

As is inevitable, however, under such circumstances, this obvious interpretation was rejected, and the most uncharitable construction put upon her words. It was said, among other things, that she evidently could not be moral at heart, whatever her conduct might be, because she made mention of immorality in her book. Her manner of mentioning the subject was not taken into consideration, because such sheep cannot consider; they can only criticise. The next thing they did, therefore, was to take out the incident in the book which was most likely to damage her reputation, and declare that it was autobiographical. There was one man who knew exactly when the thing had occurred, who the characters were, and all about it.

"*Nunc dimittis!*" said Mrs. Malcomson when she heard the story; "for the same thing has been said of the author of any book of consequence that has ever appeared." And naturally she was somewhat puffed up. But it remained for Mrs. Guthrie Brimston to cap the criticisms. Her smouldering antagonism to Mrs. Malcomson was kept alight by a strong suspicion she had that Mrs. Malcomson was wont to ridicule her; and as a matter of fact, the best jokes of that winter *were* made by Mrs. Malcomson at the expense of Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. It was not likely, therefore, that the latter would spare Mrs. Malcomson if she ever had an opportunity of crushing her, and she watched and waited long for a chance, until at last, one night at a dinner-party, she thought the auspicious moment had arrived, and hastened to take advantage of it; but, unfortunately for her, she chose a weapon she was unaccustomed to handle, and in her awkwardness she injured herself.

Mr. Price was giving the dinner, and Mrs. Malcomson was not there, but the Colquhouns and Sillengers were, and other friends of hers, kindly disposed, cultivated people, who spoke well of her, and were all agreed in their praise of her work.

Mrs. Guthrie Brimston stiffened as she listened to their remarks, but held her peace for a time, with thin lips compressed, and rising ire apparent.

"I cannot class the book," said Colonel Sillenger. "It does not claim to be fact exactly, and yet it is not fiction."

"Not a novel, but a novelty," Major Guthrie Brimston put in, clasping his hands on his breast, twiddling his thumbs, and setting his head on one side, the "business" with which he usually accompanied one of his facetious sallies.

"What I admire most about Mrs. Malcomson is her courage," said Mr. Price. "She ignores no fact of life which may be usefully noticed and commented upon, but gives each in its natural order without affectation. Do you not agree with me?" he asked, turning to Mrs. Guthrie Brimston, who was standing beside him.

Her nostrils flapped. "If you mean to say that you *like* Mrs. Malcomson's book, I do *not* agree with you," she answered decidedly; "I consider it *improper*, simply!"

There was a momentary silence, such as sometimes precedes a burst of applause at a theatre; and then there was laughter! Such an objection from such a quarter was considered too funny, and when it became known, there was quite a run upon the book; for Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's stories were familiar to the members of all the messes, naval and military, in and about the island, not to mention the club men, and the curiosity to know what she did consider an objectionable form of

impropriety in narrative made Mrs. Malcomson's fortune.

From that time forward, however, Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's influence was perceptibly upon the wane. Even Colonel Colquhoun wearied of her—to Evadne's great regret. For Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's vulgarity and coarseness of mind were always balanced by her undoubted propriety of conduct, and her faults were altogether preferable to the exceeding polish and refinement which covered the absolutely corrupt life of a new acquaintance Colonel Colquhoun had made at this time, a Mrs. Drinkworthy, who would not have lingered alone with him anywhere in public, but dressed sumptuously at his expense the whole season. The different estimation in which he held the two ladies, and his respect for Evadne herself, was emphasised by the fact that he never brought Mrs. Drinkworthy to the Colquhoun House, nor encouraged Evadne to associate with her as he had always encouraged her to associate with Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. And there can be no doubt that the latter's influence was restraining, for, after his allegiance to her relaxed, Evadne noticed new changes for the worse in him, and regretted them all the more because she feared that a chance remark of her own had had something to do with weaning him from the Guthrie Brimstons. She had been having tea with him there one day, and on their way home Colonel Colquhoun said something to her about the Guthrie Brimstons having been unusually amusing.

"They only seemed unusually talkative to me," she answered; "but I always come away from their house depressed, and with a very low estimate of human nature generally. I feel that their mockery is essentially 'the fume of little minds'; and when they are particularly facetious at other people's expense, I leave them with the pleasing certainty that our own peculiarities will be put under the microscope as soon as we are out of earshot, a species of inquisition from which no human being can escape with dignity."

Colonel Colquhoun reflected upon this. His horror of being made to appear ridiculous may have hitherto blinded him to the possibility of such a thing—there is no knowing; but, at all events, it was from that time forward that he began to go less to the Guthrie Brimstons.

He was just at the age, however, when the manners of certain men begin to deteriorate, especially in domestic life. Their capacity for pleasure has been lessened by abuse, and they have to excite it with stimulants. They become less careful in their appearance, are not particular in their choice of words before the ladies of their own families, nor nice in their manners at table. If not already married, they look about for something young and docile on which to inflict their ill-humours, and expect to have their maladies of mind and body tenderly cared for in return for such ecstatic joy as young wives find in the sober certainties of board and lodging. Should they be married already, however, Heaven be good to their wives, for they will have no comfort upon earth!

But doubtless, in the good time coming, all estimable wives will subscribe to keep up asylums to which their husbands can be quietly removed for treatment, so soon after the honeymoon as their manners show signs of deterioration. When they begin to be greedy, forget to say "please," "thank you," and "I beg your pardon"; show no consideration for anyone's comfort but their own, no natural affection, and lose control of

their tempers, the best thing that can be done for them, and the kindest, is to place them under proper restraint at once. They cannot be treated at home. Opposition irritates them, and humouring such dreadful propensities submissively only confirms them.

The deterioration of Colonel Colquhoun had certainly been delayed by the arrangement which in honour bound him to treat Evadne as a young lady, and not as a wife; but that it should set in eventually was inevitable. When it did begin, however, it was less in manner, for the same reason that had delayed it, than in pursuits, and therefore Evadne's position was not affected by it, and she continued to have a kindly, affectionate feeling for him, and to pity him still without bitterness.

He began to stay out late at night at this time, and she would hear him occasionally in the small hours of the early morning returning from a bachelor dinner-party, or a big guest-night at mess, reeking, doubtless, of tobacco and stimulants. Verily, Ouida knows what she is writing about when she invariably adds "essences" to the toilet of her dissipated men. Evadne would wake with a start in the grey of the dawn sometimes, and hearing Colonel Colquhoun pass her door with unsteady step on his way to his own room, would shudder to think what his wife must have suffered. And it was not as if the sacrifice of herself would have made any difference to him either. If she could have done any good in that way she might have tried; but his habits were formed, and they were the outcome of his nature. Nothing would have changed him, and the longer she lived with him the more reason she had to be convinced of this, and to be sure that her decision had been a right and wise one.

But Colonel Colquhoun did not agree with her. He cherished the vain delusion that, although her influence as a young lady whom he admired and respected had not availed to elevate him, her presence as a wife, whose feelings he certainly would not have felt bound to consider, and whose opinion he would not have cared a rap for, would have made all the difference.

They drifted into a discussion of this subject one hot afternoon when he happened to find Evadne idling, for a wonder, with a fan at an open window.

"You might have made anything you liked of me had you adopted a different course," he said. He had been carousing the night before, and was now mistaking nausea and depression for a naturally good disposition perverted by ill-treatment.

"No," she answered gently. "I do not flatter myself that I should have succeeded where Mrs. Beston and half a dozen other ladies I could name even here, in a little place like Malta, all more lovable, estimable, and stronger in womanly attributes generally than I am, have failed. Colonel Beston is always with your particular clique—and she is very unhappy."

"She makes herself miserable, then," said Colonel Colquhoun, the natural man reappearing as the *malaise* passed off or was forgotten.

"What business is it of hers where he goes or what he does, so long as he is nice to her when he is at home?"

"Just reverse the position, and consider what Colonel Beston's feelings would be if she took to amusing herself as he does, and maintained that he had no business to interfere with her private pursuits; would he be satisfied so long as she was 'nice' to him at home?" Evadne asked.

Colonel Colquhoun's countenance lowered. "That is nonsense," he said. "Women are different. They must behave themselves."

Evadne smiled. "I am beginning to know that phrase," she said. "It puzzled me at first, because it is neither reason nor argument, but merely an assertion somewhat in the nature of a command, and equally applicable to either sex, if the other chose to use it. But I know that what you have just said with regard to Mrs. Beston having no occasion to make herself miserable is your true feeling on the subject, and therefore I am convinced that if I had 'adopted a different course' it would not have been to your advantage in any way, and it would certainly have been very much to the reverse of mine. We are excellent friends as it is, because we are quite independent of each other; but had it been otherwise—I shudder to think of the hopeless misery of it."

Colquhoun was silent.

"There is no hope for me, then?" he said at last lamely. "I suppose the truth of the matter is, you never cared for me at all; you just thought you would get married, and accepted me because I was the first person to propose, and your friends considered me eligible. I think you are cold-hearted, Evadne. I have watched you since you came out here, and I've never seen you fancy any man, even for a moment."

Evadne flushed angrily. It is one thing to consider ethical questions in relation to their bearing upon the future of the world at large, and another to have it suggested that you have been under observation yourself with a view to discovering if you found it possible to live up to your own ideas. It was a fact, however, that no man attracted Evadne during this period as Colonel Colquhoun himself had done. The shock of the discovery which had destroyed her passion for him had caused a revulsion of feeling great enough to subdue all further possibilities of passion for years to come, and even if she had been free to marry she would not have done so. All the energy of her nature had flashed from her heart to her brain in a moment, and every instinct of her womanhood was held in check by the superior power of intellect. Since the day of the marriage ceremony she had been a child in her pleasures, and only mature in the capacity for thought. Her senses had been stunned, and still slept heavily; but there remained to her a vivid recollection of the entrancing period which had followed their first awakening, and so she answered Colonel Colquhoun's last remark decidedly.

"You are mistaken," she said, "if you imagine that I did not care for you—that I was merely marrying you for the sake of marrying, and would have been quite as content with anyone else whom my friends might have considered eligible. My mother was very much disappointed because I did not accept an offer I had before I saw you from a man who was certainly 'eligible' in every way—I think you said my father had told you of it? I could not care for *him*; but I think my passion for *you* was blinder and more headlong, if anything, than is usually the case in very young girls. It possessed me from the moment I saw you in church that first time. You pleased my eyes as no other man has ever done, and I was only too glad to take it for granted that your career and your character were all that they ought to have been. But of course I did not love you, for passion, you know, is only the introduction to love. It is a flame that may be blown out at any time by a difference of opinion, and mine went out the

moment I learnt that your past had been objectionable. I really care more for you now than I did in the days when I was 'in love' with you. For you have been very good to me—very kind in every possible way. So much so, indeed, that I have more than once felt the keenest regret—I have wished that there was no barrier between us."

"There is no hope for me, then?" he again suggested, but with hope in his heart as he spoke. She shook her head sadly.

"It is what might have been that I regret," she answered; "but that does not change what has been—and is."

"I suppose you consider that I have spoilt your life?" he said.

"Oh no!" she exclaimed. "Don't think that. Don't blame yourself. I have never blamed you since I was cool enough to reflect. It is the system that is at fault, the laxity which permits anyone, however unfit, to enter upon the most sacred of all human relations. Saints should find a reward for sanctity in marriage; but the Church, with that curious want of foresight for which it is peculiar, induced the saints to put themselves away in barren celibacy, so that their saintliness could not spread, while it encouraged sinners satiated with vice to transmit their misery-making propensities from generation to generation. I believe firmly that marriage, when those who marry are of such character as to make the contract *holy* matrimony, is a perfect state, fulfilling every law of our human nature, and making earth with all its drawbacks a heaven of happiness; but such marriages as we see contracted every day are simply a degradation of all the higher attributes which distinguish men from beasts. For there is no contract more carelessly made, more ridiculed, more lightly broken; no sacred subject that is oftener blasphemed; and nothing else in life affecting the dignity and welfare of man which is oftener attacked with vulgar ribaldry in public, or outraged in private by the secret conduct of it. No. You are not to blame, nor am I. It is not our fault that we form the junction of the old abuses and the new modes of thought. Some two people must have met as we have for the benefit of others. But it has been much better with us than it might have been—thanks to your kindness. I have been quite happy here with you—much happier than I should have been at Fraylingay, I think, all this time. You have never interfered with my pursuits or endeavoured to restrict my liberty in any way, and consequently my occupations and interests have been more varied, and my content greater than it would have been at home after my father had discovered how very widely we differ in opinion. I am grateful to you, George, and I do hope that it has been as well with you as it has been with me since I came to Malta."

"Oh yes. I have been all right," he answered—in a quite dissatisfied tone, however. But presently that passed, and then he slid into a better frame of mind. "You are a good woman, Evadne," he said. "You have played me a—eh—*very* nasty trick, and I don't agree with you—and I don't believe there are a dozen men in the world at the present moment who would agree with you. But, apart from your peculiar opinions, you are about one of the nicest girls I ever knew. Everything you do is well done. You're never out of temper. You don't speak much, as a rule, but you're always ready to respond cheerfully when you're spoken to—and you don't interfere. I wish from the bottom of my soul you had never been taught to read and write, and then you would have had

no views to come between us. But since you think you cannot care for me, I shall not persecute you. I gave you my word of honour that I never would, and I hope I have kept it."

"Yes—*indeed*. You have been goodness itself," she answered.

"I wrote and told your father how very well we get on," he continued, "and tried to persuade him to make it up with you, but the old gentleman is obstinate. He has his own notion of a wife's duty, and he sticks to it. But I did my best, because I know you feel the separation from your own family, although you never complain. He can't get over your wanting a 'Christlike' man for a husband. He says he laughs every time he thinks of it. The first time he laughed at that idea of yours I was there, and a—eh—*very* unpleasant laugh it was. It got my back up somehow, and made me feel ready to take your part against him. It isn't a compliment, you know, to have your father-in-law laugh outright at the notion of your ever being able to come up to your wife's idea of what a man should be. And when he came down raging about your books, it was the recollection of that laugh, I believe, that made me determine to get them for you. I asked your mother to show me your old rooms, and I just took all the books I could find; and then I thought it would be a good idea to make your new rooms look as much like the old ones as possible."

"It was a very kind thought," Evadne answered.

"I don't pretend to have been a saint; very much the contrary," Colonel Colquhoun proceeded, with that assumption of humility often apparent in the repentant sinner who expects to derive both credit and importance from his past when he frankly confesses it was wicked, "but I hope I have always been a gentleman,"—with her "saint" and "gentleman" were synonymous terms,—"and what I want to say is," he continued—"I don't quite see how to put it; but you have just expressed yourself satisfied with the arrangements I have made for you so far. Well, if you really think that I have done all I can to make your life endurable, will you do something for me? I am a good deal older than you are. In all human probability you will outlive me. Will you promise me that during my lifetime you will not mix yourself up publicly—will not join societies, make speeches, or publish books, which people would know you had written, on the social subjects you are so fond of."

"*Fond* of!" she ejaculated.

"Well, perhaps that is not the right expression," he conceded.

"No, very far from the right expression," she answered gently. "Social subjects seem to be forcing themselves on the attention of every thoughtful and right-minded person just now, and it would be culpable cowardice to shun them while there is the shadow of a hope that some means may be devised to put right what is so very wrong. Ignoring an evil is tantamount to giving it full licence to spread. But I am thankful to say I have never known anyone who found the knowledge of evil anything but distressing—except Mrs. Guthrie Brimston, and she only delights in it so long as it is made a jest of. But they are all alike in that set she belongs to. Their ideas of propriety are bounded by their sense of pleasure. So long as you talk flippantly, they will listen and laugh; but if you talk seriously on the same subject, you make the matter disagreeable, and then they call it 'improper.'"

Colonel Colquhoun was standing with his arms

folded on the parapet of the veranda looking down a vista of yellow houses at a glimpse there was of the sea, dotted with boats, hazy with heat, intensely blue, and sparkling back reflections of the glaring sun. From where Evadne sat she saw the same scene through the open balustrade over the tops of the oleanders growing in the garden below, and gradually the heat, and stillness, and beauty, stole over her, melting her mood to tenderness, and filling her mind with sadly sweet memories of the days of delight which preceded "all this." She thought of the yellow gorse on the common, recalling its peculiar fragrance; of the misty cobwebs stretched from bush to bush, and decked with dazzling drops of dew; of the healthy, happy heath creatures peeping out at her shyly, here a rabbit and there a hare; of a lark that sprang up singing and was lost to sight in a moment; of a thrush that paused to reflect as she passed. She thought of the little church on the high cliffs, the bourne of her morning walks; of the long stretch of sand, and of the sea; and she felt the fresh, free air of those open spaces rouse her again to a gladness in life not often known to ladies idling on languid afternoons in the sickly heat essential to the well-being of citron, orange, and myrtle; beloved of the mythical faun, but fatal to the best energies of the human race. And by a very natural transition, her mind leaped on to that morning in church when the sense of loneliness which comes to all young creatures that have no mate resolved itself into that silent supplication, the petition which it is a part of the joy of life in youth to present to a Heaven which is willing enough to hear; and she recalled the thrill of delight that trembled through every nerve of her body when she looked up and found her answer, when she saw and recognised what she sought in the glance which, flashing between them, was the spark that first fired the train of her blind passion for Colonel Colquhoun. She thought then that her prayer was answered at that moment; and she believed still that it had been answered so; but for a special purpose which she had not then perceived. Colonel Colquhoun was not the husband of her heart, but the rod of chastisement for her rash presumption; he had not been given to her for her own happiness, but that she might act as she had done to set an example by which she should have the double privilege of expiating a fault of her own and at the same time securing the peace in life of others. It was in this way there hummed in her brain on that hot afternoon results of the faith which had been held by her ancestors; of the teaching which she had herself received directly; with a curious glimmering of truths that were already half apparent to her own acute faculties; an incongruous jumble, all leavened by the natural instincts of a being rich in vitality and wholesome physical force. With the recollection of the old days came back the shadow of the old sensation. The interval was forgotten for the moment. She saw before her the man whose every glance and word had thrilled her with pleasurable emotion, whom it had been a joy just to be with and see. It was the same man leaning there, fine of form and feature, with a dreamy look in his blue eyes softening the glitter which was apt to be hard and stony. If only— At that moment Colonel Colquhoun looked round at her, hesitated, although his face flushed, and then exclaimed, "Evadne, you *do* love me!"

"I *did* love you," she answered.

He sat down beside her, close to her. "Will you forget all this?" he said. "Will you forget

my past; will you make me a different man? Will you? You can." He half stretched out his hand to take hers, but then drew back, a gentleman always in that he would not force her inclinations in any way. "If I do not change, we can be again as we are now, and there would be no harm done. Will you consent, Evadne, will you—my wife—will you?"

He leant forward so close that her senses were troubled—too close, for she pushed her chair back to relieve herself of the oppression, and the act irritated him. Another moment, a little more persuasion and caressing of the voice, which he could use so well to that effect, and she might have given in to the kind of fascination which she had felt in his presence from the first; but when she moved he drew back too, his countenance clouded, and her own momentary yearning to be held close, close; to be kissed till she could not think; to live the intoxicating life of the senses only, and not care, was over.

"We could never be again as we are now," she answered. "There would be no return for me. A wife cannot feel as I do. And you—you would not change. Or at least you would only change your habits; the consequences of them you will carry to your grave with you, and I doubt if you could ever change your habits once for all. You were a different man for a while when I first came out, but you soon relapsed. No. I can never regret my present attitude; but I have seen several times already how much reason I should have to regret—a different arrangement."

"You make light of love," he said. "Many a girl has died of a disappointment."

"Many a girl is a fool," she answered placidly. "And what can love offer me in exchange for the calm content of my life just now? for my perfect health? for my freedom from care?"

"A reconciliation with your family," he suggested.

She sighed, and sat silent a little, lost in thought.

"I do not live with my family now," she answered at last. "They have all their own interests, their own loves, apart from mine; would a letter or two a year from them make up after all for the risk of misery I should be running—for the terrible, helpless, hopeless, incurable misery of an unhappily married woman, if I should become one?"

He rose and returned to his old position, leaning over the veranda, looking down to the sea.

"You are cold-blooded, I think, Evadne," he reiterated.

She said nothing, but rested her head on the back of her chair and smiled. She was not cold-blooded, and he knew it as well as she did. She was only a nineteenth-century woman of the higher order with senses so refined that if her moral as well as her physical being were not satisfied in love, both would revolt. They were silent some time after that, and then he turned to her once more.

"Will you promise me that one thing, Evadne?" he asked. "Promise me that during my lifetime you will never mix yourself up—never take part publicly in any question of the day. It would be too deuced ridiculous for me, you know, to have my name appearing in the papers in connection with measures of reform, and all that sort of thing."

"I promise to spare you that kind of annoyance at all events," she answered, without hesitation, making the promise, not because she was infirm of purpose, but because she was indefinite; she

had no impulse at the time to do anything, and no notion that she would ever feel impelled to act in opposition to this wish of his.

"Thank you," he said, and there was another little pause, which he was again the first to break.

"You would have loved me, then, if I had lived a different life?" he said.

"Yes," she answered simply, "I should have loved you. No other man has made me feel for a moment what I felt for you, while I believed that you were all that a man should be who proposes to marry; and I don't think any other man ever will. You were born for me. Why, oh, why! did you not live for me?"

"I wish to God I had!" he answered.

She rose impulsively, and stretched out her hands to him. It was a movement of pain and pity, sorrow and sympathy, and he understood it.

"You meant to marry always," she said. "You treasured in your heart your ideal of a woman. Why could you not have lived so that you would have been *her* ideal too, when at last you met?"

He took her two little outstretched hands and held them a moment in his, looking down at them. "I wish to God I had!" he repeated.

"Did it never occur to you that a woman has her ideal as well as a man?" she said: "that she loves purity and truth, and loathes degradation and vice more than a man does?"

"Theoretically, yes," he answered; "but you find practically that women will marry anyone. If they were more particular, we should be more particular too."

"Ah, that is our curse," said Evadne—"yours and mine. If women had been 'more particular' in the past, you would have been a good man, and I should have been a happy wife to-day."

He raised her hands, which he was still holding, placing them palm to palm, took them in one of his, and clasped them to his chest, bringing her very close to him; and then he looked into her upturned face, considering it, with that curious set expression on his own which always came at a crisis. Her lips were parted, her cheeks were pale, she still panted from the passion of her last utterance, and her eyes, as he looked down into them, were pained in expression and fixed. He let her hands drop, and once more returned to his old position, leaning upon the balustrade with his back to her, looking out over the sea. If it had been possible to have obtained the mastery he had dreamed of over her, mere animal mastery, the thought would have repelled him now. He might have dominated her senses, but her soul would only have been the more confirmed in its loathing of his life. He knew the strength of her convictions; knew that, so long as they were a few yards apart, she could always have ruled both herself and him; and life is lived a few yards apart. It was the best side of his nature that was under Evadne's influence, and he had now some saving grace of manhood in him, which enabled him to appreciate the esteem with which she had begun to repay his consideration for her, and to admire the consistent self-respect which had brought her triumphantly out of all her difficulties, and won her a distinguished position in the place. He felt that he ought to be satisfied, and knew that he would have to be.

She remained standing as he had left her, and presently he turned to her again. "Forgive me," he said, "for provoking a discussion which has pained you needlessly. If repentance and remorse could wipe out the past, I should be worthy to claim you this minute. But I know you are right. There might have been hours of intoxication, but

there would have been years of misery also—for you—as my wife. Your decision was best for both of us. It was our only chance of peace." He looked at her wistfully, and approached a step.

She met him more than halfway. She put her hands on his shoulders, and looked up at him. "But we are friends, George," she said, with emotion. "I seem to have nobody now but you belonging to me, and I should be lonely indeed if"—She suddenly burst into tears.

"Yes, yes," he said huskily. "Of course we are friends; the best friends. We shall always be friends. I have never let anyone say a word against you, and I never will. I am proud to think that you are known by my name. I only wish that I could make it worthy of you—and, perhaps, some day—in the field"—

Poor fellow! The highest proof of moral worth he knew of was to be able to take a prominent part in some great butchery of his fellow-men, without exhibiting a symptom of fear.

Evadne had recovered herself, and now smiled up at him with wet eyelashes.

"Not there, I hope!" she answered. "Going to war and getting killed is not a proof of affection and respect which we modern women care about. I would rather keep you safe at home, and quarrel with you."

Colonel Colquhoun smiled. "Here is tea," he said, seeing a servant enter the room behind them. "Shall we have it out here? We shall be cooler."

"Yes, by all means," she answered.

And then they began to talk of things indifferent, but with a new and happy consciousness of an excellent understanding between them.

## CHAPTER XV

THE following day, as Colonel Colquhoun went out in the afternoon, he met Evadne coming in with Mrs. Malcomson and Mrs. Sillenger. Evadne was leaning on Mrs. Malcomson's arm. She looked haggard and pale, and the other two ladies were evidently also much distressed.

"Has anything happened?" Colquhoun asked, with concern. "Are you ill, Evadne?"

"I am sick at heart," she answered bitterly.

"We have had bad news," Mrs. Malcomson said significantly.

Colonel Colquhoun stood aside, and let them pass in. Then he went on to the club, wondering very much what the news could be.

There he found Captain Belliot, Colonel Beston, and a few more of his particular friends, all discussing something in tones of righteous indignation. Mr. Price and Mr. St. John were there also. A mail had just arrived, bringing the details of Edith's illness from Morningquest.

Mr. St. John turned from the group, and as he did so Colonel Colquhoun noticed that his gait was uncertain, and his face was white and distorted as if with physical pain. His impulse was to offer him a restorative and see him to his rooms, but Mr. Price anticipated the kind intention.

It was Mrs. Orton Beg who had written to Evadne, and she had brought Mrs. Sillenger and Mrs. Malcomson in to hear the letter read.

"Edith is quite, quite mad," she said, unconsciously choosing the poor girl's own expression; "and the most horrible part of it is, she knows it herself. She wants to do the most dreadful things, and all the time she feels as much

horror of such deeds as we should. My aunt says her sufferings are too terrible to describe. But she was growing gradually weaker when the letter left."

"How awful!" Mrs. Sillenger ejaculated. "To think of her as we knew her, so beautiful, and so sweet and good and true in every way; and with her magnificent physique! and now not a soul that loves her, when they hear that she is 'growing gradually weaker,' would wish it otherwise."

"My aunt concludes her letter by saying: 'I am telling you the state of the case exactly,'" Evadne continued, "'because I did not agree with you when you were here. I had been so shielded from evil myself that I could not believe in the danger to which all women in their weakness are exposed. But I agree with you now, perfectly. We must alter all this, and we can. Put me into communication with your friends'"—

"And you will join us yourself, Evadne?" Mrs. Malcomson exclaimed.

"Certainly I shall!" she answered emphatically. Then all at once something flashed through her mind.

"Heaven!" she exclaimed, "I had forgotten! I cannot—I cannot join you. I have given my word—to do nothing—so long as Colonel Colquhoun is alive."

Up to this time, Evadne in her home life had been serene and healthy minded. But now suddenly there came a change. She began to ask, Why should she trouble herself? Nobody who had a claim upon her wished her to do anything but dress well and make herself agreeable, and that was what most of the people about her were doing to the best of their ability. The Church enjoined that she should do her duty. What was her duty? Clearly to acquiesce, as everybody else was doing; to refuse to know of anything that might distress her; to be pleased and to give pleasure. That was all that heaven itself had to offer her, and if she could make heaven upon earth now, with a fan and a book, and a few congenial friends, she would.

This was the first consequence of her promise to Colonel Colquhoun. It had cramped her into a narrow groove wherein to struggle would only have been to injure herself ineffectually. There comes a time when every intellectual being is forced to choose some definite pursuits. Evadne had been formed for a life of active usefulness; but now she found herself reduced to an existence of objectless contemplation, and she suffered acutely until she had recourse to St. Paul and the pulpit, from which barren fields she succeeded at last in collecting simples enough to make up a dose of the time-honoured anodyne sacred to her sex. It is a delicious opiate which gives immediate relief, but it soothes without healing and is in the long-run deleterious. And this was the influence under which Evadne entered upon a new phase of life altogether. She gave up reading; and by degrees there grew upon her a perfect horror of disturbing emotions. She burnt any books she had with repulsive incidents in them. She would not have them about even, lest they should remind her. There were some pictures also in her rooms which depicted scenes of human suffering—a battle piece, a storm at sea, a caravan lost in the desert, and a prison scene; and those she had removed. She would have ended all such horrors if she could, but as that was impossible, she would not even think of them; and accordingly, she had those pictures replaced by soothing subjects—moonlit spaces,

sun-bright seas, clear brown rivulets, lakes that mirrored the placid mountains, and flowers and birds and trees. She would look at nothing that was other than restful; she would read nothing that harrowed her feelings; she would listen to nothing that might move her to indignation and reawaken the futile impulse to resist; and she banished all thought or reflection that was not absolutely tranquillising in effect or otherwise enjoyable.

But all this was extremely enervating. She had owed her force of character to her incessant intellectual activity, which had also kept her mind pure and her body in excellent condition. Had she not found an outlet for her superfluous vitality as a girl in the cultivation of her mind, she must have become morbid and hysterical, as is the case with both sexes when they remain in the unnatural state of celibacy with mental energy unapplied. We are like running water, bright and sparkling so long as the course is clear; but divert us into unprogressive shallows, where we lie motionless, and very soon we stagnate, and every particle of life within us becomes offence. This was the fate which threatened Evadne. As her mind grew sluggish, her bodily health decreased, and the climate began to tell upon her. Malta has a pet fever of its own, of a dangerous kind, from which she had hitherto escaped, but now, quite suddenly, she went down with a bad attack, and hovered for weeks between life and death. Colonel Colquhoun made arrangements to take her home as soon as she was sufficiently strong to be moved; but just at that time a small war broke out, and his regiment was one of the first to be ordered to the front. He was able to see her off, however, with other ladies of the regiment, and he telegraphed to her friends, begging them to meet her at Southampton. The hope of seeing them sustained Evadne during the voyage, but when she arrived only Mrs. Orton Beg appeared. The latter was shocked by the change in Evadne. Her hair had been cut short, her eyes were sunken, her cheeks were hollow; she was skin and bone, and the colour of death.

Mrs. Orton Beg had gone on board the steamer, and Evadne had been brought up on deck, supported by one of the ladies and her own maid.

She looked at her aunt, and then she looked beyond her. "Has my mother not come to meet me?" she asked.

Mrs. Orton Beg looked at her compassionately.

"Is she ill?" Evadne added.

"No, dear," her aunt replied.

Evadne burst into tears. It was a bitter disappointment, and she was very weak, and had suffered a great deal.

After her arrival her pompous papa continued "firm," as he called it, and as she was equally "firm" herself, he would not have her at Frayling-gay. He repeated that if there were one human weakness which is more reprehensible than another, it is obstinacy, and he told Mrs. Frayling that she must choose between himself and Evadne. If she preferred the latter, she might go to see her, but she should not return to him. He meant to be master in his own house—and so on, at the top of his voice, with infinite bluster—to which it was that Mrs. Frayling submitted. She never could bear a noise.

Evadne, therefore, saw nothing of her mother or brothers or sisters, and must have been lonely indeed had it not been for Mrs. Orton Beg, who took charge of her and nursed her and brought

her round, and remained with her until Colonel Colquhoun returned. They spent most of their time in the Western Highlands, but stayed also in London and Paris.

Colonel Colquhoun was absent a year, and made the most of every opportunity to distinguish himself. At the end of the war he was made C.B., and promoted to rank of colonel; and, his time with his regiment having expired, he was further honoured by being immediately appointed to the command of the dépôt at Morningquest. Evadne was glad to see him again. She had missed him,

and had waited anxiously for his return. She had no one to care for in his absence, no one, that is to say, who was specially her charge, to be attended to and made comfortable. He had narrowed her sphere of usefulness down to that by the promise he had exacted, and in his absence she had what to her was a useless, purposeless existence, wandering about from place to place. During this period she made few notes in the "Commonplace Book," but the few all bore witness to one thing, namely, her ever-increasing horror of unpleasantness in any shape or form.

END OF BOOK III.

## BOOK IV

### THE TENOR AND THE BOY—AN INTERLUDE

His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles ;  
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate ;  
His tears pure messengers sent from his heart,  
His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth.

*Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

#### CHAPTER I

MORNINGQUEST, with the sunset glow upon it, might have made you think of Arthur's "dim rich city"; but Morningquest had already flourished a thousand years longer than Caerlyon, and was just as many times more wicked. And it was known to be so, although not a tithe of the crimes committed in it were ever brought to light; but even of those which were known and recorded, no man could have told you the half, so great was their number. Of course, as the place was wicked, the doctors were well to the fore, combating the wages of sin gallantly; and the lawyers also, needless to say, were busy; and so, too, were the clergy in their own way, ecclesiasticism being well-worked. Christianity, however, was much neglected, so that, for the most part, the devil went unmolested in Morningquest, and had a good time.

There were seventy-five churches besides the cathedral within the city boundary, and a large sprinkling of religious sects of all denominations, which caused ferment enough to prevent stagnation; and, of course, where so many churches were the clergy swarmed, and were made the subject of the usual well-worn pleasantries. If you asked what good they were doing, you would hear that nobody knew; but you would also be assured that at all events they were, as a rule, too busy about candles and vestments and what not of that kind of thing, discussing such questions with heat enough to convince anyone that the Lord in heaven cares greatly about the use of one gaud more or less in His service, to do much harm. But, upon the whole, the attitude of the citizens toward the clergy was friendly and unexact. If nobody heeded them much, nobody opposed them much either, so that, as in any other profession, they enjoyed the liberty of earning their livelihood in their own way. The people considered them without reverence as a part of the population merely; their services were accepted as a necessity in the regular routine of life as bread and butter was, and doubtless they did good in some such way, although the one was as much forgotten as the other before it was well assimilated. If the citizens mentioned their teaching at all, it was merely to repeat what they said of the clergy themselves—that it did no harm.

This was a pleantry of which they never

wearied; but sometimes they would add to it another article of their faith. "The Lord is gracious," they would declare, "and when He sends dull preachers, He mercifully sends sleep also to comfort His afflicted people." So the preachers preached, and their congregations slumbered tranquilly, and everybody was satisfied. If the clergy squabbled amongst themselves, and with their churchwardens, their fellow-citizens were rather grateful to them than otherwise for varying the monotony, so that they were encouraged to wage their internecine combats to their hearts' content; and when these lapsed, and they let each other alone, it was always interesting to see how they turned upon the bishop. But nobody was disturbed, for in such a sleepy old place—and the respectable part of it *was* sleepy!—men habitually view the vagaries of their friends with smiling tolerance, and if they comment upon them at all, it is without bitterness.

In general history there are always events, as there are people, that take prominent places and attract attention long after similar events are buried and forgotten. They owe their vitality less to their importance, perhaps, than to some gleam of poetry, pathos, or romance which distinguishes the actors in them, and most old places have a pet tragedy amongst their traditions; but Morningquest was an exception to this rule, for, although it had its particular tragedy, it was quite a new one. From the first, however, it was easy enough to foresee that this one event of all the sorrowful things which had happened in that bad old place, having as it were every desirable requirement of time, setting, and person to invest it with a proper, permanent, and most pathetic interest, was the likeliest one to be remembered.

Morningquest was a city of singers, and the citizens were proud of their cathedral choir, which was chiefly recruited from amongst themselves, there being a succession of exquisite boy-voices constantly forthcoming to awaken the slumbering echoes in the ancient pile, and the sweet old sentiments in the people's hearts. Some of the lay clerks had been choristers themselves, and amongst them was one who had been especially noted as a boy for his birdlike treble. It seemed a thousand pities when it broke; but as he reached maturity, he found himself able to sing again, and eventually he developed a very true, if not very powerful, tenor voice, and rose in time



to be the leading tenor in the choir. People had flocked to hear him sing in his childhood, and as they still came, it was natural that he should continue to think himself the attraction, and also natural that he should be somewhat puffed up in consequence. He wore a moustache, he wore a ring, he put on airs, he scented his pocket-handkerchiefs, he ogled the pretty ladies in the canon's pew like an officer; but he was an orphan, and had a poor old kinswoman depending upon him, and kept her well; he was harmless; he never did anyone an ill-turn, nor said an evil thing, and he could sing; so that, taken all round, his good qualities outweighed his weaknesses, and he was duly allowed the measure of praise and respect which he earned.

But his rings and his scents, and his affectations generally, covered a secret ambition. He wanted to be more than a tenor in the choir; he wanted to be an opera singer, and he entered into negotiations with a London *impresario*. He did so secretly, being fearful of discouragement, and also because he wished to surprise his friends; and when a personal interview became necessary he did not ask for the means to make the journey; he had the management of the choir funds, and there being a surplus in his hands at the moment, he made use of the money, borrowing it in perfect good faith, and honestly sure that he would be able to repay it before it was required of him. Had he succeeded, the money would have been returned at once; but, alas! he did not succeed; the money was spent, his hopes were shattered, and his honest career was at an end. "If only he had come to me, the matter might have been put right," the dean said, and he publicly reproached himself for not knowing the hearts of his people better, so that he might have entered with sympathy into their lives, and won their confidence. The tenor ought to have trusted him, but he never thought of such a thing. He was a poor crushed creature, and had abandoned hope. But he went back to Morningquest nevertheless. Indeed, where else could he go? He knew no other place, and had never a friend elsewhere in the world. So he went back mechanically, and he went to the cathedral, and there he hid himself. And there three times a day for three days he looked down from the clerestory, himself unseen; looked into the faces he knew so well, faces which had been friendly faces, eyes that had watched him kindly all his life; and, out there in the cold, he followed the services at which he had been wont to assist, taking a leading part almost as long as he could remember. And there in the grim solitude by day, and the added horror of ghostly darkness by night, he lived on thought, and suffered his agony of remorse, and the minor miseries of cold and hunger and thirst, till the need of endurance ceased to be felt. And then, amid the misty morning greyness of the fourth day, he hanged himself from a ladder left by some workmen engaged in repairs, by whom his body was afterward found desecrating the sacred precincts.

These are the materials out of which Morningquest wove its pet tragedy. The event happened at the beginning of that important year which the Heavenly Twins spent with their grandfather at Morne, and doubtless they heard all about it; but being very much occupied with a variety of absorbing interests at the time, it did not make any particular impression upon them. It was brought home to them eventually, however, when it might have been considered an old story; but it had not become so then in anybody's estima-

tion, nor has it since, because of the pity of it, which lent the pathetic interest that makes a story deathless and ageless; the subtle something which influences to better moods, and from which the years as they pass do not detract, but rather pay it the tribute of an occasional addition thereto, by which its hope of immortality is greatly strengthened.

After the tenor's death, the difficulty had been who should succeed him. There was nobody immediately forthcoming, and this had put the dean and chapter in a fix, for it happened that there were services of particular importance going on in the cathedral at the time, to which strangers flocked from a distance, and it was felt that it would never do to disappoint them of their music. So, on the morning of the great day of all, after the early service, the dean, the precentor, and the organist, having doffed their surplices, returned to the choir, and stood for some time beside the brazen lectern, discussing the subject.

While they were so engaged, a gentleman came up to the dean, and, after making a graceful apology for the intrusion, explained that he had heard of their difficulty, and begged to be allowed to sing the tenor part, and a solo, at the afternoon service.

The dean looked doubtful; the precentor, judging by the stranger's appearance and tone that he might be somebody, was inclined to be obsequious; the organist struck a neutral attitude; and stood by ready to agree to anything.

"I can sing," the applicant said modestly, answering the doubt he saw in the dean's demeanour, "although I confess that I have not been doing so lately. I think I may venture to promise, however, that I shall not, at all events, spoil the service."

"Well, sir," the dean replied, "if you *can* help us, you will really be putting us under a great obligation, for we are in a most awkward dilemma. What do you say, Mr. Precentor?"

"I should say, as the organist is here, if this gentleman would try his part this morning"—

"That is what I was about to suggest," the stranger interposed.

The precentor found the music, the organist retired to his instrument, the dean took a seat, and the stranger sang. When he paused, the dean arose.

"I thank you, sir," he said, with effusion, "and I gratefully accept your offer."

The stranger bowed to his little audience, returned the music, and left the building.

He was a young man, tall and striking in appearance, clean shaven, with delicate features, dark, dreamy grey eyes, and a tumbled mop of golden hair, innocent of parting. He was well-dressed, but his clothes hung upon him loosely, as if he had grown thinner since they were made; his face was pale too, and pinched in appearance, and his movements were languid, giving him altogether the air of a man just recovering from some serious illness. That he was a gentleman no one would have doubted for a moment, nor would they have been surprised to hear that he was a great man in the sense of being a peer or something of that kind, for there was that indefinable something in his look and bearing which people call aristocratic, and his manner was calm and assured, like that of a well-bred man of the world accustomed to good society.

The people who flocked to the afternoon service that day regarded him with much curiosity, and he was certainly unlike anyone whom they had

hitherto seen in the choir. A surplice had been found for him, and the dead white contrasted well with the brightness of his hair, and made the refined beauty of his face even more remarkable than it had been in his morning dress. Sitting with the lay clerks behind the choristers, he looked like the representative of another and a higher race, and even those of them whose personal attractions had hitherto been considered more than merely passable, when they appeared beside him were suddenly seen to be hopelessly commonplace. But although the interest he excited was evident enough, it was equally evident that he himself remained quite unaware of it. In his whole bearing there was not the slightest assumption. He entered with the choir, and might have been in the habit of doing so all his life, so perfectly unconscious did he seem of anything new or strange in the position. As soon as he was seated, without even glancing at the people, he had taken up his music, and continued lost in the study of it until the service opened; and then he sang his part with ease and precision, which, however, attracted less attention at the moment than his appearance. The rest of the choir, animated by his presence, exerted themselves to the utmost, but were too delighted with their own performances to think much of his before the solo began.

Then, however, they awoke. The first note he uttered was a long crescendo, of such rich volume and so sweet that the people held their breath and looked up—

This world recedes; it disappears!  
 Heaven opens on my eyes! my ears  
 With sounds seraphic ring:  
 Lend, lend your wings! I mount! I fly!  
 O Grave! where is thy victory?  
 O Death! where is thy sting?

It was as if a delicious spell had been cast upon the congregation, which held them bound until the last note of the exquisite voice, even the last reverberation of the organ accompaniment, had trembled into silence, and then there was a movement, a flutter, a great sigh of relief heaved, so to speak, as if the pleasure had been too great, and nerves and senses were glad to be released from the tension of it.

The Tenor was slightly flushed when he resumed his seat, but otherwise his face was as serenely impassive as ever.

"It is some great singer from abroad," the people whispered to each other. "He is used to every kind of success, and does not even trouble himself to see if we are pleased. He has sung doubtless to gratify some whim of his own. Such artists are capricious folk." To which the answer was, "Long may such whims continue!"

After the service, the dean hastened to thank the stranger. He shook his hand with emotion, and congratulated him upon his marvellous gift. "May I ask if you are a professional singer?" the old gentleman said.

"Not yet," was the answer; "but I wish to offer myself for the vacant post of Tenor in the choir, if you are satisfied with my attainments."

The dean stared at him. "Oh—ah"—he stammered, in his surprise; and then he added something apologetically about references, and being obliged to ask a few questions.

"If you have the time to spare, I think I can satisfy you now," the stranger answered.

The dean, perceiving that he wished to speak to him alone, bowed courteously, and requested the applicant to accompany him to the deanery. The

precentor, who had assisted at the interview up to this point, now watched them depart, and as he did so he pursed up his lips significantly. The stranger had sunk in his estimation from the possible rank of a Russian prince to that of a simple singer, a considerable drop; but the precentor was a musician, and he asserted that the voice was of the finest quality, and trained to perfection. He wanted to know, however, what could bring a man with a fortune like that in his throat to bury himself alive in Morningquest, and he ventured to predict that it must be something "fishy."

The stranger had a long private interview with the dean, but what transpired thereat was never made public. It was known, however, that when he left the deanery the dean himself accompanied him to the door, and there shook hands with him cordially; and it was immediately afterward announced that "Mr. Jones" was to be the new tenor.

"Mr. Jones, indeed!" said Morningquest sarcastically. "As much Jones as the bishop!" And the precentor was sure that the dean had been taken in by a clever impostor, which would not have been the case, he asserted, if the matter had been referred to him as it ought to have been. But Morningquest declared that there was no imposition about that voice, and as to antecedents, why, it was absurd to be too particular when everything else was so entirely satisfactory.

There happened to be a tiny tenement in the Close vacant when the new lay clerk began his duties as tenor in the choir, and this he took. It was a detached house, one of a row which faced the apse on the south side of the cathedral. One step led down from the road into the little front garden, and another from that into the house, which was thus two steps below the road in front, but was level with the garden at the back. The passage ran right through the house, the garden door being opposite the front door; the kitchen was behind a little sitting-room on the right as you entered, and on the left were two other rooms when the Tenor took the house, the one looking into the back garden, the other into the front; but these two rooms he immediately turned into one by having the dividing wall removed, and together they made a long, low, but comfortably proportioned apartment, with a French window at either end. The Tenor spent all his spare time when he first arrived in decorating this room, "making work for himself," as the people said; and indeed that was just what he seemed to be doing, for he worked as a man does who feels that he ought to be occupied, but he takes no pleasure and finds no relief in any occupation. He frescoed the walls and ceiling of his room with admirable taste and skill, making it look twice the size by cunning divisions of the pattern on the walls, and by the well-devised proportions of dado and cornice.

The dean often went to watch him at his work, and sat on a packing-case (the only article which the room contained at the time) by the hour together talking to him, a circumstance which, taken with the fact that other gentlemen in the neighbourhood also called upon him and lingered long on the premises, greatly exercised the inquisitive minds of the multitude, especially when it was perceived that the Tenor, instead of being elated by their condescension, accepted it as a matter of course, and continued always the same—sad, preoccupied, impassive, seldom smiling, never surprised, taking no healthy interest in anything.

When the painting was finished, furniture began to arrive, and this was another surprise for the Close, where houses were not adorned with the designs of any one period, but were filled with a heterogeneous collection of articles, generally aged and remarkably uncouth. Everything in the Tenor's long low room, on the contrary, even down to the shape of the brass coal scuttle and including the case of the grand piano, was in harmony with the colour and design of the frescoes on the walls and ceiling; the floor, which was polished, being adorned here and there with rugs which suggested dim reflections of the tint and tone above. It was a luxurious apartment, but not effeminate. The luxury was masculine luxury, refined and significant; there was no meaningless feminine fripperies about, nor was there any evidence of sensuous self-indulgence. It was the abode of a cultivated man, but of one who was essentially manly withal.

The fame of this apartment having been noised abroad, the precentor came one day to inspect it. There is no need to describe this precentor; one knows exactly what a man must be who calls things "fishy." He was an ordained clergyman, but not at all benevolent, neither was he a Christian, for he did not love his neighbour as himself, and his visit on this occasion was anything but friendly in intention. He was determined to know something more about the Tenor, he said, and he meant to question him. His theory was that the Tenor had been a public singer, but had disgraced himself, and was unable to appear again in consequence; and on this supposition he intended to proceed.

He found the Tenor with his hat in his hand on the point of leaving the house; but the precentor was not delicate about detaining him. He walked into the sitting-room without waiting to be asked, pried impertinently into everything, and then sat down. The Tenor meantime had remained standing with his hat in his hand patiently waiting, and he still stood, but the precentor did not take the hint.

"You are an opera singer, I think you said," he remarked, as soon as he was seated.

The Tenor looked at him inquiringly.

"Or was it concerts?" he suggested, a trifle disconcerted.

The Tenor looked gravely amused.

"It was not the music halls, of course?" the precentor persuasively insinuated.

"Well, hardly," said the Tenor, fixing his steady eyes upon the man in a way that made him wince. "I have some business to attend to in the town," he added. "Pray make yourself at home so long as it pleases you to remain;" with which he brushed his hand back over his glossy hair, put on his hat, and sauntered out, leaving his gentle guest to ruminat.

The interest which the Tenor had begun by exciting in the breasts of the quiet inhabitants of Morningquest did not diminish all at once, as might have been expected. He was only a lay clerk, to be sure, but then he was so utterly unlike any other lay clerk. He was always so carefully dressed, for one thing, and maintained so successfully that suggestion of good breeding which had been their first impression of him; was altogether so distinguished in appearance, that it was a pleasure to hear strangers exclaim, "Who is that?" and to be able to surprise them with the off-hand rejoinder, "Oh, that is only our tenor."

Then he was a stranger from nobody knew where; he went by the name of "Jones," which

was not believed to be his; he had a magnificent voice, and he remained in Morningquest in an obscure position, making nothing of it. True, he must have means; but what, after all, were the means which he appeared to possess compared with the means which he might be enjoying? And further—and this was considered the most extraordinary circumstance of all—there was his attitude in the cathedral. He followed the services devoutly; and such a thing as attention, let alone devotion, on the part of a lay clerk had never been heard of in Morningquest. There was not even a remote tradition in existence to prepare anybody's mind for such a contingency.

So that altogether the man was a mystery; a mystery, however, toward which the kindly people were well-disposed. And no wonder. For the Tenor's manners were as attractive as his appearance, and his ways were not at all mysterious when considered apart from the points already indicated, but, on the contrary, simple in the extreme: the ways of one who is kindly courteous, and considerate on all occasions, paying proper respect to every man, and also rigorously exacting from each the respect that was due to himself. He would always see people who called upon him, and though it was believed that he would rather not have been disturbed, he was too much of a gentleman to show it. In fact, it was agreed that he was a gentleman before everything, and not at all like a "Jones"; and therefore, acting on some instinctive perception of the fitness of things, the citizens dropped the offensive appellation altogether and called him "the Tenor" simply, as they might have called him "the Duke."

There was at first a good deal of wonder as to where the money came from with which he furnished his little house in the Close. How did he manage to buy so many books and pictures? and how could he afford to give so much away in charity? For it was known beyond a doubt that he had on more than one occasion relieved the families of the other singers, and had relieved them, too, in a most substantial way. It was evident that he had means; but if he had means, why did he sing in the choir? This question was the Alpha and Omega of all that concerned him.

It was asked everywhere and by everybody; but no one could answer it save the dean, who was not to be approached upon the subject. Finally, however, people grew tired of forming conjectures which were neither denied nor affirmed, and, becoming accustomed to the Tenor's presence amongst them, they ceased as a regular thing to discuss his affairs.

But this was not the case until a story had been circulated about him which was generally believed, although nobody knew from whence it emanated. He was, according to the story, the illegitimate son of an actress and some great—in-the-sense-of—having-a-title—man, from whom he inherited his aristocratic appearance and a small income. His mother, it was said, had been an opera singer, which accounted for his voice; and shame, they declared, on the discovery of his birth, had driven him into his present retirement, and caused him to renounce the world. As this story accounted in the most satisfactory manner for all that was strange about him, it was regarded in every respect as authentic; and, after the wickedness of titled men and the frailty of acting women had been freely commented upon with much sage shaking of the head, as if only titled men were wicked and acting women frail and Morningquest itself was a saintly city, innocent of any deed not strictly in

accordance with its word, the matter was allowed to drop, and the Tenor was left to "gang his ain gait," which he would have done in any case probably, but which he continued to do in a quiet, earnest, regular way that won him a friendly feeling from most men, and more than his share of sympathy and attention from the good women who had not self-love enough to be wounded by his indifference. Unsophisticated little maidens, just budding into womanhood, would peep after him shyly from the old-fashioned houses sometimes, and would feel in their tender little hearts a gentle pity for one who was so handsome and so unfortunate. Like the true hero of romance, he was believed by them to be supremely unhappy, and all they asked was to be allowed to comfort him; but he noticed none of them. And so the little maidens blushed at first for having thought of him at all, and then forgot him for somebody else; or, if the somebody else did not come quickly, they began to regard the Tenor with a totally different feeling—almost as if he had wronged them in some way. But the Tenor continued to "gang his ain gait," and was alike indifferent to their pity or their spite.

His little house, like most of those in the Close, had an old walled garden behind it, a large garden for the size of the house, and so sheltered that many things grew there which would not grow elsewhere in the open. The house itself was picturesque on that side, having a bright south aspect favourable to the growth of creepers, with which it was thickly covered, jasmine, clematis, honeysuckle, and roses succeeding each other in their regular order; and the garden was always full of flowers. It was here that the Tenor spent much of his time, hard at work. He had evidently a passion for flowers, and was a most successful gardener, the conservatory and orchid house, which he had had built soon after his arrival, being always lovely even in the winter. The building of these two houses was considered an extravagance, and had caused the Close to point the finger at him for a while; but when someone declared that the unfortunate Tenor had probably inherited much of his mother's recklessness, and was not therefore responsible as other people were, the suggestion was considered reasonable enough, and from that time forward the Tenor's expensive tastes were held to be separate matter for commiseration; the truth being that Morningquest could not bear to be on bad terms with the Tenor, and would have found an excuse for him had he outraged the best preserved prejudices it ever held.

It was only necessary to glance at the Tenor's books to perceive that he was a student. Many valuable works in many languages were scattered about his house, and it was a well-known fact that he spent much of his leisure in poring over these. To what end his studies might be directed no one, of course, could tell, but it was assumed that he had acquired a respectable amount of knowledge from the fact that the dean, himself a learned man, delighted not a little in his conversation. When this fact had been fully ascertained by careful observation, smouldering curiosity blazed up afresh, and surmise was once more busy with the Tenor's name. Did he write for the magazines, they wondered? It seemed likely enough, for it was notorious in Morningquest that people who did that kind of thing were not like the rest of the world; and it soon came to pass that certain articles relating to various things, such as drainage, deep-sea fishery, the coinage of Greece, competitive examinations in China, and

essays on other subjects likely to interest an artistic man, were confidently assumed to be his. And the shy little girls in the old-fashioned houses, who never looked at anything in the magazines but the pictures and the poetry, were wont to credit him with certain passionate lays from which they got quite new ideas of eyes and dies and sighs, and other striking rhymes to musical metres, which made their little hearts throb pleasantly.

But nothing more definite was known of the Tenor's labours than was known of anything else concerning him; and, fortunately for himself, there was that in his bearing which preserved him from being personally annoyed by impertinent curiosity, so that he was most probably pretty nearly the only person in the city who had no idea of the interest he himself excited.

Two years had glided by in great apparent tranquillity since the day the Tenor entered the choir; two years, during which he had trodden the path of life so uprightly and so purely, that not even a suspicion of wrong-doing was ever breathed against him by gentle or simple, good or bad. It was a calm and passionless existence that he led, the life of an ascetic, but of a cultivated ascetic, devoted to the highest intellectual pursuits, and actuated by the belief that their value consisted, not in their market price, nor in the amount of attention called fame, which they might attract to himself, but in the pleasure they gave and in the good they did. Many a weary man whose life had been wasted in the toil of bringing himself before the world, when he had reached the summit of his ambition, might well have envied the Tenor his placid countenance and untroubled lot; some might even have perceived that there was more of poetry than of commonplace in the quiet life which glided on so evenly, soothed by the cathedral services, cheered by the chime, and guarded by the shadow of its grey protecting walls.

The Tenor's cheeks had been haggard and worn when he first settled in Morningquest, and dark circles round his eyes had betokened sleepless nights and the ceaseless gnawing ache of a great grief. But all that had passed as the days wore on, giving place to a settled expression of peace—peace tinged with a certain sadness, but dignified by resignation. Gradually, too, although he remained slender, he ceased to be emaciated, and his cheeks assumed a healthy hue that very well became them.

## CHAPTER II

It was thought at first that the dean's intimacy with the new Tenor arose from a sense of duty sharpened by the feeling of self-reproach with which he had regarded his fancied neglect of the old one; but, however that might have been, it was continued from a genuine liking for the man himself. No one in Morningquest knew the Tenor half so well as the dean did; no one could have had a truer regard for him, or watched the passing of his trouble with more affectionate interest, or noted the change for the better which had been wrought by the regular occupation of those peaceful days with greater satisfaction. The dean knew the Tenor's story, so that their relations might be called confidential; but for two years no allusion had been made by either of them to the past, neither had any plans been formed for the future.

At the end of that time, however, the dean noticed signs of awakening energy in his friend. The Tenor performed his duties less mechanically,

His apathy was broken by fits of restlessness. He had found the mornings long lately; he had thought the afternoons objectless; and when evening came and the lamps were lighted, he wearied of his books and music, and chafed a little for something, not change exactly; but he was conscious of a desire—and this he only felt at times—a desire for some trifling human interest which should make the life he was leading fuller. He had awakened, in fact, from his long lethargy, and found himself alone.

The Dean of Morningquest was a remarkable man. He had the fine physique, the high-breeding, and the scholarly reputation common to that order of divines who keep up the dignity of the Church without doing much for Christianity. In person he was tall, but stooped from the shoulders. He had white hair, a fine intellectual face, fresh, and with that young look in it which has been called saint-like, and is only seen on the faces of those in whom passion has not died a natural death as the vital powers decay, but has been brought into subjection, and made to do good work instead of evil. No man consorted more habitually with his equals, or seldomer entertained the notion that there were such people in the world as his inferiors. He practised his religion to the last letter of church law, and worshipped Christ the Son of God; but there is no doubt that he would have turned his exclusive back on Christ the carpenter's son, and had him prosecuted for an impostor had he presented himself with no better pedigree. He could tell the story of the Saviour's sufferings with infinite pathos because he knew who the Saviour was; but he could not have told the same story with the same power had the hero of it been merely one common man sacrificing his life for others. What affected the dean was the enormous condescension. It was the greatness of the Man, not the greatness of the deed, that appealed to him. A poor tradesman might sacrifice his life nobly also; but then, what is the life of a tradesman, comparatively speaking?

People called the dean proud and worldly-wise, but this was not true of him. He may have believed that all the people of Palestine belonged to county families, and were therefore called the chosen people, but he never said so. A certain gentle humility of demeanour always distinguished him, no matter to whom he spoke; and he was without doubt a thoroughly good nineteenth-century churchman, living at his own level, of course, and true to his caste, toward the weaknesses of which he exercised much charity and forbearance, while he expressed his condemnation of its sins by rigorously excluding from his family circle any member of it who had been openly convicted of disgraceful conduct, just as he excluded professional men and other common citizens when they held no official position which he was obliged to recognise, and were not connected with the landed gentry. But these were the characteristics of his position, for as a dean he was required to be the slave of precedent; as a man, however, he was known to be just and generous, and an excellent good friend to all who had any claim upon him, from the bishop who governed him down to the humblest chorister in the cathedral which he governed.

It was in the early spring when the dean first noticed what he took to be a change for the better in the Tenor's attitude toward life at large. The dean was susceptible himself to kindly changes in the season; so much so, indeed, that, contrary to

all precedent, he allowed himself to be tempted out after dark one night into the Close by the balmy mildness of the weather. His mind had been running all day upon the Tenor, and, noticing as he passed his little house that the blind was up, and the sitting-room window wide open, showing the lamplit interior, and the object of his thoughts pacing restlessly to and fro, he determined to go in and have a chat. The Tenor received him cordially, but his manner was somewhat absent, and for a wonder the conversation flagged.

"Are you well?" the dean asked at last. "You look somewhat fatigued, I think, and pale."

"Yes, I am well, thank you," the Tenor answered, brushing his hand back over his forehead and hair, a gesture which was habitual. "But I fancy," he added, smiling, "that I am beginning to be a little"—he did not know what.

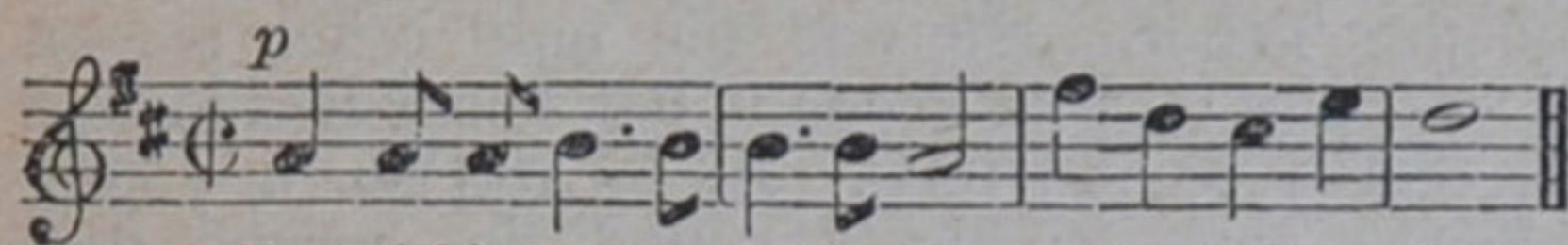
"Ah!" said the dean, looking at him with the grave, critical air of an anxious physician, and ruminating before he pronounced his diagnosis. "You have shown most extraordinary perseverance in the course of life you marked out for yourself," he finally observed; "and I trust your resolution is well recompensed by having obtained for you that peace of mind which you sought. But there is one thing I should like to be permitted to point out to you. I do not venture to advise, because, in the first place, it is always a difficult matter to decide on what would be best for another man's welfare; and, in the second"—the dean always spoke with great deliberation—"a man who has proved himself so capable of acting with prudence and determination, so competent to judge, and so firm in carrying out his convictions as you have been, might well consider advice from anyone presumptuous. And therefore, I am merely going to observe that, lately, it has seemed to me to be a pity that your life should continue much longer to be a life of inaction. I hope, and indeed I think, that the years you have spent so well in this quiet way have been even more beneficial than you yourself imagine; that they have not only reconciled you to life, but have given you back the confidence and energy which should belong to your character and abilities, and the ambition to succeed in the world which should belong to your age. For some time past it has seemed to me that you are more restless than you used to be; and I have fancied, indeed I may say I have hoped, that you are at last beginning to long for change."

The Tenor sat silent and thoughtful for a while. "No," he began at last, "I do not even yet long for change, as you would understand the longing. I have begun to feel a want, though I scarcely know of what—of companionship, perhaps, of some new interest; but I have no inclination for any change that would take me away from here. After the storm I passed through, this place has been for me a perfect haven of rest; and now that my peace of mind has returned to me, do you think it would be wise, by any voluntary act, to alter the present course of my life, seeing that it is so well with me as it is? When a man is content it does not seem to me that any change can be for the better; and, trifles apart, I really am content."

"Cod grant it may last," the dean responded earnestly. "Only I would warn you to be ready for change in case it comes to you in spite of yourself. I would warn you not to feel too secure. For I have noticed this, that, for some mysterious reason which no mortal can fathom, it appears to be the will of Heaven that when a man is able to say sincerely, 'I am happy'; when he is most confident, believing his happiness to be as firmly

placed as earthly happiness can be, then is the time for him to be most watchful, for then is change most likely to be at hand. Indeed, it has seemed to me that this feeling of security, or rather of content with things as they are, is in itself an indication of coming change."

As he finished speaking the cathedral clock above them began to strike the hour. Slowly the mellow notes followed each other, filling the night with sound and dying away in a long reverberation when the twelfth had struck. Then came silence, then the chime, voicelike, clear, and resonant:



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

After which all was so still that the Tenor, looking up through the open window at the moonlit cathedral, towering above him, grey, shadowy, and mysterious, felt as if the world itself had stopped, and all the life in it had been resolved into a moment of intense self-consciousness, of illimitable passionate yearning for something not to be expressed.

The next day was Saturday, and in the afternoon the Tenor had to sing.

### CHAPTER III

THERE is human nature, both literally and figuratively speaking, in Wagner's method of setting a character to a tune of its own; for, although our lives can hardly be said to order themselves to one consistent measure, our days often do.

For months now, "When the orb of day departs," Schubert's song, had accompanied the Tenor. It had soothed him, it had irritated him; it had expressed passionate longing, it had been the utterance of despairing apathy; it had marked the vainest regret and it had suggested hope; it had wearied him, it had comforted him; but it had never left him. That Saturday morning, however, when he awoke, his mind was set to another measure. Schubert's song had gone as it had come, without conscious effort on his part; but it had left a substitute, for the Tenor, as he lingered over his morning's work, found himself continually murmuring whole phrases of a chant which he had heard once upon a time when he was staying in an old town in France. It was the Litany of the Blessed Virgin sung at Benediction by some unseen singer with a wonderfully sympathetic mezzo-soprano voice. The Tenor had gone again and again to hear her in this chant; the music of which suited her as well as it did the theme. The words of adoration, "Sancta Maria, Sancta Dei Genetrix, Sancta Virgo virginum," were uttered evenly on notes that admitted of the tenderest expression, while the supplication, the "Ora pro nobis," rose to the full compass of the singer's voice, and was delivered in tones of passionate entreaty. At the end, in the "Agnus Dei," the music changed, dropping into the minor with impressive effect, the effect of earnestness wearied by effort but still unshaken; and it was this final appeal in all its pathetic beauty that now recurred to the Tenor. He had not thought of the chant for years, nor had there been anything apparently

to recall it now; but all that day it possessed him, and at intervals he caught himself involuntarily singing it aloud—

"Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, parce nobis Domine,  
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, exaudi nos Domine,  
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis."

He sang it while he was dressing; he whistled it with his hands in his pockets while he walked up and down the room waiting for his breakfast; and at breakfast, with the newspaper before him, he hummed it to himself steadily. He began it again as he crossed the road to enter the cathedral for the early morning service; he continued it while he was putting on his surplice; he marched to it in the procession, and he rapped it out on his music book when he had taken his seat in the choir. He opened the book to study his solo for the afternoon service, but before he was halfway through his mind was busily rendering, not the music before him, but

"Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, parce nobis Domine."

The haunting strain had become an intolerable nuisance by this time, and he made a vigorous effort to get rid of it by giving his mind to what was going on around him, and interesting himself in the people as they entered and took their places in stall and choir and canon's pew, chancel and transept. Being Saturday, there was a good attendance even at this early service. Strangers from a distance came in to see the cathedral, and people in the place came in to see the strangers; so that there was plenty to observe, especially for one who (unlike the Tenor) was a little behind the scenes or had peeped beneath the surface and beheld the various incidents of the life-dramas which were constantly being enacted in the sacred edifice itself from service to service in the midst and with the help of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, prayers and sermons, under the dean's very nose, and often in the presence of the bishop. The world at worship is a worldly sight, and there was a certain appropriateness in the Tenor's *miserere*; but he failed to apply it, although it kept him company to the end, and was still faithful when he sallied forth from the gloom of the cathedral and went on his way with the rest in the sunshine and freshness of a glad new day.

As the time for the afternoon service approached, the people began again to flock to the cathedral, but in crowds now, for it had been rumoured that the Tenor was to sing.

The choir, from their lateral position on either side of the aisle, were able to look up and down the church, having on the one hand and opposite the distinguished visitors who were accommodated with seats in the stalls, the canon's and dean's pews; and on the other the officiating clergy and the congregation generally. It was an advantageous position for those who came to observe, but the Tenor had not hitherto been one of these. The music, when it was interesting, absorbed him; and when it was dull the monotony soothed him, so that he noticed nothing. It had done so this afternoon. During all the first part of the service he neither saw nor heard, but did his work mechanically like one in a dream; and in every pause of it the old chant recurred to him, filling his heart

with a separate undercurrent of solemn supplication, now in French: "Agneau de Dieu, qui effacez les péchés du monde, ayez pitié de nous," and now in Latin: "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis."

The dean preached a *sermonette* on Saturday afternoon, which he took the precaution to deliver before the anthem, so that the people might still have something to look forward to and keep their seats. The *sermonette* over, the organ played the opening bars of the Tenor's solo, and the choir stood up. While he waited for the note, the Tenor absently fixed his eyes on a lady in the canon's pew. The spell of the old chant was still upon him, and, instead of preparing his mind for his task, he let it murmur on: "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, parce nobis Domine"—while a rapt silence fell upon the congregation—not a ribbon rustled; the expression of expectation was most intense. One would scarcely have expected the Tenor to take up the note at the right moment, his mind being preoccupied by another strain, but he did. The lady in the canon's pew held the music of the anthem before her, and had been following that; but when the first clear notes of the Tenor's voice rang through the building she looked up as if in surprise, their eyes met, and with a shock the Tenor awoke from his lethargy, faltered for a moment, and then stopped. The organ played on, however, and he quickly recovered; but the pause had been quite perceptible, and the people were amazed. It was the first time that such a thing had happened with their Tenor, which made it a matter of moment; and the wonder of it grew, parties being formed, the one to excuse the slip and call it nothing, the other to blame him for his carelessness, as people who never disappoint us are blamed, with bitterness, if for once by chance they err.

That night the Tenor's restlessness grew to a head. He was engaged upon a piece of work he wished to finish, but he could not settle to it; and after making an ineffectual effort to concentrate his attention upon it, he took up his hat and strolled out.

It was a lovely moonlight night. The line of trees in the Close were in flower, and their sweetness was overpowering. He did not stay there, however, but wandered out into the city, with his hat pushed back from his forehead, and his hands in his pockets. The gas was not lighted in the streets, as the moon was near the full; and beneath her rays, all common objects, however obtrusively vulgar by daylight, were refined into beauty for the moment.

"Pater de cœlis Deus, miserere nobis;  
Fili Redemptor mundi Deus, miserere nobis,  
Spiritus sancte Deus, miserere nobis;  
Sancte Trinitas unus Deus, miserere nobis"—

the Tenor sang softly to himself as he slowly pursued his way.

He had some sort of a vague idea that he would like to go and look at the quaint old market-place by moonlight; and when he reached it, he stopped at the corner, interrupting his song to gaze in artistic appreciation at the silent scene before him, at the heavy masses of shade interspersed with intervals of mellow moonlight, and the angles of roof and spire and ornament cut clean as cameos against "the dark and radiant clarity of the beautiful night sky."

The market-place was an irregular square, picturesquely enclosed by tall houses of different heights and most original construction; among them the east end of a church and part of a public building of ancient date were crowded in; without incongruous effect, however, the moonlight, crisp, cool, and clear, having melted hue and form of all alike into one harmonious whole, to the charm of which even the covered stalls, used in the day's dealings and now packed in the middle of the square, and the deserted footways added something.

A tall, slender lad of sixteen or seventeen was standing on the edge of the pathway, just in front of the Tenor. He was the only other person about, and on that account the Tenor had looked at him a second time. As he did so, a young woman came suddenly round the corner, and accosted the boy.

"Qu'il est beau!" she exclaimed, laying her hand on his arm, and smiling up into his face admiringly.

The Boy stepped back to avoid her, with an unmistakable gesture of disgust, and in doing so, he accidentally stumbled up against the Tenor.

He turned round and apologised confusedly.

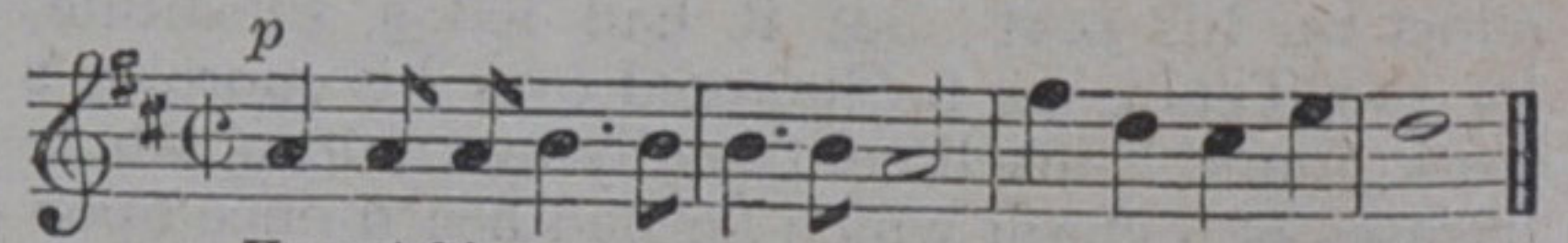
The Tenor raised his hat, and answered courteously. They were standing together side by side now, and remained so for some seconds, silently surveying the scene; and then the Tenor, all unconsciously, began again to sing—

"Sancta Maria," he entreated, "Sancta Dei Genetrix, Sancta Virgo virginum, ora pro nobis."

The girl had been wandering off again, but at the first note of the supplication she stopped. A chord of memory stirred. She knew the words, she knew the tune. She had sung them both herself often and often at home in France. She was a Child of Mary then—and now?

As the Tenor finished the last note of the phrase and paused, she clasped her hands convulsively, and gasped, "O mon Dieu! mon Dieu! ayez pitié de moi!"

Her half-inarticulate cry did not reach the Tenor and the Boy, neither had they observed her distress, for just at that moment the city clock struck one, and both had raised their heads involuntarily in expectation of the chime. And presently out upon the night it rolled, a great wave of sound, swelling and spreading, muffled by distance somewhat, but still distinctly sweet and insistent:



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

"Do you believe it?" said the Boy, glancing toward the girl, and repeating the gesture of disgust with which he had shrunk from her when she accosted him.

The Tenor lifted his hat, and brushed his hand back over his hair. "Do I believe it in spite of *that*, you would say?" he answered, considering the girl with quiet eyes. "Yes, I believe it," he declared, "in spite of *that*, which has puzzled older heads than yours."

With which he turned to retrace his steps, taking up the Litany of the Blessed Virgin once more as he went, the supplication, "Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis," being audible long after he was out of sight.

The Boy remained as he had left him for some time, apparently lost in thought; and the girl still stood a little way off in a dejected attitude, her

hands clasped before her, her eyes fixed on the ground. She looked ill and spiritless. The Boy, glancing at her carelessly, wondered at the intent expression of her face; he did not perceive that she was praying, but she was.

The midnight stillness deepened about those two; there was not another living creature to be seen. The irregular old buildings on every side looked ruinous in the shadowy moonlight, and the whole market-place presented to the Boy a picture of desolation which chilled him. He was about to turn away with a last cursory glance at the other solitary figure, when something suddenly occurred which arrested his attention. It seemed to startle him too, for he sprang back, with prompt agility, into a dark doorway behind him, from whence he watched what followed with the keenest interest, being careful, however, to conceal himself the while. He had not felt any movement of pity or kindly compassion for the girl; perfect indifference had succeeded the first sensation of repugnance; he would have left her there to any fate that might await her, and would have expected all right-minded people to do the same. It was therefore with unmitigated astonishment that he beheld the scene which was now being enacted before him. They were no longer alone. A tall and graceful lady of most dignified bearing, with a countenance of peculiar serenity and sweetness, had approached from the opposite direction, and was standing beside the girl, speaking to her evidently, but the Boy was too far off to hear what was said. He could see, however, that the girl's whole attitude had changed. She was no longer dejected, but eager; and she gazed in the lady's face as she listened to her words with an expression of admiration and wonder, one had almost said of adoration, upon her own, as though it were a heavenly visitant who had hailed her. The lady, as she spoke, pointed to a street opposite, and the girl cast a quick glance in that direction; she seemed to be measuring a distance she was impatient to traverse, and moved a step forward at the same time, uttering some short sentence with rapid gesticulation. The pantomime was perfectly intelligible to the Boy, who understood that she was feverishly anxious to carry out some intention on the instant. The lady seemed to hesitate, then, laying her beautiful white ungloved hand on the girl's shoulder, and looking into her face, she spoke again earnestly. The girl answered with passionate protestations, and then the lady smiled, satisfied apparently, and led the way in the direction to which she had pointed, the girl following in haste. Her hat had fallen back, her hair was loosened, her countenance beamed with enthusiasm, as the Boy observed. He was stealing softly after them, skipping from shadow to shadow, in great enjoyment of the whole adventure.

The lady took the girl to a long low rambling house beside a church, at the door of which she knocked. It was opened immediately by a singularly venerable-looking old man, evidently a priest, with a fine though rugged face, instinct with zeal and benevolence. He had his hat in his hand, and was just coming out; but when he saw who had knocked, he stopped short, and bowed deferentially. The girl sank down upon the doorstep as if exhausted.

"I have brought Marie Cruchot home, father," the lady said.

"Ah, my daughter, is that you? We have been expecting you for many days," the old man exclaimed in French, taking the girl's hand and raising her gently as he spoke. "I have prayed for

you day and night without ceasing, and only just now, as I passed the convent, I went to ask the night portress for tidings of our wandering sheep, and specially mentioned you. But enter. The good sisters are waiting for you, and will welcome you with joy."

One of two sisters of charity, who were standing behind the priest, now came forward and kissed the girl. The old man raised his hat, and, looking up into the clear depths of the quiet sky, murmured a blessing, and went his way. And then the door was closed.

"Humph!" said the Boy, who was lurking up an entry opposite. "So that is what they do at night, is it? and that is the young person who sold her sister Louise to Mosley Menteith. Now I am beginning to know the world; and what an extraordinary old world it is, to be sure! One half seems to be always kept busy mending the mischief the other half has made."

He peeped cautiously out of the entry, looking for the lady, but she had disappeared, and night and silence reigned supreme.

#### CHAPTER IV

ALL that the Tenor had witnessed of the scene in the market-place made little or no impression on him, and he would probably never have thought of it again had he not encountered the Boy a few nights later, standing, idly observant as before, at the same time and almost in the same place.

The Tenor's first impulse was to pass on without speaking, but the Boy looked at him, and there was something in the look, half shy, half appealing, which caused him to stop, and having stopped, he was obliged to speak.

To his first commonplace remark the Boy answered nervously, and with quick glances instantly averted, as if he were afraid to meet the Tenor's eyes. The latter continued to talk, however, and after a little the Boy's timidity wore off, and his manner became assured.

"This is a curious old place, is it not?" he remarked; "and curiously named, if you consider how very little *quest* there is for *morning* here, for the new day which would bring the light of truth after the darkness of error."

"It never struck me that the name could have any allegorical significance," the Tenor answered prosaically. "I believe it used to be Morn and Quest. It stands at the junction of the two rivers, you know, or rather just below it. They run their united race from hence to the sea."

"I know," said the Boy. "But it really is a romantic old place, especially by moonlight; and it teems with historical associations, as the guide-book has it, with its cathedral, cloisters, castle, and Close—the closest in England, they say. Don't you feel remote from the world when you get in there, and the four old gates are shut upon you? The water-gate is the most interesting to me."

"Two of the others are architecturally beautiful where they haven't been spoiled by restoration," the Tenor rejoined.

"Ah!" the Boy ejaculated, and then continued boyishly, "You're not a native evidently, or you wouldn't speak so moderately. The inhabitants boast themselves black in the face about everything in the city. They made me believe that the whole earth began here originally, and that it was



also the point of departure for the sea. It did wash their walls on the southern side once upon a time; but the sinfulness of the people compelled it to retire ages ago, and it has since enjoyed a purer moral atmosphere twenty miles away."

"Indeed," said the Tenor. "I did not know that the sea was so fastidious!"

"Oh yes, it is, naturally," the Boy declared; "but it cannot choose its position for itself always any more than we can. But people are more entertaining than places," he pursued; "don't you think so? Now these people, how God-fearing and orthodox they are, and how admirably they make religion part of their daily life in the matter of stretching a point and using the right of Christian charity to be lenient when a too rigorous adherence to principle would injure their interest. Their chief confectioner retired from business the other day, but they would not give their custom to his successor at first because of his religious opinions. They forsook him for his atheism, in fact; but in a very short time they returned to him for his icecreams, which are excellent. If you ever feel any doubt about life being worth living, go and get one. It will reassure you."

They had been strolling on as they talked, and now the Tenor turned to look at his companion, being about to answer him, when something in the Boy's face struck him as familiar, and he paused, knitting his brows in a perplexed effort to think what it was. Measured beside himself, the Boy was rather taller than he looked, but very slender, and his hands and feet were too small. He had dark eyebrows, peculiarly light luxuriant hair, and, as a natural accompaniment, a skin of extreme fairness and delicacy. In fact, he was too fair for his age—it made him look effeminate; and had it not been for the dark eyebrows and eyelashes his colouring would have been insipid. As it was, however, there was no lack of character in his face; and you would have called him "a pretty boy" while thinking it high time he had grown out of his prettiness. This was the Tenor's reflection, but his too earnest gaze apparently disconcerted the Boy, who returned it with one quick anxious glance, then seemed to take fright, and finally bolted, leaving the Tenor alone in the road. "That young rascal is out without leave, and is afraid of being recognised," he concluded.

It was some weeks before they met again, and during the interval the Tenor often thought of the Boy with curiosity and interest. There was something unusual in his manner and appearance which would have attracted attention even if his conversation had not been significant, and that it was significant the Tenor discovered by the continual recurrence to his mind of some one or other of the Boy's observations. He had not tried to find out who the Boy was, interest not having stirred his characteristic apathy in such matters to that extent, but he looked for him continually both by day and night, his thoughts being pretty equally divided between him and the lady whose brilliant glance had had such a magical effect upon him the first time he encountered it. She came to the cathedral regularly now, and always sat in the canon's pew; and always when he sang she looked at him, and he knew that the look was an expression of appreciation and thanks. He knew, too, that the day she did not come would be a blank day for him.

## CHAPTER V

THE moon had grown old, but the nights were still scented by the lime trees when the Tenor met the Boy again. He had begun to believe that the Boy did not live in Morningquest; and, as often happens, he was thinking of him less than usual on this particular occasion, and hence he came upon him unawares.

The Boy was lolling against the iron railings that enclosed the grassy space round which the old lime trees grew, in the middle of one arm of the Close. It was a bright, clear night, but chilly, and he was wrapped up in a greatcoat which lent a little substance to his slender figure. The Tenor would have passed him without recognising him, but for his sandy hair, which shone out palely against the bark of one of the trees.

"I was waiting for you," the Boy said. "Why are you so late to-night?"

"How do you know I am later than usual to-night?" he asked.

"Because, generally, you come out about ten o'clock, and it is nearly twelve now."

"How do you happen to know I generally come out about ten o'clock?"

"Oh," the Boy answered coolly, "I watched you. I have been studying your habits in order to find out what manner of man you are; and I think you'll do," he added patronisingly, with a wise shake of the head. "I guess you were looking for me too, weren't you?"

The Tenor smiled again, and, lifting his hat, brushed his hand back over his hair. "What makes you think so?" he asked.

"I am accustomed to that sort of thing," the Boy replied, with a twinkle in his eyes. "People who meet me once try, as a rule, to cultivate my acquaintance," with which he raised himself from his lolling posture, and added, "I'll walk up and down with you, if you like, but you must give me your arm. I require support."

"Why? are you tired? What have you been doing to-day?" the Tenor asked as he acquiesced, smiling in his grave way, for the Boy pleased him.

"Oh, well" — considering — "I got up this morning."

"That was a serious business!"

"It was" — with emphasis — "for I had to settle a serious question before I arose. I had to make up my mind about free will and predestination. If I could believe in predestination I thought I might have breakfast in bed without self-reproach; but if it were a matter of free will, I felt I should be obliged to get up."

"And how did you settle it?" the Tenor asked.

"I didn't settle it," the Boy replied, "for just as I was coming to a conclusion the breakfast bell rang, and the force of habit compelled me to jump out of bed in a hurry. I don't call *that* free will! And I think, on the whole, predestination had the best of it, perhaps, for my breakfast was sent up to me after all, without any action on my part, and I partook of it in the silence and solitude of my own chamber, with an easy conscience, and the luxuries of an open window and a book. I suppose you can do that every day if you like? You have no one to interfere with you."

"I have no one to interfere with me," the Tenor repeated thoughtfully. "Perhaps it would be better for me if I had."

"By better you mean happier," the Boy re-

sponded, clasping both hands round the Tenor's arm.

The latter looked down at him, wondering a little, but not displeased.

They were walking in the shadow of the houses just then and could not see each other's faces, but the Tenor's heart warmed more and more to this curious Boy, and he pressed the hand that rested on his arm a little closer. It was a long time since the grave, large-hearted, earnest man had known anyone so young and spontaneous, or felt a touch of human sympathy, and in both he found refreshment—a something of that something which he knew he needed but could not name.

They took a turn up and down in silence, and then the Boy began again, boyishly, "I say, do you suffer from nerves? You made rather a bungle of it the other day, didn't you?"

"You mean when I broke down in that anthem? Were you there? Where did you sit?"

"With the distinguished strangers, of course."

"I did not see you."

"Did you look behind you?"

"No. But are you a stranger here?"

"Well, not exactly," said the Boy, with a great affectation of candour.

They had passed out into the open now, and the Tenor could see the Boy's face. He had glanced at him as we do at the person we speak to, but something he saw arrested his glance, and caused him to look again keenly and closely—the something that had perplexed him before.

The Boy returned his gaze smiling and unabashed. "She put you out, didn't she?" he asked, with a grin. "Verily, she hath eyes—at least, I've been told so; but I am no judge of such things myself."

The puzzled look passed from the Tenor's face. "I know what it is," he said. "You are exactly like her."

The Boy laughed. "I meant to keep it a secret. I was going to make a mystery of myself," he said; "but faculties like yours are not to be baffled, and since you have observed so much, I might as well confess that there are two of us, twins. They call us the Heavenly Twins."

"What, signs of the Zodiac?" said the Tenor.

"No, signs of the times," said the Boy.

There was a little pause, and then the Tenor observed, "I should hardly have thought you were twins, except for the likeness. Your sister looks older than you do."

"Well, you see, she's so much more depraved," said the Boy. "And her lovely name is Angelica—excuse me. I must laugh." He slipped his hand from the Tenor's arm, leant his back against a railing, and exploded. "Excuse me," he repeated, when he could contain himself. "I have suffered from this affliction all my life. I can't help laughing."

"So it seems," said the Tenor. "May I ask what provoked this last attack of your malady?"

Before he could answer, they were accosted by a respectable-looking man, a small farmer from a distance probably, who was making the most of a rare opportunity by trying to see as much as he could of the cathedral in the dark.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said—the Boy was all gravity in a moment—"but could you tell me what flying buttresses are?"

"A sign of rain," said the Boy, whereupon the Tenor seized him by the scruff of the neck and shook him incontinently. For a moment after he was released, the Boy seemed to be overcome by

astonishment; but this was rapidly succeeded by an attack of the malady he had declared to be congenital, apparently brought on by the shock of the chastisement, and the Tenor, who had walked on a little way with the countryman, answering his questions, left him laughing all over. He waited, leaning against the railing, until the Tenor returned.

"You little wretch"—the latter began.

"That's right, don't make a stranger of me," the Boy interrupted. "Treat me like a younger brother. You make me feel that I have succeeded in establishing confidential relations between us, which is what I want."

The Tenor was about to reply, but his voice was drowned by a sudden clangour of the bells above them. The clock struck, the chime rang, and while they waited listening, the Tenor raised his hat. They were standing at the corner of the cloisters, looking up to the clock tower and its tapering spire, which surmounted the Norman façade and entrance to the south transept.

"I must go," the Boy said, when he could hear himself speak.

"Will you not come in—to my house?—I am afraid I am very wanting in hospitality," the Tenor exclaimed. "I should have asked you before. I live close by. I should be so glad"—

"Not to-night," the Boy interrupted hastily; "another time. Good-bye!"

## CHAPTER VI

WHEN next the Tenor saw Angelica after he had learnt that she was the Boy's sister, he felt that a new interest had been added to her attractions.

It was on a Saturday afternoon in the cathedral, as usual, and she came in late. But almost as soon as she had taken her seat she looked at the Tenor with an earnest, anxious glance that reminded him of her brother, and her colour deepened. The Boy had told her, then, the Tenor thought, and he was glad she knew that they had met; it was a bond of union which seemed to bring her nearer.

He noticed now how like in feature the brother and sister were. The girl looked taller as well as older, and was altogether on a larger scale, her figure being amply developed for her age, while the Boy's was fragile to a fault; her hair was dark, too, while his was light; but with these slight differences there was likeness enough to show that they were twins. They both had the same shaped eyes, the same straight, well-defined, dark eyebrows and long lashes, the same features, the same clear skin and even teeth; but the expression was different. There was never any devilment in the girl's face; it was always pale and tranquil, almost to sadness, as the Tenor saw it, standing out in fair relief against the dark oak carving of the stalls. Her movements were all made, too, with a certain quiet dignity that seemed habitual. In the Boy, on the contrary, there was no trace of that graceful attribute. He threw himself about, lolled, lolloped, and gesticulated, with as much delight in the free play of his muscles as if he were only let out to exercise them occasionally; and it seemed as if he must always be at daggers drawn with dignity. But such a slender intellectual creature could not without absurdity acquire the ponderous movements and weight of manner of smaller wits and duller brains. In the girl, quiescence was the natural outcome of

womanly reserve ; in the Boy, it would have been mere affectation. His lightness and brightness were his great charm at present, a charm, however, which was much enhanced by moments of thoughtfulness, which gave glimpses of another nature beneath, with more substantial qualities. The Tenor had soon perceived that he was not all mischief, romp, and boyishness ; all that was on the surface ; but beneath there was a strong will at work with some purpose, or the Tenor was much mistaken ; and there was daring, and there was originality. This was the Tenor's first impression, and further acquaintance only confirmed it.

Having formed his opinion of the Boy's abilities, the Tenor began to make plans for his future, and the selflessness of the man's nature showed itself in nothing more clearly, perhaps, than in the consideration he gave to the lad's career. His own had not cost him so much as a thought for years ; but now he roused himself and became ambitious all at once for the Boy ! He believed that there was the making of a distinguished man in him, and he allowed the hope of being able to influence him in some worthy direction to become as much a part of his daily life as another hope had become—a hope which was strongly felt but not yet acknowledged, except in so far as it took the form of a desire to see her, and made known its presence with force in the pang of disappointment which he suffered if by chance she failed to come as usual to the service on Saturday afternoon. He saw in the girl an ideal, and had found soul enough in the laughter-loving Boy to make him eager to befriend him.

And thus into the Tenor's life two new interests had found their way, and something which had hitherto been wanting to make the music of it perfect was heard at last in his wonderful voice when he sang.

## CHAPTER VII

ABOUT this time the weather changed ; the nights were wet for a week, and when it cleared up the Tenor had begun to do some work for the dean which kept him at home in the evenings, so that he had no opportunity of seeing the Boy, who only seemed to come abroad at night, for some little time. He saw his sister, however, in the cathedral regularly once a week, and always she gave him a friendly glance, by which his days were rounded as by a blessing, and he felt content. His being so was entirely characteristic. Another man in his place would have lost the charm of the present in anxiety to reach some future which should be even more complete. But the Tenor took no thought for the morrow ; each day as it came was a joy to him, and his hopes, if he had any, were a part of his peace.

The work he was doing for the dean was interesting. He was making drawings to illustrate a history of Anglo-Norman times which the dean was writing. He drew well and with great facility ; but these drawings, many of which were architectural, required special care and accuracy, with the closest attention to detail, which made the work fatiguing, particularly as he had to do it at night, his only leisure time just then ; and more than once he had tired himself out, and been obliged to put it away and rest. On one of these occasions, instead of going to bed, he stretched himself in an easy-chair beside the open French window

which looked out upon the cathedral, and prepared to indulge in the quiet luxury of a pipe while he rested his weary eyes. The great cathedral towered above him, and from where he sat the Tenor caught a beautiful glimpse of it anglewise, of the south transept and tower and spire ; the rich perpendicular windows of the clerestory, the bold span of the flying buttresses rising out of the plain but solid Norman base, every detail of which he knew and appreciated.

It was a fair, still, starry night without, and the light air that blew in upon him was sweet and refreshing. His mind wandered from subject to subject—a sleepy sign—as he smoked, and presently he put down his pipe and closed his eyes. He thought then that he had fallen asleep and was dreaming, and in his dream he fancied he heard himself sing. "This is a queer dream," he was conscious of saying. "That is my voice exactly. I have often wondered how it sounded to other people, and now I am listening to it myself, which is strange." But the strangest part of it was that the words to which the music shaped itself in his mind were not the words of any song he knew, but that expression of human nature which contains in itself some of the grandest harmony in the language—

"These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and  
Are melted into air, into thin air :  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself ;  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve ;  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a wreck behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep."

The last words repeated themselves over and over again, on different notes and in another key each time, and with such powerful emphasis that at last it aroused the Tenor, upon whose sleepy brain the fact that it was not a voice but a violin to which he had been listening, dawned gradually, while his trained ear further recognised the tone of a rare instrument, and the touch of a master hand. He got up and went to the window. "Oh !" he exclaimed, "is it you?" and there was a world of pleasure in the exclamation. "Come in."

The Boy, who was standing in the road, opened the little garden gate, and entered. "I am glad you have relented," he said ; "for I meant to play until I had softened your heart, and had persuaded you to take me in ; and the hope deferred was making me sick."

"I was asleep," the Tenor answered. "Why didn't you come in? You must have known you would be welcome. Here is an easy-chair. Sit down. And, tell me, why do we only meet at night? What do you do with yourself all day?"

"I am not a daylight beauty," the Boy declared. "I look best at night."

"But seriously?" the Tenor persisted.

"Oh, my tutor, you know—Sandhurst—exams—and that kind of thing."

"You are going into the army, then?"

But the Boy, smiling, put the question by. The easy, pleasure-loving, sensuous side of his nature was evidently uppermost, and when that was the case it was so natural for him to shirk a disagreeable subject that the Tenor had not the heart to pursue it further.

"Won't you take your hat off?" he said presently.

The Boy put up both hands to it. "My head's a queer shape," he said, tapping it. "You won't want to examine it phrenologically, will you?"

"No," the Tenor answered, smiling. "Not if you object."

"I do object. I don't like to be touched."

The Tenor, still smiling, watched him as he carefully removed his hat. His head was rather a peculiar shape. It was too broad at the back, and too large altogether for his slight frame, though probably the thickness of his fluffy light hair, which stood up all over it, innocent of parting as the Tenor's own, added considerably to this last defect. There was nothing so very extraordinary about it, however, and the Tenor did not see why he should be sensitive on the subject, and rather suspected that the boy was gravely poking fun at him; but as he could not be sure of this, and would not have hurt his feelings for the world, he forbore to make any remark.

The Boy glanced round the room. "What a wealthy, luxurious fellow you are," he observed.

"These appearances of wealth, as you call it, are delusive," the Tenor answered. "I just happened to have money enough to furnish my house when I came here; but I am a very poor man now. I have little or nothing, in fact, but my salary for singing in the choir."

"Oh," said the Boy. "And you might be so rich with your voice."

The Tenor brushed his hand back over his hair.

"Are you lazy?" the Boy demanded.

"No," he answered, smiling again. The Boy kept him smiling perpetually.

"What is it, then? Why don't you work?"

"Well, I do work," the Tenor answered him.

"I mean, why don't you make money?"

"Oh—because I have no one to make it for."

"If you had"—and the Boy leant forward eagerly—"would you? Would you work for a lady who loved you if she gave herself to you?"

"I would work for my wife," said the Tenor.

"Are you engaged?" the Boy asked. There seemed no limit to his capacity for asking.

The Tenor shook his head, and shook the ashes out of his pipe at the same time.

"Are you in love?" the Boy persisted.

The Tenor made no reply to this impertinence, but a glow spread over his face, forehead and chin and throat.

The Boy, whom nothing escaped, leant back satisfied. "I know what it is," he said. "She's married, and you don't like to ask her to run away with you. I expect she would, you know, if you did."

The Tenor threw himself back in his chair and laughed.

His mirth seemed to jar on the Boy, who got up and began to pace about the room, frowning and dissatisfied.

"You look pale," the Tenor said. "Have you been ill since I saw you?"

"No—yes," the Boy answered. "I had a bad cold. I was very sorry for myself."

The Tenor took up his violin, and examined it. "Where did you study?" he asked.

"Everywhere," was the ungraciously vague reply.

"I wish you would play again," the Tenor said, taking no notice of his ill-humour. "It would be a rare treat for a hermit like me."

"No," was the blunt rejoinder. "I don't want to make music. I want to explore."

"Well, make yourself at home," the Tenor said, humouring him good-naturedly.

"Make me at home," the Boy replied. "Confidential relations, you know. You may smoke if you like."

"Oh, thank you," the Tenor answered politely, sitting down in his easy-chair, from which he had risen to look at the violin, and taking up his pipe again.

The Boy was rummaging about now, and, finding much to interest him, he presently recovered his temper, and began to banter his host. But even this outlet was scarcely sufficient for his superfluous life and energy, so he emphasised his remarks by throwing a stray cushion or two at the Tenor; he jumped over the chairs instead of walking round them, and performed an occasional *pas seul*, or pirouette, in various parts of the room. When these innocent amusements palled upon him, he took up his violin and played a plaintive air, to which he chanted—

"There was a merry dromedary  
Waltzing on the plain;  
Dromedary waltzing, dromedary prancing.  
And all the people said, it is a sign of rain,  
When they saw the good beast dancing";

executing grotesque steps himself at the same time in illustration.

"Oh, Boy, forbear!" the Tenor exclaimed at last, "or you will be the death of me."

"That's it," the Boy responded cheerfully. "I mean to be life or death to you."

After this he sat down on a high-backed chair, with his hands in his pockets, his legs stretched out before him, and his chin on his chest, looking up from under his eyebrows at the Tenor thoughtfully. It was an interval of great gravity, and when he spoke again the Tenor looked for something serious.

"I say," he began at last.

The Tenor took his pipe from his mouth and waited, interrogatively.

"I say, I'm hungry."

The Tenor looked his dismay.

"Boys always are, you know," the youth added, encouragingly.

"And if there should be nothing in the house!" the poor Tenor ejaculated. "I'll go and see."

He returned quite crestfallen. "There is nothing," he said; "at least nothing but bread—no butter even."

"I don't believe you," said the Boy, rousing himself from his indolent attitude.

"Boy, you mustn't say you don't believe me."

"But I don't," said the Boy. "I don't believe you know where to look. Are the servants out?"

"Yes, my solitary attendant doesn't sleep here."

"Then I'll go and look myself."

"Oh, do, if you like," said the Tenor, much amused. And thinking the Boy would enjoy himself best if he were left to rummage at his own sweet will, he took up a book, brushed his hand back over his shining hair, and was soon absorbed. But presently he was startled by a wild cry of distress from the kitchen, and, jumping up hastily, he went to see what was the matter.

He found the Boy standing at one end of the kitchen, clutching a vegetable dish, and gazing with a set expression of absolute horror at some object quite at the other end. The Tenor strained his own eyes in the same direction, but could not at first make anything out. At last, however, he distinguished a shining black thing moving, which proved to be a small cockroach.

"Well, you *are* a baby!" he exclaimed.

"I'm not," the Boy snapped. "It's an idiosyn-

crasy. I can't bear creepy, crawly things. They give me fits."

"I begin to perceive, Boy, that you have a reason for everything," the Tenor observed, as he disposed of the innocent object of the Boy's abhorrence.

"Put it out of sight," the latter entreated, looking nauseated.

But as soon as the Tenor had accomplished his mandate, his good-humour returned, and he began to beam again. "What a duffer you are!" he said, taking the lid off the dish he held in his hand. "You have no imagination. You never lifted a dish cover. Why, I've found a dozen eggs—fresh, for I broke one into a cup to see; and here are a whole lot of cold potatoes."

"It doesn't sound appetising; cold potatoes and raw eggs!"

"Sound! It isn't sound you judge by in matters of this kind. Just you wait, and you shall see, smell, and taste."

"Well, if it please you," the Tenor answered lazily. "I see something already. You have lighted a fire."

"Yes, and I've used all the dry sticks," said the Boy, with great glee. "Won't the old woman *swear* when she comes in the morning!"

The Tenor returned to his book, reflecting, as he prepared to resume it, on the wonderful provision of nature which endows the growing animal not only with such strong instincts of self-preservation, but with the power to gratify them, and to take itself off at the same time and be happy in so doing, thus saving those who have outgrown these natural proclivities from some of their less agreeable consequences.

Presently a hot red face appeared at the door. "Did you say you liked your eggs turned?" the Boy wanted to know.

"I didn't say; but I do, if you're frying them."

"And hard or soft?"

"Oh, soft."

"How many can you eat?"

"Half a dozen at least," the Tenor returned at random.

"And I can eat three"—with great gravity—"that will make nine, and leave three for your breakfast in the morning. I dare say you won't want more after such a late supper. I don't think I should myself."

"But do you mean me to understand that the voracity of the growing animal will be satisfied with less than I can eat?"

"Well, you see," the Boy explained apologetically, "the heat of the fire has taken a lot out of me."

"But the waste must be repaired."

"Yes, but the expenditure has been followed by a certain amount of exhaustion, and the power to repair the waste has yet to be generated; it will come as a sort of reaction of the organs which can only set in after a proper period of repose—a sort of interregnum of their energies, you know."

The Tenor threw back his golden head. "Oh, Boy!" he expostulated, "don't make me laugh again to-night; don't, please!"

The Boy was very busy for the next ten minutes, arranging the table, and quite in his element, cooing as he proceeded, and giving little muttered reasons to himself, in his soft contralto voice, for everything he did. That voice of his was wonderfully flexible; he could make it harsh, grating, gruffly mannish, and caressing as a woman's, at will; but the tone that seemed natural to it was the deep, mellow contralto into which he always re-

lapsed when not thinking of himself. The Tenor thought it hardly rough enough for a boy of his age, but it was in harmony with his fragile form, and delicate, effeminate features.

"Whom the gods love die young," flashed through his mind as he watched him now, coming and going; and he sighed, it seemed so likely; and felt already that he should miss the Boy; and wondered, with retrospective self-pity, how he had managed to live at all with no such interest.

"A golden-headed, grey-eyed, white-toothed, fine-skinned son of the morning must be a sybarite," the Boy observed, entering the room at that moment; "so I bring flowers, and also salad, just cut and crisp."

"May I ask how you knew there was salad in my garden?"

"Well, you may *ask*," the Boy responded cheerfully; "but—let me see, though—perhaps I had better tell you. I found that out the last time I was here. Perhaps you don't know that I came? I wanted to discover the resources of the place, so I took advantage of your temporary absence on business one day, and inspected it."

"Where was I?" the Tenor asked.

"You were busy at the fire insurance office opposite."

"Do you mean the cathedral? Boy, I will not let you mock."

The Boy grinned. "It was the only time I could be at all sure of you," he pursued. "You were going to sing a solo. I saw it advertised in the paper, and laid my plans accordingly. But I *was* in a fright! I thought you might just happen to feel bad and be obliged to come out, and catch me. I felt that strongly when I was picking your flowers in the greenhouse."

He left the room before the Tenor recovered, and returned with a tray on which was the result of his enterprise.

"If you don't like eggs and potatoes fried as I fry them, you'll never like anything again in this world," he asserted confidently, helping the Tenor as he spoke. "The thing is to have the dripping boiling to begin with, you know," he continued—"I'll only give you two eggs at a time)—then plunge them in, and as they brown take them off one by one and put them on a hot dish—I'm speaking of the potatoes now; but don't cover them up—it makes them flabby, and the great thing is to keep them crisp."

"They really are good," said the Tenor. But he had overestimated his capacity, and could only dispose of three of the eggs.

The Boy was disgusted. However, he said it did not matter, since he was there to sacrifice himself in the interests of science, and preserve the balance of nature by eating the rest himself, a feat he accomplished easily.

"Now this is what I call good entertainment for man and beast," he observed.

"May I ask which is the beast?" the Tenor ventured.

"Why, I am, of course," said the Boy. "Did you ever know a boy who wasn't half a beast?"

"Yes. It is all a matter of early association and surroundings."

"Well, if you knew the kind of moral atmosphere I have to breathe at home, you would know also how little you ought to expect of me. But what shall we drink?"

"There is some beer, I believe," the Tenor said dubiously.

"Burgundy is more in my line."

"Burgundy! A boy like you shouldn't know the difference."

"A boy like me wouldn't, probably."

The Tenor smiled. "And what do you call yourself, pray? A man?" he asked.

"No; a bright particular spirit."

It was not inappropriate, the Tenor thought, and he got up. "It does not often happen so," he said; "but now I think of it I believe I have some Burgundy in the house. The dean sent me a dozen the last time I was out of sorts, and there is some left."

"I know," said the Boy. "It is in the cupboard under the stairs on the left hand side."

When the Tenor came back with the Burgundy the Boy settled himself in an easy-chair with a glass on the table beside him, and it was evident that his mood had changed. He was thoughtful for a little, sitting with solemn eyes, looking out at the cathedral opposite.

There was only one rose-shaded lamp left alight in the long low room, and the dimness within made it possible to see out into the clear night and distinguish objects easily.

"When I look out at that great pile and realise its antiquity, I suffer," the Boy said at last. "Do you know what it is, the awful oppression of the ages?"

The Tenor did not answer for a moment, then he said—

"I never see you at church."

"I should think not," the Boy replied, still speaking seriously. "You never see anyone but Angelica."

The Tenor flushed.

"Why do you never speak to that sweet young lady?" the Boy asked tentatively, after a little pause.

"I! How could I?"

"I fancy you ought to," the Boy went on, endeavouring to "draw" the Tenor. "You can't expect her to make up to you, you know."

"Oh, Boy! how can you be so young!" the Tenor exclaimed, with a gesture of impatience, but still amused.

The Boy sipped his wine, and gazed into the glass, delighting in the rich, deep colour. "I should think she would be delighted to make the acquaintance of so great an artist," he said.

The Tenor bowed ironically. "May I ask if you are pursuing your investigations as to what manner of man I am?" he asked.

"Well, yes," was the candid rejoinder; "I was. I suppose you think that you ought not to speak without an introduction. Well, say I gave you one."

The Tenor laughed. He felt that he ought to let the subject drop, and at the same time yielded to temptation.

"What would your introduction be worth?" he asked.

"Everything," the Boy rejoined. "I am on excellent terms with Angelica. We have always been inseparable, and I get on with her capitally; and she's not so easy to get on with, I can tell you," he added, as if taking credit to himself.

"When she is good she is very good indeed,  
But when she is naughty she is horrid.

And just now she's mostly naughty. She isn't very happy."

The interest expressed in the Tenor's attitude was intensified, and inquiry came into his eyes.

"She is not very happy," the Boy pursued, with

extreme deliberation, "because you come no nearer."

"Boy, you are romancing," the Tenor said, with a shade of weariness in his voice.

"I am not," the Boy replied. "I know all that Angelica thinks, and it is of you"—

"Hush!" the Tenor exclaimed. "You must not tell me."

"But she"—

"I will not allow it."

"Well, there then, don't bite," said the Boy; "and I won't tell you against your will that she thinks a great deal about you"—this *presto*, in order to get it out before the Tenor could stop him. "But I will tell you on my own account that I don't know the woman who wouldn't."

A vivid flush suffused the Tenor's face, and he turned away.

"I hope you never say things like that to your sister," he objected, after a time.

The Boy grinned. "Sometimes I do," he said, "only they're generally more so."

There was a long silence after this, during which the Tenor changed his attitude repeatedly. He was much disturbed, and he showed it. The Boy made a great pretence of sipping his wine, but he had not in reality taken much of it. He was watching the Tenor, and it was curious how much older he looked while so engaged. The Tenor must have noticed the change in him, which was quite remarkable, giving him an entirely different character, but for his own pre-occupation. As it was, however, he noticed nothing.

"Boy," he began at last, in a low voice and hesitating, "I want you to promise me something." The Boy leant forward all attention. "I want you to promise that you will not say anything like that—anything at all about me to"—

"To Angelica?" The Boy seemed to think. "I will promise," he slowly decided, "if you will promise me one thing in return."

"What is it?"

"Will you promise to tell me everything you think about her?"

The Tenor laughed.

"You might as well," the Boy expostulated. "I've got to look after you both and see that you don't make fools of yourselves. The youngness of people in love is a caution! And I should like to see Angelica safely settled with you. A man with a voice like yours is a match for anyone. There are obstacles, of course; but they can be got over—if you will trust me."

"Oh, you impossible child!" the Tenor exclaimed.

"It is you who are impossible," the Boy said, in dudgeon. "You are too ideal, too content to worship from afar off as Dante worshipped Beatrice. I believe that was what killed her. If Dante had come to the scratch, as he should have done, she would have been all right."

"Beatrice was a married woman," the Tenor observed.

The Boy shrugged his shoulders, but just then the cathedral clock struck three, and he hastily finished his wine.

"I'll disperse," he said, when the chime was over. "Take care of my fiddle. You'll find the case under the sofa. I left it the last time I was here. By the bye, you should make the old woman stay at home to look after the place when you're out. Unscrupulous people might walk in uninvited, you know. Ta, ta," and the Tenor found himself alone.

It was no use to go to bed; he could not rest. His heart burned within him. It was no use to tell himself that the Boy was only a boy. He knew what he was saying, and he spoke confidently. He was one of those who are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And he had said—what was it he had said? Not much in words, perhaps, but he had conveyed an impression. He had made the Tenor believe that she thought of him. He believed it, and he disbelieved it. If she thought of him—he threw himself down on the sofa, and buried his face in the cushions. The bare supposition made every little nerve in his body tingle with joy. He ought not to indulge in hope, perhaps; but, as the Boy himself might have observed, you can't expect much sense from a man in that state of mind.

A few days later the Tenor saw his lady again in the canon's pew, and he was sure, quite sure, she tried to suppress a smile.

"That little wretch has told her, and she is laughing at my presumption," was his distressed conclusion. "I'll wring his neck for him when he comes again."

But when the service was over, and he had taken his surplice off, she passed him in the nave, so close that he might have touched her, and looked at him with eyes just like the Boy when he was shy; gave him a quick half-frightened look, and blushed vividly; gave him time to speak, too, had he chosen. But the Tenor was not the man to take advantage of a girlish indiscretion.

When he went home, however, he was glad. And he opened his piano and sang like one inspired. "I am gaining more power in everything," he said to himself. "I could make a position for her yet."

## CHAPTER VIII

A FEW nights later the Tenor went out for a stroll, leaving the windows of his sitting-room closed but not fastened, and the lamp turned down. On his return he was surprised to find the window wide open and the room lit up. The little garden gate was shut and bolted. He could easily have reached over and opened it from the outside, but knowing that it creaked, and not wanting to disturb his nocturnal visitor until he had ascertained his occupation, he jumped over it lightly, walked across the grass plot to the window, and looked in.

It was the Boy, of course. The Tenor recognised him at once, although all he could see of him at first were his legs as he knelt on the floor with his back to him and his head and shoulders under a sofa. "What, in the name of fortune, is he up to now?" the Tenor wondered.

Just then the Boy got up, frowning, and flushed with stooping. He stamped his foot impatiently, and looked all round the room in search of something. Suddenly his face cleared. He had discovered his violin on the top of a bookshelf above him, and that was apparently what he wanted, for he made a dash at it, and took it down, and hugged it affectionately.

The Tenor smiled, and stepped down into the room. He did not wish to take his visitor unawares, but the carpet was soft and thick, and his quick step as he crossed to where the Boy was standing with his back to him, absorbed in the contemplation of his beloved instrument, made

no noise, so that when the Tenor laid his hand on the Boy's shoulder he did startle him considerably. The Boy did not drop his instrument, but he uttered an almost womanish shriek, and faced round with such a scared, white look that the Tenor thought he was going to faint. He recovered immediately, however, and then exclaimed angrily, "How dare you startle me so? Everybody knows I can't bear to be startled. If you are nothing but a blunderer you will spoil everything. And I bolted the gate too. It would have made a noise if you had opened it as you ought to have done, and then I should have known. I've a good mind to go away now, and never come back again."

"I am very sorry," said the Tenor. "But how was I to know it was you? It might have been a thief."

"Thieves don't come to steal grand pianos and arm-chairs in lighted chambers with the windows open and the blinds up," the Boy retorted. "Don't you feel mean, spying around like that?"

"Are you an American?" the Tenor interrupted blandly.

"Yes, I am"—with asperity—"and you must have known quite well it was me. Who else could get into the Close after the gates were shut?"

"I never thought of that," said the Tenor. "And how do you get in, pray? By the postern?"

"No," was the answer. "I come by the water-gate;" and his face cleared as he saw the Tenor's puzzled glance at his garments.

"I'm not wet," he said. "I don't swim."

"But the ferry does not cross after six."

"No, but I do, you see. And now let us make music," he added, his good-humour restored by the Tenor's mystification. "If you will be so good as to accompany me with your piano, I will give you a treat. I brought my music the last time I was here;" and there it was piled up, on a chair beside the instrument.

The Tenor could have sworn that neither chair nor music was there when he went out that evening, but what was the use of swearing? He felt sure that the Boy in his present mood would have outsworn him without scruple had it pleased him to maintain his assertion, so he opened his piano in silence, and the music began. And it was a rare treat indeed which the Tenor enjoyed that night. The Boy played with great technical mastery of the instrument, but even that was not so remarkable as the originality of his interpretations. He possessed that sympathetic comprehension of the masters' ideas which is the first virtue of a musician; but even when he was most true to it, he managed to throw some of his strong individuality into the rendering, and hence the originality which was the special charm of his playing. As an artist, he certainly satisfied; even the sensitive soul of the Tenor was refreshed when he played; but in other respects he was obviously deficient. So long as things were pleasant it was a question whether he would ever stop to ask himself if they were right. Acts which lead to no bodily evil, such as sickness or that lowering of the system which lessens the power of enjoyment, he was not likely in his present phase to see much objection to; and for the truth, for verbal accuracy in his assertions, that is, he had no particular respect. All this, however, the Tenor was more reluctant to acknowledge, perhaps, than slow to perceive. He

was one of those who expect a great soul to accompany great gifts, and what he did know of the Boy's shortcomings he condoned. He believed the young tone-poet's power was in itself an indication of high aspirations, and those, he thought, were only temporarily suppressed by a boyish affectation of cynicism.

But the Boy did not give the Tenor much time to think. His mind was quick-glancing, like his eyes when he was animated, and he carried the Tenor along with him from one occupation to another with distracting glee. When he was tired of making music, as he called it, he demanded food, and, so long as he could cook it and serve it himself, he delighted in bacon and eggs, as much as he did in Bach and Beethoven.

The Tenor tried to wean him of his nocturnal habits, but to this the Boy would not listen. He said he liked to sit up all night, and when he said he liked a thing, he seemed to think he had adduced an unanswerable argument in its favour. The Tenor complained of fatigue. The long nights affected his voice, he said, and made him unfit for work; but the Boy only grinned at this, and told him he'd get used to it. Then he threatened to shut up the house and go to bed if the Boy did not come in proper time, and on one occasion he carried out his threat; but when the Boy arrived he made night hideous with horrid howls until the Tenor could stand it no longer, and was obliged to get up and let him in, to preserve the peace of the neighbourhood. After which the Tenor ceased to remonstrate, and it became one of the pleasures of his life to prepare for this terrible hungry Boy. He worked in his garden early and late, cultivating the succulent roots which the latter loved, the fruits and the vegetables, and, last but not least, the flowers, for he never could feed without flowers, he said, and the Tenor ministered to this exaction with the rest. "He is dainty because he is delicate," the Tenor thought, always excusing him. "When he is older and stronger he will grow out of all these epicurean niceties of taste. I must make him dig, too, and fence, and row. He'll soon develop more manliness."

That he was spoiling the Boy in the meantime never occurred to him, not even when he noticed that the latter took all these kindnesses as a matter of course, and only grumbled when some accustomed attention was omitted.

The Tenor was vexed sometimes, and obliged to find fault, but the Boy could always soothe him. "I am sure you love me," he would say. "Your life was not worth living until I came, and you could not live without me now. I am a horrid little brute, I know, but I have my finer feelings too, my capacity for loving, and that raises me.

All love is sweet,  
Given or returned."

When the Boy quoted or recited anything he really felt, he had a way of lingering over the words as if each syllable were a pleasure to him. The deep contralto of his voice was at its sweetest then, and he seldom failed to make his own mood felt as he intended.

The Tenor, justly incensed by some wicked piece of mischief, was often obliged to turn away that he might maintain his authority and not be seen to soften. But he never deceived the Boy, who could gauge the effect of his persuasion to a nicety, and would grin like a fiend behind the Tenor's back at the success of his own eloquence. No matter what he had done, by hook or by crook he always

managed to bring about a reconciliation before they parted. He knew the Tenor's weak point—Angelica—and when everything else failed he would play upon that unmercifully. But he had a way of speaking of his sister which often made the Tenor seriously angry. He did not believe the Boy meant half the disrespect with which he mentioned her, but it galled him, nevertheless; and, on one occasion, when the Boy had repeated some scandalous gossip to which the Tenor objected, and afterward excused himself by saying that it was not his but his sister's story, the Tenor's indignation overflowed, and he lectured him severely.

"You should never forget that your sister is an innocent girl," he said, "and it is degrading to her even to have her name associated with such ideas."

But the Boy only grinned. "Bless you," he retorted, "don't make so much ado about nothing. She's quite as wise as we are."

The Tenor's eyes flashed. "I call that disloyal," he said. "Even if it were true—and it is not true—it would be disloyal; and I am ashamed of you. If you ever dare to speak of your sister in that light way to me again, I'll thrash you."

For a moment the Boy was astonished by the threat. His jaw dropped, and he stared at the Tenor; but, quickly recovering himself, he burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. "Oh, my!" he exclaimed. "What a brother-in-law you would be! How do you know she is such a saint?"

"You are a little brute," was all the answer the Tenor vouchsafed. But the question made him think. He could picture her to himself at any time as he saw her in the canon's pew, and the pale, proud purity of her face, with the unvarying calm of her demeanour, were assurances enough for him. His dear lady. His delicate-minded girl. He would stop it. He would make this scapegrace brother of hers respect her, even as he had threatened, if necessary.

"Do you know what she calls you?" that youth asked presently, breaking in upon the Tenor's meditation in a confident way, as if he could not be mistaken about the subject of it.

But the Tenor was not to be beguiled all at once. "I have already requested you not to mention your sister to me," he said.

"I know," was the cool rejoinder. "But I promised on my word of honour to tell you what she calls you. She calls you Israfil—Is-ra-fil," he repeated, "the angel of song, you know."

But the Tenor made no sign. The Boy watched him a moment, and then continued unabashed, "I shall call you Israfil myself, I think, for the future. But I like your own name too!" he added. "I have only just found it out. Everybody here calls you the Tenor, you know."

"And how did you find it out, pray, if I may ask?"

"I looked everywhere," said the Boy, glancing round him comprehensively; "and at last I found it on the back of an old envelope that was in that Bible you keep in your bedroom. Here it is," and he took it out of his pocket-book. "David Julian Vanetemple, Esq., Haysthorpe Castle, Hays, N.B."

A painful spasm contracted the Tenor's face. "Oh, Boy," he said, in a deep, stern voice that made the latter quail for once; "have you no sense of honour at all? You must give that back to me immediately."

The Boy returned it without a word, and the Tenor went upstairs. His step was listless, and



when he came back he looked pale and disheartened. He sat down in his accustomed seat beside the fireplace farthest from the window that looked out upon the cathedral, but facing it himself, and rested his elbow on the arm of the chair and his head on his hand, taking no notice of the Boy, however, who waited a while, casting anxious glances at him, and then rose softly and stole away.

When the Tenor roused himself he found a slip of paper on the table beside him, on which was written, "Dear Israfil, I beg your pardon. I did it without thinking. I will never hurt you like that again, only forgive me." And the Tenor forgave him.

On another occasion, when there was peace between them, and they were both in a merry mood, the Boy said he had a grievance, and when the Tenor asked what it was, he complained that the Tenor had never taken interest enough in him to ask him his name.

"No, now you mention it," the Tenor answered. "I never thought of your having a name."

"Do you mean to say you think me such a nonentity?"

"Just the opposite. Your individuality is so strongly marked that you don't seem to require to be labelled like other people. By the bye, what is your name?"

"Claude."

The Tenor laughed ironically. "Oh no," he said, "it is Maude you mean; delicate, dainty, white-fingered Maude."

But the Boy only roared. This kind of insinuation never roused his resentment; on the contrary, it delighted him. "Imagine the feelings of the flowers," he said, with a burst of laughter that convulsed him, "if my remarkable head, sunning over with curls, were to shine out on them suddenly, and want to be their sun!"

"I am afraid you are incorrigible," the Tenor answered. "You seem to glory in being effeminate. If wholesome ridicule has no effect, you'll die an old woman in the opprobrious sense of the word."

"I'll make you respect these delicate fingers of mine, though," the Boy irritably interposed, and then he took up his violin. "I'll make you quiver."

He drew a long melodious wail from the instrument, then lightly ran up the chromatic scale and paused on an upper note for an instant before he began, with perfect certainty of idea and marvellous modulations and transitions in the expression of it, to make music that steeped the Tenor's whole being in bliss.

The latter had noticed before that it was to his senses absolutely, not at all to his intellect, that the Boy's playing always appealed; but he did not quarrel with it on that account, for music was the only form of sensuous indulgence he ever rioted in, and besides, once under the spell of the Boy's playing, he could not have resisted it even if he would, so completely was he carried away. The Boy's white fingers were certainly not out of place at such work. "Do I play like an old woman in the opprobrious sense of the word?" he demanded, mimicking the Tenor.

"Oh, Boy!" the latter exclaimed, with a deep-drawn sigh of satisfaction. "You have genius. When you play you are like that creature in the *Witch of Atlas*—

A sexless thing it was, and in its growth  
It seemed to have developed no defect  
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both."

But the Boy frowned for a moment at the definition, and then he said, "Is that what you call genius? Now I make it something like that, only different. I believe it is the attributes of both minds, masculine and feminine, perfectly united in one person of either sex."

The Tenor, lolling in his easy-chair, smiled at him lazily. There was no end to his indulgence of the Boy; but still he led him, by example principally, but also by suggestion, as on one occasion when the Boy had been sketching out a scheme of life in which self was all predominant and the Tenor asked, "Do you never feel any impulse to do something for your suffering fellow-creatures?"

To which the Boy at first rejoined derisively, "Am I not one of the best of their benefactors? Would you say that a fellow who plays as I can does nothing for his fellow-creatures? To make music is my vocation, and I follow it like a man." But after a moment's thought he confessed, "Once indeed I did try to do some good in the world, but I failed disastrously."

"What did you try?"

"I took a class in a Sunday school." He waited to enjoy the effect of this announcement on the Tenor. "I did, indeed," he protested; "but—eh—I cannot say that success attended the effort. In fact, both I and my class were forcibly ejected from the building before the school closed. You see, I had no vocation, and it was foolish to experiment."

The Tenor said no more on the subject, and did not mean to, but the Boy returned to it himself eventually, and it was evident that the wish to do something for somebody was taking possession of him seriously. This was the Tenor's tactful way with him; and from such slight indications of awakening thought he continued to augur well for the Boy.

## CHAPTER IX

So time passed on, changing all things greatly, or with infinitesimal changes, according to their nature. The colours worn in crowded thoroughfares varied with the varying fashions; the tint of the summer foliage with sun and rain and dust. Doors, closed the whole long winter, were opened now and left so, and the young people passed to and fro, thronging to river banks but lately deserted; to the cricket fields, garden, or wood, or lawn. The very faces of the streets were changing, enlivened by plaster and paint and polish: the face of the land with the certain advance of the season; the faces of friends with something not to be named, but visible, strange, and, for the most part, disheartening. It was the old story for ever and ever; all things changed always; but the chime was immutable.

As the days grew gradually to weeks, his one connecting link with the outer world became dearer and dearer to the lonely Tenor. The nights that brought the Boy were happy nights, looked forward to with eagerness, and prepared for with difficulty. For at this time the Tenor denied himself some of the bare necessities of life, that he might buy him the Burgundy he loved to sip: he did no more than sip, and, therefore, the Tenor indulged him; drink was not to be one of his vices, evidently.

The Tenor, although he would not have acknowledged it, held that the Boy was a creature

apart, and one, therefore, whom it was not fair to measure by the common standard. Doubtless the manner of their meeting had something to do with this idea. The Boy was associated in the Tenor's mind with many sweet associations: with the beautiful still night; with the Tenor's far-off ideal of all that is gracious and womanly; with the music that was in him; and, further, with a sympathetic comprehension of those moments when grey glimpses of the old cathedral, or a warm breath of perfumed air from the garden, or some slight sound, such as the note of a night-bird breaking the silence, fired a train of deep emotion, and set his whole poetic nature quivering to the unspeakable joy of it; joy sanctified by reverence, and enlarged beyond comparison by love.

With such moods as these the Boy's own mood was always in harmony; so much so, indeed, that the Tenor thought it was then that he was himself, and that those wild ebullitions of spirits were only affected to disguise some deeper feeling of which, boy-like, he was ashamed. As their intimacy ripened there were times when, not only his whole demeanour, but his very nature seemed to change; when he craved for dimness and quiet; and when he would work upon the Tenor with little caressing ways that won his heart and drew from him, although he was habitually undemonstrative, expressions of tenderness which were almost paternal.

In his quieter moods the Boy would sit in the dim lamplight on a footstool beside the Tenor's chair, leaning his head against the arm of it, while the latter smoked, and the tap, tap, tap of the clematis and honeysuckle on the window pane kept time to the thoughts of each. Long intervals of silence were natural to the Tenor, and it was generally the Boy who broke the charm. He would talk seriously then, and often about his sister, and was not to be silenced until he had had his say. He conquered the Tenor as usual by his persistence, but the latter was not much influenced by what he said at first. Gradually, however, and by dint of constant iteration, some of the Boy's assertions became impressed upon his mind. He began to believe that Angelica did wish to make his acquaintance, and to admit to himself that there might be a possibility of winning her regard eventually; but his highmindedness shrank from approaching a girl whose social position was so far above his own—in the matter of money, that is. For of course the Tenor had a proper respect for art. He knew that to be a great artist, with the will and power to make his art elevating, is to be great in the greatest way; and he also knew that his own gift was second to none. But would she link her lot with his? He yearned for some assurance. He had no ambition whatever for himself, but he would have toiled to succeed for her. It was his weakness to require someone to work for as he was working for the Boy; a purely personal ambition seemed to him a vexing, vain, and insufficient motive for action. All selfless people suffer from indolence when only their own interests are in question; they require a strong incentive from without to arouse them. Such incentive as the Tenor had was in itself a pleasure to him, a refinement of pleasure which might be coarsened, which certainly would be impaired by any change. He had, however, begun to make plans. He was determined to go and take his place amongst the singers of the world; but when, exactly, he had not decided. As the Boy declared, when it came to the point he found

it difficult to tear himself away from Morningquest. Of course he would go, in fact he felt he must go, soon—say, when these drawings for his good friend the dean were finished.

"By the way, Boy," he asked one night, "what is your family name? and who are your people?"

"My family name is Wells," the boy answered demurely. "My father has a little place in the neighbourhood, and my grandfather lives here too."

"Wells," the Tenor repeated. "I seem to know the name."

"Oh, doubtless," the Boy observed. "This is a hotbed of Wellses. Israfil," he pleaded—he was nestling beside the Tenor in the dim half-light, watching the latter smoke—"Israfil, tell me all about yourself. Tell me about that old castle in the North to which your letter was addressed. Tell me who you are. I want your sympathy."

"You have it all, dear Boy," the Tenor said.

"I shall not feel that I have until you ask for mine. You would not deny me this if you knew what a stranger I am to the luxury of loving. I want to cultivate the power to care for others. Just now I don't seem to be able to sympathise with anyone for more than a moment, and that is the cause of all you object to in me. But if you would confide in me, if you would make me feel that I am nearer to you than anybody else is, I believe I could be different."

The Tenor reflected for a little. "If I were to make you my confidant, Boy, would you respect my confidence?" he said at last.

"Assuredly," the Boy replied. "I promise on my honour. You shall tell her yourself."

The Tenor ignored this last impertinence, but the Boy was not abashed. "Israfil," he pursued, "they say you are the son of an actress and some great nobleman, and that when you found it out, your intolerable pride made you give up your profession, and come and bury yourself alive in Morningquest because you could not bear the stigma. Are you the son of such parents, Israfil?"

The Tenor brushed his hand back over his hair. "Has your sister heard these reports?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And what does she say?"

"Oh, *she* doesn't mind! She rather leans to the nobleman theory; and when people of that kind—I mean the nobility and gentry," he exclaimed with a grin—"the worst of being in society is that you are forced to know so many disreputable people); when they come to our house—and they do come in shoals, Angelica being the attraction, you know—then we speculate. Angelica feels quite sure that the Duke of Morningquest himself is your father. He was a loose old fish, they say. And there is a sort of family likeness between you. Angelica thinks you came here that your presence might be a continual reproach to him."

"Not a very worthy thought," said the Tenor drily.

"Well," said the Boy, with much candour, "I could not swear it was Angelica's. It has a strong family likeness to some of my own."

"It has," said the Tenor.

He was lolling in his deep easy-chair with his hands folded on his vest and his legs crossed, and now he laid his sunny head back wearily against the cushion, and looked up at the ceiling. It was his accustomed attitude in moments of abstrac-

tion, and the Boy let him alone for a little, watching him quietly. Then he grew impatient, and broke the silence. "Is it true, Israfil?" he asked.

"Is what true?" lowering his eyes to look at him without changing his position.

"Is it true that you are the son of an actress and a duke?"

"Probably," the Tenor answered; "anything is probable where the most absolute uncertainty prevails."

"Then you don't know who you are?" the Boy exclaimed, in a tone of deep disgust due to baffled curiosity.

"I haven't the most remote idea," said the Tenor.

"I don't believe you."

"Boy, I have already told you that I will not have my word doubted."

"I know," said the Boy. "You are always autocratic. But I can't believe you don't know who you are. It is incredible. You would never give yourself such airs if you hadn't something to go upon. And, besides, you command respect naturally, as well-bred people do. And you have all the manner and bearing of a man accustomed to good society. You have the accent, too, and all the rest of it. The difficulty in your case is to believe in the actress. She was a very superior kind of actress, I suspect. And, at anyrate, you must have been brought up and educated by somebody. Do tell me, Israfil. I am burning to know."

"Your curiosity is quite womanish, Boy."

"That is quite the right word," the Boy answered glibly. "Women are generous and elevated, and 'a generous and elevated mind is distinguished by nothing more certainly than an eminent curiosity.'"

The Tenor changed his position slightly, and in doing so absently laid his hand on the Boy's head. "What queer dry hair you have," he said.

The Boy drew back resentfully. "I wish you wouldn't touch my hair," he said. "I know it's nasty dry hair. It's a sore point with me. I think you should respect it."

"I beg your pardon," the Tenor answered. "I really didn't know you were so sensitive on the subject. But why on earth do you come so close? You put that remarkable head of yours under my hand, and then growl at me for touching it. And really it is a temptation. If I were a man of science instead of a simple artist I should like to examine it inside and out."

The Boy put both hands up to his head and laughed, delighted as usual by any jest at his own expense. He had moved his footstool back a little now, and sat, stroking his upper lip thoughtfully and looking at the Tenor. There was a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, and he seemed to have forgotten his desire to know the Tenor's secret history. "Why don't you wear a moustache?" he said suddenly.

The Tenor looked at him lazily. "Well, I never did wear one," he said. "But I could not in any case have worn one with a surplice."

The Boy nodded his head sagely. "I forgot," he said. "Of course that would have been bad form. A parson is always vulgarised in appearance by wearing a military moustache. The effect is as incongruous as a tail would be if added to a figure with wings. But, tell me, do you think my moustache will be the colour of my eyebrows when it comes?"

"Oh, Boy!" the Tenor exclaimed, "this is quite refreshing; especially from you. You will be quite young in time if you go on."

The Boy grinned in his peculiar way, and then got up and began to walk about the room. The Tenor thought from the expression of his face that he was meditating mischief; but before he had time to put it into effect the big bell boomed above them, striking the hour, and then came the chime.

The Boy hated the chime. He said it was flat; he said it was importunate, like an ill-bred person; he said it mingled inopportunely with everything; he declared it had a spite against him, and would do him an injury if it could; when he was good he said it made him bad, and when he was bad it made him worse. The Tenor had expected to hear him swear at it; but, oddly enough, considering some of his aberrations, the Boy never swore. His ideas were occasionally shocking, but, with the exception of certain *boyishnesses*, in the expression of them he was a purist.

He went off now, however, anathematising the chime, and the Tenor was almost glad to get rid of him. The Boy's superabundant vitality alone was fatiguing, and when he added, as he often did, a certain something of manner to it which was perplexing and irritating in the extreme, he left the Tenor not only fatigued but jarred all over. Yet he spent the interval which usually elapsed before the Boy returned in making excuses for him, and also in making preparations.

## CHAPTER X

THE Tenor was obliged to leave the window of his sitting-room, which looked out on the little grass plot in front of his house and the cathedral opposite, open always now, rain, blow, or snow, for the convenience of the Boy. The latter had changed his mind about forcing an entrance. If the Tenor, he said, would not make it quite evident that he wanted him by leaving the window open so that he could come in his own way whenever he chose, he should not come at all. The window was his way; and on one occasion when he had found it shut he had gone home, intending, as he afterward declared, never to return; but he had changed his mind, and reappeared after an unusually long interval, when the Tenor, to use the Boy's own phrase, "caught it" for his want of hospitality. Of course, he acknowledged, he might have come in by the door or he might have knocked at the window; but then he did not choose to come in by the door or knock at the window, so that was all about it. If the Tenor wanted to see him he knew how to make him feel he was welcome; and so on, until, for the sake of peace and quietness, the Tenor was again obliged to yield.

Oh, the moods of that terrible Boy! No two the same and none to be relied on! Sometimes he was like a wild creature; there was no holding him, no knowing what he would do next; and the Tenor used to tremble lest he should carry out one of his impossible threats, among which serenading the dean, upsetting the chime, climbing the cathedral spire on the outside, or throwing stones at the stained-glass saints in the great west window, were intentions so often expressed that there seemed some likelihood of one or other of them being eventually put into execution. Then again he would saunter in about midnight, and sit down in a dejected attitude, looking un-

utterably miserable; he would hardly answer when the Tenor spoke to him, and if he did not speak he resented it; neither would he eat, nor drink, nor make music, and if the Tenor sang he sometimes burst into tears.

On other occasions he was the most commonplace creature imaginable. He would talk about a book he had been reading, a new picture his "people" had bought, the society in the neighbourhood; anything, in fact, to which the Tenor would listen, and the latter was often astonished by the acuteness of his perceptions and the worldly wisdom of his conclusions.

The Tenor made every allowance for these changes of mood, which, if they were trying at times—and certainly they were trying—were interesting also and amusing. He knew what an affliction the sensitive, nervous, artistic temperament is; what a power of suffering it hides beneath the more superficial power to be pleased; and he pitied the Boy, who was an artist in every sense. He also thought there had been mistakes made in his education.

"Did you ever go to a public school, Boy?" he asked one night.

"Well, no," the Boy rejoined. "I had the advantage of being educated with Angelica. They kindly allowed me to share her tutor. I was thrown in, you understand, just to fill up his time. And that is how it is I am so refined and cultivated."

"But seriously?" said the Tenor.

The Boy raised his eyebrows. "Seriously?" he repeated. "But do you think it delicate to question me so closely? Ah, I see, poor fellow! You don't know any better. But really your curiosity is quite womanish. I will tell you, however. I had the misfortune to sever my femoral artery when I was a brat, and, although it seems to have come quite right now, it was not thought advisable for me to rough it at a public school."

"But why on earth are they putting you in the army?" the Tenor asked.

"You mean I am much too pretty?" said the Boy, "not to mention my brains and manners. Well, there I must agree with you. It does seem a sad waste of valuable material. But it is only to fill up an interval. I shall be put into a permanent billet of another kind eventually, whether I like it or not."

"You mean you will be put into the earth to enrich it, I suppose?"

"Well, no. I was not so smart," said the Boy. "Now, that is rather a good one for you. Oh, I suspect, if I could plumb your depth, I should find myself but a simple, shallow child in comparison. No; what I meant was that eventually a certain amount of earth would come to me to enrich me."

"But what does your father think about this military manœuvre?"

"My father *think!*" roared the Boy. "O Lord! you don't know my father!" and he fairly curled himself up in convulsions of silent laughter, which the Tenor thought unseemly considering the subject of it, but he said no more. He knew that there was nothing to be done with such a boy but to wait and hope; and that was the attitude into which the Tenor found himself most prone to fall in these days with regard to things in general; being greatly cheered meanwhile by the sight of his lovely lady, who smiled at him now without doubt, and was seldom absent from her accustomed seat in the canon's pew when he sang.

The Tenor looked better now, and more out of

place than ever in the choir—better, that is to say, in the sense of being more attractive; but he was not looking strong, and the common faces about him seemed commoner still when contrasted with the exceptional refinement of his own. The constant self-denial he had been obliged to exercise in order to indulge the fancies of that rapacious Boy, although a pleasure in itself, was beginning to tell upon him. His features had sharpened a little, his skin was transparent to a fault, and the brightness of his yellow hair, if it added to the quite peculiar beauty, added something also to the too great delicacy of his face. It was the brightness of his hair that suggested such names for him as "Balder the Beautiful" and "Son of the Morning" to the Boy, who invariably called him by some such fanciful appellation.

It was at this time, too, that a great painter came to Morningquest and painted a picture called *Music*, the interest of which centred in the Tenor himself singing, while Angelica gazed at him as if she were spellbound.

The Boy used to describe this picture to the Tenor while it was in progress, but the latter, listening in his dreamy way, was under the impression for some time that the work was one of his young friend's own imagination only. By degrees, however, it dawned upon him that the picture was an actual fact, and then he was displeased. He thought that the artist had taken a liberty with regard to himself, and been guilty of an impertinence so far as his lovely lady was concerned.

"Well, so I told him," said the Boy. "But you know, dear Israfil, that in the interests of art as well as in the interests of science, men are carried away to such an extent that they sometimes forget to be scrupulous. It is curious," he broke off, gazing at the Tenor critically, "that Angelica should specially admire your chin. It is your mouth that appeals to me. You have a regular Rossetti-Burne-Jones-Dante's-Dream-and-Blessed-Damosel kind of mouth, with full, firm lips. I should think you're the sort of fellow that women would like to kiss. Don't try to look as if you wouldn't kiss a woman just once in a way, dear old chap! Women hate men like priests, who mustn't kiss them if they would; and they have no respect for other men who wouldn't kiss them if they could. I know Angelica hasn't!"

The last words were delivered from outside in the garden after the Boy had made his escape through the window.

## CHAPTER XI

How long the Tenor's dream would have remained unbroken by action it is hard to say. His want of personal ambition, his perfect serenity of mind, and his thankfulness for a state of things so much more blissful than anything he had ever expected to fall to his lot again; the languid summer weather, and his affectionate anxiety for the Boy, all combined to keep him in Morningquest, and to keep his indefinite plans for the future still in abeyance.

Other people, however, were not so apathetic. The dean's friendly remonstrances had been redoubled of late; the Boy had become importunate; and even the mild musicians of Morningquest, whose boast it was to have that bright particular star in their own little firmament, ventured to hint respectfully that he was not doing his duty

by himself. All this kindly interest in his future career was not without its effect upon him, and if it did not actually rouse him to act, it put him in the mood to be aroused.

He was sitting alone one evening in his accustomed seat beside the fireplace, or rather beside the bank of ferns and flowering plants which he had arranged before the fireplace so as to hide it, at the instigation of the Boy. A shaded lamp stood on a table behind him, throwing its softened light from over his shoulder on to the big book which lay open on his knee. But he was not reading. He had placed his hands upon the book, and was resting his head on the back of the chair. His yellow hair seemed to shine out of the surrounding gloom with a light of its own; but his face was in shadow.

The window at the farther end of the room behind him was shut, and the creepers outside brushed gently against it, tapping now and then, and keeping up a continual soft rustle and murmur of leaves, like friendly voices, soothing insensibly.

The other window was open as usual, and as he sat now he could see the old cathedral opposite towering above him. It was a bright moonlight night; the shadows were strong, and the details of the façade, flying buttress, gargoyle, and cornice, with a glimpse of the apse and spire, were all distinct. But as the Tenor thoughtfully perused them, the whole fabric suddenly disappeared from view, blotted out by an opaque body round which the moonlight showed like a rim of silver, tracing in outline the slender figure of the Boy. The Tenor had forgotten him for once, and was startled from his reverie by the unexpected apparition; but he did not alter his position or make any sign. The Boy preferred to come and go like that, ungreeter and unquestioned, and the Tenor of course humoured this harmless peculiarity with the rest.

The Boy sauntered in now in a casual way, arranged his hair at a mirror, threw himself into an arm-chair, leant back, crossed his legs, folded both hands on his hat, which he held on his knee, and looked at the Tenor lazily.

In the little pause that followed, the Tenor glanced at his book again, and then he closed it.

"Israfil," the Boy said suddenly, leaning forward to look at the book, as if to make sure, and speaking in an awestruck voice—"is that the *Bible* you were reading?"

Any evidence of the Tenor's simple piety, which was neither concealed nor displayed, because it was in no way affected but quite natural to him, and he was, therefore, unconscious of it, had a peculiar effect upon the Boy. It seemed to shock him. But whether it made him feel ashamed or not, it is impossible to say. Sometimes, the first effect over, he would remain thoughtful, as if subdued by it; but at others it appeared to have irritated him, and made him aggressively cynical.

To-night he was all subdued.

"You believe it, Israfil, don't you?" he said. "'He watching' is a fact for you?"

The Tenor did not answer, except by folding his hands upon his book again, and looking at the Boy.

"Now, I don't believe a word of it," the latter pursued, "but it makes me feel. I have my moments. The Bible is a wonderful book. I open it sometimes, and read it haphazard. I did last night, and came upon—oh, Israfil, the grand simplicity of it all! the wonderful solemn earnest-

ness! It brought me to my knees, and made me hold up my hands; but I could not pray. I heard the chime, though, that night. It sounded insistent. It seemed to assert itself in a new way. It was as if it spoke to me alone, and I felt a strange sense of something pending—something for which I shall have to answer. 'He watching.' Yes. I feel all that. But"—dejectedly—"one feels so much more than one knows; and when I want to know, I am never satisfied. Trying to find the little we know amongst the lot that we feel is a veritable search for mignonette seeds in sand."

The Tenor continued silent and thoughtful for a time. "But do you never pray, dear Boy?" he said at last.

The Boy shook his head.

"Did you never?"

"Oh yes,"—more cheerfully. "I used to believe in all the bogies at one time."

"I am afraid you have been brought under some bad influence, then. Tell me, who was it?"

"Angelica," said the boy.

"Oh, Boy! your sister!"

"Ah, you don't know that young lady!" the Boy rejoined, with his cynical chuckle. "She is very fascinating, I allow; but always, in her conversation, 'the serpent hisses where the sweet bird sings.'"

The Tenor toyed with the cover of his book, and was silent.

After a time the Boy spoke diffidently. "But do you pray, Israfil?" he asked.

"Yes," the Tenor answered. "I try to make prayer the attitude of my mind always—I mean I try to be, and to do, and to think nothing that I could not make a subject of prayer at any time. But I do not think that a direct petition is the only or best way to pray. It seems to me that it is in a certain attitude of mind we find the highest form of prayer, a reverential attitude toward all things good and beautiful, by which we attain to an inexpressible tenderness, that enemy of evil emotions, and also to rest and peace and a great deep solemn joy which is permanent."

"I don't think I ever knew a man before who prayed regularly," the Boy observed thoughtfully, rising as he spoke, and standing with his hat on: "except the clergy, I suppose. But then that is their profession, and so one thinks nothing of it. But I wonder if many men of the world pray? I suppose they have to give up everything that makes life pleasant before they can conscientiously begin."

"Far from it," said the Tenor, smiling. "But you are going early! Aren't you hungry?"

The Boy grinned as if the insinuation were flattering. "No, I am not hungry," he answered. "I dined at home to-night for a wonder, and when I do that I don't generally want any more for some time. By home I mean at my grandad's, where they always have seven or eight courses, and I can't resist any of them. I lose my self-respect, but satisfy my voracity, which has the effect of improving the greediness out of my mind. But I am in a hurry this evening, and I have already outstayed my time. I only came in for a moment to ask you if you are to sing to-morrow?"

The Tenor nodded.

"In that case I am to beg you for 'Waft her, Angels.' Angelica ventures to make the request. Good-night!"

The words were scarcely spoken, and his flying footsteps were still audible as he ran lightly up

the Close, when the cathedral clock began to strike. There was only one emphatic throb of the iron tongue, followed by a long reverberation, and then came the chime.

The Tenor, who had risen, stood listening, with upturned face, until the end.

But the chime failed of its effect for once. There was something weary and enigmatical in the old worn strain. Hitherto, it had always been a comfort and an assurance to him, but to-night, for the first time, it was fraught with some portentous meaning. Was there any cause for alarm in what was happening? any reason for fear that should make it merciful to prepare him with misgivings? It was no new thing for the Tenor to be asked to sing something special, and he tried to think such a request, although it came from Angelica—if indeed it came from her, and was not a fabrication of the Boy's—was a whim as trifling as the rest. But even if it were, trifles, as all the world knows, are not to be despised. Someone has said already that they made up the sum of life, and it may also be observed that the hand of death is weighted by them.

## CHAPTER XII

THE Tenor happened to be entering the cathedral next day for the afternoon service just as Angelica was being handed from a carriage by a singular-looking man who wore a *pince-nez*, was clean shaven, and had an immense head of hair. Angelica very evidently called the attention of this gentleman to the Tenor as he passed, and the latter heard the "Ach!" of satisfaction to which the stranger gave utterance when he had adjusted his *pince-nez* with undisguised interest, and taken the Tenor in.

The latter felt that he had seen the man before, and while he was putting on his surplice he remembered who he was, an *impresario*, well known by sight to regular opera-goers and musicians generally. Having established his identity, the reason of his presence there that afternoon was at once apparent. The Tenor had been requested to sing a solo which was admirably calculated to display the range and flexibility of his voice to the best advantage, and the *impresario* had been brought to hear him. The mountain had come to Mahomet.

The Tenor never sang better than upon that occasion, and he had scarcely reached his cottage after the service was over, when the *impresario* burst in upon him, having, in his eagerness, omitted the ceremony of knocking. He seized the Tenor's hand, exclaiming in broken English, "Oh, my dear friend, you are an ideal!" Then he flung his hat on the floor, and curveted about the room, alternately rubbing his hands and running his fingers upward through his luxuriant hair till it stood on end all over his head. "And have I found you?" he cried sentimentally, apostrophising the ceiling. "Oh, have I found you? What a *Lohengrin*! Ach Gott! it is the prince himself. Boat"—and he stopped prancing in order to point his long forefinger at the Tenor's chest—"boat you are an actor born, my friend! You was the *Prince of Devotion* himself jus' now. You do that part as if you feel him too! Why,"—jerking his head towards the cathedral with a gesture which signified that if he had not seen the thing himself he never could have believed it—"why, you loose

yourself in there completely!" Then he asked the Tenor to sing again, which the Tenor did, being careful, however, not to give his excitable visitor too much, lest the intoxicating draught should bring on a fit.

The music-mad-one had come to make the Tenor golden offers, and he did not leave him now until the Tenor had agreed to accept them.

The dean came in by chance in time to witness the conclusion of the bargain, adding by his congratulations and good wishes to the Tenor's own belief that such an opportunity was not to be lost. The drawings the Tenor had been doing for the dean were all but finished now, and it was arranged that the Tenor should enter upon his new engagement in one month's time.

When he found himself alone at last and could think the matter over, he was thoroughly content with what he had done. There could be no doubt now as to whose wish it was that he should go and make a name for himself, and he felt sure that the step he was about to take would not lead to the separation he dreaded, but rather to the union for which he might at last without presumption, after such encouragement, venture to hope.

## CHAPTER XIII

A FEW nights after the Tenor had signed the agreement the Boy burst in upon him, exclaiming in guttural accents, "Oh, my dear friend! have I found you?" Then he threw his hat on the floor and began to prance up and down, waving his hands ecstatically.

The Tenor picked up a cushion and threw it at him. "You wretched Boy!" he said, laughing. "Who told you he did that?"

"Oh, my dear Israfel!" the Boy replied. "Why on earth do you ask who *told* me? You must know by this time, and if you don't you should, that genius does not require to be told. Given the man and the circumstances, and we'll tell you exactly what he'll do, don't you know," and the Boy showed his teeth.

But the Tenor was not convinced. "Knowing your patience and zeal when engaged in the pursuit of knowledge—I think that was the euphemism you employed the last time you had to apologise for the unscrupulous indulgence of your boundless curiosity," the Tenor, standing with his back to the Boy, observed with easy deliberation, as he filled and lighted a pipe, "I have little doubt that you assisted at the interview from some safe coigne of vantage—to borrow another of your pet expressions—perhaps from the closet under the stairs there"—

"Or from behind the sofa," the Boy suggested, with that enigmatical grin of his which the Tenor disliked, perhaps because it was enigmatical. "Like my new suit, Israfel?" he demanded in exactly the same tone. He had on a spotless flannel boating suit, with a silk handkerchief of many colours, knotted picturesquely round his neck.

"It's too new," said the Tenor. "It looks as if you'd got it for private theatricals, and taken great care of it."

The Boy laughed, and then, assuming another character, he began to remonstrate with himself playfully in the Tenor's voice.

"Boy, will you never be more manly?" and "Don't mock, Boy!" and "Boy, you have no soul!" and "Oh, Boy, you're not high-minded."

Then he did a love scene between the Tenor and Angelica. The Tenor tried to stop this last performance, but he only made matters worse, for the Boy argued the question out in Angelica's voice, taking the part of "dear Claude"—he still insisted that his name was Claude—and ending with, "Dear Israfil, we are so happy ourselves, I think Claude should have a little latitude to-night. He studies so hard, poor boy, he deserves some indulgence."

When this amusement ceased to divert him, he announced his intention of going on the stage, of not going home till morning, and of being rowed down the river in the meantime.

"But where will you get a boat at this time of night?" the Tenor objected.

"You're not a man of much imagination," said the Boy, "or you wouldn't have asked such a question. How do you suppose I come every night, after all the world is barred and bolted out of your sacred Close, and the alternative lies between the porter at the postern, whom you know I shun, and the water-gate?"

"Do you mean to say you row yourself down the river every time you come?"

"I do," said the Boy complacently.

"I didn't think you could!" was the Tenor's naïve ejaculation.

The Boy was delighted. "It never struck you, I suppose," he chuckled, "that my fragile appearance might be delusive? Haven't you noticed I never tire?"

"Yes," said the Tenor. "But I thought that you probably paid for these nights of dissipation by days of languor."

The Boy laughed again. "Don't know the sensation," he declared. "Days of laziness would be nearer the mark. I have plenty of them."

It was a lovely night, all pervaded by the fragrance of the flowers in the gardens round about the Close.

They sauntered out, turning to the left from the Tenor's cottage, the cathedral being on their right, the cloisters in front. The Boy walked up to the latter and peeped in. "Come here, dear Israfil," he said obligingly, "and I will show you the beauties of the place. These are the cloisters, and, as you see, they form a hollow square, nearly two hundred feet long, and twelve feet wide. Yon slowly rising moon shows the bare quadrangle in the centre, and the tracery of the windows opposite; but the exquisite groining of the roof, and the quaintly sculptured bosses, are still hidden in deep darkness. The light, however, brightens in the north-east corner, and—if you weren't in such a *hem* hurry, Israfil"—The Tenor had walked on, but the Boy stayed where he was, and now began to improve the occasion at the top of his voice.

The Tenor returned hurriedly. "For Heaven's sake hold your tongue!" he expostulated. "You'll wake the whole Close."

"I was calling your attention to the details of the architecture," the Boy rejoined politely; and, as usual, for the sake of peace and quietness, the unfortunate Tenor was obliged to hear him out.

When he stopped, the Tenor exclaimed, "Thank Heaven!" devoutly, then added, "No fear for your exams, Boy, if you can cram like that. But I did not know you were a cultivated archæologist."

"Nor am I," said the Boy, with a shiver. "I hate architecture, and I don't want to know about it, but I can't help picking it up. It is horrid to remember that that arch yonder was built in

the time of William the Conqueror. I never look at it without feeling the oppression of the ages come upon me. And when I get into this bigoted Close and think of the heathenish way the people live in it, shutting themselves in from the rest of the citizens with unchristian ideas of their own superiority, I am confirmed in my unbelief. I feel if there were any truth in that religion, those who profess it would have begun to practise its precepts by this time; they would not be content to teach it for ever without trying it themselves. And oh!"—shaking his fist at the cathedral—"I loathe the deeds of darkness that are done there in the name of the Lord."

"What unhappy experience are you alluding to, Boy?" said the Tenor, concerned.

"I was thinking of Edith—poor Edith Beale," the Boy replied. "But don't ask me to tell you that story if you have not heard it. It makes my blood boil with indignation."

"I have heard it," the Tenor answered sadly. "But, Boy dear, every honest man deploras such circumstances as much as you do."

"Then why do they occur?" the Boy asked hotly. "If the honest men were in earnest, such blackguardism would not go unpunished. But don't let us talk about it."

They went through the arm of the Close in the centre of which the lime trees grew round a grassy space enclosed from the road by a light iron railing. "This is grateful!" the Boy exclaimed, as they passed under the old trees, lingering a while to listen to the rustle and murmur of the leaves. Then they emerged once more into the moonlight, and took their way down the little lane that led to the water-gate. Here they found an elegant cockleshell of a boat tied up, "a most ladylike craft," said the Tenor.

"I'll steer," said the Boy, fixing the rudder, and then arranging the cushions for himself, while the Tenor meekly took the oars.

With one strong stroke he brought the boat into mid-stream, then headed her down the river toward the sea, and settled to his oars with a long steady pull that roused the admiration of the Boy.

"You row like a 'Varsity man," he said.

"So I should," was the laconic rejoinder.

"Are you a 'Varsity man?"

"I am."

"Oxford, then, I'll bet. And did you take your degree?"

The Tenor nodded.

"Well, you *are* a queer chap!" said the Boy. "Were you expelled?" The Tenor shook his head. "Did you do *anything* disgraceful?" The Tenor again made a sign of negation. "Then why on earth did you come and bury yourself alive in Morningquest?"

"That I might have the pleasure of rowing you down the river by moonlight, apparently," the Tenor answered, but without a smile.

"I'd give my ears to know!" the Boy ejaculated.

"I quite believe you would!" said the Tenor, pausing to speak; after which he bent to his oars with a will, and the banks became a moving panorama to their vision as they passed. Now they swept under a light iron bridge that crossed the river with one bold span, and connected a busy thoroughfare of the city with a pleasant shady suburb beyond. Then they wound round a curve, and on their left was a broad towing-path and beautiful old trees, and a high paling made of sleepers shutting out the view; while on the right, those crowded dwellings of the poor which add so much to a picture, especially by moonlight, and

so little to the loveliness of life, rose from the water's edge and straggled up the rising ground, tumbling over each other in every sort of picturesque irregularity. Ahead of them, the river was landlocked by a wooded hill; and, also facing them, was an old round tower on the towing-path, above which the round moon shone in an empty indigo sky.

"Stop a minute, Israfil," said the Boy, "and turn your head. Who does it make you think of?"

"Old Chrome," the Tenor answered, looking over his shoulder. "It is perfect."

The river was quite narrow here, and on either side were long lines of pleasure-boats moored to the bank, and an occasional flat tied up for the night, with its big brown sails, looking like webbed wings, hoisted to dry. Farther on they met a barge coming up the river, and the Boy wished the man who was steering a polite good-night, and hoped he'd have a pleasant passage and no bad weather; to which piece of facetiousness the bargee replied good-humouredly, having mistaken the Boy's contralto for a woman's voice, an error of judgment at which the latter affected to rage, much to the amusement of the Tenor.

But they were out of the city by this time. On their right was a gentleman's park, well wooded, and sloping up from the river to a gentle eminence crowned by a crest of trees; on their left, across some fields, the villas of that pleasant suburb before mentioned studded the rising ground, appearing also among old trees, beneath which they and their quiet gardens nestled peacefully. There were trees everywhere—beech and laburnum and larch, horsechestnut and lime and poplar, as far as the eye could reach, and the latter, standing straight up in the barer spots, were a notable feature in the landscape, as were also the alder-cars and occasional osier beds dotted about in marshy places.

The pleasant suburb straggled out to an ancient village, past which a reach of the river wound, but the Boy kept the boat to the main stream. They could see the village street, however, with the quaint church on the level; and light warm airs brought them odours of roses and mignonette from the gardens. It had been a long pull for a hot night, and the Tenor shipped his oars here, and threw himself back in the bow to rest. He lay looking up at the sky while they drifted back little by little with the tide. The balmy air, the lop-lop of the water against the boat, the rock and sway and sense of dreamy movement, and ever and anon the nightingales, made a time of soft excitement, such as the Boy loved.

"Oh, Israfil!" he burst out; "isn't it delicious just to be alive?"

He was lolling in the stern with his hat off, his legs stretched out before him, and a tiller rope in each hand, the image of indolent ease. "Yes, this is perfect," he added; "it is paradise."

"Not for you, I should think," said the Tenor, "without an Eve."

"Now, there you mistake me," the Boy replied. "If there be one thing I deprecate more than another it is the impertinent intrusion of sex into everything."

"You surprise me," the Tenor answered idly. "When I first had the pleasure of meeting you, love was a favourite topic of yours."

"Ah! at that time, yes," said the Boy. "You see I was merely pandering then to what I supposed to be your taste, in order to ingratiate myself with you; but you may have noticed that

since I knew you better I have allowed the subject to drop—except, of course, when I wanted to draw you."

"That is true," said the Tenor upon reflection. "And yet you are the most sensuous little brute I know."

"Sensuous, yes; not sensual," said the Boy. "I take my pleasures daintily, and this scene satisfies me heart and soul: balmy air; moonlight with its myriad associations; a murmurous multitude of sounds like sighs, all soothing; the silent drift and gentle rocking of the boat; and the calm human fellowship, the brotherly love undisturbed by a single violent emotion, which is the perfection of social intercourse to me. I say the scene is hallowed, and I'll have no sex in my paradise." The last words were uttered irritably, and he sat up as he spoke, thrust his hands into his pockets, and frowned at the silvery surface of the river. "Love!" he ejaculated. "Rot! It is not love they mean. But don't let us desecrate a night like this with any idea that lowers us to the level of a beastly French novel reeking with sensuality."

"Amen, with all my heart," said the Tenor lazily. "But don't introduce the disturbing element of violence either, dear Boy. Your sentiments may be refined, but the same cannot be said for the expressions in which you clothe them. In fact, to describe the latter, I don't think *coarse* would be too strong a word."

"No, not coarse," said the Boy, with his uncanny grin. "Vigorous, you mean, dear. But now shut up. I want to think."

"You don't. You want to feel," said the Tenor.

The Boy threw his cap at him.

Then they resettled themselves, lolling luxuriously, the one in the bows, the other in the stern; and the Tenor's soul was uplifted, as was the case with him in every pause of life, to the heaven of heavens which only could contain it; while the Boy's roamed away to realms of poesy, where it revelled amid blossoming rhymes, or rested satisfied on full-blown verses, some of which he presently began to chant to himself monotonously.

"I like that," he broke off at last. "There is quite an idea in it—well worked out too; don't you think so?"

"What is the thing?" the Tenor asked. "Who wrote it?"

"I wrote it myself," said the Boy.

The Tenor roused himself, and got out the oars, but sat resting on them with a far-away look in his dreamy eyes. He was bareheaded, and the moon played on his yellow hair, making it shine; a detail which did not escape the Boy, whose pleasure in the Tenor's beauty never tired.

"I didn't know you were a poet as well as a musician," the latter said at last.

"Ah! you have much to learn," the Boy answered complacently, then added, "I am extremely versatile."

"Jack of all trades," said the Tenor.

"Now, don't be coarse," said the Boy.

"Well, I hope that is not the best specimen of your powers in that line," the Tenor drily pursued.

"By no means," was the candid rejoinder; "but the most appropriate, seeing that I just made it for the occasion, which is not a great occasion, don't you know?"

"I've heard something very like it before," said the Tenor.

"Yes," said the Boy, with a gratified smile,



"that is the beauty of it. There is no new-fangled nonsense about me. My verses always tremble with agreeable reminiscences. They set the sensitive sympathetic chords of memory vibrating pleasantly. You can hardly read anything I write without being reminded of some one or other of your best friends in the language. I have written some verses which I can assure you were a triumph of this art." He made an artistic pause here, shook his head, and then ejaculated solemnly, "But, Lord! how I did rage when the fact was first pointed out to me!"

The Tenor got the boat round, and, with an occasional dip of the oars to keep it in mid-stream, allowed it to drift slowly back toward Morningquest.

"I am afraid you are precocious, Boy," he said at last. "Don't be so if you can help it. The thing is detestable."

"I really think I shall be obliged to avoid you, Israfil," the Boy rejoined. "If I let you be intimate, you will be giving me good advice. Look there!"

The Tenor turned hastily. But there was nothing wrong. It was only that they had reached a point from which they could obtain a view that pleased the Boy's excitable fancy; a bend of the river, a glimpse of upland meadows, woods with the cathedral spire above them, and the square outline of the castle overhanging the city from its dominant site on the hill, and seeming to guard it as it slept.

The Tenor looked a little, then dipped his oars and rowed a stroke or two. The Boy's mood had changed. He was keenly susceptible to the refining influences of beautiful scenes. His countenance cleared and softened as he gazed, and the Tenor knew that he would jeer no more that night.

Presently they heard the city clocks striking the hour. Both listened, waiting for the chime. The Tenor rested on his oars, and after it had sounded, muffled by distance, but quite distinct, he still sat so, gazing thoughtfully into the water.

"Boy, shall I tell you something?" he said at last.

The Boy gravely responded with a nod.

"It was not far from where we are now," the Tenor continued, "that I first heard the chime—oh, ever so many years ago!" and he brushed his hand back over his hair.

"You were a boy then?"

"Yes, a lad like you—perhaps younger. I had been working in a colliery. The work was too hard for me, and I was coming up the Morne on a barge, to try and get something lighter to do in one of the towns. We came up very slowly, and it was a hot day, and I idled about for hours, looking at the water over the side, and at the banks of the river as we passed, but without thinking of anything. What I saw made me feel. I was conscious of various sensations—pleasure, wonder, amusement, and, above all, of a dreamful ease; but I could not translate sensations into words at that time; they suggested no ideas. There had been nothing in my life so far to rouse my mental faculties, and I was conscious without being intelligent, as I suppose the beasts of the field are. I must have been happy then, but I did not know it. As we approached Morningquest I heard the chime. It was very faint at first, for we were still a long way off; but the next time it sounded we were nearer; and the next it was quite distinct. And it seemed to me to mean something, so I asked the old bargee who was steering,

and he told me. I could neither read nor write at that time, and I had never heard of Christ, but I loved music, and the idea of a great beneficent being who slumbered not nor slept, but watched over us all for ever, took possession of my imagination, and I caught up the notes and words and sang them with all my heart. And when we got to the outskirts of the city, a gentleman who had been sitting on the towing-path, sketching the old houses on the opposite side of the river, heard me, and hailed the barge, and came on board. 'Which is your sweet singer?' he asked, and the old fellow who was steering nodded toward me, and answered, 'The lad there.' And the gentleman said if I would go away with him he would have me taught music and make a great singer of me."

"And you went?"

"Yes," said the Tenor, with his habitual gesture.

"The gentleman was a bachelor," he resumed, "with few near relations. He was very rich, very liberal, and passionately fond of art in all its branches. That was why he took me at first, but by and by he began to like me for myself. He had me educated as his own son might have been, and I loved him as if he had been my father. Oh, Boy, he was a good man! You never would have scoffed at religion and truth had you been brought up by him. I rested on his affection as securely as you rely on the obligation of your nearest of kin. I knew that, even if I had lost my voice or otherwise disappointed him, it would have made no difference. Once my friend he would always have been my friend. But I did not lose my voice, nor did I otherwise disappoint him, I trust." The Tenor paused a moment. "He was always sure that I was gentle by birth," he resumed, "and all my tutors said I must have come of an educated race because I was so teachable. Everything in the new life came to me naturally. I never had any trouble. My friend tried hard to find my parents, but all that was known of me in the place I came from was that a collier, who lived alone in a little cottage, went home late one night and found me asleep on his bed. They thought I was only a few days old then, and had kept my clothes, which were such as a gentleman's child would have worn, but there was no mark on any of them, nor any clue by which I could be identified, except the name, David Julian Vanetemple, scrawled on a scrap of paper in a woman's hand, an educated hand. The collier brought me up somehow, though Heaven alone knows how, considering my age and his own occupation. Do you know, Boy, one of the most weary things in life is the sense of an obligation you can never repay. If I could only have done something to prove my gratitude to my first foster father! But there! I must not think of it. It is better to hope that all he did for me was a pleasure to himself at the time, though there must have been much more trouble than pleasure at first. But he was very kind, and I was very happy with him." Here the Tenor paused again for a while, and then resumed. "When I was old enough he took me down to the pit occasionally, but he would not let me work until I was much past the age at which the other boys began. He said I was not one of them; my build was different, and I was quite unfit for such rough labour; and so it proved, but I persevered as long as he lived. It was not very long, however, for he was killed one day by an explosion of gas down in the mine while trying to

rescue some other poor fellows who had been blocked up in a gallery for days by a fall. His dog was killed at the same time. He liked to have his family with him, he said, and we were generally both beside him when he was at work. But he sent me off on an impossible errand to a neighbouring town that day. I did not suspect it at the time, but I know now that it was to keep me out of harm's way. And so I was left quite alone in the world, and I thought the place where I had had a friend was more desolate than strange places with which I had no such tender associations would be; and so I wandered away, and wandered about until I was found by my next friend on the barge, and the new life began for me."

"Then he never found out who you were?" the Boy exclaimed.

"No, never."

"And why did you leave him?"

The Tenor shipped his oars. "He had a place in Scotland to which we went every autumn for shooting," he began to answer indirectly, and then stopped.

The Boy was leaning forward, with his eyes riveted on the Tenor's face; his delicate features were pale and drawn with excitement and interest; his lips were parted; he scarcely seemed to breathe. There was a long pause. The moonlight still streamed down upon them. The water lapped against the sides of the boat, and sparkled and rippled all around them, its murmurs mingling with the rustle of leaves, the sighing of sleeping cattle, the manifold "inarticulate voices of the night," above which a nightingale in a copse hard by sang out at intervals divinely.

"My friend was not conventional in anything," the Tenor began again at last. "When he went out shooting, for instance, he liked to find his own game as he would have had to do in the wilds. All the sport of the thing lay in that, he said; it was just the difference between nature and artifice. We were therefore in the habit of going out alone—that is to say, with a keeper or two and the dogs, but never with a party." Here again the Tenor paused, and all the minor murmurs of the water and from the land sounded aggressively, with that sort of sound which fills the ears but seems nevertheless to emphasise the silence and solitude at night.

The Boy moved restlessly once or twice, making the little boat rock, and the Tenor, yielding to the eager expectancy he saw in his eyes, resumed his story.

"Toward the end of the season of which I have been speaking," he said, "we had arranged an expedition for one particular morning; but just as we were about to start my friend got a telegram from a man he knew, begging him as a favour to be at home that day to receive a yachting party who were anxious to come up and see the place, and had only a few hours to do it in. I wanted to stay and help him to entertain them, but he would not hear of it. My day's shooting was of more consequence to him than the entertainment of many guests, and he made me go alone. But I went reluctantly. I had been out alone often enough before, and had enjoyed it thoroughly, but that day, somehow, I hated to leave him, and only went to please him, he made such a point of it. Once fairly started, however, I began, as was natural, to enjoy the tramp over the moors. We intended to send back for any game we might shoot, so only one old gillie accompanied me. I carried out the plans we had made the night be-

fore, going the way we had intended to go. It was deer I was after, and as luck would have it, I had some splendid sport, and had begun to enter into it thoroughly before we halted to refresh ourselves at noon. After a long rest we set off again up a wooded glen. The keeper had noticed a herd of deer only the day before feeding at the other side, and it seemed more than probable that we should get a shot when we reached the brow of the hill, or we might perhaps meet some of them coming down the glen to drink. The afternoon was waning then, and we had turned our faces homeward. When we got to the head of the glen the luck seemed still to be favouring us, for there, on our right, was a splendid fellow lording it alone on the very crest of the hill within range. I did not stop to consider, but raised my gun to my shoulder and fired instantly. But just as I pulled the trigger, someone sprang up from the heather between me and the stag—sprang up, uttered a cry, and reeled and fell"—the last words were spoken with a gasp, and the Tenor stopped for an instant, and then continued in a hoarse broken whisper, to which his companion had to listen intently, leaning forward to do so, with his great eyes dilated, and his pale lips quivering. "'Lord, sir,' the gillie exclaimed, 'you've shot the master!'"

"And you had?"

"I had. Yes, I had shot him," the Tenor repeated.

"Oh, Israfil!" cried the Boy, flinging himself down impetuously before him, and grasping his hands.

"When his guests had gone," the latter continued in a broken voice, "he strolled out to meet me. He had not said anything about coming, but he knew I meant to return by that glen. He did not, however, know on which side I should be, and he had therefore taken up his position on the brow of the hill from whence he could see every point at which I was likely to appear. Probably he never saw the stag—it was behind him; and we—the gillie and I—neither of us saw anything else. And, indeed, had there been no game, we could hardly have distinguished him at that time of the day from the hillside till he moved, for the suit he wore was just the colour of the rocks and heather. We carried him home—but he was dead—dead—quite dead," and the Tenor moaned, covering his face with his hands.

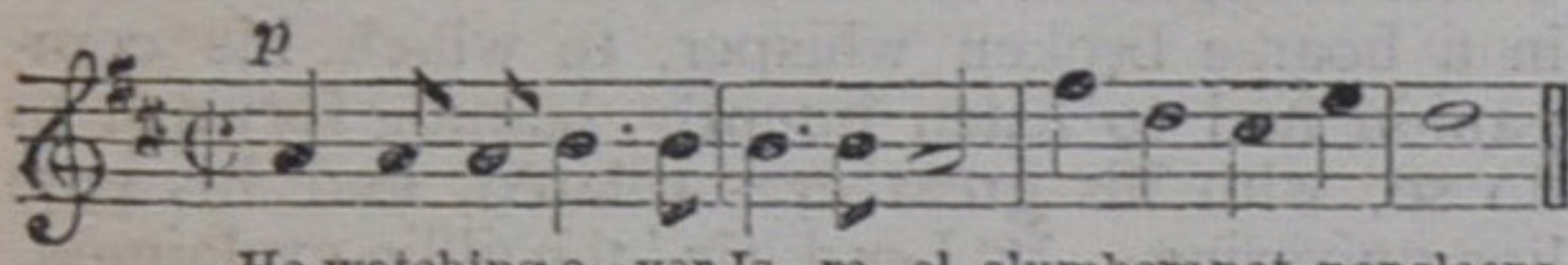
"I remember now," the Boy said softly. "I heard all about it at the time, and read the case in the papers, but I never thought of associating it with you. Yet—how could I have been so dull? There was an inquest, and they tried"—he hesitated.

"They tried to make out that I had some motive—something to gain by his death," the Tenor went on; "but everyone, and most of all his nearest of kin, his heir, came forward to exonerate me. He had provided for me in his will by settling the allowance he always made me on me and my heirs for ever. But he always said that my voice was my fortune, and he had no need to make enemies for me by giving me that which belonged by right to others. He was a just man, singularly open in all his dealings, and it was not hard to clear me, but still—oh!"—he broke off—"it was awful! awful!"

"And afterward?" the Boy ventured to ask.

"Afterward," the Tenor repeated slowly, "Afterward—for some months—I wandered about. They were all very kind. They wanted me to stay with them—they wanted to take me

abroad—they would have done anything to help and comfort me. But all I cared for was to be alone. At first there was a blank—the faces about me had no meaning for me—the people when they spoke could scarcely make me understand. I was mad in a way, but not mad enough to be insensible to sorrow. I felt the fearful calamity that had fallen upon me, but nothing else. I told myself every hour of the day that he was dead—dead; cruelly cut off in the midst of his happy life by me whom he loved—I could not have suffered more had I been guilty," the Tenor broke off. "This lasted—I hardly know how long; but eventually I began to fancy that he saw my agony of grief, and that it was a torment to him not to be able to come and comfort me. Then one day—I was in Cornwall at the time—sitting on the seashore—and all at once—it was the strangest thing in life—I heard the chime! I had not been thinking of it. I doubt if I had thought of it a dozen times since I heard it first. But it sounded for me then:



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

I heard it quite distinctly, and I got up and looked about me. It was the first thing outside myself that had arrested my attention since I had seen him drop on the moor. I went back to the inn I was staying at, and asked about it; but I could scarcely make them understand what I meant, and there was certainly no such chime in that neighbourhood. Then I felt it was a message sent specially to me, and I made my man pack up my things, and then I dismissed him, and started at once for Morningquest alone. It was a long journey, and although I travelled with all possible speed, I did not arrive until nearly forty-eight hours later. It was close on midnight then, and the first thing I heard, when I found myself alone in my room at the hotel, was the chime itself. Have you ever noticed—or is it only my fancy?—that it seems to strike louder at midnight, and with greater intensity of expression, as we ourselves strike final chords? It sounded so to me then, and suggested something—I can't tell what, I can't define it; but something that changed the current of my thoughts, and made me feel I had done right to come. And from that moment my grief was less self-centred, and the blessed power to feel for others began to return to me. Almost immediately after my arrival, I heard of the tragedy in the cathedral, the suicide of the tenor, and the trouble the dean and chapter were having to find a substitute; and when I had seen the quiet shady Close, and the beautiful old cathedral, and my little house with its high-walled garden at the back, standing, as it were, on holy ground, I longed to take up my abode there, where no one would know my story but those to whom the secret would be sacred, and no one would intrude upon my grief. So I applied for the tenor's place, and I knew as soon as I had taken the step that it was a wise one. I thought, if anything could restore the balance of my mind, it would be the regular employment, the quiet monotony, the something to do that I must do, the duty and obligation, which were just sufficient without being any tax on my powers to take me out of myself. And the being able to shut myself up from the world in the Close, as I said before, was another inducement, though by far the

greatest were the daily services in the cathedral; while taking part in them I always feel that I am nearer him. When I applied for the place, and the dean heard who I was—of course, he knew the story; the whole world knew it at that time—and heard how I yearned for a life of devotion, he sympathised with me entirely, gladly acceded to my request, and agreed to keep my secret. He has told me since that he always hoped and believed the quiet, regular life would restore me, and when it had he intended to urge me to go away, and make the most of my powers. Dear, kind old man! he has indeed been a good friend to me, and he is a good man himself, if ever there were one. But I seem to have known none but good men," the Tenor concluded thoughtfully.

"But your money, Israfil," the Boy said impatiently; "what did you do with that?"

The question provoked the ghost of a smile. "Oh, Boy! that is so like you!" the Tenor answered. "But since you wish to know, I will tell you. My income has all been disposed of for some years to come. It was a great deal more than I should have required in any case, and a lay clerk with such means would have been an anomaly not to be tolerated. But he meant that I should enjoy it, and so I have. I have held it as a sacred trust left to me for the benefit of those who are worse off than myself. I keep the principal in my own hands, but I dispose of the interest. It does not go very far, alas! in my profession, where want is the rule, but it enables me to do something, and that, till I knew you, Boy, was my greatest pleasure in life. I have earned my own living almost ever since I came to Morningquest, and being obliged to do so has been a very good thing for me."

"And all these pensioners—or whatever you like to call them—of yours, do they know?"

"As a rule my lawyers manage the business delicately," the Tenor answered, smiling. He dipped his oars as he spoke, and began to row back with a will.

The Boy, shivering as if with cold, gathered up the tiller lines and steered mechanically. They were both subdued, and scarcely spoke till the boat touched the landing-place at the water-gate, and then the Boy begged the Tenor to get out, saying that he must row himself home.

The Tenor jumped ashore, and then, with a long grip of each other's hands, and a long look into each other's eyes, they parted in silence.

The moon had set by this time, and the summer dawn was near.

#### CHAPTER XIV

THE next night the Boy appeared again in his white boating suit, with his sandy hair tumbled more than usual. His restless eyes sparkled and glanced, and there was a glow beneath his clear skin which answered in his to a heightened colour in other complexions. He was evidently excited about something, and the Tenor thought he had never seen him look so well. What his mood was did not become immediately apparent. The Tenor had learnt that the sparkle in his eyes either meant some mischievous design or a strong desire to "make music." But this evening he was long in coming to the point. He began by pelting the Tenor with roses through the window, and then he entered and danced an impromptu

breakdown in the middle of the room; but these preliminaries might have been an introduction to anything, and it seemed as if his programme were not complete, for he next subsided into his accustomed seat on the sofa up against the wall opposite the fireplace, and remained there, with his hands in his pockets, looking at the Tenor thoughtfully for at least ten minutes.

The Tenor was also in his accustomed seat beside the hearth—or rather beside the stand of growing flowers and ferns that hid the hearth, with a book on his knee. He was sitting there when the first rose whizzed in out of the silence and solitude of night without warning upon him, announcing the arrival of the Boy. It startled him somewhat, but he did not wince from the shower that followed, nor did he move when the Boy chose to show himself, but merely smiled and closed his book, and then sat watching the next part of the proceedings with the gravity of an Eastern potentate. He sat so now, looking up at the great cathedral, seen dimly through the open window, towering above them, his profile turned to the Boy, and the roses all about him—on the floor, on the back of his chair, one on his shoulder, another on his book, and one he held in his hand. There were dozens of them of every hue, from that deep crimson damask which is almost black, to the purest white, fresh gathered from the trees apparently, with the dew still glistening on their perfumed petals and on the polished surface of the leaves. The Tenor, becoming conscious of the *Gloire de Dijon* he held in his hand, looked into its creamy depth with quiet eyes. The beauty of the flower was a pleasure to him—though, for the matter of that, everything was a pleasure to him now. He had no words to tell it, but his face was irradiated by the gladness of the hope which he cherished from morning till night.

The Boy had been watching him admiringly. "You will be one of the beauties when you come out, dear Israfil," he said. "They will photograph you and put you into the shop windows, cabinet size two-and-sixpence. Sounds rather vulgar, though, doesn't it? Savours of desecration, to my mind. But, Israfil, you will certainly be the rage. One so seldom sees a good-looking man! Good-looking women are common enough, and they make themselves still commoner nowadays,"—which remark coming from such a quarter amused the Tenor, whereupon the Boy became irate. "Oh, jeer away!" he exclaimed; "but when you know Angelica as well as I do you will respect my knowledge of the subject."

But here the Tenor threw back his head, and groaned aloud.

"Boy, I protest!" he exclaimed. "I can endure your garrulousness, but I do bar your cynicism. If you can't be agreeable, be still. You're in a horrid bad temper"—and so saying the Tenor rose in his languid way, got a little table which he placed beside his chair, spread out his pipes upon it, and began to clean them with crows' quills, the Boy watching the operation the while with cheerful intentness.

"Pipes and tobacco and roses!" he said at last. "What a mixture it sounds! But it doesn't look bad, dear Israfil," he added encouragingly.

The Tenor made no remark; his pipes seemed to be all-engrossing. He had just filled the bowl of one with a number of fuseeheads, cut off short, and now he popped in a light and corked them up. There was a tiny explosion on the instant, followed by a rush of smoke through the shank of the pipe, which swept it clean, and added musk

and gunpowder to the already heavy odour of roses that filled the room.

The Boy, still lolling on the sofa observing the Tenor's proceedings with interest, drew up one leg, clasping his hands round it below the knee, and began to sing to himself in a monotonous undertone as was his wont.

"By the bye," the Tenor said, like one who suddenly remembers, "I found some verses after you were here the other night"—and he straightened himself to feel in his pockets—"I suppose you dropped them. Here they are." And then he leant back in his chair again and read aloud—

"When the winter storms were howling o'er the ocean,  
Leafless trees and sombre landscape cold and drear,  
Bitter winds, and driving rains, or white commotion  
Of the whirling snow that drifted far and near;  
Then my heart, which had been strong, was bowed and broken,  
I was crushed with sudden sense of loss and fear,  
Dull as silence passed the days, and brought no token  
Of a light to make the darkness disappear.  
Would the grief that wrecked my life for ever hold me?  
Soon or later winter storms their ravage cease—  
With the coming of the green leaves, something told me,  
With the coming of the green leaves there is peace.

When the bursting buds proclaim'd the spring-time nearing,  
Song of birds and scent of flowers everywhere,  
Drowsy drone of distant workers, and the cheering  
Hum of honey-seeking bees in all the air;  
Then my sorrow took swift wings and rose and left me;  
And I knew no more the aching of despair;  
Came again to me the joy that seemed bereft me,  
And for hope I changed the dreary weight of care.  
With the winter tempests pass'd the storms of feeling,  
Soon and surely did their power to pain me cease,  
And the sunshine-lighted summer rose revealing  
With the coming of the green leaves there is peace."

The Tenor looked at the Boy when he had finished, shook his head mournfully, struck a match, set fire to the paper upon which the verses were written, and watched it burn with the air of a disappointed man.

"Don't make any more rhymes, Boy," he said; "don't write any more, at least, until you get out of the sickly sentimental stage. I thought I was prepared for the worst, but I really never imagined anything quite so bad as that."

The Boy, although he had listened to the lines with a fine affectation of enjoyment, was in no way discomposed by the Tenor's adverse criticism; he seemed, on the contrary, to enjoy that too, for he chuckled and hugged himself ecstatically before he replied.

"I should like to know," he said, with his uncanny grin, "how you found out those lines were mine, for I certainly never told you that I wrote them."

The Tenor's mind misgave him.

"Didn't you?" he said, looking at the ashes.

The Boy threw himself back on the sofa.

"They were Angelica's!" he said, with a shout of laughter. "And now you look as if you would like to have them back again. It will take you months to get over that!"

The Tenor was certainly disconcerted, but he

merely resumed his pipe, folded his hands, and looked up at the cathedral. He had been blessed all his life with the precious gift of silence. Outside the night was very still. There was a fitful little breeze, which rustled the leaves and made the creepers tap on the window panes, but, beyond this, there was no sound, no sign of life or movement, nothing to remind them of the "whole cityful" so close at hand.

The Tenor lay back in his chair, looking somewhat dispirited. The Boy got up and began to wander about the room; a long pause followed, which was broken by the chime.

"I have been trying to say something all the evening, and now that beastly chime has gone and made it impossible," the Boy exclaimed, as soon as he could hear himself speak. "I hate it. I loathe it. It is cruel as eternal damnation. It is condemnation without appeal. It is a judgment which acknowledges none of the excuses we make for ourselves. I wish they would change it. I wish they would make it say, 'Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy upon us.'"

The Tenor put down his pipe, rose slowly, and went upstairs. In a few minutes he returned in flannels.

"You want exercise, Boy," he said. "You must come out. It is a lovely night for the river, and I have been shut up in the Close all day."

The Boy sprang to his feet. "Yes, yes," he exclaimed with animation, "let us go, and I'll bring my violin. Where's my hat?"

"You came without one to-night—or perhaps you hung it on the palings."

"No, I didn't," the Boy replied. "I must have forgotten it altogether. But it doesn't matter. I'd rather be without one. I always take it off when I can."

"So I have seen," said the Tenor, following him out.

As he walked through the Close, still a little behind the Boy, he could not help noticing, by no means for the first time, but more particularly than usual, what a graceful creature the latter was. His slender figure showed to advantage in the light flannels. They made him look broader and more manly while leaving room for the free play of limb and muscle. He had knotted a crimson silk scarf round his neck, sailor fashion, and twisted a voluminous cummerbund of the same round his waist, carelessly, so that one heavily fringed end of it came loose, and now hung down to his knee, swaying with his body as he moved. The Tenor remembered that his socks were also of crimson silk, a detail which had caught his eye as the Boy lolled on the sofa. It was evident that the costume had cost him a thought, and, if somewhat theatrical, it was certainly picturesque, and entirely characteristic. In one respect the Boy's art was perfect: although he was quite conscious of his good looks, he never had the air of being so; every movement was natural and spontaneous, like the movements of a wild creature, and as agile. He seemed to rejoice in his own strength, to delight in his own suppleness; and he walked on now with healthy elastic step, his violin held to his shoulder, his clear-cut cheek leant down to it lovingly; his luxuriant light hair all tumbled and tossed, while he kept time to an imaginary tune with the bow in his right hand, now flourishing it in the air, and now drawing it across the instrument, scarcely seeming to touch the strings, yet waking low Æolian harplike murmurs, or deep thrilling tones, or bright melodious cadences; making it respond to his touch like a living

creature, and glancing back over his shoulder at the Tenor as they proceeded, with a joyous face as if sure of his sympathy, but anxious to see if he had it all the same.

"I feel more amiable now," he said, between cadence and cadence. "Kindly consider that I have cancelled all my former misstatements. Cynicism can't exist in a healthy sensorium with sounds like these"—and he executed a magnificent crescendo passage on his violin. "When I want to play I feel that I must prepare myself. Making music is a religious rite to me, which can only be performed by one in perfect charity with all men."

They were seated in the boat by this time, the Tenor at the oars.

"Row, brothers, row!"

the Boy played—"and steer yourself," he said. "I can do nothing but accompany you."

And then he began in earnest, while the Tenor made the boat fly past river bank and towing-path, and house and wharf; past bridge and tower and town—it seemed but a flash, and they were out in the open country! flat meadows on the left, and on their right the green and swelling upland, dotted with slumbrous cattle and sheep, and shadowy with the heavy summer foliage of old trees. The Tenor stopped there, exhausted.

"There is madness in your music, Boy," he said. "It puts me beside myself."

The Boy laughed.

But in the pause that followed he shivered a little, and laid aside his instrument. It was not such a very fine night on the river as it had appeared to be in the Close. The moon would rise later, but at present there was no sign of her, and the sky, though cloudless, was not clear, the colour being that misty opaque grey which hangs low at the horizon on summer nights when the light never wholly departs, and is accompanied by a close and sultry atmosphere, surcharged with electricity, the harbinger of storms. It was so that night. There were no stars to relieve the murky heaviness, nor was it dark; a sort of twilight reigned, as comfortless as tepid water, and there was no breeze now to rustle the leaves into life. All seemed ghostly still save for the muffled rush of the river, and the melancholy howling of a dog at some farm out of sight. And even the river was not its usual merry self, but a sullen, heavy body that slipped by stealthily, making haste to the sea as if anxious to be away from the spot, without a ripple to break its level surface, and without the musical lisp and gurgle and murmur with which it danced along at brighter times. In spite of the heat—or perhaps because of it—the air was full of moisture, and while the Tenor rested, a dead white mist began to appear above the low-lying meadows. It rose thinly, a mere film at first, which, coming suddenly, would have made a man brush his hand over his eyes, mistaking the haze for some defect of vision; but gathering and gaining body rapidly, and rising a certain height clear from the ground, then seeming to hover, a thick cloud poised between earth and sky, not touching either, but drawn horizontally over the fields like a pall with ragged edges through which the trees showed in blurred outline, their leaves dripping miserably with an intermittent pattering of uncertain drops as the moisture collected upon them and fell, and then collected again.

The fog was stationary for a time, and did not extend beyond the meadows, but it rose at intervals, though the clearance was only

momentary, and had scarcely become perceptible before reinforcements of dull white vapour, tainted with miasma, rolled up from the marshy ground, bringing dank odours of standing water and weedy vegetation, half decayed, and gradually encroaching on the river, the smooth surface of which glowed with a greasy gleam beneath it, making it look like a river of oil.

"Let us go back," said the Boy. "My soul is sick with apprehension, and the damp will ruin my violin."

"I thought it was making you feel as if something were going to happen," the Tenor observed as he got the boat round.

The Boy ruffled his flaxen hair, and laughed uneasily. "Get away quick," he said. "If the elements do sympathise with man, there'll be a tragedy here before morning."

The Tenor pulled on steadily and in silence for some distance. But once out of sight of the mist and the meadows, the Boy's ever-varying spirits rose again. He took up his violin, and drew soft sounds from it which seemed to float away far out into the night.

"Sing something," he said at last, playing the prelude to the most love-sweet song ever written.

"I arise from dreams of thee," the Tenor sang like one inspired.

The Boy uttered a deep sigh when he had finished; he was speechless with pleasure.

But the Tenor went on. He sang of the sun and the sea, gliding from one strain to another, and unconsciously keeping time to the measure as he rowed, now making the little boat leap forward with a fine impulse, now almost resting on his oars till their progress through the water was scarcely perceptible, and now stopping altogether while he lingered on a closing cadence, looking up.

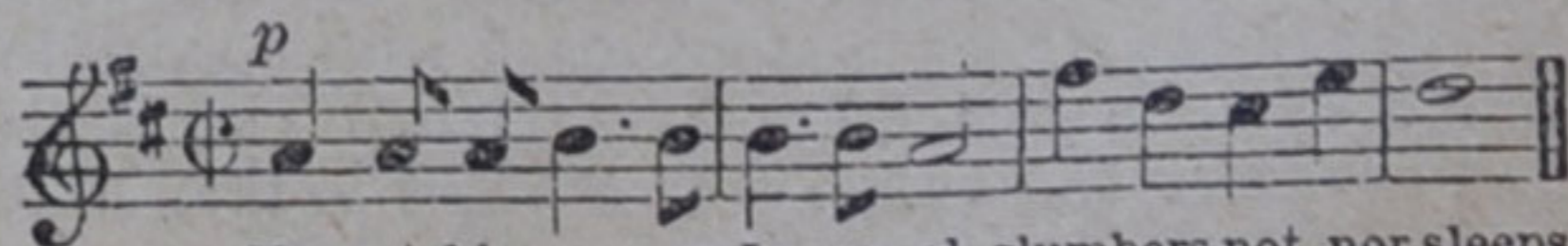
People who chanced to wake, as the windings of the river brought the singer past their homes that night, sat up in their beds and wondered. The music made them think of old tales of weird enchantment, in which strains, incomprehensibly sweet and thrilling like these, coming from nobody could tell where, had played a part. And one poor creature, who had long been dying in lingering pain, thought heaven had opened for her, and, smiling, passed happily away.

It would have been no great stretch of the imagination to have supposed that nature did sympathise with man in his moods just then, for gradually, as if to the music, the murky clouds had parted like a curtain at a given signal, and rolled away, leaving the vault of night high and bare and blue above them, with here and there a diamond star or two sparsely sprinkled from horizon to zenith, radiant at first, but presently paling before a slender shaft of light that shot up in the east, and then, opening fan-like, was quickly followed by the great golden rim of the moon herself. She rose from behind a hill crested with fir trees, which appeared for a moment as if photographed on her disc, and then, mounting rapidly, hung suspended in a clear indigo sky above the quiet woods, the river and the little boat, which was motionless now—an ideal moon in an ideal world with ideal music to greet her. But the Boy dropped the violin on his knee and forgot to play as he watched this beautiful transformation scene, and the Tenor's song sank to a murmur while he also gazed and waited, dipping his oars to keep the boat in mid-stream mechanically. Joy and sadness are near akin in music: they are like pleasure and happiness; the one is

the surface of feeling, the other its depth; and there is solemnity in every phase of absolute beauty which cannot fail to influence such natures as the Tenor's and the Boy's. It was the Tenor, though, that felt this moment most. His nature, if not deeper, was more devout than the Boy's; pleasure with him was a veritable uplifting of the spirit in praise and thankfulness; and all the peace and quietness about them, the marvellous light on hill and wood and vale, and even the nearness of the unseen city, which he felt without perceiving it, and from which there came to him that sense of fellowship and of the sacredness of human life in which all the best qualities of man are rooted; these together sanctified the time. Although, for the matter of that, to such a nature all times and seasons are sanctified. For if ever a man's soul was purified on earth, his was; and if ever a man deserved to see heaven, he did. Humanly speaking, there was no stain on him; in thought, word, and deed he was immaculate and true as a little child. This moment was therefore peculiarly his own, a moment of deep happiness, which found expression, as all pleasurable emotion did with him, in music. He lifted up his voice, that wonderful voice which had no equal then upon earth, and sung as he had sung once before on that very spot when the first vague idea of the omnipresent majesty of a God possessed him, sang with all his heart, and it was the litany of the Blessed Virgin, the one he had heard in France in days gone by, the one he had been singing when first he met the Boy, which recurred to him now—why or wherefore it would be hard to say. He had not thought of it since. But perhaps the moon, which was shining again as it had shone that night on the old market-place, had helped to recall it, or perhaps it satisfied him with a sense of appropriateness. For it was not a dismal, monotonous product of mercenary dryness to which the words were set, but the characteristic music of devotion by which the spirit of prayer is made audible when words fail, as they always do, to express it in all its force and fervour.

The Boy listened a while with parted lips. It was a new experience for him, and he was deeply moved. Then his musical instinct awoke, and presently he took up the strain, voice and violin, accompanying the Tenor, who rowed on once more, while the river banks resounded with, "Christe audi nos, Christe exaudi nos," and re-echoed "Miserere nobis."

At one point as they approached, a lady appeared suddenly, and stood with her hands clasped to her breast, looking and listening. She was a tall and graceful woman, wrapped in a long cloak and bareheaded, as if she had stepped out from somewhere just for the moment. She evidently recognised the singer; and the Boy would have recognised the beautiful face, strong in its calm, sad serenity, and compassionate, had he looked that way; but he did not look that way, and they swept on, the music growing fainter and fainter in the distance, till at last the boat was out of sight. Yet even then a few high notes continued to float back; but these in turn quivered into silence, and all was still—only for a moment, though, for the clocks had struck unheeded, and now the chime rang out through the sultry air, voice-like, clear, and resonant:



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

The lady listened, looking up as if the message were for her, but sighed.

"It will come right, I know," she said as she turned away. "But, Lord, how long?"

## CHAPTER XV

AIR perfumed with flowers; music, motion, warmth, and stillness; moonlit meadows, shadowy woods, the river, and the boat; it had been a time of delight too late begun and too soon ended. But exaltation cannot last beyond a certain time at that height, and then comes the inevitable reaction. It came upon the Tenor and the Boy quite suddenly, and for no apparent reason. It was the Boy who felt it first, and left off playing; then the song ceased, and the Tenor rowed on diligently. They were near the landing-place by this time, but the Tenor did not know it. He had not noticed the landmarks as they passed, and thought they had still some distance to go.

"Here, Boy," he said, breaking a long silence. "Take the oars and row. I am tired. And it is your turn now."

"Oh!" the Boy exclaimed derisively. "Just as if I would row and blister my lovely white hands when you are here to row me!"

"I cannot tolerate such laziness," the Tenor protested. "It is sparing the rod and spoiling the child. Here, take the oars or I'll throw you overboard," and he made a gesture toward him.

The Boy jumped up laughing, and flourishing his violin as if he would hit the Tenor on the head with it. "Don't touch me," he cried, "or I'll"—

"Take care, for God's sake!" the Tenor exclaimed.

But too late. His excitable companion, in the middle of cutting a fantastic caper, reeled, lost his balance, plunged head foremost into the water, and sank like a stone.

Without a moment's delay the Tenor dived in after him; the cockleshell of a boat, half capsizing as he went over, took in water enough to sink her to the gunwale, and the whole thing happened so quickly that a spectator on the bank who had seen the boat and its occupants one moment might have looked in vain the next for any trace of either.

The Tenor came to the surface alone. His dive in the uncertain light had been unsuccessful, and now he had the strength of mind to wait—in what agony of suspense Heaven only knows!—till the Boy should rise. It could only have been a few seconds, but it was long enough for the Tenor to lay another man's death at his own door, to realise the loss to himself the Boy would be, and his position when he would have to take the dreadful news to the family, only one member of which in all probability knew of their intimacy. She knew—but, good Heaven! would she not blame him? Oh, he had been to blame, to blame!—It was only a few seconds, yet it was time enough for the unfortunate Tenor to live over again the awful moment when he had seen his best friend drop dead, only there was a double pang, for time and space were confounded, and it was as if both father and brother—as they had been to him—had gone down at once, and both by his hand.

In that brief interval of suffering his face had become rigid and set, a stony mask with no visible sign of emotion upon it; and yet the man's strength and power of endurance were evident in this, that he had the courage to wait.

And presently the Boy rose to the surface within easy reach.

With an exclamation of relief the Tenor grasped him, and struck out for the shore—afraid at first that the Boy, who apparently could not swim, would cling about him in his fright and hamper his movements; and then afraid because the Boy did not cling about him, but suffered himself to be dragged through the water, inert, like a log, helpless, lifeless—no, not lifeless, the Tenor argued with himself. He could not be lifeless, you know. He had not been in the water long enough for that. The Tenor noticed that he had not let go of his violin, and thought, "The ruling passion strong in—no, not in death. How could a dead hand hold on like that? Boy, dear Boy!" But the Boy made no response. The Tenor had struck out for the nearest bank, which, as luck would have it, brought him to the landing-place at the water-gate. His perception seemed singularly quickened; every sense was actively alive to what was passing; nothing escaped him; and he rendered an account to himself of all that occurred, feeling it strange the while that he should be able to do so at such a time. He noticed some detail of the stonework in the arch as he swam toward it; he noticed the poplars, some three or four of different heights, which stood up all stiff and vimineous as seen from below, beside it; he remembered the Boy once saying they looked like hairy caterpillars standing on their heads, and smiled even now at the quaint conceit. When he reached the steps and clutched the handrail, it was with a sensation of joy that nearly paralysed him. It was curious, though, what odd and trivial phrases rose to his lips, what irrelevant thoughts passed through his mind.

"Mustn't holloa till we're out of the wood," he warned himself, as he drew the Boy from the water with difficulty, and, getting him over his shoulder so that he could hold him with one hand and steady himself on the steep steps with the other, began to stagger up. "I wonder what the Boy would say if he could see me now!" was his involuntary thought as he did so.

The Boy was heavier than his slender figure would have led one to suppose, or else the Tenor was not so strong as he thought himself; at all events, he swayed under his burden as he carried him through the silent Close, now putting out his hand flat against a wall to steady himself, and now staggering up to the gnarled trunk of one of the old lime trees, and pausing to take breath while he mentally calculated the distance between that and the next support at which he could stop to rest, noticing in the brief interval the blackness of the shadows; noticing, also, a little shiver of leaves above him caused by a gust of air, the first forerunner of a breeze that was rapidly rising; noticed this last fact particularly, partly because the wind chilled him in his thin wet flannels, and partly because it marked the change and contrast between the warm and happy time just over, the anxious present moment, and the dread of what might be yet to come. The next support was the corner of the wall which surrounded the dean's garden; creeping on by that till it ended, he made an unsteady dash across the road for the wall of the cathedral, and then from that across again, zigzag, to his own little gate, where, gathering his strength for the last effort, he took the Boy, whom he apostrophised as a perfect Old Man of the Sea, in both arms, as a mother does her child, and a moment afterward laid him on the floor of the long low room where they had

spent so many happy hours together, and from whence he had gone out a short time before all life and strength and youth and beauty, "Gone to his death!" The Tenor felt the phrase in his mind, but stifled it with a "Thank God!" as he laid him down.

He had been fatigued by the long row when the accident happened, and was now almost exhausted by excitement, terror for the Boy, and this last effort; but still his mind went on with abnormal clearness, noting every trifle, and continuing to force him, as it were, to render an account of each to himself. He noticed the perfume of roses, the roses the Boy had showered in upon him—so short a time before—and he found himself measuring the shortness of the interval again as if it would have been easier to bear the catastrophe had it not jostled a happier state of things so closely. He found himself wondering what the Boy would say if he knew he had brought him in by the front door instead of by the window; he was sure he would have insisted on the mode of entrance he so much preferred had he been conscious, and felt as if he had taken a disloyal advantage of the Boy's helpless condition.

But while these trivial thoughts flashed through his brain he lost no time, not even in lighting a lamp, though the room was dark. What there was to be done must be done promptly, and with the same extraordinary lucidity of mind he remembered every simple remedy there was at his disposal. He ran upstairs, three steps at a time, for the blankets off his own bed. He had made up the kitchen fire, as was his wont, that evening, for the Boy to cook if it pleased him, and fortunately it was burning brightly still. He warmed the blankets there, and then returning, stripped the light flannel clothing from the Boy, loosened his fingers from the violin which he still clutched convulsively, rolled him up in them, and then, with an effort, lifted him on to the sofa, where he had sat and jested only a little while ago—and again the involuntary reckoning of time, to consider the contrast between the then and now, smote the Tenor to the heart with a cruel pang.

"Boy, dear Boy!" he called to him. He was kneeling beside him, but could only see a dim outline of his face in the obscurity of the room, and perhaps it was the darkness that made him look so rigid. "Boy, dear Boy!" he cried again, but the Boy made no sign. "O God, spare him!" the stricken man implored. And then he clasped the lad in his arms and pressed his cheek to his in a burst of grief and tenderness not to be controlled. He held him so for a few seconds, and it seemed as if in that close embrace his whole being had expressed itself in love and prayer, as if he had wrestled with death itself and conquered, for all at once he felt the Boy's limbs quiver through their clumsy wrappings, and then he heard him sigh. Oh, the relief of it! The sudden reaction made him feel sick and faint. But the precious life was not yet safe. "There's many a slip"—so his mind began in spite of an effort to control it. "Restoratives—heat, stimulants, friction." He pulled the stand of ferns and flowering plants half round from the fireplace roughly, so that the pots fell up against each other, or rolled on the floor; then he fetched the burning coals from the kitchen, and heaped them on till the grate was full. The kettle had been boiling on the hob, so he brought it in now hissing, with brandy to make a drink. But he must have more light. Where are the matches? Nowhere, of course. They never are

when they're wanted. However, it didn't matter, a piece of paper would do as well; and he twisted a piece up and stooped among the scattered roses to light it at the fire, and then he lit the lamp and turned to look at the Boy. All this had been done in a moment, as it seemed, and his face was still bright with hope, and prepared to smile encouragement. But—"God in heaven!" he cried, under his breath, as a man does who is too shocked to speak out.

Had some strange metamorphosis been brought about by that sudden immersion?

He pulled himself together with an effort, and walked to the other end of the room, where he stood with his back to the sofa, and his hands upraised to his head, trying to steady himself. Then he returned.

No, he had not been mistaken, he was not mad, he was not dreaming. It was the Boy who had plunged into the water headforemost, but this—

"God in heaven!" he ejaculated again, under his breath, and then stood gazing like one transfixed.

For this, with the handsome, strong young face upturned, the smooth white throat, the dark brown braids pinned close to the head, all wet and shining; this was not the Boy, but the Tenor's own lady, his ideal of purity, his goddess of truth, his angel of pity, as, in his foolishly fond way idealising, he had been accustomed to consider her. It was Angelica herself! Yet so complete had been the deception to his simple, unsuspecting mind, so impossible to believe was the revelation, and so used was he to associate some idea of the Boy with everything that occurred, that now, with his first conscious mental effort, he began to blame him as if her being there were due to some unpardonable piece of his mischief.

"The little wretch," he began, "how dare he"—he stopped there, realising the absurdity of it, realising that there was no Boy; and no lady, for the matter of that—at least none such as he had imagined. It had all been a cruel fraud from beginning to end.

It was a terrible blow, but the high-minded, self-contained dignity of the man was never more apparent than in the way he bore it. His face was unnaturally pale and set, but there was no other sign of what he suffered, and, the first shock over, he at once resumed his anxious efforts to restore—the girl—whose consciousness had scarcely yet returned, although she breathed and had moved. It was curious how the new knowledge already affected his attitude toward her. In preparing the hot drink he put half the quantity of brandy he would have used five minutes before for the Boy, and when he had to raise her head to make her swallow it, he did so reluctantly. It was only a change of idea really—the Boy was a girl, that was all; but what a difference it made, and would have made even if there had been no question of love and marriage in the matter! At any other time the Tenor himself might have marvelled at the place apart we assign in our estimation to one of two people of like powers, passions, impulses, and purposes, simply because one of them is a woman.

The stimulant revived the girl, and presently she opened her eyes and met his as he bent over her.

"You are better now, I hope?" he said coldly, moving away from her.

"I am better," she answered, and again their eyes met. But there was yet another moment of



dazed semi-consciousness before she was able to attach any meaning to the change she saw in his face; and then it flashed upon her. What she had hoped, feared, expected, and prevented every time they met had come to pass. He knew at last, and she could see at once what he thought of her. She would never again meet the tolerant loving glance he had had for the Boy, nor note the tender reverence of his face when her own name was mentioned. His idol was shattered, the dream and hope of his life was over, and from all that remained of them, herself as she really was, he shrank as from the dishonoured fragment of some once loved and holy thing—a thing which is doubly painful to contemplate in its ruin because of the importunate memories that cling about it.

Realising something of this, she uttered a smothered ejaculation, and covered her face with a gesture of intolerable shame. There was always that saving grace of womanliness about Angelica, that when there was no excuse for her conduct, she had the honesty to be ashamed of herself; in consequence of which she was one of those who never erred in the same way twice.

The Tenor turned to the fire, and then noticing her wet things scattered about, he gathered them up: "I will take them and dry them," he said, and gladly made his escape. What he thought in the interval was, "I must marry her now, I suppose," and he could not help smiling ironically at this new way of putting it, nor wondering a little at the possibility of such a sudden change of feeling as that which had all at once transformed the dearest wish of his life into a distasteful, if not altogether repugnant, duty.

When the things were dry he took them to her.

"I will leave you to put them on," he said. "Will you kindly call me when you are ready?" And then he closed the window that looked out on the road, drew down the blind, and once more left her.

No reproach could have chilled and frightened her as this stiff and formal yet cool acceptance of the position did. She feared it meant that all was over between them in a way she had never thought possible. But still she hoped to coax him round. She dreaded the next hour, the day of reckoning, as it were, but did not try to escape it. On the contrary, she hastened her dressing in order to get it over as quickly as possible.

"Israfil!" she called to him boldly, as soon as she was ready.

The Tenor returned.

She was standing in the middle of the room when he entered, and she looked at him confidently, and just as the "Boy" would have done after a piece of mischief which he had determined to brazen out. The Boy had two moods, the defiant and the repentant; it seemed that the girl—but here the Tenor checked his thoughts. It was very hard, though, to drop either of the two individualities which had hitherto been so distinct and different, and to realise that one of them at least had never existed.

She certainly brought more courage to the interview than he did, for he, the wronged one, found as he faced her now that he had not a word to say for himself. For the moment, she was master of the situation, and she began at once as if the whole thing were a matter of course.

Catching an involuntary glance of the Tenor's, she put both hands up to her head as the Boy would have done—so the Tenor, still confused between the two, expressed it to himself; and the old familiar gesture sent another pang through his

heart. The water had washed the flaxen wig away, but the thick braids of her hair were still pinned up tightly, accounting for the shape of the *remarkable head* about which the Boy had so often, and, as was now evident, so recklessly, jested.

Her hair was very wet, and she began deliberately to take it down and unplait it.

"I could not always make it—my head, you know—the same shape," she said, answering his thought; "but you never noticed the difference, although you often looked. I used to wonder now you could look so intelligently and see so little"—and she glanced down at herself, so unmistakably a woman now that he knew. She had been like a conundrum, the answer to which you would never have guessed for yourself, but you see it at once when you hear it, and then it seems so simple. She was rather inclined to speak to the Tenor in a half-pitying, patronising way, as to a weak creature easily taken in; but he had recovered himself by this time, and something in his look and manner awed her, determined as she was, and she could not keep it up.

He moved farther from her, and then spoke in a voice made harsh by the effort it cost him to control it.

"Why have you done this thing?" he said sternly.

Her heart began to beat violently. The colour left her lips, and she sank into a chair, covered once more with shame and confusion. But, boy or girl, the charm of her peculiar personality was still the same, and it had its effect upon him even at that moment, indignant as he was, as she sat there, her long hair falling behind her, looking up at him with timid eyes and with tremulous mouth.

It was pitiful to see her so, and it softened him.

"What was your object?" he asked, relenting.

"Excitement—restlessness—if I had any," she faltered. "But I had no object. I am inventing one now because you ask me; it is an after-thought. I—I took the first step"—with a dry sob—"and then I—I just drifted on—on, you know—from one thing to another."

"But tell me all about it," he persisted, taking a seat as he spoke. "Tell me exactly how it began."

There was no help for it now. He was sitting in judgment upon her, and she felt that she must make an effort to satisfy him.

"It began—oh, let me see! how am I to tell you?" and she twisted her hands, frowning in perplexity. "I don't want to embellish the story so as to make it picturesque and myself more interesting," and she looked at the Tenor with slightly elevated eyebrows, as if pained already by her own inaccuracy. There was something irresistibly comic in this candid avowal of the force of habit, and all the more so because she was too much in earnest for once to see the humour of it herself. The Tenor saw it, however, but he made no sign.

"Well, begin," he said. "I ought to know your method sufficiently well by this time to enable me to sift the wheat from the chaff."

Angelica considered a little, and then she answered, hesitating as if she were choosing each word, "I see where the mistake has been all along. There was no latitude allowed for my individuality. I was a girl, and therefore I was not supposed to have any bent. I found a big groove ready waiting for me when I grew up, and in that I was expected to live whether it suited me

er not. It did not suit me. It was deep and narrow, and gave me no room to move. You see, I loved to make music. Art! That was it. There is in my own mind an imperative monitor which urges me on always into competition with other minds. I wanted to *do* as well as to *be*, and I knew I wanted to do; but when the time came for me to begin, my friends armed themselves with the whole social system as it obtains in our state of life, and came out to oppose me. They used to lecture me and give me good advice, as if they were able to judge, and it made me rage. I had none of the domestic virtues, and yet they would insist upon domesticating me; and the funny part of it was that, side by side with my natural aspirations was an innate tendency to conform to their ideas while carrying out my own. I believe I could have satisfied *them*—my friends—if only they had not thwarted me. But that was the mistake. I had the ability to be something more than a young lady, fiddling away her time on useless trifles, but I was not allowed to apply it systematically, and ability is like steam—a great power when properly applied, a great danger otherwise. Let it escape recklessly and the chances are someone will be scalded; bottle it up and there will be an explosion. In my case both happened. The steam was allowed to escape at first instead of being applied to help me on in a definite career, and a good deal of scalding ensued; and then, to remedy that mistake, the dangerous experiment of bottling it up was tried, and only too successfully. I helped a little in the bottling myself, I suppose, and then came the explosion. This is the explosion,”—glancing round the disordered room, and then looking down at her masculine attire. “I see it all now,” she proceeded in a spiritless way, looking fixedly into the fire, as if she were trying to describe something she saw there. “I had the feeling, never actually formulated in words, but quite easy to interpret now, that if I broke down conventional obstacles—broke the hampering laws of society, I should have a chance”—

“It is a common mistake,” the Tenor observed, filling up the pause.

“But I did not know how,” she pursued, “or where to begin, or what particular law to break—until one evening. I was sitting alone at an open window in the dark, and I was tired of doing nothing and very sorry for myself, and I wanted an object in life more than ever, and then a great longing seized me. I thought it an inspiration. I wanted to go out there and then. I wanted to be free to go and come as I would. I felt a galling sense of restraint all at once, and I determined to break the law that imposed it; and that alone was a satisfaction—the finding of one law that I could break. I didn’t suppose I could learn much—there wasn’t much left to learn,”—this was said bitterly, as if she attached the blame of it to somebody else,—“but I should be amused, and that was something; and I should see the world as men see it, which would be from a new point of view for me, and that would be interesting. It is curious, isn’t it?” she reflected, “that what men call ‘life’ they always go out at night to see; and what they mean by ‘life’ is generally something disgraceful?” It was to the fire that she made this observation, and then she resumed, “It is astonishing how importunate some ideas become—one now and then of all the numbers that occur to you; how it takes possession of you, and how it insists upon being carried into effect. This one gave me no peace. I knew from the first I should

do it, although I didn’t want to, and I didn’t intend to, if you can understand such a thing. But my dress was an obstacle. As a woman, I could not expect to be treated by men with as much respect as they show to each other. I know the value of men’s cant about protecting the ‘weaker’ sex! Because I was a woman I knew I should be insulted, or at all events hindered, however inoffensive my conduct; and so I prepared this disguise. And I began to be amused at once. It amused me to devise it. I saw a tailor’s advertisement, with instructions how to measure yourself; and I measured myself and sent to London for the clothes—these thin ones are padded to make me look square like a boy. And then, with some difficulty, I got a wig of the right colour. It fitted exactly—covered all my own hair, you know, and was so beautifully made that it was impossible for any unsuspecting person to detect it without touching it; and the light shade of it, too, accounted for the fairness of my skin, which would have looked suspiciously clear and delicate with darker hair. The great difficulty was my hands and feet; but the different shape of a boy’s shoes made my feet pass; and I crumpled my hands up and kept them out of sight as much as possible. But they are not of a degenerated smallness,” she added, looking at them critically; “it is more their shape. However, when I dressed myself and put on that long ulster, I saw the disguise would pass, and felt pretty safe. But isn’t it surprising the difference dress makes? I should hardly have thought it possible to convert a substantial young woman into such a slender, delicate-looking boy as I make. But it just shows how important dress is.”

The Tenor groaned. “Didn’t you know the risk you were running?” he asked.

“Oh yes!” she answered coolly. “I knew I was breaking a law of the land. I knew I should be taken before a police magistrate if I were caught masquerading, and that added excitement to the pleasure—the charm of danger. But then, you see, it was danger without danger for me, because I knew I should be mistaken for my brother. Our own parents do not know us apart when we are dressed alike.”

“Oh, then there *are* two of you?” the Tenor said.

“Yes. I told you. They call us the Heavenly Twins,” said Angelica.

“Yes, you told me,” the Tenor repeated thoughtfully. “But then you told me so many things.”

“Well, I told you nothing that was not absolutely true,” Angelica answered—“from Diavolo’s point of view. I assumed his manner and habits when I put these things on, imitated him in everything, tried to think his thoughts, and looked at myself from his point of view; in fact, my difficulty was to remember that I was not him. I used to forget sometimes, and think I was. But I confess that I never was such a gentleman as Diavolo is always under all circumstances. Poor dear Diavolo!” she added regretfully; “how he would have enjoyed those fried potatoes!”

The Tenor slightly changed his position. He only glanced at her now and then when he spoke to her, and for the rest he sat as she did, with his calm deep eyes fixed on the fire, and an expression of patient sadness upon his face that wrung her heart. Perhaps it was to stifle the pain of it that she began to talk garrulously. “Oh, I am sorry for the trick I have played you!” she exclaimed, with real feeling. “I have been sorry all along

since I knew your worth, and I came to-night to tell you, to confess and to apologise. When I first knew you all my *loving consciousness* was dormant, if you know what that is; I mean the love in us for our fellow-creatures which makes it pain to ourselves to injure them. But you re-awakened that feeling, and strengthened and added to it until it had become predominant, so that, since I have known you as you are, I have hated to deceive you. This is the first uncomfortable feeling of that kind I have ever had. But for the rest I did not care. I was bored. I was always bored; and I resented the serene unconcern of my friends. Their indifference to my aspirations, and the way they took it for granted that I had everything I ought to want, and could therefore be happy if I chose, exasperated me. To be bored seems a slight thing, but a world of suffering is contained in the experience; and do you know, Israfil, I think it dangerous to leave an energetic woman without a single strong interest or object in life. Trouble is sure to come of it sooner or later—which sounds like a truism now that I have said it, and truisms are things which we habitually neglect to act upon. In my case nothing of this kind would have happened”—and again her glance round the room expressed a comprehensive view of her present situation—“if I had been allowed to support a charity hospital with my violin—or something; made to feel responsible, you know.”

“But surely you must recognise the grave responsibility which attaches to all women”—

“In the abstract,” Angelica interposed. “I know if things go wrong they are blamed for it; if they go right the Church takes the credit. The value attached to the influence of women is purely fictitious, as individuals usually find when they come to demand a recognition of their personal power. I should have been held to have done my duty if I had spent the rest of my life in dressing well and saying the proper thing; no one would consider the waste of power which is involved in such an existence. You often hear it said of a girl that she should have been a boy, which being interpreted means that she has superior abilities; but because she is a woman, it is not thought necessary to give her a chance of making a career for herself. I hope to live, however, to see it allowed that a woman has no more right to bury her talents than a man has; in which days the man without brains will be taught to cook and clean, while the clever woman will be doing the work of the world well which is now being so shamefully scamped. But I was going to say that I am sure all my vagaries have arisen out of the dread of having nothing better to do from now until the day of my death—as I once said to an uncle of mine—but to get up and go to bed, after spending the interval in the elegant and useless way ladies do—a ride, a drive, a dinner, a dance, a little music—trifling all the time to no purpose, not even amusing one’s self; for when amusement begins to be a business, it ceases to be a pleasure. This has not mended matters, I know,” she acknowledged drearily; “but it has been a distraction, and that was something while it lasted. Monotony, however luxurious, is not less irksome because it is easy. A hard-working woman would have rest to look forward to, but I hadn’t even that, although I was always wearied to death—as tired of my idleness or purposeless occupations as anybody could possibly be by work. I think if you will put yourself in my place, you will not wonder at me, nor at any woman under the circumstances who, secure of herself and her

position, varies the monotony of her life with an occasional escapade as one puts sauce into soup to relieve the insipidity. Deplore it if you will, but don’t wonder at it; it is the natural consequence of an unnatural state of things; and there will be more of it still, or I am much mistaken.”

Again the Tenor changed his position. “I cannot, *cannot* comprehend how you could have risked your reputation in such a way,” he said, shaking his head with grave concern.

“No risk to my reputation,” she answered, with the insolence of rank. “Everybody knows who I am, and, if I remember rightly, ‘That in the captain’s but a choleric word which in the soldier is rank blasphemy.’ What would be an unpardonable offence if committed by another woman less highly placed than myself is merely an amusing eccentricity in me, so—for *my* benefit—conveniently snobbish is society. Since I grew up, however, I find that I am not one of those who can say flippantly, ‘You can’t have everything, and if people have talents they are not to be expected to have characters as well.’ Great talent should be held to be a guarantee for good character; the loss of the one makes the possession of the other dangerous. But what I do maintain is that I have done nothing by which I ought in justice to be held to have jeopardised my character. I have broken no commandment, nor should I under any circumstances. It is only the idea of the thing that shocks your prejudices. You cannot bear to see me decently dressed as a boy, but you would think nothing of it if you saw me half undressed for a ball, as I often am; yet if the one can be done with a modest mind, and you must know that it can, so can the other, I suppose.”

The Tenor was sitting sideways on his chair, his elbow resting on the back, his head on his hand, his legs crossed, half turned from her and listening without looking at her; and there was something in the way she made this last remark that set a familiar chord vibrating not unpleasantly. Perhaps, after the revelation, he had expected her to turn into a totally different person; at all events, he was somewhat surprised, but not disagreeably, to perceive how like the Boy she was. This was the Boy again, exactly, in a bad mood, and the Tenor sought at once, as was his wont, to distract him rather than argue him out of it. This was the force of habit, and it was also due to the fact that his mind was rapidly adapting itself to a strange position and becoming easier in the new attitude. The woman he had been idolising was lost irretrievably, but the charm which had been the Boy’s remained to him, and he had already begun to reconcile himself to the idea of a wrong-headed girl who must be helped and worked for, instead of a wrong-headed boy.

“But why should you have chosen this impossible form of amusement in particular?” he said. “Why could you not interest yourself in the people about you—do something for them?”

“I did think of that, I did try,” she answered petulantly. “But it is impossible for a woman to devote herself to people for whom there is nothing to be done, who don’t want her devotion; and, besides, devotion wasn’t my vocation. But, after all,” she broke off, defending herself, “I only arrived at this by slow degrees, and I never should have come so far at all if Diavolo had stuck to me; but he got into a state of don’t-care-and-can’t-be-bothered, and separated his work from mine by going to Sandhurst. Then I found myself alone, and you cannot think how a woman