

order to win the credit of having secured an exceptionally young and attractive wife, and now all he thought of was "what fellows would say" if they knew of the slight she had put upon him. To conceal this was the one object of his life at present, the thought that for ever absorbed him.

Mr. Frayling felt that it would be a relief to get away from his son-in-law. "If the fellow would only speak!" he exclaimed, when he was alone with his wife. "What the deuce he's always thinking about I can't imagine."

"He is in great grief," Mrs. Frayling maintained.

As soon as she was settled at Fraylingay she wrote to Evadne:—

"MY POOR MISGUIDED CHILD,—Your whole action since your marriage and your extraordinary resolution have occasioned your dear father, your poor husband, and myself the very greatest anxiety and pain. We have grave fears for your sanity. I have never in my life heard of a young lady acting in such a way. Your poor husband has been very sweet and good all through this dreadful trial. He very much fears the ridicule which of course would attach to him if his brother officers hear what has happened; but so far, I am thankful to say, no inkling of the true state of the case has leaked out. The servants talk, of course, but they *know* nothing. What they suspect, however, is, I believe, that you have gone out of your mind, and I even ventured to suggest something of the kind to Jenny, who, after all these years, is naturally concerned at the sight of my deep distress. I assure you I have taken nothing since your letter arrived but a little tea. So do, dear child, end this distressing state of things by returning to your right state of mind *at once*. You are a legally married woman, and you must obey the law of the land; but of course your husband would rather not invoke the law and make a public scandal if he can help it. He does not wish to force your inclinations in any way, and he therefore generously gives you more time to consider. In fact he says, 'She must come back of her own free will.'¹ And he is as ready, I am sure, as your father and myself are, to forgive you freely for all the trouble and anxiety you have caused him, and is waiting to welcome you to his heart and home with open arms.

"And, Evadne, remember: a woman has it in her power to change even a reprobate into a worthy man—and I know from the way George talks that he is far from being a reprobate now. And just think what a work that is! The angels in heaven rejoice over the sinner that repents, and you have before you a sphere of action which it should gladden your heart to contemplate. I don't deny that there *were* things in George's past life which it is very sad to think of, but women have always much to bear. It is our *cross*, and you must take up yours patiently and be sure that you will have your reward. *Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth*. I wish now that I had talked to you on the subject before you were married, and prepared you to meet some forms of wickedness in a proper spirit; you would not then have been at the mercy of the wicked woman who has caused all this mischief. She is some clever designing adventuress, I suppose, and she must have told you dreadful things, which you should never have heard of at your age, and I

¹ What he did say exactly was: "She went of her own accord, and she must come back of her own accord, or not at all. Just as she likes. I shall not trouble about her."

suspect that jealousy is at the bottom of it all. She may herself have been cast off in her wickedness for my own sweet, innocent child's sake. When I think of all the happiness she has destroyed, of these dark days following such bright prospects, I could see her *whipped*, Evadne, I could indeed. Everything had arranged itself so beautifully. He is an excellent match. The Irish property, which he *must* have, is one of the best in the country, and as there is only one fragile child between him and the Scotch estates, you might almost venture to calculate upon becoming mistress of them also. And then, he certainly is a handsome and attractive man of most charming manners, so what more do you want? He is a good churchman too. You know how regularly he accompanied you to every service. And, *really*, if you will just think for a *moment*, I am sure you will see yourself that you have made a terrible mistake, and repent while it is called to-day. But we do not blame you entirely, dear. You have surprised and distressed us, but we all freely forgive you, and if you will come back at once, you need fear *no* reproaches, for not another word will *ever* be said on the subject. —I am, dear child, ever your loving mother,

"ELIZABETH FRAYLING."

"P.S.—Your father is so horrified at your conduct that he declares he will neither write to you nor speak to you until you return to your duty."

Evadne took a day and a half to consider her mother's letter, and then she wrote the following reply:—

"THE CLOSE,
MORNINGQUEST, 9th October.

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—I answer your postscript first, because I am cut to the quick by my father's attitude. I was sure that, large-minded and just as I have always thought him, he would allow that a woman is entitled to her own point of view in a matter which, to begin with, concerns her own happiness more than anybody else's, and that if she accepts a fallen angel for a husband, knowing him to be such, she shows a poor appreciation of her own worth. I am quite ready to rejoice over any sinner that repents if I may rejoice as the angels themselves do, that is to say, at a safe distance. I would not be a stumbling-block in the way of any man's reformation. I only maintain that I am not the right person to undertake such a task, and that if women are to do it at all, they should be mothers or other experienced persons, and not young wives.

"I am pained that you should make such a cruel insinuation against the character and motives of the lady whom I have to bless for my escape from a detestable position. But even if she had been the kind of character you describe, do I understand you to mean that it would have been a triumph for me to have obtained the reversion of her equally culpable associate? that I ought, in fact, to have gratefully accepted a second-hand sort of man! You would not counsel a son of yours to marry a society woman of the same character as Major Colquhoun, and neither more nor less degraded, for the purpose of reforming her, would you, mother? I know you would not. And as a woman's soul is every bit as precious as a man's, one sees what cant this talk of reformation is. It seems to me that such cases as Major Colquhoun's are for the clergy, who have both experience and authority, and not for young wives to tackle.

And, at anyrate, although reforming reprobates may be a very noble calling, I do not, at nineteen, feel that I have any vocation for it; and I would respectfully suggest that you, mother, with your experience, your known piety, and your sweet disposition, would be a much more suitable person to reform Major Colquhoun than I should be. His past life seems to inspire you with no horror; the knowledge of it makes *me* shrink from him. My husband must be a Christlike man. I have very strong convictions, you see, on the subject of the sanctity and responsibilities of marriage. There are certain conditions which I hold to be essential on both sides. I hold also that human beings are sacred and capable of deep desecration, and that marriage, their closest bond, is sacred too, the holiest relationship in life, and one which should only be entered upon with the greatest care, and in the most reverent spirit. I see no reason why marriage should be a lottery. But evidently Major Colquhoun's views upon the subject differ widely from mine, and it seems to me utterly impossible that we should ever be able to accommodate ourselves to each other's principles. Had I known soon enough that he did not answer to my requirements, I should have dismissed him at once, and thought no more about him, and all this misery would never have occurred; but having been kept in ignorance, I consider that I was inveigled into consenting, that the vow I made was taken under a grave misapprehension, that therefore there is nothing either holy or binding in it, and that every law of morality absolves me from fulfilling my share of the contract. This, of course, is merely considering marriage from the higher and most moral point of view; but even when I think of it in the lower and more ordinary way, I find the same conclusion forces itself upon me. For there certainly is no romance in marrying a man old already in every emotion, between whom and me the recollection of some other woman would be for ever intruding. My whole soul sickens at the possibility, and I think that it must have been women old in emotion themselves who first tolerated the staleness of such lovers.

"I feel that my letter is very inadequate, mother. The thought that I am forced to pain and oppose you distracts me. But I have tried conscientiously to show you exactly what my conviction and principles are, and I do think I have a right to beg that you will at least be tolerant, however much you may disagree with me.—Your affectionate daughter, EVADNE."

Mrs. Frayling's reply to this letter arrived by return of post, red hot. Evadne, glancing at the envelope, frowned to find herself addressed as "Mrs. Colquhoun." The name had not struck her on her mother's first communication, which was also the first occasion upon which she had been so addressed, and it had not occurred to her until now that she would have to be "Mrs. Colquhoun" from thenceforth, whether she liked it or not. She felt it to be unjust, distinctly,—a gross infringement of the liberty of the subject; and she opened her mother's letter with rage and rebellion at her heart, and found the contents anything but soothing to such a state of mind. It ran as follows:—

"YOU MOST UNNATURAL CHILD,—We shall all be disgraced if this story gets out. So far, the world knows nothing, and there is time for you to

save yourself. I warn you that your father's anger is extreme. He says he shall be obliged to put you in a lunatic asylum if you do not give in at once, and consent to live with your husband. And there is the law, too, which your husband can invoke. And think of your five sisters. Will anybody marry them after such a business with you? Their prospects will be simply ruined by your heartless selfishness. No girl in my young days would have acted so outrageously. It is not decent. It is positively immodest. I repeat that your father is the proper person to judge for you. You know nothing of the world, and even if you did, you are not old enough to think for yourself. You do not imagine yourself to be a sort of seer, I hope, better informed by intuition than your parents are by wisdom and knowledge, for that would be a certain sign of insanity. Your father thinks your opposition is mere conceit, and certainly no good can come of it. All right-minded women have submitted and suffered patiently, and have had their reward. Think of the mother of St. Augustine! Her husband returned to her penitent after years of depravity. 'Every wise woman buildeth her house; but the foolish pluck it down,' and that is what you are doing. 'A continual dropping on a rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.' For Heaven's sake, my child, do not become a contentious woman. See also Prov. viii. If only you had read your Bible regularly every day, prayed humbly for a contrite heart, and *obeyed your parents*, as you have always been taught to do, we should never have had all this dreadful trouble with you; but you show yourself wanting in respect in every way and in all right and proper feeling, and really I don't know what to do. I don't indeed. Oh, do remember that forgiveness is still offered to you, and repent while it is called to-day. I assure you that your poor husband is even more ready than your father and myself to forgive and forget.

"I pray for you continually, Evadne. I do indeed. If you have any natural feeling at all, write and relieve my anxiety at once.—Your affectionate mother,

"ELIZABETH FRAYLING."

Evadne read this letter in the drawing-room, and stood for a little leaning against the window-frame looking up at the Close, at the old trees dishevelled by the recent gale, and at the weather-beaten wall of the south transept of the cathedral, from which the beautiful spire sprang upward; but she rendered no account to herself of these marvels of nature and art.

Something in her attitude as she stood there, with one hand resting flat upon the window-frame high above her head and the other hanging down beside her loosely holding her mother's letter, attracted Mrs. Orton Beg's attention, and made her wonder what thought her niece was so intent upon. Not one of the thoughts of youth, which are "long, long thoughts," apparently, for the expression of her countenance was not far away, and neither was it sad nor angry, but only intent. Presently she turned from the window, languidly strolled to the writing-table, re-read her letter, and began to write without moving a muscle of her face. As she proceeded, however, she compressed her lips and bent her brows portentously, and Mrs. Orton Beg was sure that she heard no note of the mellow chime which sounded once while she was so engaged, and seemed to her aunt to plead with her solemnly to cast her care on the great Power watching, and continue passively in

the old worn grooves, as Mrs. Orton Beg herself had done.

Evadne began abruptly—

‘THE CLOSE,
MORNINGQUEST, 13th October.

“DEAR MOTHER,—You say that no girl in your young days would have behaved so outrageously as I am doing. I wish you had said ‘so decidedly,’ instead of ‘outrageously,’ for I am sure that any resistance to the old iniquitous state of things is a quite hopeful sign of coming change for the better. We are a long way from the days when it was considered right and becoming for women in our position to sit in their ‘parlours,’ do Berlin wool work, and say nothing. We should call that conniving now. But, happily, women are no longer content to be part of the livestock about the place; they have acquired the right of reason and judgment in matters concerning themselves in particular, and the welfare of the world at large. Public opinion now is composed of what *we* think, to a very great extent. You remind me of what other women have done, and how patiently they have submitted. I have found the same thing said over and over again in the course of my reading, but I have not yet found any particular mention made of the great good which would naturally have come of all the submission which has been going on for so many centuries, if submission on our part is truly an effectual means of checking sin. On the contrary, St. Monica doubtless made things pleasanter for her own husband by rewarding him with forgiveness, a happy home, and good nursing, when he returned to her exhausted by vice, but at the same time she set a most pernicious example. So long as men believe that women will forgive anything, they will do anything. Do you see what I mean? The mistake from the beginning has been that women have practised self-sacrifice, when they should have been teaching men self-control. You say that I do not know the world, but my father does, and that, therefore, I must let him judge for me. He probably does know the world, but he quite evidently does not know me. Our point of view, you see, is necessarily very different. I have no doubt that Major Colquhoun is agreeable in the temporary good-fellowship of the smoking-room, and he is agreeable in the drawing-room also, but society and his own interests require him to be so; it is a trick of manner, merely, which may conceal the most objectionable mind. Character is what we have most to consider in the choosing of a partner for life, and how are we to consider it except by actions, such as a man’s misdeeds, which are specially the outcome of his own individuality, and are calculated in their consequences to do more injury to his family than could be compensated for by the most charming manners in the world?”

“Of course I deprecate my father’s anger, but I must again repeat I do not consider that I deserve it.

“The lunatic asylum is a nonsensical threat, and the law I am inclined to invoke myself for the purpose of ventilating the question. Do I understand that Major Colquhoun presumes to send *me* messages of forgiveness? What has *he* to forgive, may I ask? Surely *I* am the person who has been imposed upon. Do not, I beg, allow him to repeat such an impertinence.

“But, mother, why do you persistently ignore my reason for refusing to live with Major Colquhoun? Summed up it comes to this really, and I

give it now vulgarly, baldly, boldly, and once for all. *Major Colquhoun is not good enough, and I won’t have him.* That is plain, I am sure, and I must beg you to accept it as my final decision. The tone of our correspondence is becoming undignified on both sides, and the correspondence itself must end here. I shall not write another word on the subject, and I only wish you had not compelled me to write so much. Forgive me, mother, do, for being myself—I don’t know how else to put it; but I know that none of the others could do as I have done, and yet I cannot help it. I cannot act otherwise and preserve my honesty and self-respect. It is conscience, and not caprice, that I am obeying; I wish I could make you realise that. But, at all events, don’t write me any more hard words, mother. They burn into my memory and obliterate the loving thoughts I have of you. It is terrible to be met with bitterness and reproach, where hitherto one has known nothing but kindness and indulgence; so, I do entreat you, mother, once more to forgive me for being myself, and above everything, to say nothing which will destroy my affection for you.

“Believe me, I always have been, and hope always to be, your most loving child,

“EVADNE.”

The last lines were crowded into the smallest possible space, and there had hardly been room enough for her name at the end. She glanced at the clock as she folded the letter, and finding that there was only just time to catch the post she rang for a servant and told her to take it at once. Then she took her old stand in the window, and watched the girl hurrying up the Close, holding the white letter carelessly, and waving it to and fro on a level with her shoulder as she went.

“I wish I had had time to re-write it,” Evadne thought; “shall I call her back? No. Anything will be better for mother than another day’s suspense. But I think I might have expressed myself better. I don’t know, though.” She turned from the window, and met her aunt’s kind eyes fixed upon her.

“You are flushed, Evadne,” the latter said. “Were you writing home?”

“Yes, auntie,” Evadne answered wearily.

“You are looking more worried than I have seen you yet.”

“I *am* worried, auntie, and I lost my temper. I could not help it, and I am dissatisfied. I know I have said too much, and I have said the same thing over and over again, and gone round and round the subject, too, and altogether I am disheartened.”

“I cannot imagine you saying too much about anything, Evadne,” Mrs. Orton Beg commented, smiling.

“When I am speaking, you mean. But that is different. I am always afraid to speak, but I dare write anything. The subject is closed now, however. I shall write no more.” She advanced listlessly, and leaned against the mantelpiece close beside the couch on which her aunt was lying.

“Have you ever felt compelled to say something which all the time you hate to say, and afterward hate yourself for having said? That is what I always seem to be doing now.” She looked up at the cathedral as she spoke. “How I envy you your power to say exactly what you mean,” she added.

“Who told you I always say exactly what I mean?” her aunt asked, smiling.

"Well, exactly what you ought to say, then," Evadne answered, responding to the smile.

Mrs. Orton Beg sighed and resumed her knitting. She was making some sort of wrap out of soft white wool, and Evadne noticed the glint of her rings as she worked, and also the delicacy of her slender white hands as she held them up in the somewhat tiring attitude which her position on the couch necessitated.

"How patient you are, auntie," Evadne said, and then she bent down and kissed her forehead and cheeks.

"It is easy to be patient when one's greatest trial is only the waiting for a happy certainty," Mrs. Orton Beg answered. "But you will be patient too, Evadne, sooner or later. You are at the passionate age now, but the patient one will come all in good time."

"You have always a word of comfort," Evadne said.

"There is one word more I would say, although I do not wish to influence you," Mrs. Orton Beg began hesitatingly.

"You mean *submit*," Evadne answered, and shook her head. "No, that word is of no use to me. Mine is *rebel*. It seems to me that those who dare to rebel in every age are they who make life possible for those whom temperament compels to submit. It is the rebels who extend the boundary of right little by little, narrowing the confines of wrong, and crowding it out of existence."

She stood for a moment looking down on the ground with bent brows, thinking deeply, and then she slowly sauntered from the room, and presently passed the south window with her hat in her hand, took one turn round the garden, and then subsided into the high-backed chair, on which she had sat and fed her fancy with dreams of love a few weeks before her marriage. The day was one of those balmy mild ones which come occasionally in mid-October. The sheltered garden had suffered little in the recent gale. From where Mrs. Orton Beg reclined there was no visible change in the background of single dahlias, sunflowers, and the old brick wall curtained with creepers, nor was there any great difference apparent in the girl herself. The delicate shell-pink of passion had faded to milky white, her eyes were heavy, and her attitude somewhat fatigued, but that was all; a dance the night before would have left her so exactly, and Mrs. Orton Beg, watching her, wondered at the small effect of "blighted affection" as she saw it in Evadne, compared with the terrible consequences which popular superstition attributes to "a disappointment." Evadne had certainly suffered, but more because her parents, in whom she had always had perfect confidence, and whom she had known and loved as long as she could remember anything, had failed her, than because she had been obliged to cast a man out of her life who had merely lighted it for a few months with a flame which she recognised now as lurid at the best, and uncertain, and which she would never have desired to keep burning continually with that feverish glare to the extinguishing of every other interesting object. She would have been happiest when passion ended and love began, as it does in happy marriages.

And she was herself comparing the two states of mind as she sat there. She was conscious of a blank now, dull and dispiriting enough, but no more likely to endure than the absorbing passion it succeeded. She knew it for an interregnum,

and was thinking of the books she would send for when she had mastered herself sufficiently to be interested in books again. It was as if her mind had been out of health, but was convalescent now and recovering its strength; and she was as well aware of the fact as if she had been suffering from some physical ailment which had interrupted her ordinary pursuits, and was making plans for the time when she should be able to resume them.

While so engaged, however, she fell asleep, as convalescents do, and Mrs. Orton Beg smiled at the consummation. It was not romantic, but it was eminently healthy.

At the same time she heard the hall door opened from without as by one who had a right to enter familiarly, and a man's step in the hall.

"Come in," she said, in answer to a firm tap at the door, and smiled, looking over her shoulder as it opened.

It was Dr. Galbraith on his way back through Morningquest to his own place, Fountain Towers.

"I am so glad to see you," said Mrs. Orton Beg as he took her hand.

"I am on my way back from the Castle," he rejoined, sitting down beside her; "and I have just come in for a moment to see how the ankle progresses."

"Quicker now, I am thankful to say," she answered. "I can get about the house comfortably if I rest in between times. But is there anything wrong at the Castle?"

"The same old thing," said Dr. Galbraith, with a twinkle in his bright grey eyes. "The Duke has been seeing visions—determination of blood to the head; and Lady Fulda has been dreaming dreams—fatigue and fasting. Food and rest for her—she will be undisturbed by dreams to-night; and a severe course of dieting for him."

Mrs. Orton Beg smiled. "Really life is becoming too prosaic," she said, "since you dreadfully clever people began to discover a reason for everything. Lady Fulda's beauty and goodness would have been enough to convince any man at one time that she is a saint indeed, and privileged to heal the sick and converse with angels; but you are untouched by either."

"On the contrary," he answered, "I never see her or think of her without acknowledging to myself that she is one of the loveliest and most angelic women in the world. And she has the true magnetic touch of a nurse too. There is healing in it. I have seen it again and again. But that is a natural process. Many quite wicked doctors are endowed in the same way, and even more strongly than she is. There can be no doubt about that"—He broke off with a little gesture and smiled genially.

"But anything *beyond*!" Mrs. Orton Beg supplemented; "anything supernatural, in fact, you ridicule."

"One cannot ridicule *anything* with which Lady Fulda's name is associated," he answered. "But tell me," he exclaimed, catching sight of Evadne placidly sleeping in the high-backed chair, with her hat in her hand held up so as to conceal the lower part of her face; "are visions about? Is that one that I see there before me? If I were Faust, I should love such a Marguerite. I wish she would let her hat drop. I want to see the lower part of her face. The upper part satisfies me. It is fine. The balance of brow and frontal development are perfect."

Mrs. Orton Beg coloured with a momentary annoyance. She had forgotten that Evadne was

there, but Dr. Galbraith had entered so abruptly that there would have been no time to warn her away in any case.

"No vision," she began—"or if a vision, one of the nineteenth century sort, tangible, and of satisfying continuance. She is a niece of mine, and I warn you in case you have a momentary desire to forsake your books and become young in mind again for her sake that she is a very long way after Marguerite, whom I think she would consider to have been a very weak and foolish person. I can imagine her saying about Faust, 'Fancy sacrificing one's self for the transient pleasure of a moonlight meeting or two with a man, and a few jewels, however unique, when one can *live!*' in italics and with a note of admiration. 'Why, I can put my elbow here on the arm of my chair and my head on my hand, and in a moment I perceive delights past, present, and to come, of equal intensity, more certain quality, and longer continuance than passion. I perceive the gradual growth of knowledge through all the ages, the clouds of ignorance and superstition slowly parting, breaking up, and rolling away, to let the light of science shine—science being truth. And there is all art, and all natural beauty from the beginning—everything that lasts and *is* life. Why, even to think on such subjects warms my whole being with a glow of enthusiasm which is in itself a more exquisite pleasure than passion, and not alloyed like the latter with uncertainty, that terrible ache. I might take my walk in the garden with my own particular Faust like any other girl, and as I take my glass of champagne at dinner, for its pleasurable stimulating quality, but I hope I should do both in moderation. And as to making Faust my all, or even giving him so large a share of my attention as to limit my capacity for other forms of enjoyment, absurd! We are long past the time when there was only one incident of interest in a woman's life, and that was its love affair! There was no sense of proportion in those days!'"

"Is that how you interpret her?" he said. "One who holds herself well in hand, bent upon enjoying every moment of her life and all the variety of it, perceiving that it is stupid to narrow it down to the indulgence of one particular set of emotions, and determined not to swamp every faculty by constant cultivation of the animal instincts to which all ages have created altars! Best for herself, I suppose, but hardly possible at present. The capacity, you know, is only coming. Women have been cramped into a small space so long that they cannot expand all at once when they *are* let out; there must be a great deal of stretching and growing, and when they are not on their guard, they will often find themselves falling into the old attitude, as newborn babes are apt to resume the ante-natal position. She will have the perception, the inclination; but the power—unless she is exceptional, the power will only be for her daughter's daughter."

"Then she must suffer and do no good?"

"She must suffer, yes; but I don't know about the rest. She may be a seventh wave, you know!"

"What is a seventh wave?"

"It is a superstition of the fisher-folks. They say that when the tide is coming in it pauses always, and remains stationary between every seventh wave, waiting for the next, and unable to rise any higher till it comes to carry it on; and it has always seemed to me that the tide of human progress is raised at intervals to higher levels at a bound in some such way. The seventh waves of

humanity are men and women who, by the impulse of some one action which comes naturally to them but is new to the race, gather strength to come up to the last halting place of the tide, and to carry it on with them ever so far beyond." He stopped abruptly, and brushed his hand over his forehead. "Now that I have said that," he added, "it seems as old as the cathedral there, and as familiar, yet the moment before I spoke it appeared to have only just occurred to me. If it is an ill-digested reminiscence and you come across the original in some book, I am afraid you will lose your faith in me for ever; but I pray you of your charity make due allowance. I must go."

"Oh no, not yet a moment!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed. "I want to ask you: How are Lady Adeline and the twins?"

"I haven't seen Lady Adeline for a month," he answered, rising to go as he spoke. "But Dawne tells me that the twins are as awful as ever. It is a question of education now, and it seems that the twins have their own ideas on the subject, and are teaching their parents. But take care of your girlie out there," he added, his strong face softening as he took a last look at her. "Her body is not so robust as her brain, I should say, and it is late in the year to be sitting out of doors."

"Tell me, Dr. Galbraith," Mrs. Orton Beg began, detaining him, "you are a Scotchman, you should have the second sight; tell me the fate of my girlie out there. I am anxious about her."

"She will marry," he answered, in his deliberate way, humouring her, "but not have many children, and her husband's name should be George."

"Oh, most oracular! a very oracle! a Delphic oracle, only to be interpreted by the event!"

"Just so!" he answered from the door, and then he was gone.

"Evadne, come in!" Mrs. Orton Beg called. "It is getting damp." Evadne roused herself and entered at once by the window.

"I have been hearing voices through my dim dreaming consciousness," she said. "Have you had a visitor?"

"Only the doctor," her aunt replied. "By the way, Evadne," she added, "what is Major Colquhoun's Christian name?"

"George," Evadne answered, surprised. "Why, auntie?"

"Nothing; I wanted to know."

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN breakfast was over at Fraylingay next morning, and the young people had left the table, Mrs. Frayling helped herself to another cup of coffee, and solemnly opened Evadne's last letter. The coffee was cold, for the poor lady had been waiting, not daring to take the last cup herself, because she knew that the moment she did so her husband would want more. The emptying of the urn was the signal which usually called up his appetite for another cup. He might refuse several times, and even leave the table amiably, so long as there was any left; but the knowledge or suspicion that there was none, set up a sense of injury, unmistakably expressed in his countenance, and not to be satisfied by having more made immediately, although he invariably ordered it just to mark his displeasure. He would get up and ring for it emphatically, and would even sit with it before him for some time after it came, but

would finally go out without touching it, and he, as poor Mrs. Frayling mentally expressed it, "Oh dear! quite upset for the rest of the day."

On this occasion, however, the pleasure of a wholly new grievance left no space in his fickle mind for the old-worn item of irritation, and he never even noticed that the coffee was done. "Dear George" sat beside Mrs. Frayling. She kept him there in order to be able to bestow a stray pat on his hand, or make him some other sign of that maternal tenderness of which she considered the poor dear fellow stood so much in need.

Mr. Frayling sat at the end of the table reading a local paper with one eye, as it were, and watching his wife for her news with the other. A severely critical expression sat singularly ill upon his broad face, which was like a baked apple, puffy, and wrinkled, and red, and there was about him a queerly pursed-up air of settled opposition to everything which did duty for both the real and spurious object of his attention.

Mrs. Frayling read the letter through to herself, and then she put it down on the table and raised her handkerchief to her eyes with a heavy sigh.

"Well, what does she say now?" Mr. Frayling exclaimed, throwing down the local paper and giving way to his impatience openly.

"Dear George" was perfectly cool.

"She says," Mrs. Frayling enjoined between two sniffs, "that Major Colquhoun isn't good enough, and she won't have him."

"Well, I understand that, at all events, better than anything else she has said," Major Colquhoun observed, almost as if a weight had been removed from his mind. "And I am quite inclined to come to terms with her, for I don't care much myself for a young lady who gets into hysterics about things that other women think nothing of."

"Oh, *don't* say think *nothing* of, George," Mrs. Frayling deprecated. "We lament and deplore, but we forgive and endure."

"It comes to the same thing," said Major Colquhoun.

A big dog which sat beside him, with its head on his knee, thumped his tail upon the ground here and whined sympathetically; and he laid one hand caressingly upon his head, while he twirled his big blond moustache with the other. He was fond of children and animals, and all creatures that fawned upon him and were not able to argue if they disagreed with him, or resent it if he kicked them, actually or metaphorically speaking; not that he was much given to that kind of thing. He was agreeable naturally, as all pleasure-loving people are; only when he did lose his temper that was the way he showed it. He would cut a woman to the quick with a word, and knock a man down; but both ebullitions were momentary, as a rule. It was really too much trouble to cherish anger.

And just then he was thinking quite as much about his moustache as about his wife. It had once been the pride of his life, but had come to be the cause of some misgivings; for "heavy moustaches" had gone out of fashion in polite society.

Mr. Frayling followed up the last remark. "This is very hard on you, Colquhoun, very hard," he declared, pushing his plate away from him; "and I may say that it is very hard on me too. But it just shows you what would come of the Higher Education of Women! Why, they'd raise some absurd standard of excellence, and want to import angels from Eden if we didn't come up to it."

Major Colquhoun looked depressed.

"Yes," Mrs. Frayling protested, shaking her head. "She says her husband must be a Christlike man. She says men have agreed to accept Christ as an example of what a man should be, and asserts that therefore they must feel in themselves that they *could* live up to His standard if they chose."

"There now!" Mr. Frayling exclaimed triumphantly. "That is just what I said. A Christlike man, indeed! What absurdity will women want next? I don't know what to advise, Colquhoun. I really don't."

"Can't you *order* her?" Mrs. Frayling suggested.

"Order her! How can *I* order her? She belongs to Major Colquhoun now," he retorted irritably, but with a fine conservative regard for the rights of property.

"And this is the way she keeps her vow of obedience," Major Colquhoun muttered.

"Oh, but you see—the poor misguided child considers that she made the vow under a misapprehension," Mrs. Frayling explained, her maternal instinct acting on the defensive when her offspring's integrity was attacked, and making the position clear to her. "Don't you think, dear,"—to her husband—"that if you asked the bishop, he would talk to her?"

"The bishop!" Mr. Frayling ejaculated, with infinite scorn. "I know what women are when they go off like this. Once they set up opinions of their own, there's *no* talking to them. Why, haven't they gone to the stake for their opinions? She wouldn't obey the whole bench of bishops in her present frame of mind; and, if they condescended to talk to her, they would only confirm her belief in her own powers. She would glory to find herself opposing what she calls her opinions to theirs."

"Oh, the child is mad!" Mrs. Frayling wailed. "I've said it all along. She's quite mad."

"Is there any insanity in the family?" Major Colquhoun asked, looking up suspiciously.

"None, none whatever," Mr. Frayling hastened to assure him. "There has never been a case. In fact, the women on both sides have always been celebrated for good sense and exceptional abilities—for women, of course; and several of the men have distinguished themselves, as you know."

"That does not alter *my* opinion in the least!" Mrs. Frayling put in. "Evadne must be mad."

"She's worse, I think," Major Colquhoun exclaimed, in a tone of deep disgust. "She's worse than mad. She's clever. You can do something with a mad woman; you can lock her up; but a clever woman's the devil. And I'd never have thought it of her," he added regretfully. "Such a nice quiet little thing as she seemed, with hardly a word to say for herself. You wouldn't have imagined that she knew what 'views' are, let alone having any of her own. But that is just the way with women. There's no being up to them."

"That is true," said Mr. Frayling.

"Well, I don't know where she got them," Mrs. Frayling protested, "for I am sure *I* haven't any. But she seems to know so much about—*everything*!" she declared, glancing at the letter. "At *her* age I knew *nothing*!"

"I can vouch for that!" her husband exclaimed. He was one of those men who oppose the education of women might and main, and then jeer at them for knowing nothing. He was very

particular about the human race when it was likely to suffer by an injurious indulgence on the part of women, but when it was a question of extra port wine for himself, he never considered the tortures of gout he might be entailing upon his own hapless descendants. However, there was an excuse for him on this occasion, for it is not every day that an irritated man has an opportunity of railing at his wife's incapacity and the inconvenient intelligence of his daughter both in one breath. "But how has Evadne obtained all this mischievous information? I cannot think how she could have obtained it!" he ejaculated, knitting his brows at his wife in a suspicious way, as he always did when this importunate thought recurred to him. In such ordinary everyday matters as the management of his estate, and his other duties as a county gentleman, and also in solid comprehension of the political situation of the period, he was by no means wanting; but his mind simply circled round and round this business of Evadne's like a helpless swimmer in a whirlpool, able to keep afloat, but with nothing to take hold of. The risk of sending the mind of an elderly gentleman of settled prejudices spinning "down the ringing grooves of change" at such a rate is considerable.

During the day he wandered up to the rooms which had been Evadne's. They were kept very much as she was accustomed to have them, but there was that something of bareness about them, and a kind of spick-and-spanness conveying a sense of emptiness and desertion which strikes cold to the heart when it comes of the absence of someone dear. And Mr. Frayling felt the discomfort of it. The afternoon sunlight slanted across the little sitting-room, falling on the backs of a row of well-worn books, and showing the scars of use and abuse on them. Without deliberate intention, Mr. Frayling followed the ray, and read the bald titles by its uncompromising clearness—histology, pathology, anatomy, physiology, prophylactics, therapeutics, botany, natural history, ancient and outspoken history, not to mention the modern writers and the various philosophies. Mr. Frayling took out a work on sociology, opened it, read a few passages which Evadne had marked, and solemnly ejaculated, "Good heavens!" several times. He could not have been more horrified had the books been *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, *Nana*, *La Terre*, *Madame Bovary*, and *Sapho*; yet, had women been taught to read the former and reflect upon them, our sacred humanity might have been saved sooner from the depth of degradation depicted in the latter.

The discovery of these books was an adding of alkali to the acid of Mr. Frayling's disposition at the moment, and he went down to look for his wife while he was still effervescing. How did Evadne get them? he wanted to know. Mrs. Frayling could not conceive. She had forgotten all about Evadne's discovery of the box of books in the attic, and the sort of general consent she had given when Evadne worried her for permission to read them.

"She must be a most deceitful girl. I shall go and talk to her myself," Mr. Frayling concluded.

And doubtless, if only he had had a pair of wings to spread, he would presently have appeared sailing over the cathedral into the Close at Morningquest, a portly bird, in a frock coat, tall hat, and a very bad temper.

But, poor gentleman! he really was an object for compassion. All his ideas of propriety and

the natural social order of the universe were being outraged, and by his favourite daughter too, the one whom everybody thought so like him. And in truth, she was like him, especially in the matter of sticking to her own opinion; just the very thing he had no patience with, for he detested obstinate people. He said so himself. He did not go, however. Having preparations to make and a train to wait for, gave him time to reflect, and, perceiving that the interview must inevitably be of a most disagreeable nature, he decided to send his wife next day to reason with her daughter.

Mrs. Frayling came upon Evadne unawares, and the shock it gave the girl to see her mother all miserably agitated and worn with worry, was a more powerful point in favour of the success of the latter's mission than any argument would have been.

The poor lady was handsomely dressed, and of a large presence calculated to inspire awe in inferiors unaccustomed to it. She was a well-preserved woman, with even teeth, thick brown hair, scarcely tinged with grey, and a beautiful soft transparent pink and white complexion, and Evadne had always seen her in a state of placid content, never really interrupted except by such surface squalls as were caused by having to scold the children, or the shedding of a few sunshiny tears; and had thought her lovely. But when she entered now, and had given her daughter the corner of her cheek to kiss for form's sake, she sat down with quivering lips and watery eyes all red with crying, and a broken-up aspect generally which cut the girl to the quick.

"Oh, mother!" Evadne cried, kneeling down on the floor beside her, and putting her arms about her. "It grieves me deeply to see you so distressed."

But Mrs. Frayling held herself stiffly, refusing to be embraced, and presenting a surface for the operation as unyielding as the figurehead of a ship.

"If you are sincere," she said severely, "you will give up this nonsense at once."

Evadne's arms dropped, and she rose to her feet, and stood, with fingers interlaced in front of her, looking down at her mother for a moment, and then up at the cathedral. Her talent for silence came in naturally here.

"You don't say anything, because you know there is nothing to be said for you," Mrs. Frayling began. "You've broken my heart, Evadne, indeed you have. And after everything had gone off so well too. What a tragedy! How could you forget? And on the very day itself! Your wedding-day, just think! Why, we keep ours every year. And all your beautiful presents, and such a trousseau! I am sure no girl was ever more kindly considered by father, mother, friends—everybody!"

She was obliged to stop short for a moment. Ideas, by which she was not much troubled as a rule, had suddenly crowded in so thick upon her when she began to speak, that she became bewildered, and in an honest attempt to make the most of them all, only succeeded in laying hold of an end of each, to the great let and hindrance of all coherency, as she herself felt when she pulled up.

"Yes, you may well look up at the cathedral," she began again, unreasonably provoked by Evadne's attitude. "But what good does it do you? I should have supposed that the hallowed associations of this place would have restored you to a better frame of mind."

"I do feel the force of association strongly,"

Evadne answered; "and that is why I shrink from Major Colquhoun. People have their associations as well as places, and those that cling about him are anything but hallowed."

Mrs. Frayling assumed an aspect of the deepest depression: "I never heard a girl talk so in my life," she said. "It is positively indelicate. It really is. But *we* have done all we could. Now, honestly, have you anything to complain of?"

"Nothing, mother, nothing," Evadne exclaimed. "Oh, I wish I could make you understand!"

"Understand! What is there to understand? It is easy enough to understand that you have behaved outrageously. And written letters you ought to be ashamed of. Quoting Scripture too, for your own purposes. I cannot think that you are in your right mind, Evadne, I really cannot. No girl ever acted so before. If only you would read your Bible properly, and say your prayers, you would see for yourself and repent. Besides, what is to become of you? We can't have you at home again, you know. How we are any of us to appear in the neighbourhood if the story gets about—and of course it must get about if you persist—I cannot think. And everybody said, too, how sweet you looked on your wedding-day, Evadne; but I said, when those children changed clothes, it was unnatural, and would bring bad luck; and there was a terrible gale blowing, too, and it rained. Everything went so well up to the very day itself; but, since then, for no reason at all but your own wicked obstinacy, all has gone wrong. You ought to have been coming back from your honeymoon soon now, and here you are in hiding—yes, literally *in hiding like a criminal*, ashamed to be seen. It must be a terrible trial for my poor sister Olive, and a great imposition on her good nature, having you here. You consider no one. And I might have been a grandmother in time too, although I don't so much mind about that, for I don't think it is any blessing to a military man to have a family. They have to move about so much. But, however, all that, it seems, is over. And your poor sisters—five of them—are curious to know what George is doing all this time at Fraylingay, and asking questions. You cannot have imagined *my* difficulties, or you never would have been so selfish and unnatural. I had to box Barbara's ears the other day, I had indeed, and who will marry them now, I should like to know? If only you had turned Roman Catholic and gone into a convent, or died, or never been born—oh dear! oh dear!"

Evadne looked down at her mother again. She was very white, but she did not utter a word.

"Why don't you speak?" Mrs. Frayling exclaimed. "Why do you stand there like a stone or statue, deaf to all my arguments?"

Evadne sighed: "Mother, I will do anything you suggest except the one thing. I will not live with Major Colquhoun as his wife," she said.

"I thought so!" Mrs. Frayling exclaimed. "You will do everything but what you ought to do. It is just what your father says. Once you over-educate a girl, you can do nothing with her, she gives herself such airs; and you have managed to over-educate yourself somehow, although *how* remains a mystery. But one thing I am determined upon. Your poor sisters shall never have a book I don't know off by heart myself. I shall lock them all up. Not that it is much use, for no one will marry them now. No man will ever come to

the house again to be robbed of his character, as Major Colquhoun has been by you. I am sure no one ever knew anything bad about him—at least *I* never did, whatever your father may have done—until you went and ferreted all those dreadful stories out. You are shameless, Evadne, you really are. And what good have you done by it all, I should like to know? When you might have done so much, too."

Mrs. Frayling paused here, and Evadne looked up at the cathedral again, feeling for her pitifully. This new view of her mother was another terrible disillusion, and the more the poor lady exposed herself, the greater Evadne felt was the claim she had upon her filial tenderness.

"Why don't you say something?" Mrs. Frayling recommenced.

"Mother, what *can* I say?"

"If you knew what a time I have had with your father and your husband, you would pity me. I can assure you George has been so sullen there was no doing anything with him, and the trouble I have had, and the excuses I have made for you, I am quite worn out. He said if you were that kind of girl you might go, and I've had to go down on my knees to him almost to make him forgive you. And now I will go down on my knees to you"—she exclaimed, acting on a veritable inspiration, and suiting the action to the word—"to beg you, for the sake of your sisters, and for the love of God, not to disgrace us all!"

"Oh, mother—no! Don't do that. Get up—do get up! This is too dreadful!" Evadne cried, almost hysterically.

"Here I shall kneel until you give in," Mrs. Frayling sobbed, clasping her hands in the attitude of prayer to her daughter, and conscious of the strength of her position.

Evadne tried in vain to raise her. Her bonnet had slipped to one side, her dress had been caught up by the heels of her boots, and the soles were showing behind; her mantle was disarranged; she was a figure for a farce; but Evadne saw only her own mother, shaken with sobs, on her knees before her.

"Mother—mother," she cried, sinking into a chair, and covering her face with her hands to hide the dreadful spectacle: "Tell me what I am to do! Suggest something!"

"If you would even consent," Mrs. Frayling began, gathering herself up slowly, and standing over her daughter, "if you would even consent to live in the same house with him until you get used to him and forget all this nonsense, I am sure he would agree. For he is *dreadfully* afraid of scandal, Evadne. I never knew a man more so. In fact, he shows nothing but right and proper feeling, and you will love him as much as ever again when you know him better, and get over all these exaggerated ideas. *Do* consent to this, dear child, for my sake. You shall have your own way in everything else. And I will arrange it all for you, and get his written promise to allow you to live in his house quite independently, like brother and sister, as long as you like, and there will be no awkwardness for you whatever. Do, my child, do consent to this," and the poor old lady knelt once more, and put her arms about her daughter, and wept aloud.

Evadne broke down. The sight of the dear face so distorted, the poor lips quivering, the kind eyes all swollen and blurred with tears, was too much for her, and she flung her arms round her mother's neck and cried, "I consent, mother, for your sake—to keep up appearances; but only

that, mother, you promise me. You will arrange all that?"

"I promise you, my dear, I promise," Mrs. Frayling rejoined, rising with alacrity, her countenance clearing on the instant, her heart swelling with the joy and pride of a great victory. She knew she had done what the whole bench of bishops could not have done—nor that most remarkable man, her husband, either, for the matter of that, and she enjoyed her triumph.

As she had anticipated, Major Colquhoun made no difficulty about the arrangement.

"I should not care a rap for an unwilling wife," he said. "Let her go *her* way, and I'll go mine. All I want now is to keep up appearances. It would be a deuced nasty thing for me if the story got about. Fellows would think there was more in it than there is."

"But she will come round," said Mrs. Frayling. "If only you are nice to her, and I am sure you will be, she is sure to come round."

"Oh, of course she will," Mr. Frayling decided.

And Major Colquhoun smiled complacently. He often asserted that there was no knowing women; but he took credit to himself for a superior knowledge of the sex all the same.

CHAPTER XVII

BEFORE writing the promise which Evadne required, Major Colquhoun begged to be allowed to have an interview with her, and to this also she consented at her mother's earnest solicitation, although the idea of it went very much against the grain. She perceived, however, that the first meeting must be awkward in any case, and she was one of those energetic people who, when there is a disagreeable thing to be done, do it, and get it over at once. So she strengthened her mind by adding a touch of severity to her costume, and sat herself down in the drawing-room with a book on her lap when the morning came, well nerved for the interview. Her heart began to beat unpleasantly when he rang, and she heard him in the hall, doubtless inquiring for her. At the sound of his voice she arose from her seat involuntarily, and stood, literally awaiting in fear and trembling the dreadful moment of meeting.

"What a horrible sensation!" she ejaculated mentally.

"Colonel Colquhoun," the servant announced.

He entered with an air of displeasure he could not conceal, and bowed to her from a distance stiffly; but, although she looked hard at him, she could not see him, so great was her trepidation. It was she, however, who was the first to speak.

"I—I'm nervous," she gasped, clasping her hands and holding them out to him piteously.

Colonel Colquhoun relaxed. It flattered his vanity to perceive that this curiously well-informed and exceedingly strong-minded young lady became as weakly emotional as any ordinary schoolgirl the moment she found herself face to face with him. "There is nothing to be afraid of," he blandly assured her.

"Will you—sit down," Evadne managed to mumble, dropping into her own chair again from sheer inability to stand any longer.

Colonel Colquhoun took a seat at an exaggerated distance from her. His idea was to impress her with a sense of his extreme delicacy, but the act had a contrary effect upon her. His manners had been perfect so far as she had hitherto seen

them, but thus to emphasise an already sufficiently awkward position was not good taste, and she registered the fact against him.

After they were seated, there was a painful pause. Evadne knit her brows and cast about in her mind for something to say. Suddenly the fact that the maid had announced him as "Colonel" Colquhoun recurred to her.

"Have you been promoted?" she asked very naturally.

"Yes," he answered.

"I congratulate you," she faltered.

Again he bowed stiffly.

But Evadne was recovering herself. She could look at him now, and it surprised her to find that he was not in appearance the monster she had been picturing him—no more a monster, indeed, than he had seemed before she knew of his past. Until now, however, except for that one glimpse in the carriage, she had always seen him through such a haze of feeling as to make the seeing practically null and void, so far as any perception of his true character might be gathered from his appearance, and useless for anything really but ordinary purposes of identification. Now, however, that the misty veil of passion was withdrawn from her eyes, the man whom she had thought noble she saw to be merely big; the face which had seemed to beam with intellect certainly remained fine-featured still, but it was like the work of a talented artist when it lacks the perfectly perceptible, indefinable finishing touch of genius that would have raised it above criticism, and drawn you back to it again, but, wanting which, after the first glance of admiration, interest fails, and you pass on only convinced of a certain cleverness, a thing that soon satiates without satisfying. Evadne had seen soul in her lover's eyes, but now they struck her as hard, shallow, glittering, and obtrusively blue; and she noticed that his forehead, although high, shelved back abruptly to the crown of his head, which dipped down again sheer to the back of his neck, a very precipice without a single boss upon which to rest a hope of some saving grace in the way of eminent social qualities. "Thank Heaven, I see you as you are in time!" thought Evadne.

Colonel Colquhoun was the next to speak.

"I shall be able to give you rather a better position now," he said.

"Yes," she replied, but she did not at all appreciate the advantage, because she had never known what it was to be in an inferior position.

"May I speak to you with reference to our future relations?" he continued.

She bowed a kind of cold assent, then looked at him expectantly, her eyes opening wide, and her heart thumping horribly in the very natural perturbation which again seized upon her as they approached the subject; yet, in spite of her quite perceptible agitation, there was both dignity and determination in her attitude, and Colonel Colquhoun, meeting the unflinching glance direct, became suddenly aware of the fact that the timid little love-sick girl with half-shut, sleepy eyes he had had such a fancy for, and this young lady, modestly shrinking in every inch of her sensitive frame, but undaunted in spirit, nevertheless, were two very different people. There had been misapprehension of character on both sides, it seemed, but he liked pluck, and, by Jove! the girl was handsomer than he had imagined. Views or no views, he would lay siege to her senses in earnest; there would be some satisfaction in such a conquest.

"Is there no hope for me, Evadne?" he pleaded.

"None — none," she burst out impetuously, becoming desperate in her embarrassment. "But I cannot discuss the subject. I beg you will let it drop."

Her one idea was to get rid of this big blond man, who gazed at her with an expression in his eyes from which, now that her own passion was dead, she shrank in revolt.

Again Colonel Colquhoun bowed stiffly. "As you please," he said. "My only wish is to please you." He paused for a reply, but as Evadne had nothing more to say, he was obliged to recommence: "The regiment," he said, "is going to Malta at once, and I must go with it. And what I would venture to suggest is, that you should follow when you feel inclined, by P. and O. Fellows will understand that I don't care to have you come out on a troopship. And I should like to get your rooms fitted up for you, too, before you arrive. I am anxious to do all in my power to meet your wishes. I will make every arrangement with that end in view; and if you can suggest anything yourself that does not occur to me I shall be glad. You had better bring an English maid out with you, or a German. Frenchwomen are flighty." He got up as he said this, and added: "You'll like Malta, I think. It is a bright little place, and very jolly in the season."

Evadne rose too. "Thank you," she said. "You are showing me more consideration than I have any right to expect, and I am sure to be satisfied with any arrangement you may think it right to make."

"I will telegraph to you when my arrangements for your reception are complete," he concluded. "And I think that is all."

"I can think of nothing else," she answered.

"Good-bye, then," he said.

"Good-bye," she rejoined, "and I wish you a pleasant voyage and all possible success with your regiment."

"Thank you," he answered, putting his heels together, and making her a profound bow as he spoke.

So they parted, and he went his way through the old Cathedral Close with that set expression of countenance which he had worn when he first became aware of her flight. But, curiously enough, although he had no atom of lover-like feeling left for her, and the amount of thought she had displayed in her letters had shocked his most cherished prejudices on the subject of her sex, she had gained in his estimation. He liked her pluck. He felt she could be nothing but a credit to him.

She remained for a few seconds as he had left her, listening to his footsteps in the hall and the shutting of the door; and then from where she stood she saw him pass, and watched him out of sight—a fine figure of a man certainly; and she sighed. She had been touched by his consideration, and thought it a pity that such a kindly disposition should be unsupported by the solid qualities which alone could command her lasting respect and affection.

She walked to the window, and stood there drumming idly on the glass, thinking over the conclusion they had come to, for some time after Colonel Colquhoun had disappeared. She felt it to be a lame one, and she was far from satisfied. But what, under the circumstances, would have been a better arrangement? The persistent

question contained in itself its own answer. Only the prospect was blank—blank. The excitement of the contest was over now; the reaction had set in. She ventured to look forward; and, seeing for the first time what was before her, the long, dark, dreary level of a hopelessly uncongenial existence, reaching from here to eternity, as it seemed from her present point of view, her over-wrought nerves gave way; and, when Mrs. Orton Beg came to her a moment later, she threw herself into her arms and sobbed hysterically, "Oh, auntie! I have suffered horribly! I wish I were dead!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE first news that Evadne received on arriving in Malta was contained in a letter from her mother. It announced that her father had determined to cut her off from all communication with her family until she came to her senses.

She had remained quietly with Mrs. Orton Beg until it was time to leave England. She did not want to go to Fraylingay. She shrank from occupying her old rooms in her new state of mind, and she would not have thought of proposing such a thing herself; but she did half expect to be asked. This not liking to return home, not recognising it as home any longer, or herself as having any right to go there uninvited, marked the change in her position, and made her realise it with a pang. Her mother came and went, but she brought no message from her father nor ever mentioned him. Something in ourselves warns us at once of any change of feeling in a friend, and Evadne asked no questions, and sent no messages either. But this attitude did not satisfy her father at all. He thought it her duty clearly to throw herself at his feet and beg for mercy and forgiveness; and he waited for her to make some sign of contrition until his patience could hold out no longer, and then he asked his wife: "Has Evadne—ch—what is her attitude at present?"

"She is perfectly cheerful and happy," Mrs. Frayling replied.

"She expresses no remorse for her most unjustifiable conduct?"

"She thinks she only did what is right," Mrs. Frayling reminded him.

"Then she is quite indifferent to my opinion?" he began, swelling visibly and getting red in the face. "Has she asked what I think? Does she ever mention me?"

"No, never," Mrs. Frayling declared apprehensively.

"A most unnatural child," he exclaimed, in his pompous way; "a most unnatural child."

It was after this that he became obstinately determined to cut Evadne off from all communication with her friends until she should become reconciled to Colonel Colquhoun as a husband. Mr. Frayling was not an astute man. He was simply incapable of sitting down and working out a deliberate scheme of punishment which should have the effect of bringing Evadne's unruly spirit into what he considered proper subjection. In this matter he acted, not upon any system which he could have reduced to writing, but rather as the lower animals do when they build nests, or burrow in the ground, or repeat, generation after generation, other arrangements of a like nature with a precision which the cumulative practice of the race makes perfect in each individual. He possessed a certain faculty, transmitted from

father to son, that gives the stupidest man a power in his dealings with women which the brightest intelligence would not acquire without it; and he used to obtain his end with the decision of instinct, which is always neater and more effectual than reason and artifice in such matters. He denied hotly, for instance, that Evadne had any natural affection, and yet it was upon that woman's weakness of hers that he set to work at once, proving himself to be possessed of a perfect, if unconscious, knowledge of her most vulnerable point; and he displayed much ingenuity in his manner of making it a means of torture. He let no hint of the cruel edict be breathed before she went abroad; she might have altered her arrangements had she known of it before, and remained with Mrs. Orton Beg—and there was something of foresight, too, in timing her mother's tear-stained letter of farewell, good advice, pious exhortation, and plaintive reproach to meet her on her arrival, to greet her on the threshold of her new life, and make her realise the terrible gulf which she was setting between herself and those who were dearest to her by her obstinacy.

The object was to make her suffer, and she did suffer; but her father's cruelty did not alter the facts of the case, or appeal to her reason as an argument worthy to influence her decision.

Mrs. Orton Beg ventured to express her opinion to Mr. Frayling on the subject seriously. She often said more to him in her quiet way than most people would have dared to.

"I think you are making a mistake," she said.

"What!" he exclaimed, ready to bluster. "Would you have me countenance such conduct? Why, it is perfectly revolutionary. If other women follow her example, not one man in ten will be able to get a wife when he wants to marry."

"It is very terrible," she answered, in her even way, "to hear that so large a majority will be condemned to celibacy; but I have no doubt you have good grounds for making the assertion. That is not the point, however. What I was thinking of was the risk you run of bringing more serious trouble on yourself by cutting Evadne adrift from every influence of her happy childhood, and casting her lot among strangers, and into a world of intrigue alone."

"She will come to her senses when she finds herself so situated, perhaps," he retorted testily; "and if she does not, it will just show that she is incorrigible."

Evadne answered this last letter of her mother's with dignity.

"Of course I regret my father's decision [she wrote], and I consider it neither right nor wise. But I shall take the liberty of writing to you regularly every mail nevertheless. I know my letters will be a pleasure to you although you cannot answer them. But where is the reason and right, mother, in this decision of my father's? We both know, you and I, that it is merely the outcome of irritation caused by a difference of opinion, and no more binding in reason upon you than upon me."

When Mrs. Frayling received this letter, she wrote a hurried note to Evadne, saying that she did think her husband unreasonable, and also that he had no right to separate her from any of her children, and that therefore she should write to Evadne as often as she liked, but with-

out letting him know it. She thought his injustice quite justified such tactics; but Evadne answered, "No!"

"There has been too much of that kind of cowardice among women already [she wrote]. Whatever we do we should do openly and fearlessly. We are not the property of our husbands; they do not buy us. We are perfectly free agents to write to whomsoever we please, and so long as we order our lives in all honour and decency, they have no more right to interfere with us than we with them. Tell him once for all that you see no reason in his request, and write openly. What can he do? Storm, I suppose. But storming is no proof of his right to interfere between you and me. Once on a time the ignorant were taught to believe that the Lord spoke in the thunder, and they could be influenced through their terror and respect to do anything while an opportune storm was raging; and when women were weak and ignorant men used their wrath in much the same way to convince them of error. To us, educated as we are, however, an outburst of rage is about as effectual an argument as a clap of thunder would be. Both are startling, I grant, but what do they prove? I have seen my father in a rage. His face swells and gets very red, he prances up and down the room, he shouts at the top of his voice, and presents altogether a very disagreeable spectacle which one never quite forgets. But he cannot go like that for ever, mother. So tell him gently you have been thinking about his proposition, and are sorry that you find you must differ from him, but you consider that it is clearly your duty to correspond with me. Then sit still, and say nothing, and let him storm till he is tired; and when he goes out and bangs the door, finish your letter, and put it in a conspicuous position on the hall table to be posted. He will scarcely tear it up, but if he does, write another, send it to the post yourself, and tell him you have done so, and shall continue to do so. Be open before everything, and stand upon your dignity. Things have come to a pretty pass, indeed, when an honourable woman only dares to write to her own daughter surreptitiously, as if she were doing something she should be ashamed of."

Poor Mrs. Frayling was not equal to such opposition. She would rather have faced a thunderstorm than her husband in his wrath, so she concealed Evadne's letter from him, and wrote to her again surreptitiously in order to reproach her for seeming to insinuate that she, her mother, would stoop to do anything underhand. Evadne sighed when she received this letter, and thought of letting the matter drop. Why should she dislike to see her father in the position unreasonable husbands and fathers usually occupy, that of being ostensibly obeyed while in reality they are carefully kept in the dark as to what is going on about them? And why should she object to allow her mother to act as so many other worthy but weak women daily do in self-defence and for the love of peace and quietness? There seemed to be no great good to be gained by persisting, and she might perhaps have ended by acquiescing under protest if her mother had not added by way of postscript: "I doubt very much if I shall be allowed to receive your letters. Your father will probably send any he may capture straight back to you; and, at anyrate, he will

insist upon seeing them; so do not, my dear child, allude to having heard from me. I earnestly entreat you to remember this."

But the request only made Evadne's blood boil again. She did not belong to the old corrupt state of things herself, and she would not submit to anything savouring of deceit. If her mother were too weak to assert her own independence she felt herself forced to do it for her, so she wrote to her father sharply—

"My mother tells me that you intend to stop all communication between her and myself. I consider that you have no right to do anything of the kind, and unless I hear from her regularly in answer to my letters, I shall be reluctantly compelled to send a detailed statement of my case to every paper in the kingdom in order to find out from my fellow-countrywomen what their opinion of your action in the matter is, and also what they would advise us to do. You know my mother's affection for you. You have never had any reason to complain of want of devotion on her part, and when you make your disagreement with me a whip to scourge her with, you are guilty of an unjustifiable act of oppression."

This letter arrived at Fraylingay late one afternoon, and was handed to Mr. Frayling on his return from a pleasant country ride. He read it standing in the hall, and lost his equanimity at once.

"Where is Mrs. Frayling?" he asked a servant who happened to be passing, speaking in a way which caused the man to remark afterward that "Mrs. Frayling was going to catch it about somethin'; and 'e seemed to think I'd made away with 'er."

Mrs. Frayling was in the drawing-room, writing one of her pleasant chatty letters to a friend in India, with a cheerful expression on her comely countenance, and all recollections of her domestic difficulties banished for the moment.

When Mr. Frayling entered in his riding dress, with his whip in his hand and his hat on his head (he was one of those men who are most punctilious with strange ladies, but do not feel it necessary to behave like gentlemen in the presence of their own wives, making it appear as if the latter had lost caste and forfeited all claim to their respect by marrying them), Mrs. Frayling looked round from her writing and smiled.

"Have you had a nice ride, dear?" she said.

"Read that!" he exclaimed, slapping Evadne's letter with his whip, and then throwing it down on the table before her rudely. "Read that, and tell me what you think of your daughter now!" Mrs. Frayling's fair face clouded on the instant, and her affectionate heart, which had been so happily expanded the moment before by the kind thoughts about her absent friend that came crowding as she wrote to her, contracted now with a painful spasm of nervous apprehension.

She read the letter through, and then put it down on the table beside her without a word. She did not look at her husband, but at some miniatures which hung on the wall before her. They were portraits of her own people, father, mother, grandmother, a great aunt and uncle, and other near relations, together with a brother and sister much older than herself, and both dead and forgotten as a rule: but at that moment all that she had ever known of them, details of merry games together, and childish

naughtinesses which got them into trouble at the time but made them appear to have been only amusingly mischievous now, recurred to her in one great flash of memory, which showed her also some lost illusions of her early girlhood about a husband's love and tenderness, his constant friendship, the careful, patient teaching of the more powerful mind which was to strengthen her mind and enlarge it too, and the constant companionship which would banish forever the indefinite gnawing sense of loneliness from which all healthy, young, unmated creatures suffer. She had actually expected at one time to be more to her husband than the mere docile female of his own kind which was all he wanted his wife to be. She had had aspirations which had caused her to yearn for help to develop something beyond the animal side of her, proving the possession in embryo of faculties other than those which had survived Mr. Frayling's rule; but her nature was plastic; one of those which require the strong and delicate hand of a master to mould them into distinct and lovely form. Motherhood, as it had appeared to her in the delicate dreams of those young days, had promised to be a beautiful and blessed privilege, but then the children of her happy imaginings had been less her own than those of the shadowy perfection who was to have been her husband. She had little sense of humour, but yet she could have smiled when, in this moment of absolute insight, she saw the ideal compared with the real husband, this great fat country gentleman. The folly of having expected even motherhood with such a father for her children to be anything but unsatisfactory and disappointing at the best, dawned upon her for an instant with disheartening effect. But, fortunately, the outlook was so hopeless there seemed nothing more to sigh for, and so she sat for once, looking up at the miniatures without washing out with tears the little mental strength she had left.

Mr. Frayling waited impatiently for her to make some remark when she had read Evadne's letter. Almost anything she could have said must have given him some further food for provocation, and there is nothing more gratifying to an angry man than fresh fuel for his wrath. However, silence sometimes fans the flame as effectually as words, and it did so on this occasion, for, having waited till he could contain himself no longer, he burst out so suddenly that Mrs. Frayling raised her large soft white hand to the heavy braids which it was then the fashion to pile high on the head and have hanging down in two rows to the nape of the neck behind, as if she expected them to be disarranged by the concussion.

"May I ask if you approve of that letter?" he demanded.

But she only set her lips.

Mr. Frayling took a turn about the room with his hands behind his back, holding his riding whip upright, and flicking himself between the shoulders with it as he went.

"Let her write to the papers!" he exclaimed, addressing the pictures on the walls as if he were sure of their sympathy. "Let her write to the papers. I don't care what she does. I cast her off for ever. This comes of the higher education of women; a promising specimen! Woman's rights, indeed! Woman's shamelessness and want of common decency once she is let loose from proper control. She'll make the matter public, will she? A girl of nineteen! and take the opinion of her fellow-countrywomen on the

subject, egad! because I won't let her mother write to her: and my not doing so is an unjustifiable act of oppression, is it? What do you consider it yourself?" he demanded of his wife, striding up to her, and standing over her in a way which, with a flourish of the whip, was unpleasantly suggestive of an impulse to visit her daughter's offence upon her shoulders actually as well as figuratively.

Mrs. Frayling did not shrink, but her comely pink and white face, usually so lineless in its healthy matronly plumpness, suddenly took on a look of age and hardness, the one moment of horrid repulsion marking it more deeply than years of those household cares which write themselves on the mind without contracting the heart had done.

"Do you consider," he repeated, "that I have been guilty of an unmanly act of oppression?"

"I think you have been very unkind," she answered, meaning the same thing. "Her conduct was bad enough to begin with, but now it will be ten times worse. She will write to the papers, if she says she will. Evadne is as brave!— You can't understand her courage. She will do anything she thinks right. And now there will be a public scandal after all we have done to prevent it, and you will never be able to show your face again anywhere, for there isn't a mother in the country, from Her Majesty downward, who will not take my part and say you have no right to separate me from my daughter."

"I know what the end of it will be," he roared. "I know what happens when women leave the beaten track. They go to the bad altogether. That's what will happen, you'll see. She'll write a volume next to prove that she has a right to be an immoral woman if she chooses. She'll be a common hussey yet, I promise you."

"*Sir!*" said Mrs. Frayling, stung into dignity for a moment, and rising to her feet in order to confront him boldly while she spoke. "Sir, I have been a good and loyal wife to you, as my daughter says, and it seems she was right too, when she declared that you are capable of making your disapproval of her opinions a whip to scourge me with; but I warn you, if you do not instantly retract that cowardly insult, I shall walk straight out of your house, and make the matter public myself."

Mr. Frayling stared at her. "I—I beg your pardon, Elizabeth," he faltered, in sheer astonishment. "What with you and your daughter, I am provoked past endurance. I don't know what I am saying."

"No amount of provocation justifies such an attack upon your daughter's reputation," Mrs. Frayling rejoined, following up her advantage. "If she had been that kind of girl she would not have objected to Colonel Colquhoun; and at any rate, she has every right to as much of your charity as you give him."

"Women are different," Mr. Frayling ventured feebly.

"Are they?" said Mrs. Frayling, some of Evadne's wisdom occurring to her with the old worn axiom upon which for untold ages the masculine excuse for self-indulgence at the expense of the woman has rested. "I believe Evadne is right after all. I shall get out her letters, and read them again. And what is more, I shall write to her just as often as I please."

Mr. Frayling stared again in his amazement, and then he walked out of the room without uttering another word. He had not foreseen the

possibility of such spirited conduct on the part of his wife; but since she had ventured to revolt, the question of a public scandal was disposed of, and that being a consummation devoutly to be wished, he said no more, salving his lust of power with the reflection that, by deciding the question for herself, she had removed all responsibility from his shoulders, and proved herself to be a contumacious woman and blameworthy. So long as there is no risk of publicity the domestic tyrannies of respectable elderly gentlemen of irascible disposition may be carried to any length, but once there is a threat of scandal they coil up.

By that one act of overt rebellion, Mrs. Frayling secured some comfort in her life for a few months at least, and taught her husband a little lesson which she ought to have endeavoured to inculcate long before. It was too late then, however, to do him any permanent good; the habit of the slave-driver was formed. When a woman sacrifices her individuality and the right of private judgment at the outset of her married life, and limits herself to "What thou biddest, unargued I obey," taking it for granted that "God is thy law," without making any inquiries, and accepting the assertion that "To know no more is woman's happiest knowledge, and her praise," as confidently as if the wisdom of it had been proved beyond a doubt, and its truth had never been known to fail in a single instance, she withdraws from her poor husband all the help of her keener spiritual perceptions, which she should have used with authority to hold his grosser nature in check, and leaves him to drift about on his own conceit, prejudices, and inclinations, until he is past praying for.

There was a temporary lull at Fraylingay after that last battle, during which Mrs. Frayling wrote to her daughter freely and frequently. She described the fight she had had for her rights, and concluded: "Now the whole difficulty has blown over, and I have no more opposition to contend against"—to which Evadne had replied in a few words, judiciously adding—

"Before the curing of a strong disease,
Even in the instant of repair and health,
The fit is strongest; evils that take leave,
On their departure most of all show evil."

CHAPTER XIX

IT came to be pretty generally known that all had not gone well with the Colquhouns immediately after their marriage. Something of the story had of necessity leaked out through the servants; but, as the Fraylings had the precaution, common to their class, to keep their private troubles to themselves, nobody knew precisely what the difficulty had been, and their intimate friends, whom delicacy debarred from making inquiries, least of all. Lady Adeline just mentioned the matter to Mrs. Orton Beg, and asked, "Is it a difficulty that may be discussed?"

"No, better not, I think," the latter answered; and of course the subject dropped.

But poor Lady Adeline was too much occupied with domestic anxieties of her own at that time to feel more than a passing gleam of sympathetic interest in other people's. As Lord Dawne had hinted to Mrs. Orton Beg, it was now a question of how best to educate the twins. Their parents had made what they considered suitable arrangements for their instruction; but the children,

unfortunately, were not satisfied with these. They had had a governess in common while they were still quite small; but Mr. Hamilton-Wells had old-fashioned ideas about the superior education of boys, and consequently, when the children had outgrown their nursery governess, he decided that Angelica should have another, more advanced; and had at the same time engaged a tutor for Diavolo, sending him to school being out of the question because of the fear of further trouble from the artery he had severed. When this arrangement became known, the children were seen to put their heads together.

"Do we like having different teachers?" Diavolo inquired tentatively.

"No, we don't," said Angelica.

Lady Adeline had tried to prepare the governess, but the latter brought no experience of anything like Angelica to help her to understand that young lady, and so the warning went for nothing. "A little affection goes a long way with a child," she said to Lady Adeline, "and I always endeavour to make my pupils understand that I care for them, and do not wish to make their lessons a task, but a pleasure to them."

"It is a good system, I should think," Lady Adeline observed, speaking dubiously, however.

"Can you do long division, my dear?" the governess asked Angelica when they sat down to lessons for the first time.

"No, Miss Apsley," Angelica answered sweetly.

"Then I will show you how. But you must attend, you know,"—this last was said with playful authority.

So Angelica attended.

"How did you get on this morning?" Lady Adeline asked Miss Apsley anxiously afterward.

"Oh, perfectly!" the latter answered. "The dear child was all interest and endeavour."

Lady Adeline said no more; but such docility was unnatural, and she did not like the look of it at all.

Next day Angelica, with an innocent air, gave Miss Apsley a long division sum which she had completed during the night. It was done by an immense number of figures, and covered four sheets of foolscap gummed together. Miss Apsley worked at it for an hour to verify it, and, finding it quite correct, she decided that Angelica knew long division enough, and must go on to something else. Her first impression was that she had secured a singularly apt pupil, and she was much surprised, when she began to teach Angelica the next rule in arithmetic, to find that she could *not* make the dear child see it. Angelica listened, and tried, with every appearance of honest intention, getting red and hot with the effort; and she would not put the slate down; she would go on trying till her head ached, she was so eager to learn; but work as she might, she could do nothing but long division. Miss Apsley said she had never known anything so singular. Lady Adeline sighed.

For about a week the twins "lay low."

The tutor had found it absolutely impossible to teach Diavolo anything. The boy was perfectly docile. He would sit with his bright eyes riveted on his master's face, listening with might and main apparently; but at the end of every explanation the tutor found the same thing. Diavolo never had the faintest idea of what he had been talking about.

At the end of a week, however, the children

changed their tactics. When lessons ought to have begun one morning Diavolo went to Miss Apsley, and sat himself down beside her in Angelica's place, with a smiling countenance and without a word of explanation; while Angelica presented herself to the tutor with all Diavolo's books under her arm.

"Please, sir," she said, "there must have been some mistake. Diavolo and I find that we were mixed somehow wrong, and I got his mind and he got mine. I can do his lessons quite easily, but I can't do my own; and he can do mine, but he can't do these,"—holding up the books. "It's like this, you see. I can't learn from a lady, and he can't learn from a man. So I'm going to be your pupil, and he's going to be Miss Apsley's. You don't understand twins, I expect. It's always awkward about them; there's so often something wrong. With us, you know, the fact of the matter is, that *I* am Diavolo and *he* is me."

The tutor and governess appealed to Mr. Hamilton-Wells, and Mr. Hamilton-Wells sent for the twins and lectured them, Lady Adeline sitting by, seriously perplexed. The children stood to attention together, and listened respectfully; and then went back to their lessons with undeviating cheerfulness; but Diavolo did Angelica's, and Angelica did his diligently, and none other would they do.

But this state of things could not continue, and in order to end it, Mr. Hamilton-Wells had recourse to a weak expedient which he had more than once successfully employed unknown to Lady Adeline. He sent for the twins, and consulted their wishes privately.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Well, sir," Diavolo answered, "we don't think it's fair for Angelica only to have a beastly governess to teach her when she knows as much as I do, and is a precious sight sharper."

"I taught you all you know, Diavolo, didn't I?" Angelica broke in.

"Yes," said Diavolo, with a wise nod.

"And it is beastly unfair," she continued, "to put me off with a squeaking governess and long division, when I ought to be doing mathematics and Latin and Greek."

"My dear child, what use would mathematics and Latin and Greek be to you?" Mr. Hamilton-Wells protested.

"Just as much use as they will to Diavolo," she answered decidedly. "He doesn't know half as much about the good of education as I do. Just ask him." She whisked round on her brother as she spoke, and demanded: "Tell papa, Diavolo, what *is* the use of being educated."

"I am sure I don't know," Diavolo answered impressively.

"My dear boy, mathematics are an education in themselves," Mr. Hamilton-Wells began didactically, moving his long white hands in a way that always suggested lace ruffles. "They will teach you to reason."

"Then they'll teach me to reason too," said Angelica, setting herself down on the arm of a chair as if she had made up her mind, and intended to let them know it. All her movements were quick, all Diavolo's deliberate. "Men are always jeering at women in books for not being able to reason, and I'm going to learn, if there's any help in mathematics," she continued. "I found something the other day—where is it now?" She was down on her knees in a moment,

emptying the contents of her pocket on to the floor, and sifting them. There were two pocket-handkerchiefs of fine texture, and exceedingly dirty, as if they had been there for months (the one she used she carried in the bosom of her dress or up her sleeve), a ball of string, a catapult and some swan shot, a silver pen, a pencil holder, part of an old song book, a pocket book, some tin tacks, a knife with several blades and scissors, etc.; also a silver fruit knife, two coloured pencils, indiarubber, and a scrap of dirty paper wrapped round a piece of almond toffee. This was apparently what she wanted, for she took it off the toffee, threw the latter into the grate—whither Diavolo's eyes followed it regretfully—and spread the paper out in her lap, whence it was seen to be covered with cabalistic-looking figures.

"Here you are," she said. "I copied it out of a book the other day, and put it round the toffee because I knew I should be wanting that, and then I should see it every time I took it out of my pocket, and not forget it."

"But why did you throw the toffee away?" said Diavolo.

"Shut up, and listen," Angelica rejoined from the floor politely; and then she began to read: "'Histories make men wise; poets, witty; mathematics, subtle; natural philosophy, deep, moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend.' Now that's what I want, papa. I want to know all that, and have a good time; and I expect I shall have to contend to get it!"

"You'll soon learn how," said Diavolo encouragingly.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells had always enjoyed his children's precocity, and provided they amused him, they could make him do anything. So after the conference he announced that he had been questioning Angelica, and had found that she really was too far advanced for a governess, and he had therefore decided that she should share Diavolo's lessons with the tutor. The governess accordingly disappeared from Hamilton House, the first tutor found that he had no vocation for teaching, and left also, and another was procured with great difficulty, and at considerable expense, for the fame of the Heavenly Twins was widespread, and their parents were determined besides not to let any candidate engage himself under the pleasing delusion that the task of teaching them would be something of a sinecure.

The tutor they finally secured turned out to be a very good fellow, fortunately; a gentleman, and with a keen sense of humour which the twins appreciated, so that they took to him at once, and treated him pretty well on the whole; but lessons were usually a lively time. Angelica, who continued to be the taller, stronger, and wickeder of the two, soon proved herself the cleverer also. Like Evadne, she was consumed by the rage to know, and insisted upon dragging Diavolo on with her. It was interesting to see them sitting side by side, the dark head touching the fair one as they bent together intently over some problem. When Diavolo was not quick enough, Angelica would rouse him up in the old way by knocking her head, which was still the harder of the two, against his.

"Angelica, did I see you strike your brother?" Mr. Ellis sternly demanded, the first time he witnessed this performance.

"I don't know whether you saw me or not, sir, but I certainly did strike him," Angelica answered irritably.

"Why?"

"To wake him up."

"You see, sir," Diavolo proceeded to explain in his imperturbable drawl, "Angelica discovered that I was born with a hee-red-it-air-ee predisposition to be a muff. We mostly are on father's side of the family"—

"And if he isn't one, it's because I slapped the tendency out of him as soon as I perceived it," Angelica interrupted. "Get on, Diavolo; I've no patience with you when you're so slow. You know you don't want to learn this, and that's why you're snailing."

It was rather a trick of Diavolo's "to snail" over his lessons, for in that as in many other things he was very unlike the good little boy who loved his book, besides evincing many other traits of character equally unpopular at the present time. Diavolo would not work unless Angelica made him, and the worst collision with the tutor was upon this subject.

"Wake up, Theodore, will you!" Mr. Ellis said, during the first week of their studies.

"Not until you call me Diavolo," was the bland response.

Mr. Ellis resisted for some time, but Diavolo was firm and would do nothing, and Lady Adeline cautioned the tutor to give in if he saw an opportunity of doing so with dignity.

"But the young scamp will be jeeringly triumphant if I do," Mr. Ellis objected.

"Oh no," Lady Adeline answered. "Diavolo prides himself upon being a gentleman, and he says a gentleman never jeers or makes himself unpleasant. His ideas on the latter point, by the way, are peculiarly his own, and you will probably differ from him as to what is or is not unpleasant."

Mr. Ellis made a point of calling the boy "Diavolo" in a casual way, as if he had forgotten the dispute, as early as possible after this, and found that Lady Adeline was right. Diavolo showed not the slightest sign of having heard, but he got out his books at once, and did his lessons as if he liked them.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells had a habit of always saying a little more than was necessary on some subjects. He was either a born *naturalist* or had never conquered the problem of what not to say, and he was so incautious as to come into the schoolroom one morning while lessons were going on, and warn Mr. Ellis to be most careful about what he gave the twins to read in Latin, because some of the classic delicacies which boys are expected to swallow without injury to themselves are much too highly seasoned for a young lady: "You must make judicious excerpts," he said.

Slap came the dictionary down upon the table, and Angelica was deep in the "ex's" in a moment. Excerpt, she found, was to pick or take out. She passed the dictionary to Diavolo, who studied the definition; but neither of them made a remark. From that day forth, however, they spent every spare moment they had in poring over Latin text-books, until they mastered the language, simply for the purpose of finding out what it was that Angelica ought not to know.

There were, as has already been stated, some lively scenes at lessons.

"Talk less and do more," Mr. Ellis rashly recommended in the early days of their acquaintance, and after that, when they disagreed, they claimed that they had his authority to settle the difference by tearing each other's hair or scratching each other across the table; and when he

interfered, sometimes they scratched him too. Mr. Hamilton-Wells raised his salary eventually.

The children invariably had a discussion about everything as soon as it was over. They called it "talking it out"; and after they had sinned and suffered punishment, their great delight was to come and coax the tutor "to talk it out." They would then criticise their own conduct and his impartially, point out what they might have done, and what he might have done, and what ought to have been done on both sides.

These discussions usually took place at the schoolroom tea, a meal which both tutor and children as a rule thoroughly enjoyed. Mr. Ellis was not bound to have tea with the twins, but they had politely invited him on the day of his arrival, explaining that their parents were out, and it would give them great pleasure to entertain him.

Tea being ready, they took him to the schoolroom, where he found a square table, just large enough for four, daintily decorated with flowers and very nice china.

"We have to buy our own china, because we break so much," Angelica said, seeing that the tutor noticed it. "That was the kind of thing papa got for us"—indicating a hugely thick white cup and saucer, which stood on the mantelpiece on a stand of royal blue plush, and covered with a glass shade.

"We broke the others, but we had that one mounted as a warning to him. Papa has no taste at all."

The tutor's face was a study. It was the first of these remarks he had heard.

The children decided that it would balance the table better if he poured out the tea, and he good-naturedly acquiesced, and sat down with Angelica on his right and Diavolo on his left. The fourth seat opposite was unoccupied, but there was a cover laid, and he asked who was expected.

"Oh, that is for the Peace Angel," said Diavolo casually.

"Prevents difficulties at tea, you know," Angelica supplemented. "*We* don't mind difficulties, but we thought you might object, so we asked his holiness"—indicating the empty chair—"to preserve order."

Mr. Ellis did not at first appreciate the boon which was conferred on him by the presence of the Peace Angel, but he soon learnt to.

"I am on my honour and thick bread and butter to-day," said Diavolo, looking longingly at the plentiful supply and variety of cakes on the table.

"What does that mean exactly?" Mr. Ellis asked, pausing with the teapot raised to pour.

"Why, you see, he was naughty this morning," Angelica explained. "And as mamma was going out, she put him on his honour, as a punishment, not to eat cake."

"I've a good mind not to eat anything," said Diavolo, considering the plate of thick bread and butter beside him discontentedly.

"Then you'll be cutting off your nose to vex your face," said Angelica.

Diavolo caught up a piece of bread and butter to throw at her; but she held up her hand, crying, "I appeal to the Peace Angel!"

"I forgot," said Diavolo, transferring the bread to his plate.

The children studied the tutor during tea.

He was a man of thirty, somewhat careworn about the eyes, but with an excessively kind and pleasant face, clean shaven, and thick, reddish-brown hair. He was above the middle height,

a little stooped at the shoulders, but of average strength.

"I like the look of you," said Angelica frankly.

"Thank you," he answered, smiling.

"And I vote for a permanent arrangement," she said, looking at Diavolo.

He was just then hidden behind a huge slice of bread, biting it, but he nodded intelligently.

The permanent arrangement referred to was to have the tutor to tea, and he agreed, wisely stipulating, however, that the presence of the Peace Angel should also be permanent. He even tried to persuade the twins to invite him to lessons; but that they firmly declined.

"You'll like being our tutor, I think," Diavolo observed during this first tea.

"He will if we like him," said Angelica significantly.

"Are we going to?" Diavolo asked.

"Yes, I think so," she answered, taking another good look at Mr. Ellis. "I like the look of that red in his hair."

"Now, isn't that a woman's reason?" Diavolo exclaimed, appealing to Mr. Ellis.

"Yes, it is," said Angelica, preparing to defend it by shuffling a notebook out of her pocket, and ruffling the leaves over: "Listen to this"—and she read—"A tinge of red in the hair denotes strength and energy of character and good staying power." We don't want a muff for a tutor, do we? There are born muffs enough in the family without importing them. And a woman's reason is always a good one, as men might see if they'd only stop chattering and listen to it."

"It mayn't be well expressed, but it will bear examination," Mr. Ellis suggested.

"Do you like being a tutor?" Diavolo asked.

"It depends on whom I have to teach."

"If you're a good fellow, you'll have a nice time here—on the whole—I hope, sir," Angelica observed. "But why are you a tutor?"

"To earn my living," Mr. Ellis answered, smiling again.

The children remembered this, and when they were having tea under the shadow of the supposititious Peace Angel's wing, after the first occasion on which, when the tutor tried to separate them during a fight at lessons, they had turned simultaneously and attacked him, they made it the text of some recommendations. He expressed a strong objection to having manual labour imposed upon him as well as his other work; but they maintained that if only he had called the affray "a struggle for daily bread" or "a fight for a livelihood," he would quite have enjoyed it; and they further suggested that such diversion must be much more interesting than being a mere commonplace tutor who only taught lessons. They could not understand why a fight was not as much fun for him as for them, and thought him unreasonable when they found he was not to be persuaded to countenance that way of varying the monotony. Not that there was ever much monotony in the neighbourhood of the Heavenly Twins; they managed to introduce variety into everything, and their quickness of action, when both were roused, was phenomenal. One day while at work they saw a sparrow pick up a piece of bread, take it to the roof-tree of an angle of the house visible from the schoolroom window, drop it, and chase it as it fell; and the twins had made a bet as to which would beat, bird or bread, quarrelled because they could not agree as to which had bet on bird and which on bread, and boxed each other's ears almost before the race was over,

Mr. Ellis, although continually upon his guard, was not by any means always a match for them. Over and over again he found that his caution had been fanned to sleep by flattering attentions, while traps were being laid for him with the most innocent air in the world, as on one occasion when Diavolo betrayed him into a dissertation on the consistency of the Scriptures, and Angelica asked him to kindly show her how to reconcile Prov. viii. 11: "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it," with Eccles. i. 18: "For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

His way with them was admirable, however, and he completely won their hearts. The thing that they respected him for most was the fact that he took in *Punch* on his own account, and could show you a lot of things in it that you could never have discovered yourself, as Angelica said, and read bits in a way that made them seem ever so much funnier than when *you* read them; and could tell you who drew the pictures the moment he looked at them—so that "*Punch* Day" came to be looked forward to by the children as one of the pleasantest events of the week. Lessons were suspended the moment the paper arrived, if they had been good; but when they were naughty Mr. Ellis put the paper in his pocket, and that was the greatest punishment he could inflict upon them—the only one that ever made them sulk. They would be good for hours in advance to earn the right of having *Punch* shown to them the moment it came. And it was certainly by means of his intelligent interpretation of it that their tutor managed to cultivate their tastes in many ways, and give them true ideas of art, and the importance of art at the outset, and also of ethics. He was as careful of Angelica's physical as of her mental education, being himself strongly imbued by the then new idea that a woman should have the full use of her limbs, lungs, heart, and every other organ and muscle, so that life might be a pleasure to her and not a continual exertion. He had a strong objection to the artificial waist, and impressed the beauty of Tenniel's classical purity of figure upon the children by teaching them to appreciate the contrast it presents to the bulging vulgarities made manifest by Keene; and showed them also that while Du Maurier depicted with admirable artistic interpretation the refined surroundings and attenuated forms of women as they are, Linley Sambourne, that master of lovely line, pointed the moral by drawing women as they should be. There was nothing conventional about the Heavenly Twins, and it was therefore easy to make a good impression upon them in this direction, and the tutor soon had a practical proof of his success which must have been eminently satisfactory if a trifle embarrassing.

The children were out on the lawn in front of the house one afternoon when a lady arrived to call upon their mother. They were struck by her appearance as she descended from her carriage, and followed her into the drawing-room to have a good look at her. She was one of those heroic women who have the constancy to squeeze their figures in beyond the V shape, which is the commonest deformity, to that of the hour-glass which bulges out more above and below the line of compression.

There were a good many other people in the room, whom the Heavenly Twins saluted politely, and then they sat down opposite to the object of their interest and gazed at her,

"Why are you tied so tight in the middle?" Angelica asked at last in a voice that silenced everybody else in the room. "Doesn't it hurt? I mean to have a *good* figure when I grow up, like the Venus de Medici, you know. I can show you a picture of her if you like. She hasn't a stitch on her."

"She looks awfully nice, though," said Diavolo, "and Angelica thinks she'd be able to eat more with that kind of figure."

"Yes," Angelica candidly confessed, looking at her victim compassionately. "I shouldn't think, now, that you can eat both pudding and meat, can you?"

"Not to mention dessert!" Diavolo ejaculated, with genuine concern.

"Mr. Ellis, will you get those children out of the room, somehow?" Lady Adeline whispered to the tutor, who had come in for tea.

"Is it true, do you think," Mr. Ellis began loudly, addressing Mr. Hamilton-Wells across the room—"Is it true that Dr. Galbraith is going to try some horrible experiments in vivisection this afternoon?"

"What is vivisection?" asked Angelica, diverted.

"Cutting up live animals to find out what makes them go," said the tutor.

In three minutes there wasn't a vestige of the Heavenly Twins about the place.

CHAPTER XX

THE twins had a code of ethics which differed in some respects from that ordinarily accepted in their state of life. They honoured their mother—they couldn't help it, as they said themselves apologetically; but their father they looked upon as fair game for their amusement.

"What was that unearthly noise I heard this morning?" Mr. Ellis asked one day.

"Oh, did we wake you, sir?" Diavolo exclaimed. "We didn't mean to. We were only yowling papa out of bed with our fiddles. He's idle sometimes, and won't get up, and it's so bad for him, you know."

"I wish you could see him scooting down the corridor after us," Angelica observed. "And do you know, he speaks just the same at that time of day in his dressing-gown as he does in the evening in dress clothes. You'd die if you heard him."

Another habit of the twins was to read any letters they might find lying about.

"It is dishonourable to read other people's letters," Mr. Ellis admonished them severely when he became aware of this peculiarity.

"It isn't for us," Angelica answered defiantly. "You might as well say it's dishonourable to squint. We've always done it, and everybody knows we do it. We warn them not to leave their letters lying about, don't we, Diavolo?"

"That is because it is greater fun to hunt for them," Diavolo interpreted precisely. When Angelica gave a reason he usually cleared it of all obscurity in this way.

"And how are we to know what goes on in the family if we don't read the letters?" Angelica demanded.

"What necessity is there for you to know?"

"Every necessity!" she retorted. "Not be interested in one's own family affairs? Why, we should be wanting in intelligence, and we're not that, you know! And we should be wanting in

affection, too, and every right feeling; and I hope we are not that either, Mr. Ellis, *quite*. But you needn't be afraid about your own letters. We shan't touch them."

"No," drawled Diavolo. "Of course that would be a very different thing."

"I am glad you draw the line somewhere," Mr. Ellis observed sarcastically. He was far from satisfied, however, but he noticed eventually that the dust collected on letters of his own if he left them lying about, and he soon discovered that when his intelligent pupils gave their word they kept it uncompromisingly. It was one of their virtues, and the other was loyalty to each other. Their devotion to their mother hardly counted for a virtue, because they never carried it far enough to make any sacrifice for her sake. But they would have sacrificed their very lives for each other, and would have fought for the right to die until there was very little left of either of them to execute; of such peculiar quality were their affections.

They had gone straight to Fountain Towers by the shortest cut across the fields that afternoon when Mr. Ellis suggested vivisection as a possible occupation for Dr. Galbraith. They never doubted but that they should discover him hard at work, in some underground cellar most likely, to which they would be guided by the cries of his victims, and would be able to conquer his reluctance to allow them to assist at his experiments, by threats of exposure; and they were considerably chagrined when, having carefully concealed themselves in a thick shrubbery, in order to reconnoitre the house, they came upon him in the garden, innocently occupied in the idle pursuit of pruning rose trees.

He was somewhat startled himself when he suddenly saw their hot red faces, set like two moons in a clump of greenery, peeping out at him with animated eyes.

"Hollo!" he said. "Are you hungry?" The faces disappeared behind the bushes.

"Are we, Angelica?" Diavolo whispered anxiously.

"Of course we are," she retorted.

"I thought we were too angry—disgusted—disappointed—*something*," he murmured apologetically, but evidently much relieved.

Dr. Galbraith went on with his pruning, and presently the twins appeared walking down the proper approach to the garden hand in hand demurely.

After they had saluted their host politely, they stood and stared at him.

"Well?" he said at last.

"I suppose we are too late?" said Angelica.

"For what?" he asked, without pausing in his occupation.

"For the viv-viv-vivinesectionining."

"Vivinesectionining! What on earth— Oh!" Light broke in upon him. "Who told you I was?"

"Mr. Ellis," said Angelica.

"No, he didn't tell us you were exactly," Diavolo explained, with conscientious accuracy.

"He asked papa if it was true that you were going to this afternoon?"

"And what were *you* doing?" Dr. Galbraith asked astutely.

"We were in the drawing-room," Angelica answered, "trying to find out from a lady why she tied herself up so tight in the middle."

"And so you came off here to see?"

"Yes," said Diavolo. "We wanted to catch you at it,"

"You little brute, misbegotten by the"—Dr. Galbraith began, but Diavolo interrupted him.

"*Sir!*" he exclaimed, drawing himself up with an expression of as much indignation as could be got into his small patrician features. "If you do not instantly withdraw that calumny, I shall have to fight you on my mother's behalf, and I shall consider it my duty to inform her of the insinuation which is the cause of offence."

"I apologise," said Dr. Galbraith, taking off his hat and bowing low. "I assure you the expression was used as a mere *façon de parler*."

"I accept your explanation, sir," said Diavolo, returning the salute. "But I caution you to be careful for the future. What is a *façon de parler*, Angelica?" he whispered, as he put his hat on.

"Oh, just a way of saying it," she answered. "I wish you wouldn't talk so much. Men are always cackling by the hour all about nothing. If people come to see me when I have a house of my own, I shall not forget the rites of hospitality."

The doctor put up his pruning knife. There was a twinkle in his grey eyes.

"If you will do me the favour to come this way," he said, "my slaves will prepare a small collation on the instant."

"Oh yes," said Diavolo. "Arabian Nights, you know! You must have fresh fruits and dried fruits, choice wines, cakes, sweets, and nuts."

"It shall be done as my lord commands," said the doctor.

That same evening, when he took the children home, Dr. Galbraith found Lady Adeline alone. She was a plain woman, but well-bred in appearance; and tender thoughts had carved a sweet expression on her face.

Next to her brother Dawne, Dawne's most intimate friend, Dr. Galbraith, was the man in the world upon whom she placed the greatest reliance.

"I have brought back the children," he said.

"Ah, then they *have* been with you!" she answered, in a tone of relief. "We hoped they were."

"Oh yes," he said, smiling. "They showed me exactly what the difficulty here had been, and I have been endeavouring to win back their esteem, for they made it appear plainly that they despised me when they found me peacefully pruning rose trees instead of dismembering live rabbits, as Mr. Ellis had apparently led them to expect."

"They told you, then?"

"Oh, exactly, I am sure—about the lady tied too tight in the middle, and everything."

"They are terrible, George, those children," Lady Adeline declared. "My whole life is one ache of anxiety on their account. I am always in doubt as to whether their unnatural acuteness portends vice or is promising; and whether we are doing all that ought to be done for them."

"I am sure they are in very good hands now," he answered cheerfully. "Mr. Ellis is an exceedingly good fellow; they like him too, and I don't think anybody could manage them better."

"No," said Lady Adeline; "but that only means that no one can manage them at all. They are everywhere. They know everything. They have already mastered every fact in natural history that can be learnt upon the estate; and they will do almost anything, and are so unscrupulous that I fear sometimes they are going to take after some criminal ancestor there may have been in the family, although I never heard of one, and go to the bad altogether. Now, what is to

be done with such children? I hardly dare allow myself to hope that they have good qualities enough to save them, and yet—and yet they are lovable," she added, looking at him wistfully.

"Most lovable, and I am sure you need not disturb yourself seriously," he answered, with confidence. "The children have vivid imaginations and incomparable courage; and their love of mischief comes from exuberance of spirits only, I am sure. When Angelica's womanly instincts develop, and she has seen something of the serious side of life—been made to *feel* it, I mean—she will become a very different person, or I am much mistaken. Her character promises to be as fine, when it is formed, as it will certainly be unusual. And as for Diavolo—well, I have seen no sign of any positive vice in either of them."

"You comfort me," said Lady Adeline. "How did you entertain them?"

"Oh, we had great fun!" he replied, laughing. "We had an impromptu Arabian Night's entertainment with all the men and women about the place disguised as slaves; and they all entered into the spirit of the thing heartily. I assure you, I never enjoyed anything more in my life. But I must go. I am on my way to town to-night to read a paper to-morrow morning upon a most interesting case of retarded brain development, which I have been studying for the last year. If I am right in my conclusions, we are upon the high road to some extraordinary and most valuable discoveries."

"Now, that is a singular man," Lady Adeline remarked to Mr. Ellis afterward. She had been telling the tutor about the success of his stratagem. "He spent valuable hours to-day playing with my children, and he says he never enjoyed anything so much in his life, and I quite believe him; and to-morrow he will probably astonish the scientific world with a discovery of the last importance."

"I call him a human being, perfectly possessed of all his faculties," Mr. Ellis answered.

The twins worked well by fits and starts; but when they did not choose to be diligent, they considerately gave their tutor a holiday. The last threat of a thrashing for Diavolo happened to be on the first of these occasions.

"It looks a good morning for fishing," he remarked casually to Angelica, just after they had settled down to lessons.

"Yes, it does," she answered.

There was a momentary pause, and then away went their books, and they were off out of the window.

But Mr. Ellis succeeded in capturing them, and, laying hold of an arm of each, he dragged them before the paternal tribunal in the library. He was not intimate with the peculiar relations of the household to each other at that particular time, and he thought Mr. Hamilton-Wells would prefer to order the punishment himself for so serious an offence. Angelica shook her hair over her face, and made sufficient feint of resistance to tumble her frock on the way, while Diavolo pretended to be terror-stricken; but this was only to please Mr. Ellis with the delusion that fear of their father gave him a moral hold over them, for the moment Mr. Hamilton-Wells frowned upon them they straightened themselves and beamed about blandly.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells ordered Diavolo to be thrashed, and Diavolo dashed off for the cane and handed it to his tutor politely, saying at the same time, "Do be quick, Mr. Ellis; I want to get out."

"You wouldn't dare to thrash him if he were big enough to thrash you back," Angelica shrieked, waltzing round like a tornado; "and it isn't fair to thrash him and not me, for I am much worse than he is. You know I am, papa! and I shall *hate* you if Diavolo is thrashed, and teach him how to make your life a burden to you for a month, I *shall*"—stamping her foot.

It always made her blood boil if there were any question of corporal punishment for Diavolo. She could have endured it herself without a murmur, but she had a feminine objection to knowing that it was being inflicted, especially as she was not allowed to be present.

"Don't be an idiot, Angelica," Diavolo drawled. "I would rather be thrashed, and have done with it. It does fellows good to be thrashed; makes them manly, they say in the books. And it hurts a jolly sight less than being scratched by *you*, if that is any comfort."

"Oh, you *are* mean!" Angelica exclaimed. "Wait till we get outside!"

"I think, sir," Mr. Ellis ventured to suggest, in answer to an appealing glance from Mr. Hamilton-Wells, and looking dubiously at the cane—"I think, since Diavolo doesn't care a rap about being flogged, I had better devise a form of punishment for which he will care."

"Then come along, Diavolo," Angelica exclaimed, making a dash for the door. "They won't want us while they're devising."

Mr. Ellis would have followed them, but Mr. Hamilton-Wells gently restrained him. "It is no use, Mr. Ellis," he said, sighing deeply. "I would recommend you to keep up a show of disapproval for form's sake, but I beg that you will not give yourself any unnecessary trouble. They are quite incorrigible."

"I hope not," the tutor answered.

"Well, I leave them to you; make what you can of them!" their father rejoined. "I wash my hands of the responsibility while you are here."

The Heavenly Twins got their day's sport on that occasion, and returned with a basket full of trout for tea, fishy themselves, and tired, but bland and conciliatory. They dressed for the evening carefully, and without coercion, which was always a sign of repentance; and then they went down to the schoolroom, where they found Mr. Ellis standing with his back to the fireplace, reading a newspaper. He looked at them each in turn as they entered, and they looked at him, but he made no remark.

"I wish you would give us a good scolding at once, and have done with it," Angelica observed.

He made no sign of having heard, however, but quietly turned the paper over, chose a fresh item of information, and began to read it. Angelica sat down in her place at table, leant back with her short frock up to her knees and her long legs tucked under her chair, and reflected. Diavolo did the same, yawning aggressively.

"I'd sell my birthright for a mess of pottage with pleasure this minute," he exclaimed.

"What was pottage, Mr. Ellis?" Angelica asked insinuatingly.

"You don't suppose the recipe has been handed down in the Ellis family, do you?" said Diavolo.

Angelica looked round for a missile to hurl at him, but there being nothing handy, she tried the effect of a withering glance, to which he responded by making a face at her. A storm was evidently brewing, but fortunately just at that moment the tea arrived, and caused a diversion which pre-

vented further demonstrations. Happily for those in charge of the twins, their outbursts of feeling were all squalls which subsided as suddenly as those of the innocent babe which howls everybody in the house out of bed for his bottle, and is beyond all comfort till he gets it, when his anger instantly goes out, and only a few gurgling "Oh's" of intense satisfaction mark the point from which the racket proceeded.

For a week Mr. Ellis maintained an attitude of dignified reserve with the twins, and their sociable souls were much exercised to devise a means to break down the barrier of coldness which they found between themselves and their tutor. They tried everything they could think of to beguile him back to the old friendly footing, and it was only after all other means had failed that they thought at last of apologising for their unruly conduct. It was the first time that they had ever done such a thing in their lives spontaneously, and they were so proud of it that they went and told everybody they knew.

Mr. Ellis, having graciously accepted the apology, found himself expected to discuss the whole subject at tea that evening.

"Of course, we were quite in the wrong," said Angelica, taking advantage of the Peace Angel's presence to sum up comprehensively; "but you must acknowledge that we were not altogether to blame, for you really have not been making our lessons sufficiently interesting to rivet our attention lately."

"That is true," said the diligent Diavolo. "My attention has not been riveted for weeks."

After the twins had made their memorable apology, they were so impressed by the importance of the event that they determined to celebrate it in some special way. They wanted to do something really worthy of the occasion.

"We'll do some good to somebody, shall we?" said Angelica.

"Not unless there's some fun in it," said Diavolo.

"Well, who proposed to do anything without fun in it?" Angelica wanted to know. "You've no sense at all, Diavolo. When people get up fancy fairs and charity balls, do they pretend to be doing it for fun? No! They say, 'Oh, my dear, I am so busy, I hardly know what to do first; but what keeps me up is the object! the good object!' And then they're enjoying it as hard as they can all the time. And that's what we'll do. We'll give the school children a treat."

The twins were allowed an hour to riot about the place after their early dinner, and then a bell was rung to summon them in to lessons, but on that particular day Mr. Ellis waited in vain for them. Angelica had concealed her riding habit in a loft, and as soon as they got out they ran to the stables, which were just then deserted, the men being at their dinner; and Angelica changed her dress while Diavolo got out their ponies and saddled them, and having carefully stolen through a thick plantation on to the high road, they scampered off to Morningquest as hard as their lively little steeds could carry them.

They were well known in Morningquest, and many an admiring as well as inquiring glance followed them as they cantered close together side by side through the quaint old streets. The people were wondering what on earth they were up to.

"Everybody looks so pleased to see us," said Diavolo, smiling genially; "I think we ought to come oftener."

"We will," said Angelica.

They pulled up at the principal confectioner's in the place, and bought as many pounds of sweets as they could carry, desiring the proprietor in a lordly way to send the bill to Hamilton House at his earliest convenience; and then they rode off to the largest day school in the city, stationed themselves on either side of a narrow gateway through which both girls and boys had to pass to get in, and pelted the children with sweets as they returned from their midday dinners; and as they had chosen sugar almonds, birds' eggs, and other varieties of a hard and heavy nature, which, although interesting in the mouth of a child, are inconvenient when received in its eyes, and cause irritation, which is apt to be resented, when pelted at the back of its head, the scene in a few minutes was extremely animated. This was what the Heavenly Twins called giving the school children a treat, and they told Mr. Ellis afterward that they enjoyed doing good very much.

"What shall we do now?" said Diavolo, as they walked their ponies aimlessly down the street when that episode was over.

"Let's call on grandpapa and the bishop," Angelica suggested.

"The bishop first, then," said Diavolo.

"They've such good cakes at the palace."

"Well, that's just why we should do grandpapa first," said Angelica. "Don't you see? We can have cake at Morne; and we shall be able to eat the ones at the palace too, if they're better."

"Yes," said Diavolo, with grave precision. "I notice myself, that, however much I have had, I can always eat a little more of something better."

"That's what they mean by tempting the appetite," observed Angelica sagely.

When the children arrived at the castle, it occurred to them that it would be a very good idea to ride right in and go upstairs on their ponies; but they only succeeded in mounting the broad steps and entering the hall, where they were captured by the footmen and respectfully persuaded to alight. They announced that they had come to call on the Duke of Morningquest, and were conducted to his presence with pomp and ceremony enough to have embarrassed any other equally dusty, dishevelled mortals; but the twins were not troubled with self-consciousness, and entered with perfect confidence. The duke was delighted. If there was one thing which could give him more pleasure than another in his old age, it was the wicked ways of the Heavenly Twins, and especially of the promising Angelica, who very much resembled him in appearance, as well as in decision of character and sharpness of temper. She promised, however, to be on a much larger scale, for the duke was diminutive. He looked like one who stands in a picture at the end of a long line of ancestors, considerably reduced by the perspective, and it was as if in his person an attempt had been made to breed the race down to the vanishing point. His high-arched feet were admired as models of size and shape, and so also were his slender, delicate hands; but neither were agreeable to an educated eye and an intelligence indifferent to the dignity of dukes, but nice in the matter of proportion.

The children found their grandfather in the oriel room, so called because of the great oriel window, which was a small room in itself, although it looked, as you approached the castle, no bigger than a swallow's nest on the face of the solid masonry, being the only excrescence visible above the trees from that point of view. The

castle stood on a hill which descended precipitously from under the oriel, so that the latter almost overhung the valley in which the city lay below, and commanded a magnificent view of the flat country beyond, thridded by a shining, winding ribbon of river. The hill was wooded on that side to the top, and the castle crowned it, rising above the trees in irregular outline against the sky imposingly. The old duke sat in the oriel often, looking down at the wonderful prospect, but thinking less of his own vast possessions than of the great cathedral of Morningquest, which he coveted for Holy Church. He had become a convert to Roman Catholicism in his old age, and his bigotry and credulity were as great now as his laxity and scepticism had been before his conversion.

He was sitting alone with his confessor and private chaplain, Father Ricardo, a man of middle age, middle height, attenuated form, round head with coarse black hair, piercing dark eyes, aquiline nose somewhat thick, and the loose mouth characteristic of devout Roman Catholics, High Church people, and others who are continually being wound up to worship an unseen Deity by means of sensuous enjoyment; the uncertain lines into which the lips fall in repose indicating fairly the habitual extent of their emotional indulgences. His manners were suave and deferential, his motives sincerely disinterested in the interests of the Church, his method of gaining his ends unhampered by any sense of the need of extreme verbal accuracy. He was reading to the duke when the children were announced, and rose and bowed low to them as they entered, with a smile of respectful and affectionate interest.

Diavolo raised his dusty cap to his chest and returned the bow with punctilious gravity. Angelica tossed him a nod as she passed up the room in a business-like way to where her grandfather was sitting facing the window. The old duke looked round as the children approached and his face relaxed; he did not absolutely smile, but his eyes twinkled.

Angelica plumped down on the arm of his chair, put her arm round his neck, and deposited a superficial kiss somewhere in the region of his ear, while Diavolo wrung his hand more ceremoniously, but with much energy. Both children seemed sure of their welcome, and comported themselves with their usual unaffected ease of manner. The old duke controlled his mouth, but there was something in the expression of his countenance which meant that he would have chuckled if his old sense of humour had not been checked by the presence of the priest, which held him somehow to his new professions of faith, and the severe dignity of demeanour that best befits the piety of a professional saint.

He was wearing a little black velvet skull-cap, and Angelica, still sitting on the arm of his chair, took it off as soon as she had saluted him, looked into it, and clapped it on to the back of his head again, somewhat awry.

"I am glad you have your black velvet cap on to-day," she said, embracing the back of his chair with an arm, and kicking her long legs about in her fidgety way. "It goes well with your hair, and I like the feel of it."

"Have you a holiday to-day?" the duke demanded, with an affectation of sternness.

"Yes," said Angelica absently, taking up one of his delicate hands and transferring a costly ring from his slender white forefinger to her own dirty brown one.

"No," the more exact Diavolo contradicted; "we gave Mr. Ellis a holiday."

"To tell you the truth, grandpapa, I had forgotten all about lessons," said Angelica candidly. "I fancy Mr. Ellis is fizzing by this time, don't you, Diavolo?"

"What are you doing here if you haven't a holiday?" their grandfather asked.

"Visiting you, sir," Diavolo answered in his peculiar drawl, which always left you uncertain as to whether he intended an impertinence or not. He was lying at full length on the floor facing his grandfather, with the back of his head resting on the low window sill, and the old gentleman was looking at him admiringly. He was not at all sure of the import of Diavolo's last reply, but had the tact not to pursue the subject.

The priest had remained standing, with his hands folded upon the book he had been reading, and a set smile upon his thin intellectual face, behind which it was easy to see that the busy thoughts came crowding.

Angelica turned on him suddenly, flinging herself from the arm of her grandfather's chair on to a low seat which stood with its back to the window, in order to do so.

"I say, Papa Ricardo, I want to ask you," she began. "What do you think of that Baronne de Chantal, whom you call Sainte, when her son threw himself across the threshold of their home to prevent her leaving the house, and she stepped across his body to go and be *religieuse*?"

"It was the heroic act of a holy woman," the priest replied.

"But I thought Home was the woman's sphere?" said Angelica.

"Yes," the priest rejoined, "unless God calls them to religion."

"But did God give her all those children?" Angelica pursued.

"Yes indeed," said Father Ricardo. "Children are the gift of God."

"Well, so I thought I had heard," Angelica remarked, with a genial air of being much interested. "But it seems such bad management to give a lady a lot of children, and then take her away so that she can't look after them."

The poor old duke had been dull all day. His mind, under the influence of his father confessor, had been running on the horrors of hell, and such subjects, together with the necessity of accomplishing certain good works and setting aside large sums of money in order to excuse himself from such condemnation as the priest had ventured to hint courteously that even a great duke might entail upon himself by the quite excusable errors of his youth; but since the Heavenly Twins arrived the old gentleman had begun to see things again from a point of view more natural to one of his family, and his countenance cleared in a way which denoted that his spirits were rising. Father Ricardo was accustomed to say that the dear children's high spirits were apt to be too much for his Grace; but this was a mistake, due doubtless to his extreme humility, which would not allow him to mention himself, for whom, there was no doubt, the dear children *were* apt to be too much.

The old duke, upon that last remark of Angelica's, twinkled a glance at his father confessor which had an effect on the latter that made itself apparent in the severity of his reply: "The ways of the Lord are inscrutable," he said, "and it is presumptuous for mortals, however great their station, to attempt to fathom them."

"I have heard that before too, often," said Diavolo, with a wise nod of commendation.

"So have I," said Angelica; and then both children beamed at the priest cordially, and the long-suppressed chuckle escaped from the duke.

Father Ricardo retired into himself.

"Grandpapa," Diavolo resumed—the Heavenly Twins never allowed the conversation to flag—"Grandpapa, do you believe there ever was a little boy who never, never told a lie?"

"I hope, sir, you do not mean me to infer that you are mendacious?" the old gentleman sternly rejoined.

"Mendacious?" Diavolo repeated; "that's do I tell lies, isn't it? Well, you see, sir, it's like this. If I'd been up to something, and you asked me if I'd done it, I'd say 'Yes' like a shot; but if Angelica had been up to something, and I knew all about it, and you asked me if she'd done it, I'd say 'No' flatly."

"Do I understand, sir, that you would tell me a lie 'flatly'?"

"Yes," said Diavolo decidedly, "if you were mean enough to expect me to sneak on Angelica."

"Father Ricardo," the latter began energetically, "when you tell a lie do you look straight at a person or just past the side of their heads?"

"I always look straight at a person myself," said Diavolo, gravely considering the priest; "I can't help it."

"It's the best way," said Angelica, with the assurance of one who has tried both. "I suppose, grandpapa," she pursued, "when people get old they have nothing to tell lies about. They just sit and listen to them"; and again she looked hard at Father Ricardo, whose face had gradually become suffused with an angry red.

"I should think, Father Ricardo," said Diavolo, observing this, "if you were a layman, you would be feeling now as if you could throttle us?"

But before the poor priest could utter the reproof which trembled on his lips, the door opened and the duke's unmarried daughter and youngest child, the beautiful Lady Fulda, entered, and changed the moral atmosphere in a moment.

Both children rose to receive her tender kisses affectionately.

Their passionate appreciation of all things beautiful betrayed itself in the way they gazed at her; and hers was the only presence that ever subdued them for a moment.

"I like her in white and gold," Angelica remarked to Diavolo when she had looked her longest.

"So do I," Diavolo rejoined, with a nod of satisfaction.

"My dear children!" Lady Fulda exclaimed.

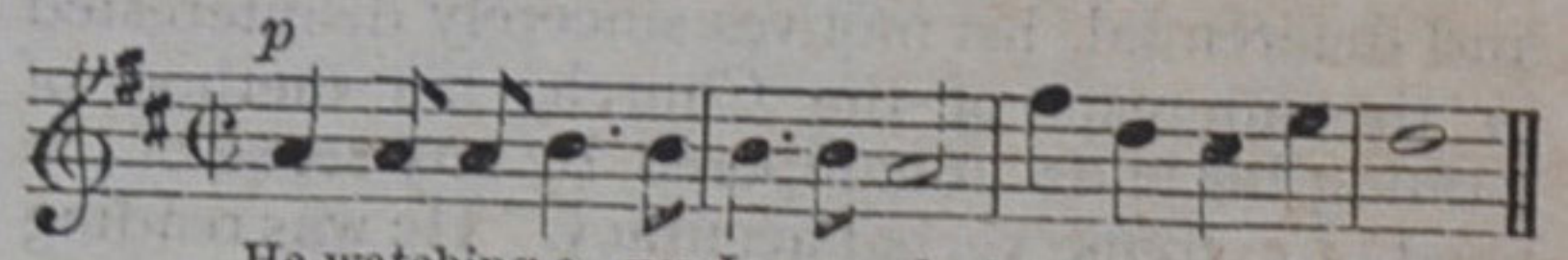
"You must not discuss my appearance in that way. You speak of me as if I were not here."

"You never seem to be here, somehow," said Diavolo, struggling with a big thought he could not express. "I always feel when you come in as if you were miles and miles away from us. Now, mamma is always close to us, and papa gets quite in the way; but you seem to be"—he raised both hands high above his head, with the palms spread outward, and then let his arms sink to his sides slowly. The gesture expressed an immeasurable distance above and beyond him.

"Yes," said Angelica, "I feel that too. But sometimes, when there's music and flowers and no light to speak of—in church, you know—and you feel as if angels might be about, or even the Lord himself, I rise up beside you somehow, and come quite close,"

Lady Fulda's eyes deepened with feeling as Angelica spoke, and drawing the child to her side, she smoothed her hair, and gazed down into her face earnestly, as if she would penetrate the veil of flesh that baffled her when she tried to see clearly the soul of which Angelica occasionally gave her some such glimpse.

The old duke glanced round at the clock, and instantly the attentive priest stepped to the window and opened it wide. Then the duke raised his hand as if to enjoin silence, and presently the music of the bells of the city clocks, striking the hour in various tones, and all at different moments, causing a continuous murmurous sea of sound, arose from below. When the last vibration ceased there was a quite perceptible pause. The duke took off his little round black velvet cap, and leant forward, listening intently; Lady Fulda bent her head and her lips moved; the priest folded his hands and looked straight before him with the unconscious eyes of one absorbed in thought or prayer who sees not; the twins, assuming a sanctimonious expression, bowed their hypocritical heads and watched what was going on out of the corners of their eyes. There was a moment's interval, and then came the chime, mellowed by distance, but clear and resonant—



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

It was the habit of the old duke to listen for it hour by hour, and while it rang, he, and those of his household who shared his faith, offered a fervent prayer for the restoration of Holy Church.

Lady Fulda insisted on sending the children home under proper escort. They strongly objected. They said they were not going straight home; they had to call on the Bishop of Morningquest.

"Why are you going to call on the Bishop of Morningquest?" their aunt asked.

"We wish to see him," Angelica answered stiffly.

"On the subject of rotten potatoes," Diavolo supplemented. Lady Fulda stared.

"Sainte Chantal, you know," said the ready Angelica. The reason was new to her, but the twins usually understood each other like a flash. "They put a rotten potato on her plate one day at dinner, and she ate it."

"She was so hungry?" suggested Lady Fulda, trying hard to remember the story.

"No, so humble," Angelica answered; "at least, so they say in the book. But we don't think it could have been humility; it must have been horrid bad taste; but we're going to ask the bishop. He's so temperate, you know. We tried to discuss the matter with Father Ricardo, but he shut us up promptly."

"My dear child!" Lady Fulda exclaimed, "what an expression!"

"I assure you it is the right one, Aunt Fulda," Angelica maintained. "He got quite red in the face."

"Yes," said Diavolo, gazing at Father Ricardo thoughtfully. "He looked hot enough to set fire to us if he'd touched us."

"I should think he would have been invaluable in the Inquisition," said Angelica, to whom that last remark of Diavolo's had opened up a boundless field of speculation and retrospect,

"Wouldn't you like to hear a heretic go off pop on a pile?" she inquired, turning to Father Ricardo.

The duke and Lady Fulda glanced at him involuntarily, and very good-naturedly tried to smile. This, however, did not necessitate such an effort as the mere cold reading of the twins' remark might make it appear, for they both had a certain charm of manner, expressive of an utter absence of any intention to offend, which no kindly disposed person could resist; and Father Ricardo was essentially kindly disposed.

The twins were taking their leave by this time. Angelica proceeded to deposit one of her erratic kisses somewhere on the old duke's head, with an emphasis which caused him to wince perceptibly. Then she went up to Father Ricardo, and shook hands with him.

"I hope the next time we come you will be able to tell us some nice bogey stories about death and the judgment, and hell, and that kind of thing," she said politely. "They interest us very much. You remember, you told us some before?"

"It must be very jolly for grandpapa to have you here always, ready to make his blood run cold whenever he feels dull," Diavolo observed, looking up at the priest admiringly. "You do it so well, you know, just as if you believed it all."

"We tried it once with some children we had to spend the day with us at Hamilton House," Angelica said. "We took them into a dark room—the long room, you know, Aunt Fulda; and Diavolo rubbed a match on the wall at the far end, and I explained that that was a glimmer of hell-fire at a great distance off; and then we told them if they didn't keep quite still the old devil himself would come creeping up behind without any noise, and jump on their backs."

"And the little beggars howled," Diavolo added, as if that consequence still filled him with astonishment.

"My dear children, I am afraid you tell dreadful stories," Lady Fulda exclaimed, in a horrified tone.

"Yes," said Angelica, with her grave little nod; "and we're improving; but we cannot come up to Father Ricardo yet in that line."

"Not by a long chalk," said Diavolo.

"But, my dear child," Lady Fulda solemnly asserted, "Father Ricardo tells you *nothing* but what is *absolutely* true."

"How do you know?" Angelica asked.

"Oh—oh!" Lady Fulda stammered, and then looked at the priest appealingly.

"When you are older, and able to understand these things," Father Ricardo began, with gentle earnestness, "perhaps you will allow me"—

"But how do you *know* it's true yourself?" Angelica demanded.

"Did you ever *see* the devil,
With his little spade and shovel,
Digging praties in the garden
With his tail cocked up?"—

Diavolo chanted, accompanying the words with a little dance, in which Angelica, holding up her habit, joined incontinently.

Lady Fulda remained grave, but the old duke and Father Ricardo himself were moved to mirth, and there was no more talk of Revealed Religion, the Power of the Popedom, and the glory of the Church on earth, at Morne that day.

Lady Fulda had been firm about sending the

children home under escort, and they found a steady old groom waiting ready to mount a spirited horse when they went down to the courtyard to get on their ponies. They had discovered a box of croquet mallets on their way downstairs, and borrowed one each.

As they descended the steep hill leading from the castle, at a walk, they began to discuss recent events, as their habit was.

"What did you do when the chime went, and you hung your head?" said Angelica.

"I hoped there'd be hot cakes for tea; but I didn't mean it for a prayer," Diavolo answered, as if the matter admitted of a doubt.

"I'm glad we decided to go secondly to the palace; I didn't think much of grandpapa's tea," Angelica observed. "It was all china, and no cakes—to speak of; no crisp ones, you know."

"Well, you see, his teeth are bad," said Diavolo indulgently.

"He has enough of them, then!" Angelica answered.

"Yes, but they aren't much good, they're so loose, you know; every now and again you can see them waggle," said Diavolo.

"I'd like to see him bite a fig!" said Angelica, chuckling.

"They'd stick, I suppose," said Diavolo meditatively. "I expect there will be great improvements in those matters by the time we want to be patched."

The groom, who had been riding at a respectful distance behind, suddenly perceived that he had lost sight of the children altogether. The descent was steep just there, and winding; and, knowing with whom he had to deal, the man urged his horse on, straining his eyes at every turn to catch a glimpse of the twins, but vainly, till he reached the bottom of the hill, when they bounced out on him suddenly from among the trees on either side of the road, whooping and flourishing their mallets wildly. The horse, which was very fresh, gave one great bound and bolted, and the Heavenly Twins, shrieking with delight, hunted him hard into Morningquest.

When they arrived at the palace, Angelica asked with the utmost confidence if the bishop were at home; and being informed by an obsequious footman that he was, the twins marched into the hall, and were ushered into the presence of Mrs. Beale and her daughter Edith.

"Tell his lordship we are here," Angelica said to the servant authoritatively, before she performed her salutations. When these were over, the twins sat down opposite to Edith and inspected her.

"We've just been seeing Aunt Fulda," Diavolo remarked.

Angelica caught the connection: "Your hair is about the same colour as hers, but your face is smoother," she observed. "It looks like porcelain. Hers has little stipples, you know, about the nose, when you go close. They seem to come as you get older."

"Uncle Dawne calls you Saxon Edith," said Diavolo. "Don't you wonder he doesn't want to marry you? I do. When I'm old enough I'm going to propose to you; do you think you will have me?"

"Have you! I should think not, indeed!" Angelica exclaimed, with a jealous flash. At that time the notion of sharing her brother's affection with anybody always enraged her.

Diavolo was irritated by her scornful manner.

"I am a little afraid," he began, addressing

Mrs. Beale in his deliberate way, "I am a little afraid Angelica will stand in the way of my making a good match. No respectable wife would have her about."

Quick as thought, Angelica had him by the hair, and the two were tumbling over each other on the floor.

Mrs. Beale and Edith sprang forward to separate them, but that was impossible until the twins had banged each other to their heart's content, when they got up, with their feelings thoroughly relieved, and resumed their seats and the conversation as if nothing had happened. The skirmish, however, had been severe although short. Diavolo had a deep scratch over his right eyebrow which began to bleed profusely. Angelica was the first to notice it, and tearing out a handkerchief which was up her sleeve, she rolled it into a bandage roughly, whirled over to Diavolo, and tied it round his head, covering his right eye, and leaving a great knot and two long ends sticking up like rabbit's ears amongst his fair hair, and a pointed flap hanging down on the opposite side.

"I must cut my nails," she remarked, giving a finishing touch to this labour of love, which made Diavolo rock on his chair; but he accepted her attentions as a matter of course, merely drawling, "Angelica is *so* energetical!" as he recovered his balance.

Just at this moment the bishop bustled in. He had been engaged upon some important diocesan duties when the twins were announced; but, thinking they must have come with an urgent message, he suspended the work of the diocese, and hurried up to see what was the matter.

The twins rose to receive him with their usual unaffected affability. He was a short, stout man with a pleasant face and a cordial, well-bred manner; a little apt to be fussy on occasion, and destitute of any sense of humour in other people, although given to making his own little jokes. He was a bishop of the old-fashioned kind, owing his position to family influence rather than to any special attainment or qualification; but he was a good man, and popular, and the See of Morningquest would have had much to regret if the back door by which he got into the Church had been shut before he passed through it.

"I am afraid there has been an accident," he said with concern, when he saw Diavolo's head tied up in a handkerchief.

"Oh no, thank you, sir," that young gentleman assured him. "It is only a scratch."

"I did it," said the candid Angelica; "and it looked unpleasant, so I tied it up."

"Oh," the bishop ejaculated, glancing inquiringly at his wife and daughter. "You wanted to see me?"

"Yes," said Diavolo, preparing to suit his conversation to the bishop's taste. "There are a great many things we want to discuss with you; what were they, Angelica? I am sure I have forgotten them all."

"Let me see," said Angelica—Sainte Chantal and the rotten potato had quite gone out of her mind. "It was just to have a little interesting conversation, you know."

"We're getting on very well with our lessons," Diavolo gravely assured him, anticipating the inevitable question.

"We've just come from Morne," said Angelica.

"Indeed," the bishop answered. "How is your grandfather?"

"Rather flat to-day," said Angelica. "He

didn't say anything of interest; didn't even lecture us."

"No; but he looked pleasant," said Diavolo.

"I like him to lecture," Angelica insisted. "I like him to talk about the Church, how it is going to encompass the earth, the sea, and all that in them is; and that kind of thing, you know—boom, boom! He makes you feel as if every word he uttered ought to be printed in capital letters; and it seems as if your eyes opened wider and wider, and your skin got tight."

Diavolo nodded his head to one side in intelligent acquiescence.

Not being troubled with self-consciousness, he wore the handkerchief with which his head was decorated with the grave dignity of his best behaviour.

"I sometimes think, sir," he began, addressing the bishop exactly in his father's precise way, "that there is something remarkable about my grandfather. He is a kind of a prophet, I imagine, to whom the Lord doesn't speak."

Edith walked to the window, Mrs. Beale got out her handkerchief hastily; the bishop's countenance relaxed.

"I suppose you wouldn't like us to be converted?" Angelica asked.

"We call it *perverted*, dear child," said Mrs. Beale.

"Well, they call it *converted* just as positively up at the castle," Angelica rejoined, not argumentatively, merely stating the fact.

"I wonder what the angels call it," said Diavolo, looking up in their direction out of a window opposite, and then glancing at the bishop as if he thought he ought to know.

"I don't suppose they care a button what we call it," Angelica decided off-hand, out of her own inner consciousness. "But you would not like us to be either 'con' or 'per,' would you?" she asked the bishop.

"I am afraid I must not discuss so serious a question with you to-day," he answered. "I am very busy, and I must go back to my work."

"I thought you looked unsettled," Angelica observed. "I know what it is when you've got to come to the drawing-room, and want to be somewhere else. They won't excuse us at home as a rule, but we'll excuse you, if you like."

"Eh—thank you," the old gentleman answered, glancing with a smile at his wife.

"But I should think some tea would do you good," Diavolo suggested.

"Have you not had any tea?" Edith asked, stretching her hand out toward the bell.

"Well, yes," he answered. "We've had a little—the tone implied, "but not nearly enough."

"We always like your cakes, you know," said Angelica; "and ours at Hamilton House are generally nice; but at Morne they're sometimes sodden."

The bishop withdrew at this point, and the children devoted the rest of their attention to the cakes.

"Now we've got to go and settle with Mr. Ellis," Diavolo remarked to Angelica, yawning, as they walked their ponies out of the palace grounds.

"Well, at anyrate, we've done the celebration thoroughly," she answered, "and enjoyed it. He won't be able to help that now. Oh—by the way! here's grandpapa's ring. I forgot it."

"It doesn't matter," said Diavolo. "He knows you'll take care of it."

Almost at the same moment the old duke at Morne missed the ring, and remarked, "Ah, I remember, Angelica has it. She put it on her finger when she was sitting beside me this afternoon."

"Shall I go at once to Hamilton House, and bring it back with me?" Father Ricardo asked, somewhat officiously.

"No, sir, thank you," said the duke, with dignity. "My granddaughter will return the ring when it suits her convenience."

Next day Angelica begged her father to take the ring back for her with a note of apology, explaining that she had forgotten it, and expressing her regret.

CHAPTER XXI

PART of the old grey palace at Morningquest had been a monastery. The walls were thick, the windows gothic, the bedrooms small, the reception rooms huge, as if built for the accommodation of a whole community at a time; and with unexpected alcoves and angles and deep embrasures, all very picturesque, and also extremely inconvenient; but Edith Beale, who had been born in the palace and grown up there, under the protection of the great cathedral, as it were, and the influence of its wonderful chime, was never conscious of the inconvenience, and would not, at any rate, have exchanged it for the comfort and luxury of the best appointed modern house.

The Bishop of Morningquest and Mrs. Beale had three sons, but Edith was their only daughter, their white child, their pearl; and certainly she was a lovely specimen of a well-bred English girl.

On the day following that upon which the Heavenly Twins had celebrated the important occasion of their first spontaneous "Kow-tow," as they called it, in the early morning Edith, being still asleep, turned toward the east window of her room, the blind of which was up, and fell into a dream. The sun, as he rose, smiled in upon her. She had flung her left hand up above her head with the pink palm outward and the fingers half bent; the right lay on the sheet beside her, palm downward, spread out, and all relaxed. Her whole attitude expressed the most complete abandonment of deep and restful sleep.

The night had been warm, and the heavier draperies had slipped from her bed on the farther side, leaving only the sheet.

Her warm bright hair, partly loosened from the one thick braid into which it had been plaited, fell from off the pillow to the floor on her right, and the sun, looking in, lit it up and made it sparkle. She left that window with the blind undrawn so that he might arouse her every morning; and now, as the first pale ray gleamed over her face, her eyelids quivered and half opened, but she was still busy with her dream and did not wake. She lived in an atmosphere of dreams and of mystic old associations. Events of the days gone by were often more distinctly pictured in her mind than incidents of yesterday. Mrs. Orton Beg, her mother, and all the gentle-mannered, pure-minded women among whom she had grown up, thought less of this world, even as they knew it, than of the next as they imagined it to be; and they received and treasured with perfect faith every legend, hint, and shadow of a communication which they believed to have come to them from thence. They neglected the good they

might have done here in order to enjoy their bright and tranquil dreams of the hereafter. Their spiritual food was faith and hope. They kept their tempers even and unruffled by never allowing themselves to think or know, so far as it is possible with average intelligence not to do either in this world, anything that is evil of anybody. They prided themselves on only believing all that is good of their fellow-creatures; this was their idea of Christian charity. Thus they always believed the best about everybody, not on evidence, but upon principle; and then they acted as if their attitude had made their acquaintances all they desired them to be. They seemed to think that by ignoring the existence of sin, by refusing to obtain any knowledge of it, they somehow helped to check it; and they could not have conceived that their attitude made it safe to sin, so that, when they refused to know and to resist they were actually countenancing evil and encouraging it. The kind of Christian charity from which they suffered was a vice in itself. To keep their own minds pure was the great object of their lives, which really meant to save themselves from the horror and pain of knowing.

Edith, by descent, by teaching, by association, and in virtue of the complete ignorance in which she had been kept, was essentially one of that set. It is impossible for any adult creature to be more spiritually-minded than she was. She lived in a state of exquisite feeling. The whole training of her mind had been so directed as to make her existence one long beatific vision, and she was unconsciously prepared to resent in her gentle way, and to banish at once, if possible, any disturbing thought that might break in upon it.

In her dream that morning she smiled at first, and then she fairly laughed. She had met the Heavenly Twins, and they were telling her something—what was it? The most amusing thing she had ever heard them say; she knew it by the way it had made her laugh—why couldn't she repeat it? She was trying to tell her mother, and while in the act, she became suddenly aware of a strange place, and Diavolo kneeling at her feet, clasping her left hand, and kissing it. She felt the touch of his lips distinctly; they were soft and warm. He was beseeching her to marry him, she understood, and she was going to laugh at him for being a ridiculous boy, but it was the steadfast, dark blue eyes of Lord Dawne that met hers, and she was looking up at him, and not down at the fair-haired Diavolo kneeling before her. She caught the gloss on Lord Dawne's black hair, the curve of his slight moustache, and the gleam of his white teeth. He was grave, but his lips were parted, and he carried a little child in his arms, and the expression of his face was like the dear Lord's in a picture of the Good Shepherd which she had in her room. He held the little child out to her. She took it from him, smiling, raised its little velvet cheek to hers, and then drew back to look at it, but was horrified because it was not beautiful at all as it had been the moment before, but deformed, and its poor little body was covered with sores. The sight sickened her, and she tried to cover it with her own clothes. She tore at the skirt of her gown. She struggled to take off a cloak she wore. She stripped herself in the endeavour and cried aloud in her shame, but she could not help herself, and Dawne could not help her, and in the agony of the attempt she awoke, and sprang up, clutching at the bedclothes, but was not able to find them at first, because they had fallen on the floor; and she fancied herself

still in her horrible dream. Big drops of perspiration stood on her forehead, her eyes were dazzled by the sun, and she was all confused. She jumped out of bed and stood a moment, trying to collect herself; and the first thing she saw distinctly was the picture of the Saviour on the wall. A *Prie-dieu* stood beneath it, and she went and knelt there, her beautiful yellow hair streaming behind her, her eyes fixed on the wonderful, sad, sweet face.

"Dear Lord," she prayed passionately, "keep me from all knowledge of unholy things,"—by which she meant sights and circumstances that were unlovely, and horrified.

She knelt for some minutes longer, with all articulate thought suspended; but by degrees there came to her that glow in the chest, that expansion of it which is the accompaniment of the exalted sentiment known to us as adoration, or love; love purged of all earthly admixture of doubt and fear, which is the most delicious sensation human nature is capable of experiencing. And presently she arose, free from the painful impression made by the revolting details of her dream, put her hands under her hair at the back of her neck, and then raised them up above her head, and her hair with them, stretching herself and yawning slightly. Then she brought her hair all around to the right in a mass, and let it hang down to her knees, and looked at it dreamily; and then began to twist it slowly preparatory to coiling it round her head. She went to the dressing-table for hairpins to fasten it, holding up her long nightdress above her white feet with one hand that she might not trip, and, standing before the mirror, blushed at the beauty of her own reflection. When she had put her hair out of the way, she glanced at her bed somewhat longingly, then at her watch. It was very early, and the morning was chilly, so she put on her white flannel dressing-gown, got a book, returned to her bed, and propped herself up in a comfortable position for reading; and so she spent the time happily until her maid came to call her. Her book that morning was *The Life of Frances Ridley Havergal*, and she found it absorbingly interesting.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ladies of an artist's family usually arrange and decorate their rooms in a way which recalls the manner called artistic, more especially when the artist is a figure or subject, as distinguished from a landscape painter, for the latter lives too much in the free fresh air to cultivate draperies, even if he does not absolutely detest them as being stuffy; and in the same way the bedroom of the only daughter of the Bishop of Morningquest would have made you think of matters ecclesiastical. The room itself, with its thick walls, high stone mantelpiece, small gothic windows, and plain ridged vault, was so in fact; and a sense of suitability as well as the natural inclination of the occupant had led her to choose the furniture and decoration as severely in keeping as possible. The pictures consisted of photographs or engravings of sacred subjects, all of Roman Catholic origin. There was a "Virgin and Child," by Botticelli, and another by Perugini; "Our Lady of the Cat," by Baroccio; the exquisite "Vision of St. Helena," by Paolo Veronese; Correggio's "Ecce Homo," and others less well known, with a ghastly Crucifixion too painful to be

endured, especially by a young girl, had not custom dulled all genuine perception of the horror of it. The whole effect, however, was a delicious impression of freshness and serenity, which inspired something of the same respect for Edith's sanctum that one felt for Edith herself, as was evident on one occasion, when, the ladies of his family being absent, the Bishop of Morningquest had taken Mr. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe, a gentleman who had lately settled in that neighbourhood, over the palace. When they came to Edith's room, he had opened the door absently, and then, remembering whose it was, he said, "My daughter's room," and they had both looked in without entering, and both becoming aware at the same moment that they had their hats on, removed them involuntarily.

Edith's dress, too, was characteristic. All the ornamentation was out of sight, the lining of her gowns being often more costly than the materials of which they were made. In the same way, her simple, unaffected manners were the plain garment which concealed the fine quality and cultivation of her mind. She might have done great good in the world had she known of the evil; she would have fought for the right in defiance of every prejudice, as women do. But she had never been allowed to see the enemy. She had been fitted by education to move in the society of saints and angels only, and so rendered as unsuited as she was unprepared to cope with the world she would have to meet in that state of life to which, as she herself would have phrased it, it had pleased God to call her.

When she left her room that morning she went to her mother's sitting-room, which was on the same floor.

Edith and her mother usually breakfasted here together. Sometimes the bishop joined them and chatted over an extra cup of tea; but he was an early riser, and had generally breakfasted with his chaplain and private secretary, and done an hour's work or so before his wife appeared. For Mrs. Beale was delicate at that time, and obliged to forego the early breakfast with her husband which had hitherto been the habit and pleasure of her whole married life.

The bishop did not come up to the sitting-room that morning, however, and when Edith and her mother had breakfasted they read the Psalms for the day together, and a chapter of the Bible verse by verse. Then Edith wrote some notes for her mother, who was busy making a cushion for a bazaar; after which she went into the garden and gathered flowers in one of the conservatories, which she brought in to paint on a screen she was making, also for the bazaar.

Mother and daughter worked together without any conversation to speak of until lunch: they were too busy to talk. After lunch they drove out into the country and paid a call. On the way back Edith noticed a beggar, a young, slender, very delicate-looking girl, lying across the footpath with her feet toward the road. A tiny baby lay on her lap. Her head and shoulders were pillowed upon the high bank which flanked the path, her face was raised as if her last look had been up at the sky above her, her hands had slipped helplessly on to the ground on either side of her, releasing the child, which had rolled over on to its face and so continued inertly.

Edith caught only a passing glimpse of the group, and she made no remark until they had driven on some distance; but then she asked, "Did you notice that poor girl, mother?"

"No," Mrs. Beale answered. "Where was she?"

"Lying on the ground. She had a baby on her lap. I think she was ill."

They were in an open carriage, and Mrs. Beale looked round over the back of it. It was a straight road, but she could only see something lying on the footpath, which looked like a bundle at that distance.

"Are you sure it was a girl?" she said.

"Yes, quite, mother," Edith answered.

"Stop the carriage, then," said Mrs. Beale, "and we will turn back and see what we can do."

They found the girl in the same attitude. Edith was about to alight, but her mother stopped her.

"Let Edwards" (the footman, who was an old servant), "see what is the matter," she said.

Edith instantly sat down again, and the footman went and stood by the girl, looking down at her curiously. Then he stooped, took off his glove, and put the points of the four fingers of his right hand on her chest, like an amateur doctor afraid of soiling his hands, a perfunctory way of ascertaining if she still breathed.

"I know who it is, ma'am," he said, returning to the carriage. "She's French, and was a dressmaker in Morningquest. There were two of them, sisters, doing a very good business, but they got to know some of the gentry"—

Mrs. Beale stopped him. She would not have heard the story for the world.

"She's not dead, is she?" Edith asked, in a horrified tone.

The man looked at the girl again from where he stood. "No, miss," he answered, "I think not. She's dead beat after a long tramp. The soles are wore off her shoes. Or likely she's fainted. It's a pity for her," he added, for the relief of his own feelings, looking at her again compassionately.

"Oh, mother! can't we do something?" Edith exclaimed.

"But what *can* we do?" Mrs. Beale responded helplessly, looking at Edwards for a suggestion.

"We're not very far from the work'us," he said, looking down the road they had just retraversed. "We might call there as we pass, and leave a message for them to send and take her in."

"Let us go at once," said Mrs. Beale, in a tone of relief.

Edith, whose face was pale, looked pityingly once more at the girl and her little child as they drove off. It had not occurred to either of the two ladies, gentle, tender, and good as they were, to take the poor dusty, disgraced tramp into their carriage and restore her to "life and use and name and fame" as they might have done.

The incident, however, had naturally made a painful impression upon them both; and when they returned to the palace they ordered tea in the drawing-room immediately, feeling that they must have something, and went there with their things still on to wait for it. Neither of them could get the tramp and her baby out of their heads, but they had not mentioned her since they came in, until Mrs. Beale broke a long silence by exclaiming, "We will drive that way again to-morrow, and find out how they are."

Edith needed no explanation as to whom she was alluding to. "They would take her in at

once, of course, mother? They could not put it off?" she said.

"Oh no! not when we asked them," her mother answered.

The tea was brought at this moment, and immediately afterward the footman announced from the door, "Sir Mosley Menteith," and a tall, fair-haired man about thirty, with a small, fine, light-coloured moustache, the ends of which were waxed and turned up toward the corners of his eyes, entered and shook hands with Mrs. Beale, looking into her face intently as he did so, as if he particularly wanted to see what she was like; then he turned to Edith, shook hands, and looked at her intently also, and taking a seat near her he continued to scrutinise her in a way that brought the blood to her cheeks, and caused her to drop her eyes every time she looked at him. But they were old acquaintances, and she was not displeased.

He was a good-looking young man, although he had a face which some people called empty because of the singular immobility of every feature except his eyes; but whether the set expression was worn as a mask, or whether he really had nothing in him, was a question which could only be decided on intimate acquaintance; for although some effect of personality continually suggested the presence in him of thoughts and feelings disguised or concealed by an affectation of impassivity, nothing he did or said at an ordinary interview ever either quite confirmed or destroyed the impression.

"I thought you had gone abroad with your regiment," said Mrs. Beale, who had received him cordially.

"No, not yet," he answered, looking away from Edith for a minute in order to scrutinise her mother.

He always seemed to be inspecting the person he addressed, and never spoke of anyone without describing their charms or blemishes categorically. "Fact is, I've just come to say good-bye. I've been abroad on leave for two months. Took mine at the beginning of the season."

He looked intently at Edith again when he had said this.

"Mrs. Orton Beg," the servant announced.

Mrs. Orton Beg's ankle was strong enough now for her to walk from her little house in the Close to the palace, but she had to use a stick. She was bleached by being so much indoors, and looked very fragile in the costly simplicity of her black draperies as she entered.

Mrs. Beale and Edith received her affectionately, and Sir Mosley rose and transferred his scrutinising gaze to her while they were so occupied. He inspected her dark glossy hair; eyes, nose, mouth, and figure, down to her feet; then looked into her eyes again, and bowed on being presented by Mrs. Beale.

"Sir Mosley is in the Colquhoun Highlanders," the latter explained to Mrs. Orton Beg. "He is just going out to Malta to join them."

Mrs. Orton Beg looked up at him with interest from the low chair into which she had subsided: "Then you know my niece, I suppose," she said—"Mrs. Colquhoun?"

"I have not yet the pleasure," he answered, smiling so that he showed his teeth. They were somewhat discoloured by tobacco, but the smile was a pleasant one, to which people instantly responded. He went to the tea-table when he had spoken, and stood there waiting to hand Mrs. Orton Beg a cup of tea which Mrs. Beale was

pouring out for her. "But I have seen Mrs. Colquhoun," he added. "I was at the wedding—she looked remarkably well." He fixed his eyes on vacancy here, and turned his attention inward in order to contemplate a vision of Evadne in her wedding dress. His first question about a strange woman was always, "Is she good-looking?" and his first thought when one whom he knew happened to be mentioned was always as to whether she was attractive in appearance or not. He was one of several of Colonel Colquhoun's brother-officers who had graced the wedding. There was not much variety amongst them. They were all excessively clean and neat in appearance, their manners in society were unexceptionable, the morals of most of them not worth describing because there was so little of them; and their comments to each other on the occasion neither original nor refined; generations of them had made the same remarks under similar circumstances.

The bishop came in during the little diversion caused by handing tea and cake to Mrs. Orton Beg.

"Ah, how do you do?" he said, shaking hands with the latter. "How is the foot? Better? That's right. Oh! is that you, Mosley? I beg your pardon, my dear boy"—here they shook hands—"I did not see you at first. Very glad you've come, I'm sure. How is your mother? Not with your regiment, eh?" He peered at Sir Mosley through a pair of very thick glasses he wore, and seemed to read an answer to each question as he put it, written on the latter's face.

"Will you have some tea, dear?" said Mrs. Beale.

"Eh, what did you say, my dear? Tea? Yes, if you please. That is what I came for."

He turned to the tea-table as he spoke, and stood over it rubbing his hands and beaming about him blandly.

Sir Mosley Menteith had been a good deal at the palace as a youngster. He and Edith still called each other by their Christian names. The bishop had seen him grow up from a boy, and knew all about him—so he would have said—although he had not seen much of him and had heard absolutely nothing for several years.

"So you are not with your regiment?" he repeated interrogatively.

"I am just on my way to join it now," the young man answered, looking up at the bishop from the chair near Edith on which he was again sitting, and giving the corners of his little light moustache a twirl on either side when he had spoken. All his features, except his eyes, preserved an imperturbable gravity; his lips moved, but without altering the expression of his face. His eyes, however, inspected the bishop intelligently; and always, when he spoke to him, they rested on some one point, his vest, his gaiters, his apron, the top of his bald head, the end of his nose.

"Dr. Galbraith," the footman announced; and the doctor entered in his easy, unaffected, but somewhat awkward way. He had his hat in his hand, and there was a shade of weariness or depression on his strong, pale face; but his deep grey, kindly eyes—the redeeming feature—were as sympathetically penetrating as usual.

He shook hands with them all, except Sir Mosley, at whom he just glanced sufficiently long to perceive that he was a stranger.

Mrs. Beale named them to each other, and they both bowed slightly, looking at the ground, and then they exchanged glances.

"Not much like a medico if you are one," thought Menteith.

"Not difficult to take your measure," thought the doctor; after which he turned at once to the tea-table, like one at home, and stood there waiting for a cup. His manner was quite unassuming, but he was one of those men of marked individuality who change the social atmosphere of a room when they enter it. People became aware of the presence of strength almost before they saw him or heard him speak. And he possessed that peculiar charm, common to Lord Dawne and others of their set, which came of giving the whole of their attention to the person with whom they were conversing for the moment. His eyes never wandered, and if his interest flagged he did not allow the fact to become apparent, so that he drew from everybody the best that was in them, and people not ordinarily brilliant were often surprised, on reflection, at the amount of information they had been displaying, and the number of ideas which had come crowding into their usually vacant minds while he talked with them.

He turned his attention to Mrs. Beale now. "I was afraid I should be late for tea," he said. "I had to turn back—about something. I was delayed."

"We were late ourselves this afternoon," said Mrs. Beale.

Curiously enough, the same cause had delayed them both, for Dr. Galbraith, coming into Morningquest by the road Mrs. Beale had chosen for her drive that day, had noticed the insensible girl and her baby lying on the footpath, and had got down, lifted them into his carriage, and driven back some miles with them in order to leave them at the house of one of his tenants, a respectable widow whom he had trained as a nurse, and to whose kind care he now confided them with strict orders for their comfort, and the wherewithal to carry the orders out.

Dr. Galbraith took his tea now and sat down. He had come for a special purpose, and hastened to broach the subject at once.

"Have you decided where to go this winter?" he asked Mrs. Beale. "You will be having another attack of bronchitis, and then you will not be able to travel. It is not safe to put it off too long."

His orders were that she should winter abroad that year, and Edith was to accompany her; but they were both reluctant to go because of the bishop, whose duties obliged him to remain behind alone. Mrs. Beale glanced at him now affectionately. He was leaning back in a low chair, paunch protuberant, and little legs crossed; and he answered the look with a smile which was meant to be encouraging, but was only disturbed. He was a perfect coward, this ruler of a great diocese, in matters which were of moment to the health and well-being of his own family; he hated to have to decide for them.

"Why not come to Malta?" Sir Mosley suggested.

"That would be nice for Evadne," Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed, her mind taking in at a glance all the advantage for the latter of having a companion of her own age, and without quirks, like Edith, and the womanly, restraining influence of a friend like dear old Mrs. Beale.

"What kind of a place is Malta?" the bishop asked generally, tapping the edge of his saucer

with his teaspoon; then, addressing Dr. Galbraith in particular, he added, "Would it be suitable?"

"Just the thing," the latter answered. "Picturesque, good society, and delightful climate at this time of the year. Accessible, too; you can go directly by P. and O., and the little sea voyage would be good for Mrs. Beale."

"It would be nice to have Evadne there," said Edith, considering the proposition favourably. "I have hardly seen her at all since we were both in the nursery."

"She was such a quiet child," said Mrs. Beale, "unnaturally so; but they used to say she was clever."

"She is," said Mrs. Orton Beg, "decidedly so, and original—or, rather, *advanced*. I believe that is the proper word now."

"Oh dear!" said Mrs. Beale. "Is that nice?"

"Well," Mrs. Orton Beg answered, smiling, "I cannot say. It is not a matter of law, you know, but of opinion. Evadne is nice, however; so much I will venture to declare!"

"She used to be very good to the little Hamilton-Wellses," Mrs. Beale gave out as a point in her favour.

"Oh—*did* you hear about the Heavenly Twins yesterday?" Edith exclaimed, addressing Dr. Galbraith. "They came to call on papa, and he couldn't make out what they wanted. He did look so puzzled! and they sat down and endeavoured to draw him into a theological discussion, after having had a fight on the floor—the children, I mean, not papa, of course!"

"They always endeavour to adapt themselves to the people with whom they happen to be," said Dr. Galbraith. "When they call upon me they come primed with medical matters, and discuss the present condition of surgical practice, and the future prospects of advance in that direction. And I rather suspect that my own books and papers are the sources from which they derive their information. I lock up my library and consulting rooms now as a rule when I go out, but sometimes I forget to shut the windows."

"They are very singular little people," said the bishop, with his benign smile; "very singular!"

"They are very *naughty* little people, I think!" said Mrs. Beale.

Dr. Galbraith laughed as at some ludicrous reminiscence.

"But will you come to Malta?" said Sir Mosley. "Because if you will, and would allow me, I could see about making arrangements for your accommodation."

"You are very kind," said the bishop.

"But when should we be obliged to go?" Mrs. Beale asked, meaning, "How long may we stay at home?"

"You must go as soon as possible," Dr. Galbraith decided inexorably.

And so the matter was settled after some little discussion of details, during which Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells and Mrs. Frayling came in. The latter was in Morningquest for the day doing some shopping. She had lunched with her sister, Mrs. Orton Beg, and had come to have tea with Mrs. Beale; and she and Lady Adeline had encountered each other at the door.

Mrs. Frayling looked very well. She was a wonderfully preserved woman, and being of an elastic temperament, a day away from home always sufficed to smooth out the wrinkles which her husband's peculiar method of loving and cherishing her tended to confirm. And she was especially buoyant just then, for it was immedi-

ately after the Battle of the Letters, and Mr. Frayling was so meek in his manner, and she felt altogether so free and independent, that she had actually ventured to come into Morningquest that day without first humbly asking his permission. She had just informed him of her intention, and walked out before he could recover himself sufficiently to oppose it.

Dr. Galbraith had taken his leave when they entered the room, and only waited a moment afterward to exchange a word with Lady Adeline. When he had gone, Sir Mosley asked the latter, who had known him since he was a boy, but did not love him, "Is that ugly man a medical doctor?"

"Yes," she answered, in her gentle but downright way, "he *is* a medical man, but not an 'ugly' man at all."

"Is Mosley calling Dr. Galbraith ugly?" Mrs. Beale exclaimed. "Now, I think he has the *nicest* face!"

"A most good-looking kind of ugliness," said Mrs. Orton Beg.

Menteith perceived that any attempt to disparage Dr. Galbraith in that set was a mistake, and retired from the position cleverly. "There is a kind of ugliness which is attractive in a man," he said, with his infectious smile.

Edith responded, and then they drew apart from the rest, and began to talk to each other exclusively.

There was a bright tinge of colour in her transparent cheeks, her eyes sparkled, and a pleased perpetual smile hovered about her lips. The entrance of Sir Mosley Menteith had changed the unemotional feminine atmosphere. He was an eligible, and his near neighbourhood caused the girl's heart to swell with a sensation like enthusiasm. She felt as if she could be eloquent, but no suitable subject presented itself, and so she said little. She was very glad, however, and she looked so; and naturally she thought no more for the moment of the poor little French girl—who was just then awaking to a sense of pain, mental and physical, to horror of the past, and fear for the future, and the heavy sense of an existence marred, not by reason of her own weakness so much as by the possession of one of the most beautiful qualities in human nature—the power to love and trust.

"Is the old swing still on the elm?" said Sir Mosley.

"Yes," Edith answered. "Not exactly the same rope, you know; but we keep a swing there always."

"Who uses it now?"

"Children who come to see us," she said. "And sometimes I sit in it myself!" she added, laughing.

"I should very much like to see it again," he said.

"Come and see it then," she answered, rising as she spoke. "Mosley wants to see the old swing," she said to her mother as they left the room together.

"What a nice-looking young man," Mrs. Frayling observed.

"His head is too small," Lady Adeline said. "Has he anything in him?"

"Oh—yes. Well, good average abilities, I should say," Mrs. Beale rejoined. "Too much ability, you know, is rather dangerous. Men with many ideas so often get into mischief."

"That is true," said Mrs. Frayling; "and it is worse with women. When *they* have ideas, as

my husband was saying only this morning, they become quite outrageous—*new* ideas, of course I mean, you know."

"He seems to admire Edith very much," Mrs. Orton Beg observed.

Mrs. Beale smiled complacently.

Edith sat long in her room that night on the seat of the window that faced the east. She had taken off her evening dress and put on her white flannel wrapper. The soft material draped itself to her figure, and fell in heavy folds to her feet. Her beautiful hair, which was arranged for the night in one great plait with the ends loose, hung down to the ground beside her.

The moon was high in the heavens, but not visible from where she sat. Its light, however, flooded the open spaces of the garden beneath her, and cast great shadows of the trees across the lawn. The sombre afternoon had cleared to a frosty night, and the deep indigo sky was sparsely sprinkled with brilliant stars.

Edith looked out. She saw the stars, and the earth with its heavy shadows, and the wavering outlines of the trees and shrubs, and felt a kinship with them.

She was very happy, but she did not think. She did not want to think. When any obtrusive thought presented itself she instantly strove to banish it, and at first she succeeded. She wanted to recall the pleasurable sensations of the day, and to prolong them.

The last sixteen hours seemed longer in the retrospect than any other measure of time with which she had been acquainted. She felt as if the terrible dream from which she had awakened that morning in affright had happened in some other state of being which ended abruptly while she was pacing the shady walks of the old palace garden with Mosley Menteith in the afternoon, and was now only to be vaguely recalled. Some great change in herself had taken place since then; she would not define it; she imagined she could not; but she knew what it was all the same, and rejoiced.

They were going to Malta.

The feeling resolved itself into that clear idea inevitably; and after a little pause it was followed by the question, "Well, and what then?"

But either her mind refused to receive the reply, or else in the Book of Fate the answer was still unwritten, for none came to her consciousness.

Turning at last from the window, she found the eyes of the Good Shepherd in the picture fixed upon her, the beautiful benign eyes she loved so well; and looking up at Him responsively, she waited a moment for her heart to expand anew, and then set herself to meditate upon His life. It was a religious exercise she had taught herself, not knowing that the Roman Catholics practise it as a duty always. She thought of Him first as the dear Lord who died for her, and her heart awoke trembling with joy and fear at the realisation of the glorious deed. His tenderness came upon her, and she bowed her head to receive it. Her ears were straining as it were to hear the sweetness of His voice. She sank on her knees before His image to be the nearer to Him while she dwelt on the mystery of His divine patience, and felt herself filled with the serene intensity of His holy love.

She recalled the faultless grace and beauty of His person, and revelled in the thought of it, till suddenly a deep and sensuous glow of delight in Him flooded her being, and her very soul was faint for Him. She called Him by name caressingly: "Dear Lord!" She confessed her passionate attachment to Him. She implored Him to look upon her lovingly. She offered Him the devotion of her life. And then she sank into a perfect stupor of ecstatic contemplation. This was the way she worshipped, dwelling on the charms of His person and character with the same senses that her delicate maiden mind still shrank from devoting to an earthly lover; calling Him what she would have had her husband be: "Master!"—the woman's ideal of perfect bliss: "A strong support!" "A sure refuge!"—praying Him to strengthen her, to make her wise, to keep her pure; to help, to guide, to comfort her! and finding in each repetition of familiar phrases the luxurious gladness of a great enthusiasm.

But these emotional excesses were not to be indulged in with impunity. When Edith arose from her knees she had already begun to suffer the punishment of a chilling reaction. The love-light faded from her face. The glow of ecstatic passion was extinguished in her heart. The festal robes of enraptured feeling fell from her consciousness and were replaced by the rags of unwelcome recollections. She thought of the poor delicate little French girl lying by the wayside exhausted, and longed to know if she were at that moment sheltering in the workhouse, and rested and restored. She wondered what it was like to be in the workhouse—alone—without a single friend to speak kindly to her; but the bare thought of such a position made her shudder. If only she could have befriended that poor creature and her little child? The sweet maternal instinct of her own being set up a yearning which softened her heart the more tenderly toward the mother because of the child. She did so wish that she could have done something for both of them, and then she recollected her horrible dream, and began involuntarily to piece the vision of the morning to the incident of the afternoon in order to find some faint foreshadowing for her guidance of the one event in the other. Next day she persuaded her mother to send to the workhouse directly after breakfast to ask if the girl had been taken in, and how she was. Edwards, the old footman, could have told his mistress the girl's whole history, and she knew him also to be an honest man, of simple speech, not given to exaggerate; but she scented something "unpleasant" in the whole affair, and she would have looked coldly for the rest of her life on anyone as being a suspicious character, who had ventured to suggest that she should make herself acquainted with the details of such a case. She considered that any inquiries of that kind would have been improper to the last degree.

She sent Edwards to the workhouse, however, to know if the girl had been found; and when he brought back word that she had not, although the most careful search for her had been made in the neighbourhood, Mrs. Beale concluded that she had recovered sufficiently to continue her weary tramp, and very gladly dismissed the whole matter from her mind.

BOOK II

A MALTESE MISCELLANY

Death itself to the reflecting mind is less serious than marriage. The elder plant is cut down that the younger may have room to flourish; a few tears drop into the loosened soil, and buds and blossoms spring over it. Death is not a blow, is not even a pulsation; it is a pause. But marriage unrolls the awful lot of numberless generations. Health, genius, honour are the words inscribed on some; on others are disease, fatuity, and infamy.—WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

The great leading idea is quite new to me, viz., that during late ages the mind will have been modified more than the body; yet I had not got as far as to see with you, that the struggle between the races of man depended entirely on intellectual and *moral* qualities.—DARWIN: *Letter to A. R. Wallace*.

CHAPTER I

MEANWHILE the Colquhouns at Malta had been steadily making each other's acquaintance.

Colonel Colquhoun had met Evadne on board the steamer on her arrival, and had found her enchanted by her first glimpse of the place, and too girlishly glad in the excitement of change, the bustle and movement and novelty, to give a thought to anything else. The healthy young of the human race have a large capacity for enjoyment, and they have also the happy knack of banishing all thought which threatens to be an interruption to pleasurable sensation. When a thing was once settled it was Evadne's disposition to have done with it, and since she had come to satisfactory terms with Colonel Colquhoun and recovered from the immediate effects of the painful contest, the matter had not troubled her. She had perfect confidence in his word of honour as a gentleman, and was prepared to find it no more awkward to live in his house and have him for an occasional companion, than it would to be a guest of good position in any other establishment.

His own attitude was that of a kind of pleased curiosity. He considered their bargain a thing to be carried out to the letter so long as she held him to it, like a debt of honour, not legally binding but morally, and he was prepared, with gentlemanly tact, to keep faith without further discussion of the subject. The arrangement did not trouble him at all. It was original, and therefore somewhat piquant, and so was Evadne.

They met, therefore, without more than a momentary embarrassment, and his first glimpse of her fresh young face, flushed with excitement, and full of intelligent interest and of unaffected pleasure in everything, was an unexpected revelation of yet another facet of her manifold nature, and a bright one too. What a pity she had "views"! But there was always a hope the determination to live up to them was merely an infantile disease of which society would soon cure her. Society has views too. It believes all it hears in the churches without feeling at all bound to practise any inconvenient precept implied in the faith.

Colonel Colquhoun had gone out on a govern-

ment steam launch to meet the mail as soon as she was signalled, and finding Evadne on deck had remained there with her watching the wonderful panorama of the place gradually unfolding itself. He showed her the various points of interest as they came along, and she smiled silent acknowledgments of the courtesy.

The sun was just dispelling the diaphanous mists of early morning, making them hang luminous a moment and then disperse, like tinted gauze that flutters slowly upward in a breeze and vanishes. Great white clouds, foam-like and crisp, piled themselves up fantastically and floated off also, leaving the deep blue vault to mirror itself in the answering azure of the sea; the eternal calm above, awful in its intensity of stillness; the ceaseless movement below, a type of life, throbbing, murmurous, changeful, more interesting than awe-inspiring, more to be wondered at than revered.

Colonel Colquhoun pointed out the lighthouses of St. Elmo, patron saint of sailors, on the right, and Ricasoli on the left. Then they were met by a rainbow fleet of dghaisas, gorgeous in colour, and propelled by oarsmen who stood to their work, and were also brightly clad—both boats and boatmen, clothed by the sun, as it were, having blossomed into colour unconsciously as the flowers do in genial atmospheres. The boats, carrying fruits, flowers, tobacco, cheap jewellery, and coarse clothing for sailors, each cargo adding something of picturesqueness to the scene, formed a gay flotilla about the steamer and accompanied her, she towering majestically above them, and appearing to attract them and hold them to her sides as a great cork in the water does a handful of chopped straw. The boatmen held up their wares, chattering and gesticulating, their sun-embrowned faces all animation and changeful as children's. One moment they would be smiling up and speaking in wheedling tones to the passengers, and the next they would be frowning round at each other, and resenting some offence with torrents of abuse. So the mail glided into the Grand Harbour, Evadne wondering at the fortifications, and straining her eyes to make out somewhat of the symbols, alternate eye and ear, carved on the

old watch tower of St. Angelo; noticing, too, the sharp outline of everything in the pellucid atmosphere, and feeling herself suddenly aglow with warmth and colour, a part of the marvellous beauty and brightness, and uplifted in spirit out of the everyday world above all thought and care into regions of the purest pleasure.

"What a lovely place!" she exclaimed. "It looks like a great irregular enchanted palace!"

"It's very jolly," said Colonel Colquhoun, smiling upon the scene complacently, and looking as important as if he were himself responsible for the whole arrangement, but was too magnanimous to mention the fact. "I thought you'd like it. But wait till you see it by moonlight! We'll come off and dine with one of the naval fellows some night. I'm sure you'll be delighted. It's just like a photograph."

Evadne found that Colonel Colquhoun had secured a good house for her, and had bestowed much care upon the arrangement of it. It was the kind of occupation in which he delighted, and he did it well. He showed Evadne over the house himself as soon as she arrived, and what struck her as most delightful were the flowers and foliage plants which decorated every available corner, and nearly all growing; oranges and oleanders in great tubs, and palms and ferns in Oriental china stands and in Majolica vases.

"One only sees it so for a ball at home," she said, "or some other special occasion."

He looked at her keenly a moment. Her face was serenely content.

"Well, this is a kind of a special occasion with me," he said rather gloomily.

He went on as he spoke, Evadne following him from room to room, pleased with everything, and looking it; which is a much more convincing token of appreciation than the best chosen words.

But when they came to the rooms which were to be hers, she was quite overcome. For Colonel Colquhoun had chosen two opening into each other, as nearly as possible like those she had occupied at Fraylingay, and had filled them with all the beloved possessions, books, pictures, and ornaments, which she had left behind her.

"How good you are! How very good you are!" she exclaimed impulsively. "I hope we shall be friends."

"Oh, we shall be friends," he answered, with affected carelessness, but really well pleased. "I thought you would settle better if you had your own pet things to begin with. I had a great fight with your father about the books. He said you'd got all your nonsense out of them, but I suggested that it might be a case of a little learning being a dangerous thing, so I captured all the old ones, and I've got a lot more for you; see, here's Zola and Daudet complete, and George Sand. You'll like them better, I fancy, when you get into them than Herbert Spencer and Francis Galton. But I've got you some more of their books as well—all that you hadn't got."

"You are really *too* good," said Evadne.

Getting her the books was like putting butter on the paws of a strange cat to make it settle. She sat down beside them and began to take off her gloves at once. Colonel Colquhoun smiled beneath his blond moustache, then, pleading regimental duty, left her to her treasures, assuring himself as he went that he really did know women, exceptional or otherwise.

He had arranged the books himself, placing Zola and Daudet in prominent positions, and anticipating much entertainment from the obser-

vation of their effect upon her. He expected that she would end by making love to him; in which case he promised himself the pleasure of paying her off by acting for a time after the manner proposed by the Barber's Fifth Brother.

When they met again, Evadne had read her mother's letter, and she at once took him into her confidence about it.

"What would you do if you were me?" she asked.

"I should write to the papers," he answered gravely, as if he meant it.

He did not at all understand the strong, simple, earnest nature, incapable of flippancy, with which he had to deal, nor appreciate the danger of playing with it; and he never dreamt that she would seriously consider the suggestion.

"I cannot understand why my father should continue to feel vexed about this arrangement of ours," she said seriously. "We do not interfere with his domestic affairs; why should he meddle with ours? It is not at all his business; do you think it is?" This taking it for granted that the arrangement was as satisfactory to him as it was to her, and appealing to him in good faith against himself and his own interests as it were, touched Colonel Colquhoun's sense of the ludicrous pleasurably. It was always the unexpected apparently that was likely to happen with Evadne, and he appreciated the charm of the unexpected, and began to believe he should find more entertainment at home than he had thought possible even at the outset of his matrimonial venture, when all appeared most promising. He got on very well with her father, but, nevertheless, when it had at last dawned upon him that she was taking his suggestion about writing to the papers seriously, it jumped with his peculiar sense of humour—which had never developed beyond the stage into which it had blossomed in his subaltern days—to egg her on "to draw" the testy old gentleman by threats of publicity. It was his masculine mind, therefore, that was really responsible for her "unnatural" action in that matter. In bygone days when there was any mischief afoot the principle used to be, *chercher la femme*, and when she was found the investigation stopped there; but modern methods of inquiry are unsatisfied with this imperfect search, and insist upon looking behind the woman, when lo, invariably, there appears a skulking creature of the opposite sex who is not ashamed to be concealed by the petticoats generously spread out to screen him. While the world approves man struts and crows, taking all the credit; but, when there is blame about, he whines, street-arab fashion, "It wasn't me. *Cherchez la femme.*"

CHAPTER II

MRS. BEALE and Edith arrived in Malta almost immediately after Evadne herself, and it so happened that the latter, when she went with Colonel Colquhoun to call upon them, met for the first time in their drawing-room most of the people to whom she was to become really attached during her sojourn in Malta. There were Mrs. Sillenger, wife of the colonel of one of the other regiments stationed on the island; Mrs. Malcomson, also the wife of a military man; the Rev. Basil St. John, a man of good family, pronounced refinement, and ultra-ritualistic practices; and Mr. Austin B. Price, a distinguished American diplomatist and man of letters, to whom she

became specially attached. Mrs. Beale and Edith also were from that time forward two of her dearest and most valued friends. She looked very charming on the occasion of that first visit.

Mrs. Beale received her with quite effusive kindness. She had promised Mrs. Orton Beg to be a mother to her, and had been building a little aerial castle wherein she saw herself installed as principal adviser, comforter, confidential friend, and invaluable help generally under certain circumstances of peculiar trial and happy interest to which young wives are subject.

Evadne and Edith looked at each other with a kind of pleased surprise.

"How tall you have grown!" said Evadne.

"And how young you are to be married!" Edith rejoined. "I was so glad when Mrs. Orton Beg told us you were here. That was one of the reasons which decided us to come, I think."

"I hope we shall see a good deal of each other," said Evadne.

"That would be delightful," Edith answered. Then suddenly she blushed. She had recognised someone who had just entered the room, and Evadne, narrowing her eyes to see who it was, recognised him as Sir Mosley Menteith, a captain in the Colquhoun Highlanders, whose acquaintance she had made the day before, when he called upon her for the first time. He shook hands with Mrs. Beale and stood talking to her, looking down at her intently, until someone else claimed her attention. Then he turned away, rested the back of his left hand, in which he was holding his hat, on his haunch, fixed an eyeglass in his eye, and looked round with an expression of great gravity, twirling first one end and then the other of his little light moustache slowly as he did so. He was extremely spic-and-span in appearance, and wore light-coloured kid gloves. The room was pretty full by that time, and he seemed to have some little difficulty in finding the person whom he sought, but at last he made out Edith and Evadne sitting together, and going over to them, greeted them both, and then took a vacant chair beside them. He began by inspecting first one and then the other carefully in turn, as if he were comparing them point by point, uttering little remarks the while of so thin and weak a nature that Evadne had to make quite an effort to grasp them. She had thawed under the influence of Edith's warm, frank cordiality, but now she froze again suddenly, and began to have disagreeable thoughts. She noticed something repellent about the expression of Sir Mosley's mouth. She acknowledged that his nose was good, but his eyes were small, peery, and too close together, and his head shelved backward like an ape's. She could not have kept up a conversation with him had she wished to, but she preferred to withdraw herself and let him monopolise Edith.

"I like you best in blue," Sir Mosley was saying. "Will you wear blue at our dance?"

"Oh no!" Edith rejoined archly, smiling up at him with lips and eyes. "I have worn nothing but blue lately. I shall soon be known as the blue girl! I must have a change. Grey and pink are evidently *your* colours, Evadne!"

Evadne looked down at her draperies as a polite intimation that she had heard. But just then her attention was diverted by the conversation of two ladies and a gentleman, who were sitting together in a window on her right. The gentleman was Mr. St. John, the ritualistic divine, whose clean-shaven face, with its firm, well-

disciplined mouth, finely formed nose with sensitive nostrils, and deep-set, kindly dark eyes, attracted her at once. He was very fragile in appearance, and had a troublesome cough.

"Ah, Mrs. Malcomson!" he was saying, "I should be very sorry to see the old exquisite ideal of womanhood disturbed by these new notions. What can be more admirable, more elevating to contemplate, more powerful as an example, than her beautiful submission to the hardships of her lot?"

"Or less effectual—seeing that no good, but rather the contrary, has come of it all!" Mrs. Malcomson answered. "That is the poetry of the pulpit; and the logic too, I may add," she said, leaning back in her chair luxuriously. "For what could be less effectual for good than the influence has been of those women, poor wingless creatures of the 'Sphere,' whose ideal of duty rises no higher than silent, abject submission to all the worst vices we know to be inseparable from the unchecked habitual possession of despotic authority? What do you say, Mrs. Sillenger?"

The other lady smiled agreement. She was older than Mrs. Malcomson, and otherwise presented a contrast to the latter, being taller, slighter, with a prettier, sweeter, and altogether more womanly face, as some people said. A stranger might have thought that she had less character too, but that was not the case. She suffered neither from weakness nor want of decision; but her manner was more diffident, and she said less.

Mrs. Malcomson belonged to a somewhat different order of being. She had a strong and handsome face with regular features; a proud mouth, slightly sarcastic in expression; and dark grey eyes given to glow with fiery enthusiasm. Her hair was dark brown, but showed those shades of red in certain lights which betoken an energetic temperament, and good staying power. It was crisp, and broke into little natural curls on her forehead and neck, or wherever it could escape from bondage; but she had not much of it, and it was usually rather picturesque than tidy. Mrs. Sillenger's, on the contrary, was straight and luxuriant, and always neat. It had been light golden-brown in her youth, but was somewhat faded. Mrs. Malcomson spoke as well as she looked, the resonant tones of her rich contralto voice pleasing the ear more than her opinions startled the understanding. She owed half her success in life to the careful management of her voice. By simple modulations of it she could always differ from an opponent without giving personal offence, and she seldom provoked bitter opposition, because nothing she said ever sounded aggressive. If she had not been a good woman she would have been a dangerous one, since she could please eye and ear at will, a knack which obtains more concessions from the average man than the best chosen arguments.

"It seems to me that your 'poetry of the pulpit' is very mischievous," she pursued. "You have pleased our senses with it for ages. You have flattered us into inaction by it, and used it as a means to stimulate our vanity and indolence by extolling a helpless condition under the pompous title of 'beautiful patient submission.' You have administered soothing sedatives of 'spiritual consolation,' as you call it, under the baleful influence of which we have existed with all our highest faculties dulled and drugged. You have curtailed our grand power to resist evil by narrowing us down to what you call the 'Woman's Sphere,'

wherein you insist that we shall be unconditional slaves of man, doing always and only such things as shall suit his pleasure and convenience."

"Ah, but when you remember that the law which man delivers to woman he receives direct from God, you must confess that that alters the whole aspect of the argument," Mr. St. John deprecated.

"I confess that it would alter it if it were true," Mrs. Malcomson replied. "But it is not true. Man does not deliver the law of God to us, but the law of his own inclinations. And by assuming to himself the right, among other things, of undisputed authority over us, he has held the best half of the conscience of the race in abeyance until now, and so checked the general progress; he has confirmed himself in his own worst vices, arrogance, egotism, injustice, and greed, and has developed the worst in us also, among which I class that tendency to sycophantic adulation which is an effort of nature to secure the necessaries of life for ourselves."

"But women generally do not think that any change for the better is necessary in their position." They are satisfied," Mr. St. John observed, smiling.

"Women generally are fools," Mrs. Malcomson ruefully confessed. "And the 'women generally' to whom you allude as being satisfied are the women well off in this world's goods themselves, who don't think for others. The first symptom of deep thought in a woman is dissatisfaction."

"I wonder men like yourself, Mr. St. John," Mrs. Sillenger began, in her quiet, diffident way, "continue so prejudiced on this subject. How you could help on the moral progress of the world, if only you would forget the sweet soporific 'poetry of the pulpit,' as Mrs. Malcomson calls it, and learn to think of us women, not as angels or beasts of burden—the two extremes between which you wander—but as human beings"—

"Oh!" he protested, interrupting her, "I hope I have not made you imagine that I do not recognise certain grave injustices to which women are at present subject. Those I as earnestly hope to see remedied as you do. But what I do think objectionable is the way in which women are putting themselves forward"—

"You are right there," said Mrs. Sillenger. "I think myself that men might be allowed to continue to monopolise the right of impudent self-assertion."

"But do not lend yourself to the silencing system any longer, Mr. St. John," Mrs. Malcomson implored. "The silent acquiescence of women in an iniquitous state of things is merely an indication of the sensual apathy to which your ruinous 'poetry of the pulpit' has reduced the greater number of us."

"I quite agree with you!" Evadne exclaimed; then stopped, colouring crimson. She had forgotten in her interest that she was a stranger to these people, and only remembered it when they all looked at her—rather blankly, as she imagined. "I beg your pardon," she said, addressing Mrs. Malcomson. "I could not help overhearing the discussion, and I am deeply interested. I am—Mrs. Colquhoun," she broke off, covered with confusion.

"Oh, I am very glad to make your acquaintance," Mrs. Malcomson said warmly. "I called on you to-day on my way here, but you were out."

"And so did I," said Mrs. Sillenger.

"And I hope to have the pleasure very soon," Mr. St. John added, bowing.

Mrs. Beale joined the group just then.

"You have been talking so merrily in this corner," she said, sitting down on a high chair as she spoke, "I have been wondering what it was all about!"

"*Woman's Rights!*" Mrs. Malcomson uttered in deeply tragic tones.

"*Woman's Rights!* Oh dear me, how dreadful!" Mrs. Beale exclaimed comfortably. "I won't hear a word on the subject."

"Not on the subject of cooking?" said Mrs. Malcomson.

"What has cooking to do with it?" Mrs. Beale asked.

"Why, everything!" Mrs. Malcomson answered, smiling. "If only Mr. St. John and a few other very good men would stand up in their pulpits boldly and assure those who dread innovation that their food will be the better cooked, and the 'Sphere' itself will roll along all the more smoothly for the changes we find necessary, there would be an end of their opposition. I would not promise women cooks, for I really think myself that the men are superior, they put so much more feeling into it. And I can never understand why they do not quarrel with us for the possession of that department. I am sure we are quite ready to resign it! and really, when one comes to think of it, it is obvious that the kitchen is much more the man's sphere than the woman's, for it is there that his heart is!"

"You beguile me, my dear," Mrs. Beale said, smiling; "but I will not listen to your wicked raileries." She looked at Mrs. Sillenger. "I came to ask you if you would be so kind as to play us something," she said.

Mrs. Sillenger was a perfect musician; and as Evadne listened, her heart expanded. When the music ceased, she looked up and about her blankly like one who is bewildered by the sudden discovery of an unexpected loss; and with that expression still upon her face she met the bright, penetrating, kindly eye of a small, thin, elderly gentleman with refined features, a wrinkled forehead, and thick grey hair, who was looking at her so fixedly from the other side of the room that at first her own glance fell; but the next moment she felt an irresistible impulse to look at him again. The attraction was mutual. He got up at once from the low ottoman on which he was sitting, and came across to her; and she welcomed his approach with a smile.

"Excuse the liberty of an old man who has not been introduced," he said. "You are Mrs. Colquhoun, I know, and my name is Price. I am an American, and I came to Europe on official business for my country first of all; but I am now travelling for my own pleasure."

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance," Evadne answered.

Before they could say another word to each other, however, there was a general move of guests departing, and Colonel Colquhoun came to carry her off. She held out her hand to Mr. Price. "We shall meet again?" she said.

"With your permission, I will call," he answered.

CHAPTER III

MR. ST. JOHN and Mr. Price were staying at the same hotel, and they walked back to it together.

They had only just made each other's acquaintance, and were feeling the attraction which there is in a common object pursued by the most dissimilar means. They were both humanitarians, Mr. Price by choice and of set purpose, Mr. St. John of necessity—seeing that he was a good man, but unconsciously, the consequence being much confusion of mind on the subject, and a wide difference between his words and his deeds. He preached, for instance, the degrading doctrine that we ought to be miserable in this world, that all our wonderful powers of enjoyment were only given to us to be suppressed; and further blasphemed our sacred humanity by maintaining that we are born in sin, and sinners we must remain, fight as we will to release ourselves from that bondage; but yet his whole life was spent in trying to make his fellow-creatures better, and the world itself a pleasanter place to live in. The means which he employed, however, was the old anodyne: "Believe the best"—that is to say, "Cultivate agreeable feelings." Mr. Price's motto, on the other hand, was: "Know the worst." The foe must be known, must be recognised, must be met and fought in the open if he is to be subdued at all.

This was the difference which drew the two together; each felt the deepest interest in the point where the other diverged, and yearned to convert him to his own way of thought. Mr. Price would have had the clergyman know the world; Mr. St. John would have taught Mr. Price to ignore it, "to look up!" as he called it, or, in other words, to sit and sigh for heaven while the heathen raged, and the wicked went their way here undisturbed—although he had not realised up to the present that that was practically what his system amounted to. He belonged by birth to the caste which is vowed to the policy of ignoring, and was as sensitive as a woman about delicate matters. Nationally, Mr. Price was the Englishman's son, and had advanced a generation. Men are what women choose to make them. Mr. St. John's mother was the best kind of woman of the old order, Mr. Price was the product of the new; and the two were typical representatives of the chivalry of the past, high-minded, ill-informed, unforeseeing—and the chivalry of the present, which reaches on always into futurity with the long arm of knowledge, not deceiving itself with romantic misrepresentations of things by the way, but fully recognising what is wrong from the outset, and making direct for the root of the evil instead of contenting itself by lopping a branch here and there.

"I think you said you were going to winter here?" Mr. Price remarked, as they stepped into the street.

"Yes—if the place suits me," Mr. St. John answered; "and so far,—that is to say for the last month,—it has done so very well. Are you a resident?"

"Well, no, not exactly," the old gentleman answered; "but I have been in the habit of coming here for years."

"It is an interesting place," said Mr. St. John, "teeming with historical associations."

"Yes, it is an interesting place," Mr. Price agreed, making a little pause before he added—"full of food for reflection. Life at large is represented at Malta during the winter season, and in a little place like this humanity is under the microscope as it were, which makes it a happy hunting-ground for those who have to know the world."

"Ah!" Mr. St. John ejaculated deliberately. "I should think there are some very nice people here."

"Yes—and some very nasty ones," Mr. Price rejoined. "But, of course, one must know both."

"Oh, I differ from you there!" Mr. St. John answered, smiling. "Walk not in sinners' way, you know!"

"On the contrary, I should say," Mr. Price rejoined, smiling responsively, and twitching his nose as if a gnat had tickled it; "but I allow you have got to have a good excuse when you do."

Mr. St. John smiled again slightly, but said nothing.

"There were elephants once in Malta, I am told," he began, after a little pause, changing the subject adroitly, "but they dwindled down from the size which makes them so useful by way of comparison, till they were no bigger than Shetland ponies, before they finally became extinct."

"And there is a set in society on the island now," Mr. Price pursued, "formed of representatives of old English houses that once brought men of notable size and virility into the world, but are now only equal to the production of curious survivals, tending surely to extinction like the elephant, and by an analogous process."

"Here we are," said Mr. St. John, as they arrived at their place of abode. "Will you come to my room and smoke a cigarette with me?"

"Thank you, I don't smoke, but I'll go to your room, and see *you* smoke one, with pleasure," Mr. Price responded.

When they got to Mr. St. John's room, the latter took off his clerical coat and waistcoat, and put on a coloured smoking jacket, which had the curious effect of transforming him from an ascetic-looking High Churchman into what, from his refined, intellectual, clean-shaven face, and rather long, straight hair, most people would have mistaken for an actor suffering from overwork.

Having provided Mr. Price with a comfortable seat in the window, which was open, he lighted a cigarette, drew up another easy-chair, and stretched himself out in it luxuriously. He was easily fatigued at that time, and the rest and quiet were grateful after the talk and crowd at Mrs. Beale's. There was a little wooden balcony outside his window, full of flowers and foliage plants; and from where he sat he saw the people passing on the opposite side of the street below, and could also obtain a glimpse of the Mediterranean, appearing between the yellow houses at the end of the street, intensely blue, and sparkling in the rays of the afternoon sun. It was altogether a soothing scene; and had he been alone he would have sunk into that state of intellectual apathy which is so often miscalled contemplative. The homely duties of hospitality, however, compelled him to exert himself for the entertainment of his guest. Several of the people they had just met at Mrs. Beale's went past together, laughing and talking, and *à propos* of this he remarked, "It's a bright little world."

"Yes, on the smoothly smiling surface of society, I allow it's bright," Mr. Price rejoined. "The surface, however, is but a small part of it"

Mr. St. John took a whiff of his cigarette.

"Do you see that man?" Mr. Price pursued, indicating a man below the middle height, with broad shoulders, a black beard and moustache streaked with brown, a ruddy complexion, and obtrusively blue eyes, who was passing at the moment.

"Captain Belliot, of H.M.S. *Abomination*," Mr. St. John answered, using the ship's nickname, and holding out his cigarette between his finger and thumb as he spoke, his fluent patrician English losing in significance what it gained in melody compared with the slow dry *staccato* intonation of the American.

"Yes, sir," Mr. Price rejoined. "Now, he is one of the survivals I just now mentioned—a typical specimen."

"I rather like the man," Mr. St. John answered. "He isn't a friend of mine, but he's pleasant enough to meet."

"Just so," Mr. Price rejoined. "The manners of the kind are agreeable—on the surface. One must give the devil his due. But on closer acquaintance you won't find that their general characteristics are exactly pleasant. Their minds are hopelessly tainted with exhalations from the literary sewer which streams from France throughout the world, and their habits are not nicer than their books."

"Ah, well," said Mr. St. John, whose sensitive lip had curled in dislike of the subject, "it is never too late to mend. I believe, too, that the evil is exaggerated. But at all events they repent and marry, and become respectable men eventually."

"Well, yes, sir, they marry as a rule," Mr. Price rejoined; "and that's the worst of it."

Mr. St. John held his cigarette poised in the air on the way to his mouth, and looked at him interrogatively.

"Will what you call repentance restore a rotten constitution?" Mr. Price responded. "Will it prevent a drunkard's children from being weakly vicious? or the daughters of a licentious man from being foredoomed to destruction by an inherited appetite for the vices which you seem to flatter yourself end in effect when they are repented of? You do not take into consideration the fact that the once vicious man becomes the father of vicious children and the grandfather of criminals. You persuade women to marry these men. The arrangement is perfect. Man's safety, and man's pleasure; if there is any sin in it, *damn the woman*. She's weak; she can't retaliate."

Mr. St. John's cigarette went out. He had begun to think.

"These are horrors!" he ejaculated. "But I know, thank Heaven, that the right feeling of the community is against the perpetration of them."

"That's so," said the American. "Unfortunately, it is not with the right feeling of the community, but with the wrong feeling of individuals, that women have to deal."

"Heaven forbid that women should ever know anything about it!"

"I say so too," said Mr. Price. "At present, however, Heaven permits them by the thousand to make painful personal acquaintance with the subject. And I assure you, sir, that the indignation which has long been simmering in whispers over tea-tables in the seclusion of scented boudoirs, amongst those same delicate dames whom you have it in your mind to keep in ignorance of the source of most of their sufferings, mental and physical, is fast approaching the boiling point of rebellion."

"Do you know this for a fact?"

"I do. And the time is at hand, I think, for a thorough ventilation of the subject. It is the question of all others which must either be ignored until society is disintegrated by the licence that attitude allows, or considered openly and seriously.

That is why I mentioned it. I see in you every inclination to help and defend the suffering sex, and every quality except the habit of handling facts. The subject's repulsive enough, I allow. Right-minded people shrink in disgust even from what is their obvious duty in the matter, and shirk it upon various pretexts, visiting their own pain—like *Betsy Trotwood*, when she boxed the ears of the doctor's boy—upon the most boxable person they can reach, and that is generally the one who has forced their attention to it."

There was a pause after this, then the clergyman observed, "One knows that there are sores which must be exposed to view if they are to be prescribed for at all or treated with any chance of success."

"Yes, yes, that is just it," Mr. Price exclaimed. "You will perceive, if you reflect for a moment, that there must have been a good deal that was disagreeable in the cleansing of the Augean stables to which people in the neighbourhood would certainly and very naturally object at the time; but it has since been pretty generally conceded that the undertaking was a very good sanitary measure nevertheless; and had Hercules lived in our day, and survived the shower of stones with which he was sure to have been encouraged during his conduct of the business, we should doubtless have given him a dinner, or in the other case, an epitaph at least. But there is work for the strong man still. The Augean stable of our modern civilisation must be cleansed, and it is a more difficult task than the other was, and one to put him on his mettle and win him great renown because it is held to be impossible."

He rose as he spoke, and looked at Mr. St. John with concern, as the latter struggled with a bad fit of coughing.

"I am afraid I have talked too much for your strength," he added.

"Oh no," Mr. St. John answered, as soon as he could speak. "On the contrary, I assure you. You have taken me out of myself, and that is always good. Must you go?"

"I must, thank you. Don't rise."

But Mr. St. John had risen, and was surprised to find himself towering over the little gentleman as they shook hands—a feeling which recurred to him always afterward when they met, there being about Mr. Price the something that makes the impression of size and strength and courage which is usually only associated with physical force.

CHAPTER IV

NEXT day there was an afternoon dance on board Captain Belliot's ship, H.M.S. *Abomination*—facetiously so called for no particular reason; and Evadne was there with Colonel Colquhoun. She was dressed in white, heavily trimmed with gold, and, being a bride, was an object of special attention and interest. It was the first entertainment of the kind she had appeared at since her arrival, and, not having a scrap of morbid sentiment about her, she was prepared to enjoy it thoroughly, but in her own way, of course, which, as she was new to the place and the people, would naturally be a very quiet, observant way.

Captain Belliot received her when she came on board, and they shook hands.

She was taller than he was, and looking down at him while in the act, noticed the streaks of brown in his black beard, his brick red skin,

tight as a gooseberry's, and his obtrusively blue eyes.

"Queen's weather!" he remarked.

"Yes," she answered, looking out at the sparkling water.

"It's a pretty place," he continued.

"Yes," she agreed, glancing toward the shore, but seeing only with the mind's eye. Her pupils dilated, however, as she recalled the way she had come: the narrow, picturesque, steep streets, almost all stone-steps, well worn; with high irregular houses on either side, yellow, with green wooden verandas jutting out; the wharf on which they had waited a moment for the man-of-war's boat to take them off, and the Maltese ruffians with their brown faces and brightly coloured clothing, lying idly about in the sun, or chattering together at the top of their voices in little groups. They had seemed to look at her, too, with friendly eyes. And she saw the sapphire sea which parted in dazzling white foam from the prow of the boat as they came along, saw the steady sweep of the oars rising and falling rhythmically, the flash of the blades in the sunshine, the well-disciplined faces of the men who looked at her shyly, but with the same look which she took to be friendly, and their smart uniforms. She would like to have shaken hands with them all. And there was more still in her mind when Captain Belliot asked her if she thought the place "pretty," yet all she found for answer was the one word, "Yes"; and he, being no physiognomist, rashly concluded that was all she had in her.

"Do you dance?" he proceeded, making one more effort to induce her to entertain him.

"Not in the afternoon," she said.

Sir Mosley Menteith tried next.

"You come from Morningquest, do you not?" he asked, looking into her eyes.

"My people live near Morningquest," she answered.

"Ah, then I suppose you know everybody there," he observed, looking hard at her brooch.

She reflected a moment, then answered deliberately, "Not by any means, I should think. It is a large neighbourhood."

He twisted each side of his little light moustache, and changed the subject, inspecting her figure as he did so.

"Do you ride?" he asked.

"Yes," she said.

There was a pause, during which she noticed a suspicion of powder on his face, and he felt dissatisfied because she didn't seem to be going to entertain him.

The band struck up a waltz.

"Do you dance?" he said, looking down from her face to her feet.

"Not in the afternoon," she answered.

The dance had begun, and a pair came whirling down toward them.

Evadne moved back to be out of the way, and Menteith, looking round for a partner, saw Mrs. Guthrie Brimston opposite smiling at him.

He went over to her.

"Well, what do you make of the bride?" she asked.

"Her conversation is not exactly animated," he answered, looking into Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's face intently.

She was a round, flat-faced, high-hipped, high-shouldered woman, short in the body, and tight-laced; and she had a trick of wagging her skirts and perking at a man when talking to him.

She did so now, nodding and smiling in a way that made her speech piquant with the suggestion that she thought or knew a great deal more than she meant to say.

"You have made her acquaintance, I suppose?" Menteith added.

"Oh yes," she answered. "Her husband is an old friend of ours, you know, so Bobbie thought we ought to call at once."

The tone in which she spoke suggested that she and "Bobbie" merely meant to tolerate Mrs. Colquhoun for her husband's sake. "Bobbie" was Major Guthrie Brimston, a very useful little man to his wife by way of reference. When she wanted to say a smart thing which might or might not be considered objectionable, according to the taste of the person she addressed—and she very often did—she always presented it as a quotation from him. "Bobbie thinks," she added now, "that if there were an Order of the Silent Sewing Machine, Mrs. Colquhoun would be sure to be a distinguished member of it."

A royal personage whom Evadne had met at home recognised her at this moment, and shook hands with her with somewhat effusive cordiality, making a remark to which she responded quietly.

"She seems to be a pretty self-possessed young woman, too," Menteith observed. "Her composure is perfect."

"Ah!" Mrs. Guthrie Brimston ejaculated; "those stupid people have no nerves! Now, I should shake all over in such a position!"

The band played the next few bars hard and fast, the dancers whirled like teetotums, then stopped with the final crash of the instruments, and separated, scattering the groups of onlookers, who re-arranged themselves into new combinations immediately. Mrs. Guthrie Brimston leaned against the bulwarks. Colonel Beston, of the Artillery, and Colonel Colquhoun joined her, also her Bobbie, and Menteith remained. The conversation was animated. Evadne, having moved, could now hear every word of it, and thought it extremely stupid. It was all what "he said" and "she said"; what they ought to have said, and what they really meant. Mrs. Guthrie Brimston made some cutting remarks. She talked to all the men at once, and they appeared to appreciate her sallies; but their own replies were vapid. She seemed to be the only one of the party with any wit. Mrs. Beston joined her. She was a little dark woman with a patient, anxious face, and eyes that wandered incessantly till she discovered her husband with Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. Evadne surprised the glance—entreating, reproachful, loving, helpless—what was it? The look of a woman who finds it a relief to know the worst. Evadne's heart began to contract; the girlish gladness went out of her eyes.

Mrs. Beale and Edith arrived and joined her, and Menteith came and attached himself to them at once.

"You *have* put on the blue frock," he said softly to Edith, looking down at her with animal eyes and a flush partly of gratified vanity on his face.

Edith smiled and blushed. She could not reason about him. Her wits had forsaken her.

"That's a case, I think," said Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. Several more men had joined her by this time, and they all looked across at Edith and Menteith. Half the men on the island took their opinions, especially of the women, from Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. She was for ever lowering

her own sex in their estimation, and they, with sheep-like docility, bowed to her dictates, and never dreamt of judging for themselves.

Mr. Price persuaded Mr. St. John to come and look on at the dance. They were leaning now against the bulwarks beside Mrs. Guthrie Brimston, who tried to absorb them into her circle, but found them heavy. Mr. Price despised her, and Mr. St. John was occupied with his own thoughts. He had passed the night in painful reflection, and when he arose in the morning he was more than half convinced that Mr. Price had not exaggerated; but now, with the smiling surface of society under observation, and his senses both soothed and exhilarated by the animated scene and the lively music, he could not believe it. He had thought for the moment that the old American minister was a strong and disinterested philanthropist, but now he saw in him only the victim of a diseased imagination. The habit of seeing society through a haze of feeling as it should be was older than the American's entreaties that he should learn to know it as it is, and he deliberately chose to be unconvinced.

"The parson is casting covetous eyes at the bishop's pretty ewe lamb," Colonel Beston observed to Mrs. Guthrie Brimston *sotto voce*.

A kind of bower had been made of the stern-sheets by screening them off from the main deck with an awning, and from out of this a lady, a young widow, stepped just at this moment, followed by a young man. They had been out of sight together, innocently occupied leaning over, watching the fish darting about down in the depths of the transparent water. The moment they appeared, however, the men about Mrs. Guthrie Brimston exchanged glances of unmistakable significance, and the young widow, perceiving this, flushed crimson with indignation.

"Guilty conscience!" Major Guthrie Brimston remarked upon this, with a chuckle.

Mr. St. John had witnessed the incident and overheard the remark, and the import of both forced itself upon his attention. Mr. Price's words recurred to him. "You are right," he remarked. "They are gross of nature, these people. The animal in them predominates—at present. But the spiritual, the immortal part, is there too. It must be. It has not been cultivated, and therefore it is undeveloped. We should direct our whole energies to the cultivation of it. It is a serious subject for thought and prayer."

Mr. Price twitched his nose, and studied the physiognomies about him. "I doubt myself if the spiritual nature has been as generally diffused as you seem to imagine," he remarked, in his crisp, dry way. "But if the germ of it is anywhere, it is in the women. Help them out of their difficulties, and you will help the world at large. Now, there is one"—indicating Evadne, who was sitting in the same place still, quietly observant.

"I was looking at her," Mr. St. John broke in. "She seems to me to be one of those sensitive creatures, affected by sun and wind and rain, and all atmospheric influences, to their joy or sorrow, who will suffer a martyrdom in secret with beautiful womanly endurance."

"And be very much to blame for it!" Mr. Price interrupted. "That is your idea of her character? Now mine is different. I should say that she is a being so nicely balanced, so human, that either senses or intellect might be tipped up

by the fraction of an ounce. Which is right, surely; since the senses are instrumental in sustaining nature, while the intellect helps it to perfection. And as to her beautiful womanly endurance"—he shrugged his shoulders, and turned the palms of his hands upward—"I don't know, of course; but I am no judge of character if she does not prove to be one of the new women, who are just appearing among us, with a higher ideal of duty than any which men have constructed for women. I expect she will be ready to resent as an insult every attempt to impose unnecessary suffering either upon herself or her sex at large."

"Well, I hope she will not become a contentious woman," Mr. St. John said. "The way in which women are putting themselves forward just now on any subject which happens to attract their attention is quite deplorable, I think; and pushing themselves into the professions, too, and entering into rivalry with men generally; you must confess that all that is unwomanly."

"It seems to me to depend entirely upon how it is done," Mr. Price answered judicially. "And I deny the rivalry. All that women ask is to be allowed to earn their bread honestly; but there is no doubt that the majority of men would rather see them on the streets." The old gentleman stopped, and compressed his lips into a sort of smile. "I can see," he said, "that you are dissenting from every word I say; but I am not disheartened. I feel sure that the scales will fall from your eyes some day, and then you will look back, and see clearly for yourself the way in which all moral progress has been checked for ages by the criminal repression of women."

"Repression of women!" exclaimed Captain Belliot, who caught the words just as the band stopped—"Good Lord! I beg your pardon, St. John—but it's a subject I feel very strongly upon. It's impossible to tell what the devil women will be at next. Why, I went into an hotel in Devonport for a brandy and soda just before I sailed, and I happened to remark to a fellow that was with me that something was 'a damned nuisance'; and the barmaid leant over the counter: 'A shilling, sir,' she said, with the coolest cheek in the world. 'What for?' I demanded. 'A fine, sir, for swearing,' she answered, with the most perfect assurance. 'Now, look here, young woman,' I said, 'you just shut up, for I'm not going to stand any of your damned nonsense.' 'Two shillings, sir,' she said, in just the same tone. I wanted to argue the question, but she wouldn't say a word more. She just sent for the proprietor, and he said it was his wife's orders. She wouldn't have any female in her service insulted by bad language, and that fellow, the proprietor, actually supported his wife. What do you think of that for petticoat government? He made me pay up too, by Jove! I was obliged to do it, to save a row. Now, what do you think of that for a sign of the times?"

Mr. Price twitched his nose, and looked at Mr. St. John.

"Some signs of the times are hopeful, certainly," the latter said enigmatically.

"What! talking seriously in these our hours of ease?" Mrs. Guthrie Brimston broke in. "What is it all about?"

"I was just about to remark that I like a woman to *be* a woman," Captain Belliot rejoined, ogling the lady, and with the general air of being sure that she at least could have no higher ambition than to attain to his ideal. "These bold creatures who put themselves forward, as so many of them do nowadays, are highly antipathetic to me; and

if you saw them! the most awful old harridans—with voices!—'Shrieking sisterhood' doesn't half come up to it!"

Mrs. Malcomson passed at that moment.

"Should you call *her* an old harridan?" Mr. St. John asked, smiling involuntarily.

"No," the naval man was obliged to confess; "she's deuced handsome; but she presumes on her good looks, and doesn't trouble herself to be agreeable. I took her in to dinner the other night, and could hardly get a word out of her—not that she can't talk, mind you; she just wouldn't—to pique my interest, you know. You may take your oath that was it. There's no being up to women. But she'll find herself stranded, if she doesn't take care. I shan't bother myself to pay her any more attention; and I'm a bad prophet if the other men in the place go out of their way to be civil to her much longer either. Besides," he said to Mr. Price, lowering his voice, but not enough to prevent Mr. St. John hearing—"her husband's jealous!" He turned up his eyes—"Game's not worth—you know!"

Again Mr. Price looked at Mr. St. John. The band struck up; another waltz began; scarcely anything else had been danced.

"Oh, this eternal one, two, three!" Mr. Price ejaculated; "how it wearies the mind! Society has sacrificed its most varied, wholesome, and graceful recreation—dancing—to this monotonous one, two three!"

He passed on, leaving Mr. St. John to his reflections.

Captain Belliot bent before Mrs. Guthrie Brimston: "Our dance, I think," he said, offering her his arm.

She took it, perking and preening herself, and began to say something about Mrs. Malcomson in agreement with his last remark: "You are quite right about her," Mr. St. John overheard. "She is always jeering at men. She abuses you wholesale. I've heard her often."

Captain Belliot's face darkened; but he put his arm round his partner, and they glided off together slowly.

When next they passed Mr. St. John, their faces wore a similar expression of drowsy sensuous delight, which gave them for the moment a curious likeness to each other. They looked incapable of speech or thought, or anything but the slow measure of their interwoven paces, and inarticulate emotion.

The scene made a painful impression on Mr. St. John, and he began to feel as much out of place as he looked.

"We churchmen are a failure," he thought. "We have done no good, and are barely tolerated. Poetry of the pulpit—spiritual anodyne—what is it? Something I cannot grasp; but something wrong somewhere. Is Mrs. Malcomson right? Is Mr. Price? Where are they?"

He looked about, but the dancers, with parted lips and drowsy, dreamy eyes, intoxicated with music and motion, floated past him in endless, regular succession, hemming him in, so that he could not move till the music stopped.

CHAPTER V

MRS. MALCOMSON had made her way over to where Evadne and Mrs. Beale were sitting. Both welcomed her cordially, and Evadne, in particular, brightened visibly when she saw her

approach. She was wearied by these vapid men, who had all said the same thing, and looked at her with the same expression one after the other the whole afternoon. Mrs. Sillenger and Mr. Price were also of the party, and Mrs. Malcomson, in a merry mood, was holding forth brightly when Mr. St. John joined them.

"Oh yes, we have our reward, we Englishwomen," she was saying. "We religiously obey our men. We do nothing of which they disapprove. We are the meekest sheep in the world. We scorn your independent, outspoken American women, Mr. Price; we think them bold and unwomanly, and do all we can to be as unlike them as possible. And what happens? Do our men adore us? Well, they continue to say so. But it is the Americans they marry."

Mr. Price twitched his nose and smiled.

"But tell me, Mr. Price," Mrs. Malcomson rattled on: "the fate of nations has hung upon your opinion, and your decisions are matter of history; so kindly condescend, of your goodness and of your wisdom, to tell us if you think that 'true womanliness' is endangered by our occupations or the cut of our clothes—I have it!" she broke off, clasping her hands. "Make us a speech! *Do!*"

"Oh yes, *do!*" the rest exclaimed simultaneously.

Mr. Price's mobile countenance twitched all over. He looked from one to the other, then, entering good-humouredly into the jest, he struck an attitude: "If true womanliness has been endangered by occupation or the fashion of a frock in the past, it will not be so much longer, or the signs of the times are most misleading," he began, with the ease of an orator. "The old ideals are changing, and we regret them—not for their value, for they were often mischievous enough; but as a sign of change, to which, in itself, mankind has an ineradicable objection—yet these changes must take place if we are ever to progress. For myself," he continued, "I should be very sorry to say that anything which honourable women of the day consider a reform, and propose to adopt, is 'unwomanly' or 'unsexing' until it has been thoroughly tried, and proved to be so. It sounds mere idiotcy, the thing is so obvious, when one reduces it to words, but yet neither men nor women themselves—for the most part—seem to recognise the fact that womanliness is a matter of sex, not of circumstances, occupation, or clothing; and each sex has instincts and proclivities which are peculiar to it, and do not differ to any remarkable extent even in the most diverse characters; from which we may be sure that those instincts are safe whatever happens. And as to the value of cherished 'ideals of womankind'—well, we have only to look back at many of the old ones, which had to be abandoned, and have been held up to the laughter and contempt of succeeding ages—although doubtless they were dear enough to the heart of man in their own day—to appreciate the worth of such. That little incident of Jane Austen, hiding away the precious manuscript she was engaged upon, under her plain sewing, when visitors arrived, ashamed to be caught at the 'unwomanly' occupation of writing romances, and shrinking with positive pain from the remarks which such poor foolish people as those she feared would have made about her—that little incident alone, which I remarked very early in life, has saved me from braying with the rest of the world upon this subject. If those brave women, sure of

themselves and of their message, who have written in the face of all opposition, had not dared to do so, how much the poorer and meaner and worse we should all, men and women alike, have been to-day for want of the nourishment of strength and goodness with which they have kept us provided. And you will find it so in these questions of our day. Women are bringing a storm about their ears, but they are prepared for that, and it will not deter them; for they have an infallible prescience in these matters which men have not, and they know what they are doing and why, and could make their motives plain to us if it were not for our own stupid prejudices and density. Ah! these are critical times, but I believe what a fellow-countryman of mine has already written—I believe that the women will save us. I do not fear the fate of the older peoples. I am sure that we shall not fall into nothingness from the present height of our civilisation, by reason of our sensuality and vice, as all the great nations have done heretofore. The women will rebel. The women will not allow it. But"—he added, with his benign smile, dropping into a lighter tone, as if he felt that he had been more serious than the occasion warranted, and addressing Mrs. Malcomson specially—"but you must not despise your personal appearance. Beauty is a great power, and it may be used for good as well as for evil. Beauty is beneficent as well as malign. Angels are always allowed to be beautiful, and our highest ideal of manhood is associated with physical as well as moral perfection. Yes! Be sure that beauty is a legitimate means of grace; and I will venture to suggest that you who have it should use it as such." Here he was interrupted by applause. "True beauty, I mean, of course," he added, descending from the rostrum, as it were, and speaking colloquially—"not the fashionable travesty of it."

"Well, that is a piece of servility I have never been so degraded as to practise," Mrs. Malcomson exclaimed.

"Ah, my dear, it does not do to be singular," Mrs. Beale mildly remonstrated.

A dance concluded just at this moment, and Edith joined the group, followed by Sir Mosley Menteith.

The ladies looked at her as she approached with affectionate interest and admiration.

"I am always conscious of their presence," she was saying.

"Whose presence, dear?" her mother asked.

"The presence of those who love us, mother, in the other life," she said, looking out into space with great serious eyes, as if she saw something grand and beautiful, and also love-inspiring. The words and her presence changed the whole mental attitude of the group. The intellectual element subsided, the spiritual, which trenches on sensation and is warm, began to glow in their breasts. Edith was the actor now, and Mrs. Malcomson became a mere spectator. Mr. St. John was the first to appreciate the change. Edith's presence, more than her words, was enough in itself to relax the tension of pained reflection which had possessed him the whole afternoon. It was as if a draught of the sacred anodyne to which he had been so long accustomed were being held out to him, and he had drained it eagerly, to excite feeling and to drown thought.

"Mosley does not think they are so near us as I know them to be," Edith pursued; "but I tell

him, if only he would allow himself, he would perceive their presence just as I do. He says this scene is so worldly it would frighten them; but I answer that they cannot be frightened; they are incorruptible, so that there is nothing for them to fear for themselves—but they may fear for us, and when they do, we know that it is then that they are nearest to us. They come to guard us."

Menteith's glance wandered over her person as she spoke, and returned again to meet her eyes. He quite enjoyed a thrill of superstitious awe; it was an excellent *sauce piquante* to what he called his "sentiments"—by which he meant the state of his senses at the moment. He recognised in Edith no higher quality than that of innocence, which is so appetising.

But a gentle thrill, as of an electric shock, had passed through them all, silencing them. Mrs. Beale, with a sigh, released herself from the uneasy impression Mrs. Malcomson's words had made upon her, and felt the peace of mind, which she managed to preserve by refusing to know of anything that might disturb it and rouse her soul from its apathetic calm to the harassing point of action, restored. Mrs. Sillenger gave herself up for the moment also. Her fine nature, although highly tempered and exceedingly sensitive, was too broad to allow her to delude herself by imagining that it is right to countenance evil by ignoring it. She shrank from knowledge, but still she had the courage to possess herself of it; and, fortunately, her very sensitiveness enabled her to turn with ease from the consideration of terrible facts to the enjoyment of a fine idea.

Mrs. Malcomson and Mr. Austin Price looked at each other involuntarily. The new element was not congenial to either of them. But Mr. St. John was satisfied. His heart had expanded to the full: "Mr. Price is wrong, Mrs. Malcomson is wrong," was the new measure to which he set his thoughts. "They exaggerated the evil; they have never perceived in what the good consists. And what do they do with all their wondrous clever talk? They withdraw our attention from the contemplation of holy things only to pain and excite us; for sin must continue, and suffering must continue, and we can do no more than we have done. Example—a good example! We have only each to set one, and say nothing. Talk, talk, talk; I will listen no more to such tattle! It is mere pride of intellect, which is put to shame by the first gentle innocent girl who comes, strong in purity and faith, and simply bids us all look up! Did not our heart burn within us? Was not the worst among us and the most worldly moved to repent?" He looked across at Menteith, but suddenly the exaltation ceased, and his soul shot with a pang to another extreme. "He is not worthy of her—he is not worthy of her—no! no! Heaven help me to save her from such a fate!" His mind had been nourished upon inconsistencies, and he was as unconscious of any now as he was when he preached—as he had been taught—that God orders all things for the best, and at the same time prayed Him to avert some special catastrophe.

Menteith was bending over Edith.

"I want to lunch with you to-morrow," he said. "Do let me. I love to hear you talk. Just to be near you makes a better man of me. But you can make anything you like of me; you know you can. May I come?"

Edith glanced up at him and smiled, and the young man, taking this for acquiescence, bowed

and withdrew in triumph, making way for Colonel Colquhoun.

Evadne looked up at the latter and smiled too. "Shall we go?" she said.

"I came to see if you were ready," he answered; and then she rose, took leave of the friends about her, crossed the deck to where Captain Belliot, her host, was standing, shook hands with him, and left the ship. Many eyes had followed her with curiosity and interest; and many tongues made remarks about her when she was gone, expressing positive opinions with the confident conceit of mediocrity, although she had not at that time made any sign of what manner of person she really was. She had only been a week amongst them, and her mind had been in a state of passive receptivity the whole time, subject to the impressions which might be made upon it, but not itself producing any. It was her appearance that they presumed to judge her by. But her intellect had been both nourished and stimulated that afternoon, and when she went to her room at night she hunted up a manuscript book suitable for the purpose, and resumed her old habit of noting everything of interest which she had seen and heard. There were blank pages still in the old "Commonplace Book," and she had it with her, but she never dreamt of making another note in it. She had written her last there once for all the night before her wedding, expecting to enter upon a new phase of existence; and she had indeed entered upon a new phase, although not at all in the way she had expected; and now she felt that only a new volume would be appropriate to contain the record of it.

She ended her notes that night with a maxim which probably contained all the wisdom she had been able to extract from her late experiences:—"Just do a thing, and don't talk about it," she wrote, expressing herself colloquially. "This is the great secret of success in all enterprises. Talk means discussion, discussion means irritation, irritation means opposition, and opposition means hindrance always, whether you are right or wrong."

CHAPTER VI

EVADNE settled down into her new position at once. She took charge of the household and managed it well. Colonel Colquhoun was scrupulous in matters of etiquette, and Evadne's love of order and exactitude made her punctilious too, so that there was one subject which they agreed upon perfectly, and it very soon came to be said of them that they always did the right thing. They appeared together everywhere, at the Palace receptions, the opera, entertainments on naval vessels, dinners and dances, polo and picnics, and at church. If there was one thing that Colquhoun was more particular about than another, it was, in the language of his own profession, church parade. Watching Evadne to detect the first symptom of new tactics on her part, became one of the interests of his life. It wouldn't have been good form to take another man into his confidence for betting purposes, seeing that the lady was "Mrs. Colquhoun"; but a wager laid upon the chances of change in her "views" was the only zest lacking to the pleasure he took in the study of this new specimen of her sex. He used to dance a good deal himself, and danced well too, but after Evadne joined him he gave it up to a great extent, and might often have been seen leaning against a pillar

in a ballroom gravely observing her. It was a kind of curiosity he suffered from, a sort of rage to make her out. He was very attentive to her at that period, treating her always with the deference due to a young lady, and for that reason she accepted his attentions gratefully, because they were delicately paid and he was really kind, but also as a matter of course. They had begun well together from the very first day, and she was soon satisfied that her position at Malta was the happiest possible. The beautiful place, the bright clear atmosphere, the lively society, all suited her. She had none of the trials peculiar to married life to injure her health and break her spirit, none of the restrictions imposed upon a girl to limit her pleasures, and she enjoyed her independence thoroughly. But of course there were drawbacks, and the thing of all others she disliked most was being toadied. There was one pair of inveterate toadies in the garrison, Major and Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. They belonged to a class well known in the service, and tolerated on the principle of *Damne-toi, pourvu que tu nous amuse*. Major Guthrie Brimston claimed to be one of the Morningquest family, and he had a portrait of the duke, as the head of the house, in his dressing-room. It was balanced on the right by *Ecce Homo*, and on the left by the *Sistine Madonna*, but it was popularly supposed that he worshipped the duke. The pair acted the rôle of devoted husband and wife successfully, being in fact sincere in their habit of playing into each other's hands for their own selfish purposes; and people who wished for an excuse to tolerate them because they were amusing, might say of them quite truly, "Well, whatever their faults, they are certainly devoted to each other." But it was a partnership of self-interest, enhanced by a little sentimentality; and they understood it themselves, for Mrs. Guthrie Brimston confessed in a moment of expansion that she knew "Bobbie" would marry again directly she died, and certainly she would do the same if she lost him; why shouldn't she?

Mrs. Guthrie Brimston was a nasty-minded woman, of extremely coarse conversation, and, without compromising herself, she was a fecund source of corruption in others. No younger woman of undecided character could come under her influence without being tainted in mind if not in manners. She delighted in objectionable stories, and her husband fed her fancy from the clubs liberally. Her stock-in-trade consisted for the most part of these stories, which she would retail to her lady friends at afternoon teas. She told them remarkably well too, and knew exactly how to suit them to palates which were only just beginning to acquire a taste for such fare, and were still fastidious. Wherever she came there was laughter among the ladies, of the high, hysteric, bacchante kind, not true mirth, but a loud laxity, into which they were beguiled for the moment, and which was the cause of self-distrust, disgust, and regret, upon reflection, to the better kind. If the question of motive is to be taken into account in considering the words and deeds of people, it may be confidently asserted that the Guthrie Brimstons never said a good-natured thing nor did a kind one. "I say, Minnie, if I give that sergeant of mine a goose at Christmas I think I'll get more work out of the fellow next year," Major Brimston said to his wife at breakfast one morning. "Yes, do," his wife answered sympathetically. "And I say, Bobbie, I'm going to work Captain Askew a bedspread. He's an awfully useful little man."

One form of pleasantry the Guthrie Brimstons greatly affected was nicknaming. They nicknamed everybody, always opprobriously, often happily in the way of hitting off a salient peculiarity; but they were not in the least aware that they were themselves the best nicknamed people in the service. And they would not have liked it had they known it, for they were both exceedingly touchy. They held no feelings of another sacred, but their own supreme. Mrs. Guthrie Brimston was known as "The Brimston Woman."

Her conversation bristled with vain repetitions. She was always "a worm" when asked after her health, and everything that pleased her was "pucka." She knew no language but her own, and that she spoke indifferently, her command of it being limited for the most part to slang expressions, which are the scum of language, and a few stock phrases of polite quality for special occasions. But she used the latter awkwardly, as workmen wear their Sunday clothes.

Of the Guthrie Brimston morals it is safe to say that they would neither of them have broken either the sixth, seventh, or eighth commandments; but they bore false witness freely—not in open assertion, however, for that could be easily refuted, and fair fight was not at all in their line. But when false witness could be meanly conveyed by implication and innuendo, it formed the staple of their conversation.

"Those Guthrie Brimstons should be public prosecutors," Evadne said to Colonel Colquhoun at breakfast one morning, commenting upon some story of theirs which he had just retailed to her. "I notice when anyone's character is brought forward to be judged by society they are always counsel for the prosecution."

These were the people whom Colonel Colquhoun first introduced to Evadne. They amused him, and therefore he encouraged them to come to the house. Mrs. Guthrie Brimston suited him exactly. To use their own choice language, he would have given her away at any time, and she him; but that did not prevent them enjoying each other's society thoroughly.

True to her determination to make things pleasant for Colonel Colquhoun if possible, and seeing that he found these people congenial, Evadne did her best to cultivate their acquaintance for his sake. Never successfully, however. A mere tolerance was as far as she got; but even that was intermittent; and the undercurrent of criticism which streamed through her mind in their presence could never be checked. But she was slow to read character. Her impulse was always to believe in people, and to like them; and she had to acquire a knowledge of their faults painfully, bit by bit. But Colonel Colquhoun helped her here. He was an inveterate gossip, very much in the manner of Mrs. Guthrie Brimston herself, only that he was more refined when he talked to Evadne; and at breakfast, their one *tête-à-tête* meal in the day, it was his habit to tell her such club stories as were sufficiently decent, and what "he said" and what "she said" of each other, upon which he would strike an average to arrive at the probable truth.

"Do you happen to know what is at the bottom of the feud between Mrs. Guthrie Brimston and Mrs. Malcomson?" he asked her one morning at breakfast.

"Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's defects of character obviously," said Evadne sententiously.

"Then you prefer Mrs. Malcomson?" he suggested. "Now, I can't get on with her a bit.

She always appears to me so cold and censorious."

"Does she?" said Evadne thoughtfully. "But she is not really so at all. She is judicial, though, and sincere, which gives one a sense of security in her presence."

"But she is deadly dull," said Colonel Colquhoun.

"Oh no!" Evadne exclaimed, smiling. "You mistake her entirely. She made me laugh immoderately only yesterday."

"I should like to see you laugh immoderately," said Colonel Colquhoun.

Major Guthrie Brimston surprised Evadne more, perhaps, than his wife did. She began by overlooking the little man somehow without the least intending it, and as he seemed to himself to fill the horizon when in society and block out all view of anybody else, he could only believe that she did it on purpose.

He was by way of being an amateur actor, a low comedy man; but he was not sincere enough to personate any character, or be anything either on the stage or off it but his own small inartistic self; and no amount of bawling could make him an actor, though he bawled himself hoarse as a rule, mistaking sound for the science of expression. Still, it was the fashion to consider him funny. People called him "Grigsby" and "Kickleberry Brown," and laughed when he twiddled his thumbs. He was for ever buffooning, and if he sat on a high stool with his toes just touching the floor, his head on one side, a sad expression of countenance, and the tips of his fingers touching, he was supposed to be doing something amusing, and the effort would be rewarded with laughter, in which, however, Evadne could not join. These performances outraged her sense of the dignity of poor human nature, which it is easy enough to discount but very difficult to maintain, and made her sorry for him.

His hands were another offence to her. They were fat and podgy, with short pointed fingers, indicative of animalism and ill-nature, the opposite of all that is refined and beautiful—truly of necessity an offence to her.

It was at first that she had overlooked him, but after a time, when she began to know him better, the little, fat, funny man magnetised her attention. She could not help gravely considering him wherever she met him, and wondering about him—wondering about them both, in fact. She wondered, for one thing, why they were so fond of eating and drinking, her own taste in those matters being of the simplest description.

"I never deny myself anything," said Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. And she looked like it.

Evadne wondered also at their meanness, when she saw them saving money by borrowing the carriages of people whom she had heard them class as "Nothing but shopkeepers, you know. We shouldn't speak to them anywhere else"; and whom they ridiculed habitually for the mispronunciation of words, and for accents unmistakably provincial.

What could Evadne have in common with these flippant people—scum themselves, for ever on the surface, incapable even of seeing beneath, their every idea and motive a falsification of something divine in life or thought? They did not even speak the same language. To their insidious slang she opposed a smooth current of perfect English, which seemed to reflect upon the inferior quality of their own expressions and led to mutual embarrassment. Evadne meant every word she uttered,

and was careful to choose the one which should best express her meaning. Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's meanings, on the other hand, told best when half concealed. Another difficulty was, too, that Evadne's clear, decided speech had the effect of exposing innuendo and insincerity, and making both "bad form," which, socially speaking, is a much more terrible stigma to bear than an accusation of dishonesty, however well authenticated. And even their very manner of expressing legitimate mirth was not the same, for Mrs. Guthrie Brimston laughed aloud, while Evadne's laugh was soundless.

Evadne suffered when she found herself being toadied by these people. She said nothing, however. They were Colonel Colquhoun's friends, and she felt herself forced to be civil to them so long as he chose to bring them to the house. And they were, besides, an evil out of which good came to her quickly. For as soon as she understood their manners and their modes of thought, she felt her heart fill with earnest self-congratulation: "If these are the kind of people whom Colonel Colquhoun prefers," was her mental ejaculation, "what an escape I have had! Thank Heaven, he is nothing to me."

CHAPTER VII

SOCIETY in Malta during the sunny winter is very much like the society of a London season, only that it is more representative because there are fewer specimens of each class, and those who do go out are like delegates charged with a concentrated extract of the peculiarities and prejudices of their own set. When Evadne arrived, at the beginning of the winter, the rest of the party had already assembled. There were naval people, military, commercial, landed gentry, clerical, royalty, and beer. The principal representative of this latter interest was a lady whom Mrs. Guthrie Brimston called the Queen of Beersheba because of her splendid habiliments, and this is a fair specimen of Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's wit.

Evadne was received in silence, as it were, for abroad the question is not generally "Who are you?" as at home, but "What are you like?" or "How much can you do for us?" and people were waiting till she showed her colours. She never did show any decided colours of the usual kind, however. She was not "a beauty beyond doubt"—some people did not admire her in the least. She was not "the same" or "nice" to everybody, for she had strong objections to certain people, and showed that she had; and she was not "by way of entertaining" at all, although she did "as much of that kind of thing" as other ladies of her station. But yet, with all these negatives, she made a distinct impression on the place as soon as she appeared. It sounds paradoxical, but she was celebrated at once for her silence and for what she had said. The weight of her occasional utterances told. And if it were fair to call Mrs. Guthrie Brimston counsel for the prosecution, Evadne might have been set up as counsel for the defence; for it so happened that when she did speak in those early days it was usually in defence of something or somebody—people, principles, absent friends, or enemies; anything unfairly attacked. Generally, when she said anything cutting, it was so clearly incisive you hardly knew for a moment where you were injured. She did it like the executioner of that Eastern potentate who de-

capitated a criminal with such skill and with so sharp an instrument that the latter did not know when he was executed and went on talking, his head remaining *in situ* until he sneezed. There was one old gentleman, Lord Groome, whom she had disposed of several times in that way without, however, being able to get rid of him quite, because his stupidity was a hardy perennial which came up again all the fresher and stronger for having been lopped. He was a degenerated, ridiculous-looking old object, a man with the most touching confidence in his tailor, which the latter invariably betrayed by never making him a garment that fitted him. He had begun by admiring Evadne, and had endeavoured to pay his senile court to her with fulsome flatteries in the manner approved of his kind—but he ended by being afraid of her.

His first collision with Evadne was on the subject of "those low Radicals," against whom he had been launching out in unmeasured terms. "Why low, because Radical?" she asked. "I should have thought, among so many, that some must be honest men, and nothing honest can be low."

"I tell you, my dear lady," he replied, his temper tried by her words, but controlled by her appearance, "I tell you the Radicals are a low lot, the whole of them."

"Ah! Then I suppose you know them all," she said, looking at him thoughtfully.

The want of intelligence in the community at large was made painfully apparent by the stories of her peculiar opinions which were freely circulated and seldom suspected. The Queen of Beersheba declared that Evadne approved of the frightful cruelties which the people inflicted on the nobles during the Reign of Terror, that she had heard her say so herself.

What Evadne did say was: "The revolutionary excesses were inevitable. They came at the swing of the pendulum which the nobles themselves had set in motion; and if you consider the sufferings that had been inflicted on the people, and their long endurance of them, you will be more surprised to think that they kept their reason so long than that they should have lost it at last. 'Pour la populace ce n'est jamais par envie d'attaquer qu'elle se soulève, mais par impatience de souffrir.'"

But the French Revolution is an abstract subject of impersonal interest compared with the Irish question at the present time; and the commotion which was caused by the misrepresentation of Evadne's remarks about the Reign of Terror was insignificant compared with what followed when her feeling for Ireland had been misinterpreted. She gave out the text which called forth the second series of imbecilities during a dinner-party at her own house one night, her old friend, Lord Groome, supplying her with a peg upon which to hang her conclusions, by making an intemperate attack upon the Irish.

CHAPTER VIII

CAPTAIN BELLIOU was not one of the guests at that dinner-party of Evadne's, but he happened to call on Mrs. Guthrie Brimston next day, and finding her alone, had tea with her *tête-à-tête*; and of course she entertained him with her own version of what had occurred the night before.

"The dinner itself was very good," she said. "All their dinners are, you know. But Mrs.

Colquhoun was"—she raised her hands, and nodded her head—"well, just *too* awful!" she concluded.

"Indeed!" he observed, leaning back in his chair, crossing his legs, and settling himself for a treat generally. "You surprise me, because she has never struck me as being the kind of person who would set the Thames on fire in any way."

Mrs. Guthrie Brimston smiled enigmatically: "Do you admire her very much?" she asked, with the utmost suavity.

"Well," he answered warily, "she is rather peculiar in appearance, don't you know."

Mrs. Guthrie Brimston drew her own conclusions, not from the words, but from the wariness, and proceeded: "It is not in appearance only that she is peculiar, then. She astonished us all last night, I can assure you."

"How?" he asked, to fill up an artistic pause.

"By the things she said!" Mrs. Guthrie Brimston answered, with an affectation of reserve.

"Now you do surprise me!" Captain Belliot declared. "Because I cannot imagine her saying anything but 'How do you do?' and 'Good-bye,' 'Yes' and 'No,' 'Indeed!' 'Please,' 'Thank you,' and 'Do you think so?' On my honour, those words are all I have ever heard her utter, and I have met her as often as anybody on the island. Now, *I* like a woman with something in her," he concluded, ogling Mrs. Guthrie Brimston.

"Well, then, she must have been hibernating, or something, when she first came out, for she has begun to talk now with a vengeance," Mrs. Guthrie Brimston answered smartly.

"But what has she been saying?" he asked, with great curiosity.

"I simply cannot tell you!" she answered pointedly.

"So bad as that?" he said, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes. Things that *no* woman should have said," she subjoined, with emphasis.

There was, of course, only one conclusion to be drawn from this, and it would have been drawn at the club later in the day inevitably, even if other ladies had not also declared that Mrs. Colquhoun had said such dreadful things that they really could not repeat them. It is true that some of the men of the party mentioned the matter in a different way, and one, when asked what it was exactly that Mrs. Colquhoun had said, even answered casually, "Oh, some rot about the Irish question!" But the explanation made no impression, and was immediately forgotten. Captain Belliot himself was so excited by the news that he hurried away from Mrs. Guthrie Brimston as soon as he could possibly excuse himself without giving offence, and went at once to call upon Evadne in order to inspect her from this unexpected point of view.

He found her talking tranquilly to Mr. St. John, Edith, and Mrs. Beale; and although he sat for half an hour, she never said a word of the slightest significance. That, however, proved nothing either one way or the other, and he left her with his confidence in Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's insinuations quite unshaken, his theory being that the women whose minds are in reality the most corrupt are as a rule very carefully guarded in their conversation, although, of course, they always betray themselves sooner or later by some such slip as that with which he credited Evadne—an idea which he proceeded to expand at the club with great effect.

Evadne's reputation was in danger after that, and she risked it still further by acting in defiance

of the public opinion of the island generally, in order to do what she conceived to be an act of justice.

Mrs. Guthrie Brimston went to her one morning, brimming over with news.

"My husband has just received a letter from a friend of his in India, Major Lopside, telling him to warn us all not to call on Mrs. Clarence, who has just joined your regiment," she burst out. "I thought I ought to let you know at once. She met her husband in India, Major Lopside says, and it was a runaway match. But that is not all. For he says he knows for a fact that they travelled together for three hundred miles down country, sleeping at all the dak bungalows by the way, before they *were* married!"

"Waiting until they came to some place where they could be married, I suppose?" Evadne suggested.

Mrs. Guthrie Brimston laughed. "Taking a sort of trial trip, I should say!" she ventured. "But it was very good of Major Lopside to let us know. I should certainly have called if he hadn't."

"You make me feel sick"—Evadne began.

"I knew I should!" Mrs. Guthrie Brimston interposed triumphantly.

"Sick at heart," Evadne pursued, "to think of an Englishman being capable of writing a letter for the express purpose of ruining a woman's reputation."

Mrs. Brimston changed countenance. "*We* think it was awfully kind of Major Lopside to let us know," she repeated, perking.

"Well, *I* think," said Evadne, her slow utterance giving double weight to each word—"I think he must be an exceedingly low person himself, and one probably whom Mrs. Clarence has had to snub. He could only have been actuated by animus when he wrote that letter. One may be quite sure that a man is never disinterested when he does a low thing."

"It was a private letter written for our *private* information," Mrs. Guthrie Brimston asserted. She was ruffled considerably by this time.

"No, not written for your private information," Evadne rejoined, "or if it were, you are making a strange use of it. I have no doubt, however, that it was designed for the very purpose to which you are putting it—the purpose of spoiling the Clarences' chance of happiness in a new place. And it is precisely to the 'private' character of the document that I take exception. If this Major Lopside has any accusation to bring against Captain Clarence, he should have done it publicly, and not in this underhand manner. He should have written to Colonel Colquhoun."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Guthrie Brimston, her native rudeness getting the better of her habitual caution at this provocation. "Major Lopside would not be fool enough to report a man to his own chief. Why, he might get the worst of it himself if there were an inquiry."

"Exactly," Evadne answered. "He thinks it safer to stab in the dark. Will you kindly excuse me? I am very busy this morning, writing my letters for the mail. But many thanks for letting me know about this malicious story."

There was nothing for it but to retire after this, which Mrs. Guthrie Brimston did, discomfited, and with an uneasy feeling, which had been growing upon her lately, that Evadne was not quite the nonentity for which she had mistaken her.

Colonel Colquhoun had lunched at mess that day, and Evadne did not see him until quite late, when she met him on the Barraca with the Guthrie Brimstons.

It was the hour when the Barraca is thronged, and Evadne had gone with a purpose, expecting to find him there.

He left the Guthrie Brimstons and joined her as soon as she appeared.

"I have been home to look for you," he said, "but I found that you had gone out without an escort, no one knew where."

"I have been making calls," Evadne answered—"and making Mrs. Clarence's acquaintance also. Oh, there she is, leaning against that arch with her husband. Have you met her yet? Let me introduce you. She is charmingly pretty, but very timid."

Colonel Colquhoun's brow contracted.

"I thought Mrs. Guthrie Brimston had warned you"—

"Warned me?" Evadne quietly interposed. "Mrs. Guthrie Brimston brought me a scandalous story which had the effect of making me call on Mrs. Clarence at once. I suppose you have seen this precious Major Lopside's letter?"

"Yes," he answered. "And I am sorry you called without consulting me. You really ought to have consulted me. It will make it doubly awkward for you, having called. But we'll rush the fellow. I'll make him send in his papers at once."

"Why is it awkward for me—what is awkward for me?" Evadne asked.

"Why, having a lady in the regiment you can't know, to begin with, and having to cut her after calling upon her," he answered. "If you would only condescend to consult me occasionally I could save you from this kind of thing."

"But why may I not countenance Mrs. Clarence?"

"You cannot countenance a woman there is a story about," he responded decidedly.

"But where is the proof of the story?" she asked.

Colonel Colquhoun reflected: "A man wouldn't write a letter of that kind without some grounds for it," he said.

"We must find out what the exact grounds were," said Evadne.

"Well, you see none of the other ladies are speaking to her," Colonel Colquhoun observed, with the air of one whose argument is unanswerable.

"They are sheep," said Evadne, "but they can be led aright as well as astray, I suppose. We'll see, at all events. But don't let me keep you from your friends. I want to speak to Mrs. Malcomson."

There was a quiet sense of power about Evadne when she chose to act which checked opposition at the outset, and put an end to argument. Colonel Colquhoun looked disheartened, but like a gentleman he acted at once on the hint to go. He did not rejoin the Guthrie Brimstons, however, but sat alone under one of the arches of the Barraca, turning his back on the entrancing view of the Grand Harbour, a jewel of beauty, set in silence.

Colonel Colquhoun was watching. He saw Mrs. Clarence turn from the strange Christian women who eyed her coldly, and lean over the parapet; he saw the influence of the scene upon her mind in the sweet and tranquil expression which gradually replaced the half-pained, half-puzzled look her face had been wearing. He saw her husband standing beside her, but with his back to the parapet, looking at the people gloomily and with resentment, but also half puzzled, perceiving that his wife was being slighted, and wondering why.

Colonel Colquhoun saw Mrs. Guthrie Brimston also, going from one group to another with the peculiar ducking-forward gait of a high-hipped, high-shouldered woman, followed by her little fat

"Bobbie," smiling herself, and met with smiles which were followed by noisy laughter; and he noticed, too, that invariably the eyes of those she addressed turned upon Mrs. Clarence, and their faces grew hard and unfriendly; and not one person to whom she spoke looked the happier or the better for the attention when she left them. Colonel Colquhoun, with a set countenance, slowly curled his blond moustache. Only his eyes moved, following Mrs. Guthrie Brimston for a while, and then returning to Evadne. She was speaking to Mrs. Malcomson, and the latter looked, as she listened, at Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. Then Evadne took her arm, and the two sauntered over to Mrs. Beale—an important person, who always adopted the last charitable opinion she heard expressed positively, and acted upon it.

It was Mrs. Malcomson who spoke to her, and the effect of what she said was instantaneous, for the old lady bridled visibly, and then set out, accompanied by Edith, with the obvious intention of heading the relief party herself that very minute. She stationed herself beside Mrs. Clarence, and stood patting the poor girl's hand with motherly tenderness, smiling at her, and saying conventional nothings in a most cordial manner.

Colonel Colquhoun had watched these proceedings, understanding them perfectly, but remaining impassive as at first. And Mrs. Guthrie Brimston had also seen signs of the reaction the moment it set in, and shown her astonishment. She was not accustomed to be checked in full career when it pleased her to be down upon another woman, and she didn't quite know what to do. She looked first at Colonel Colquhoun, inviting him to rejoin her, but he ignored the glance; and she therefore found herself obliged either to give him up or go to him. She decided to go to him, and set out, attended by her own "Bobbie." By the time she reached him, however, the last act of the little play had begun. Evadne was standing apart with Captain Clarence, looking up at him and speaking—with her usual unimpassioned calm, to judge by the expression of her face, but Mrs. Guthrie Brimston had begun to realise that when Evadne did speak it was to some purpose, and she watched now and awaited the event in evident trepidation.

"She's not telling him! She never would dare to!" slipped from her unawares.

"They are coming this way," Colonel Colquhoun observed significantly.

"I shall go!" cried Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. "Come, Bobbie!"

It was too late, however; they were surrounded.

"Be good enough to remain a moment," Captain Clarence exclaimed authoritatively. Then turning to Colonel Colquhoun, he said, "I understand that these people have in their possession a letter containing a foul slander against my wife and myself, and that they have been using it to injure us in the estimation of everybody here. If it be possible, sir, I should like to have an official inquiry instituted into the circumstances of my marriage at once."

"Very well, Captain Clarence," Colonel Colquhoun answered ceremoniously.

"I'll apologise," Major Guthrie Brimston gasped.

But Captain Clarence turned on his heel, and walked back to his wife as if he had not heard.

How the inquiry was conducted was not made public. But when it was said that the Clarences had been cleared, and seen that the Guthrie Brimstons had not suffered, society declared it to have been a case of six of one and half a