

older than the church, and of an entirely different kind of architecture. It was once a depository for the bones of Danish warriors killed before the Norman Conquest; it extends, not only beneath the chancel, as in most cases, but beneath both the transepts. The vaulting (supported partly on low columns of remarkable beauty and partly on the basement wall of the church) is therefore of unusual extent. The external door in the churchyard is now hidden by drifted sand and mould. Many years ago, to give place to the tombs and coffins of my family, the bones of the old Danes were piled together in various corners; and the thought of these bones called up the picture of the abode of "Nin-ki-gal," the Queen of Death,

"Ghosts, like birds, flutter their wings there;

On the gate and the gate-posts the dust lies undisturbed."

Then my mind began to make pictures for itself of my father lying in his coffin. I have, I think, already said that his body had been embalmed, in order to allow of its being conveyed from Switzerland to England. Therefore I had no dread of being confronted by that attribute of Death alluded to by D'Arcy which is the most cruel and terrible of all—corruption. But then what change should I find in the *expression* of those features which on the day of interment had looked so calm? A thrill ran through my frame as I pictured myself raising the coffin-lid, and finding expressed upon the face, in language more appalling than any malediction in articulate speech—the curse!

At about ten o'clock I mounted the gangway and waited behind a deserted bungalow built for Fenella Stanley till I should hear the Odd-Fellows returning. In a few minutes I heard them approaching. They were singing snatches of songs they had been entertained with at Graylingham, and chatting and laughing as they went down Wilderness Road towards Raxton. As they passed the bungalow and adjoining mill there was a silence.

I heard one man say: "'Ez Tom Wynne's ghoost bin seen here o' late?"

"Nooa, but the Squire's 'ez," said another.

"I say they've both on 'em bin seed," exclaimed a third voice, which I recognized to be that of old Lantoff of the "Fishing Smack"—"leaseways, if they ain't bin seed they've bin 'eared. One Saturday arternoon old Sal Gunn wur in the church a-cleanin' the Hall brasses, an' jist afore sundown, as

she wur a-comin' away, she 'eared a awful scrimmage an' squealin' in the crypt, and she 'eared the v'ice o' the Squire a-callin' out, and she 'eared Tom Wynne's v'ice a-cussin' an' a-swearin' at 'im. And more nor that, Sal told me that on the night when the Squire wur buried, she seed Tom a-draggin' the Squire's body along the churchyard to the cliff; only she never spoke on it at the time. And Sal says she larnt in a dream that the moment as Tom went and laid 'is 'and on that 'ere dimind cross in the coffin, up springs Squire and claps 'old o' Tom's throat, and Tom takes 'old on him, and drags him out o' the church, meanin' to chuck him over the cliffs, when God o' mighty, as wur a-keepin' 'is eye on Tom all the time, he jist lets go o' the cliffs and down they falls, and kills Tom, an' buries him an' Squire tew."

"Did you say Sal seed all that in a dream? or did she see it in ole ale, Muster Lantoff?" said Shales.

"Well," replied Lantoff, as the party turned past the bungalow, "p'raps it wur ole ale as made me see in this very bungaler when I wur a bor the ghoost o' the great Gypsy lady whose pictur' hangs up at the Hall, her as they used to call the old Squire's Witch-wife."

Soon the singing and laughing were renewed; and I stood and listened to the sounds till they died away in the distance. Then I unlocked the church door and entered.

V

As I walked down an aisle, the echoes of my footsteps seemed almost loud enough to be heard on the Wilderness Road. No one could have a more contemptuous disbelief in ghosts than I, and yet the man's words about the ghost of Fenella Stanley haunted me. When I reached the heavy nailed door leading down to the crypt, I lit the lantern. The rusty key turned so stiffly in the lock, that, to relieve my hands (which were burdened with the implements I had brought), I slung the hair-chain of the cross around my neck, intending merely to raise the coffin-lid sufficiently high to admit of my slipping the amulet in.

Having, with much difficulty, opened the door, I entered the crypt. The atmosphere, though not noisome, was heavy, and charged with an influence that worked an extraordinary effect upon my brain and nerves. It was as though my personality were becoming dissipated, until at last it was partly the reflex of ancestral experiences. Scarcely had this mood passed before a sensation

came upon me of being fanned as if by clammy bat-like wings; and then the idea seized me that the crypt scintillated with the eyes of a malignant foe. It was as if the curse which, until I heard Winnie a beggar singing in the street, had been to me but a collocation of maledictory words, harmless save in their effect upon her superstitious mind, had here assumed an actual corporeal shape. In the uncertain light shed by the lantern, I seemed to see the face of this embodied curse with an ever-changing mockery of expression; at one moment wearing the features of my father; at another those of Tom Wynne; at another the leer of the old woman I had seen in Cyril's studio.

"It is an illusion," I said, as I closed my eyes to shut it out; "it is an illusion, born of opiate fumes or else of an over-taxed brain and an exhausted stomach." Yet it disturbed me as much as if my reason had accepted it as real. Against this foe I seemed to be fighting towards my father's coffin as a dreamer fights against a nightmare, and at last I fell over one of the heaps of old Danish bones in a corner of the crypt. The candle fell from my lantern, and I was in darkness. As I sat there I passed into a semi-conscious state. I saw sitting at the apex of a towering pyramid, built of phosphorescent human bones that reached far, far above the stars, the "Queen of Death, Nin-ki-gal," scattering seeds over the earth below. At the pyramid's base knelt the suppliant figure of a Sybil pleading with the Queen of Death:

"What answer, O Nin-ki-gal?
Have pity, O Queen of Queens!"

And the Sybil's face was that of Fenella Stanley—her voice was that of Sinfy Lovell.

And then from that dizzy height seemed to come a cackling laugh:—

"You makes me blush, an' blow me if blushin' ain't bin an' made t'other eye dry. I lives in Primrose Court, Great Queen Street, an' my reg'lar perfession is a-sellin' coffee 'so airly in the mornin', and I've got a darter as ain't quite so 'ansom as me, bein' the moral of her father."

And now in my vision I perceived that Nin-ki-gal's face was that of the old woman I had seen in Cyril's studio, and that she was dressed in the same fantastic costume in which Cyril had bedizened her.

VI

I SPRANG up, struck a light and relit the candle, and soon reached the coffin resting

on a stone table. I found, on examining it, that although it had been screwed down after the discovery of the violation, the work had been so loosely done that a few turns of the screwdriver were sufficient to set the lid free. Then I paused; for to raise the loosened lid (knowing as I did that it was only the blood's inherited follies that had conquered my rationalism and induced me to disturb the tomb) seemed to require the strength of a giant. Moreover, the fantastic terror of old Lantoff's story, which at another time would have made me smile, also took bodily shape, and the picture of a dreadful struggle at the edge of the cliff between Winnie's father and mine seemed to hang in the air—a fascinating mirage of ghastly horror.

* * * * *

At last, by an immense effort of will, I closed my eyes and pushed the lid violently on one side.

* * * * *

The "sweet odours and divers kinds of spices" of the Jewish embalmer rose like a gust of incense—rose and spread through the crypt like the sweet breath of a new-born blessing, till the air of the charnel-house seemed laden with a mingled odour of indescribable sweetness. Never had any odour so delighted my senses; never had any sensuous influence so soothed my soul.

While I stood inhaling the scents of opobalsam, and cinnamon and myrrh, and wine of palm and oil of cedar, and all the other spices of the Pharaohs, mingled in one strange aromatic cloud, my personality seemed again to become, in part, the reflex of ancestral experiences.

I opened my eyes. I looked into the coffin. The face (which had been left by the embalmer exposed) confronted mine. "Fenella Stanley!" I cried, for the great transfigurer Death had written upon my father's brow that self-same message which the passions of a thousand Romany ancestors had set upon the face of her whose portrait hung in the picture-gallery. And the rubies and diamonds and beryls of the cross as it now hung upon my breast, catching the light of the opened lantern in my left hand, shed over the features an indescribable reflex hue of quivering rose.

Beneath his head I placed the silver casket: I hung the hair-chain round his neck: I laid upon his breast the long-loved memento of his love and the parchment scroll.

Then I sank down by the coffin, and prayed. I knew not what or why. But never since the first human prayer was breathed did there rise to heaven a supplication so incoherent and so wild as mine. Then I rose, and laying my hand

upon my father's cold brow, I said: "You have forgiven me for all the wild words that I uttered in my long agony. They were but the voice of intolerable misery rebelling against itself. You, who suffered so much—who know so well those flames burning at the heart's core—those flames before which all the forces of the man go down like prairie-grass before the fire and wind—you have forgiven me. You who knew the meaning of the wild word Love—you have forgiven your suffering son, stricken like yourself. You have forgiven me, father, and forgiven him, the despoiler of your tomb: you have removed the curse, and his child—his innocent child—is free."

* * * * *

I replaced the coffin-lid, and screwing it down left the crypt, so buoyant and exhilarated that I stopped in the churchyard and asked myself: "Do I, then, really believe that she was under a curse? Do I really believe that my restoring the amulet has removed it? Have I really come to this?"

Throughout all these proceedings—yes, even amidst that prayer to Heaven, amidst that impassioned appeal to my dead father—had my reason been keeping up that scoffing at my heart which I have before described.

I knocked up the landlord of the "White Hart," and, turning into bed, slept my first peaceful sleep since my trouble.

To escape awkward questions, I did not in the morning take back the keys to Shales's house myself, but sent them, and walking to Dullingham took the train to London.

X

Behind the Veil

I

WHEN I met my mother at the solicitor's office next day, she was astonished at my cheerfulness and at the general change in me. As we left the office together, she said,

"Everything is now arranged: your aunt

and I have decided to accept Lord Sleaford's invitation to go for a cruise in his yacht. We leave to-morrow evening. Lord Sleaford has promised to take me to-morrow afternoon to Mr. Wilderspin's studio, to see the great painter's portrait of me, which is now, I understand, quite finished."

"Why did you not ask me to accompany you, instead of asking Sleaford?"

"I did not know that you would care to do so."

"Dear mother," I said, in a tender tone that startled her, "you must let me go with you and Sleaford to the studio."

She consented, and on the following afternoon I called at my aunt's house in Belgrave Square. The hall was full of portmanteaux, boxes, and packages. Sleaford had already arrived, and was waiting with stolid patience for my mother, who had gone to her room to dress. He began to talk to me about the astonishing gifts of Cyril Aylwin.

"Have you made an appointment with Wilderspin?" I said to my mother, when she entered the room. "The last time I saw him he seemed to be much occupied with some disturbing affairs of his own."

"Appointment? No," said she, with an air that seemed to imply that an Aylwin, even with Gypsy blood in his veins, in calling upon Art, was conferring upon it a favour to be welcomed at any time.

"I have not seen this portrait yet," said Sleaford, as the carriage moved off; "but Cyril Aylwin says it is magnificent, and if anybody knows what's good and what's bad it's Cyril Aylwin."

"Do you know," said my mother to me, "I have taken vastly to this eccentric kinsman of ours? I had really no idea that a bohemian could be so much like a gentleman; but, of course, an Aylwin must always be an Aylwin."

"Haw, haw!" laughed Sleaford to himself, "that's good about Cyril Aylwin though—that's dooced good."

"We shall see Wilderspin's great picture, 'Faith and Love,' at the same time," I said, as we approached Chelsea; "for Wilderspin tells me that he has borrowed it from the owner to make a replica of it."

"That is very fortunate," said my mother. "I have the greatest desire to see this picture and its wonderful predella. Wilderspin is one of the few painters who revert to the predella of the old masters. He is said to combine the colour of him whom he calls 'his master' with the draughtsmanship and intellect of Shields, whose stained-glass windows the owner was showing me the other day at Eaton Hall; and do you know, Henry, that the painter of this wonderful 'Faith and

Love* is never tired of declaring that the subject was inspired by your dear father."

When we reached the studio the servant said that Mr. Wilderspin was much indisposed that afternoon, and was also just getting ready to go to Paris, where he was to join Mr. Cyril in his studio; "but perhaps he would see us,"—an announcement that brought a severe look to my mother's face, and another half-suppressed "Haw, haw!" from Sleaford's deep chest.

Mounting the broad old staircase, we found ourselves in the studio of the famous spiritualist-painter—one of two studios; for Wilderspin had turned two rooms communicating with each other by folding-doors into a sort of double studio. One of these rooms, which was of moderate size, fronted the north-east, the other faced the south-west. There were (as I soon discovered) easels in both. It was the smaller of these rooms into which we were now shown by the servant. The walls were covered with sketches and drawings in various stages, and photographs of sculpture.

"By Jove, that's dooced like!" said Sleaford, pointing to my mother's portrait, which was standing on the floor, as though just returned from the frame-maker's: "Ask Cyril Aylwin if it ain't when you see him."

It was a truly magnificent painting, but more full of imagination than of actual portraiture.

One of the windows was open, and the noise of an anvil from a blacksmith's shop in Maud Street came into the room.

"Do you know," said my mother in an undertone, "that this strange genius can only, when in London, work to the sound of a blacksmith's anvil? Nothing will induce him to paint a portrait out of his own studio; and I observed, when I was sitting to him here, that sometimes when the noise from the anvil ceased he laid down his brush and waited for the hideous din to be resumed."

Wilderspin now came through the folding doors, and greeted us in his usual simple, courteous way. But I saw that he was in trouble. "The portrait will look better yet," he said. "I always leave the final glazing till the picture is in the frame."

After we had thoroughly examined the portrait, we turned to look at a large canvas upon an easel. Wilderspin had evidently been working upon it very lately.

"That's 'Ruth and Boaz,' don't you know?" said Sleaford. "Finest crop of barley I ever saw in my life, judgin' from the size of the sheaves. Barley paid better than wheat last year. So the farmers all say."

"Don't look at it," said Wilderspin. "I have been taking out part of Ruth, and was

just beginning to repaint her from the shoulders upwards. It will never be finished now," he continued with a sigh.

We asked him to allow us to see "Faith and Love."

"It is in the next room," said he, "but the predella is here on the next easel. I have removed it from underneath the picture to work upon."

"The head of Ruth has been taken out," said my mother, turning to me: "but isn't it like an old master? You ought to see the marvellous Pre-Raphaelite pictures at Mr. Graham's and Mr. Leyland's, Henry."

"Pre-Raphaelites!" said Wilderspin, "the Master rhymes, madam, and Burne-Jones actually reads the rhymes! However, they are on the right track in art, though neither has the slightest intercourse with the spirit world, not the slightest."

"My exploits as a painter have not been noticeable as yet," I said; "but an amateur may know what a barley field is. That is one before us. He may know what a man in love is; Boaz there is in love."

"I wish we could see the woman's face," said Sleaford. "A woman, you know, without a face—"

"Come and see the predella of 'Faith and Love,'" said Wilderspin, and he moved towards an easel where rested the predella, a long narrow picture without a frame. My mother followed him, leaving me standing before the picture of Ruth and Boaz. Although the head of Ruth had been painted out, the picture seemed to throb with life. Boaz had just discovered the Moabitish maiden in the gleaming barley-field, as she had risen from stooping to glean the corn. Two ears of barley were in one hand. In the face of Boaz was an expression of surprise, and his eyes were alight with admiration. The picture was finished with the exception of the face of Ruth, which was but newly sketched in. Wilderspin had contrived to make her attitude and even the very barley-ears in her hand (one of which was dangling between her slender fingers in the act of falling) express innocent perturbation and girlish modesty.

II

At length I joined the others, who were standing before the easel, looking at the predella which, as Wilderspin again took care to tell us, had been removed from the famous picture of "Faith and Love" we were about to see in the next room—"the culmination and final expression of the Renaissance of Wonder in Art."

"Perhaps it is fortunate," said he, "that I happen to be working at this very time upon the predella, which acts as a key to the meaning of the design. You will now have the advantage of seeing the predella before you see the picture itself. And really it would be to the advantage of the picture if everyone could see it under like circumstances; it would add immensely to the effect of the design. Look well and carefully at the predella first. Try to imagine the Oriental Queen behind that veil, then observe the way in which the features are expressed through the veil; and then, but not till then, come into the adjoining room and see the picture itself, see what Isis really is (according to the sublime idea of Philip Aylwin) when Faith and Love, the twin angels of all true art, upraise the veil."

He then turned and passed through the folding-doors into a room of great size, crowded with easels, upon which pictures were resting.

The predella before me seemed a miracle of imaginative power. At that time I had not seen the work of the great poet-painter of modern times whom Wilderspin called "the Master," and by whom he had been unconsciously inspired.

"Most beautiful!" my mother ejaculated, as we three lingered before the predella. "Do look at the filmy texture of the veil."

"Looks more like steam than a white veil, don't you know," said Sleaford.

"Like steam, my lord?" exclaimed Wilderspin from the next room. "The painter of that veil had peculiar privileges. As a child he had been in the habit of watching a face through the curtain of steam around a blacksmith's forge when hot iron is plunged into the water-trench, and the face, my lord, though begrimed by earthly toil, was an angel's. No wonder, then, that the painting in that veil is unique in art. The flesh-tints that are pearly and yet rosy seem, as you observe, to be breaking through it, and yet you cannot say what is the actual expression on the face. But now come and see the picture itself."

My mother and Sleaford lingered for a moment longer, and then passed between the folding-doors.

But I did not follow them; I *could* not. For now there was something in the predella before me which fascinated me, I scarcely knew why. It was the figure of the queen—the figure between the two sleeping angels—the figure behind the veil, and expressed by the veil—that enthralled me.

There was a turn about the outlined neck and head that riveted my gaze; and, as I looked from these to the veil falling over the

face, a vision seemed to be rapidly growing before my eyes—a vision that stopped my breath—a vision of a face struggling to express itself through that snowy film—*whose* face?

"In the crypt my senses had a kind of license to play me tricks," I murmured; "but now and here my reason *shall* conquer."

And I stood and gazed at the veil. During all the time I could hear every word of the talk between Wilderspin, Sleaford and my mother before the picture in the other room.

"Awfully fine picture," said Sleaford, "but the Queen there—Isis: more like a European face than an Egyptian. I've been to Egypt a good deal, don't you know?"

"This is not an historical painting, my lord. As Philip Aylwin says, 'the only soul-satisfying function of art is to give what Zoroaster calls 'apparent pictures of unapparent realities.' Perfect beauty has no nationality; hers has none. All the perfections of woman culminate in her. How can she then be disfigured by paltry characteristics of this or that race or nation? In looking at that group, my lord, nationality is forgotten, and should be forgotten. She is the type of Ideal Beauty whose veil can never be raised save by the two angels of all true art, Faith and Love. She is the type of Nature, too, whose secret, as Philip Aylwin says, 'no science but that of Faith and Love can read.'"

"Seems to be the type of a good deal; but it's all right, don't you know? Awfully fine picture! Awfully fine woman!" said Sleaford in a conciliatory tone. "She's a good deal fairer, though, than any Eastern women I've seen; but then I suppose she has worn a veil all her life up to now. Most of 'em take sly peeps, and let in the hot Oriental sun, and that tans 'em, don't you know?"

"And the original of this face?" I heard my mother say in a voice that seemed agitated; "could you tell me something about the original of this remarkable face?"

"The model?" said Wilderspin. "We are not often asked about our models, but a model like that would endow mediocrity itself with genius, for, though apparently, and by way of beneficent illusion, the daughter of an earthly costermonger, she was a wanderer from another and a better world. She is not more beautiful here than when I saw her first in the sunlight on that memorable day, at the corner of Essex Street, Strand, bare-headed, her shoulders shining like patches of polished ivory here and there through the rents in her tattered dress, while she stood gazing before

her, murmuring a verse of Scripture, perfectly unconscious whether she was dressed in rags or velvet; her eyes—"

"The eyes—it is the eyes, don't you know—it is the eyes that are not quite right," said Sleaford. "Blue eyes with black eyelashes are awfully fine; you don't see 'em in Egypt. But I suppose that's the type of something too. Types always floor me, don't you know?"

"But the scene is no longer Egypt, my lord; it is Corinth," replied Wilderspin.

During this dialogue I stood motionless before the predella: I could not stir; my feet seemed fixed in the floor by what can only be described as a wild passion of expectation. As I stood there a marvellous change appeared to be coming over the veiled figure of the predella. The veil seemed to be growing more and more filmy—more and more like the "steam" to which Sleaford had compared it, till at last it resolved itself into a veil of mist—into the rainbow-tinted vapours of a gorgeous mountain sunrise, and looking straight at me were two blue eyes sparkling with childish happiness and childish greeting, through flushed mists across a pool on Snowdon.

That she was found at last my heart knew, though my brain was dazed. That in the next room, within a few yards of me, my mother and Sleaford and Wilderspin were looking at the picture of Winifred's face unclouded by the veil, my heart knew as clearly as though my eyes were gazing at it, and yet I could not stir. Yes, I knew that she was now neither a beggar in the street, nor a prisoner in one of the dens of London, nor starving in a squalid garret, but was safe under the sheltering protection of a good man. I knew that I had only to pass between those folding-doors to see her in Wilderspin's picture—see her dressed in the "azure-coloured tunic bordered with stars," and the upper garment of the "colour of the moon at moonrise," which Wilderspin had so vividly described in Wales, and yet, paralysed by expectation, I could not stir.

III

SOON I was conscious that my mother, Sleaford, and Wilderspin were standing by my side, that Wilderspin's hand was laid on my arm, and that I was pointing at the predella—pointing and muttering,

"She lives! She is saved."

My mother led me into the other studio, and I stood before the great picture. Wilderspin and Sleaford, feeling that something had occurred of a private and delicate

nature, lingered out of hearing in the smaller studio.

"I must be taken to her at once," I muttered to my mother; "at once."

So living was the portrait of Winifred that I felt that she must be close at hand. I looked round to see if she herself were not standing by me dressed in the dazzling draperies gleaming from Wilderspin's superb canvas.

But in place of Winifred the profile of my mother's face, cold, proud, and white, met my gaze. Again did the stress of overmastering emotion make of me a child, as it had done on the night of the landslip. "Mother!" I said, "you see who it is?"

She made no answer: she stood looking steadfastly at the picture; but the tremor of the nostrils, the long deep breaths she drew, told me of the fierce struggle waging within her breast between conscience and pity, with rage and cruel pride. My old awe of her returned. I was a little boy again, trembling for Winnie. In some unaccountable and, I believe, unprecedented way I had always felt that she, my own mother, belonged to some haughty race superior to mine and Winnie's; and nothing but the intensity of my love for Winnie could ever have caused me to rebel against my mother.

"Dear mother," I murmured, "all the mischief and sorrow and pain are ended now; and we shall all be happy; for you have a kind heart, dear, and cannot help loving poor Winnie, when you come to know her."

She made no answer save that her lips slowly reddened again after the pallor; then came a quiver in them, as though pity were conquering pride within her breast, and then that contemptuous curl that had often in the past cowed the heart of the fearless and pugnacious boy whom no peril of sea or land could appal.

"She is found," I said. "And, mother, there is no longer an estrangement between you and me. I forgive you everything now."

I leapt from her as though I had been stung, so sudden and unexpected was the look of scorn that came over her face as she said, "You forgive me!" It recalled my struggle with her on that dreadful night: and in a moment I became myself again. The pleading boy became, at a flash, the stern and angry man that misery had made him. With my heart hedged once more with points of steel to all the world but Winnie, I turned away. I did not know then that her attitude towards me at this moment came from the final struggle in her breast between her pride and that remorse which afterwards took pos-

session of her and seemed as though it would make the remainder of her life a tragedy without a smile in it. At that moment Wilderspin and Sleaford came in from the smaller studio. "Where is she?" I said to Wilderspin. "Take me to her at once—take me to her who sat for this picture. It is she whom I and Sinfì Lovell were seeking in Wales."

A look of utter astonishment, then one of painful perplexity, came over his face—a look which I attributed to his having heard part of the conversation between my mother and myself.

"You mean the—the—model? She is not here, Mr. Aylwin," said he. "The same young lady you were seeking in Wales! Mysterious indeed are the ways of the spirit world!" and then his lips moved silently as though in prayer.

"Where is she?" I asked again.

"I will tell you all about her soon—when we are alone," he said in an undertone. "Does the picture satisfy you?"

The picture! He was thinking of his art. Amid all that gorgeous pageant in which mediæval angels were mixed with classic youths and flower-crowned maidens, in such a medley of fantastic beauty as could never have been imagined save by a painter who was one-third artist, one-third madman, and one-third seer—amid all the marvels of that strange, uncanny culmination of the neo-Romantic movement in Art which had excited the admiration of one set of the London critics and the scorn of others, I had really and fully seen but one face—the face of Isis, or Pelagia, or Eve, or *Natura Benigna*, or whoever she was looking at me with those deep eyes of Winnie's which were my very life—looking at me with the same bewitching, indescribable expression that they wore when she sat with her "Prince of the Mist" on Snowdon. I tried to take in the *ensemble*. In vain! Nothing but the face and figure of Winifred—crowned with seaweed as in the Raxton photograph—could stay for the thousandth part of a second upon my eyes.

"Wilderspin," I said, "I cannot do the picture justice at this moment. I must see it again—after I have seen *her*. Where is she? Can I not see her now?"

"You cannot."

"Can I not see her to-day?"

"You cannot. I will tell you soon, and I have much to tell you," said Wilderspin, looking uneasily round at my mother, who did not seem inclined to leave us. "I will tell you all about her when—when you are sufficiently calm."

"Tell me now," I said.

"Gad! this is a strange affair, don't you

know? It would puzzle Cyril Aylwin himself," said Sleaford. "What the dooce does it all mean?"

"Is she safe?" I cried to Wilderspin.

There was a pause.

"Is she safe?" I cried again.

"Quite safe," said Wilderspin, in a tone whose solemnity would have scared me had the speaker been any other person than this eccentric creature. "When you are less agitated, I will tell you all about her."

"No! now now!"

IV

"WELL, Mr. Aylwin," said Wilderspin, "when I first saw your father's book, *The Veiled Queen*, it was the vignette on the title-page that attracted me. In the eyes of that beautiful child-face, even as rendered by a small reproduction, there was the very expression that my soul had been yearning after—the expression which no painter of woman's beauty had ever yet caught and rendered. I felt that he who could design or suggest to a designer such a vignette must be inspired, and I bought the book: it was as an artist, not as a thinker, that I bought the book for the vignette. When, on reading it, I came to understand the full meaning of the design, such sweet comfort and hope did the writer's words give me, that I knew at once who had impressed me to read it—I knew that my mission in life was to give artistic development to the sublime ideas of Philip Aylwin. I began the subject of 'Faith and Love.' But the more I tried to render the expression that had fascinated me the more impossible did the task seem to me. Howsoever imaginative may be any design, the painter who would produce a living picture must paint from life, and then he has to fight against his model's expression. Do you remember my telling you the other day how the spirit of Mary Wilderspin in heaven came upon me in my sore perplexity and blessed me—sent me a spiritual body—led me out into the street, and—"

"Yes, yes, I remember; but what happened?"

"We will sit," said Wilderspin.

He placed chairs for us, and I perceived that my mother did not intend to go.

"Well," he continued, "on that sunny morning I was impressed to leave my studio and go out into the streets. It was then that I found what I had been seeking,—the expression in the beautiful child-face of the vignette."

"In the street!" I heard my mother say

to herself. "How did it come about?" she asked aloud.

"It had long been my habit to roam about the streets of London whenever I could afford the time to do so, in the hope of finding what I sought, the fascinating and indescribable expression on that one lovely child-face. Sometimes I believed that I had found this expression. I have followed women for miles, traced them home, introduced myself to them, told them of my longings; and have then, after all, come away in bitter disappointment. The insults and revilings I have, on these occasions, sometimes submitted to I will narrate to no man, for they would bring me no respect in a cynical age like this—an age which Carlyle spits at and the great and good John Ruskin chides. Sometimes my dear friend Mr. Cyril has accompanied me on these occasions, and he has seen how I have been humiliated."

An involuntary "haw, haw!" came from Sleaford, but looking towards my mother and perceiving that she was listening with intense eagerness, he said: "Ten thousand pardons, but Cyril Aylwin's droll stories,—don't you know? they will—hang it all—keep comin' up and makin' a fellow laugh."

"Well," continued Wilderspin, "on that memorable morning I was impressed to walk down the street towards Temple Bar. I was passing close to the wall to escape the glare of the sun, when I was stopped suddenly by a sight which I knew could only have been sent to me in that hour of perplexity by her who had said that Jesus would let her look down and watch her boy. Moreover, at that moment the noise of the Strand seemed to cease in my ears, which were filled with the music I love best—the only music that I have patience to listen to—the tinkle of a blacksmith's anvil."

"Blacksmith's anvil in the Strand?" said Sleaford.

"It was from heaven, my lord, that the music fell like rain; it was a sign from Mary Wilderspin who lives there."

"For God's sake be quick!" I exclaimed. "Where was it?"

"At the corner of Essex Street. A bright-eyed, bright-haired girl in rags was standing bareheaded, holding out boxes of matches for sale, and murmuring words of Scripture. This she was doing quite mechanically, as it seemed, and unobservant of the crowd passing by,—individuals of whom would stop for a moment to look at her; some with eyes of pure admiration and some with other eyes. The squalid attire in which she was clothed seemed to add to her beauty."

"My poor Winnie!" I murmured, entirely overcome.

"She seemed to take as little heed of the heat and glare as of the people, but stood there looking before her, murmuring texts from Scripture as though she were communing with the spiritual world. Her eyes shook and glittered in the sunshine; they seemed to emit lights from behind the black lashes surrounding them; the ruddy lips were quivering. There was an innocence about her brow, and yet a mystic wonder in her eyes which formed a mingling of the childlike with the maidenly such as—"

"Man! man! would you kill me with your description?" I cried. Then grasping Wilderspin's hand, I said, "But,—but was she begging, Wilderspin? Not literally begging! My Winnie! my poor Winnie!"

My mother looked at me. The gaze was full of a painful interest; but she recognized that between me and her there now was rolling an infinite sea of emotion, and her eyes drooped before mine as though she had suddenly invaded the privacy of a stranger.

"She was offering matches for sale," said Wilderspin.

"Winnie! Winnie! Winnie!" I murmured. "Did she seem emaciated, Wilderspin? Did she seem as though she wanted food?"

"Heaven, no!" exclaimed my mother.

"No," replied Wilderspin, firmly. "On that point who is a better judge than the painter of 'Faith and Love'? She did not want food. The colour of the skin was not—was not—such as I have seen—when a woman is dying for want of food."

"God bless you, Wilderspin, God bless you! But what then?—what followed?"

"Well, Mr. Aylwin, I stood for some time gazing at her, muttering thanks to my mother for what I had found. I then went up to her, and asked her for a box of matches. She held me out a box, mechanically, as it seemed, and, when I had taken it of her, she held out her hand just as though she had been a real earthly beggar-girl; but that was part of the beneficent illusion of Heaven."

"That was for the price, don't you know?" said Sleaford. "What did you give her?"

"I gave her a shilling, my lord; which she looked at for some time in a state of bewilderment. She then began to feel about her as if for something."

"She was feelin' for the change, don't you know?" said Sleaford, not in the least degree perceiving how these interruptions of a prosaic mind were maddening me.

"I told her that I wanted to speak to her," continued Wilderspin, "and asked her where she lived. She gave me the same bewildered, other-world look with which she had regarded the shilling, a look which seemed to say, 'Go away now: leave me alone!' As I did not go, she began to appear afraid of me, and moved away towards Temple Bar, and then crossed the street. I followed, as far behind as I could without running the danger of losing sight of her, to a wretched place running out of Great Queen Street, Holborn, which I afterwards found was called Primrose Court, and when I got there she had disappeared in one of the squalid houses opening into the Court. I knocked at the first door once or twice before an answer came, and then a tiny girl with the face of a woman opened it. 'Is there a beggar-girl living here?' I asked. 'No,' answered the child in a sharp, querulous voice. 'You mean Meg Gudgeon's gal wot sings and does the rainy-night dodge. She lives next house.' And the child slammed the door in my face. I knocked at the next door, and after waiting for a minute it was opened by a short, middle-aged woman, with black eyes and a flattened nose, who stared at me, and then said, 'A Quaker, by the looks o' ye.' She had the strident voice of a raven, and she smelt, I thought, of gin."

"But, Mr. Wilderspin, Mr. Wilderspin, you said the girl was safe!"

It was my mother's voice, but so loud, sharp, and agonised was it that it did not seem to be her voice at all. In that dreadful moment, however, I had no time to heed it. At the description of the hideous den and the odious Mrs. Gudgeon, whose face as I had seen it in Cyril's studio had haunted me in the crypt, a dreadful shudder passed through my frame; an indescribable sense of nausea stirred within me; and for a moment I felt as though the pains of dissolution were on me. And there was something in Wilderspin's face—what was it?—that added to my alarm. "Stay for a moment," I said to him; "I cannot yet bear to hear any more."

"I know the dread that has come upon you, and upon your kind, sympathetic mother," said he; "but she you are disturbed about was not a prisoner in the kind of place my words seem to describe."

"But the woman?" said my mother. "How could she be safe in such hands?"

"Has he not said she is safe?" I cried, in a voice that startled even my own ears, so loud and angry it was, and yet I hardly knew why.

"You forget," said Wilderspin, turning to

my mother, "that the whole spiritual world was watching over her."

"But was the place very—was it so very squalid?" said my mother. "Pray describe it to us, Mr. Wilderspin; I am really very anxious."

"No!" I said; "I want no description: I shall go and see for myself."

"But, Henry, I am most anxious to know about this poor girl, and I want Mr. Wilderspin to tell us how and where he found her."

"The 'poor girl' concerns me alone, mother. Our calamities—Winnie's and mine—are between us two and God. . . . You engaged her, Wilderspin, of the woman whom I saw at Cyril's studio, to sit as a model? What passed when she came?"

"The woman brought her next day," said Wilderspin, "and I sketched in the face of Pelagia as Isis at once. I had already taken out the face of the previous model that had dissatisfied me. I now took out the figure too, for the figure of this new model was as perfect as her face."

"Go on, go on. What occurred?"

"Nothing, save that she stood dumb, like one who had no language save that of another world. But at the second sitting she had a fit of a most dreadful kind."

"Ah! Tell me quickly," I said.

"Her face became suddenly distorted by an expression of terror such as I had never seen and never imagined possible. I have caught it exactly in my picture 'Christabel.' She revived and tried to run out of the studio. Her mother and I seized her, and she then fell down insensible."

"What occasioned the fit? What had frightened her?"

"That is what I am not quite certain about. When she entered the studio she fixed her eyes upon a portrait which I had been working upon; but that must have been merely a coincidence."

"A portrait!" I cried. And Winifred's scared expression when she encountered my mother's look of hate in the churchyard came back to me like a scene witnessed in a flash of lightning. "The portrait was my mother's?"

"It was the face of the kind, tender, and noble lady your mother," said Wilderspin, gently.

I gave a hurried glance at my mother, and saw the pallor of her face,—but to me the world held now only two realities, Winifred and Wilderspin; all other people were dreams, obtrusive and irritating dreams.

"Go on, go on," I said.

"She recovered," continued Wilderspin, "and seemed to have forgotten all about the portrait, which I had put away."

"Did she talk?"

"Never, Mr. Aylwin," said Wilderspin, solemnly. "Nor did I invite her to talk, knowing whence she came—from the spirit-world. At the first few sittings Mrs. Gudgeon came with her, and would sit looking on with the intention of seeing that she came to no harm. She said her daughter was very beautiful, and she, her mother, never trusted her with men."

"God bless the hag, God bless her; but go on!"

"Gradually Mrs. Gudgeon seemed to acquire more confidence in me; and one day, on leaving, she lingered behind, the girl, and told me that her daughter, though uncommonly stupid and a little touched in the head, had now learnt her way to my studio, and that in future she should let her come alone, as she believed that she could trust her with me. She warned me earnestly, however, not to 'worrit' the girl by asking her all sorts of questions."

"And there she was right, I cried. "But you did ask her questions,—I see you did, you asked her about her father and brought on another catastrophe."

"No," said Wilderspin with gentle dignity; "I was careful not to ask her questions, for her mother told me that she was liable to fits."

"Mr. Wilderspin, I beg your pardon," I said.

"I see you are deeply troubled," said he; "but, Mr. Aylwin, you need not beg my pardon. Since I saw Mary Wilderspin, my mother, die for her children, no words of mere Man have been able to give me pain."

"Go on, go on. What did the woman say to you?"

"She said, 'The fewer questions you ask her the better, and don't pay her any money. She'd only lose it; I'll come for it at the proper times.' From that day the model came to the sittings alone, and Mrs. Gudgeon came at the end of every week for the money."

"And did the model maintain her silence all this time?"

"She did. She would, every few minutes, sink into a reverie, and appear to be stone-deaf. But sometimes her face would become suddenly alive with all sorts of shifting expressions. A few days ago she had another fit, exactly like the former one. That was on the day preceding my call at your hotel with your father's books. This time we had much more difficulty in bringing her round. We did so at last; and when she was gone I gave the final touch to my picture of the Lady Geraldine and Christabel. I was at the moment, however, at

work upon 'Ruth and Boaz,' which I had painted years before—removing the face of Ruth originally there. I worked long at it; and as she was not coming for two days I kept steadily at the picture. This was the day on which I called upon you, wishing you to postpone your visit, lest you should interrupt me while at work upon the head of Ruth, which I was hoping to paint. On Thursday I waited for her at the appointed hour, but she did not come, and I saw her no more."

V

"MR. WILDERSPIN," I said, as I rose hurriedly, with the intention of going at once in search of Winifred, "let me see the picture you allude to—'Christabel,' and then tell me where to find her."

"Better not see it!" said Wilderspin, solemnly; "there's something to tell you yet, Mr. Aylwin."

"Yes, yes; but let me see the picture first. I can bear anything now. Howsoever terrible it may be, I can bear it now; for she's found—she's safe." And I rushed into the next room, and began turning round in a wild manner one after another some dozens of canvases that were standing on the floor and leaning against the wall.

Half the canvases had been turned, and then I came upon what I sought.

I stood petrified. But I heard Wilderspin's voice at my side say "Do not let an imaginary scene distress you, Mr. Aylwin. The picture merely represents the scene in Coleridge's poem where the Lady Christabel, having secretly and in pity brought to her room to share her bed the mysterious lady she had met in the forest at midnight, watches the beautiful witch undress, and is spell-bound and struck dumb by some 'sight to dream of, not to tell,' which she sees at the lady's bosom."

* * * * *

Christabel! It was Winifred sitting there upright in bed, confronted by a female figure—a tall lady, who with bowed head was undressing herself beneath a lamp suspended from the ceiling. Christabel! It was Winifred gazing at this figure—gazing as though fascinated; her dark hair falling and tumbling down her neck, till it was at last partly lost between her shining bosom and her nightdress. Yes, and in her blue eyes there was the same concentration of light, there was the same uprolling of the lips, there was the same dreadful gleaming of the teeth, the same swollen veins about the throat that I had seen in Wales. No wonder that at first

I could see only the face and figure of Winifred. My consciousness had again dwindled to a single point. In a few seconds, however, I perceived that the scene was an antique oak-panelled chamber, corniced with large and curiously-carven figures, upon which played the warm light from a silver lamp suspended from the middle of the ceiling by a twofold silver chain fastened to the feet of an angel, quaintly carved in the dark wood of the ceiling. It was beneath this lamp that stood the majestic figure of the beautiful stranger, the Lady Geraldine. As she bent her head to look at her bosom, which she was about fully to uncover, the lamp-light gleaming among the gems and flashing in her hair and down her loosened white silken robe to her naked feet, shining, blue-veined and half-hidden in the green rushes that covered the floor, she seemed to be herself the source from which the lurid light was shed about the room. But her eyes were brighter than all. They were more dreadful by far to look at than Winifred's own—they were rolling wildly as if in an agony of hate, while she was drawing in her breath till that marble throat of hers seemed choking. It was not upon her eyes, however, that Winifred's were fixed: it was upon the lady's bosom, for out from beneath the partially-loosened robes that covered that bosom a tiny fork of flame was flickering like a serpent's tongue ruddy from the fires of a cruel and monstrous hate within.

This sight was dreadful enough; but it was not the terror on Winifred's face that now sent me reeling against Sleaford, who with my mother had followed me into the smaller room. Whose figure was that, and whose was the face which at first I had half-recognised in the Lady Geraldine? My mother's!

In painting this subject Wilderspin had, without knowing it, worked with too strong a reminiscence of my mother's portrait, unconscious that he was but giving expression to the awful irony of Heaven.

I turned round. Wilderspin was supporting with difficulty my mother's dead weight. For the first time (as I think) in her life, she whom, until I came to know Sinfi Lovell, I had believed to be the strongest, proudest, bravest woman living, had fainted.

"Dear me!" said Wilderspin, "I had no idea that Christabel's terror was so strongly rendered,—no idea! Art should never produce an effect like this. Romantic art knows nothing of a mere sensational illusion. Dear me!—I must soften it at once."

He was evidently quite unconscious that he had given my mother's features to Geraldine, and attributed the effect to

his own superlative strength as a dramatic artist.

I ran to her: she soon recovered, but asked to be taken to Belgrave Square at once. Wild as I was with the desire to go in quest of Winifred; goaded as I was by a new, nameless, shapeless dread which certain words of Wilderspin's had aroused, but which (like the dread that had come to me on the night of my father's funeral) was too appalling to confront, I was obliged to leave the studio and take my mother to the house of my aunt, who was, I knew, waiting to start for the yacht.

XI

The Irony of Heaven

I

As we stepped into the carriage, Sleaford, full of sympathy, jumped in. This fortunately prevented a conversation that would have been intolerable both to my mother and to me.

"Studio oppressively close," said Sleaford; "usual beastly smell of turpentine and pigments and things. Why the dooce don't these fellows ventilate their studios before they get ladies to go to see their paintin's!" This he kept repeating, but got no response from either of us.

As to me, let me honestly confess that I had but one thought: how much time would be required to go to Belgrave Square and back to the studio, to learn the whereabouts of Winifred. "But she's safe," I kept murmuring, in answer to that rising dread: "Wilderspin said she was safe."

During that drive to Belgrave Square, he whose bearing towards my mother was that of the anxious, loving son was not I, the only living child of her womb, but poor, simple, empty-headed Sleaford.

When we reached Belgrave Square my mother declared that she had entirely recovered from the fainting fit, but I scarcely dared to look into those haggard eyes of hers, which showed only too plainly that the

triumph of remorse in her bosom was now complete. My aunt, who seemed to guess that something lowering to the family had taken place, was impatient to get on board the yacht. I saw how my mother now longed to remain and learn the upshot of events; but I told her that she was far better away now, and that I would write to her and keep her posted up in the story day by day. I bade them a hurried "Good-bye."

"How shall I be able to stay out of England until I know all about her?" said my mother. "Go back and learn all about her, Henry, and write to me; and be sure to get and take care of that dreadful picture, and write to me about that also."

When the carriage left I walked rapidly along the Square, looking for a hansom. In a second or two Sleaford was by my side. He took my arm.

"I suppose you're goin' back to cane him, aren't you?" said he.

"Cane whom?" I said impatiently, for that intolerable thought which I have hinted at was now growing within my brain, and I must, *must* be alone to grapple with it.

"Cane the d—d painter, of course," said Sleaford, opening his great blue eyes in wonder that such a question should be asked. "Awfully bad form that fellow goin' and puttin' your mother in the picture. But that's just the way with these fellows."

"What do you mean?" I asked again.

"What do I mean? The paintin' and writin' fellows. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, as I've often and often said to Cyril Aylwin; and by Jove, I'm right for once. I suppose I needn't ask you if you're going back to cane him."

"Wilderspin did what he did quite unconsciously," I replied, as I hailed a hansom. "It was the finger of God."

"The finger of—Oh come! That be hanged, old chap."

"Good-bye," I said, as I jumped into the hansom.

"But you don't mean to say you are goin' to let a man put your mother into—"

I heard no more. The terrible idea which had been growing in my brain, shaping itself out of a nebulous mass of reminiscences of what had just occurred at the studio, was now stinging me to madness. Wilderspin's extreme dejection, the strange way in which he had seemed inclined to evade answering my question as to the safety of Winifred, the look of pity on his face as at last he answered "quite safe"—what did all these indications portend? At every second the thought grew and grew, till my brain seemed like a vapour of fire, and my eyeballs seemed to scorch their

sockets as I cried aloud: "Have I found her at last to lose her?"

On reaching the studio-door I rapped: before the servant had time to answer my summons, I rapped again till the summons echoed along the street. When my summons was answered, I rushed up stairs. Wilderspin stood at the studio-door, listening, apparently, to the sound of the blacksmith's anvil coming in from the back of Maud Street through the open window. Though his sorrowful face told all, I cried out, "Wilderspin, she's safe? You said she was safe?"

"My friend," said Wilderspin solemnly, "the news I have to give you is news that I knew you would rather receive when you could hear it alone."

"You said she was safe!"

"Yes, safe indeed! She whom you, under some strange but no doubt beneficent hallucination, believe to be the lady you lost in Wales, is safe indeed, for she is in the spirit-land with her whose blessing lent her to me—she has returned to her who was once a female blacksmith at Oldhill, and is now the brightest, sweetest, purest saint in Paradise."

Dead! My soul had been waiting for the word—expecting it ever since I left the studio with my mother—but now it sounded more dreadful than if it had come as a surprise.

"Tell me all," I cried, "at once—at once. She did not return, you say, on the day following the catastrophe—when did she return?—when did you next see her?"

"I never saw her again alive," answered Wilderspin mournfully; "but you are so pale, Mr. Aylwin, and your eyes are so wild, I had better defer telling you what little more there is to tell until you have quite recovered from the shock."

"No; now, now."

Wilderspin looked with a deep sigh at the picture of "Faith and Love," fired by the lights of sunset, where Winifred's face seemed alive.

"Well," said he, "as she did not come, I worked at my painting of 'Ruth' all day, and on the next morning, as I was starting for Primrose Court to seek her, Mrs. Gudgeon came kicking frantically at the street-door. When it was opened, she came stamping upstairs, and as I advanced to meet her, she shook her fists in my face, shouting out: 'I could tear your eyes out, you vagabones.' 'Why, what is the matter?' I asked in great surprise. 'You've bin and killed her, that's all,' said the woman, foaming at the mouth. She then told me that her daughter, almost imme-

diately on reaching home after having left the studio in the company of my servant, had fallen down in a swoon. A succession of swoons followed. She never rallied. She was then lying dead in Primrose Court.

"And what then? Answer me quickly."

"She asked me to give her money that her daughter might be buried respectably and not by the parish. I told her that it was all hallucination about the girl being her daughter, and that a spiritual body could not be buried, but she seemed so genuinely distressed that I gave her the money."

"Spiritual body! Hallucination!" I said. "I heard her voice in the London streets, and she was seen selling baskets at the theatre door. Where shall I find the house?"

"It is of no use for you to go there," he said.

"Nothing shall prevent my going at once." A feverish yearning had come upon me to see the body.

"If you *will* go," said Wilderspin, "it is No. 2, Primrose Court, Great Queen Street, Holborn."

II

I HURRIED out of the house, and soon finding a cab, I drove to Great Queen Street.

My soul had passed now into another torture-chamber. It was being torn between two warring, maddening forces—the passionate desire to see her body, and the shrinking dread of undergoing the ordeal. At one moment I felt—as palpably as I felt it on the betrothal night—her slim figure, soft as a twine of flowers in my arms: at the next I was grasping a corpse—a rigid corpse in rags. And yet I can scarcely say that I had any thoughts. At Great Queen Street I dismissed the cab, and had some little difficulty in finding Primrose Court, a miserable narrow alley. I knocked at a door which, even in that light, I could see was a peculiarly wretched one. After considerable delay the door was opened and a face peered out—the face of the woman whom I had seen in Cyril's studio. She did not at first seem to recognise me. She was evidently far gone in liquor, and looked at me, murmuring, "You're one o' the cussed body-snatchers; I know you: you belong to the Rose Alley 'Forty Thieves.' You'll swing—every man Jack o' ye'll swing yet, mind if you don't."

At the sight of the squalid house in which Winifred had lived and died I passed into

a new world of horror. Dead matter had become conscious, and for a second or two it was not the human being before me, but the rusty iron, the broken furniture, the great patches of brick and dirty mortar where the plaster had fallen from the walls,—it was these which seemed to have life—a terrible life—and to be talking to me, telling me what I dared not listen to about the triumph of evil over good. I knew that the woman was still speaking, but for a time I heard no sound—my senses could receive no impressions save from the sinister eloquence of the dead and yet living matter around me. Not an object there that did not seem charged with the wicked message of the heartless Fates.

At length, and as I stood upon the doorstep, a trembling, a mighty expectance, seized me like an ague-fit; and I heard myself saying, "I am come to see the body, Mrs. Gudgeon." Then I saw her peer, blinking, into my face, as she said,

"Oh, oh, it's *you*, is it? It's one o' the lot as keeps the studeros, is it?—the cussed Chelsea lot as killed her. I recklet yer a-starin' at the goddess Joker! So you've come to see my poor darter's body, are you? How werry kind, to be sure! Pray come in, gentleman, an' pray let the beautiful goddess Joker be perlite and show sich a nice kind wisiter the way up-stairs."

She took a candle, and with a mincing, mocking movement, curtsying low at every step, she backed before me, and then stood waiting at the foot of the staircase with a drunken look of satire on her features.

"Pray go up-stairs fust, gentleman," said she; "I can't think o' goin' up fust, an' lettin' my darter's kind wisiter foller behind like a sarvint. I 'opes we knows our manners better nor that comes to in Primrose Court."

"None of this foolery now, woman," said I. "There's a time for everything, you know."

"How right he is!" she exclaimed, nodding to the flickering candle in her hand. "There's a time for everythink, an' this is the time for makin' a peep show of my pore darter's body. Oh, yes!"

I mounted a shaky staircase, the steps of which were, some of them, so broken away that the ascent was no easy matter. The miserable light from the woman's candle, as I entered the room, seemed suddenly to shoot up in a column of dazzling brilliance that caused me to close my eyes in pain, so unnaturally sensitive had they been rendered by the terrible expectance of the sight that was about to sear them.

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When I re-opened my eyes, I perceived that in the room there was one window, which looked like a trap-door; on the red pantiles of the opposite roof lay a smoke-dimmed sheet of moonlight. On the floor at the further end of the garret, where the roof met the boards at a sharp angle, a mattress was spread. Then speech came to me.

"Not there!" I groaned, pointing to the hideous black-looking bed, and turning my head away in terror. The woman burst into a cackling laugh.

"Not there? Who said she *was* there? I didn't. If you can see anythink there besides a bed an' a quilt, you've got eyes as can make picturs out o' nothink, same as my darter's eyes could make 'em, pore dear."

"Ah, what do you mean?" I cried, leaping to the side of the mattress, upon which I now saw that no dead form was lying.

For a moment a flash of joy as dazzling as a fork of lightning seemed to strike through my soul and turn my blood into a liquid fire that rose and blinded my eyes.

"Not dead," I cried; "no, no, no! The pitiful heavens would have rained blood and tears at such a monstrous tragedy. She is not dead—not dead after all! The hideous dream is passing."

"Oh, ain't she dead, pore dear?—ain't she? She's dead enough for one," said the woman; "but 'ow can she be there on that mattress, when she's buried, an' the prayers read over her, like the darter of the most 'spectable mother as ever lived in Primrose Court! That's what the neighbours say o' me. The most 'spectable mother as ever—"

"Buried!" I said, "who buried her?"

"Who buried her? Why, the parish, in course."

Despair then again seemed to send a torrent of ice-water through my veins. But after a time the passionate desire to see her body leapt up within my heart.

At this moment Wilderspin, who had evidently followed me with remarkable expedition, came upstairs and stood by my side.

"I must go and see the grave," I said to him. "I must see her face once more. I must petition the Home Secretary. Nothing can and nothing shall prevent my seeing her—no, not if I have to dig down to her with my nails."

"An' who the dickens are you as takes on so about my darter?" said the woman, holding the candle to my face.

"Drunken brute!" said I. "Where is she buried?"

"Well, I'm sure!" said the woman in a

mincing, sarcastic voice. "How werry unperlite you is all at wonst! how werry rude you speaks to such a werry 'spectable party as I am! You seem to forgit who I am. Ain't I the goddess as likes to 'ave 'er little joke, an' likes to wet both eyes, and as plays sich larks with her flummeringeroes and drumming-dairies an' ring-tailed monkeys an' men?"

When I saw the creature whip up the quilt from the mattress, and, holding it over her head like a veil, leer hideously in imitation of Cyril's caricature, a shudder went again through my frame—a strange kind of dementia came upon me; my soul again seemed to leave my body—seemed to be lifted through the air and beyond the air and beyond the air and beyond the stars, crying in agony, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Yet all the while, though my soul seemed fleeing through infinite space, where a pitiless universe was waltzing madly round a ball of cruel fire—all the while I was acutely conscious of looking down upon the dreadful dream-world below, looking down into a frightful garret where a dialogue between two dream-figures was going on—a dialogue between Wilderspin and the woman, each word of which struck upon my ears like a sharp-edged flint, though it seemed millions of miles away.

"What made you trick me like this? Where is the money I gave you for the funeral?"

"That's werry true, about that money, an' where is it? The orkerdest question about money allus is—'Where is it?' The money for that funeral I 'ad, I won't deny that. The orkard question ain't that: it's 'Where is it?' But you see, arter I left your studero I sets on that pore gal's bed a-cryin' fit to bust; then I goes out into Clement's Alley, and I calls on Mrs. Mix—that's a werry dear friend of mine, the mother o' seven child'n as are allus a-settin' on my doorstep, an' she comes out of Yorkshire you must know, an' she's bin a streaker in her day (for she was well off wonst was Mrs. Mix afore she 'ad them seven dirty-nosed child'n as sets on her neighbours' doorsteps)—an' she sez, sez she, 'My pore Meg' (meanin' me), 'I've bin the mother o' fourteen beautiful clean-nosed child'n, an' I've streaked an' buried seven on 'em, so I ought to know somethink about corpuses, an' I tell you this corpse o' your darter's must be streaked an' buried at wonst, for she died in a swownd. An' there's nothink like the parishes for buryin' folk quick, an' I dessay the coffin's ordered by this time, an' I dessay the gent gev you that money just to

make you comfoble like, seein' as he killed your darter.' That's what Mrs. Mix says to me. So the parish comed an' brought a coffin an' tookt her, pore dear. And I've cried myself stupid-like, bein' her pore mother as 'es lost her on'y darter—an' I was just a-tryin' to make myself comfoble when this 'ere young toff as seems so werry drunk comes a-rappin' at my door fit to rap the 'ouse down."

"Has she been buried at all? How can a spiritual body be buried?"

"Buried at all? What do you mean by insinivatin' to the pore gal's conflicted mother as she p'raps ain't buried at all? You're a-makin' me cry ag'in. She lays comfoble enough underneath a lot of other coffins, in the pauper part of the New North Cimingtary."

"Underneath a lot of others; how can that be?"

"What! ain't you toffs never seed a pauper finneral? Now that's a pity; and sich nice toffs as they are, a-settin' their-selves up to look arter the darters o' pore folks. P'raps you never thought how we was buried. We're buried, when our time comes, and then they're werry kind to us, the parish toffs is:—It's in a lump—six at a time—as they buries us, and sich nice deal coffins they makes us, the parish toffs does, an' sich nice lamp-black they paints 'em with to make 'em look as if they was covered over with the best black velvid; an' then sich a nice sarmint—none o' your retail sarmints, but a hulsale sarmint—they reads over the lot, an' into one hole they packs us one atop of the other, jest like a pile o' the werry best Yarmith bloaters, an' that's a good deal more sociable an' comfoble, the parish toffs thinks, than puttin' us in single; so it is, for the matter o' that."

* * * * *

Then I heard no more; for at the intolerable picture called up by the woman's words, my soul in its misery seemed to have soared, scared and trembling, above and beyond the heavens at whose futile gates it had been moaning, till at last it sank at the feet of the mighty power that my love had striven with on the sands of Raxton when the tide was coming in—some pale and cruel ruler whose brow I saw wrinkled with the woman's mocking smile—some frightful columbine-queen, wicked, bowless and blind, shaking a starry cap and bells, and chanting—

"I lent the drink of Day
To gods for feast;
I poured the river of Night
On gods surceased:
Their blood was Nin-ki-gal's."

And there at the feet of the awful jesting hag, Circumstance, I could only cry "Winnie! my poor Winnie!" while over my head seemed to pass Necessity and her black ages of despair.

When I came to myself I said to the woman,

"You can point out the grave?"

"Well, yes," said she, turning round sharply; "but may I ax who the dickens you are?—an' what makes you so cut up about a pore woman's darter? It's right-on beautiful to see how kind gentlemen is now-a-days"; and she turned and tried, stumbling, to lead the way downstairs.

As we left the room I turned round to look at it. The picture of the mattress, now nearly hidden in the shadows—the picture of the other furniture in the room—two chairs—or rather one and a part of a chair, for the rails of the back were gone—a table, a large brown jug, the handle of which had been replaced by a piece of string, and a white wash-hand basin, with most of the rim broken away, and a shallow tub apparently used for a bath—seemed to sink into my flesh as though bitten in by the etcher's aquafortis.

Winifred's sleeping room!

"Of course she wasn't her daughter," said Wilderspin, meditatively, as we stood on the stairs.

"Not my darter! Why, in course she was. What an imperent thing to say, *surrelie!*"

"There is one thing I wish to say to you," said he to the woman. "When I agreed with you as to the sum to be paid for the model's sittings, it was clearly understood that she was to sit to no other artist, and that the match-selling was to cease."

"Well, and 'ave I broke my word?"

"A person has heard her singing and seen her selling baskets," I said.

"The person tells a lie," said the woman, with a dogged and sullen look, and in a voice that grew thicker with every word. "Ain't there sich things as doubles?"

At these last words my heart gave a sudden leap.

We left the house, and neither of us spoke till we got into the Strand.

"Did you see the—body at all?" I asked Wilderspin.

"Oh, yes. After I gave her the money for the funeral I went to Primrose Court. The woman took me upstairs, and there on the mattress lay—what the poor woman believed to be the earthly body of an earthly daughter. It was covered with a quilt. Over the face a ragged shawl had been thrown."

"Yes, yes. She raised the shawl?"

"Yes, the woman went and held the candle over the head of the mattress and uncovered the face: and there lay she whom the woman believed to be her daughter, and whom you believe to be the young lady you seek, but whom I *know* to be a spiritual body—the perfect type that was sent to me in order that I might fulfil my mission. You groan, Mr. Aylwin, but remember that you have lost only a dream, a beautiful hallucination: I have lost a reality: there is nothing real but the spiritual world."

III

As I wandered about the streets after parting from Wilderspin, what were my emotions? If I could put them into words, is there one human being in ten thousand who would understand me? Happily, no. For there is not one in ten thousand who, having sounded the darkest depths of human misery, will know how strong is Hope when at the true death-struggle with Despair. "Hope in the human breast," wrote my father, "is a passion, a wild, a lawless, and an indomitable passion, that almost no cruelty of Fate can conquer."

Many a passer-by in the streets of London that night must have asked himself, What lunatic is this at large? At one moment I would bound along the pavement as though propelled by wings, scarcely seeming to touch the pavement with my feet. At the next I would stop in a cold perspiration and say to myself, "Idiot, is it possible that you, so learned in suffering—you, whom Destiny, or Heaven, or Hell, has taken in hand as a special sport—can befool yourself with Hope now, after the terrible comedy by which you and the ancestral idiots from whom you sprang amused Queen Nin-ki-gal in Raxton crypt?"

Hope and Despair were playing at shuttlecock with my soul. Underneath my misery there flickered a thought which, wild as it was, I dared not dismiss—the thought that, after all, it *might* not be Winifred who had died in that den. Possible it was—however improbable—that I *might* be labouring under a delusion. My imagination *might* have exaggerated a resemblance into actual identity, and Winifred and she whom Wilderspin painted might be two different persons—and there might be hope even yet. But so momentous was the issue to my soul, that the mere fact of having clearly marshalled the arguments on the side of Hope made my reason critical and suspicious of their cogency. From the sweet sophisms

that my reason had called up, I turned, and there stood Despair, ready for me behind a phalanx of arguments, which laughed all Hope's "ragged regiment" to scorn.

Had not my mother recognised her? Could the infallible perceptive faculties of my mother be also deceived?

But to accept the fact that she who died on that mattress was little Winnie of the sands was to go stark mad, and the very instinct of self-preservation made me clutch at every sophism Hope could offer.

"Did not the woman declare that the singing-girl and the model were *not* one and the same?" said Hope. "And if she did not lie, may you not have been, after all, hunting a shadow through London?"

"It might not have been Winifred," I shouted.

But no sooner had I done so than the scene in the studio—Wilderspin's story of the model's terror on seeing my mother's portrait—came upon me, and "Dead! dead!" rang through me like a funeral knell: all the superstructure of Hope's sophisms was shattered in a moment like a house of cards: my imagination flew away to all the London graveyards I had ever heard of; and there, in the part divided by the pauper line, my soul hovered over a grave newly made, and then dived down from coffin to coffin, one piled above another, till it reached Winifred, lying pressed down by the superincumbent mass; those eyes staring.

Yes; that night I was mad!

* * * * *

I could not walk fatigue into my restless limbs.

Morning broke in curdling billows of fire over the east of London—which even at this early hour was slowly growing hazy with smoke. I found myself in Primrose Court, looking at that squalid door, those squalid windows. I knocked at the door. No answer came to my summons, and I knocked again and again. Then a window opened above my head, and I heard the well-known voice of the woman exclaiming,

"Who's that? Poll Onion's out to-night, and the rooms are empy 'cept mine. Why, God bless me, man, is it you?"

"Hag! that was not your daughter."

She slammed the window down.

"Let me in, or I will break the door."

The window was opened again.

"Lucky as I didn't leave the front door open to-night, as I mostly do. What do you want to skeer a pore woman for?" she bawled. "Go away, else I'll call up the people in Great Queen Street."

"Mrs. Gudgeon, all I want to do is to ask you a question."

"Ah, but that's what you jis' *won't* do, my fine gentleman. I don't let you in again in a hurry."

"I will give you a sovereign."

"Honour bright?" bawled the old woman; "let me look at it."

"Here it is, in my hand."

"Jink it on the stuns."

I threw it down.

"Quid seems to jink all right, anyhow," she said, "though I'm more used to the jink of a tanner than a quid in these cussed times. You won't skeer me if I come down?"

"No, no."

At last I heard her fumbling inside at the lock, and then the door opened.

"Why, man alive! your eyes are afire jist like a cat's wi' drowned kitlins."

"She was not your daughter."

"Not my darter?" said she, as she stooped to pick up the sovereign. "You ain't a-go'in' to catch me the likes o' that. The Beauty not my darter! All the court knows she was my own on'y darter. I'll swear afore all the beaks in London as I'm the mother of my own on'y darter Winifred, allus wur'er mother, and allus will be; an if she went a-beggin' it worn't my fort. She liked beggin', poor dear; some gals does."

"Her name Winifred!" I cried, with a pang at my heart as sharp as though there had been a reasonable hope till now.

"In course her name was Winifred."

"Liar! How came she to be called Winifred?"

"Well, I'm sure! Mayn't a Welsh-man's wife give her own on'y Welsh darter a Welsh name? Us poor folks is come to somethink! P'raps you'll say I ain't a Welsh-man's wife next? It's your own cussed lot as killed her, ain't it? What did I tell the shiny Quaker when fust I tookt her to the studero? I sez to the shiny un, 'She's jist a bit touched here,' I sez" (tapping her own head), "'and nothink upsets her so much as to be arsted a lot o' questions,' I sez to the shiny un. 'The less you talks to her,' I sez, 'the better you'll get on with her,' I sez, 'and the better kind o' pictur you'll make out on her,' I sez to the shiny un; 'an' don't you go an' arst who her father is,' I sez, 'for that word 'ull bring such a horful look on her face,' I sez, 'as is enough to skeer anybody to death. I sha'n't forget the look the fust time I seed it,' I sez. That's what I sez to the shiny Quaker. An' yit you did go an' worrit'er, a-arstin'er a lot o' questions about'er father. You *did*—I know you did! You *must* 'a done it—so no lies; for that wur the on'y thing as ever skeered'er, arstin'er about'er father, pore dear. . . . Why, man alive! what *are* you a-gurnin' at? an' what are you

a-smackin' your forred wi' your 'and like that for, an' a-gurnin' in my face like a Chessy cat? Blow'd if I don't b'lieve you're drunk. An' who the dickens are you a-callin' a fool, Mr. Imperance?"

It was not the woman but myself I was cursing when I cried out, "Fool! besotted fool!"

Not till now had the wild hope fled which had led me back to the den. As I stood shuddering on the door-step in the cold morning light, while the whole unbearable truth broke in upon me, I could hear my lips murmuring,

"Fool of ancestral superstitions! Fenella Stanley's fool! Philip Aylwin's fool! Where was the besotted fool and plaything of besotted ancestors, when the truth was burning so close beneath his eyes that it is wonderful they were not scorched into recognizing it? Where was he when, but for superstitions grosser than those of the negroes on the Niger banks, he might have saved the living heart and centre of his little world? Where was the rationalist when, but for superstitions sucked in with his mother's milk, he would have gone to a certain studio, seen a certain picture which would have sent him on the wings of the wind to find and rescue and watch over the one for whom he had renounced all the ties of kindred? Where was then the most worthy descendant of a line of ancestral idiots,—Romany and Gorgio—stretching back to the days when man's compeers, the mammoth and the cave-bear, could have taught him better? Rushing down to Raxton church to save her!—to save her by laying a poor little trinket upon a dead man's breast!"

After the paroxysm of self-scorn had partly exhausted itself, I stood staring in the woman's face.

"Well," said she, "I thought the shiny Quaker was a rum un, but blow me if you ain't a rummyer."

"Her name was Winifred, and the word 'Father' produced fits," I said, not to the woman, but to my soul, in mocking answer to its own woe. "What about my father's spiritualism now? Good God! Is there no other ancestral tomfoolery, no other of Superstition's patent Aylwinian soul-salves for the philosophical Nature-worshipper and apostle of rationalism to fly to? Her name was Winifred!"

"Yis; don't I say'er name wur Winifred?" said the woman, who thought I was addressing her. "You're jist like a poll-parrit with your 'Winifred, Winifred, Winifred.' That was'er name, an' she 'ad a

shock, pore dear, an' it was all along of you at the studero a-talkin' about 'er father. You *must* a-talked about 'er father: so no lies. She 'ad fits arter that, in course she 'ad. Why, you'll make me die a-larfin' with your poll-parritin' ways, sayin' 'a shock, a shock, a shock,' arter me. In course she 'ad a shock; she 'ad it when she was a little gal o' six. My pore Bill (that's my 'usband as now lives in the fine 'Straley) was a'most killed a-fightin' a Irishman. They brought 'im 'um an' laid 'im afore her werry eyes, an' the sight throwd 'er into high-strikes, an' arter that the name of 'father' allus throwd her into high-strikes, an' that's why I told 'em at the studero never to say that word. An' I know you *must* 'a' said it, some o' your cussed lot must, or else why should my pore darter 'a' 'ad the high-strikes? Nothin' else never gev 'er no high-strikes only talkin' to 'er about 'er father. An' as to me a-sendin' 'er a-beggin', I tell you she liked beggin'. I gev her baskets to sell, an' flowers to sell, an' yet she *would* beg. I tell you she liked beggin'. Some gals does. She was touched in the 'ead, an' she used to say she *must* beg, an' there was nothink she used to like so much as to stan' with a box o' matches a-jabberin' a tex' out o' the Bible unless it was singin'. There you are, a-larfin' and a-gurnin' agin. If I wur on'y 'arf as drunk as you are the coppers 'ud 'a' run *me* in hours ago; cuss 'em, an' their favouritin' ways."

At the truth flashing in upon me through these fantastic lies, I had passed into that mood when the grotesque wickedness of Fate's awards can draw from the victim no loud lamentations — when there are no frantic blows aimed at the sufferer's own poor eyeballs till the beard — like the self-mutilated Theban king's — is bedewed with a dark hail-shower of blood. More terrible because more inhuman than the agony imagined by the great tragic poet is that most awful condition of the soul into which I had passed — when the cruelty that seems to work at Nature's heart, and to vitalize a dark universe of pain, loses its mysterious aspect and becomes a mockery; when the whole vast and merciless scheme seems too monstrous to be confronted save by mad peals of derisive laughter — that dreadful laughter which bubbles lower than the fount of tears — that laughter which is the heart's last language; when no words can give it the relief of utterance — no words, nor wails, nor moans.

"Another quid," bawled the woman after me, as I turned away, "another quid, an' then I'll tell you somethink to your

awantage. Out with it, and don't spile a good mind."

What I did and said that morning as I wandered through the streets of London in that state of tearless despair and mad unnatural merriment, one hour of which will age a man more than a decade of any woe that can find a voice in lamentations, remains a blank in my memory.

I found myself at the corner of Essex Street, staring across the Strand, which, even yet, had scarcely awoke into life. Presently I felt my sleeve pulled, and heard the woman's voice.

"You didn't know as I was cluss behind you all the while, a-watchin' your tantrums. Never spile a good mind, my young swell. Out with t'other quid, an' then I'll tell you somethink about my pooty darter as is on my mind."

I gave her money, but got nothing from her save more incoherent lies and self-contradictions about the time of the funeral.

"Point out the spot where she used to stand and beg. No, don't stand on it yourself, but point it out."

"This is the werry spot. She used to hold out her matches like this 'ere, — my darter used, — an' say texes out o' the Bible. She loved beggin', pore dear!"

"Texts from the Bible?" I said, staggering under a new thought that seemed to strike through me like a bar of hot metal. "Can you remember any one of them?"

"It was allus the same tex', an' I ought to remember it well enough, for I've 'eerd it times enough. She wur like you for poll-parrittin' ways, and used to say the same thing over an' over agin. It wur allus, 'Let his children be wagabones and beg their bread; let them seek it also out of desolate places.' Why, you're at it ag'in — gurnin' ag'in. You *must* be drunk."

Again there came upon me the involuntary laughter of heart-agony at its tensest. I cried aloud: "Faith and Love! Faith and Love! That farce of the Raxton crypt with the great-grandmother's fool on his knees shall be repeated for the delight of Nin-ki-gal and the Danish skeletons and the ancestral ghosts from Hugh the Crusader down to the hero of the knee-caps and mittens; and there shall be a dance of death and a song, and the burden shall be —

"As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods:
They kill us for their sport."

Misery had made me a maniac at last; my brain swam, and the head of the woman

seemed to be growing before me—seemed once more to be transfigured before me into a monstrous mountainous representation of an awful mockery-goddess and columbine-queen, down whose merry wrinkles were flowing tears that were at once tears of Olympian laughter and tears of the oceanic misery of Man.

"Well, you *are* a rum 'un, and no mistake," said the woman. "But who the dickens *are* you? *That's* what licks me. Who the dickens *are* you? Howsomever, if you'll fork out another quid, the Queen of the Jokes'll tell you some'ink to your awantage, an' if you won't fork out the Queen o' the Jokes is mum."

I stood and looked at her—looked till the street seemed to heave under my feet and the houses to rock. After this I seem to have wandered back to Wilderspin's studio, and there to have sunk down unconscious.

XII

The Revolving Cage of Circumstance

I

I WILL not trouble the reader with details of the illness that came upon me as the result of my mental agony and physical exhaustion. At intervals I was aware of what was going on around me, but for the most part I was in a semi-comatose state. I realised at intervals that a medical man was sitting by my side, as I lay in bed. Then I had a sense of being moved from place to place; and then of being rocked by the waves. Slowly the periods of consciousness became more frequent and also more prolonged.

My first exclamation was—"Dead! Have I been ill?" and I tried to raise myself in vain.

"Yes, very ill," said a voice, my mother's.

"Dangerously?"

"For several days you were in danger. Your recovery now entirely depends upon your keeping yourself calm."

"I am out at sea?"

"Yes," said my mother; "in Lord Sleaford's yacht."

"How did I come here?"

"Well, Henry, I was so anxious to wait for a day or two to learn the sequel of the dreadful tragedy, that I persuaded Lord Sleaford to delay sailing. Next day he called at Belgrave Square, and told us he had heard that you had been taken suddenly ill and were lying unconscious at the studio. I went at once and saw the medical man, Mr. Finch, whom Mr. Wilderspin had called in. This gentleman took a serious view of your case. When I asked him what could be done he said that nothing would benefit you so much as removal from London, and recommended a sea voyage. It occurred to me at once to ask Lord Sleaford if we might take you in his yacht, and he with his usual good nature agreed, and agreed also that Mr. Finch should accompany us as your medical attendant."

"You know all?" I said; "you know that she is dead."

"Alas! yes."

At that moment the doctor came into the cabin, and my mother retired.

"When did you last see Wilderspin?" I asked Mr. Finch.

"Before leaving England to join a friend in Paris he went to Belgrave Square to get tidings of you, and I was there."

"He told you—what had occurred to make me ill?"

"He told me that it was the death of some one in whom you took an interest, a model of his, but told it in such a wild and excited way that I lost patience with him. His addled brains are crammed with the wildest and most ignorant superstitions."

"Did you ask him about her burial?"

"I did. I gathered from him that she was buried by the parish in the usual way. But I assure you the man's account of everything that occurred was so bewildered and so incoherent that I could really make nothing out of him. What is his creed? Is it Swedenborgianism? He seems to think that the model he has lost is a spirit (or spiritual body, to use his own jargon) sent to him by the artistic-minded spirits for entirely artistic purposes, but snatched from him now by the mean jealousy of the same spirit-world."

"But what did he say about her burial?"

"Well, he seems not to have ignored so completely the mundane question of burying this spiritual body as his creed would have warranted, for he gave the mother money to bury it. The mother, however, seems to have spent the money in gin and to have

left the duty of burying the spiritual body to the parish, who make short work of all bodies; and, of course, by the parish she was buried, you may rest assured of that, though the artist seemed to think that she was simply translated to heaven like Elijah."

"I must return to England at once," I said. "I shall apply to the Home Secretary to have the body disinterred."

"Why, sir?"

"In order that she may be buried in a proper place, to be sure."

"No use. You have no *locus standi*."

"What do you mean?"

"You are not a relative, and to ask for a disinterment for such an unimportant reason as that you, a stranger, would prefer to see her buried elsewhere, would be idle."

Sleaford now came into the cabin. I thanked him for his kindness, but told him I must return at once.

"Even if your health permitted," he said, "it is impossible for the yacht to go back. I have an appointment to meet a yachting friend. But in any case depend upon it, old fellow, the doctor won't hear of your returning for a long while yet. He told me not five minutes ago that nothing but sea air, and keeping your mind tranquil, you know, will restore you."

The feeling of exhaustion that came upon me as he spoke convinced me that there was only too much truth in his words. I felt that I must yield to the inevitable; but as to tranquillity of mind, my entire being was now filled with a yearning to see the New North Cemetery—to see her grave. I seemed to long for the very pang which I knew the sight of the grave would give me.

It is of course impossible for me to linger over that cruise, or to record any of the incidents that took place at the ports at which we touched and landed. My recovery, or rather my partial recovery, was slower than the doctor had anticipated. Weeks and months passed, and still there seemed but little improvement in me.

The result was that I was obliged to yield to the importunities of my mother, and to the urgent advice of Dr. Finch, to remain on board Sleaford's yacht during the entire cruise, and afterwards to go with them to Italy.

Absence from England gave me not the smallest respite from the grief that was destroying me.

My parting with my mother was a very pathetic one. She was greatly changed, and I knew why. The furrows Time sets on the face can never be mistaken for those which

are caused by the passions. The struggle between pride and remorse had been going on apace; her sufferings had been as great as my own.

It was in Rome we parted. We were sitting in the cool, perfumed, atmosphere of St. Peter's, and for the moment a soothing wave seemed to pass over my soul. For some little time there had been silence between us. At length I said, "Mother, it seems strange indeed for me to have to say to you that you blame yourself too much for the part you took in the tragedy of Winnie. When you sent her into Wales you didn't know that her aunt was dead; you did it, as you thought, for her good as well as for mine."

She rose as if to embrace me, and then sank down again.

"But you don't know all, Henry; you don't know all. I knew her aunt was dead, though Shales did not, or he would never have taken her. All that concerned me was to get her away before your own recovery. I thought there might be relatives of hers or friends whom Shales might find. But I was possessed by a frenzied desire to get her away. For years my eyes had been fixed on the earldom. I had been told by your aunt that Cyril was consumptive, and also that he was very unlikely to marry."

I could not suppress a little laugh. "Ha, ha! Cyril consumptive! No man's stronger and sounder, I am glad to tell you; but if by ill-chance he should die and the title should come to me, then, mother, I'll wear the coronet, and it shall be made of the best gingerbread gilt and ornamented thus. I'll give public lectures on the British aristocracy and its origin, and its present relations to the community, and my audience shall consist of society—that society which is so much to aunt and the likes of her. Society shall be my audience, and then, after my course of lectures is over, I will join the Gypsies. But pray pardon me, mother. I had no idea I should thus lose my temper. I should not have lost it so entirely had I not witnessed how you are suffering from the tyranny of this blatant bugbear called 'Society.'"

"My suffering, Henry, has brought me nearer to your line of thought than you may suppose. It has taught me that when the affections are deeply touched everything which before had seemed so momentous stands out in a new light, that light in which the insignificance of the important stands revealed. In that terrible conflict between you and me on the night following the landslide, you spoke of my 'cruel pride.' Oh, Henry, if you only knew how that cruel

pride had been wiped out of existence by remorse, I believe that even you would forgive me. I believe that even she would if she were here."

"I told you that I had entirely forgiven you, mother, and that I was sure Winnie would forgive you if she were alive."

"You did, Henry, but it did not satisfy me; I felt that you did not know all."

"I fear you have been very unhappy," I said.

"I have been constantly thinking of Winifred a beggar in the streets as described by Wilderspin. Oh, Henry, I used to think of her in the charge of that woman. And Miss Dalrymple, who educated her, tells me that in culture she was far above the girls of her own class; and this makes the degradation into which she was forced through me the more dreadful for me to think of. I used to think of her dying in the squalid den, and then the Italian sunshine has seemed darker than a London fog. Even the comfort that your kind words gave me was incomplete, for you did not know the worst features of my cruelty."

"But have you had no respite, mother? Surely the intensity of this pain did not last, or it would have killed you."

"The crisis did pass, for, as you say, had it lasted in its most intense form, it would have killed me or sent me mad. After a while, though remorse was always with me, I seemed to become in some degree numbed against its sting. I could bear at last to live, but that was all. Yet there was always one hour out of the twenty-four when I was over-mastered by pathetic memories, such as nearly killed me with pity—one hour when, in a sudden and irresistible storm, grief would still come upon me with almost its old power. This was on awaking in the early morning. I learnt then that if there is trouble at the founts of life, there is nothing which stirs that trouble like the twitter of the birds at dawn. At Florence, I would, after spending the day in wandering with you through picture galleries or about those lovely spots near Fiesole, go to bed at night tolerably calm; I would sink into a sleep, haunted no longer by those dreams of the tragedy in which my part had been so cruel, and yet the very act of waking in the morning would bring upon me a whirlwind of anguish; and then would come the struggling light at the window, and the twitter of the birds that seemed to say, 'Poor child, poor child!' and I would bury my face in my pillow and moan."

When I looked in her face, I realised for the first time that not even such a passion of pity as that which had aged me is so cruel in its ravages as Remorse. To gaze at

her was so painful that I turned my eyes away.

When I could speak, I said,

"I have forgiven you from the bottom of my heart, mother, but, if that does not give you comfort, is there anything that will?"

"Nothing, Henry, nothing but what is impossible for me ever to get—the forgiveness of the wronged child herself. *That* I can never get in this world. I dare only hope that by prayers and tears I may get it in the end. Oh, Henry, if I were in heaven I could never rest until I had sought her out, and found her and thrown myself on her neck and said, 'Forgive your persecutor, my dear, or this is no place for me.'"

II

AS soon as I reached London, thinking that Wilderspin was still on the Continent, I went first to D'Arcy's studio, but was there told that D'Arcy was away—that he had been in the country for a long time, busy painting, and would not return for some months. I then went to Wilderspin's studio, and found, to my surprise and relief, that he and Cyril had returned from Paris. I learnt from the servant that Wilderspin had just gone to call on Cyril; accordingly to Cyril's studio I went.

"He is engaged with the Gypsy-model, sir," said Cyril's man, pointing to the studio door, which was ajar. "He told me that if ever you should call you were to be admitted at once. Mr. Wilderspin is there too."

"You need not announce me," I said, as I pushed open the door.

Entering the studio, I found myself behind a tall easel where Cyril was at work. I was concealed from him, and also from Wilderspin and Sinfi. On my left stood Cyril's caricature of Wilderspin's "Faith and Love," upon which the light from a window was falling aslant!

Before I could pass round the easel into the open space I was arrested by overhearing a conversation between Cyril, Sinfi, and Wilderspin.

They were talking about *her*!

With my eyes fixed on Cyril's caricature on my left hand, I stood, every nerve in my body seeming to listen to the talk, while the veil of the goddess-queen in the caricature appeared to become illuminated; and the tragedy of our love (from the spectacle of her father's dead body shining in the moonlight, with a cross on his breast, down to the hideous-grotesque scene of the woman at the corner of Essex Street,) appeared to be represented on the veil of the mocking Queen in little

pictures of scorching flame. These are the words I heard:

"Keep your head in that position, Lady Sinfi," said Cyril, "and pray do not get so excited."

"I thought I felt the Swimmin' Rei in the room," said Sinfi.

"What do you mean?"

"I thought I felt the stir of him in my burk [bosom]. Howsomever, it must ha' bin all a fancy o' mine. But you see, Mr. Cyril, she wur once a friend o' mine. I want to know what skeared her? If it *was* her as set for the pictur, she'd never 'a' had the fit if she hadn't 'a' bin skeared. I s'pose Mr. Wilderspin didn't go an' say the word 'feyther' to her? I s'pose he didn't go an' ax her who her feyther was?"

I heard Wilderspin's voice say, "No, indeed, I would never have asked who her father was. Ah, Mr. Cyril, I knew how mysteriously she had come to me; why should I ask who was her father? Her earthly parentage was all an illusion. But you will remember that I was not in the studio at the time of the fit. Mr. Ebury had called about a commission, and I had gone into the next room to speak to him. You came into the studio at the time, Mr. Cyril. When I returned, I found her in the fit, and you standing over her."

"No, don't get up, Sinfi, my girl," I heard Cyril say. "Sit down quietly, and I will tell you what passed. There is no doubt I did ask her about her father, poor thing; but I did it with the best intentions—did it for her good, as I thought—did it to learn whether she had been kidnapped, and certainly not from idle curiosity."

"Scepticism, the curse of the age," said Wilderspin.

I heard Cyril say, "Who could have thought it would turn out so? But you yourself had told me, Wilderspin, of Mother Gudgeon's injunction not to ask the girl who her father was, and of course it had upon me the opposite effect the funny hag had intended it to have upon you. It was hard to believe that such a flower could have sprung from such a root. I thought it very likely that the woman had told you this to prevent your getting at the truth about their connection; so I decided to question the model myself, but determined to wait till you had had a good number of sittings, lest there should come a quarrel with the woman."

"Well, an' so you asked her?" said Sinfi.

"I thought the moment had come for me to try to read the puzzle," said Cyril. "So, on that day when Ebury called when you, Wilderspin, had left us together, I walked up to her, and said, 'Is your father alive?'"

"Ah!" cried Sinfi, "it was as I thought. It was the word 'feyther' as killed her! An' what'll become o' *him*?"

"The word 'father' seemed to shoot into her like a bullet," said Cyril. "She shrieked 'Father' and her face looked——"

"No, don't tell me how she looked!" said Sinfi. "Mr. Wilderspin's pictur' o' the witch and the lady shows how she looked—whoever she was. But if it was Winnie Wynne, what'll become o' *him*?"

Then I heard Cyril address Wilderspin again. "We had great difficulty, you remember, Wilderspin, in bringing her round, and afterwards I took her out of the house, put her into a cab, and you directed your servant whither to take her."

"It was scepticism that ruined all," I heard Wilderspin say.

"And yet," said Sinfi, "the Golden Hand on Snowdon told as he'd marry Winifred Wynne. Ah! surely the Swimmin' Rei is in the room! I thought I heard that choke come in his throat as comes when he frets about Winnie. Howsomever, I s'pose it must ha' bin all a fancy o' mine."

"You make *me* laugh, Sinfi, about this golden hand of yours that is stronger than the hand of Death," said Cyril; "and yet I wish from my heart I could believe it."

"My poor mammy used to say, 'The Gorgios believes when they ought to disbelieve, and they disbelieve when they ought to believe, and that gives the Romanies a chance.'"

"Sinfi Lovell," said Wilderspin, "that saying of your mother's touches at the very root of romantic art."

"Well, if Gorgios don't believe enough, Sinfi,—if there is not enough superstition among certain Gorgio acquaintances of mine, it's a pity," said Cyril.

"I don't know what you are a-talkin' about with your romantic art an' sich like, but I *do* know that nothink can't go agin' the dukkeripen o' the clouds, but if I was on Snowdon with my crwth I could soon tell for sartin whether she's alive or dead," said Sinfi.

"And how?" said Cyril.

"How? By playin' on the hills the old Welsh dukkerin' tune* as she was so fond on. If she was dead, she wouldn't hear it but if she was alive she would, and her livin' mullo + 'ud come to it," said Sinfi.

"Do you believe that possible?" said Cyril, turning to Wilderspin.

"My friend," said Wilderspin, "I was at that moment repeating to myself certain wise and pregnant words quoted from an Oriental book by the great Philip Aylwin — words

* Incantation song.

† Wraith or fetch.

which tell us that he is too bold who dares say what he will believe, what disbelieve, not knowing in any wise the mind of God—not knowing in any wise his own heart and what it shall some day suffer.”

“But,” said Sinfi, “about her as sat to Mr. Wilderspin; did she never talk at all, Mr. Cyril?”

“Never; but I saw her only three times,” said Cyril.

“Mr. Wilderspin,” said Sinfi, “did she never talk?”

“Only once, and that was when the woman addressed her as Winifred. That name set me thinking about the famous Welsh saint and those wonderful miracles of hers, and I muttered ‘St. Winifred.’ The face of the model immediately grew bright with a new light, and she spoke the only words I ever heard her speak.”

“You never told me of this,” said Cyril.

“She stooped,” said Wilderspin, “and went through a strange kind of movement, as though she were dipping water from a well, and said, ‘Please, good St. Winifred, bless the holy water and make it cure——’”

“Ah, for God’s sake stop!” cried Sinfi. “Look! the Swimmin’ Rei! He’s in the room! There he stan’s, and he’s a-hearin’ every word, an’ it’ll kill him outright!”

I stared at Cyril’s picture of Leæna for which Sinfi was sitting. I heard her say,

“There ain’t nothink so cruel as seein’ him take on like that,” said Sinfi; “I’ve seed it afore, many’s the time, in old Wales. You’ll find her yit. The dukkeripen says you’ll marry her yit, and you will. She can’t be dead when the sun and the golden clouds say you’ll marry her at last. Her as is dead *must* ha’ been somebody else.”

“Sinfi, you know there is no hope.”

“It might not ha’ bin your Winnie, arter all,” said she. “It might ha’ bin some poor innocent as her feyther used to beat. It’s wonderful how cruel Gorgio feythers is to poor born naturals. And she might ha’ heerd in London about St. Winifred’s Well a-curin’ people.”

“Sinfi,” I said, “you know there is no hope. And I have no friend but you now—I am going back to the Romanies.”

“No, no, brother,” she said, “never no more.”

She put on her shawl. I rose mechanically. When she bade Cyril and Wilderspin good-bye and passed out of the studio, I did so too. In the street she stood and looked wistfully at me, as though she saw me through a mist, and then bade me good-bye, saying that she must go to Kingston Vale, where her people were encamped in a hired field. We separated, and I wandered I knew not whither.

III

I FOUND myself inquiring for the New North Cemetery, and after a time I stood looking through the bars of tall iron gates at long lines of gravestones and dreary hillocks before me. Then I went in, walking straight over the grass towards a gravedigger digging in the sunshine. He looked at me, resting his foot on his spade.

“I want to find a grave.”

“What part was the party buried in?”

“The pauper part,” I said.

“Oh,” said he, losing suddenly his respectful tone. “When was she buried? I suppose it was a she by the look o’ you.”

“When? I don’t know the date.”

“Rather a wide order that, but there’s the pauper part.” And he pointed to a spot at some little distance, where there were no gravestones and no shrubs. I walked across to this Desert of Poverty, which seemed too cheerless for a place of rest. I stood and gazed at the mounds till the black coffins underneath grew upon my mental vision, and seemed to press upon my brain. Thoughts I had none, only a sense of being another person.

The man came slowly towards me, and then looked meditatively into my face. I shall never forget him. A tall, scrawny, emaciated man he was, with cheek-bones high and sharp as an American Indian’s, and straight black hair. He looked like a wooden image of Mephistopheles, carved with a jack-knife.

“Who are you?” The words seemed to come, not from the gravedigger’s mouth, but from those piles of lamp-blacked coffins which were searing my eyes through four feet of graveyard earth. By the fever-fires in my brain I seemed to see the very faces of the corpses.

“Who am I?” I said to myself, as I thought, but evidently aloud; “I am the Fool of Superstition. I am Fenella Stanley’s Fool, and Sinfi Lovell’s Fool, and Philip Aylwin’s Fool, who went and averted a curse from one of the heads resting down here, averted a curse by burying a jewel in a dead man’s tomb.”

“Not in this cemetery, so none o’ your gammon,” said the gravedigger, who had overheard me. “The on’y people as is fools enough to bury jewels with dead bodies is the Gypsies, and *they* take precious good care, as I know, to keep it mum *where* they bury ’em. There’s bin as much diggin’ for them thousand guineas as was buried with Jerry Chilcott in Foxleigh parish, where I

was born, as would more nor pay for emptying a gold mine; but I never heard o' Christian folk a-buryin' jewels. But who are you?"

I felt a hand upon my shoulder, and looking round, I found Sinfy by my side.

"Does he belong to you, my gal?"

"Yis," said Sinfy, with a strange, deep ring in her rich contralto voice. "Yis, he belongs to me now—leastways he's my pal now—whatever comes on it."

"Then take him away, my wench. What's the matter with him? The old complaint, I s'pose," he added, lifting his hand to his mouth as though drinking from a glass.

Sinfy gently put out her hand and brushed the man aside.

"I've bin a-followin' on you all the way, brother," said Sinfy, as we moved out of the cemetery, "for your looks skeared me a bit. Let's go away from this place."

"But whither, Sinfy? I have no friend but you; I have no home."

"No home, brother? The kairengros^o has got about everythink, 'cept the sky an' the wind, an' you're one o' the richest kairengros on 'em all—leastways so I wur told t'other day in Kingston Vale. It's the Romanies, brother, as ain't got no home 'cept the sky an' the wind. Howsumever, that's nuther here nor there; we'll jist go to the woman they told me on, an' if there's any truth to be torn out on her, out it'll ha' to come, if I ha' to tear out her windpipe with it."

We took a cab and were soon in Primrose Court.

The front door was wide open—fastened back. Entering the narrow common passage, we rapped at a dingy inner door. It was opened by a pretty girl, whose thick chestnut hair and eyes to match contrasted richly with the dress she wore—a dirty black dress, with great patches of lining bursting through holes like a whity-brown froth.

"Meg Gudgeon?" said the girl in answer to our inquiries; and at first she looked at us rather suspiciously, "upstairs, she's very bad—like to die—I'm a-seein' arter 'er. Better let 'er alone; she bites when she's in 'er tantrums."

"We's friends o' hern," said Sinfy, whose appearance and decisive voice seemed to reassure the girl.

"Oh, if you're friends that's different," said she. "Meg's gone off 'er 'ead; thinks the p'lace in plain clothes are after 'er."

We went up the stairs. The girl followed us. When we reached a low door, Sinfy

proposed that she should remain outside on the landing, but within ear-shot, as "the sight o' both on us, all of a sudden, might make the poor body all of a dither if she was very ill."

The girl opened the door and went in. I heard the woman's voice say in answer to her,

"Friend? Who is it? Are you sure, Poll, it ain't a copper in plain clothes come about that gal?"

The girl came out, and signalling me to enter, went leisurely down-stairs. Leaving Sinfy outside on the landing, I entered the room. There, on a sort of truckle-bed in one corner, I saw the woman. She slowly raised herself up on her elbows to stare at me. I took for granted that she would recognise me at once; but either because she was in drink when I saw her last, or because she had got the idea of a policeman in plain clothes, she did not seem to know me. Then a look of dire alarm broke over her face and she said,

"P'leaceman, I'm as hinicent about that air gal as a new-born babe."

"Mrs. Gudgeon," I said, "I only want you to tell a friend of mine about your daughter."

"Oh, yis! a friend o' yourn! Another or two on ye in plain clothes behind the door, I dessay. An' pray who said the gal wur my darter? What for do you want to put words into the mouth of a hinicent dyin' woman? I comed by 'er 'onest enough. The pore half-starved thing came up to me in Llanbeblig churchyard."

"Llanbeblig churchyard?" I exclaimed, drawing close up to the bed. "How came you in Llanbeblig churchyard?" But then I remembered that, according to her own story, she had married a Welshman.

"How did I come in Llanbeblig churchyard?" said the woman in a tone in which irony and fear were strangely mingled. "Well, p'leaceman, I don't mean to be sarcy; but seein' as all my pore dear 'usband's kith and kin o' the name o' Goodjohn was buried in Llanbeblig churchyard, p'raps you'll be kind enough to let me go there sometimes, an' p'raps be buried there when my time comes."

"But what took you there?" I said.

"What took me to Llanbeblig churchyard?" exclaimed the woman, whose natural dogged courage seemed to be returning to her. "What made me leave every fardin' I had in the world with Poll Onion, when we ommust wanted bread, an' go to Carnarvon on Shanks's pony? I sha'n't tell ye. I comed by the gal 'onest enough, an' she never comed to no 'arm through me, less

* The roof-dwellers.

mendin' 'er cloes for 'er, and bringin' 'er to London, and bein' a mother to her, an' givin' 'er a few baskets an' matches to sell is a-doing 'er any 'arm. An' as to beggin' she *would* beg, she loved to beg an' say texes."

"Old kidnapper!" I cried, maddened by the visions that came upon me. "How do I know that she came to no harm with a wretch like you?"

The woman shrank back upon the pillows in a revival of her terror. "She never comed to no harm, p'leaceman. No, no, she never comed to no 'arm through me. I'd a darter once o' my own, Jenny Gudgeon by name—p'raps you know'd 'er, most o' the coppers did—as was brought up by my sister by marriage at Carnarvon, an' I sent for 'er to London, I did, p'leaceman—God forgi'e me—and she went wrong all through me bein' a drinkin' woman and not seein' arter 'er, just as my son Bob tookt to drink, through me bein' a drinkin' woman and not seein' arter *him*. She tookt and went from bad to wuss, bad to wuss; it's my belief as it's allus starvation as drives 'em to it; an' when she wur a dyin' gal, she sez to me, 'Mother,' sez she, 'I've got the smell o' Welsh vi'lets on me ag'in: I wants to be buried in Llanbeblig churchyard, among the Welsh child'n an' maids, mother. I wants to feel the snowdrops, an' smell the vi'lets, an' the primroses, a-growin' over my 'ead,' sez she; 'but that can't never be, mother,' sez she, a-sobbin' fit to bust; 'never, never, for such as me,' sez she. An' I know'd what she meant, though she never once blamed me, an' 'er words stuck in my gizzard like a thorn, p'leaceman."

"But what has all this to do with the girl you kidnapped?"

"Ain't I a-tellin' on ye as fast as I can? When my pore gal dropped off to sleep, I sez to Polly Onion, 'Poll,' I sez, 'to-morrow mornin' I'll pop everythink as ain't popped a'ready, and I'll leave you the money to see arter 'er, and I'll start for Carnarvon on Shanks's pony. I knows a good many on the roads,' sez I, 'as won't let Jokin' Meg want for a crust and a sup, and when I gits to Carnarvon I'll ax 'er aunt to bury 'er (she sells fish, 'er aunt does,' sez I, 'and she's got a pot o' money), an' then I'll see the parson or the sexton or somebody,' sez I, 'an' I'll tell 'em I've got a darter in London as is goin' to die, a Carnarvon gal by family, an' I'll tell 'im she ain't never bin married, an' then they'll bury 'er where she can smell the primroses and the vi'lets.' That's what I sez to Poll Onion, an' then Poll she begins to pipe, an' sez, 'Oh Meg, Meg, ain't I a Carnarvon gal too? The likes o' us ain't

a-goin' to grow no vi'lets an' snowdrops in Llanbeblig churchyard.' An' I sez to her, 'What a d—d fool you are, Poll! You never 'adn't a gal as went wrong through you a-drinkin', else you'd never say that. If the parson sez to me, "Is your darter a vargin-maid?" d'ye think I shall say, "Oh no, parson"? I'll swear she is a vargin-maid on all the Bibles in all the churches in Wales.' That's jis' what I sez to Polly Onion, God forgi'e me. An' Poll sez, 'The parson'll be sure to send you to hell, Meg, if you do that air.' An' I sez, 'So he may, then, but I *shall* do it, no fear.' That's what I sez to Poll Onion (she's downstairs at this werry moment a warmin' me a drop o' beer); it was 'er as showed you upstairs, cuss 'er for a fool; an' she can tell you the same thing as I'm a-tellin' on you."

"But what about her you kidnapped? Tell me all about it, or it will be worse for you."

"Ain't I a-tellin' you as fast as I can? Off to Carnarvon I goes, an' every futt o' the way I walk—Lor' bless your soul, there worn't a better pair o' pins nowheres than Meg Gudgeon's then, afore the water got in 'em and bust 'em; and I got to Llanbeblig churchyard early one mornin', an' there I seed the poor half-sharp gal. So you see I comed by her 'onest enough, p'leaceman, though she worn't ezzactly my own darter."

"Well, well," I said; "go on."

"Yes, it's all very well to say 'go on,' p'leaceman; but if you'd got as much water in your legs as I've got in mine, an' if you'd got no more wind in your bellows than I've got in mine, you'd find it none so easy to go on."

"What was she doing in the churchyard?"

"Well, p'leaceman, I'm tellin' you the truth, s'elp me Bob! I was a-lookin' over the graves to see if I could find a nice comforble place for my pore gal, an' all at once I heered a kind o' sobbin' as would a' made me die o' fright if it 'adn't a' bin broad daylight, an' then I see a gal a-layin' flat on a grave an' cryin', an' when I got up to her I seed as she wur covered with mud, an' I seed as she wur a-starvin'."

"Good God, woman, you are lyin'! you are lyin'!"

"No, I ain't a-lyin'. She tookt to me the moment she clapped eyes on me; most people does, and them as don't ought, an' she got up an' put her arms round my neck, and she called me 'Knocker.'"

"Called you what?"

"Ain't I a-tellin' you? She called me 'Knocker'; and that's the very name as she allus called me up to the day of her death,

pore dear! I tried to make 'er come along o' me, an' she wouldn't stir, an' so I left 'er, meanin' to go back; but when I got to my sister's by marriage, there was a letter for me and it wur from Polly Onion, a-sayin' as my pore Jenny died the same day as I left London, a-sayin', 'Mother, vi'lets, vi'lets; mother, vi'lets, vi'lets!' an' was buried by the parish. An' that upset me, p'leaceman, an' made me swownd, an' when I comed to, I couldn't hear nothink only my pore Jenny's voice a-sobbin' on the wind, 'Mother, vi'lets, vi'lets; mother, vi'lets, vi'lets!' an' that sent me off my 'ead a bit, an' I run out o' the house, an' there was Jenny's voice a-goin' on before me a-sobbin', 'Mother, vi'lets, vi'lets; mother, vi'lets, vi'lets!' an' it seemed to lead me back to the churchyard; an' lo! and be'old, there was the pore half-starved creatur' a-settin' there jist as I'd left 'er, an' I sez, 'God bless you, my gal, you're a-starvin'!' an' she jumped up, an' she comed an' throwed 'er arms round my waist, an' there we stood both on us a-cryin' together, an' then I runned back into Carnarvon, an' fetched 'er some grub, an' she tucked into the grub.—But hullo! p'leaceman, what's up now? What the devil are you a-squeedgin' my 'and like that for? Are you a-goin' to kiss it? It ain't none so clean, p'leaceman. You're the rummest copper in plain clothes ever I seed in all my born days. Fust you seem as if you want to bite me, you looks so savage, an' then you looks as if you wants to kiss me; you'll make me laugh, I know you will, an' that'll make me cough.—Hi! Poll Onion, come 'ere. Bring my best lookin'-glass out o' my boudore, an' let me look at my ole chops, for I'm blowed if there ain't a copper in plain clothes this time as is fell 'ead over ears in love with me, jist as the young swell did at the studero."

"Go on, Mrs. Gudgeon," I said; "go on. She ate the food?"

"Oh, didn't she jist! And the pore half-sharp thing took to me, an' I took to she, an' I thinks to myself, 'She's a purty gal, if she's ever so stupid, an' she'll get 'er livin' a-sellin' flowers o' fine days, and doin' the rainy-night dodge with baskets when it's wet'; and so I took 'er in, an' in the street she'd all of a suddent bust out a-singin' songs about Snowdon an' sich like, jist as if she was a-singin' in a dream, and folk used to like to hear her an' gev her money; an' I was a good mother to 'er, I was, an' them as sez I worn't is cussed liars."

"And she never came to any harm?" I said, holding the great muscular hands between my two palms, unwilling to let them go. "She never came to any harm?"

"Ain't I said so more nor wunst? I swore on the Bible—there's the very Bible, under the match-box, agin the winder—on that very Bible I swore as my pore Jenny brought from Wales, and as I've never popped yit—that this pore half-sharp gal should never go wrong through me; an' then, arter I swore that, my pore Jenny let me alone, an' I never 'eard 'er v'ice no more a-cryin', 'Mother, vi'lets, vi'lets; mother, vi'lets, vi'lets!' An' many's the chap as 'as come leerin' after 'er as I've sent away with a flea in 'is ear. Cuss 'em all; they's all bad alike about purty gals, men is. She's never comed to no wrong through me. Didn't I ammost kill a real sailor captin' when I used to live in the East End 'cause he tried to meddle with 'er? And worn't that the reason why I left my 'um close to Radcliffe Highway and comed here? Them as killed 'er wur the cussed lot in the studeros. I'm a dyin' woman; I'm as hincient as a new-born babe. An' there ain't nothink o' 'ern in this room on'y a pair o' ole shoes an' a few rags in that ole trunk under the winder."

I went to the trunk and raised the lid. The tattered, stained remains of the very dress she wore when I last saw her in the mist on Snowdon! But what else? Pushed into an old worn shoe, which with its fellow lay tossed among the ragged clothes, was a brown stained letter. I took it out. It was addressed to "Miss Winifred Wynne at Mrs. Davies's." Part of the envelope was torn away. It bore the Graylingham post-mark, and its superscription was in a hand which I did not recognise, and yet it was a hand which seemed half-familiar to me. I opened it; I read a line or two before I fully realised what it was—the letter, full of childish prattle, which I had written to Winifred when I was a little boy—the letter which her aunt had forbidden her to answer.

I forgot where I was. I forgot that Sinf was standing outside the door, till I heard the woman's voice exclaiming, "What do you want to set on my bed an' look at me like that for?—you ain't no p'leaceman in plain clothes, so none o' your larks. Git off o' my bed, will ye? You'll be a-settin' on my bad leg an' a-bustin' on it in a minit. Git off my bed, else look another way; them eyes o' yourn skeer me."

I was sitting on the side of her bed and looking into her face. "Where did you get this?" I said, holding out the letter.

"You skeers me, a-lookin' like that," said she. "I comed by it 'onest. One day when she was asleep, I was turnin' over her clothes to see how much longer they would hold together, when I feels a somethink 'ard sewed

up in the breast; I rips it open, and it was that letter. I didn't put it back in the frock ag'in, 'cause I thought it might be useful some day in findin' out who she was. She never missed it. I don't think she'd ave missed anythink, she wur so uncommon silly. You ain't a-goin' to pocket it, air you?"

I had put the letter in my pocket, and had seized the shoes and was going out of the room; but I stopped, took a sovereign from my purse, placed it in an envelope bearing my own address which I chanced to find in my pocket, and, putting it into her hand, I said, "Here is my address and here is a sovereign. I will tell your friend below to come for me or send whenever you need assistance." The woman clutched at the money with greed, and I left the room, signalling to Sinfì (who stood on the landing, pale and deeply moved) to follow me down stairs. When we reached the wretched room on the ground-floor we found the girl hanging some wet rags on lines that were stretched from wall to wall.

"What is your name?" I said.

"Polly Unwin," replied she, turning round with a piece of damp linen in her hand.

"And what are you?"

"What am I?"

"I mean what do you do for a living?"

"What do I do for a living?" she said.

"All kind of things—help the men at the barrows in the New Cut sell flowers, do anything that comes in my way."

"Never mind what she does for a livin', brother," said Sinfì; "give her a gold balanser or two, and tell her to see arter the woman."

"Here is some money," I said to the girl.

"See that Mrs. Gudgeon up-stairs wants for nothing. Is that story of hers true about her daughter and Llanbeblig churchyard?"

"That's true enough, though she's a winner at a lie: that's true enough."

But as I spoke I heard a noise like the laugh or the shriek of a maniac. It seemed to come from up-stairs.

"She's a-larfin' ag'in," said the girl. "It's a very wicked larf, sir, ain't it? But there's wuss 'uns nor Meg Gudgeon for all 'er wicked larf, as I knows. Many a time she's kep' me from starvin'. I mus' run up an' see 'er. She'll kill herself a-larfin' yit."

The girl hurried up-stairs and I followed her, leaving Sinfì below. I re-entered the bed-room. There was the woman, her face buried in the pillow, rocking and rolling her body half round with the regularity of a pendulum. Between the peals of half-smothered hysterical laughter that came from her, I could hear her say:

"Dear Lord Jesus, don't forget to love dear

Henry who can't git up the gangways without me."

The words seemed to fall upon my heart like a rain of molten metal dropping from the merciless and mocking skies. But I had ceased to wonder at the cruelty of Fate. The girl went to her and shook her angrily. This seemed to allay her hysterics, for she rolled round upon her back and stared at us. Then she looked at the envelope clutched in her hand, and read out the address,

"Henry, Henry, Henry Halywin, Eskeuer! An' I tookt 'im for a copper in plain clothes all the while! Henry, Henry, Henry Halywin, Eskeuer! I shall die a-larfin', I know I shall! I shall die a-larfin', I know I shall! Poll! don't you mind me a-tellin' you about my pore darter Winifred—for my darter she was, as I'll swear afore all the beaks in London—don't you mind me a-sayin' that if she wouldn't talk when she wur awake, she could mag away fast enough when she wur asleep; an' it were allus the same mag about dear little Henry, an' dear Henry Halywin as couldn't get up the gangways without 'er. Well, pore dear Henry was 'er sweet'airt, an' this is the chap, an' if my eyes ain't stun blind, the werry chap out o' the cussed studeros as killed 'er, pore dear, an' as is a-skeerin' me away from my beautiful 'um in Primrose Court; an' 'ere wur I a-talkin' to him all of a muck sweat, thinking he wur a copper in plain clothes!"

At this moment Sinfì entered the room. She came up to me, and laying her hand upon my shoulder she said: "Come away, brother, this is cruel hard for you to bear. It's our poor sister Winifred as is dead, and it ain't nobody else."

The effect of Sinfì's appearance and of her words upon the woman was like that of an electric shock. She sat up in her bed open-mouthed, staring from Sinfì to me, and from me to Sinfì.

"So my darter Winifred's your sister now, is she?" (turning to me). "A few minutes ago she was your sweet'airt: and now she seems to ha' bin your sister. And she was your sister, too, was she?" (turning to Sinfì). "Well, all I know is, that she was my darter, Winifred Gudgeon, as is dead, and buried in the New North Cemetery, pore dear; and yet she was sister to both on ye!"

She then buried her face again in the pillows and resumed the rocking movement, shrieking between her peals of laughter: "Well, if I'm the mother of a six-fut Gypsy girl and a black-eyed chap as seems jest atween a Gypsy and a Christian, I never knowed that afore. No, I never knowed that afore! I allus said I should die a-larfin',

and so I shall; I'm a-dyin' now—ha! ha! ha!"

She fell back upon the pillow, exhausted by her own cruel merriment.

"She always said she'd die a-larfin', an' she will, too—more nor I shall ever do," said the girl, after we had gone down stairs.

"Did you notice what she said about Winnie a-callin' her Knocker?" said Sinfi.

"Yes, and couldn't understand it."

"I know what it meant. Winnie knowed all about the Knockers of Snowdon, the dwarfs o' the copper mine, and this woman, bein' so thick and short, must look ezactly like a Knocker, I should say, if you could see one."

I said to the girl, "Was she really kind to—to—"

"To her you were asking about,—the Essex Street Beauty? I should think she just was. She's a drinker, is poor Meg, and drinking in Primrose Court means starvation. Meg and the Beauty were often short enough of grub, but, drunk or sober, Meg would never touch a mouthful till the Beauty had had her fill. I noticed it many a time—not a mouthful. When Meg was obliged to send her into the streets to sell things she was always afraid that the Beauty might come to harm through the toffs and the chaps. The toffs were the worst looking after her—as they mostly are—so I was always watching her in the day-time, and at night Meg was always watching her, and that was what made me know your face, as soon as ever I clapt eyes on it."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Well, one rainy night when I was standing by the theatre door, I heard a toff ask a policeman about the Essex Street Beauty, and I thought I knew what that meant very well. So I ran off to find Meg. I had seen her watching the Beauty all the time. But lo and behold! Meg was gone and the Beauty too. So I run across here, and found Meg and the Beauty getting their supper as quiet as possible. Meg had heard the toff talking to the policeman—though I didn't know she was standing so near—and whisked her off and away as quick as lightning."

"That was I," I said. "God! God! If I had only known!"

"There's the same look now on your face as there was then, and I should know it among ten thousand."

"Polly Onion," I said, "there is my address, and it ever you want a friend, and if you are in trouble, you will know where to find assistance," and I gave her another sovereign.

"You're a good sort," said she, "and no mistake."

"Good-bye," I said, shaking her hand. "See well after Mrs. Gudgeon."

"All right," said she, and a smile broke over her face. "I think I ought to tell you now," she continued, "that Meg's no more ill of drowsy than I am; she could walk twenty miles off the reel; there ain't a bullock in England half as strong as Meg; she's shamming."

"Shamming, but why?"

"Well, she ain't drunk; ever since the Beauty died she's never touched a drop o' gin. But she's turned quite cranky. She's got it into her head that the relations of the Beauty are going to send her to prison for kidnapping; and she thinks that every one that comes near her is a policeman in plain clothes. She's just lying in bed to keep herself out of the way till she starts."

"Where's she going, then?"

"She talks about going to see after her son Bob in the country; her husband is a Welshman. He's over the water."

"Did you say she had given up drinking?"

I asked.

"Yes; she seemed to dote on the Beauty, and when the Beauty died she said, 'My darter went wrong through me drinkin', and my son Bob went wrong through me drinkin'; and I feel somehow that it was through my drinkin' that I lost the Beauty; and never will you find me touch another drop o' gin, Poll. Beer I ain't fond on, and it 'ud take a rare swill o' beer to get up as far as Meg Gudgeon's head.'"

"There ain't much fault to be found with a woman like Meg Gudgeon," said Sinfi. "Was the Beauty fond o' her? She ought to ha' bin."

"She used to call her Knocker," said the girl. "She seemed very fond of her when they were together, but seemed to forget her as soon as they were apart."

Sinfi and I then left the house.

In Great Queen Street she took my hand as if to bid me good-bye. But she stood and gazed at me wistfully, and I gazed at her. At last she said,

"An' now, brother, we'll jist go across to Kingston Vale, an' see my daddy, an' set your livin'-waggin to rights."

"Then, Sinfi," I said, "you and I are once more—"

I stopped and looked at her. The fearless young Amazon and seeress, who kept a large family of the Kaulo Camloes in awe, was supposed to have nearly conquered the feminine weakness of tears; but she had not. There was a chink in the Amazon's armour, and I had found it.

"Yis," said she, nodding her head and smiling. "You and me's right pals ag'in."

As we were going I told her I had replaced the jewel in the tomb.

"I know'd you would do it. Yis, I heer'd you telling the gravedigger the same thing."

"And yet," said I bitterly, "in spite of that and in spite of the Golden Hand, she is dead."

Sinfi stood silently looking at me now. Even her prodigious faith seemed conquered.

IV

FOR a few days I paced with Sinfi over Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park. The weather was now unusually brilliant for the time of year. Sinfi would walk silently by my side.

But I could not rest with the Gypsies. I must be alone. Soon I left the camp and returned to London, where I took a suite of rooms in a house not far from Eaton Square—though to me London was a huge meaningless maze of houses clustered around Primrose Court—that horrid, fascinating, intolerable, core of pain. Into my lungs poured the hateful atmosphere of the city where Winifred had perished; poured hot and stifling as sand-blasts of the desert. Impossible to stay there!—for the pavement seemed actually to scorch my feet, like the floor of a fiery furnace. To me the sun above was but the hideous eye of Circumstance which had stared down pitilessly on that bare head of hers, and blistered those feet.

The lamps at night seemed twinkling, blinking in a callous consciousness of my tragedy—my monstrous tragedy of real life, the like of which no poet dare imagine. But what aroused my wrath to an unbearable pitch—what determined me to leave London at once—was the sight of the unsympathetic faces in the streets. Though sympathy could have given me no comfort, the myriad unsympathetic eyes of London infuriated me.

"Died in beggar's rags—died in a hovel!" I muttered with rage as the equipages and coarse splendours of the West End rolled insolently by. "Died in a hovel! and this London, this vast, ridiculous, swarming human ant-hill, whose millions of paltry humdrum lives were not worth one breath from those lips—this London spurned her, left her to perish alone in her squalor and misery."

Cyril and Wilderspin had returned to the Continent. D'Arcy was still away.

I made application to the Home Secretary to have the pauper grave opened. On the ground that I was "not a relative of the deceased," the officials refused to institute even preliminary inquiries.

During this time no news of Mrs. Gudgeon had come to me through Polly Onion, and I determined to go to Primrose Court and see what had become of her.

When I reached Primrose Court I found that the shutters of the house were up. Knocking and getting no response, I ascertained from a pot-boy who was passing the corner of the court that Mrs. Gudgeon had decamped. Neither the pot-boy nor any one in the court could tell me whither she was gone.

"But where is Polly Onion?" I asked anxiously; for I was beginning to blame myself bitterly for having neglected them.

"I can tell you where poor Polly is," said the pot-boy. "She's in the New North Cemetery. She fell down-stairs and broke her neck."

"Why, she lived down-stairs," I said.

"That's true; you seem to be well up in the family, sir. But Poll couldn't pay her rent, so old Meg took her in. And on the very morning when Meg and Poll were a-startin' off together into the country—it was quite early and dark—Poll stumbles over three young flower gals as 'ad crep' in the front door in the night time and was makin' the stairs their bed. Gals as hadn't made enough to pay for their night's lodging often used to sleep on Meg's stairs. Poll was picked up as nigh dead as a toucher, and she died at the 'ospital."

Toiling in the revolving cage of Circumstance, I strove in vain against that most appalling form of envy—the envy of one's fellow-creatures that they should live and breathe while there is no breath of life for the *one*. My uncle Cecil's death had made me a rich man; but what was wealth to me if it could not buy me respite from the vision haunting me day and night—the vision of the attic, the mattress, and the woman?

And as I thought of the powerlessness of wealth to give me one crumb of comfort, and remembered Winnie's sermon about wealth, I would look at myself in the mirror above my mantel-piece and smile bitterly at the sight of the hollow cheeks, furrowed brow, and melancholy eyes, and recall her words about her hovering near me after she was dead.

The thought of my wealth and the squalor in which she had died was, I think, the most maddening thought of all. I had now become the possessor of Wilderspin's

picture *Faith and Love*, having bought it of the Bond Street dealer to whom it belonged; and also of the *Christabel* picture, and these I was constantly looking at as they hung up on the walls of my room. After a while, however, I destroyed the *Christabel* picture, it was too painful. Though I would not see such friends as I had, I read their letters; indeed, it was these same letters which alone could draw from me a grim smile now and then.

Almost every letter ended by urging me, in order to flee from my sorrows, to travel! With the typical John Bull travelling seems to be always the panacea. In sorrow, John's herald of peace is Baedeker: the dispenser of John's true nepenthe is Mr. Murray. Pity and love for Winifred pursued me, tortured me nigh unto death, and therefore did these friends of mine seem to suppose that I wanted to flee from my pity and sorrow! Why, to flee from my sorrow, to get free of my pity, to flee from the agonies that went nigh to tearing soul from body, would have been to flee from all that I had left of life—memory.

Did I want to flee from Winnie? Why, memory was Winnie now; and did I want to flee from *her*? And yet it was memory that was goading me on to the verge of madness. No doubt the reader thinks me a weak creature for allowing the passion of pity to sap my manhood in this fashion. But it was not so much her death as the manner of her death that withered my heart and darkened my soul. The calamities which fell upon her, grievous beyond measure, unparalleled, not to be thought of save with a pallor of cheek and a shudder of the flesh, were ever before me, mocking me—maddening me.

"Died in a hovel!" As I gave voice to this impeachment of Heaven, night after night, wandering up and down the streets, my brain was being scorched and withered by those same thoughts of anger against destiny and most awful revolt which had appalled me when first I saw how the curse of heaven or the whim of Circumstance had been fulfilled.

Then came that passionate yearning for death, which grief such as mine must needs bring. But if what Materialism teaches were true, suicide would rob me even of my memory of her. If, on the other hand, what I had been taught by the supernaturalism of my ancestors were true, to commit suicide might be but to play finally into the hands of that same unknown pitiless power with whom my love had all along been striving.

"Suicide might sever my soul from hers for ever," I said, and then the tragedy would

seem too monstrously unjust to be true, and I said: "It cannot be—such things cannot be: it is a hideous dream. She is not dead! She is in Wales with friends at Carnarvon, and I shall awaken and laugh at all this imaginary woe!"

And what were now my feelings towards the memory of my father? Can a man cherish in his heart at one and the same moment scorn of another man for believing in the efficacy of a curse, and bitter anger against him for having left a curse behind him? He can! On my return to London after my illness I had sent back to Wilderspin the copy of *The Veiled Queen* he had lent me. But from the library of Raxton Hall I brought my father's own copy, elaborately bound in the tooled black calf my father affected. The very sight of that black binding now irritated me; never did I pass it without experiencing a sensation that seemed a blending of scorn and fear: scorn of the ancestral superstitions the book gave voice to: fear of them.

One day I took the book from the shelves and then hurled it across the room. Stumbling over it some days after this, a spasm of ungovernable rage came upon me, for terribly was my blood struggling with Fenella Stanley and Philip Aylwin, and thousands of ancestors, Romany and Gorgio, who for ages upon ages had been shaping my destiny. I began to tear out the leaves and throw them on the fire. But suddenly I perceived the leaves to be covered with marginalia in my father's manuscript, and with references to Fenella Stanley's letters—letters which my father seemed to have studied as deeply as though they were the writings of a great philosopher instead of the scribbings of an ignorant Gypsy. My eye had caught certain written words which caused me to clutch at the sheets still burning on the fire. Too late!—I grasped nothing save a little paper-ash. Then I turned to the pages still left in my hand, and read these words of my father's:

"These marginalia are written for the eyes of my dear son, into whose hands this copy of my book will come. Until he gave me his promise to bury the amulet with me, I felt alone in the world. But even he failed to understand what he called 'my superstition.' He did not know that by perpetually feeling on my bosom the facets of the beloved jewel which had long lain warm upon hers—the cross which had received the last kiss from her lips—I had been able to focus all the scattered rays of thought—I had been able to vitalize memory till it became an actual presence. He did not know that out of my sorrow had been born at last a strange

kind of happiness—the happiness that springs from loving a memory—living with a memory—till it becomes a presence—an objective reality. He did not know that, by holding her continually in my thoughts, by means of the amulet, I achieved at last the miracle described by the Hindoo poets—the miracle of reshaping from the undulations of ‘the three regions of the universe the remembered object by the all-creative magic of love!’”

Then followed some translations from the Kumârasambhava and other Sanscrit poems, and then the well-known passage in Lucretius about dreams, and then a pathetic account of the visions called up within him by the sensation caused by the lacerations of the facets of the cherished amulet upon his bosom—visions something akin, as I imagine, to those experienced by *convulsionnaires*. And then after all this learning came references to poor ignorant Fenella Stanley's letters and extracts from them.

In one of these extracts I was startled to come upon the now familiar word *crwth*.

“De Welch fok ses as de livin mullos only follow the *crwth* on Snowden wen it is playde by a Welch Chavi, but dat is all a lie. Dey follows the *crwth* when a Romany Chi plays it, as I nows very wel, but de chavi wot play on the *crwth*, shee must love the living mullo she want for to come, and de living mullo must love her.”

And then followed my father's comments on the extract.

“N.B.—To see and hear a *crwth*, if possible, and ascertain the true nature of the vibrations: But there are said to be only a few *crwths* in existence; and very likely there is no musician who could play upon them.”

Then followed a few sentences written at a later date.

“The *crwth* is now becoming obsolete; on inquiry I learn that it is a stringed instrument played with a bow like a violin; but as one of the feet of the bridge passes through one of the sound-holes and rests on the inside of the back, the vibrations must be quite unique, if we remember how important a part is played by the back in all instruments of the violin kind. It must be far more subtle than the vibrations of the Welsh harp, and even more subtle (if also more nasal) than those of the violin.

“The reason why music has in all ages been called in to aid in evoking the spirits,

the reason why it is as potent now as ever it was in aiding the spirits to manifest themselves, is simple enough: the rhythmic vibrations of music set in active motion the magnetic waves through whose means alone the two worlds, spiritual and material, can hold communication. The quality and the value of these vibrations depend mainly, no doubt, upon the magnetic power, conscious or other, of the musician, but partly also upon the kind of instrument used. The vibrations awakened by stringed instruments have been long known to be more subtle than any others: instruments of the violin kind are of course the most subtle of all. Doubtless this is why among the Welsh hills the old saying used to be ‘The spirits follow the *crwth*.’”

“Which folly is the more besotted,” I said as I read and re-read the marginalia—“that of the scholar with his scientific nonsense about vibrations, or that of the ignorant Gypsy with her livin' mullos drawn through the air by music and love?”

But from this moment my mind began to run upon the picture of Fenella Stanley, surrounded by those Snowdonian spirits which her music was supposed to have evoked from the mountain air of the morning.

XIII

The Magic of Snowdon

I

In a few days I left London and went to North Wales.

Opposite to me in the railway carriage sat an elderly lady, into whose face I occasionally felt myself to be staring in an unconscious way. But I was merely communing with myself: I was saying to myself, “My love of North Wales, and especially of Snowdon, is certainly very strong; but it is easily accounted for—it is a matter of temperament. Even had Wales not been associated with Winnie, I still must have dearly loved it. Much has been said about the effect of scenery upon the minds and temperaments

of those who are native to it. But temperament is a matter of ancestral conditions: the place of one's birth is an accident. As some, like my cousin Percy, for instance, are born with a passion for the sea, so some people are born with a passion for forests, some with a passion for mountains, and some with a passion for rolling plains. The landscape amid which I was born had, no doubt, charm for me, and could bring to me that nature-ecstasy which I inherited from Fenella Stanley. But with Wales I actually fell in love the moment I set foot in the country. This is why I am hurrying there now."

And then I laughed at myself, and evidently frightened the old lady very much. She did not know that underneath the soul's direst struggle—the struggle of personality with the tyranny of the ancestral blood—there is an awful sense of humour—a laughter (unconquerable, and yet intolerable) at the deepest of all incongruities, the incongruity of Fate's game with man. I apologised to her, and told her that I had been absorbed in reading a droll story, in which a man believed that the Angel of Memory had refashioned for him his dead wife out of his own sorrow and unquenchable fountain of tears.

"What an extraordinary idea!" said the old lady, in the conciliatory tone she would have adopted towards a madman whom she found alone with her in a railway carriage. "I mean he was very eccentric, wasn't he?"

"Who shall say, madam? 'Bold is the donkey-driver and bold the ka'dee who dares say what he will believe, what disbelieve, not knowing in any wise the mind of Allah, not knowing in any wise his own heart and what it shall some day suffer.'"

At the next station the old lady left the carriage and entered another, and I was left alone.

My intention was to take up my residence at the cottage where Winifred had lived with her aunt. Indeed, for a few days I did this, taking with me one of the Welsh peasants with whom I had previously made friends. But of course a lengthened stay in such a house was impossible. More than ever now I needed attendance, and good attendance, for I had passed into a strange state of irritability—I had no command over my nerves, which were jarred by the most trifling thing. I went to the hotel at Pen y Gwryd, but there tourists and visitors made life more intolerable still to a man in my condition.

At first I thought of building a house as near to the cottage as possible; but this would take time, and I could not rest out of Wales. I decided at last to have a wooden

bungalow built. By telling the builders that time was the first consideration with me, the cost a secondary one, I got a bungalow built in a few weeks. By the tradesmen of Chester I got it fitted up and furnished to my taste with equal rapidity. Attending to this business gave real relief.

When the bungalow was finished I removed into it the picture "Faith and Love." I also got in as much painting material as I might want and began to make sketches in the neighbourhood.

Time went on, and there I remained. In a great degree, however, the habit of grieving was conquered by my application to work. My moroseness of temper gradually left me.

Beautiful memories began to take the place of hideous ones—the picture of the mattress and the squalor gave place to pictures of Winifred on the sands of Raxton or on Snowdon. Yet so much of habit is there in grief that even at this time I was subject to recurrent waves of the old pain—waves which were sometimes as overmastering as ever.

I did not neglect the cottage, which was now my property, but kept it in exactly the same state as that in which it had been put by Sinf after Winnie had wandered back to Wales.

By isolating myself from all society, by surrounding myself with mementoes of Winifred, memory really did at last seem to be working a miracle such as was worked for the widowed Ja'afar.

Yet not entirely had memory passed into an objective presence. I seemed to feel Winnie near me; but that was all. I felt that more necessary than anything else in perfecting the atmosphere of memory in which I would live was the society of her in whom alone I had found sympathy—Sinf Lovell. Did I also remember the wild theories of my father and Fenella Stanley about the crwth? To obtain the company of Sinf had now become very difficult—her attitude towards me had so changed. When she allowed me to rejoin the Lovells at Kingston Vale she did so under the compulsion of my distress. But my leaving the Gypsies of my own accord left her free from this compulsion. She felt that she had now at last bidden me farewell for ever.

Still, opportunities of seeing her occasionally would, I knew, present themselves, and I now determined to avail myself of these. Paniel Lovell and some of the Boswells were not unfrequently in the neighbourhood, and they were always accompanied by Sinf and Videy.

II

ON a certain occasion, when I learnt that the Lovells were in the neighbourhood, I sought them out. Sinfi at first was extremely shy, or distant, or proud, or scared, and it was not till after one or two interviews that she relaxed. She still was overshadowed by some mysterious feeling towards me that seemed at one moment anger, at another dread. However, I succeeded at last. I persuaded Panuel and his daughters to leave their friends at "the Place," and spend a few days with me at the bungalow. Great was the gaping and wide the grinning among the tourists to see me marching along the Capel Curig road with three Gypsies. But to all human opinion I had become as indifferent as Wilderspin himself.

As we walked along the road, Sinfi slowly warmed into her old self, but Videy, as usual, was silent, preoccupied, and meditative. When we got within sight of the bungalow, however, the lights flashing from the windows made the long low building look very imposing. Pharaoh, the bantam cock which Sinfi was carrying, began to crow, but silence again fell upon Sinfi.

Panuel, when we entered the bungalow, said he was very tired and would like to go to bed. I had perceived by the glossy appearance of his skin (which was of the colour of beeswaxed mahogany) and the benevolent dimple in his cheek that, although far from being intoxicated, he was "market-merry"; and as the two sisters also seemed tired, I took the party at once to their bedrooms.

"Dordi! what a gran' room," said Sinfi in a hushed voice, as I opened the door of the one allotted to her. "Don't you mind, Videy, when you an' me fust slep' like two kairengros?"*

"No, I don't," said Videy sharply.

"It was at Llangollen Fair," continued Sinfi, her frank face beaming like a great child's; "two little chavies we was then. An' don't you mind, Videy, how we both on us cried when they put us to bed, 'cause we was afeared the ceilin' would fall down on us?"

Videy made no answer, but tossed up her head and looked around to see whether there was a grinning servant within earshot.

"Good night, Sinfi," I said, shaking her hand: "and now, Videy, I will show you your room."

"Oh, but Videy an' me sleeps together, don't we?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," I replied.

"She's afeard o' the 'mullos'," said Videy, scornfully, as she went and stood before an old engraved Venetian mirror I had picked up at Chester, admiring her own perfect little figure reflected therein. "Ever since she's know'd you she's bin afeard o' mullos, and keeps Pharaoh with her o' nights; the mullos never come where there's a crowin' cock."

I did not look at Sinfi, but bent my eyes upon the mirror, where, several inches above the reflex of Videy's sarcastic face, shone the features of Sinfi, perfectly cut as those of a Greek statue.

"It's the dukkerin' dook* as she's afeared on," said Videy, smiling in the glass till her face seemed one wicked glitter of scarlet lips and pearly teeth. "An' yit there ain't no dukkerin' dook, an' there ain't no mullos."

Among the elaborately-engraved flowers and stars at the top of the mirror was the representation of an angel grasping a musical instrument.

"Look, look!" said Sinfi, "I never know'd afore that angels played the crwth. I wonder whether they can draw a livin' mullo up to the clouds, same as my crwth can draw one to Snowdon?"

I bade them good-night, and joined Panuel at the door.

I was conducting him along the corridor to his room when the door was re-opened and Sinfi's head appeared, as bright as ever, and then a beckoning hand.

"Reia," said she, when I had returned to the door, "I want to whisper a word in your ear;" and she pulled my head towards the door and whispered, "Don't tell nobody about that 'ere jewelled trûshul in the church vaults at Raxton. We shall be going down there at the fair time, so don't tell nobody."

"But you surely are not afraid of your father," I whispered in reply.

"No, no," said she, bringing her lips so close to my face that I felt the breath steaming round my ear. "Not daddy—Videy!—Daddy can't keep a secret for five minutes. It's her I'm afeared on."

I had scarcely left the door two yards behind me when I heard the voices of the sisters in loud altercation. I heard Sinfi exclaim, "I sha'n't tell you what I said to him, so now! It was somethin' atween him an' me."

"There they are ag'in," said Panuel, bending his head sagely round and pointing with his thumb over his shoulder to the door; "at it ag'in! Them two chavies o' mine are allus a-quarrellin' now, an' it's allus about the

* House-dwellers.

* The prophesying ghost.

same thing. 'Tain't the quarrellin' as I mind so much,—women an' sparrows, they say, must cherrup an' quarrel,—but they needn't allus keep a-nag-naggin' about the same thing."

"What's their subject, Panuel?" I asked.

"Subjick? Why *you*, in course. That's what the subjick is. When women quarrels you may allus be sure there's a chap somewheres about."

By this time we had entered his bedroom: he went and sat upon the bed, and without looking round him began unlacing his "highlows." I had often on previous occasions remarked that Panuel, who, when sober, was as silent as Videy, and looked like her in the face, became, the moment that he had passed into "market-merriness," as frank and communicative as Sinf, and (what was more inexplicable) looked as much like Sinf as he had previously looked like Videy.

"How can I be the subject of their quarrels?" I said listlessly enough, for I scarcely at first followed his words.

"How? Ain't you a chap?"

"Undoubtedly, Panuel, I am a chap."

"When women quarrels there's allus a chap somewheres about, in course there is. But look ye here, Mr. Aylwin, the fault ain't Sinf's, not a bit of it. It's Videy's, wi' her dog-in-the-manger ways. She's a back-bred 'un," he said, giving me a knowing wink as he pulled off his calf-skin waistcoat and tossed it on to a chair at the further end of the room with a certainty of aim that would have been marvellous, even had he been entirely free from market-merriness.

I had before observed that Panuel when market-merry always designated Videy the "back-bred 'un," that took a'ter Shuri's blazin' ole dad! when sober his views of heredity changed; the "back-bred 'un" was Sinf.

After breakfast next morning it was agreed that Panuel and Videy should walk to the Place to see that everything was going on well, while Sinf and I should remain in the bungalow. I observed from the distance that Videy had loitered behind her father on the Capel Curig road. I saw a dark shadow of anger pass over Sinf's face, and I soon understood what was causing it. The daughter of the well-to-do Panuel Lovell and my guest was accosting a tourist with, "Let me tell you your fortune, my pretty gentleman. Give the poor Gypsy a sixpence for luck, my gentleman."

The bungalow delighted Sinf. "It's just like a great livin' waggin, only more comfortable," said she.

We spent the entire morning and afternoon there, and much of the next two days. It certainly seemed to me that her mere presence was an immense stimulus to memory in vitalising its one image.

"What's the use o' us a-keepin' a-talkin' about Winnie?" Sinf said to me one day. "It on'y makes you fret. You skears me sometimes; for your eyes are a-gettin' jis' as sad-lookin' as Mr. D'Arcy's eyes, an' it's all along o' frettin'."

I persuaded her to stay with me while Panuel and Videy went on to Chester, for she could both soothe and amuse me.

III

THOSE who might suppose that Sinf Lovell's lack of education would be a barrier against our sympathy, know little or nothing of real sorrow—little or nothing of the human heart—little or nothing of the stricken soul that looks out on man and his conventions through the light of an intolerable pain.

I now began to read and study as well as paint. But so absorbed was I in my struggle with Fenella Stanley and Romany superstitions, that the only subject which could distract me from memory was that of hereditary influence—prepotency of transmission in relation to races. Though Sinf could neither read nor write, she loved to sit by my side and, caressing Pharaoh, to watch me as I read or wrote. To her there evidently seemed something mysterious and uncanny in writing, something like "penning dukkering." It seemed to her, I think, a much more remarkable accomplishment than that of painting. And as to reading, I am not sure that the satirical Videy was entirely wrong in saying that Sinf believed that books "could talk jis' like men and women." Not a word would she speak, save when she now and then bent down her head to whisper to Pharaoh when that little warrior was inclined to give a disturbing chuckle, or to shake his wattles. And when at last she and Pharaoh got wearied by the prolonged silence, she would begin to murmur in a tone of playful satire to the restless bird, "Mum, mum, Pharaoh. He's too boot of a mush to rocker a choori chavi." [Hush, hush, Pharaoh. He's too proud to speak to a poor child.]

Of course there was immense curiosity about my life at the bungalow, not only among the visitors at the Capel Curig Hotel, but among the Welsh residents; and rarely did the weekly papers come out without some paragraph about me. As a result of

this, some of the London papers reproduced the paragraphs, and built upon their gossip columns of a positively offensive nature. In a paper which I will for convenience call the *London Satirist* appeared a paragraph which some one cut out of the columns of the paper and posted to me. It ran thus :

“THE ECCENTRIC AYLWINS. — The power of heredity, which has much exercised the mind of Balzac, has never been more strikingly exemplified than in the case of the great family of the Aylwins. It is a matter of common knowledge that some generations ago one of the Aylwins married a Gypsy. This fact did not, however, prevent his branch from being respectable, and receiving the name of the proud Aylwins ; and the Gypsy blood remained entirely in abeyance until the present generation. Mr. Percy Aylwin, it will be remembered, having been smitten by the charms of a certain Rhona Boswell, actually set up a tent with the Gypsies ; and now Mr. Henry Aylwin, of Raxton Hall (who, by the bye, has never been seen in that neighbourhood since the great landslip), is said to be following a good example by living in Wales with a Gypsy wife, but whether the wedding took place at St. George's, Hanover Square, or in simpler fashion in an encampment of Little Egypt, we do not know.”

One day in the bungalow, when I was reading the copious marginalia with which my father had furnished his own copy of *The Veiled Queen*, I came upon a passage which so completely carried my mind back to the night of our betrothal that I heard as plainly as I had then heard Winnie's words at the door of her father's cottage :

“I should have to come in the winds and play around you in the woods. I should have to peep over the clouds and watch you. I should have to follow you about wherever you went. I should have to beset you till you said : ‘Bother Winnie, I wish she'd keep in heaven !’”

The written words of my father that had worked this magical effect upon me were these :

“But after months of these lonely wanderings in Graylingham Wood and along the sands, not even the reshaping power of memory would suffice to appease my longing ; a new hope, wild as new, was breaking in upon my soul, dim and yet golden, like the sun struggling through a sea-fog. While wandering with me along the sands on the

eve of that dreadful day when I lost her, she had declared that even in heaven she could not rest without me, nor did I understand how she could. For by this time my instincts had fully taught me that there is a kind of love so intense that no power in the universe—not death itself—is strong enough to sever it from its object. I knew that although true spiritual love, as thus understood, scarcely exists among Englishmen, and even among Englishwomen is so rare that the capacity for feeling it is a kind of genius, this genius was hers. Sooner or later I said to myself, ‘She will and must manifest herself !’”

I looked up from the book and saw both Sinfi and Pharaoh gazing at me.

“Sinfi.” I said, “what were Winnie's favourite places among the hills? Where was she most in the habit of roaming when she stayed with your people?”

“If I ain't told you that often enough it's a pity, brother,” she said. “What do *you* think, Pharaoh?”

Pharaoh expressed his acquiescence in the satire by clapping his wings and crowing at me contemptuously.

“The place I think she liked most of all wur that very pool where she and you breakfasted together on that morning.”

“Were there no other favourite places?”

“Yes, there wur the Fairy Glen ; she wur very fond of that. And there wur the Swallow Falls ; she wur very fond of them. And there wur a place on the Beddgelert pathway, up from the Carnarvon road, about two miles from Beddgelert. There is a great bit of rock there where she used to love to sit and look across towards Anglesey. And talking about that place reminds me, brother, that our people and the Boswells and a lot more are camped on the Carnarvon road just where the pathway up Snowdon begins. And I wur told yesterday by a 'quaintance of mine as I seed outside the bungalow that daddy and Videy had joined 'em. Shouldn't we go and see 'em?”

This exactly fitted in with the thoughts and projects that had suddenly come to me, and it was arranged that we should start for the encampment next morning.

As we were leaving the bungalow the next day, I said to Sinfi, “You are not taking your crwth.”

“Crwth ! we sha'n't want that.”

“Your people are very fond of music, you know. Your father is very fond of a musical tea.”

“So he is. I'll take it,” said Sinfi.

IV

WHEN we reached the camping place on the Carnarvon road we found a very jolly party. Panuel had had some very successful dealings, and he was slightly market-merry. He said to Videy, "Make the tea, Vi, and let Sinfi hev' hern fust, so that she can play on the Welsh fiddle while the rest on us are getting oun. It'll seem jist like Chester Fair with Jim Burton scrapin' in the dancin' booth to heel and toe."

Sinfi soon finished her tea, and began to play some merry dancing airs, which set Rhona Boswell's limbs twittering till she spilt her tea in her lap. Then, laughing at the catastrophe, she sprang up saying, "I'll dance myself dry," and began dancing on the sward.

After tea was over the party got too boisterous for Sinfi's taste, and she said to me, "Let's slip away, brother, and go up the pathway, and I'll show you Winnie's favourite place."

This proposal met my wishes entirely, and under the pretence of going to look at something on the Carnarvon road we managed to escape from the party, Sinfi still carrying her crwth and bow. She then led the way up a slope green with grass and moss. We did not talk till we had passed the slate quarry.

The evening was so fine and the scene was so lovely that Sinfi's very body seemed to drink it in and become intoxicated with beauty. After we had left the slate quarries behind, the panorama became more entrancing at every yard we walked. Cwellyn Lake and Valley, Moel Hebog, y Garnedd, the glittering sea, Anglesey, Holyhead Hill, all seemed to be growing in gold and glory out of masses of sunset mist.

When at last we reached the edge of a steep cliff, with the rocky forehead of Snowdon in front, and the shining llyns of Cwm y Clogwyn below, Sinfi stopped.

"This is the place," said she, sitting down on a mossy mound, "where Winnie loved to come and look down."

After Sinfi and I had sat on this mound for a few minutes, I asked her to sing and play one or two Welsh airs which I knew to be especial favourites of hers, and then, with much hesitancy, I asked her to play and sing the same song or incantation which had become associated for ever with my first morning on the hills.

"You mean the Welsh dukkerin' gillie," said Sinfi, looking, with an expression that might have been either alarm or suspicion, into my face.

"Yes."

"You've been a-thinkin' all this while, brother, that I don't know why you asked me about Winnie's favourite places on Snowdon, and why you wanted me to take my crwth to the camp. But I've been a-thinkin' about it, and I know now why you did, and I know why you wants me to play the Welsh dukkerin' gillie here. It's because you heerd me say that if I wur to play that dukkerin' gillie on Snowdon in the places she was fond on, I could tell for sartin whether Winnie wur alive or dead. If she wur alive her livin' mullo 'ud follow the crwth. But I ain't a-goin' to do it."

"Why not, Sinfi?"

"Because my mammy used to say it ain't right to make use o' the real dukkerin' for Gorgios, and I've heerd her say that if them as had the real dukkerin'—the dukkerin' for the Romanies—used it for the Gorgios, or if they turned it into a sport and a plaything, it 'ud leave 'em altogether. And that ain't the wust on it, for when the real dukkerin' leaves you it turns into a kind of a cuss, and it brings on the bite of the Romany Sap.* Even now, Hal, I sometimes o' nights feels the bite here of the Romany Sap," pointing to her bosom, "and it's all along o' you, Hal, it's all along o' you, because I seem to be breaking the promise about Gorgios I made to my poor mammy."

"The Romany Sap? You mean the Romany conscience, I suppose, Sinfi; you mean the trouble a Romany feels when he has broken the Romany laws, when he has done wrong according to the Romany notions of right and wrong. But you are innocent of all wrong-doing."

"I don't know nothin' about conscience," said she. "I mean the Romany Sap. Don't you mind when we was a-goin' up Snowdon arter Winifred that mornin'? I told you as the rocks, an' the trees, an' the winds, an' the waters, cuss us when we goes ag'in the Romany blood an' ag'in the dukkerin' dook. The cuss that the rocks, an' the trees, an' the winds, an' the waters makes, an' sends it out to bite the burk † o' the Romany as does wrong—that's the Romany Sap."

"You mean conscience, Sinfi."

"No, I don't mean nothink o' the sort; the Romanies ain't got no conscience, an' if the Gorgios has, it's precious little good as it does 'em, as far as I can see. But the Romanies has got the Romany Sap. Everything wrong as you does, such as killin' a Romany, or cheatin' a Romany, or playin' the lubbany with a Gorgio, or breakin' your

* The Romany serpent, Conscience.

† Breast.

oath to your mammy as is dead, or goin' ag'in the dukkerin' dook, an' sich like, every one o' these things turns into the Romany Sap."

"You're speaking of conscience, Sinfi."

"Every one o' them wrong things as you does seems to make out o' the burk o' the airth a sap o' its own as has got its own pertickler stare, but allus it's a hungry sap, Hal, an' a sap wi' bloody fangs. An' it's a sap as follows the bad un's feet, Hal—follows the bad un's feet wheresomever they goes; it's a sap as goes slippin' thro' the dew's o' the grass on the brightest mornin', an' dodges round the trees in the sweetest evenin', an' goes wriggle, wriggle across the brook jis' when you wants to enjoy yourself, jis' when you wants to stay a bit on the steppin' stuns to enjoy the sight o' the dear little minnows a-shootin' atween the water-creases. That's what the Romany Sap is."

"Don't talk like that, Sinfi," I said; "you make me feel the sap myself."

"It's a sap, Hal, as follows you everywhere, everywhere, till you feel as you must stop an' face it whatever comes; an' stop you do at last, an' turn round you must, an' bare your burk you must to the sharp teeth o' that air wemenous sap."

"Well, and what then, Sinfi?"

"Well then, when you ha' given up to the thing its fill o' your blood, then the trees, an' the rocks, an' the winds, an' the waters seem to know, for everythink seems to begin smilin' ag'in, an' you're let to go on your way till you do somethin' bad ag'in. That's the Romany Sap, Hal, an' I won't deny as I sometimes feel its bite pretty hard here" (pointing to her breast) "when I thinks what I promised my poor mammy, an' how I kep' my word to her, when I let a Gorgio come under our tents."*

"You don't mean," I said, "that it is a real flesh-and-blood sap, but a sap that you think you see and feel?"

"Hal," said Sinfi, "a Romany's feelin's ain't like a Gorgio's. A Romany can feel the bite of a sap whether it's made o' flesh an' blood or not, and the Romany Sap's all the wuss for not bein' a flesh-and-blood sap, for it's a cuss hatched in the airth; it's everythink a-cussin' on ye—the airth, an' the sky, an' the dukkerin' dook."

Her manner was so solemn, her grand simplicity was so pathetic, that I felt I could not urge her to do what her conscience told her was wrong. But soon that which no

persuasion of mine would have effected the grief and disappointment expressed by my face achieved.

"Hal," she said, "I sometimes feel as if I'd bear the bite o' all the Romany saps as ever wur hatched to give you a little comfort. Besides, it's for a true Romany arter all—it's for myself quite as much as for you that I'm a-goin' to see whether Winnie is alive or dead. If she's dead we sha'n't see nothink, and perhaps if she's in one o' them fits o' hern we sha'n't see nothink; but if she's alive and herself ag'in, I believe I shall see—p'raps we shall both see—her livin' mullo."

She then drew her bow across the crwth. The instrument at first seemed to chatter with her agitation. I waited in breathless suspense. At last there came clearly from her crwth the wild air I had already heard on Snowdon. Then the sound of the instrument ceased save for the drone of the two bottom strings, and Sinfi's voice leapt out and I heard the words of what she called the Welsh dukkerin' gillie.

As I listened and looked over the wide-stretching panorama before me, I felt my very flesh answering to every vibration; and when the song stopped and I suddenly heard Sinfi call out, "Look, brother!" I felt that my own being, physical and mental, had passed into a new phase, and that resistance to some mighty power governing my blood was impossible.

"Look straight afore you, brother, and you'll see Winnie's face. She's alive, brother, and the dukkeripen of the Golden Hand will come true, and mine will come true. Oh, mammy, mammy!"

At first I saw nothing, but after awhile two blue eyes seemed gazing at me as through a veil of evening haze. They were looking straight at me, those beloved eyes—they were sparkling with childish happiness as they had sparkled through the vapours of the pool when she walked towards me that morning on the brink of Knockers' Llyn.

Starting up and throwing up my arms, I cried, "My darling!" The vision vanished. Then turning round, I looked at Sinfi. She seemed listening to a voice I could not hear—her face was pale with emotion. I could hear her breath coming and going heavily; her bosom rose and fell, and the necklace of coral and gold coins around her throat trembled like a shuddering snake while she murmured, "My dukkeripen! Yes, mammy, I've gone agin you and broke my promise, and this is the very Gorgio as you meant."

"Call the vision back," I said; "play the air again, dear Sinfi."

She sprang in front of me, and seizing one of my wrists, she gazed in my face, and said,

* To prevent misconceptions, it may be well to say that the paraphrase of Sinfi's description of the "Romany Sap," which appeared in the writer's reminiscences of George Borrow, was written long after the main portion of the present narrative.

"Yes, it's 'dear Sinfi!' You wants dear Sinfi to fiddle the Gorgie's livin' mullo back to you."

I looked into the dark eyes, lately so kind. I did not know them. They were dilated and grown red-brown in hue, like the scorched colour of a North African lion's mane, and along the eyelashes a phosphorescent light seemed to play. What did it mean? Was it indeed Sinfi standing there, rigid as a column, with a clenched brown fist drawn up to the broad, heaving breast, till the knuckles shone white, as if about to strike me? What made her throw out her arms as if struggling desperately with the air, or with some unseen foe who was binding her with chains?

I stood astounded, watching her, as she gradually calmed down and became herself again; but I was deeply perplexed and deeply troubled.

After a while she said, "Let's go back to 'the Place,'" and without waiting for my acquiescence, she strode along down the path towards Beddgelert.

I was quickly by her side, but felt as little in the mood for talking as she did. Suddenly a small lizard glided from the grass.

"The Romany Sap!" cried Sinfi, and she—the fearless woman before whom the stoutest Gypsy men had quailed—sobbed wildly in terror. She soon recovered herself, and said: "What a fool you must think me, Hal! It wur all through talkin' about the Romany Sap. At fust I thought it wur the Romany Sap itself, an' it wur only a poor little effert arter all. There ain't a-many things made o' flesh and blood as can make Sinfi Lovell show the white feather; but I know you'll think the wuss o' me arter this, Hal. But while the pictur wur a-showin' I heard my dear mammy's whisper: 'Little Sinfi, little Sinfi, beware o' Gorgios! This is the one.'"

V

By the time we reached the encampment it was quite dark. Panuel, and indeed most of the Gypsies, had turned into the tents for the night; but both Videy Lovell and Rhona Boswell were moving about as briskly as though the time was early morning, one with guile expressed in every feature, the other shedding that aura of frankness and sweet winsomeness which enslaved Percy Aylwin, and no wonder.

Rhona was in a specially playful mood, and came dancing round us more like a

child of six than a young woman with a Romany Rye for a lover.

But neither Sinfi nor I was in the mood for frolic. My living-waggon, which still went about wherever the Lovells went, had been carefully prepared for me by Rhona, and I at once went into it, not with the idea of getting much sleep, but in order to be alone with my thoughts. What was I to think of my experiences of that evening? Was I really to take the spectacle that had seemed to fall upon my eyes when listening to Sinfi's crwth, or rather when listening to her song, as evidence that Winifred was alive? Oh, if I could, if I could! Was I really to accept as true this fantastic superstition about the crwth and the spirits of Snowdon and the "living mullo"? That was too monstrous a thought even for me to entertain. Notwithstanding all that had passed in the long and dire struggle between my reason and the mysticism inherited with the blood of two lines of superstitious ancestors, which circumstances had conspired to foster, my reason had only been baffled and thwarted; it had not really been slain.

What, then, could be the explanation of the spectacle that had seemed to fall upon my eyes? "It is hallucination," I said, "and it is the result of two very powerful causes—my own strong imagination, excited to a state of feverish exaltation by the long strain of my suffering, and that power in Sinfi which D'Arcy had described as her 'half-unconscious power as a mesmerist.' At a moment when my will, weakened by sorrow and pain, lay prostrate beneath my own fevered imagination, Sinfi's voice, so full of intense belief in her own hallucination, had leapt, as it were, into my consciousness and enslaved my imagination, which in turn had enslaved my will and my senses."

For hours I argued this point with myself, and I ended by coming to the conclusion that it was "my mind's eye" alone that saw the picture of Winifred.

But there was also another question to confront. What was the cause of Sinfi's astonishing emotion after the vision vanished? Such a mingling of warring passions I had never seen before. I tried to account for it. I thought about it for hours, and finally fell asleep without finding any solution of the enigma.

I had no conversation of a private nature with Sinfi until the next evening, when the camp was on the move.

"You had no sleep last night, Sinfi, I can see it by the dark circles round your eyes."

"That's nuther here nor there, brother," she said.

I found to my surprise that the Gypsies were preparing to remove the camp to a place not far from Bettws y Coed. I suggested to Sinfî that we two should return to the bungalow. But she told me that her stay there had come to an end. The firmness with which she made this announcement made me sure that there was no appeal.

"Then," said I, "my living-waggon will come into use again. The camping place is near some of the best trout streams in the neighbourhood, and I sadly want some trout-fishing."

"We part company to-day, brother," she said. "We can't be pals no more—never no more."

"Sister, I will not be parted from you; I shall follow you."

"Reia—Hal Aylwin—you knows very well that any man, Gorgio or Romany, as followed Sinfî Lovell when she told him not, 'ud ketch a body-blow as wouldn't leave him three hull ribs, nor a 'ounce o' wind to bless hisself with."

"But I am now one of the Lovells, and I shall go with you. I am a Romany myself—I mean I am becoming more and more of a Romany every day and every hour. The blood of Fenella Stanley is in us both."

She looked at me, evidently astonished at the earnestness and the energy of my tone. Indeed at that moment I felt an alien among Gorgios.

"I am now one of the Lovells," I said, "and I shall go with you."

"We part company to-night, brother, fare ye well," she said.

As she stood delivering this speech—her head erect, her eyes flashing angrily at me, her brown fists tightly clenched, I knew that further resistance would be futile.

"But now I wants to be left alone," she said.

She bent her head forward in a listening attitude, and I heard her murmur, "I knowed it 'ud come ag'in. A Romany sperrit likes to come up in the evenin' and smell the heather an' see the shinin' stars come out."

While she was speaking, she began to move off between the trees. But she turned, took hold of both my hands, and gazed into my eyes. Then she moved away again, and I was beginning to follow her. She turned and said: "Don't follow me. There ain't no place for ye among the Romanies. Go the ways o' the Gorgios, Hal Aylwin, an' let Sinfî Lovell go hern."

As I leaned against a tree and watched Sinfî striding through the grass till she passed out of sight, the entire panorama of my life passed before me.

"She has left me with a blessing after all," I said; "my poor Sinfî has taught me the lesson that he who would fain be cured of the disease of a wasting sorrow must burn to ashes Memory. He must flee Memory and never look back."

VI

AND did I flee Memory? When I re-entered the bungalow next day it was my intention to leave it and Wales at once and for ever, and indeed to leave England at once—perhaps for ever, in order to escape from the unmanaging effect of the sorrowful brooding which I knew had become a habit. "I will now," I said, "try the nepenthe that all my friends in their letters are urging me to try—I will travel. Yes, I will go to Japan. My late experiences should teach me that Ja'afar's 'Angel of Memory,' who refashioned for him his dead wife out of his own sorrow and tears, did him an ill service. He who would fain be cured of the disease of the wasting sorrow should try to flee the 'Angel of Memory,' and never look back."

And so fixed was my mind upon travelling that I wrote to several of my friends, and told them of my intention. But I need scarcely say that as I urged them to keep the matter secret it was talked about far and wide. Indeed, as I afterwards found to my cost, there were paragraphs in the newspapers stating that the eccentric amateur painter and heir of one branch of the Aylwins had at last gone to Japan and that as his deep interest in a certain charming beauty of an un-English type was proverbial, it was expected that he would return with a Japanese, or perhaps a Chinese wife.

But I did not go to Japan; and what prevented me?

My reason told me that what I had just seen near Beddgelert was an optical illusion. I had become very learned on the subject of optical illusions ever since I had known Sinfî Lovell, and especially since I had seen that picture of Winnie in the water near Bettws y Coed, which I have described in an earlier chapter. Every book I could get upon optical illusions I had read, and I was astonished to find how many instances are on record of illusions of a much more powerful kind than mine.

And yet I could not leave Snowdon. The mountain's very breath grew sweeter and sweeter of Winnie's lips. As I walked about the hills I found myself repeating over and over again one of the verses which

Winnie used to sing to me as a child at Raxton.

Eryri fynyddig i mi,
Bro dawel y delyn yw,
Lle mae'r defaid a'r wyn,
Yn y mwswg a'r brwyn,
Am cân inau'n esgyn i fyny,
A'r gareg yn ateb i fyny, i fyny,
O'r lle bu'r eryrod yn byw."*

But then I felt that Sinfi was the mere instrument of the mysterious magic of y Wyddfa, that magic which no other mountain in Europe exercises. I knew that among all the Gypsies Sinfi was almost the only one who possessed that power which belonged once to her race, that power which is expressed in a Scottish word now universally misused, "glamour," the power which Johnnie Faa and his people brought into play when they abducted Lady Casilis.

Soon as they saw her well-faured face
They cast the glamour oure her.

"Yes," I said, "I am convinced that my illusion is the result of two causes, my own brooding over Winnie's tragedy and the glamour that Sinfi sheds around her, either consciously or unconsciously; that imperious imagination of hers which projects her own visions upon the senses of another person either with or without an exercise of her own will. This is the explanation, I am convinced."

Wheresoever I now went, Snowdon's message to my heart was, "She lives," and my heart accepted the message. And then the new blessed feeling that Winnie was not lying in a pauper grave had an effect upon me that a few who read these pages will understand—only a few. Perhaps, indeed, even those I am thinking of, those who, having lost the one being they loved, feel that the earth has lost all its beauty—perhaps even these may not be able to sympathise fully with me in this matter, never having had an experience remotely comparable with mine.

When I thought of Winifred lying at the bottom of some chasm in Snowdon, my grief was very great, as these pages show. Yet it was not intolerable; it did not threaten to unseat my reason, for even then, when I

* Mountain-wild Snowdon for me!
Sweet silence there for the harp,
Where loiter the ewes and the lambs,
In the moss and the rushes,
Where one's song goes sounding up
And the rocks re-echo it higher and higher
In the height where the eagles live.

knew so little of the magic of y Wyddfa, I felt how close was the connection between my darling and the hills that knew her and loved her. But during the time that her death, amidst surroundings too appalling to contemplate, hung before my eyes in a dreadful picture—during the time when it seemed certain that her death in a garret, her burial in a pauper pit six coffins deep, was a hideous truth and no fancy, all the beauty with which Nature seemed at one time clothed was wiped away as by a sponge. The earth was nothing more than a charnel house, the skies above it were the roof of the Palace of Nin-ki-gal. But now that Snowdon had spoken to me the old life which had formerly made the world so beautiful and so beloved came back.

All Nature seemed rich and glowing with the deep expectance of my heart. The sunrise and the sunset seemed conscious of Winnie, and the very birds seemed to be warbling at times "She's alive."

XIV

Sinfi's Coup de Théâtre.

I

WEEKS passed by. I visited all the scenes that were in the least degree associated with Winnie.

The two places nearest to me—Fairy Glen and the Swallow Falls—which I had always hitherto avoided on account of their being the favourite haunts of tourists—I left to the last, because I specially desired to see them by moonlight. With regard to Fairy Glen, I had often heard Winnie say how she used to go there by moonlight and imagine the Tylwyth Teg or the fairy scenes of the "Midsummer Night's Dream" which I had told her of long ago—imagine them so vividly that she could actually see, on a certain projecting rock in the cliffs that enclose the dell, the figure of Titania dressed in green, with a wreath of leaves round her head. And with regard to the Swallow Falls, I remembered only too well her telling me, on the night of the landslip, the

Welsh legend of Sir John Wynn, who died in the seventeenth century, and whose ghost, imprisoned at the bottom of the Falls on account of his ill deeds in the flesh, was heard to shriek amid the din of the waters. On that fatal night she told me that on certain rare occasions, when the moon shines straight down the chasm, the wail will become an agonised shriek. I had often wondered what natural sound this was which could afford such pabulum to my old foe, Superstition. So one night, when the moon was shining brilliantly—so brilliantly that the light seemed very little feebler than that of day—I walked in the direction of the Swallow Falls.

Being afraid that I should not get much privacy at the Falls, I started late. But I came upon only three or four people on the road. I had forgotten that my own passion for moonlight was entirely a Romany inheritance. I had forgotten that a family of English tourists will carefully pull down the blinds and close the shutters, in order to enjoy the luxury of candle-light, lamp-light, or gas, when a Romany will throw wide open the tent's mouth to enjoy the light he loves most of all—"chonesko dood," as he calls the moonlight. As I approached the Swallow Falls Hotel, I lingered to let my fancy feast in anticipation on the lovely spectacle that awaited me. When I turned into the wood I encountered only one person, a lady, and she hurried back to the hotel as soon as I approached the river.

Following the slippery path as far as it led down the dell, I stopped at the brink of a pool about a dozen yards, apparently, from the bottom, and looked up at the water. Bursting like a vast belt of molten silver out of an eerie wilderness of rocks and trees, the stream, as it tumbled down between high walls of cliff to the platform of projecting rocks around the pool at the edge of which I stood, divided into three torrents, which themselves were again divided and scattered by projecting boulders into cascades before they fell into the gulf below. The whole seemed one wide cataract of living moonlight that made the eyes ache with beauty.

Amid the din of the water I listened for the wail which had so deeply impressed Winifred, and certainly there was what may be described as a sound within a sound, which ears so attuned to every note of Superstition's gamut as Winifred's might easily accept as the wail of Sir John Wynn's ghost.

There was no footpath down to the bottom, but I descended without any great difficulty, though I was now soaked in spray.

Here the mysterious human sound seemed to be less perceptible amid the din of the torrent than from the platform where I had stayed to listen to it. But when I climbed up again to the spot by the mid-pool where I had originally stood, a strange sensation came to me. My recollection of Winnie's words on the night of the landslip came upon me with such overmastering power that the noise of the cataract seemed changed to the sound of billows tumbling on Raxton sands, and the "wail" of Sir John Wynn seemed changed to that shriek from Raxton cliff which appalled Winnie as it appalled me.

The following night I passed into a moonlight as bright as that which had played me such fantastic tricks at the Swallow Falls.

It was not until I had crossed the bridge over the Conway, and was turning to the right in the direction of Fairy Glen, that I fully realised how romantic the moonlight was. Every wooded hill and every precipice, whether craggy and bald or feathered with pines, was bathed in light that would have made an Irish bog, or an Essex marsh, or an Isle of Ely fen, a land of poetry.

When I reached Pont Llyn-yr-Afanc (Beaver Pool Bridge) I lingered to look down the lovely lane on the left, through which I was to pass in order to reach the rocky dell of Fairy Glen, for it was perfumed, not with the breath of the flowers now asleep, but with the perfume I love most of all, the night's floating memory of the flowery breath of day.

Suddenly I felt some one touching my elbow. I turned round. It was Rhona Boswell. I was amazed to see her, for I thought that all my Gypsy friends, Boswells, Lovells, and the rest, were still attending the horse-fairs in the Midlands and Eastern Counties.

"We've only just got here," said Rhona; "wussur luck that we got here at all. I wants to get back to dear Gypsy Dell and Rington Wood; that's what I wants to do."

"Where is the camp?" I asked.

"Same place, twix Bettws and Capel Curig."

She had been to the bungalow, she told me, with a message from Sinf. This message was that she particularly wished to meet me at Mrs. Davies's cottage—"not at the bungalow"—on the following night.

"She'll go there to-morrow mornin'," said Rhona, "and make things tidy for you; but she won't expect you till night, same time as she met you there fust. She's got a key o' the door, she says, wot you gev her."

I was not so surprised at Sinf's proposed place of meeting as I should have been had

I not remembered her resolution not to return to the bungalow, and not to let me return to the camp.

"You must be sure to go to meet her at the cottage to-morrow night, else you'll be too late."

"Why too late?" I asked.

"Well," said Rhona, "I can't say as I knows why ezactly. But I know she's bin an' bought beautiful dresses at Chester, or somewheres,—an' I think she's goin' to be married the day arter to-morrow."

"Married! to whom?"

"Well, I can't say as I rightly knows," said Rhona.

"Do you know whether Mr. Cyril is in Wales?" I asked.

"Yes," said Rhona, "him and the funny un are not far from Capel Curig. Now I come to think on't, it's mose likely Mr. Cyril as she's a-goin' to marry, for I know it ain't no Romany chal. It *can't* be the funny un," added she, laughing.

"But where's the wedding to take place?"

"I can't say as I knows ezactly," said Rhona; "but I thinks it's by Knockers' Llyn if it ain't on the top o' Snowdon."

"Good heavens, girl!" I said. "What on earth makes you think that? That pretty little head of yours is stuffed with the wildest nonsense. I can make nothing out of you, so good night. Tell her I'll be there."

And I was leaving her to walk down the lane when I turned back and said, "How long has Sinf been at the camp?"

"On'y jist come. She's bin away from us for a long while," said Rhona.

And then she looked as if she was tempted to reveal some secret that she was bound not to tell.

"Sinf's been very bad," she went on, "but she's better now. Her daddy says she's under a cuss. She's been a-wastin' away like, but she's better now."

"So it's Sinf who is under a curse now," I said to myself. "I suppose Superstition has at last turned her brain. This perhaps explains Rhona's mad story."

"Does anybody but you think she's going to be married?" I asked her. "Does her father think so?"

"Her daddy says it ain't Sinf as is goin' to be married; but I think it's Sinf! An' you'll know all about it the day arter to-morrow." And she tripped away in the direction of the camp.

Lost in a whirl of thoughts and speculations, I turned into Fairy Glen. And now, below me, lay the rocky dell so dearly beloved by Winnie; and there I walked in such a magic web of light and shade as can

only be seen in that glen when the moon hangs over it in a certain position.

I descended the steps to the stream and sat down for a time on one of the great boulders and asked myself if this was the very boulder on which Winnie used to sit when she conjured up her childish visions of fairyland. And by that sweet thought the beauty of the scene became intensified. There, while the unbroken torrent of the Conway—glittering along the narrow gorge of the glen between silvered walls of rock as upright as the turreted bastions of a castle—seemed to flash a kind of phosphorescent light of its own upon the flowers and plants and sparsely scattered trees along the sides, I sat and passed into Winifred's own dream, and the Tylwyth Teg, which to Winnie represented Oberon and Titania and the whole group of fairies, swept before me.

Awaking from this dream, I looked up the wall of the cliff to enjoy one more sight of the magical beauty, when there fell upon my eyes, or seemed to fall, a sight that, though I felt it must be a delusion, took away my breath. Standing on a piece of rock that was flush with one of the steps by which I had descended was a slender girlish figure, so lissome that it might have been the famous "Queen of the Fair People."

"Never," I said to myself, "was there an optical illusion so perfect. I can see the moonlight playing upon her hair. But the hair is not golden, as the hair of the Queen of the Tylwyth Teg should be; it is dark as Winnie's own."

Then the face turned and she looked at the river, and then I exclaimed "Winifred!" And then Fairy Glen vanished and I was at Raxton standing by a cottage door in the moonlight. I was listening to a voice—that one voice to whose music every chord of life within me was set for ever, which said,

"I should have to come in the winds, and play around you on the sands. I should have to peep over the clouds and watch you. I should have to follow you about wherever you went."

The sight vanished. Although I had no doubt that what I had seen was an hallucination, when I moved further on and stood and gazed at the stream as it went winding round the mossy cliffs to join the Lledr, I felt that Winnie was by my side, her hand in mine, and that we were children together. And when I mounted the steps and strolled along the path that leads to the plantation where the moonlight, falling through the leaves, covered the ground with what seemed symbolical arabesques of silver and grey and

purple, I felt the pressure of little fingers that seemed to express "How beautiful!" And when I stood gazing through the opening in the landscape, and saw the rocks gleaming in the distance and the water down the Lledr valley, I saw the sweet young face gazing in mine with the smile of the delight that illumined it on the Wilderness road when she discoursed of birds and the wind.

The vividness of the vision of Fairy Glen drove out for a time all other thoughts. The livelong night my brain seemed filled with it.

"My eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
Or else worth all the rest."

I said to myself as I lay awake. So full, indeed, was my mind of this one subject that even Rhona's strange message from Sinfî was only recalled at intervals. While I was breakfasting, however, this incident came fully back to me. Either Rhona's chatter about Sinfî's reason for wanting to see me was the nonsense that had floated into Rhona's own brain, the brain of a love-sick girl to whom everything spelt marriage—or else poor Sinfî's mind had become un-
hinged.

II

As I was to sleep at the cottage, and as I knew not what part I might have to play in Sinfî's wild frolic, I told the servants that any letters which might reach the bungalow next morning were to be sent at once to the cottage, should I not have returned thence.

At about the hour, as far as I could guess, when I had first knocked at the cottage door at the beginning of my search for Winnie, I stood there again. The door was on the latch. I pushed it open.

The scene I then saw was so exact a repetition of what had met my eyes when for the first time I passed under that roof, that it did not seem as though it could be real; it seemed as though it must be a freak of memory: the same long low room, the same heavy beams across the ceiling, the same three chairs, standing in the same places where they stood then, the same table, and upon it the crwth and bow. There was a brisk fire, and over it hung the kettle—the same kettle as then. There were on the walls the same pictures, with the ruddy fingers of the fire-gleam playing upon them

and illuminating them in the same pathetic way, and in front of the fire sitting upon the same chair, was a youthful female figure—not Winnie's figure, taller than hers, and grander than hers—the figure of Sinfî, her elbows resting upon her knees, and her face sunk meditatively between her hands.

After standing for fully half a minute gazing at her, I went up to her, and laying my hand upon her shoulder, I said, "This is a good sight for the Swimming Rei, Sinfî."

At the touch of my hand a thrill seemed to dart through her frame; she leaped up and stared wildly in my face. Her features became contorted by terror—as horribly contorted as Winnie's had been in the same spot and under the same circumstances. Exactly the same terrible words fell upon my ear:—

"Let his children be vagabonds and beg their bread; let them seek it also out of desolate places. So saith the Lord. Amen."

Then she fell on the floor insensible.

At first I was too astonished, awed, and bewildered to stir from the spot where I was standing. Then I knelt down, and raising her shoulders, placed her head on my knee. For a time the expression of horror on her pale features was fixed as though graven in marble. A jug of water, from which the kettle had been supplied, stood on the floor in the recess. I sprinkled some water over her face. The muscles relaxed, she opened her eyes; the seizure had passed. She recognised me, and at once the old brave smile I knew so well passed over her face. Rhona's words about the curse and the purchase of the dresses seemed explained now. Long brooding over Winnie's terrible fate had unhinged her mind.

"My girl, my brave girl," I said, "have you, then, felt our sorrow so deeply? Have you so fully shared poor Winnie's pain that your nerves have given way at last? You are suffering through sympathy, Sinfî; you are suffering poor Winnie's great martyrdom."

"Oh, it ain't that!" she said, "but how I must have skeered you!"

She got up and sat upon the chair in a much more vigorous way than I could have expected after such a seizure.

"I am so sorry," she said. "It was the sudden feel o' your hand on my shoulder that done it. It seemed to burn me like, and then it made my blood seem scaldin' hot. If I'd only 'a' seed you come through the door I shouldn't have had the fit. The doctor told me the fits wur all gone now, and I feel sure as this is the last on 'em. You must go to Knockers' Llyn with me to-

morrow mornin' early. I want you to go at the same time that we started when we tried that mornin' to find Winnie."

"Then Rhona's story is true," I thought. "Her delusion is that she is going to Knockers' Llyn to be married."

"The weather's goin' to be just the same as it was then," she said, "and when we get to Knockers' Llyn where you two breakfasted together, I want to play the crwth and sing the song just as I did then."

She made no allusion to a wedding. Getting up and pouring the boiling water from the kettle into the teapot, "Something tells me," she went on, "that when I touch my crwth to-morrow, and when I sing them words by the side of Knockers' Llyn, you'll see the picture you want to see, the livin' mullo o' Winnie."

"Still no allusion to a wedding, but no doubt that will soon come," I murmured.

"I want to go the same way we went that day, and I want for you and me to see everything as we seed it then from fust to last."

I was haunted by Rhona Boswell's words, and wondered when she would begin talking about the wedding at Knockers' Llyn.

She never once alluded to it; but at intervals when the talk between us flagged I could hear her muttering, "He must see everything just as he seed it then from fust to last, and then it's good-bye for ever."

At last she said, "I've had both the rooms upstairs made tidy to sleep in—one for you and one for me. I'll call you in the mornin' at the proper time. Good night."

I was not sorry to get this summary dismissal and be alone with my thoughts. When I got to bed I was kept awake by recalling the sight I saw on entering the cottage. There seemed no other explanation of it than this, the tragedy of Winifred had touched Sinfi's sympathetic soul too deeply. Her imagination had seized upon the spectacle of Winifred in one of her fits, and had caused so serious a disturbance of her nervous system that through sheer fascination of repulsion her face mimicked it exactly as Winifred's face had mimicked the original spectacle of horror on the sands.

III

It was not yet dawn when I was aroused from the fitful slumber into which I had at last fallen by a sharp knocking at the door. When I answered the summons by "All

right, Sinfi," and heard her footsteps descend the stairs, the words of Rhona Boswell again came to me.

I found that I must return to the bungalow to get my bath.

The startled servant who let me in asked if there was anything the matter. I explained my early rising by telling him that I was merely going to Knockers' Llyn to see the sunrise. He gave me a letter which had come on the previous evening, and had been addressed by mistake to Carnarvon. As the handwriting was new to me, I felt sure that it was only an unimportant missive from some stranger, and I put it into my pocket without opening it.

On my return I found Sinfi in the little room where we had supped. I guessed that an essential part of her crazy project was that we should breakfast at the llyn.

On the table was a basket filled with the materials for the breakfast.

Another breakfast was spread for us two on the table, and the teapot was steaming. Sinfi saw me look at the two breakfasts and smile.

"We've got a good way to walk before we get to the pool where we are goin' to breakfast," she said, "so I thought we'd take a snack before we start."

As we went along I noticed that the air of Snowdon seemed to have its usual effect on Sinfi. In taking the path that led to Knockers' Llyn we saw before us Cwm-Dyli, the wildest of all the Snowdonian recesses, surrounded by frowning precipices of great height and steepness. We then walked briskly on towards our goal. When the three peaks that she knew so well—y Wyddfa, Lliwedd, and Crib Goch—stood out in the still grey light she stopped, set down her basket, clapped her hands, and said, "Didn't I tell you the mornin' was a-goin' to be ezackly the same as then? No mists to-day. By the time we get to the llyn the colours o' the vapours, what they calls the Knockers' flags, will come out ezackly as they did that mornin' when you and me first went arter Winnie."

All the way Sinfi's eyes were fixed on the majestic forehead of y Wyddfa and the bastions of Lliwedd, which seemed to guard it as though the Great Spirit of Snowdon himself was speaking to her and drawing her on, and she kept murmuring "The two dukkeripens."

But still she said nothing about her wedding, though that some such mad idea as that suggested by Rhona possessed her mind was manifest enough.

"Here we are at last," she said, when we reached the pool for which we were bound; and setting down her little basket she stood and looked over to the valley beneath.

The colours were coming more quickly every minute, and the entire picture was exactly the same as that which I had seen on the morning when we last saw Winifred on the hills, so unlike the misty panorama that Snowdon usually presents. Y Wyddfa was silhouetted against the sky, and looked as narrow and as steep as the sides of an acorn. Here we halted and set down our basket.

As we did so she said, "Hark! the Knockers! Don't you hear them? Listen, listen!"

I did listen, and I seemed to hear a peculiar sound as of a distant knocking against the rocks by some soft substance. She saw that I heard the noise.

"That's the Snowdon spirits as guards more copper mines than ever yet's been found. And they're dwarfs. I've seed 'em, and Winnie has. They're little, fat, short folk, somethin' like the woman in Primrose Court, only littler. Don't you mind the gal in the court said Winnie used to call the woman Klocker? Sometimes they knock to show to some Taffy as has pleased 'em where the veins of copper may be found, and sometimes they knock to give warnin' of a dangerous precipuss, and sometimes they knock to give the person as is talkin' warnin' that he's sayin' or doin' somethin' as may lead to danger. They speaks to each other too, but in a vice so low that you can't tell what words they're a-speakin', even if you knew their language. My crwth and song will rouse every spirit on the hills."

I listened again. This was the mysterious sound that had so captivated Winnie's imagination as a child.

The extraordinary lustre of Sinfi's eyes indicated to me, who knew them so well, that every nerve, every fibre in her system, was trembling under the stress of some intense emotion. I stood and watched her, wondering as to her condition, and speculating as to what her crazy project could be.

Then she proceeded to unpack the little basket.

"This is for the love feast," said Sinfi.

"You mean betrothal feast," I said. "But who are the lovers?"

"You and the livin' mullo that you made me draw for you by my crwth down by Beddgelert—the livin' mullo o' Winnie Wynne."

"At last then," I said to myself, "I know the form the mania has taken. It is not her own betrothal, but mine with Winnie's

wraith, that is deluding her crazy brain. How well I remember telling her how I had promised Winnie as a child to be betrothed by Knockers' Llyn. Poor Sinfi! Mad or sane, her generosity remains undimmed."

Before the breakfast cloth could be laid—indeed before the basket was unpacked—she asked me to look at my watch, and on my doing so and telling her the time, she jumped up and said, "It's later than I thought. We must lay the cloth arterwards." She then placed me in that same crevice overlooking the tarn whence Winnie had come to me on that morning.

Knockers' Llyn, it will perhaps be remembered, is enclosed in a little gorge opening by a broken, ragged fissure at the back to the east. Leading to this opening there is on one side a narrow, jagged shelf which runs half-way round the pool. Sinfi's movements now were an exact repetition of everything she did on that first morning of our search for Winnie.

While I stood partially concealed in my crevice, Sinfi took up her crwth, which was lying on the rock.

"What are you going to do, Sinfi?" I said.

"I'm just goin' to bring back old times for you. You remember that mornin' when my crwth and song called Winnie to us at this very llyn? I'm goin' to play on my crwth and sing the same song now. It's to draw her livin' mullo, as I did at Bettws and Beddgelert, so that the dukkeripen of the 'Golden Hand' may come true."

"But how can it come true, Sinfi?" I said.

"The dukkeripen allus does come true, whether it's good or whether it's bad."

"Not always," I said.

"No, not allus," she cried, starting up, while there came over her face that expression which had so amazed me at Beddgelert. When at last breath came to her she was looking towards y Wyddfa through the kindling haze.

"There you're right, Hal Aylwin. It ain't every dukkeripen as comes true. The dukkeripen allus comes true, unless it's one as says a Gorgio shall come to the Kaulo Camloes an' break Sinfi Lovell's heart. Before that dukkeripen shall come true Sinfi Lovell 'ud cut her heart out. Yes, my fine Gorgio, she'd cut it out—she'd cut it out and fling it in that 'ere llyn. She did cut it out when she took the cuss on herself. She's a-cuttin' it out now."

Then without saying another word Sinfi took up her crwth and moved towards the llyn.

"You'll soon come back, Sinfi?" I said.

"We've got to see about that," she replied,

still pale and trembling from the effects of that sudden upheaval of the passion of a Titaness. "If the livin' mullo does come you can't have a love-feast without company, you know, and I sha'n't be far off if you find you want me."

She then took up her crwth, went round the llyn, and disappeared through the eastern cleft. In a few moments I heard her crwth. But the air she played was not the air of the song she called the "Welsh dukkerin' gillie which I had heard by Beddgelert." It was the air of the same idyll of Snowdon that I first heard Winifred sing on the sands of Raxton. Then I heard in the distance those echoes, magical and faint, which were attributed by Winifred and Sinfy to the Knockers or spirits of Snowdon.

IV

THERE I stood again, as on that other morning, in the crevice overlooking the same llyn, looking at what might well have been the same masses of vapour enveloping the same peaks, rolling as then, boiling as then, blazing as then, whenever the bright shafts of morning struck them. There I stood again, listening to the wild notes of Sinfy's crwth in the distance, as the sun rose higher, pouring a radiance through the eastern gate of the gorge, and kindling the aërial vapours moving about the llyn till their iridescent sails suggested the-wings of some enormous dragon-fly of every hue.

"Her song does not come," I said, "but, this time, when it does come, it will not befool my senses. Sinfy's own presence by my side—that magnetism of hers which D'Arcy spoke of—would be required before the glamour could be cast over me, now that I know she is crazy. Poor Sinfy! Her influence will not to-day be able to cajole my eyes into accepting her superstitious visions as their own."

But as I spoke a sound fell, not upon my ears alone, but upon every nerve of my body, the sound of a voice singing, a voice that was not Sinfy's, but another's,

I met in a glade a lone little maid
At the foot of y Wyddfa the white ;
Oh, lissome her feet as the mountain hind
And darker her hair than the night ;

Her cheek was like the mountain rose,
And fairer far to see,
As driving along her sheep with a song
Down from the hills came she.

It was the same voice that I heard singing

the same song on Raxton Sands. It was the same voice that I heard singing the same song in the London streets—Winnie's!

And, then there appeared in the eastern cleft of the gorge on the other side of the Llyn, illuminated as by a rosy steam, Winnie! Amid the opalescent vapours gleaming round the llyn, with eyes now shimmering as through a veil—now flashing like sapphires in the sun—there she stood gazing through the film, her eyes expressing a surprise and a wonder as great as my own.

"It is no phantasm—it is no hallucination," I said, while my breathing had become a spasmodic, choking gasp.

But when I remembered the vision of Fairy Glen, I said, "Imagination can do that, and so can the glamour cast over me by Sinfy's music. It does not vanish; ah, if the sweet madness should remain with me for ever! It does not vanish—it is gliding along the side of the llyn: it is moving towards me. And now those sudden little ripples in the llyn—what do they mean? The trout are flying from her shadow. The feet are grating on the stones. And hark! that pebble which falls into the water with a splash; the glassy llyn is ribbed and rippled with rings. Can a phantom do that? It comes towards me still. Hallucination!"

Still the vision came on.

When I felt the touch of her body, when I felt myself clasped in soft arms, and felt falling on my face warm tears, and on my lips the pressure of Winnie's lips—lips that were murmuring, "At last, at last!"—a strange, wild effect was worked within me. The reality of the beloved form now in my arms declared itself; it brought back the scene where I had last clasped it.

Snowdon had vanished; the brilliant morning sun had vanished. The moon was shining on a cottage near Raxton Church, and at the door two lovers were standing, wet with the sea-water—with the sea-water through which they had just waded. All the misery that had followed was wiped out of my brain. It had not even the cobweb consistence of a dream.

When, after a while, Snowdon and the drama of the present came back to me, my brain was in such a marvellous state that it held two pictures of the same Winnie as though each hemisphere of the brain were occupied with its own vision. I was kissing Winnie's sea-salt lips in the light of the moon at the cottage door, and I was kissing them in the morning radiance by Knockers'

Llyn. And yet so overwhelming was the mighty tide of bliss overflowing my soul that there was no room within me for any other emotion—no room for curiosity, no room even for wonder.

Like a spirit awakening in Paradise, I accepted the heaven in which I found myself, and did not inquire how I got there.

This did not last long, however. Suddenly and sharply the moonlight scene vanished, and I was on Snowdon, and there came a burning curiosity to know the meaning of this new life—the meaning of the life of pain that had followed the parting at the cottage door.

V

"WINNIE," I said, "tell me where we are. I have been very ill since we parted in your father's cottage. I have had the wildest hallucinations concerning you; dreams, intolerable dreams. And even now they hang about me; even now it seems to me that we are far away from Raxton, surrounded by the hills and peaks of Snowdon. If they were real *you* would be the dream, but you are real; this waist is real."

"Of course we are on Snowdon, Henry!" said she. "You must indeed have been ill—you must now be very ill—to suppose you are at Raxton."

"But what are we doing here?" I said. "How did we come here?"

"Let Badoura speak for herself only," she said, with that arch smile of hers. She was alluding to the old days at Raxton, when she hoped that some day her little Camaralzaman would be carried by genii to her as she sat thinking of him by the magic llyn. "The genie who brought me was Sinfì Lovell. But who brought Camaralzaman? That is the question," she said, "I am dying to have answered."

At the name of Sinfì Lovell the past came flowing in.

"Then there *is* a Sinfì Lovell, Winnie! And yet she is one of the figures in the dream. There was no Sinfì Lovell with us at Raxton."

"Of course there is a Sinfì Lovell! You begin to make me as dazed as yourself. You have known her well; you and she were seeking me when I was lost."

"Then you *were* lost?" I said. "That, then, is no dream. And yet if you were lost you have been— But you are alive, Winnie. Let me feel the lips on mine again. You are alive! Snowdon told me at last that you were alive, but I dared not believe

it, my darling. I dared not believe that my misery would end thus—thus."

There came upon her face an expression of distressed perplexity which did more than anything else to recall me to my senses.

"Winnie," I said, "my brain is whirling. Let us sit down."

She sat down by my side.

"You thought your Winnie was dead, Henry. Sinfì Lovell has told me all about it." Then, looking intently at me, she said, "And how your sorrow has changed you, dear!"

"You mean it has aged me, Winnie. I have observed it myself, and people tell me it has made me look older than I am by many years. These furrows around the eyes—these furrows on my brow—you are kissing them, dear!"

"Oh, I love them; how I love them!" she said. "I am not kissing them to smooth them away. To me every line tells of your love for Winnie."

"And the hair, Winnie—look, it is getting quite grizzled." Then, as the lovely head sank upon my breast, I whispered in her ears, "Is there at last sorrow enough in the eyes, Winnie? Has the hardening effect of wealth coarsened my expression? Can a rich man for once enter the kingdom of love? Is the betrothal now complete? Are we both betrothed now?"

I stopped, for bliss and love were convulsing her with sobs until you might have supposed her heart was breaking.

While she lay silent thus, I was able in some degree to call my wits around me. And the difficulty of knowing in what course I ought to direct conversation presented itself, and seemed to numb my faculties and paralyse me.

After a while she became more composed, and sat in a trance, so to speak, of happiness.

But she remained silent. The conversation, I perceived, would have to be directed entirely by me. With the appalling seizures ever present in my mind, I felt that every word that came from my lips was dangerous.

"Look," I said, "the colours of the vapours round the llyn are as rich as they were when we breakfasted here together."

"We breakfasted here together! Why, what do you mean?" she said, looking in my face. "You forget, Henry, you never knew me in Wales at all; it was only at Raxton that you ever saw me."

"I mean when you breakfasted with the Prince of the Mist. I was the Prince of the Mist, dear."

She gave me a puzzled look which scared

while it warned me. How cruel it seemed of Sinfî, who had planned this meeting not to have told me how much and how little Winnie knew of the past.

"You know nothing about the Prince of the Mist except what I told you on Raxton sands," she said. "But you have been very ill; you will be well now."

"Yes," I said; "I have found the life I had lost, and these dreams of mine will soon pass."

As the conversation went on I began to see that she remembered our meetings on the sands—remembered everything up to a certain point. What was that point? This was the question that kept me on tenter-hooks.

Every word she uttered, however, shed light into my mind, and served as a warning that I must feel my way cautiously. It was evident to me that in some unaccountable way Sinfî at some time after she left me at Beddgelert had discovered that Winnie was not really dead, and had brought her back to me—brought her back to me restored in mind, but with all memory of what had passed during her dementia erased from her consciousness. Everything depended now upon my learning how much of her past she did remember. A single ill-judged word of mine—a single false move—might ruin all, and bring back the life of misery which I seemed at last to have left behind me.

VI

"WINNIE," I said, "you have not yet told me how you came here. You have not yet told me how it is that you meet me on Snowdon—meet me in this wonderful way."

"Oh," said she with a smile, "Badoura has been a mere puppet in the play. She had no idea she was going to meet her prince. Sinfî was suddenly seized with a desire that she and I should come back, and visit the dear old places we knew together. I was nothing loth, as you may imagine, but I could not understand what had made her set her heart upon it. When we reached Carnarvonshire I found that Sinfî's people were all encamped near to Bettws y Coed, and we went and stayed there. We visited all the places in the neighbourhood that were associated with her childhood and mine."

"You went to Fairy Glen?" I said.

"Yes; we went there the night before last and saw it in the moonlight."

"I was there, and I saw you."

"Ah! Then the man sitting on the boulder at the bottom was you! How wonderful! Sinfî was there on the step

round the corner; she must have seen you. I know now why she suddenly hurried me away. She had told me that she wanted to see the Glen by moonlight."

"Then you did not know that you would meet me here?"

"My dear Henry, do you suppose that if I had known, I could have been induced to take part in anything so theatrical? When I saw you standing here my amazement and joy were so great that I forgot the strange way in which I stood exhibited."

I felt that the longer she chatted about such matters as these the more opportunities I should get of learning how much and how little she knew of her own story, so I said,

"But tell me how Sinfî contrived to trick you."

"Well, this morning was the time fixed for our visiting Llyn Coblynau, as we called Knockers' Llyn, which was my favourite place as a child. We were to see it when the colours of the morning were upon it. Then we were to go right to the top of Snowdon and take a mid-day meal at the hut there, and in the evening go down to Llanberis and sleep there. To-morrow morning we were to go to dear old Carnarvon and see again the beloved sea. I find now that her plan was to bring you and me together in this sensational way."

"Will she join us?" I asked.

"I know no more than you what will be Sinfî's next whim. At the last moment yesterday I was surprised to find that I was not to come with her here, as she was not to sleep in the camp last night because she had promised to see a friend at Capel Curig. And now, shall I tell you how she inveigled me into taking my part in this Snowdon play she was getting up? She told me that she had the greatest wish to discover how the 'Knockers' echoes,' as they are called, would sound if, in the early morning, she were to play her crwth in one spot and I were to answer it from another spot with a verse of a Welsh song. It seemed a pretty idea, and it was agreed that when I reached the llyn I was to go round it to the opening at the east, pass through the crevice, and wait there till I heard her crwth."

"Well, Winnie, I must say that the way in which our Gypsy friend manipulated you, and the way in which she manipulated me, shows a method that would have done credit to any madness."

"You? How did she trick you?"

I was determined not to talk about myself till I had felt my way.

"Winnie, dear," I said, "seeing you is such a surprise, and my illness has left me so weak, that I must wait before talking about

myself. I shall be more able to do this after I have learnt more of what has befallen you. You say that Sinfi proposed to bring you to Wales; but where were you when she did so? And what brought you into contact with Sinfi again after—after—after you and I were parted in Raxton?"

"Ah! that is a strange story indeed," said Winifred. "It bewilders me to recall it as much as it will bewilder you when you come to hear it. I, too, seem to have been ill, and quite unconscious for months and months."

"Winnie," I said, "tell me this strange story about yourself. Tell it in your own way, and do not let me interrupt you by a word. Whenever you see that I am about to speak, stop me—put your hand over my mouth."

"But where am I to begin?"

"Begin from our first meeting on the sands on the night of the land-slip."

But while I spoke I thought I observed her looking at the breakfast provided by Sinfi with something like the same wistful expression that was on her face on that morning forgotten by her but remembered by me so well, when she breakfasted so heartily on the same spot.

"Winnie," I said, "this mountain air has given me a voracious appetite. I wonder whether you could manage to eat some of these good things provided by our theatrical manageress."

"I wonder whether I could," said Winnie, "I'll try—if you'll ask me no questions, but talk about Snowdon and watch the changes of the glorious morning. But we must call Sinfi."

"No, no. I want to talk to you alone first. By the time your story is over I at least shall be ready for another breakfast, and then we will call her."

This was agreed upon, and I sat down to my second breakfast with Winnie beside Knockers' Llyn. I sat with my face opposite to the llyn, and we had scarcely begun when I noticed Sinfi's face peeping round a corner of the little gorge. Winnie's back being turned from the llyn she did not see Sinfi, who gave me a sign that her part of that performance was to be looked on.

I have not time to dwell upon what was said and done during our breakfast in this romantic place, and under these more than romantic circumstances. During the whole of the time the Knockers kept up their knockings, and it really seemed as though the good-natured goblins were expressing their welcome to the child of y Wyddfa.

XV

The Daughter of Snowdon's Story

I

AFTER the breakfast was ended Winifred went over the entire drama of that night of the landslip as far as she knew it. There was not an important incident that she missed. Every detail of her narrative was so vividly given that I lived it all over again. She recalled our meeting on the sands, and my inexplicable bearing when she told me of the seaman's present of precious stones to her father. She dwelt upon my mysterious conduct in insisting upon our ascending the cliff by different gangways. She recalled her picking up from the sands a parchment scroll and spelling out by the moonlight the words of the curse it called down upon the head of any one who should violate the tomb from which the parchment and the jewel had been stolen, but as she repeated the words of the curse she was evidently unconscious of the tremendous import of the words in regard to herself and her father. She told me of her desire to conceal from me, for my own sake merely, the evidence afforded by the scroll that my father's tomb had been violated. She recalled my seeing the parchment and being thrown thereby into a state of the greatest mental agony. She recalled my taking her hand as we neared the new tongue of land made by the *débris*, and peering round it as though in dread of some concealed foe, but evidently she had no idea *what* was behind there. She described the way in which my "foot slipped on the sand," and how I was thrown back upon her as she stood waiting to pass the *débris* herself. She spoke of my unaccountable and apparently mad suggestion that we should, although the tide was coming in, and we were already in danger of being imprisoned in the cove and drowned, sit down on the boulder made sacred to us both by our childish betrothal. She spoke of her own suspicion, and then her conviction, that some great calamity was threatening me on account of the violation of the tomb, and that the knowledge of this was governing all these strange movements of mine. She reminded me of my telling her that the

shriek we both heard at the moment when the cliff fell was connected with the crime against my father and that it was the call from the grave, which according to wild traditions will sometimes come to the heir of an old family. She recalled the very words I used when I told her that in answer to this call I intended to remain there until the tide came in and drowned me. She dwelt upon the way in which I urged her to go and leave me, her own resolution to die with me, and her cutting up her shawl into a rope and tying herself to me. She recalled the sudden thunderous noise of the settlement in response to the tide, and my springing up and running to the mass of *débris* and looking round it, and then my calling her to join me; and finally she described her running toward Needle Point in order to pass round it before the tide should get any higher, her plunging into the sea and my pulling her round the Point.

It was manifest, from the first word she uttered to the last, that she had no idea who was the "miscreant," to use her oft-repeated word, who committed the sacrilege; and nothing could express what relief this gave my heart. I felt as though I had just escaped from some peril too dire to think of with calmness.

"You remember, Henry," said she, "how we ran to the cottage in our wet clothes. You remember how we parted at the cottage door. From that night till now we have never met, and now we meet—here on Snowdon—at the very llyn I was always so fond of."

"But tell me more, Winnie—tell me what occurred to you on the next morning."

"Well," said she, "I was always a sound sleeper, but my fatigue that night made me sleep until quite late the next morning. I hurried up and got breakfast ready for father and myself. I then went and rapped at his door, but I got no answer. His room was empty."

Winifred paused here as though she expected me to say something. A thousand things occurred to me to ask, but until I knew more—until I knew how much and how little she remembered of that dreadful time, I dared ask her nothing—I dared make no remark at all. I said "Go on, Winnie; pray do not break your story."

"Well," said she, "I found that my father had not returned during the night. I did not feel disturbed at that, his ways were so uncertain. I did not even hurry over my breakfast, but dallied over it, recalling the scenes of the previous night, and wondering what some of them could mean. I then went down the gangway at Needle Point to

walk on the sands. I thought I might meet father coming from Dullingham. I had to pass the landslip, where a great number of Raxton people were gathered. They were looking at the frightful relics of Raxton churchyard. They were too dreadful for me to look at. I walked right to Dullingham without meeting my father. At Dullingham I was told that he had not been there for some days. Then, for the first time, I began to be haunted by fears, but they took no distinct shape. When I returned to the landslip the people were still there, and still very excited about it. In the afternoon I went again on the sands, thinking that I might see my father and also that I might see you. I walked about till dusk without seeing either of you, and then I went back to the cottage. I had now become very anxious about my father, and sat up all night. The next morning after breakfast I went again on the sands. The number of people collected round the landslip seemed greater than ever, and many of them, I think, came from Graylingham, Rington, and Dullingham. They seemed more excited than they had been on the previous day, and they did not notice me as I joined them. I heard some one say in a cracked and piping voice, 'Well, it's my belief as Tom lays under that there settlement. It's my belief that he wur standing on the edge of the churchyard cliff, and when the cliff fell he fell with it.' Then the kind and good-natured little tailor Shales saw me, and I thought he must have made some signal to the others, for they all stood silent. I felt sure now that for some reason, unknown to me, it was generally believed that my father had perished in the landslip. Mrs. Shales took me by the hand, and gently led me away up the gangway. When we reached the cottage I asked her whether my father's body had been found. She told me that it had not, and was not likely to be found, for if he had really fallen with the landslip his body lay under tons upon tons of earth. I shall never forget the misery of that night; kind Mrs. Shales would not leave me, but slept in the cottage. I had very little doubt that the Raxton people were right in their dreadful guesses about my father. I had very little doubt that while walking along the cliff, either to or from the cottage, he had reached the point at the back of the church at the moment of the landslip, and been carried down with it, and I now felt sure that the shriek you and I both heard was his shriek of terror as he fell. I bethought me of the jewels that my father's sailor friend was to give him, and searched the cottage for them. As I could not find them, I felt sure that it was on his return

from his meeting with his sailor friend, when the jewels were upon him, that he fell with the landslip."

Again Winnie paused as if awaiting some question, or at least some remark from me.

"Did you make no inquiries about me?" I said.

"Oh yes," said she; "my grief at the loss of my father was very much increased by my not being able to see you. Mrs. Shales told me that you were ill—very ill. And altogether, you may imagine my misery. Day after day I got worse and worse news of you. And day after day it became more and more certain that my father had perished in the way people supposed. I used to spend most of the day on the sand, gazing at the landslip, and searching for my father's body. Every one tried to persuade me to give up my search, as it was hopeless, for his body was certain to be buried deep under the new tongue of land."

"But you still continued your search, Winnie?" I said, remembering every word Dr. Mivart had told me in connection with her being found by the fishermen.

"Yes, I found it impossible not to go on with it. But one morning after there had been a great storm followed by a further settlement of the landslip, I went out alone on the cliffs. I said to myself, 'This shall be my last search.' By this time the news of your illness and the anxiety I felt about you helped much in blunting the anxiety I felt about my father's loss. But on this very morning I am speaking of something very extraordinary happened."

"Don't tell me, Winnie. For God's sake, don't tell me! It will disturb you; it will make you ill again."

She looked at me in evident astonishment at my words.

"Don't tell you, Henry? Why, there is nothing to tell," said she. "As I was walking along the sands, looking at the new tongue of land made by the landslip, I seem to have lost consciousness."

"And you don't know what caused this?"

"Not in the least; unless it was my anxiety and want of sleep. This was the beginning of the long illness that I spoke of, and I seem to have remained quite without consciousness until a few weeks ago. I often try to make my mind bring back the circumstances under which I lost consciousness. I throw my thoughts, so to speak, upon a wall of darkness, and they come reeling back like waves that are dashed against a cliff."

"Then don't do so any more, Winnie. I know enough of such matters to tell you confidently that you never will recall the

incidents connected with your collapse, and that the endeavour to do so is really injurious to you. What interests me very much more is to know the circumstances under which you came to yourself. I am dying with impatience to know all about that."

II

"WHEN I came to myself," said Winifred, "I was in a world as new and strange and wonderful as that in which Christopher Sly found himself when he woke up to his new life in Shakspeare's play."

She paused. She little thought how my flesh kindled with impatience.

"Yes, Winnie," I said; "you are going to tell me how, and where, and when you were restored to life—regained your consciousness, I mean—unless it will too deeply agitate you to tell me."

"It would not agitate me in the least, Henry, to tell you all about it. But it is a long story, and this seems a strange place in which to tell it, surrounded by these glorious peaks and covered by this roof of sunrise. But do you tell me all about yourself, all about your illness, which seems to have been a dreadful one."

My story indeed! What was there in my story that I could or dare tell her? My story would have to be all about herself, and the tragedy of the supposed curse, and the terrible seizures from which she had recovered, and of which she must never know. I set to work to persuade her to tell me all she knew.

At last she yielded, and said, "Well, I awoke as from a deep sleep, and found myself lying on a couch, with a man's face bending over mine. I could not help exclaiming, 'Henry!'"

"Then did he resemble me?" I asked.

"Only in this—that in his eyes there was the expression which has always appealed to me more than any other expression, whether in human eyes or in the eyes of animals. I mean the pleading, yearning expression of loneliness that there was in your eyes when they were the eyes of a little, lame boy who could not get up the gangways without me."

"Ah, the egotism of love," I exclaimed. "You mean, Winnie, that expression which my unlucky eyes had lost when we met upon the sands after our childhood was passed."

"But which love," said she, "love of Winnie, sorrow for the loss of Winnie, have brought back, increased a thousandfold, till

it gives me pain and yet a delicious pain to look into them. Oh, Henry, I can't go on; I really can't, if you look—"

She burst into tears.

When she got calmer she proceeded.

"It was only in the expression of your eyes that he resembled you. He was much older, and wore spectacles. He, on his part, gave a start when he looked into my eyes. It seemed to me that he had been expecting to see something in them which he did not find there, and was a little disappointed. I then heard voices in the room, which was evidently, from the sound of the voices, a large room, and I looked round. I saw that there was another couch close to mine, but nearly hidden from view by a large screen between the two couches. Evidently a woman was lying on the other couch, for I could see her feet; she was a tall woman, for her feet reached out much beyond my own."

"Good heavens, Winnie," I exclaimed, "what on earth is coming? But I promised not to interrupt you. Pray go on, I am all impatience."

"Well, at the sound of the voices the gentleman started, and seemed much alarmed—alarmed on my account, I thought."

"I then heard a voice say, 'A most successful experiment. Look at the face of this other patient, and see the expression on it.'"

"The gentleman bent over me, and hurriedly raised me from the couch, and then fairly carried me out of the room. But you seem very excited, Henry, you have turned quite pale."

It would have been wonderful if I had not turned pale. So deeply burnt into my brain had been the picture I had imagined of Winnie dead and in a pauper's grave that even now, with Winnie in my arms, it all came to me, and I seemed to see her lying in a pauper's shroud, and being restored to life, and I said to her, "Did you observe—did you observe your dress, Winnie?"

She answered my question by a little laugh.

"Did I observe my dress at such a moment? Well, I knew you could be satirical on my sex when you are in the mood, but, Henry, there are moments, I assure you, when the first thing a woman observes is not her dress, and this was one. Afterwards I did observe it, and I can tell you what it was. It was a walking dress. Perhaps," said she with a smile, "perhaps you would like to know the material? But really I have forgotten that."

"Pardon my idle question, Winnie—pray go on. I will interrupt you no more."

"Oh, you will interrupt me no more! We shall see. The gentleman then led me through a passage of some length."

"Do describe it!"

"I felt quite sure you would interrupt me no more. Well! The dim light in the windows made me guess I was in an old house, and from the sweet smell of hay and wild flowers I thought we were near the Wilderness, at Raxton. I could only imagine that I had fallen insensible on the sands and been taken to Raxton Hall."

"Ah! that's where you ought to have been taken," I could not help exclaiming.

"Surely not," said Winnie.

"Why?"

"Your mother! But why have you turned so angry?"

In spite of all that I had lately witnessed of my mother's sufferings from remorse, in spite of all the deep and genuine pity that those sufferings had drawn from me, Winnie's words struck deeper than any pity for any creature but herself, and for a moment my soul rose against my mother again.

"Go on, Winnie, pray go on," I said.

"You will make me talk about myself," said Winifred, "when I so much want to hear all about you. This is what I call the self-indulgence of love. Well, then, the gentleman and I mounted some steps and then we entered a tapestried room. The windows—they were quaint and old-fashioned casements—were open, and the sunlight was pouring through them. I then saw at once that I was not anywhere near Raxton. Besides, there was no sea-smell mixed with the perfumes of the flowers and the songs of the birds. That I was not near Raxton, very much amazed me, you may be sure. And then the room was so new to me and so strange. I had never been in an artist's studio, but Sinfie had talked to me of such places, and there were many signs that I was in a studio now."

"A studio! And not in London! Describe it, Winnie," I said.

Although she had told me that the house was in the country, my mind flew at once to Wilderspin's studio. "You say that the gentleman was not young, but that he had an expression of sorrow in his eyes. Had he long iron-grey hair, and was he dressed—dressed, like a—like a shiny Quaker?" So full was my mind of Mrs. Gudgeon's story that I was positively using her language.

"Like a what?" exclaimed Winnie. "Really, Henry, you have become very eccentric since our parting. The gentleman had not iron-grey hair, and he was not dressed in the least like a Quaker, unless a loose, brown lounge coat tossed on anyhow over a waist-

coat and trousers of the same colour is the costume of a shiny Quaker. But it was the room you asked me to describe. There were pictures on the walls, and there were two easels, and on one of them I saw a picture. The gentleman led me to a strange and very beautiful piece of furniture. If I attempted to describe it I should call it a divan, under a gorgeous kind of awning ornamented with Chinese figures in ivory and precious stones. Now, isn't it exactly like an *Arabian Nights* story, Henry?"

"Yes, yes, Winnie; but pray go on. What did the gentleman do?"

"He drew a chair towards me, and without speaking looked into my face again. The expression in his eyes drew me towards him, as it had at first done when I awoke from my trance; it drew me towards him partly because it said, 'I am lonely and in sorrow,' and partly from another cause which I could not understand and could never define, howsoever I might try. 'Where am I?' I said; 'I remember nothing since I fell on the sands. Where is Henry? Is he better or worse? Can you tell me?' The gentleman said, 'The friend you inquire about is a long way from here, and you are a long way from Raxton.' I asked him why I was a long way from Raxton, and said, 'Who brought me here? Do, please, tell me what it means. I am amongst friends—of that I am sure; there is something in your voice which assures me of that; but do tell me what this mystery means.' 'You are indeed amongst friends,' he said. Then looking at me with an expression of great kindness, he continued, 'It would be difficult to imagine where you could go without finding friends, Miss Wynne.'"

"Then he knew who you were, Winnie?" I said.

"Yes, he knew who I was," said she, looking meditatively across the hills as though my query had raised in her own mind some question which had newly presented itself. "The gentleman told me that I had been very ill and was now recovered, but not so entirely recovered at present that I could with safety be burdened and perplexed with the long story of my illness and what had brought me there. And when he concluded by saying, 'You are here for your good,' I exclaimed, 'Ah, yes; no need for me to be told that,' for his voice convinced me that it was so. 'But surely you can tell me something. Where is Henry? Is he still ill?' I said. He told me that he believed you to be perfectly well, and that you had lately been living in Wales, but had now gone to Japan. 'Henry lately in Wales! now gone to Japan!' I exclaimed, 'and he was not with

me after the illness that you say I have just recovered from?'"

"Winnie," I said, "it was no wonder you asked those questions, but you will soon know all."

Whilst Winnie had been talking my mind had been partly occupied with words that fell from her about the voice of her mysterious rescuer. They seemed to recall something.

"You were saying, Winnie, that the gentleman had a peculiarly musical voice," I said.

"So musical," she replied, "that it seemed to delight and charm, not my mind only, but every nerve in my body."

"Could you describe it?"

"Describe a voice," she said, laughing.

"Who could describe a voice?"

"You, Winnie; only you. Do describe it."

"I wonder," she said, "whether you remember our first walk along the Raxton road, when I made invidious comparison between the voices of birds and the voices of men and women?"

"Indeed I do," I said. "I remember how you suggested that among the birds the rooks only could listen without offence to the cackle of a crowd of people."

"Well, Henry, I can only give you an idea of the gentleman's voice by saying that the most fastidious blackbirds and thrushes that ever lived would have liked it. Indeed they did seem to like it, as I afterwards thought, when I took walks with him. It was music in every variety of tone: and, besides, it seemed to me that this music was enriched by a tone which I had learnt from your own dear voice as a child, the tone which sorrow can give and nothing else. The listener while he was speaking felt so drawn towards him as to love the man who spoke. When his voice ceased, some part of his attraction ceased. But the moment the voice was again heard the magic of the man returned as strong as ever."

III

FOR some time during Winnie's narrative glimmerings of the gentleman's identity had been coming to me, and what she said of the voice seemed to be turning these glimmerings into shafts of light. I was now in a state of the greatest impatience to verify my surmise. But this only gave a sharper edge to my intense curiosity as to *how* she had been rescued by him.

"Winnie," I said, "you have said nothing

about his appearance. Could you describe his face?"

"Describe his face?" said Winnie. "If I were a painter I could paint it from memory. But who can paint a face in words?"

Then she launched into a description of the gentleman's appearance, and gave me a specimen of that "objective" power which used to amaze me as a child but which I afterwards found was a speciality of the girls of Wales.

"I should like a description of him feature by feature," I said.

She laughed and said, "I suppose I must begin with his forehead then. It was almost of the tone of marble, and contrasted but not too violently, with the thin crop of dark hair slightly curling round the temples, which were partly bald. The forehead in its form was so perfect that it seemed to shed its own beauty over all the other features; it prevented me from noticing, as I afterwards did, that these other features—the features below the eyes, were not in themselves beautiful. The eyes, which looked at me through spectacles, were of a colour between hazel and blue-grey, but there were lights shining within them which were neither grey, nor hazel, or blue—wonderful lights. And it was to these indescribable lights, moving and alive in the deeps of the pupils, that his face owed its extraordinary attractiveness. Have I sufficiently described him? or am I to go on taking his face to pieces for you?"

"Go on, Winnie—pray go on."

"Well, then, between the eyes across the top of the nose, where the bridge of the spectacles rested, there was a strongly marked indented line which had the appearance of having been made by long-continued pressure of the spectacle frame. Am I still to go on?"

"Yes, yes."

"The beauty of the face, as I said before, was entirely confined to the upper portion. It did not extend lower than the cheek bones, which were well shaped."

"The mouth, Winnie? Describe that, and then I need not ask you his name, though perhaps you don't know it yourself."

"A dark brown moustache covered the mouth. I have always thought that a mouth is unattractive if the lips are so close to the teeth that they seem to stick to them; and yet what a kind woman Mrs. Shales is, and her mouth is of this kind. But on the other hand where the space between the teeth and the lips is too great no mouth can be called beautiful, I think. Now though the mouth of the gentleman was not ill-cut, the lips were too far from the teeth, I thought; they

were too loose, a little baggy, in short. And when he laughed——"

"What about that, Winnie? I specially want to know about his laugh."

"Then I will tell you. When he laughed his teeth were a little too much seen; and this gave the mouth a somewhat satirical expression."

"Winnie," I said, "there is no need now for you to tell me the name of the gentleman. In a few sentences you have described him better than I could have done in a hundred."

"And certainly there is no reason why I should not tell you his name," she said, laughing, "for if there is a word that is musical in my ears, it is the name of him whose voice is music—D'Arcy. When he told me that I should know everything in time, and that there was nothing for me to know except that which would give me comfort, and said, 'You confide in me!' I could only answer, 'Who would not confide in you? I will wait patiently until you tell me what you have to tell.' 'Then,' said he, 'the best thing you can do is to lie down for an hour or two on that divan and rest yourself, and go to sleep if you can, while I go and attend to certain affairs that need me.' He then left the room. I was glad to be alone, for I was terribly tired. I felt as though I had been taking violent bodily exercise, but without feeling the staying power that Snowdon air can give. I lay down on the divan, and must have fallen asleep immediately. When I woke I found the same kind face near me, and the same kind eyes watching me. Mr. D'Arcy told me that I had been sleeping for two hours, and that it had, he hoped, much refreshed me. He told me also that he took a constitutional walk every day, and asked me if I would accompany him. I said, 'Yes, I should like to do so.' At this moment there passed the window some railway men leaving some luggage. On seeing them Mr. D'Arcy said, 'I see that I must leave you for a minute or two to look after a package of canvases that has just come from my assistant in London,' and he left me. When I was left alone I had an opportunity of observing the room. The walls were covered with old faded tapestry, so faded indeed that its general effect was that of a dull grey texture. On looking at it closely I found that it told the story of Samson. Every piece of furniture seemed to me to be a rare curiosity."

"Now, Winnie," I said, "I am not going to interrupt you any more. I want to hear your story as an unbroken narrative."

IV

"WELL," said Winnie, "after a while Mr. D'Arcy returned and told me that he was now ready to take me for a stroll across the meadows, saying, 'The doctor told me that, at first, your walks must be short; so while you go to your room I will get Mrs. Titwing in for my usual consultation about our frugal meal.'

"My room," I said, "my room, and Mrs. Titwing; who's—"

"Ha! I quite forgot myself," he said, with an air of vexation, which he tried, I thought, to conceal. "I will ring for Mrs. Titwing—the housekeeper—and she will take you to your room."

"He walked towards the bell, but before reaching it he stopped as if arrested by a sudden thought. Then he said, 'I will go to the housekeeper's room and speak to Mrs. Titwing there. I shall be back in a minute.' And he passed from the room through the door by which he and I had first entered.

"Scarcely had the door closed behind him before a woman entered by another door opposite to it. She was about the common height, slender, and of an extremely youthful figure for a woman of middle age. Her bright-complexioned face, lit by two watery blue eyes, was pleasant to look upon. It was none the less pleasant because it showed clearly that she was as guileless as a child.

"I knew at once that she was the person—the housekeeper—that Mr. D'Arcy had gone to seek at the other side of the house. Evidently she had come upon me unexpectedly, for she gave a violent start, then she murmured to herself,

"So it's all over, and all went off well," she said. Then she walked quietly towards me and threw her arms round me and kissed me, saying, 'Dear child, I am so glad.'

"The tone of voice in which she spoke to me was exactly that of a nurse speaking to a little child.

"I was so taken by surprise that I pulled myself from her embrace with some force. The poor woman looked at me in a hurt way and then said,

"I beg your pardon, miss. I didn't notice at first how—how changed you are. The look in your eyes makes me feel that you are not the same person, and that I have done quite wrong."

"While she was speaking, Mr. D'Arcy had re-entered the room by the door by which he went out. He had evidently heard the housekeeper's words.

"Miss Wynne," he said, "this is Mrs.

Titwing, my excellent housekeeper. She has been attending you during your illness; but your weakness was so great that you were unconscious of all her kindness."

"I went up to her and kissed her rosy cheek, at which she began to cry a little. I afterwards found that she was in the habit of crying a little on most occasions.

"Will you, then, kindly show me my room?" I said to her. But as she turned round to lead the way to the room, Mr. D'Arcy said to her,

"Before you show Miss Wynne the way, I should like one word with you, Mrs. Titwing, in your room, about the arrangements for the day."

"The two passed out of the room, and again I was left to myself and my own thoughts.

V

"EVIDENTLY there was some mystery about me," said Winifred, continuing her story. "But the more I tried to think it out the more puzzling it seemed. How had I been conveyed to this strange, new place? Who was the wizard whose eyes and whose voice began to enslave me? and what time had passed since he caught me up on Raxton sand? It seemed exactly like one of those *Arabian Nights* stories which you and I used to read together when we were children. The waking up on the couch, the sight of the end of the other couch behind the screen, and the tall woman's feet upon it, the voices from unseen persons in the room, and above all the strange magic of him who seemed to be the directing genie of the story—all would have seemed to me unreal had it not been for the prosaic figure of Mrs. Titwing. About her there could not possibly be any mystery; she was what Miss Dalrymple would have called 'the very embodiment of British commonplace,' and when, after a minute or two, she returned with Mr. D'Arcy, I went and kissed her again from sheer delight of feeling the touch of her real, solid, commonplace cheek, and to breathe the commonplace smell of scented soap. Her bearing, however, towards me had become entirely changed since she had gone out of the room. She did not return the kiss, but said, 'Shall I show you the way, miss?' and led the way out.

"She took me through the same dark passage by which I had entered, and then I found myself in a large bedroom with low panelled walls, in the middle of which was a vast, antique bedstead made of black carved oak, and every bit of furniture in the room

seemed as old as the bedstead. Over the mantelpiece was an old picture in a carved oak frame, a Madonna and Child, the beauty of which fascinated me. I remember that on the bottom of the frame was written in printed letters the name 'Chiaro dell'Erma.' I was surprised to find in the room, another walking dress, not new, but slightly worn, laid out ready for me to put on. I lifted it up and looked at it. I saw at a glance that it would most likely fit me like a glove.

"Whose dress is this?" I said.

"It's yours, miss."

"Mine? But how came it mine?"

"Oh, please don't ask me any questions, miss," she said. "Please ask Mr. D'Arcy, miss; he knows all about it. I am only the housekeeper, miss."

"Mr. D'Arcy knows all about my dress!" I said. "Why, what on earth has Mr. D'Arcy to do with my dress?"

"Please don't ask me any more questions, miss," she said. "Pray don't. Mr. D'Arcy is a very kind man; I am sure nobody has ever heard me say but what he is a very kind man; but if you do what he says you are not to do, if you talk about what he says you are not to talk about, he is frightful, he is awful. He calls you a chattering old—I don't know what he won't call you. And, of course, I know you are a lady, miss. Of course you look a lady, miss, when you are dressed like one. But then, you see, when I first saw you, you were not dressed as you are now, and at first sight, of course, we go by the dress a good deal, you know. But Mr. D'Arcy needn't be afraid I shall not treat you like a lady, miss. I'm only a housekeeper now, though, of course, I was once very different—very different indeed. But, of course, anybody has only to look at you to see you are a lady, and, besides, Mr. D'Arcy says you are a lady, and that is quite enough."

"At this moment there came through the door—it was ajar—Mr. D'Arcy's voice from the distance, so loud and clear that every word could be heard.

"Mrs. Titwing, why do you stay chattering there, preventing Miss Wynne from getting ready? You know we are going out for a walk together."

"Oh Lord, miss!" said the poor woman in a frightened tone, "I must go. Tell him I didn't chatter—tell him you asked me questions and I was obliged to answer them."

"The mysteries around me were thickening every moment. What did this prattling woman mean about the dress in which she had at first seen me? Was the dress in which she had first seen me so squalid that it had affected her simple imagination?

What had become of me after I had sunk down on Raxton sands, and why was I left neglected by every one? I knew you were ill after the landslip, but Mr. D'Arcy had just told me that you had since been well enough to go to Wales and afterwards to Japan.

"I put on the dress and soon followed her. When I reached the tapestried room there was Mr. D'Arcy talking to her in a voice so gentle, tender and caressing, that it seemed impossible the rough voice I had heard bellowing through the passage could have come from the same mouth, and Mrs. Titwing was looking into his face with the delighted smile of a child who was being forgiven by its father for some trifling offence. As I stood and looked at them I said to myself, 'Truly I am in a land of wonders.'

VI

"MR. D'ARCY and I," said Winifred, "went out of the house at the back, walked across a roughly paved stable-yard, and passed through a gate and entered a meadow. Then we walked along a stream, about as wide as one of our Welsh brooks, but I found it to be a backwater connected with a river. For some time neither of us spoke a word. He seemed lost in thought, and my mind was busy with what I intended to say to him, for I was fully determined to get some light thrown upon the mystery.

"When we reached the river bank we turned towards the left, and walked until we reached a weir, and there we sat down upon a fallen willow tree, the inside of which was all touchwood. Then he said,

"You are silent, Miss Wynne."

"And you are silent," I said.

"My silence is easily explained," he said. "I was waiting to hear some remark fall from you as to these meadows and the river, which you have seen so often."

"Which I see now for the first time, you mean."

"Miss Wynne," he said, looking earnestly in my face, "you and I have taken this walk together nearly every day for months."

"That," I said, "is—is quite impossible."

"It is true," he said. "And then again we sat silent."

"Then I said to him with great firmness, 'Mr. D'Arcy, I'm only a peasant girl, but I'm Welsh; I have faith in you, faith in your goodness and faith in your kindness to me; but I must insist upon knowing how I came here, and how you and I were brought together.'

"He smiled and said, 'I was right in thinking that your face expresses a good deal of what we call character. I should have preferred waiting for a day or two before relating all I have to tell,' he said, 'in answer to what you ask, but as you *insist* upon having it now,' with a playful kind of smile, 'it would be ill-bred for me to insist that you must wait. But before I begin, would it not be better if you were to tell me something of what occurred to yourself when you were taken ill at Raxton?'

"Then will your story begin where mine breaks off?' I said.

"We shall see that,' he said, 'as soon as you have ended yours.'

"Do you know Raxton?' I said.

"At first he seemed to hesitate about his reply, and then said,

"No, I do not.'

"I then told him in as few words as I could our adventures on the sands on the night of the landslip, and my search for my father's body afterwards, until I suddenly sank down in a fit. When I had finished Mr. D'Arcy was silent, and was evidently lost in thought. At last he said,

"My story, I perceive, cannot begin where yours breaks off. I first became acquainted with you in the studio of a famous painter named Wilderspin, one of the noblest-minded and most admirable men now breathing, but a great eccentric.'

"Why, Mr. D'Arcy, I never was in a studio in my life until to-day,' I said.

"You mean, Miss Wynne, that you were not consciously there,' he said. 'But in that studio you certainly were, and the artist, who revered you as a being from another world, was painting your face in a beautiful picture. While he was doing this you were taken seriously ill, and your life was despaired of. It was then that I brought you into the country, and here you have been living and benefiting by the kind services of Mrs. Titwing for a long time.'

"And you know nothing of my history previously to seeing me in the London studio?' I asked.

"All that I could ever learn about that,' said he, in what seemed to me a rather evasive tone, 'I had to gather from the incoherent and rambling talk of Wilderspin, a religious enthusiast whose genius is very nearly akin to mania. He was so struck by you that he actually believed you to be not a corporeal woman at all; he believed you had been sent from the spirit world by his dead mother to enable him to paint a great picture.'

"Oh, I must see him, and make him tell me all,' I said.

"Yes,' said he, 'but not yet.'

"What Mr. D'Arcy told me," said Winnie, "affected me so deeply that I remained silent for a long time. Then came a thought which made me say,

"You, too, are a painter, Mr. D'Arcy?"

"Yes,' he said.

"During the months that I have been living here have you used me as your model?"

"No; but that was not because I did not wish to do so.'

"Then he suddenly looked in my face and said,

"Is your family entirely Welsh, Miss Wynne?"

"Entirely,' I said. 'But why did you not use me as your model, Mr. D'Arcy?"

"Poor Wilderspin believed you to be a spiritual body,' he said: 'I did not. I knew that you were a young lady in an unconscious condition. To have painted you in such a condition and without the possibility of getting your consent would have been sacrilege, even if I had painted you as a Madonna.'

"I could not speak, his words and tone were so tender. He broke the silence by saying,

"Miss Wynne, there is one thing in connection with you that puzzles me very much. You speak of yourself as though you were a kind of Welsh peasant girl, and yet your conversation—well, I mustn't tell you what I think of that.'

"This made me laugh outright, for ladies who called on Miss Dalrymple used to make the same remark.

"Mr. D'Arcy,' I said, 'you are harbouring the greatest little impostor in the British Islands. I am the mere mocking bird of one of the most cultivated women living. My true note is that of a simple Welsh bird.'

"A Welsh nightingale,' he said, with a smile, 'but who was the original impostor?"

"Miss Dalrymple,' I said.

"Miss Dalrymple, the writer!—why I knew her years ago—before you were born.'

"Our talk had been so lively that we had not noticed the passing of time, nor had we noticed that the clouds had been gathering for a summer shower. Suddenly the rain fell heavily; although we ran to the house, we were quite wet by the time we got in.

"We found poor Mrs. Titwing in a great state of excitement on account of the rain, and also because the dinner had been waiting for nearly an hour. That scamper in the rain, and the laughing and joking at our predicament, seemed to bring us closer to-

gether than anything else could have done. Mr. D'Arcy told Mrs. Titwing to take me to my room to change my dress for dinner, and he seemed quite disappointed when I told him that I could eat no dinner, and would like to retire to my room for the night. The fact was that the events of that wonderful day had exhausted all my powers; every nerve within me seemed crying out for sleep.

"I went to my room, dismissed Mrs. Titwing, and went to bed at once. But no sooner had I got into bed than I began to perceive that, instead of sleep, a long wakeful night was before me. Mr. D'Arcy's story about finding me in a London studio took entire possession of my mind. How did I get there? Where had I been and what had been my adventures before I got there? Why did the painter, in whose studio Mr. D'Arcy found me, believe that I had been supernaturally sent to him? I shuddered as a thousand dreadful thoughts flowed into my mind. 'Mr. D'Arcy,' I said to myself, 'must know more than he has told me. Then, of course, came thoughts about you. I wondered why you had allowed me to drift away from you in this manner. True, I was probably removed from Raxton immediately after my illness, when you were very ill, as I knew; but then you had recovered!'"

VII

WHEN Winifred reached this point in her story, I said,

"And so you wondered what had become of me from your last seeing me down to you waking up in Mr. D'Arcy's house?"

"Yes, yes, Henry. Do tell me what you were doing all that time."

As she said these words the whole tragedy of my life returned to me in one moment, and yet in that moment I lived over again every dreadful incident and every dreadful detail. The spectacle on the sands, the search for her in North Wales, the meeting in the cottage, the frightful sight as she leapt away from me on Snowdon, the heart-breaking search for her among the mountains, the sound of her voice, singing by the theatre portico in the rain, the search for her in the hideous London streets, the scenes in the studios, the soul-blasting drama in Primrose Court—all came upon me in such a succession of realities that the beautiful radiant creature now talking to me seemed impossible except as a figure in a dream. And she was asking me to tell her what I had been doing during all these months of nightmare. But I knew that I never could tell her, either now or at

any future time. I knew that to tell her would be to kill her.

"Winnie," I said, "I will tell you all about myself, but I must hear your story first. The faster you get on with that the sooner you will hear what I have to tell."

"Then I will get on fast," said she. "After a while my thoughts, as I tossed in my bed, turned from the past to the future. What was the future that was lying before me? For months I had evidently been living on the charity of Mr. D'Arcy. My only excuse for having done so was that I was entirely unconscious of it; but now that I did know the relations between us I must of course end them at once. But what was I to do? Whither was I to go? Besides Miss Dalrymple, whose address I did not know, I had no friends except Sinfu Lovell and the Gypsies and a few Welsh farmers. To live upon my benefactor's generous charity now that I was conscious of it was, I felt, impossible.

"I was penniless. I had not even money to pay my railway fare to any part of England. There was only one thing for me to do—write to you. When I rose in the morning it was with the full determination to write to you at once. I had been told by Mrs. Titwing that Mr. D'Arcy always breakfasted alone in a little ante-room adjoining his bedroom, and always breakfasted late. My breakfast, she said, would be prepared in what she called the little green room. And when I left my bedroom, dressed in a morning dress that was carefully laid out for me, I found the housekeeper moving about in the passages. She conducted me to the little green room. On the walls were two looking-glasses in old black oak frames carved with knights at tilt and angels' heads hovering above them. Each frame contained two circular mirrors surrounded by painted designs telling the story of the Holy Grail. The room was furnished with quaint sofas and chairs on which beautiful little old-fashioned designs were painted. She told me that as I had not named an hour for breakfasting I should have to wait about twenty minutes.

"In one corner of the room was a rather large what-not, on which lay one or two French novels in green and yellow paper covers and a few daily and weekly newspapers, which I went and turned over. Among them I was startled to find a paper called the *Raxton Gazette*. But I saw at once how it got there, for written on the margin at the top of the paper was the address, 'Dr. Mivart, Wimpole Street, London.' Mr. D'Arcy had told me that the gentleman whose voice I heard behind the

screen was the medical man who attended to me during my illness, and it now suddenly flashed upon my mind that at Raxton there was a Dr. Mivart, though I had never seen him during my stay there. These were, no doubt, one and the same person, and some one from Raxton had posted the newspaper to the doctor's house in London.

"I looked down the columns of the paper with a very lively interest, and my eye was soon caught by a paragraph encircled by a thick blue pencil mark. It gave from a paper called the *London Satirist* what professed to be a long account of you, in which it was said that you were living in a bungalow in Wales with a Gypsy girl."

When Winifred said this I forgot my promise not to interrupt her narrative, and exclaimed,

"And you believed this infamous libel, Winnie?"

"To say that I believed it as a simple statement of fact would of course be wrong. I never doubted that you loved me as a child."

"As a child! Do you then think that I did not love you that night on Raxton sands?"

"I did not doubt that you loved me then. But wealth, I had been told, is so demoralising and I thought your never coming forward to find me and protect me in my illness might have something to do with inconsistency. Anyhow, these thoughts combined with my dread of your mother to prevent me from writing to you."

"Winnie, Winnie!" I said, "these theories of the so-called advanced thinkers, whom your aunt taught you to believe in—these ideas that love and wealth cannot exist together, are prejudices as narrow and as blind as those of an opposite kind which have sapped the natures of certain members of my own family."

"The sight of your dear sad face when I first saw it here was proof enough of that," she said. "As your life was said to be that of a wanderer, I did not care to write to Raxton, and I did not know where to address you. What I had read in the newspaper, I need not tell you, troubled me greatly. I cried bitterly, and made but a poor breakfast. After it was over Mr. D'Arcy entered the room, and shook me warmly by the hand. He saw that I had been crying, and he stood silent and seemed to be asking himself the cause. Drawing a chair towards me, and taking a seat, he said,

"I fear you have not slept well, Miss Wynne."

"Not very well," I answered. Then, looking at him, I said, "Mr. D'Arcy, I have

something to say to you, and this is the moment for saying it."

"He gave a startled look, as though he guessed what I was going to say.

"And I have something to say to you, Miss Wynne," he said, smiling, "and this seems the proper time for saying it. Up to the last few weeks a young gentleman from Oxford has been acting as my secretary. He has now left me, and I am seeking another. His duties, I must say, have not been what would generally be called severe. I write most of my own letters, though not all, and my correspondence is far from being large. His chief duty has been that of reading to me in the evening. For many years my eyes have not been so strong as a painter's ought to be, and the oculist whom I consulted told me that the strain of a painter's work was quite as much as my eyes ought to bear, and that I could not afford much eyesight for reading purposes. I am passionately fond of reading. To be without the pleasure that books can afford me would be to make me miserable, and I have looked upon my secretary's duty of reading aloud to me as an important one. If you would take his place you would be conferring the greatest service upon me."

"Mr. D'Arcy," I said, "I suspect you."

"Suspect me, Miss Wynne?"

"I suspect that generous heart of yours. I suspect you are merely inventing a post for me to fill, because you pity me."

"No, Miss Wynne; upon my honour this is not so. I will not deny that if it were not in your power to do me the service that I ask of you, I should still feel the greatest disappointment if you passed from under this roof. Your scruples about living here as you lived during your illness—simply as my guest—I understand, but do not approve. They show that you are not quite so free from the bondage of custom as I should like every friend of mine to be. The tie of friendship is, in my judgment, the strongest of all ties, stronger than that of blood, because it springs from the natural kinship of soul to soul, and there is no reason in the world why I should not offer you a home as a friend, or why, if the circumstances of our lives were reversed, you should not offer me one. But in this case it is the fact that the service I am asking you to render me is greater than any service I can render you."

"I was so deeply touched by his words and by his way of speaking them, that my lips trembled, and I could make no reply.

"It's a shame," he said, "for me to talk about business, so soon after your recovery. Let us leave the matter for the moment, and

come to me in the studio during the morning, and let me show you the pictures I am painting, and some of my choice things.'

"The morning wore on, and still I sat pondering over the situation in which I found myself. The servant came and moved the breakfast things, and her furtive glances at me showed that I was an object at once familiar and strange to her. But very little attention did I pay to her, in such a whirl of thoughts as I then was. The moment that one course of action seemed to me the best, the very opposite would occur to me as being the best. However, I was determined to know from Mr. D'Arcy, and at once, what was the state in which I was when I was brought to this place, and what had been the course of my life during my stay here. Mr. D'Arcy had told me that, for reasons which he so touchingly alluded to, he had not used me as a model. How, then, had my time been passed? To question poor Mrs. Titwing would only be to frighten her. I would ask Mr. D'Arcy for a full confession.

"Mrs. Titwing came into the room. She began pulling at the ribbon of her black silk apron as though she wanted to speak and could not find the proper words. At last she said,

"I hope, miss, there have been no words between you and Mr. D'Arcy?"

"Words between me and Mr. D'Arcy? What do you mean?" I asked.

"He seems very much upset, miss, about something. He is not at his easel, but keeps walking about the studio, and every now and then he asks where you are. I'm sure he used to dote on you when you were a child, miss."

"When I was a child?" I said, laughing. "But I see what it is, I have been very neglectful. I promised to go into the studio to see the pictures, and he is, of course, impatient at my keeping him waiting. I will go to him at once," and I went.

"When I entered the studio he turned quickly round and said,

"Well?"

"You were so kind," I said, "as to invite me to see your treasures."

"To be sure," he said. "I thought you came to give your decision."

"He then showed me the curious divan upon which I had rested the day before, and explained to me the meaning of the carved designs."

VIII

WINIFRED described the designs on the divan so vividly that I could almost see

them. But what interested me was the painter, not his surroundings: and she now seemed to grow weary of talking about herself.

"Did he," I said, "did he say anything about—about painters' models?"

"Yes," she said, "Mr. D'Arcy took me to an easel and showed me a picture. It was only the half-length of a woman; but it was a tragedy rendered fully by the expression on one woman's face.

"I had no idea," I said, "that any picture of a single face could do such work as that. Was this painted from a model?"

"Yes," he said with a smile, which was evidently at my ignorance of art. "It was painted from life."

"There were four other half-lengths in the room, all of them very beautiful.

"Two of these," he said, "are copies, the originals have been sold. The other two need still a few touches to make them complete."

"And they were all painted from life?" I said.

"Yes," he said. "Why do you repeat that question?"

"Because," I said, "although they are all so wonderful and so beautiful in colour, I can see a great difference between them—I can scarcely say what the difference is. They are evidently all painted by the same artist, but painted in different moods of the artist's mind."

"Ah," he said, "I am much interested. Let me see you classify them according to your view. There are, as you see, two brunettes and two blondes."

"Yes," I said, "between this grand brunette, to use your own expression, holding a pomegranate in her hand and the other brunette whose beautiful eyes are glistening and laughing over the fruit she is holding up, there is the same difference that there is between the blonde's face under the apple blossoms and the other blonde's face of the figure that is listening to music. In both faces the difference seems to be that of the soul."

"The two faces," said he, "in which you see what you call soul are painted from two dear friends of mine—ladies of high intelligence and great accomplishments, who occasionally honour me by giving me sittings—the other two are painted from two of the finest hired models to be found in London."

"Then," I said, "an artist's success depends a great deal upon his model? I had no idea of such a thing."

"It does indeed," he said. "Such success as I have won since my great loss is very largely owing to those two ladies, one so

grand and the other so sweet, whom you are admiring."

"The way in which he spoke the words 'since my great loss' almost brought tears into my eyes. He then went round the room, and explained in a delightful way the various pictures and objects of interest. I felt that I was preventing him from working, and told him so.

"You are very thoughtful," he said, "but I can only paint when I feel the impulse within me, and to-day I am lazy. But while you go and get your luncheon—I do not lunch myself—I must try to do something. You must have many matters of your own that you would like to attend to. Will you return to the studio about five o'clock, and let me have your company in another walk?"

"Until five o'clock I was quite alone, and wandered about the house and garden trying my memory as to whether I could recall something, but in vain. At any other time than this I should no doubt have found the old house a very fascinating one; but not for two minutes together could my mind dwell upon anything but the amazing situation in which I found myself. The house was, I saw, built of grey stone, and as it had seven gables it suggested to me Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous story, of which my aunt was so fond. Inside I found every room to be more or less interesting. But what attracted me most, I think, was a series of large attics in which was a number of enormous oak beams supporting the antique roof. With the sunlight pouring through the windows and illuminating almost every corner, the place seemed cheerful enough, but I could not help thinking how ghostly it must look on a moonlight night.

"While the thought was in my mind, a strange sensation came upon me. I seemed to hear a moan; it came through the door of the large attic adjoining the one in which I stood, and then I heard a voice that seemed familiar to me, and yet I could not recall it. It was repeating in a loud, agonised tone the words of that curse written on the parchment scroll which I picked up on the Raxton sands. I was so astonished that for a long time I could think of nothing else.

IX

"AT five o'clock I was going towards the studio to keep my appointment when I met Mr. D'Arcy in his broad-brimmed felt hat, ready and waiting for me to take the proposed walk with him.

"Oh, what a lovely afternoon it was! A Welsh afternoon could not have been lovelier. In fact it carried my mind back here. The sun, shining on the buttercups and the grey-tufted standing grass, made the meadows look as though covered with a tapestry that shifted from grey to lavender, and then from lavender to gold, as the soft breeze moved over it. And many of the birds were still in full song; and brilliant as was the music of the skylarks, the blackbirds and thrushes were so numerous that the music falling from the sky seemed caught and swallowed up by the music rising from the hedgerows and trees.

"I lingered at one of the gates through which we passed to enjoy the beauty undisturbed by the motion of my own body.

"I have often wished," Mr. D'Arcy said, "that I had a tithe of your passion for Nature, and all your knowledge of Nature. To have been born in London and to have passed one's youth there is a great loss. Nature has to be learnt, as art has to be learnt, in earliest youth."

"What makes you know that my chief passion is love of Nature?" I asked.

"It was," he said, "the one thing you showed during your illness—during your unconscious condition."

"And yet I remember nothing of that time," I said. "This gives me an opportunity of asking you something—an opportunity which I had determined to make for myself before another day went by."

"And what is that?" he said, in a tone that betrayed some uneasiness.

"You have told me how I came here. I now want you to tell me, too, what was my condition when I came and what was my course of life during all this long period. How did the time pass? What did I do? I remember nothing."

"I am glad you are asking me these questions," he said, "for I believe that the more fully and more exactly I answer them, the better for you and the better for me. Victor Hugo, in one of his romances, speaks of the pensive somnambulism of the animals. "Somnambulism," sometimes pensive and sometimes playful, is the very phrase I should use in characterising your condition when you first came here and down to your recovery from that strange illness. But this somnambulism would every now and then change and pass into a consciousness which I can only compare with that of a child. But no child that I have ever seen was so bewitchingly child-like as you were. It was this that made your presence such a priceless boon to me."

"Priceless boon. Mr. D'Arcy!" I said.

'How could such a being as you describe be a priceless boon to any one?'

"I will tell you," he replied. "Even before that great sorrow which has made me the loneliest man upon the earth—even in the days when my animal spirits were considered at times almost boisterous, I was always at intervals subject to periods of great depression, or rather, I should say, to periods of *ennui*. I must either be painting or reading or writing. I had not the precious faculty of being able on occasions to sit and let the rich waters of life flow over me. I would yearn for amusement, and search in vain for some object to amuse me. When you first came I was deeply interested in so extraordinary a case as yours; and after a while, when the acuteness of my curiosity and the poignancy of my sympathy for you had abated, you became to me a joy, as a child is a joy in the eyes of its parents.'

"Then your interest in me," I said with a smile, "was that which you would feel towards a puppy or a kitten."

"I perceive that you have a turn for satire," he said, laughing. "I will not deny that I have an extraordinarily strong passion for watching the movements of animals. I have, to the sorrow of my neighbours, filled my garden in London with all kinds of purchases from Jamrach's. But from the moment that I knew you, who combined the fascination of a fawn and a child with that of a sylph or a fairy, my poor little menagerie was neglected, and what became of its members I scarcely know. I suppose I am very uncomplimentary to you, but you would have the truth. The moment that I felt myself threatened by the fiend *Ennui* I used to tell Mrs. Titwing, who was in the habit of calling you her baby, to bring you into the studio, and at once the fiend fled. At last I grew so attached to you that your presence was a positive necessity of my life. Unless I knew that you were in the studio I could not paint. It was necessary for me at intervals to look across the room at that divan and see you there amusing yourself—playing with yourself, so to speak, sometimes like a kitten, sometimes like a child. I would not have parted with you for the world.'

"He did not say he would not now part with me for the world, Henry, and I thought I understood the meaning of that expression of disappointment which I had observed in his eyes when I first saw them looking into mine. I thought I understood this extraordinary man—so unlike all others; I thought I knew why my eyes lost the charm he was now so eloquently describing to me the moment that they became lighted with what he called self-consciousness.

"After a while I said, 'But as I was in such an unconscious state as you describe, how could you possibly know that a speciality of mine is a love of Nature?'

"It was only when you were out in the open air that the condition which I have compared to somnambulism seemed at times to disappear. Then your consciousness seemed to spring up for a moment and to take heed of what was passing around you. You would sometimes scamper through the meadows, pluck the wild flowers and weave them into wreaths round your head, or stand listening to the birds, or hold out your hands as if to embrace the sunny wind. One day when a friend of mine, an enthusiastic angler, who comes here, was going down to the river to fish, you showed the greatest interest in what was going on. The fishing tackle seemed so familiar to you that my friend put a fishing rod into your hand and you went with him to the river. I do not myself care for angling, and I was at the time very busy with a picture, but I could not resist the temptation to follow you. You skipped into the punt with the greatest glee, baited your hook, adjusted your float on the line, cast it into the water and fished with such skill that you caught two fish to my friend's one. Observing all these things, I came to the conclusion that you had lived much in the open air, and other incidents made me know that you were a great lover of Nature.'

"And you," I said, "must also be a lover of Nature, or you could not find such delight in watching animals."

"No," he said, "the interest I take in animals has nothing whatever to do with love of Nature or study of Nature. They interest me by that unconsciousness of grace which makes them such a contrast to man."

"We then went into the house. Our talk during our ramble in the fields seemed to remove effectually all awkwardness and restraint between us.

X

"THAT day," said Winnie, "a determination which had been caused by many a reflection during the last few hours induced me at dinner to lead the conversation to the subject of pictures and models. In a few minutes Mr. D'Arcy launched out in an eloquent discourse upon a subject which was so new to me and so familiar to him.

"You were saying this morning, Mr. D'Arcy," I said, "that you were indebted—I think you said you were specially indebted

—to your models for your success as a painter.'

"Yes," he said. "For many years a strange and unexampled good fortune has attended me in regard to models. "Mock modesty" has never been a vice of mine; I say what I simply mean when I tell you that without this good luck in regard to my models I could never have achieved such a position as is now mine. But why do you keep harping upon this subject? Why do you take all this interest in painters and their models?"

"Because I want to be your model," I said.

"He turned round upon me with an expression of the greatest delight on his face.

"My dear Miss Wynne," he said, "I should never have dared to ask you to sit to me. I had told you about your sitting in an unconscious state to Wilderspin, and I saw how troubled and perplexed you were; and now that you are yourself I could not ask you to sit to me. Three or four pictures painted from you as you now are would not clash with Wilderspin's pictures, the expression being so entirely different, and they would make my fortune in every way."

"Why, what *can* you mean, Mr. D'Arcy?" I exclaimed in amazement.

"I mean," he said, "that I have never yet had the chance of expressing in art a subtle and indescribable quality to be found in some few faces among your countrywomen—a quality which can only be described in the word Cymric. Even now, while I am talking to you, the subject for a picture has come to me—"The Spirit of Snowdon."

"I clapped my hands with delight.

"It would be a complete departure from my present style," he said, "of which the fickle public may very soon begin to weary. But I fear you are doing this kindness to me—I fear you are offering to sit—because of the services it has been my privilege to render you. If you knew the service your company has rendered me, you would realise how immeasurably I have been overpaid."

"Mr. D'Arcy," I said, "I have every reason to do what I want to do through gratitude, but the woman does not live who would not feel herself exalted by being turned to such use by your genius. The woman who sits as a model for a great painter in an immortal picture becomes in a way a priestess herself of Art. Her mission is only less than the painter's in nobility. And as to sitting for "The Spirit of Snowdon," what girl having within her breast the Cymric passion which nothing can quench would not feel that to do so was

almost presumption? I hope you will let me sit to you as soon as you can."

"And so you sat for the Spirit of Snowdon, Winnie?" I said.

"Yes," said Winnie; "I gave him several sittings."

"Ah, I can imagine the glorious result," I said.

"Can you?" said Winnie. "The glorious result was a failure, as Mr. D'Arcy himself was the first to admit."

"What!" I exclaimed, "he failed with a daughter of Snowdon for model?"

"To paint 'The Spirit of Snowdon,' a painter, it seems, wants something more than a daughter of Snowdon for model," said Winnie. "He needs sympathy—full and undivided sympathy—with the race to whom Snowdon has been given. The picture was a failure and was soon abandoned."

XI

EITHER because she was wearied of talking about herself and her adventures, or because she was now approaching some point in her story which it was not pleasing to dwell upon, Winnie again proposed that her narrative should end here, at least for a time, and urged me to tell her what had befallen myself since we parted at the cottage door at Raxton. Even had it been possible for me to talk about myself without touching upon some dangerous incident or another, my impatience to get at the mystery of mysteries in connection with her and her rescue from Primrose Court was so great that I could only implore her to tell me what had occurred down to her leaving Hurstcote Manor, and also what had been the cause of her leaving.

"Well," said Winnie, "I am now going to tell you of an extraordinary thing that happened. One fine night the moon was so brilliant that after I quitted Mr. D'Arcy I stole out of the side door into the garden, a favourite place of mine, for old English flowers were mixed with apple trees and pear trees. I was strolling about the garden, thinking over a thousand things connected with you, and myself, and Mr. D'Arcy, when I saw stooping over a flower bed the figure of a tall woman. I could scarcely believe my eyes, for I had all the while supposed that, excepting Mr. D'Arcy, myself, and Mrs. Titwing, the servants were the only occupants of the place. I turned away, and walked silently through the little wicket into what is called the home close. As I pondered over the incident, I recalled certain things which singly had produced no effect on my

mind, but which now fitted in with each other, and seemed to open up vistas of mystery and suspicion. Mysterious looks and gestures on the faces of the servants pointed to there being some secret that was to be kept from me. I had not given much heed to these things, but now I could not help connecting them with the appearance of the tall woman in the garden.

"Some guests arrived next day, and when I pleaded headache Mr. D'Arcy said 'Perhaps you would rather keep to your own room to-day.'

"I told him I should, and I spent the day alone—spent it mainly in thinking about the tall woman. In the evening I went into the garden, and remained there for a long time, but no tall woman made her appearance.

"I passed out through the wicket into the home close, and as I walked about in the grass, under the elms that sprang up from the tall hedge, I thought and thought over what I had seen, but could come to no explanation. I was standing under a tree, in the shadow which its branches made, when I became suddenly conscious that the tall woman was close to me. I turned round, and stood face to face with Sinfi Lovell. The sight of a spectre could not have startled me more, but the effect of my appearance upon her was greater still. Her face took an expression that seemed to curdle my blood, and she shrieked, 'Father! the curse! Let his children be vagabonds and beg their bread; let them seek it also out of desolate places.' And then she ran towards the house.

"In a few minutes Mr. D'Arcy came out into the field without his hat, and evidently much agitated.

"'Miss Wynne,' he said, 'I fear you must have been half frightened to death. Never was there such an unlucky *contretemps*.'

"'But why is Sinfi Lovell here?' I said, 'and why was I not told she was here?'

"'Sinfi is an old friend of mine,' he said. 'I have been in the habit of using her as a model for pictures. She came here to sit for me, when she was taken ill. She is subject to fits, as you have seen. The doctor believed that they were over and would not recur, and I had determined that to-morrow I would bring you together.'

"I made no reply, but walked silently by his side across the field to the little wicket. The confidence I had reposed in Mr. D'Arcy had been like the confidence a child reposes in its father.

"'Miss Wynne,' he said, in a voice full of emotion, 'I feel that an unlucky incident has come between us, and yet if I ever did anything for your good, it was when I decided to

postpone revealing the fact that Sinfi Lovell was under this roof until her cure was so complete and decisive that you could never by any chance receive the shock that you have now received.'

"I felt my resentment was melting in the music of his words.

"'What caused the fits?' I said. 'She talked about being under a curse. What can it mean?'

"'That,' he said, 'is too long a story for me to tell you now.'

"'I know,' said I, 'that some time ago the tomb of Mr. Aylwin's father was violated by some undiscovered miscreant, and I know that the words Sinfi uttered just now are the words of a curse written by the dead man on a piece of parchment, and stolen with a jewel from his tomb. I have seen the parchment itself, and I know the words well. Her father, Panuel Lovell, is as innocent of the crime of sacrilege as my poor father was. What could have made her suppose that she had inherited the curse from her father?'

"'I have no explanation to offer,' he said. 'As you know so much of the matter and I so little, I am inclined to ask you for some explanation of the puzzle.'

"I thought over the matter for a minute, and then I said to him, 'Sinfi Lovell knows Raxton as well as Snowdon, and must have been very familiar with the crime. I can only suppose that she has brooded so long over the enormity of the offence and the appalling words of the curse that she has actually come at last to believe that poor, simple-minded Panuel Lovell is the offender, and that she, as his child, has inherited the curse.'

"'A most admirable solution of the mystery,' he said, his face beaming with delight."

XII

WHEN Winnie got to this point she said, "Yes, Henry, poor Sinfi seems in some unaccountable way to have learnt all about that piece of parchment and the curse written upon it. She has been under the extraordinary delusion that her own father, poor Panuel Lovell, was the violator of the tomb, and that she has inherited the curse."

"Good God, Winnie!" I exclaimed; and when I recalled what I had seen of Sinfi in the cottage, I was racked with perplexity, pity, and wonder. What could it mean?

"Yes," said Winifred, "she has been possessed by this astounding delusion, and it used to bring on fits which were appalling

to witness. They are passed now, however."

"Is she recovered now?"

"Mr. D'Arcy," said Winnie, "assured me that, in the opinion of the doctor, the delusion would not be permanent, but that Sinfi would soon be entirely restored to health. While Mr. D'Arcy and I were talking about her Sinfi came through the wicket again. Rushing up to me and seizing my hand, she said,

"Oh, Winnie, how I must have skeered you! I dare say Mr. D'Arcy has told you that I've been subject to fits o' late. It was comin' on you suddint as I did under the tree that brought it on. I wouldn't let Mr. D'Arcy tell you I wur here until I wur quite sure I should have no more on 'em, but the doctor said this very day that I wur now quite well."

"My mind ran all night long upon the mystery of Sinfi Lovell. Mr. D'Arcy's explanation of her appearance at Hurstcote Manor was certainly clear enough, but somehow its very clearness aroused suspicion—no, I will not say suspicion—misgivings. If he had been able, while he seemed so frank and open, to keep away from me a secret—I mean the secret of Sinfi Lovell's being concealed in the house—what secrets might he not be concealing from me about my own mystery? Did he not know everything that occurred during that period which was a blank in my mind, the period from my sinking down on the sands to my waking up in his house?"

"From the very first, indeed, a feeling of mystery had haunted me. I had often pondered over every circumstance that attended my waking into life, but that incident which was the most firmly fixed in my mind was the sight of the feet of a tall woman whose body was hid by the screen between my couch and the other one. When I asked Mr. D'Arcy about this, he did not say in so many words that I was suffering from a delusion about those feet, but he talked about the illusion which generally accompanied a recovery from such illnesses as mine. Now of course I felt sure that Sinfi was the person I had seen on the couch. But why was she there?"

"I did not see Mr. D'Arcy until the afternoon after the guests had left, for in order to avoid seeing him and them, I took a long stroll by the river and then got into the punt. I had scarcely done so when Sinfi appeared on the bank and hailed me. I took her into the punt. She was so entirely herself that I found it difficult to believe in the startling spectacle of the previous evening, although her expression

was careworn, and she certainly looked a little paler than she used to look when she and I and Rhona Boswell were such great friends; her splendid beauty and bearing were as striking as ever, I thought. I was expecting every minute that she would say something about what occurred under the elm tree in the home close. But she did not allude to it, and therefore I did not. We spent the entire afternoon in reminiscences of Carnarvonshire. When she told me that she knew you and that you had been there together, and when she told me the cause of your being there, and told me of your search for me, and all the distress that came to you on my account, my longing to see you was like a fever.

"But vivid as were the pictures that Sinfi gave me of your search for me, I could not piece them together in a plain tale. I tried to do so; it was impossible. What had happened to me after I had become unconscious on the sands in that unaccountable way—why I was found in Wales—how I could possibly have got there without knowing about it—what had led to my being discovered by Mr. D'Arcy—discovered in London, above all places, and in a painter's studio—these questions were with me night and day, and Sinfi was entirely unable to tell me anything about the matter, unless, as I sometimes half-thought, she was concealing something from me."

"How could you have suspicions of poor Sinfi?" I said, for I was becoming alarmed at the way in which these inquiries were absorbing Winnie's mind.

"It is, I know, Henry, a peculiarity of my nature to be extremely confiding until I have once been deceived, and then to be just as suspicious. Kind as Mr. D'Arcy has been to me, I began to feel restless in his haven of refuge. I think that he perceived it, for I often found his eyes fixed upon me with a somewhat inquiring and anxious expression in them. I felt that I must leave him and go out into the world and take my place in the battle of life."

"But, Winnie," I said, "you don't say that you intended to come to me. Battle of life, indeed! Where should Winnie stand in that battle except by the side of Henry? You knew now where to find me. Sinfi, of course, told you that I was in Wales. And you did not even write to me! What can it mean?"

"Why, Henry, don't you know what it means? Don't you know that the newspapers were full of long paragraphs about the heir of the Aylwins having left his famous bungalow and gone to Japan? Why,

it was actually copied into the little penny weekly thing that Mrs. Titwing takes in, and it was there that I read it."

"This shows the folly of ignoring the papers," I said. "I did undoubtedly say in some letters to friends that I proposed going to Japan; but my loss of you, my grief, my misery paralysed every faculty of mine. My strength of purpose was all gone. I delayed and delayed starting, and never left Wales at all, as you see."

"Two things," continued Winnie, "prevented my leaving Hurstcote—my promise to Mr. D'Arcy to sit to him for his picture of Zenelophon, and the prosaic fact that I had not money in my pocket to travel with; for it was part of the delicate method of Mr. D'Arcy to furnish me with everything money could buy, but to give me no money. His extravagant expenditure upon me in the way of dress, trinkets, and every kind of luxury that could be placed in my room by Mrs. Titwing appalled me. Mrs. Titwing's own bearing, when I spoke to her about them, would have made one almost suppose that they grew there like mushrooms; and if I mentioned them to Mr. D'Arcy he would tell me that Mrs. Titwing was answerable for all that; he knew nothing about such matters.

"What I should in the end have done as to leaving Hurstcote or remaining there I don't know; but after a while something occurred to remove my difficulties. One morning, when I was giving Mr. D'Arcy a long sitting for his picture, a Gypsy friend of Sinfi's belonging to a family of Lees encamped two or three miles off, called to see her. It was a man, Sinfi told me, whom I did not know, and he had gone away without my seeing him.

"In the afternoon, when Sinfi and I were in the punt fishing together, I could not help noticing that she was much absorbed in thought.

"This 'ere fishin' brings back old Wales, don't it?" she said.

"Yes," I said, "and I should love to see the old places again."

"You would?" she said; and her excitement was so great that she dropped her fishing-rod in the river. 'Jake Lee has been tellin' me that our people are there, all camped in the old place by Bettws y Coed. I told him to write to my daddy—Jake can write—and tell him that I'm goin' to see him.'

"But you already knew they were there, Sinfi; you told me. What makes you so suddenly want to go?"

"That's nuther here nor there. I do want to go. Why can't you go with me?"

"I should much like it," I said, "but it's impossible."

"Why? You can come back to Mr. D'Arcy again."

"But, Sinfi," I said, "how are we to travel without money? I have not a copper."

"Ah, but I've got gold balancers about me, and they're better nor copper."

"Dear Sinfi!" I said, "I'd rather borrow of you than any one in the world."

"Borrow!" said she,—"all right! Now we shall have to speak to Mr. D'Arcy about it. It'll be like drawin' one o' his teeth partin' with you."

"When I next saw Mr. D'Arcy I found that Sinfi had already spoken to him about our project. He seemed very reluctant for me to leave him, although I promised him that I would return.

"It is a strange fancy of Sinfi's, Miss Wynne," said he, "and a very disconcerting one to me; but I feel that it must be yielded to. Whatever can be done to serve or even gratify Sinfi Lovell, it is my duty and yours to do."

"Mr. D'Arcy always spoke of Sinfi in this way. She seems to have done something of a peculiarly noble kind for him and for me too, but what it is I have tried in vain to discover.

"And a few days after this we started for Wales.

"Oh, Henry, I wonder whether any one who is not Welsh-born can understand my delight as we passed along the railway at nightfall and I first felt upon my cheek the soft rich breath of the Welsh meadows, smelling partly of the beloved land and partly of the beloved sea. 'Yr Hen Wlad, yr Hen Gartref!' I murmured when at Prestatyn I heard the first Welsh word and saw the first white-washed Welsh cottage. From head to foot I became a Welsh girl again. The loveliness of Hurstcote Manor seemed a dull, grey, far-away house in a dream. But if I had known that I should also find you, my dear! If I had dreamed that I should find Henry!"

And then silence alone would satisfy her. And Snowdon was speaking to us both.

XIII

AND what about Sinfi Lovell? In those supreme moments of bliss did Winifred and I think much about Sinfi? Alas! that love and happiness should be so selfish!

When at last the sound of Sinfi's crwth and song came from some spot a good way

up the rugged path leading to the summit, it quite startled us.

"That's Sini's signal," said Winnie; "that is the way we used to call each other when we were children. She used to sing one verse of a Snowdon song, and I used to answer it with another. Upon my word, Henry, I had forgotten all about her. What a shame! We have not seen each other since we parted yesterday at the camp."

And she sprang up to go.

"No, don't leave me," I said; "wait till she comes to us. She's sure to come quite soon enough. Depend upon it she is eager to see how her *coup de théâtre* has prospered."

"I must really go to her," said Winifred: "ever since we left Hurstcote I have fallen in with her wishes in everything."

"But why?"

"Because I am sure from Mr. D'Arcy's words that she has rendered me some great service, though what it is I can't guess in the least."

"But what are really the plans of the day of this important Gypsy?"

"There again I can't guess in the least," said Winifred. "Probably the walk to the top and then down to Llanberis, and then on to Carnarvon, is really to take place, as originally arranged—only with the slight addition that *some one* is to join us! I shall soon be back, either alone or with Sini, and then we shall know."

She ran up the path. Against her wish I followed her for a time. She moved towards the same dangerous ledge of rock where I had last seen her on the day before she had vanished in the mist.

I cried out as I followed her, "Winnie, for God's sake don't run that danger!"

"No danger at all," she cried. "I know every rock as well as you know every boulder of Raxton Cliffs."

I watched her poising herself on the ledge; it made me dizzy. Her confidence, however, was so great that I began to feel she was safe; and after she had passed out of sight I returned to the llyn where we had breakfasted.

Sini's music ceased, but Winifred did not return. I sat down on the rock and tried to think, but soon found that the feat was impossible. The turbulent waves of my emotion seemed to have washed my brain clear of all thoughts. The mystery in connection with Sini was now as great as the mystery connected with the rescue of Winifred from the mattress in Primrose Court. So numbed was my brain that I at last pinched myself to make sure that I was awake. In doing this I seemed to feel in one

of my coat pockets a hard substance. Putting my hand into the pocket, I felt the sharp corner of a letter pricking between a finger and its nail. The acute pain assured me that I was awake. I pulled out the letter. It was the one that the servant at the bungalow had given me in the early morning when I called to get my bath. I read the address, which was in a handwriting I did not know:—

"HENRY AYLWIN, ESQ.,
"Carnarvon, North Wales."

The Carnarvon postmark and the words written on the envelope, "Try Capel Curig," showed the cause of the delay in the letter's reaching me. In the left-hand corner of the envelope were written the words "Very urgent. Please forward immediately." I opened it, and found it to be a letter of great length. I looked at the end and gave a start, exclaiming "D'Arcy!"

XVI

D'Arcy's Letter

THIS is how the letter ran:—

HURSTCOTE MANOR.

MY DEAR AYLWIN,

I have just learned by accident that you are somewhere in Wales. I had gathered from paragraphs in the newspapers about you that you were in Japan, or in some other part of the East.

Miss Wynne and Sini Lovell are at this moment in Wales, and I write at once to furnish you with some facts in connection with Miss Wynne which it is important for you to know before you meet her. I can imagine your amazement at learning that she you have lost so long has been staying here as my guest. I will tell you all without more preamble.

One day, some little time after I parted from you in the streets of London, I chanced to go into Wilderspin's studio, when I found him in great distress. He told me that the

beautiful model who had sat for his picture "Faith and Love" had suddenly died. The mother of the girl had on the previous day been in and told him that her daughter had died in one of the fits to which at intervals she had been subject.

Wilderspin, in his eccentric way, had always declared that the model was not the woman's daughter. He did not think her, as I did, to have been kidnapped; he believed her to be not a creature of flesh and blood at all, but a spiritual body sent from heaven by his mother in order that he might use her as a model. As to the woman Gudgeon, who laid claim to be her mother, he thought she was suffering from a delusion—a beneficent delusion—in supposing the model to be her daughter. And now he thought that this beautiful phantom from the spirit-world had been recalled because his picture was complete. When I entered the studio he was just starting for the second time, as he told me, to the woman's house, in the belief that the body of the girl which he had seen lying on a mattress was a delusion—a spiritual body, and must by this time have vanished.

I had reasons for wishing to prevent his going there and being again brought into contact with the woman before I saw her myself. From my first seeing the woman and the model, I had found it impossible to believe that there could be any blood relationship between them, for the girl's frame from head to foot was as delicate as the woman's frame from head to foot was coarse and vulgar.

Naturally, therefore, it occurred to me that this was an excellent opportunity to find out the truth of the matter. I determined to go and bully the impudent hag into a confession; but of course Wilderspin was the last man I should choose to accompany me on such a mission. Your relative, Cyril Aylwin, was, as I believed, on the Continent, expecting Wilderspin to join him there, or I might have taken him with me.

I have always had great influence over Wilderspin, and I easily persuaded him to remain in the studio while I went myself to the woman's address, which he gave me. I knew that if the model were really dead she would have to be buried by the parish at a pauper funeral, that is to say, lowered into a deep pit with other paupers. It was painful to me to think of this, and I determined to get her buried myself. So I took a hansom and drove to the squalid court in the neighbourhood of Holborn, where the woman lived.

On reaching the house, I found the door open. Wilderspin had described to me the room occupied by Mrs. Gudgeon, so I went

at once up stairs. I found the model upon a mattress, her features horribly contorted, lying in the same clothes apparently in which she had fallen when seized.

In an armchair in the middle of the room was Mrs. Gudgeon, in a drunken sleep so profound that I could not have roused her had I tried. While I stood looking at the girl, something in the appearance of her flesh—its freshness of hue—made me suspect that she was still alive, and that she was only suffering from a seizure of a more acute kind than any the woman had yet seen. As I stood looking at these two it occurred to me that should the model recover from the seizure this would be an excellent and quite unexpected opportunity for me to get her away. The woman, I thought, would after a while wake up, and find to her amazement the body gone of her whom she thought dead. If she had really kidnapped the girl she would be afraid to set any inquiry afoot. She might even perhaps imagine that the girl's relations had traced her, found the dead body, and removed it for burial while she, the kidnapper, was asleep.

After a while the expression of terror on the model's face began to relax, and she soon awoke into that strange condition which had caused Wilderspin to declare that she had been sent from another world. She recognised me in the semi-conscious way in which she recognised all those who were brought into contact with her, and looked into my face with that indescribably sweet smile of hers. From the first she had in her dazed way seemed attached to me, and I had now no difficulty whatever in persuading her to accompany me downstairs and out of the house.

Before going, however, the whim seized me to write on the wall in large letters, with a piece of red drawing-chalk I had in my waistcoat pocket, "*Kidnapper, beware! Jack Ketch is on your track.*" I took the girl to my house, and put her under the care of my housekeeper (much to that worthy lady's surprise), who gave her every attention. I then went to Wilderspin's studio.

"Well," said he, "there is no body lying there, I suppose?"

"None," I said.

"Did I not tell you that the spirit world had called her back? What I saw has vanished, as I expected. How could you suppose that a material body could ever be so beautiful?"

As I particularly wished that the model should, for a time at least, be removed from all her present surroundings, I thought it well to let Wilderspin retain his wild theory as to her disappearance.

I had already arranged to go on the following day to Hurstcote Manor, where several unfinished pictures were waiting for me, and I decided to take the model with me.

Before, however, I started for the country with her, I had the curiosity to call next morning upon the woman in Primrose Court, in order to discover what had been the effect of my stratagem. I found her sitting in a state of excitement, and evidently in great alarm, gazing at the mattress. The words I had written on the wall had been carefully washed out.

"Well, Mrs. Gudgeon," I said, "what has become of your daughter?"

"Dead," she whimpered, "dead."

"Yes, I know she's dead," I said. "But where is the body?"

"Where's the body? Why, buried, in course," said the woman.

"Buried? Who buried her?" I said.

"What a question, *surelie!*" she said, and kept repeating the words in order, as I saw, to give herself time to invent some story. Then a look of cunning overspread her face, and she whimpered, "Who *does* bury folks in Primrose Court? The parish, to be sure."

These words of the woman's showed that matters had taken exactly the course I should have liked them to take. She would tell other inquirers as she had told me, that her daughter had been buried by the parish. No one would take the trouble, I thought, to inquire into it, and the matter would end at once.

So I said to her, "Oh, if the parish buried her, that's all right; no one ever makes inquiries about people who are buried by the parish."

This seemed to relieve the woman's mind vastly, and she said, "In course they don't. What's the use of askin' questions about people as are buried by the parish?"

Not thinking that the time was quite ripe for cross examining Mrs. Gudgeon as to her real relations to the model, I left her, and that same afternoon I took the model down to Hurstcote Manor, determining to keep the matter a secret from everybody, as I intended to discover, if possible, her identity.

I need scarcely remind you that although you told me some little of the story of yourself and a young lady to whom you were deeply attached, you were very reticent as to the cause of her dementia; and your story ended with her disappearance in Wales. I, for my part, had not the smallest doubt that she had fallen down a precipice and was dead. Everything—especially the

fact that you last saw her on the brink of a precipice, running into a volume of mist—pointed to but one conclusion. To have imagined for a moment that she and Wilderspin's model, who had been discovered in the streets of London, were the same, would have been, of course, impossible. Besides, you had given me no description of her personal appearance, nor had you said a word to me as to her style of beauty, which is undoubtedly unique.

When I got the model fairly settled at Hurstcote, her presence became a delight to me such as it could hardly have been to any other man. It is difficult for me to describe that delight, but I will try.

Do you by chance remember our talk about animals and the charm they had for me, especially young animals? And do you remember my saying that the most fascinating creature in the world would be a beautiful young girl as unconscious as a child or a young animal, if such a combination of charms were possible? Such a young girl as this it was whom I was now seeing every day and all day. The charm she exercised over me was no doubt partly owing to my own peculiar temperament—to my own hatred of self-consciousness and to an innate shyness which is apt to make me feel at times that people are watching me, when they most likely are doing nothing of the kind.

And charming as she is now, restored to health and consciousness—charming above most young ladies with her sweet intelligence and most lovable nature—the inexpressible witchery I have tried to describe has vanished, otherwise I don't know how I should have borne what I now have brought myself to bear, parting from her.

I seemed to have no time to think about prosecuting inquiries in regard to her identity. I am afraid there was much selfishness in this, but I have never pretended to be an unselfish man.

The one drop of bitterness in my cup of pleasure was the recurrence of the terrible paroxysms to which she was subject.

I was alarmed to find that these became more and more frequent and more and more severe. I felt at last that her system could not stand the strain much longer, and that the end of her life was not far distant.

It was in a very singular way that I came to know her name and also her relations with you. In my original perplexity about finding a model for my Zenelophon, I had bethought me of Sinf Lovell, who, with a friend of hers named Rhona Boswell, sat to Wilderspin, to your cousin, and others. I had made inquiries about Sinf, but had been told that she was not now to be had, as she had

abandoned London altogether, and was settled in Wales.

One day, however, I was startled by seeing Sinf walking across the meadows along the footpath leading from the station.

She told me that she had quitted Wales for good, and had left you there, and that on reaching London and calling at one of the studios where she used to sit, she had been made aware of my inquiries after her. As she had now determined to sit a good deal to painters, she had gone to my studio in London. Being told there that I was at Hurstcote Manor, where she had sat to me on several occasions, she had taken the train and come down.

During our conversation the model passed through the garden gate and walked towards the Spinney, and stood looking in a rapt way at the sunset clouds and listening to the birds.

When Sinf caught sight of her she stood as if petrified, and exclaimed, "Winnie Wynne! Then she ain't dead; the dukkeripen was true; they'll be married arter all. Don't let her see me suddenly, it might bring on fits."

Miss Wynne, however, had observed neither Sinf nor me, and we two passed into the garden without any difficulty.

In the studio Sinf sat down and in a state of the deepest agitation, she told me much of the story, as far as she knew it, of yourself and Miss Wynne, but I could see that she was not telling me all.

We were both perplexed as to what would be the best course of action to take in regard to Miss Wynne—whether to let her see Sinf or not, for evidently she was getting worse, the paroxysms were getting more frequent and more severe. They would come without any apparent disturbing cause whatever. Now that I had to connect her you had lost in Wales with the model, many things returned to me which I had previously forgotten, things which you had told me in London. I had quite lately learnt a good deal from Dr. Mivart, who formerly practised near the town in which you lived, but who now lives in London. He had been attending me for insomnia. While speculating as to what would be best to do, it occurred to me that I would write to Mivart, asking him to run down to me at Hurstcote Manor and consult with me, because he had told me that he had given attention to cases of hysteria. I did this, and persuaded Sinf to remain and to keep out of Miss Wynne's sight. Although Sinf was still as splendid a woman as ever, I noticed a change in her. Her animal spirits had fled, and she had to me the appearance of a woman in trouble;

but what her trouble was I could not guess, and cannot now guess. Perhaps she had been jilted by some Gypsy swain.

When Dr. Mivart came he was much startled at recognising in Miss Wynne his former patient of Raxton, whom he had attended on her first seizure. He said that it would now be of no use for me to write to you, as it was matter of common knowledge that you had gone to Japan. If it had not been for this I should have written to you at once. He took a very grave view of Miss Wynne's case, and said that her nervous system must shortly succumb to the terrible seizures. Sinf Lovell was in the room at the time. I asked Dr. Mivart if there was any possible means of saving her life.

"None," he said, "or rather there is one which is unavailable."

"And what is that?" I asked.

"They have a way at the Salpêtrière Hospital of curing cases of acute hysteria by transmitting the seizure to a healthy patient by means of a powerful magnet. My friend Marini, of that hospital, has had recently some extraordinary successes of this kind. Indeed, by a strange coincidence, as I was travelling here this morning I chanced to buy a *Daily Telegraph*, in which this paragraph struck my eye."

Mivart then pointed out to me a letter from Paris in the *Daily Telegraph*, giving an account of certain proceedings at the Salpêtrière Hospital, and in the same paper there was a long leading article upon the subject. The report of the experiments was to me so amazing that at first I could not bring my mind to believe in it. As you will, I am sure, feel some incredulity, I have cut out the paragraph, and here it is pasted at the bottom of this page:—

"The chief French surgeons and medical professors have, for some time, been carefully studying the effect of mesmerism on the female patients of the Salpêtrière Hospital, and M. Marini, a clinical surgeon of that establishment, has just effected a series of experiments, the results of which would seem to open up a new field for medical science. M. Marini tried to prove that certain hysterical symptoms could be transferred by the aid of the magnet from one patient to another. He took two subjects: one a dumb woman afflicted with hysteria, and the other a female who was in a state of hypnotic trance. A screen was placed between the two, and the hysterical woman was then put under the influence of a strong magnet. After a few moments she was rendered dumb, while speech was suddenly restored to the other. Luckily for his

healthier patients, nowever, their borrowed pains and symptoms did not last long."

And Mivart was able to give me some more extraordinary instances of the transmission of hysterical seizures from one patient to another, instances where permanent cures were effected.* Naturally I asked Mivart what befell the new victims of the seizures.

"That depends," said Mivart, "upon three circumstances—the acuteness of the seizure, the strength of the recipient's nervous system, and the kind of imagination she has. In all Marini's experiments the new patient has quickly recovered, and the original patient has remained entirely cured and often entirely unconscious that she has ever suffered from the paroxysms at all."

Mivart went on to say that the case of Miss Wynne was so severe a one that if the new patient's imagination were very strong the risk to her would be exceptionally great.

At the end of this discussion Mivart directed my attention to Sinfi Lovell. She sat as though listening to some voice. Her head was bent forward, her lips were parted, and her eyes were closed. Then I heard her say in a loud whisper, "Yis, mammy dear, little Sinfi's a-listenin'. Yis, this is the way to make her dukkeripen come true, and then mine can't. Yis, this is the very way. They shall meet again by Knockers' Llyn, where I seed the Golden Hand, and arter that, never shall little Sinfi go agin you, dear. And never no more shall any one on 'em, Gorgio or Gorgie, bring their gries and their beautiful livin'-waggins among tents o' ourn. Never no more shall they jine our breed—never no more, never no more. And then my dukkeripen *can't* come true."

Then, springing up, she said, "I'll stand the risk anyhow. You may pass the cuss on to me if you can."

"The seizure has nothing to do with any curse," said Mivart, "but if you think it has, you are the last person to whom it should be transmitted."

"Oh, never fear," said Sinfi; "Gorgio cuss can't touch Romany. But if you find you can pass the cuss on to me, I'll stand the cuss all the same."

I always admired this noble girl very much, and I pointed out to her the danger of the experiment to one of her temperament, but assured her the superstition about the Gorgio curse was entirely an idle one.

* The transmissions here alluded to were mostly effected by M. Babinski of the Salpêtrière. They excited great attention in Paris.

"Danger or no danger," she said, "I'll chance it; I'll chance it."

"It might be the death of you," I said, "if you believe that the seizure is a curse."

"Death!" she murmured, with a smile.

"It ain't death as is likely to scare a Romany chi, 'specially if she happens to want to die," and then she said aloud, "I tell you I mean to chance it, but I think my dear old daddy ought to know about it. So if you'll jist write to him at Gypsy Dell, by Rington, and ask him to come and see me here, I'm right well sure he'll come and see me at wonst. He can't read the letter hisself, of course, but the Scollar can, and so can Rhona Boswell. One on 'em will read it to him, and I know he'll come at wonst. I shouldn't like to run such a risk without my dear blessed old daddy knowin' on it."

It ended in Mivart's writing to Sinfi's father, and Panuel Lovell turned up the next evening in a great state of alarm as to what he was wanted for. Panuel's opposition to the scheme was so strong that I refused to urge the point.

It was a very touching scene between him and Sinfi.

"You know what your mammy told you about you and the Gorgios," said he, with tears trickling down his cheeks. "You know the dukkeripen said as you wur to beware o' Gorgios, because a Gorgio would come to the Kaulo Camloes as would break your heart."

She looked at her father for a second, and then she broke into a passion of tears, and threw herself upon the old man's neck, and I *thought* I heard her murmur, "It's broke a'ready, daddy." But I really am not quite sure that she did not say the opposite of this.

I had no idea before how strong the family ties are between the Gypsies. It seems to me that they are stronger than with us, and I was really astonished that Sinfi could, in order to be of service to two people of another race, resist the old Gypsy's appeal. She did, however, and it was decided that at the next seizure the experiment should be made, and Dr. Mivart telegraphed to London for his assistant to bring one of Marini's magnets.

We had not long to wait, for the very next day, just as Mivart was preparing to leave for London, Miss Wynne was seized by another paroxysm. It was more severe than any previous one—so severe, indeed, that it seemed to me that it must be the last.

It was with great reluctance that Mivart consented to use Sinfi as the recipient of the seizure, because of her belief that it was the result of a curse. However, he at last con-

sented, and ordered two couches to be placed side by side with a large magnet between them. Then Miss Wynne was laid on one couch, and Sinfi Lovell on the other; a screen was placed between the couches, and then the wonderful effect of the magnetism began to show itself.

The transmission was entirely successful, and Miss Wynne awoke as from a trance, and I saw as it were the beautiful eyes change as the soul returned to them. She was no longer the fascinating child who had become part of my life. She was another person, a stranger whose acquaintance I had now to make, and whose friendship I had yet to win. Indeed the change in the expression was so great that it was really difficult to believe that the features were the same. This was owing to the wonderful change in the eyes.

To Sinfi Lovell the seizure was transmitted in a way that was positively uncanny—she passed into a paroxysm so severe that Mivart was seriously alarmed for her. Her face assumed the same expression of terror which I had seen on Miss Wynne's face, and she uttered the cry, "Father!" and then fell back into a state of rigidity.

"The transmission was just in time," said Mivart; "the other patient would never have survived this."

Strong as Sinfi Lovell was, the effect of the transmission upon her nervous system was to me appalling. Indeed it was much greater, Mivart said, than he was prepared for. Poor Panuel Lovell kept gazing at us, and then said, "It's cruel to let one woman kill herself for another; but when her as kills herself is a Romany, and t'other a Gorgie, it's what I calls a blazin' shame. She would do it, my poor chavi would do it. 'No harm can't come on it,' says she, 'because a Gorgio cuss can't touch a Romany.' An' now see what's come on it."

Mivart would not hear of Sinfi's returning at present to the Gypsies, as she required special treatment. Hence there was no course left open to us but that of keeping her here attended by a nurse whom Mivart sent. While the recurrent paroxysms were severe, Sinfi was to be carefully kept apart from Miss Wynne until it should become quite clear how much and how little Miss Wynne remembered of her past life. Mivart, however, leaned to the opinion that nothing could recall to her mind the catastrophe that caused the seizure. By an unforeseen accident they met, and I was at first fearful of the consequences, but soon found that Mivart's theory was right. No ill effects whatever followed the meeting. Sinfi's transmitted paroxysms have gradually be-

come less acute and less frequent, and Miss Wynne has been constantly with her and ministering to her; the affection between them seems to have been of long standing, and very great.

I found that Miss Wynne remembered all her past life down to her first seizure on Raxton Sands, while everything that had since passed was a blank. Since her recovery her presence here has seemed to shed a richer sunlight over the old place, but of course she is no longer the fairy child who before her cure fascinated me more than any other living creature could have done.

Apart from her sweet companionship, she has been of great service to me in my art. When I learnt who she was, I should not have dreamed of asking her to sit to me as a model without having first taken your views, and you were, as I understood, abroad; but she herself generously volunteered to sit to me for a picture I had in my mind, "The Spirit of Snowdon." It was a failure, however, and I abandoned it. Afterwards, knowing that I was at my wits' end for a model in the painting I have been for a long time at work upon, "Zenelophon," she again offered to sit to me. The result has been that the picture, now near completion, is by far the best thing I have ever done.

I had noticed for some time that Sinfi's mind seemed to be running upon some project. Neither Miss Wynne nor I could guess what it was. But a few days ago she proposed that Miss Wynne and she should take a trip to North Wales in order to revisit the places endeared to them both by reminiscences of their childhood. Nothing seemed more natural than this. And Sinfi's noble self sacrifice for Miss Wynne had entitled her to every consideration, and indeed every indulgence.

And yesterday they started for Wales. It was not till after they were gone that I learnt from another newspaper paragraph that you did not go to Japan, and are in Wales. And now I begin to suspect that Sinfi's determination to go to Wales with Miss Wynne arose from her having suddenly learnt that you are still there.

And now, my dear Aylwin, having acted as a somewhat prosaic reporter of these wonderful events, I should like to conclude my letter with a word or two about what took place when I parted from you in the streets of London. I saw then that your sufferings had been very great, and since that time they must have been tenfold greater. And now I rejoice to think that, of all the men in this world who have ever loved, you, through this very suffering, have been the most for-

tunate. As Job's faith was tried by Heaven, so has your love been tried by the power which you call "circumstance" and which Wilderspin calls "the spiritual world." All that death has to teach the mind and the heart of man you have learnt to the very full, and yet she you love is restored to you, and will soon be in your arms. I, alas! have long known that the tragedy of tragedies is the death of a beloved mistress, or a beloved wife. I have long known that it is as the King of Terrors that Death must needs come to any man who knows what the word "love" really means. I have never been a reader of philosophy, but I understand that the philosophers of all countries have been preaching for ages upon ages about resignation to Death—about the final beneficence of Death—that "reasonable moderator and equipoise of justice," as Sir Thomas Browne calls him. Equipoise of justice indeed! He who can read with tolerance such words as these must have known nothing of the true passion of love for a woman as you and I understand it. The Elizabethans are full of this nonsense; but where does Shakspeare, with all his immense philosophical power, ever show this temper of acquiescence? All his impeachments of Death have the deep ring of personal feeling—dramatist though he was. But, what I am going to ask you is, How shall the modern materialist, who you think is to dominate the Twentieth Century and all the centuries to follow—how shall he confront Death when a beloved mistress is struck down? When Moschus lamented that the mallow, the anise, and the parsley had a fresh birth every year, whilst we men sleep in the hollow earth a long, unbounded, never-waking sleep, he told us what your modern materialist tells us, and he re-echoed the lamentation which, long before Greece had a literature at all, had been heard beneath Chaldean stars and along the mud-banks of the Nile. Your bitter experience made you ask materialism, What comfort is there in being told that death is the very nursery of new life, and that our heirs are our very selves, if when you take leave of her who was and is your world it is "Vale, vale, in aeternum vale"? The dogged resolution with which at first you fought and strove for materialism struck me greatly. It made you almost rude to me at our last meeting.

When I parted from you I should have been blind indeed had I failed to notice how scornfully you repudiated my suggestion that you should replace the amulet in the tomb from which it had been stolen. I did not then know that the tomb was your father's. Had I known it my suggestion would have been much more emphatic. I

saw that you had the greatest difficulty in refraining from laughing in my face when I said to you that you would eventually replace it. Yes, you had great difficulty in refraining from laughing. I did not take offence. I felt sure that the cross was in some way connected with the young lady you had lost in Wales, but I could not guess how. Had you told me that the cross had been taken from your father's tomb I should no doubt have connected it with the cry of "Father" which had, I knew, several times been uttered in Wilderspin's studio by the model in her paroxysms, and I should have earlier done what I was destined to do—I should earlier have brought you together. From sympathy that sprang from a deep experience I knew you better than you knew yourself. When I learnt from Sinfi Lovell that you had fulfilled my prophecy I did not laugh. Tears rather than laughter would have been more in my mood, for I realized the martyrdom you must have suffered before you were impelled to do it. I knew how you must have been driven by sorrow—driven against all the mental methods and traditions of your life—into the arms of supernaturalism. But you were simply doing what Hamlet would have done in such circumstances—what Macbeth would have done, and what he would have done who spoke to the human heart through their voices. All men, I believe, have Macbeth's instinct for making "assurance doubly sure," and I cannot imagine the man who, entangled as you were in a net of conflicting evidence—the evidence of the spiritual and the evidence of the natural world—would not, if the question were that of averting a curse from acting on a beloved mistress, have done as you did. That paralysis of Hamlet's will which followed when the evidence of two worlds hung in equipoise before him, no one can possibly understand better than I. For it was exactly similar to my own condition on that never-to-be-forgotten night when she whom I lost

While the marvellous sight fell, or appeared to fall, upon my eyes, my blood, like Hamlet's, became so masterful that my reason seemed nothing but a blind and timorous guide. No sooner had the sweet vision fled than my reason, like Hamlet's, rose and rejected it. It was not until I became acquainted with the *rationale* of sympathetic manifestations—it was not till I learnt, by means of that extraordinary book of your father's, which seems to have done its part in turning friend Wilderspin's head, what is the supposed method by which the spiritual world acts upon the material world—acts by

the aid of those same natural bonds which keep the stars in their paths—that my blood and my reason became reconciled, and a new light came to me. And I knew that this would be your case. Yes, my dear Aylwin, I knew that when the issues of Life are greatly beyond the common, and when our hearts are torn as yours has been torn, and when our souls are on fire with a flame such as that which I saw was consuming you, the awful possibilities of this universe—of which we, civilized men or savage, know nothing—will come before us, and tease our hearts with strange wild hopes, “though all the ‘proofs’ of all the logicians should hold them up to scorn.”

I am, my dear Aylwin,
Your sincere Friend,
T. D'ARCY.

XVII

The Two Dukkeripens

Was the mystery at an end? Was there one point in this story of stories which this letter of D'Arcy's had not cleared up? Yes, indeed there was one. What motive—or rather, what mixture of motives—had impelled Sinfi to play her part in restoring Winifred to me? Her affection for me was, I knew, as strong as my own affection for her. But this I attributed largely to the mysterious movements of the blood of Fenella Stanley which we both shared. In many matters there was a kinship of taste between us, such as did not exist between me and Winnie, who was far from being scornful of conventions, and to whom the little Draconian laws of British “Society” were not objects of mere amusement, as they were to me and Sinfi.

All this I attributed to that “prepotency of transmission in descent” which I knew to be one of the Romany characteristics. All this I attributed, I say, to the far-reaching influence of Fenella Stanley.

But would this, coupled with her affection for Winifred, have been strong enough to conquer Sinfi's terror of a curse and its supposed power? And then that colloquy

recorded by D'Arcy with what she believed to be her mother's spirit—those words about “the two dukkeripens”—what did they mean? At one moment I seemed to guess their meaning in a dim way, and at the next they seemed more inexplicable than ever. But be their import what it might, one thing was quite certain—Sinfi had saved Winifred, and there swept through my very being a passion of gratitude to the girl who had acted so nobly which for the moment seemed to drown all other emotions.

I had not much time, however, for bringing my thoughts to bear upon this new source of wonderment; for I suddenly saw Winifred and Sinfi descending the steep path towards me.

But what a change there was in Sinfi! The traces of illness had fled entirely from her face, and were replaced by the illumination of the triumphant soul within—a light such as I could imagine shining on the features of Boadicea fresh from a successful bout with the foe of her race. Even the loveliness of Winnie seemed for the moment to pale before the superb beauty of the Gypsy girl, whom the sun was caressing as though it loved her, shedding a radiance over her picturesque costume, and making the gold coins round her neck shine like dewy whinflowers struck by the sunrise.

I understood well that expression of triumph. I knew that, with her, imagination was life itself. I knew that this imagination of hers had just escaped from the sting of the dominant thought which was threatening to turn a supposed curse into a curse indeed.

I went to meet them.

“I promised to bring her livin' mullo,” said Sinfi, “and I have kept my word, and now we are all going up to the top together.”

Winnie at once proceeded to pack up the breakfast things in Sinfi's basket. While she was doing this Sinfi and I went to the side of the llyn.

“Sinfi, I know all—all you have done for Winnie, all you have done for me.”

“You know about me takin' the cuss?” she said in astonishment. “Gorgio cuss can't touch Romany, they say, but it did touch me. I wur very bad, brother. Howsomedever, it's all gone now. But how did you come to know about it? Winnie don't know herself, so she couldn't ha' told you; and I promised Mr. D'Arcy that if ever I wur to see you anywheres I wouldn't talk about it—leaseways not till he could tell you hisself or write to you full.”

“Winnie does not know about it,” I said, “but I do. I know that in order to save her life—in order to save us both—you allowed her illness to pass on to you, at your own

peril. But you musn't talk of its being a curse, Sinfí. It was just an illness like any other illness, and the doctor passed it on to you in the same way that doctors sometimes do pass on such illnesses. Doctors can't cure curses, you know. You will soon be quite well again, and then you will forget all about what you call the curse."

"I'm well enough now, brother; but see, Winnie has packed the things, and she's waiting to go up."

We then began the ascent.

Ah, that ascent! I wish I had time and space to describe it. Up the same path we went that Sinfí and I had followed on that memorable morning when my heart was as sad as it was buoyant now.

Reaching the top, we sat down in the hut and made our simple luncheon. Winnie was a great favourite with the people there, and she could not get away from them for a long time. We went down to Bwlch Glas, and there we stood gazing at the path that leads to Llanberis.

I had not observed, but Winnie evidently had, that Sinfí wanted to speak to me alone; for she wandered away pretending to be looking for a certain landmark which she remembered; and Sinfí and I were left together.

"Brother," said Sinfí, "I ain't a-goin' to Llanberis an' Carnarvon with you two. You take that path; I take this."

She pointed to the two downward paths.

"Surely you are not going to leave us at a moment like this?" I said.

"That's jist what I am a-goin' to do," she said. "This is the very time an' this is the very place where I am a-goin' to leave you an' all Gorgios."

"Part on Snowdon, Sinfí!" I exclaimed.

"That's what we're a-goin' to do, brother. What I sez to myself when I made up my mind to take the cuss on me wur this: 'I'll make her dukkeripen come true; I'll take her to him in Wales, and then we'll part. We'll part on Snowdon, an' I'll go one way an' they'll go another, jist like them two streams as start from Gorphwysfa an' go runnin' down till one on 'em takes the sea at Carnarvon, and t'other at Tremadoc.' Yis, brother, it's on Snowdon where you an' Winnie Wynne sees the last o' Sinfí Lovell."

Distressed as I was at her words, that inflexible look on her face I understood only too well.

"But there is Mr. D'Arcy to consider," I said. "Winnie tells me that it is the particular wish of Mr. D'Arcy that you and she should return to him at Hurstcote Manor.

He has been wonderfully kind, and his wishes should be complied with."

"No, brother," said Sinfí, "I shall never go to Hurstcote Manor no more."

"Surely you will, Sinfí. Winnie tells me of the deep regard that Mr. D'Arcy has for you."

"Never no more. Winifred's dukkeripen on Snowdon has come true, and it wur me what made it come true. Yis, it wur Sinfí Lovell and nobody else what made that dukkeripen come true."

And again her face was illuminated by the triumphant expression which it wore when she returned to Knockers' Llyn with Winnie.

"It was indeed your noble self-sacrifice for Winnie and me that made the dukkeripen of the Golden Hand come true."

"It worn't all for you and Winnie, Hal. I ain't a-goin' to let you think better on me than I deserve. It wur partly for you, and it wur partly for my dear mammy, and it wur partly for myself. Listen to me, Hal Aylwin. *When I made Winnie's dukkeripen come true I made my own dukkeripen come to naught at the same time.* The only way to make a dukkeripen come to naught is to make another dukkeripen what conterdicks it come true. That's the only way to master a dukkeripen. It ain't often that Romanies or Gorgios or anything that lives can master his own dukkeripen. I've been thinkin' a good deal about sich things since I took that cuss on me. Night arter night have I laid awake thinkin' about these 'ere things, and, brother, I believe I have done what no livin' creatur ever done before—I've mastered my own dukkeripen. My mammy used to say that the dukkeripen of every livin' thing comes true at last. 'Is there anythink in the whole world,' she would say, 'more crafty nor one o' those old broad-finned trouts in Knockers' Llyn? But that trout's got his dukkeripen, an' it comes true at last. All day long he's p'raps bin a-flashin' his fins an' a-twiddlin' his tail round an' round the may-fly or the brandlin' worrum, though he knows all about the hook; but all at wunst comes the time o' the bitin', and that's the time o' the dukkeripen, when every fish in the brook, whether he's hungry or not, begins to bite, an' then up comes old red-spots, an' grabs at the bait because he *must* grab, an' swallows it because he *must* swallow it; an' there's a hend of old red-spots jist as sure as if he didn't know there wur a hook in the bait.' That's what my mammy used to say. But there wur one as could, and did, master her own dukkeripen—Shuri Lovell's little Sinfí."

"You have mastered your dukkeripen, Sinfí?"

"Yes, I've mastered mine," she said with

the same look of triumph on her face—"I swore I'd master my dukkeripen, brother, an' I done it. I said to myself the dukkeripen is strong, but a Romany chi may be stronger still if she keeps a-sayin' to herself 'I WILL master it; I WILL, I WILL.'"

"Then that explains something I have often noticed, Sinfi. I have often seen your lips move and nothing has come from them but a whisper, 'I will, I will, I will.'"

"Ah, you've noticed that, have you? Well then, *now* you know what it meant."

"But, Sinfi, you have not told me what your dukkeripen is. You have often alluded to it, but you have never allowed me even to guess what it is."

Sinfi's face beamed with pride of triumph.

"You never guessed it? No, you never could guess it. An' months an' months have we lived together an' you heard me whisper 'I will, I will,' an' you never guessed what them words meant. Lucky for you, my fine Gorgio, that you didn't guess it," she said, in an altered tone.

"Why?"

"'Cos if you had a-guessed it you'd ha' cotch'd a left-hand body-blow that 'ud most like ha' killed you. That's what you'd ha' cotch'd. But now as we're a-goin' to part for ever I'll tell you."

"Part for ever, Sinfi?"

"Yis, an' that's why I'm goin' to tell you what my dukkeripen wur. Many's the time as you've asked me how it was that, for all that you and I was pals, I hate the Gorgios in a general way as much as Rhona Boswell likes 'em. I used to like the Gorgios wunst as well as ever Rhona did—else how should I ever ha' been so fond o' Winnie Wynne? Tell me that," she said, in an argumentative way as though I had challenged her speech.

"If I hadn't ha' liked the Gorgios wunst, how should I ha' been so fond o' Winnie Wynne? An' why don't I like Gorgios now? Many's the time you've ax'd me that question, an' now's the time for me to tell you. I know'd the time 'ud come, an' this is the time to tell you, when you and me and Winnie are a-goin' to part for ever at the top o' the biggest mountain in the world, this 'ere blessed Snowdon, as allus did seem somehow to belong to her an' me. When I wur fond o' the Gorgios—fonder nor ever Rhona Boswell wur at that time, ('cos she hadn't never met then with the Gorgio she's a-goin' to die for)—it wur when I wur a little chavi, an' didn't know nothink about dukkeripens at all; but arterwards my mammy told my dukkeripen out o' the clouds, an' it wur jist this: I wur to beware o' Gorgios, 'cos a Gorgio would come among the Kaulo Camloes an' break my heart. An'

I says to her, 'Mammy dear, afore my heart shall break for any Gorgio I'll cut it out with this 'ere knife,' an' I draw'd her knife out o' her frock an' put it in my own, and here it is." And Sinfi pulled out her knife and showed it to me. "An' now, brother, I'm goin' to tell you somethink else, an' what I'm goin' to tell you'll show we're goin' to part for ever an' ever. As sure as ever the Golden Hand opened over Winnie Wynne's head an' yourn on Snowdon, so sure did I feel that you two 'ud be married, even when it seemed to you that she must be dead. An' as sure as ever my mammy said I must beware o' Gorgios, so sure was I that you wur the very Gorgio as wur to break the Romany chi's heart—if that Romany chi's heart hadn't been Sinfi Lovell's. You hadn't been my pal long afore I know'd that. Arter I had been with you a-lookin' for Winnie or fishin' in the brooks, many's the time, when I lay in the tent with the star-light a-shinin' through the chinks in the tent's mouth, that I've said to myself, 'The very Gorgio as my mother seed a-comin' to the Lovells when she penned my dukkerin, he's asleep in his livin'-waggin no five yards off.' That's what made me seem so strange to you at times, thinkin' o' my mammy's words, an' sayin' 'I will, I will.' An' now, brother, fare you well."

"But you must bid Winnie good-bye," I said, as I saw her returning.

"Better not," said she. "You tell her I've changed my mind about goin' to Carnarvon. She'll think we shall meet again, but we sha'n't. Tell her that they expect you and her at the inn at Llanberis. Rhona will be there to-night with Winnie's clo'es and things."

"Sinfi," I said, "I cannot part from you thus. I should be miserable all my days. No man ever had such a noble, self-sacrificing friend as you. I cannot give you up. In a few days I shall go to the tents and see you and Rhona, and my old friends, Panuel and Jericho; I shall indeed, Sinfi. I mean to do it."

"No, no," cried Sinfi; "everything says 'No' to that; the clouds an' the stars says 'No,' an' the win' says 'No,' and the shine and the shadows says 'No,' and the Romany Sap says 'No.' An' I shall send your livin'-waggin away, Reia; yis, I shall send it arter you, Hal, and your two beautiful gries; an' I shall tell my daddy—as never conterdicks his chavi in nothink, 'cos she's took the seein' eye from Shuri Lovell—I shall tell my dear daddy as no Gorgio and no Gorgie, no lad an' no wench as ever wur bred o' Gorgio blood an' bones, mustn't never live with our breed no more. That's what I shall tell my dear

daddy; an' why? an' why? 'cos that's what my mammy comes an' tells me every night, wakin' an' sleepin'—that's what she comes an' tells me, Reia, in the waggin an' in the tent, an' aneath the sun an' aneath the stars—an' that's what the fiery eyes of the Romany Sap says out o' the ferns an' the grass, an' in the Londra streets, whenever I thinks o' you. 'The kair is kushto for the kairengro, but for the Romany the open air.'^o That's what my mammy used to say."

She then left me and descended the path to Capel Curig, and was soon out of sight.

XVIII

The Walk to Llanberis

WHEN, on coming to rejoin us, Winnie learnt that Sinfî had left for Capel Curig, she seemed at first somewhat disconcerted, I thought. Her training, begun under her aunt, and finished under Miss Dalrymple, had been such that she was by no means oblivious of Welsh proprieties; and, though I myself was entirely unable to see in what way it was more eccentric to be mountaineering with a lover than with a Gypsy companion, she proposed that we should follow Sinfî.

"I have seen your famous living-waggon," she said. "It goes wherever the Lovells go. Let us follow her. You can stay at Bettws or Capel Curig, and I can stay with Sinfî."

I told her how strong was Sinfî's wish that we should not do so. Winnie soon yielded her point, and we began leisurely our descent westward, along that same path which Sinfî and I had taken on that other evening, which now seemed so far away, when we walked down to Llanberis with the setting sun in our faces. If my misery could then only find expression in sighs and occasional ejaculations of pain, absolutely dumb was the bliss that came to me now, growing in power with every moment, as the scepticism of my mind about the reality of the new heaven before

me gave way to the triumphant acceptance of it by my senses and my soul.

The beauty of the scene—the touch of the summer breeze, soft as velvet even when it grew boisterous, the perfume of the Snowdonian flowerage that came up to meet us, seemed to pour in upon me through the music of Winnie's voice which seemed to be fusing them all. That beloved voice was making all my senses one.

"You leave all the talk to me," she said. But as she looked in my face her instinct told her why I could not talk. She knew that such happiness and such bliss as mine carry the soul into a region where spoken language is not.

Looking round me towards the left, where the mighty hollow of Cwm Dyli was partly in sunshine and partly in shade, I startled Winnie by suddenly calling out her name. My thoughts had left the happy dream of Winifred's presence and were with Sinfî Lovell. As I looked at the tall precipices rising from the chasm right up to the summit of Snowdon, I recalled how Sinfî, notwithstanding her familiarity with the scene, appeared to stand appalled as she gazed at the jagged ridges of Crib-y-Ddysgyl, Crib Goch, Lliwedd, and the heights of Moel Siabod beyond. I recalled how the expression of alarm upon Sinfî's features had made me almost see in the distance a starving girl wandering among the rocks, and this it was that made me now exclaim "Winnie!" With this my lost power of speech returned.

We went to the ruined huts where Sinfî had on that memorable day lingered by the spring, and Winnie began to scoop out the water with her hand and drink it. She saw how I wanted to drink the water out of the little palm, and she scooped some out for me, saying, "It's the purest, and sweetest, and best water on Snowdon."

"Yes," I said, "the purest, and sweetest, and best water in the world when drunk from such a cup."

She drew her hand away and let the water drop through her fingers, and turned round to look at the scene we had left, where the summit of Snowdon was towering beyond a reach of rock, bathed in the rapidly deepening light.

"No idle compliments between you and me, sir," she said with a smile. "Remember that I have still time and strength to go back to the top and follow Sinfî down to the camp."

And then we both laughed together, as we laughed that afternoon in Wilderness Road when she enunciated her theories upon the

* The house is good for the house-dweller, the open air for the Gypsy.

voices of men and the voices of birds. She then stood gazing abstractedly into a pool of water, upon which the evening lights were now falling. As I saw her reflected in the surface of the stream, which was as smooth as a mirror—saw her reflected there sometimes on an almost colourless surface, sometimes amid a procession in which every colour of the rainbow took part, I sighed.

"Why do you sigh?" said she.

I could not tell her why, for I was recalling Wilderspin's words about her matchless beauty and its inspiring effect upon the painter who painted it. It would indeed, as Wilderspin had said, endow mediocrity with genius.

"Why do you sigh?" she repeated.

"Oh, if I could paint that, Winnie, if I could paint that picture in the water."

"And why should you not?" she said, in a dreamy way. And then a sudden thought seemed to strike her, and she said with much energy, "Become a painter, Henry! Become a painter! No man ever yet satisfied a true woman who did not work—work hard at something—anything—if not in the active affairs of life, in the world of art. My love you must always have now—you must always have it under any circumstances. I could not help under any circumstances giving you love. But I fear I could not give a rich, idle man—even if he were Henry himself—enough love to satisfy a yearning like yours."

She bent her face again over the water, and looked at the picture.

"You have often told me that my face is beautiful, Henry, and you know you never could make me believe it. But suppose you should be right after all, and suppose that you were a painter, and used it for a picture of the Spirit of Snowdon, I should then thank God for having given me a beautiful face, for it would enable you to win your goal. And afterwards, when its beauty had passed away, as it soon would, I should have no further need for beauty, for my painter-husband would, partly through me, have won."

As we walked along, she pointed to the tubular bridge over the Menai Straits and to the coast of Anglesey. The panorama had that fairy-like expression which belongs so peculiarly to Welsh scenery. Other mountainous countries in Europe are beautiful, and since that divine walk I have become intimately acquainted with them, but for

associations romantic and poetic, there is surely no land in the world equal to North Wales.

"Do you remember, Winnie," I murmured, "when you so delighted me by exclaiming, 'What a beautiful world it is!'"

"Ah, yes," said Winnie, "and how I should love to paint its beauty. The only people I really envy are painters."

We were now at the famous spot where the triple echo is best heard, and we began to shout like two children in the direction of Llyn Ddu'r Arddu. And then our talk naturally fell on Knockers' Llyn and the echoes to be heard there. She then took me to another famous sight on this side of Snowdon, the enormous stone, said to be five thousand tons in weight, called the Knockers' Anvil. While we lingered here Winnie gave me as many anecdotes and legends of this stone as would fill a little volume. But suddenly she stopped.

"Look!" she said, pointing to the sunset. "I have seen that sight only once before. I was with Sinfî. She called it 'the Dukkeripen of the Trîshul.'"

The sun was now on the point of sinking, and his radiance, falling on the cloud-pagantry of the zenith, fired the flakes and vapoury films floating and trailing above, turning them at first into a ruby-coloured mass, and then into an ocean of rosy fire. A horizontal bar of cloud which, until the radiance of the sunset fell upon it, had been dull and dark and grey, as though a long slip from the slate quarries had been laid across the west, became for a moment a deep lavender colour, and then purple, and then red-gold. But what Winnie was pointing at was a dazzling shaft of quivering fire where the sun had now sunk behind the horizon. Shooting up from the cliffs where the sun had disappeared, this shaft intersected the bar of clouds and seemed to make an irregular cross of deep rose.

When Winnie turned her eyes again to mine I was astonished to see tears in them. I asked her what they meant. She said, "While I was looking at that cross of rose and gold in the clouds it seemed to me that there came on the evening breeze the sound of a sob, and that it was Sinfî's, my sister Sinfî's; but of course by this time Snowdon stands between us and her."

THE END.

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