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NEWS from
the DUCHY

By "Q"

Wm. H. Brewster
- Response

from A. S. P.

1 July 1871

NEWS FROM THE DUCHY



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News from the Duchy

By Sir ARTHUR
QUILLER-COUCH



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To
MY FRIEND
AUSTIN M. PURVES
OF
PHILADELPHIA
AND
TROY TOWN

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PART I

Tom Tiddler's Ground

PROLOGUE

THE LADY OF THE ISLES

“ Here lies a most beautiful lady,
Light of heart and step was she ;
I think she was the most beautiful lady
That ever was in the West Countrie.
But beauty vanishes, beauty passes,
However rare, rare it be,
And when I crumble who shall remember
That lady of the West Countrie ? ”

WALTER DE LA MARE.

SHOULD you ask who brought prosperity to the Islands—or brought it back after long years of estrangement—nine Islanders out of ten would have answered ‘The Mistress;’ meaning the sad and beautiful lady who dwelt at Iniscaw, and now sang to herself, after having sung in capital cities to great audiences, with kings and queens eager to listen. In addition to her beauty and her voice (which in itself was a miracle) God had given her courage, so that she kept her light step; but she had lost her

lightness of heart ever since she had found love too late, and discovered about the same time that her voice was passing with her beauty.

She was Lady Proprietress of the Islands, holding them on a lease from Queen Victoria. 'All those Her Majesty's territories and rocks,' so the legal wording ran, 'together with all sounds, harbours and sands within the circuit of the said Isles, and all lands, tenements, meadows, pastures, grounds, feedings, fishings, mines of tin, lead and coals, and all profits of the same'—But there were no such mines, by the way, and by consequence no such profits—'and all marshes, void grounds, woods, underwoods, rents, reversions, services and all other profits, rights, commodities, advantages and emoluments within the said Isles; and a moiety of all shipwreck, the other moiety to be received by the Lords Commissioners of Admiralty.'

Her predecessor, being a man, had also been sole justiciary, with full power to hear, examine and finally determine all plaints, suits, matters, actions and demands whatever, moved and depending between party and party inhabiting the same Isles—all heresies and treasons excepted—with all controversies or causes touching life or member of man, title of land, or ships or other things belonging to the High Court of Admiralty. She, as a woman, assigned the Commission of the Queen's Peace into the hands of three Magistrates, with a solitary policeman to help them; but, for the rest, within the small realm she

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was sovereign more absolute than Queen Victoria, who ruled somewhere on "the Main"—a vaguely realised land, thirty miles away, discernible on clear mornings as a cloud upon the sea.

For the Islands, ridged with reefs and dotted with sentinel lighthouses, lie off the west coast of England, well out in the Atlantic, in the mouth of the warm Gulf Stream. Six are inhabited, and contain between them less than three thousand acres suitable for grazing or tillage; the rest, eighteen or twenty in number, are mere islets, rocky and barren, on which the seabirds breed.

The rock is granitic, the soil light and friable, without width or depth for serious husbandry; and a hundred years ago the inhabitants subsisted almost wholly by fishing and by burning down the seaweed for 'kelp,' which went to Bristol to the making of glass and soap. Times had bettered when the increase of our sea-borne trade brought work to the pilots on St. Ann's, the southernmost island, and every long spell of easterly wind might be counted on to crowd the roadstead with vessels 'waiting for orders.' About that time, too, the farmers on St. Lide's (the largest island), Iniscaw, Brefar and Saaron had taken to growing early potatoes for the English market, planting them in shallow rows with a bare covering of soil—the Islands know no frost—and harvesting them a month ahead of growers on the Main.

During her girlhood—for the Lady was native to

her realm—these operations had been in full swing, and she could remember the boats arriving in April with gangs of diggers hired over from England to save the crops, which in prosperous years would touch a thousand tons. But to get the freight across to the Main and by rail to London cost forty-five shillings a ton; and when Malta, Algiers, and the Canaries started to compete at sea-borne rates of thirty shillings or thereabouts, the Islanders' profit diminished, until a crop scarcely paid for saving. This happened just as steam started in earnest to sweep the old sailing vessels off the face of the waters, and the island pilots, scarcely realising their doom, would lie off for days and nights together before they fell in with a tall ship to signal them. In brief, the Islands had fallen back into hard poverty when the Lady returned to them to take up her possessions.

Now though she lived remote from the daily life of her people, and in those early days was known to them for the most part as a voice singing wonderful songs to herself in her charmed garden amid the tide races, the Lady was in fact a shrewd woman of business. She had noted, on her visits to London, that Londoners, as they grew prosperous, were growing ever fonder of flowers; that not only did the great houses, the hotels, the restaurants require flowers for their dinner tables, but even the poor clerk pinched his pocket for a bunch to carry home.

One June morning, at the fag-end of a masked ball at Covent Garden, she had spent a couple of hours

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in the flower-market, wandering in the early daylight from stall to stall as the carts rumbled in and the auction assembled; and the buyers and sellers had wondered at the businesslike questions this exquisite visitant in Watteau gown and satin shoes put to them concerning prices, freights, discounts, demand and supply.

She learned from them that the market was hungriest in early spring, between the New Year and Lent, when open-air flowers were few or none. She recalled the sweet narcissi that, home in the Islands, bloomed in late February and early March; not only the common Lent-lily, but tazettas—'Island Whites' or 'Holy-vales'—beneath the apple trees at Holy Vale Farm on St. Lide's; 'Grand Monarque's' within the tumble-down walls of the Fort on Garrison Hill; 'Island Whites' again, intermixed with 'Solidors' (Soleils d'or), in the meadow below her own Abbey House on Iniscaw, fringing the shores of the freshwater lake that had served the old monks for fish-pond. On her return to the Islands she had dropped a hint to Farmer Banford of Holy Vale that here, maybe, was a trade worth starting.

"What!" said he. "In they old things?"

"Ah," she replied, "because flowers are beautiful you think it womanish even to consider them!"

"Beauty doesn't pay." Farmer Banford shook his head.

"You are wrong, my friend," she assured him, with one of her puzzling smiles. "And, what is more,

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many things that don't pay are well worth paying for. I will leave this address with you, at any rate, and you can think it over."

Next spring, early one fine February morning, as the small mail-packet *Lady of the Isles* was getting up steam for her return passage to the Main, Farmer Banford came along the quayside at Garland Town (harbour of St. Lide's) with a huge bandbox of cardboard under his arm.

"Hullo, Farmer!" hailed Captain Frank, the skipper. "Bound across for England, hey?"

The farmer grinned.

"Looks like the kind o' trunk I'd be takin', don't it?"

"What's inside?"

"Women's notions. If you must know, my old missus have a-taken a bee in her cap, and I'm sendin' it to Lunnon for the best advice."

So Mrs. Banford's cap-box travelled up to London, packed with three dozen bunches of 'Holy-vales,' and addressed—

To Mr. SHELLABEAR

Fruit and Flower Merchant

Covent Garden

London

England

With Speed

We shall describe, as well as we may, what prosperity dawned for the Islands from the moment

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when Mr. Shillabear in Covent Garden lifted the lid of that fateful box. As the farmer's luck spread with his story, and the whole archipelago turned to bulb-growing, all praised the Mistress, her woman's wit and her foresight.

Doubtless she deserved their praises. Yet the gods sometimes hide the secret of a gift, and hide it under the obvious. *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.*

It was at least curious that the coming of prosperity should coincide with the coming of the child, John Smith, to the Islands.

CHAPTER I

JAN

“ Then round went the good ship
And thrice she went round ;
When up there stood a guardsman,
A naked man and brown,—
Says, ‘ You are the Queen of Carthage
And gey young to drown ;
But hold you my girdle
That goeth me around,
And we ’ll swim to yon Island
As I will be bound ’
‘ Man, your girdle it is breaking ! ’
‘ Nay, ’ tis strong yet and sound ;
’Twas my heart you felt a-breaking,
But here is dry ground.’

“ With the white sand she cover’d him,
Her wet hair she wound ;
‘ Deo-gracey,’ said Zenobia,
‘ That I am not drown’d ! ’ ”

Ballad of Queen Zenobia.

THE mail-boat that brought back a letter for Farmer Banford, and in the letter a postal order, arrived in St. Lide’s Pool three hours behind her time, having fought the last twelve miles of her passage against a westerly gale. The gale increased at nightfall, and between midnight and two in the morning blew a hurricane.

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Soon after daybreak, in the midst of her dressing, word reached the Lady that a vessel was ashore on the west side of St. Ann's, and fast breaking up. The message came from the coastguard on St. Lide's across the private cable laid for her between that Island and Iniscaw.

On these occasions she was always prompt, yet not recklessly, being in fact knowledgeable of wind and water as any of her boatmen. She gazed southward from her window, and decided that by the time her launch could be put under steam and worked down to the open sound, the wind—which had northered—would have allayed the seas running there, and the traject would be made with little risk.

Nevertheless the small craft had shipped some bucketfuls, and her fires had more than once been in danger, before she weathered the Smith Rocks, that lie off the north-west angle of St. Ann's, and sheered down like a flying fish into smoother waters. The Lady steered, her sea-cloak and blown hair drenched with spray.

"Where was the wreck?" She hailed a pilot-cutter that was moving dead slow off the islets with mainsail reefed and foresheet to windward. The pilot called back through a megaphone that she had gone down somewhere under their keel and they were creeping about for wreckage. The crew of the coastguard gig, searching closer inshore to the southward, reported the missing vessel to be a

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barque—an Italian, as they believed—name unknown.

“ Anyone saved ? ”

They shook their heads.

“ Lost—all hands ! ” came the answer.

There would be flotsam, no doubt, close under the cliffs — a lifebelt, maybe, or some fragment of a boat bearing the vessel’s name ; but in the sea yet running the rocks could not be approached. The Lady gave orders to slow down and join in the search. By this the northerly wind had dispersed the storm-wrack, and as they worked southward and opened Prillis Cove the sun shone through. A small crowd of Islanders—men and women—had gathered on the beach at the head of the cove, and the Lady steered in, if haply they might have news.

They had none. But, while she parleyed with them, over the high ground a woman came running against the wind, waving her arms and pointing southward. The launch was backed, turned, set going again on her way.

Beyond the next point lay another beach of clean white sand, on the upper part of which the cliffs cast their morning shadow ; and there, a little outside the edge of the shadow, between it and the running dazzle of the waves, stood a group of three figures stooping over a fourth. The Lady at first sight of them gave a start, made sign to one of her men near by in the sternsheets, and yielding over the helm to him as he reached out a hand, drew her field-glass

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from the case slung at her hip, sighted it, and focussed it on the group.

“Set me ashore,” she said quietly, fifteen seconds later, lowering the glass. Her face was white to the lips; but the crew did not observe this, so steadily she controlled her voice.

They ran the launch in under the lee of the northerly cliff (where was least run in the waves), and grounded her on the steep-to beach. Two of them leapt out over the bows, and would have made a cradle of their hands to carry their mistress dry-shod over the knee-deep water, but she sprang after them and waded ashore, declining help.

An elderly man—a gentleman by his bearing—came down to the beach to meet her. He wore a brown garment, in length and shape somewhat like the *soutane* of a Roman Catholic priest. He saluted her gravely, respectfully, then lowered his eyes.

“Is he dead?” she asked, her gaze travelling past him to the body beside which his companions—elderly men likewise, the pair of them dressed in ragged blue regimentals—were kneeling as they attempted to restore animation. They had turned it on its right side and were rubbing the naked body briskly, the one at work at the back beneath the shoulder-blade, the other on the legs from calf to ankle; for it lay with no clothing but trousers of dark sea-cloth, rolled tight and tied above the knees.

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Dr. Hervey, the man in the *soutane*, answered with a gesture that might equally well have meant "Yes" or "No."

"How did it happen?"

He cast a hesitating glance at her. Perhaps he was wondering—as she herself wondered—at the strange composure of her voice.

"The Commandant and I were smoking a late pipe together when the rocket went up. He called out the two sergeants here, and in twenty minutes we four were pulling out in the garrison boat, close in the wake of the coastguard. But their gig is a new one and speedy, whereas ours, as you know—and moreover we were none of us young men. We soon lost sight of them in the darkness, and then, coming to open water and finding that she could not live in it, the Commandant gave orders to shape down for the back of the Island. We fetched the lee of it just before the gale worsened, beached the boat in Menadhu Cove, and started to tramp across land. The wind by this time was incredible. On the high ground we had to make short rushes against it, drop on hands and knees, catch breath and make another rush. It took us till close upon daylight to cross to St. Ann's Down. Then the wind flew almost without warning, and the rest was easy. We came to Chapel Point as the day broke. There was no sign of a ship; but about half a mile from shore the Commandant spied a man swimming, and pointed him out to us. The man was a negro, and

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he swam superbly. We watched him, taking turns with the Commandant's glass. He was black as coal, and strapped high on his shoulders—almost on the nape of the neck—he carried a small white bundle. He swam with his head, too, not straight for shore, but letting the tide carry him—only, of course, he could not know of the eddy race that had begun to set, closer inshore. He met it, and after a minute we could see that he was tiring. He made no headway at all, and this within five hundred yards of shore. The Commandant could not stand the sight of it, but stripped, for all we could do to prevent him, and swam out to help. The black man, when he reached him, would take no help, but passed over the bundle and swam in the Commandant's wake, maybe for half a minute. The heart had gone out of his strokes though, and presently he went out of sight without so much as a cry. At all events the Commandant could have heard none, for he swam on some way before looking back. I was watching all the while through the glass. When he looked and the man had disappeared, he seemed to tread water for a while and to search about, but gave it up and headed for shore again, swimming sideways with one arm and holding the bundle against his right shoulder. He brought it ashore just in that way, not once shifting his hold."

"But I do not understand. He is drowned, you say——"

"I do not say it. We ran down to the shoal water

to meet him, and as he found footing he dropped forward into my arms; or rather, he thrust the bundle on me and fell, right there on the water's edge."

"The bundle?"

Dr. Hervey turned and pointed. Some twenty yards up the beach lay a white object which she had taken for the dead man's shirt, tossed there as they had stripped it from him. Why did she walk towards it now and not first towards the body? Why, instead of going straight to the body, had she stood inert, letting the tale fall on her ears half apprehended? She had been swift and resolute enough until the moment when her feet felt the shore. Already three of her crew were gathered beside the two old sergeants, gazing soberly down upon the dead, offering suggestions which—too well she knew—were vain. Her presence, likewise, would be vain, yet surely she should have been there.

For—after one girlish passion outlasted and almost forgotten—this man, some years ago, had become the chief man in the world for her; the truest, the most honourable, as she knew in her heart that she had been the sovereign and only woman for him. Disparity of years, his poverty, his pride, had set the barrier, and she had never found courage to cast away shame and break it down. For years they had been able to meet and talk with an undisturbed courtesy.

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“ Yet what no chance could then reveal
And neither would be first to own
Let fate and courage now conceal,
When truth could bring remorse alone.”

Courage? It had been cowardice, rather, on her part,—or so she told herself. And the cowardice must go on, even now. She stepped to the bundle. It was of linen, soaked with salt water; and within it, stark naked, twisting his small legs while he cried, lay an infant—a man-child. In the bass of the waves on the sand she had caught no sound of the treble wailing. She stooped and lifted him in her arms. With the edge of her cloak she wiped away some of the brine from the creases of his small body; and the child, ceasing his wail, looked up into her eyes and crowed with glee.

“ Venus the sea-born mothering Cupid!” muttered Dr. Hervey.

But at this moment the Lady, looking over her shoulder, thrust the child on him with a gesture of repugnance. Her eyes had fallen on the two old sergeants, who had laid their dead master over on his back and were vainly endeavouring to coax back the living breath, raising his arms and anon pressing the elbows back against the sides—all with the dull, dogged motions of a military drill.

“ Ah, tell them to stop!” she entreated. “ He has had enough of it. Cannot they see that his heart is broken?”

CHAPTER II

STAR CASTLE

UBIQUE.

The dead Commandant had carved the word one day, in letters five feet long, out of the short turf on Garrison Hill where it slopes steeply from the Star Castle (as they call its antiquated small citadel) to the cliff overlooking the roadstead and the Western Islands. He had carved it in pure idleness, as an afternoon game to cheat the leisure enforced upon him since Government had dismantled his batteries, drafted his gunners off to the Main, and left him with two old sergeants—Sergeant Archelaus and Sergeant Treacher—to mark time, until the end of his days, by firing a gun at eight in the morning, another at sunset, and in the intervals by ringing the bell over the gate of the Fort every three hours to tell the time to the town below.

Ubique: it was the motto of his old corps, which he still served—as they also serve who only stand and wait. When the word was carved he had a mind to efface it, but had again been too indolent. Now he was gone, and Sergeant Archelaus kept the letters religiously trimmed with a turf-cutter. Sergeant Archelaus, a bachelor, lived alone and looked after

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the white-washed empty barracks on the summit of the hill. The other Sergeant—Traicher—was a married man. He and his wife inhabited the Star Castle, and with them lived the boy whom everyone knew as Jan.

Pending discovery of his true name, the Lady had christened him John Smith—Smith from the name of the rocks on which the vessel had split, and John because nothing could be more ordinary. For the rest she seemed to have taken a scunner (as the Scots say) at the helpless babe—an aversion not unmixed with a nameless fear. But something had to be done for him. There is no workhouse on the Islands; the rule that makes the aged, the infirm, the helpless a sacred charge upon their own kindred works well enough in a community so small that everybody is more or less nearly related to everybody else, and tradition has ordered that all shipwrecked persons must be treated with a like beautiful hospitality. So, as Traicher had been present at the finding of the child, and Mrs. Traicher was a comfortable woman who had reared children, to the Traichers little Jan was assigned by the Lady, whose word none disputed.

To be sure, his was a singular case. The ordinary outcast from the sea abides but a short time on the Islands, and in due course is returned to home and friends. But to any home, any friends—any origin, in short—of “John Smith” no clue could be discovered. The vessel proved to be an Italian

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barque, the *Fior dell' Onda*, Glasgow built, and formerly—under the name of *Lochroyan*—owned by a company of Glasgow merchants in whose service she had made half a dozen passages round the Horn. A Genoese firm had purchased and re-named her, and her last port of sailing had been Genoa, whence she was bound in ballast for Fowey, there to load a cargo of china clay. So much the Lady discovered through her agents and through Lloyd's, but the Genoese owners could tell her nothing concerning the child. To their knowledge there had been no woman on board the *Fior dell' Onda* either on this or her previous voyage (Genoa to Famagusta, port of Cyprus, and back).

So Jan lived with the Treachers until his eighth year, sleeping in an attic of the Star Castle, learning his letters in the elementary school down in Garland Town, and picking up a little Latin from Dr. Hervey, who had taken a fancy to the child and a whim to teach him.

His best opportunity for this came with the spring holidays, when the schools on the Islands were closed for a month, that the children might earn money during the daffodil harvest, the boys by picking flowers, the girls by tying them. Threepence a hundred bunches is the rate, and it is estimated that during these busy weeks no less than a million and a half of flowers are picked on the Islands every day.

But no one hired Jan. He was a solitary, shy boy,

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and perhaps people forgot him; or perhaps the Treachers, with their pension and their military post and their dignity as care-keepers of the Star Castle in Her Majesty's name, looked upon the new industry with contempt. Consequently Jan found these weeks the loneliest in the year, and on this spring morning was half minded to rebel, having a craze for flowers.

But Dr. Hervey had come to remind him of his Latin lesson. The weather being so fine, they decided to take it out of doors, on a rock a little below the flagstaff—Jan's favourite perch; and there on the slope at their feet they found Sergeant Archelaus busy with his turf-cutting tool.

"Hullo," nodded Sergeant Archelaus. "Come to talk your Latin? Well, here's a piece of Latin for ye?" He spelled out the word letter by letter, "U-b-i-q-u-e. Now what does that mean?"

"*Everywhere*," said the boy promptly. He was still in his declensions, but it seemed to him that he had known the word all his life; and yet he could not remember that he had ever inquired or been told its meaning.

"Did I tell you that?" asked Dr. Hervey.

"No—o."

Jan felt confused. He could not explain—for it seemed silly—that things were always happening to him in this way.

"*Everywhere* it is," said Sergeant Archelaus. "'Tis the word o' the R'yal Artillery, and their

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place is the right o' the line. What 's Waterloo to your *Everywhere*? . . . I remember the Commandant carving out these very letters. When he 'd finished he looks up and says, wi' that smile o' his, ' *Everywhere*, Archelaus—and we two be here, of all places! ”

Dr. Hervey muttered some words in a foreign tongue.

“ What you say, sir, is always worth listenin' to, but this time I didn't catch,” said Sergeant Archelaus, leaning on his turf-cutter.

“ I can accept the compliment for once, Archelaus, since it happens that I was quoting an old Greek, who said that ' of illustrious men the whole earth is a sepulchre.' ”

“ The Commandant was never illustrious, sir, as you put it.”

“ Remarkable, then.”

“ No, nor remarkable. An' didn't want to be. He was just an officer and a gentleman, straight as a die and modest as a maid, and we didn't wish for a better.”

Dr. Hervey filled his pipe gravely. Dr. Hervey's degree, by the way, had nothing to do with medicine. There are men who seek out-of-the-way spots, such as the Islands, to hide their broken lives, and Dr. Hervey was one. He had been a Professor of Theology at a great Catholic University, noted there for his learning and his caustic tongue. His outspokenness had made him enemies, and these (not without excuse) had arraigned a book of his, accusing

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it of "Modernism." It had ended—since he was obstinate and would neither explain nor retract—in his being expelled from his chair and laid under excommunication. The expulsion would have done him no irremediable harm, since he possessed a competence, and moreover had made a name to command attention for whatever he chose to write. But the excommunication crushed him; for, like many a brusque man, he was sensitive, and like many a fatally driven inquirer, he had a deeper love of the Church and sense of her majesty than have ninety-nine in a hundred who pay her the service of lip and knee. He and his God alone knew what a comfort during the first bitterness of exile it had been to associate with the Commandant, so simple a gentleman, if withal somewhat slow-witted, a holy and humble man of heart, so true at the root, so patient of his own disappointed life, so helpful of other men.

"You didn't wish for a better while you had the best," said Dr. Hervey, lighting his pipe very deliberately.

Jan watched the puffs of tobacco smoke. He owed his life to the man they were discussing, and he could only suppose that they must owe him a grudge for it in return. Sergeant Archelaus, indeed—whose temper did not improve with age—had more than once hinted that, though doubtless Providence had ordained this exchange of two lives, he for his part could not approve it.

"I don't want to speak irreverent, sir, but seemin'

to me th' Almighty must get a twinge, lookin' down 'pon this plat o' turf. *Everywhere*—Look ye, here the good gentleman carves it out, accusin' nobody, writin' down no more'n his deserts; and him to spend his life in this God-forsaken hole which is next to Nowhere, and end by losin' it for a child from Nowhere at all."

"That is no way to talk," said Dr. Hervey sternly, after a glance at the boy, who, gazing out over the sea, seemed not to hear.

"A man must speak his thoughts, Doctor."

"It depends how and when he speaks 'em." If Dr. Hervey, in his own career, had always remembered this! "But what does *Everywhere* mean to the best of us finite men? Your John Wesley said, 'All the world is my parish,' and a man as wise might answer, 'Then my parish is all the world.'"

"Good mornin', all!" interrupted a voice.

The new-comer was P.C. Epaminondas Ward (locally 'Paminondas), sole policeman of the Islands, sexton, too, of St. Lide's, town-crier, bill-poster and public official in general of Garland Town. "Good mornin', sir!" He touched his helmet to Dr. Hervey. "You'll excuse my breakin' in on your talk?"

"Certainly."

"It's a thing I hate to do. There's nothing like a good talk, and a man gets so few opportunities in the Force." Constable 'Paminondas was notoriously the first gossip in Garland Town. "But what might you ha' been discussin', making so bold?"

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“ Nothing against Her Majesty's peace, Constable, I assure you,” answered Dr. Hervey gravely. “ In point of fact, we were exercised over the difference between Everywhere and Nowhere, and I was trying to persuade Sergeant Archelaus that ‘ here ’ is ‘ everywhere ’ to a sensible man.”

“ That 's true enough if you take ME,” agreed Paminondas, adding modestly, “ But perhaps you 'll say that I 'm an exception ? ”

Dr. Hervey muttered something polite.

“ I 'm a thoughtful man, as by nature, sir,” went on the Constable, “ and you 'd be astonished what thoughts occur to me by night, when I goes poking around and all the rest o' the world laid asleep. F'r instance, I climb to the top o' the hill here, and 'tis midnight as you might say, in a manner of speakin'. Midnight it is, and all around the Islands the great sea-lights shinin'—fixed white low down on the Monk, white revolvin' on St. Ann's, North Island winkin' like a great red eye, white flashes from the Stones, red-white-red-white from the Wolf, not to mention the Longships an' the south-east sky runnin' in flickers from the Lizard, like men shaking a double whip. ‘ There you go, all of ye,’ I tells myself, ‘ warning mankind that here be the Islands. And what be the Islands,’ says I, ‘ at the moment to all intents an' purposes but ME,’ Paminondas Ward, with a bull's-eye at my navvle more or less—— ? ’ ”

“ There, Archelaus ! ” Dr. Hervey turned in

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triumph: but Sergeant Archelaus, after first spitting wide, had resumed his turf-trimming.

"Now, maybe you 're wondering what brings me here?" suggested the Constable. Meeting with no response, he continued, "Well, I don't mind telling you. It concerns the boy John Smith, in the form of a letter from her Ladyship. Her Ladyship sends word that Young Matthey Hender, on Brefar, wants an extry hand this fine season for the daffodil pickin', and John Smith is to go. I've just informed the Treachers."

"Ho?" Sergeant Archelaus paused again and looked up. "What did Treacher say?"

"He made a communication to me——" began 'Paminondas in his best Petty Sessions manner.

"D——d your eyes, I shouldn' wonder?"

It should be mentioned here that the attitude of the garrison towards the civil government was traditionally hostile.

"In a general way," said Constable 'Paminondas magnanimously, "a man may d——n my eyes or he may not, as the case may be, and I takes it from whence it comes. The Force, in a manner of speakin', is accustomed to such misrepresentation, and impervious, if I make myself clear. But as touching her Ladyship's order Treacher saw 'twas no use kickin' against the pricks, an' behaved himself conformably, as you might put it *in toto*. Which the upshot is, as between you and me, that John Smith is to be sailed over to Brefar to-morrow afternoon at 4 p.m., and start pickin' daffodils."

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“ Well, lad, that puts an end to Latin for a time,” said Dr. Hervey, stopping down the tobacco in his pipe with a useful forefinger.

The boy did not answer ; could not for the moment return his look. It would have been ungrateful to confess the truth, that he longed to escape and take his place among the children as one of them. Here, on St. Lide's, he mingled with the children in school, but always as one set mysteriously apart. He adored the sight of them, but could make no friends ; and the mere fact that he adored and saw them as so many bright angels playing leap-frog or marbles in the streets was proof that he could never be one of them. As counted by years their ages and his might be the same ; in fact he saw them through older, different eyes, yet yearned all the while to join them. In Brefar, picking daffodils, there might be children to understand him better. Brefar, at all events, lay clear out towards the circumference of the circle hemming him in.

The Star Castle, where he lodged with the Treachers, was a queer little octagonal building, set close within a circumvallation shaped like an eight-pointed star. A platform, seven feet high, ran round the interior of this circumvallation at about half its height of sixteen feet, and since the dwelling-house, twenty-one feet in height, was separated all round from the platform by a miserable fosse no more than four feet wide, it follows that the lower rooms lay in perpetual gloom, and only the attic chambers

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peeped over the battlements across the sea. Still, and although its eaves were low, from his bedroom window the boy could watch the great sea lights flashing or occulting—protecting, enclosing him in a magic circle he longed to pierce. He had come from Nowhere, and Nowhere lay somewhere beyond.

He had a few very vague notions about God. The teacher down at the school said something about God every morning before marking the register, and the children regularly sang a hymn.

On the whole he felt pretty safe about God. But "O God, who am I?" was the child's last thought before he dropped off in a healthy sleep. Towards dawn he stirred in a dream uncomfortably, raised himself on an elbow, turned his pillow, damp with tears, and snuggled down to sleep again.

CHAPTER III

CHY-AN-CHY FARM

IT was a voyage of delight ; better—yes, far better than all his expectations.

Sergeant Treacher, though of late years he seldom went on the sea, could handle a boat—as the Islanders allowed—“ tidy well for a soldier-man,” having been the Commandant’s mate on many a fishing expedition. He knew all the rocks and shoals, which everywhere among the Islands crop up in the most unexpected places.

The boat sped along, close hauled to a brisk nor’westerly breeze, across the roadstead, past the length of Saaron Island, and through the entrance of Cromwell’s Sound, between Iniscaw and Brefar. Jan, perched up to windward on an old military chest which contained his few shirts and change of clothes (it bore the inscription “ *R.A. 1959B, Depot 19. Return to Store,*” in white letters upon lead colour), drank in pure joy with the rush of air on his face.

At the mouth of the Sound the wind fell light and headed them for a minute or two. The sail shook this side and that, and he had to duck his head to avoid the boom.

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“ Slip over to leeward here ” said the Sergeant as the boat lost way. “ Peek your head over-side, an’ maybe I ’ll show ye something.”

Jan obeyed, and peeping over, was surprised to see a rocky ledge close below him. The weed on it floated within a foot or so of the surface.

“ Now, watch ! ” commanded the Sergeant.

Picking up a boat-hook, he jabbed the point of it smartly down amidst the weed. At once a long dark form shot out, darted away with quick gliding motion and was lost, Jan could not tell whither.

“ See anything ? ”

“ I—I saw a snake.”

Sergeant Treacher chuckled.

“ ‘ Snake,’ says the child. “ What do you know about snakes ? ”

“ Nothing,” Jan had to confess. He had never to his knowledge seen one before, or even the picture of one, for there were no picture books in the Star Castle. Yet he felt sure that this had been a snake.

“ ‘ Snake ! ’ That ’s a good ’un, too ! ” chuckled Sergeant Treacher again, and fell silent, being a taciturn man by habit.

Jan lifted his head to ask, “ What was the animal if not a snake ? Couldn’t snakes live in the sea ? ” when his eyes fell on a vision which hitherto the boat’s sail had concealed from him ; the beautiful shore of Iniscaw, with the Abbey towers rising over a mass of rhododendrons, and backed by tall spires of evergreen trees ; and below the Abbey an inland

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lake where a whole herd of fawn-coloured cattle stood knee-deep, some gazing at the boat, others dipping their black muzzles to drink.

He had passed into Wonderland, and the spell was still on him as they sailed up by Brefar shore, close under whole fields of daffodils, golden in the Island's shadow—small fields fenced around with dwarf hedges of escallonia and veronica. But the flowers had leapt these fences, it would seem; for colonies of them straggled along the edge of the cliffs and poured down to the very beaches—these being bulbs discarded by the farmers at sorting time and 'heaved to cliff' to take their own chances.

They brought the boat ashore upon a beach where Farmer Hender—'Young Matthey'—stood awaiting them. He had a grave, not unkindly face, and was clad in earth-stained blue; but what impressed the child most was his hat—a top hat of rusty black silk, extraordinarily high in the crown. Later Jan learned that this hat passed from father to son, and was worn as a crown of authority by the reigning head of Chy-an-Chy Farm.

The farmer took charge of Jan, and shouldering his box—for, as he explained, to-morrow was 'steamer day,' and no hands could be spared from the flower-picking—led the way up a shelving coombe to the farmstead, a grey building or cluster of buildings fenced with tamarisks, and set about with numerous glass-houses. The windows of these houses were banked high with flowers, but over this screen Jan, as

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he passed, caught sight of a number of girls at work, bunching and tying the blooms. The door of the house-porch stood wide, and he followed the farmer straight into the kitchen, where Mrs. Hender and a short middle-aged servant were engaged in setting out tea for the workers.

The kitchen was large, and had an immense open fireplace, with kettles hanging upon long hooks, and crocks mounted on brandises. A table, twenty feet or so in length, stood close against the long window-seat. From a bacon-rack fixed under the beams of the ceiling hung hams and sides of bacon wrapped in dry bracken and paper, with strings and bags of parched herbs—horehound, elder, mugwort,—specifics against various family ailments. The chimney-piece was flanked on the right by a dresser, on the left by a dark settle; and on the settle sat two very old men and an old woman, who regarded the boy—all three—with scarce so much movement as the blink of an eyelid, save that the old woman's head nodded quickly, regularly, as though by clockwork. These old people gave him a scare, and for a while he found it hard to believe them alive.

The middle-aged servant—who had a large, good-natured face, and in shape resembled a full sack tied tightly about the middle—came bustling forward and offered to lend the 'maister' a hand to carry the box upstairs.

"Aye, do," said the mistress. "If it takes ye

away from breakin' cream-jugs, it'll be time well spent. . . . Mary Martha broke another cream-jug only five minutes ago, if you'll believe me."

"That's true," sighed Mary Martha, still broadly beaming. "I do seem to be very unfortunate in cream-jugs."

"Not to mention the four cups an' saucers you scat to atoms on their way to the Wesleyan tea."

"I am very unfortunate in cups an' saucers," wailed Mary Martha.

"Nor the cream-pan, last Wednesday week."

"Oh, don't mention it, missis! I can't bear no more!"

"And now," persisted Mrs. Hender, addressing Jan, "it's candlesticks. Last Sunday a china one—one of a pair that I bought at Penzance, and the dealer said they were exact copies of the pillars in Solomon's Temple; an' I mended that. But what was the use? Yesterday she lets fall the fellow to 'en——"

"I do seem to be very unfortunate in candlesticks." Mary Martha's tone of despair and her jolly smile together fairly upset the boy.

"And in 'most everything else," snapped Mrs. Hender.

"You wouldn't think," she said next minute, as Jan's box went bumping up the stairs, Mary Martha knocking her end of it against the balusters, the wall, the edges of the treads,—“you'd never think that

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woman had put up a twenty-pound tombstone over her late husband—now would you ? ”

It did seem astonishing ; and so Jan agreed, still with a nervous glance at the old folks on the settle, whose faces continued impassive, as though they neither heard nor saw.

Five minutes later the work-people from the glass-houses came trooping into tea. They crowded round the long table and upon forms by the hearth, where the men sat with mugs balanced on one knee and on the other a thick slice of bread and butter or a hunk of saffron cake. Jan tried to count. The company numbered thirty-six or thirty-seven ; he could not be sure, for he had been told to squeeze himself among the young people on the window-seat, and their chatter made counting difficult.

On his right sat a child of about his own age, who told him that her name was Annet, and that she had two sisters and a brother. She pointed them out. The sisters were called Linnet and Bennet ; the brother she explained “ just had to be Mark.”

Jan asked why ; for a study of the boy's face, which was dark of complexion and somewhat heavy, gave him no clue. Annet indicated the old people, who had been led forward from the settle and placed at the head of the board, where they sat chewing slowly like ruminant animals. *That's* great-gran'-father Matthey ; he's Old Matthey, and ninety-four last birthday. And *that's* Un' Matthey, Old

Matthey's son—and my gran'father, of course—with Aun' Deb next to him. She's his wife, an' father's mother. Father is Young Matthey. That big man down at the bottom of the table is father's eldest; we call him Little Matthey. He was married two years back, and Sister Liza—we call Little Matthey's wife Sister Liza—is upstairs putting the baby to bed, and we call *him* Matthey's Matthey.

Jan agreed with her that for one family this was plenty of Mattheys, and that a Mark among them was a change at all events.

"It must feel funny," said Annet, "to be like you, and have no father nor mother nor any belongings."

Jan looked at her quickly, uneasily. But she was serious, it seemed, and did not mean to tease him. At once—how do children learn these ways?—he began to put on airs and to look darkly romantic.

"Don't!" he protested, sinking his voice to a confidential whisper. The success of it surprised him. As a matter of fact, he had never felt any deep yearning over his unknown parents, though his yearning for an answer to the questions, "*Who am I?*" "*From where in the world do I come?*" was persistent, often poignant, sometimes keeping him awake in a horror of emptiness, of belonging to nowhere . . . But this, the first romantic adventure of his life, made his head swim, and he played up to it by being false.

Annet—she was a dark pretty girl with really beautiful eyelashes—found him 'interesting,' and carried

him off after tea to the glass-houses, now lit with oil lamps, where she taught him the simple mysteries of ' bunching '—setting up blooms in pyramidal bunches, a dozen to the bunch, with room for each perianth to expand ; for the flowers are picked in bud while it is possible, kept in water under glass until partly open, and so packed ; the wise grower timing them to reach the market just at the moment of their perfection. Moreover, he thus avoids the worst risk of the February storms that sweep in from the Atlantic, charged with brine, spotting the open blooms and rendering them unsaleable.

Annet told the boy all this, and much else concerning the daffodils, while her small hands worked away with eleven other pairs of hands, bunching and tying. At the far end of the glass-house three grown girls were packing away the bunches in shallow boxes of various sizes—three, five, or six dozen to the box—and at the head of the table where they worked stood a young man receiving the full boxes, nailing down their covers, and affixing the labels. Twice, as Jan sat and watched, Mary Martha came bustling in with a kettle, for the water in which the flowers stood before being packed must be kept tepid—this was one of the secrets of young Farmer Matthey's success as a marketer. And whenever the door of the glass-house opened, the boy heard the tap-tap of a hammer across the yard from an outbuilding where new boxes were being fashioned and nailed together.

“ You may try your hand, if you will,” said Annet

graciously. "Here is a pair of scissors. To-morrow, though, father'll set you to work on the pickin'—that's the boys' work. And while you are trying you might tell me a story."

"A story?" Jan echoed blankly. "But I don't know any."

"*Everyone* must know some kind of story," said Annet with firmness. "Once upon a time there was a King and a Queen, and they were very sorry because they had no children. That's how you begin."

"But I don't see how it goes on, if they had no children—unless they go on being sorry."

"Silly! Of course they get a child in the end, and that's what the story's about. Now you go on from there."

"Oh!" said Jan, and began desperately—"Once upon a time there was a King and a Queen, and they were very sorry because they had no children; but of course they got a child in the end. He—came to them—in a boat——"

Annet nodded.

"That's better."

"He came to them in a boat," repeated Jan. "On the way he looked over the boat, and far down in the sea he saw a snake swimming."

"Now you're *inventing*," said Annet. "Well, never mind! One mustn't believe all one hears."

"But I saw one to-day," Jan protested.

"Go along with you—a snake, swimming in the sea! Well, let's hear what the snake said."

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“ He didn’t say anything. Sergeant Treacher pushed a boathook down among the seaweed—— ”

“ Who ’s Sergeant Treacher ? ”

“ He—he ’s called Treacher, and he ’s a sergeant. He lives upon Garrison Hill on St. Lide’s, along with Mrs. Treacher, and looks after the Castle.”

“ How does he come into the story ? ”

“ I don’t know that he comes into the story at all ; at least, not exactly,” Jan confessed.

“ I ’m tired of hearing about Sergeant Treacher,” said Annet ; “ and I don’t call it telling a story when you leave me to do all the talking. But I must say,” she added kindly, “ you ’ve made up that bunch very nicely, if it ’s your first try. Who taught you to make that pretty knot ? ”

“ Sergeant Treacher,” the boy began ; but at this point luckily someone called out from the far end of the glass-house that the boxes were all finished. Fresh boxes would be ready after supper, when the elder women would start packing again, while the children went off to bed. So they trooped back to the kitchen.

At supper Annet could not help being mischievous. She told the children near that Jan on his way to Brefar had seen a snake in the sea ; whereat he blushed furiously, which set the girls giggling, while an ugly tow-headed boy across the table burst into a guffaw, showing the gaps in his teeth.

Mrs. Hender, hearing the mirth, glanced down the board.

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“What’s amiss down there?” she asked. “Annet, Annet, you’re not teasing the child, I hope?”

“He says he’s seen a snake, missus,” called out the tow-headed boy.

“Lor’ mercy! Where?”

“In the sea here, off Brefar,” with another guffaw. “Brought up ’pon St. Lide’s, an’ not to know a conger!”

“Aw, a conger, was it?” said Mrs. Hender. “Yes, now, I dersay ’twas a conger he saw. They’re very like, now you come to mention it,” she added, seeing poor Jan’s confusion.

He could not understand the laughter, but it overwhelmed him with shame and vexation so that he wished he could slip beneath the table, and lower, till the earth covered him.

“There’s snakes on the Main, now; real adders and vipers; an’ that’s one reason why I never could bring myself to live in those parts. The thought came over me only last time I was over to Penzance. Half-way up Market Jew Street it came over me with a rush, and there and then a funny feelin’ all round the bottom of my skirt, till I heard a rude man askin’ what was the price of calves ’pon the Islands.”

“There was a Snake over here once upon a time—over here ’pon the Islands,” broke in a high, quavering voice.

It proceeded from the old man, Un’ Matthey, and

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he spoke up as if a spring had been started somewhere within him.

Mrs. Hender rapped the table with the back of a fork.

“ Hush 'ee, all, now, if you please ! Un' Matthey wants to tell a story.”

Conticuere omnes intentique ora tenebant.

CHAPTER IV

UN' MATTHEY'S STORY

“ THERE was a Snake over 'pon St. Lide's, one time,” said the old man, still in his high quaver, staring straight across the table; and Aun' Deb, his old wife, kept nodding her head beside him as if confirming the tale from the start.

“ —The Snake lived in the middle of the Island, in Holy Vale, and there he lorded it free an' easy till St. Lide came along and shut him up in a bag, out o' harm's way. After a time St. Lide took an' went the way of all flesh, forgetting all about the Snake an' the bag, that he 'd left hangin' from the branch of an apple-tree.

“ In those days St. Lide's was a proper wilderness. All the folks that counted—kings and queens an' such-like—lived over this side, 'pon Brefar here and Saaron.”

“ Hear him ! ” put in Mrs. Hender. “ An' Saaron nowadays but a land o' desolation ! Well did the Psalmist say, ' What ups an' downs in the world there be ! ' ”

“ One day, hundreds o' years after, a Saaron went over to St. Lide's to shoot rabbits. He came on the bag hangin' from the tree, an' saw the inside

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of it movin'. 'Hullo!' says he, 'some careless fellow has left a bag o' ferrets behind him. This 'll come in very handy.' He whips out his knife, cuts open the neck o' the bag, an' forth jumps a mons'rous big Snake, an' winds itself about his neck ready to strangle him. 'Hullo!' says the Saaron man, 'thee wou's'n't kill me, I hope?' 'Why not?' said the Snake. 'Why, seemin' to me, you owe me your liberty, not to say your life.' 'That's true enough,' says the Snake. 'A wise man shut me up in that there bag, where for these hundreds o' years I've been perishin' of hunger.' 'Then how in the world could you be so ongrateful as for to kill me?' says the Man from Saaron. 'Well, that's a pretty tale, I must say,' answers the Snake. 'Hungry I am, and ongrateful I own myself; but for ongratefulness where's the like of man?' 'Let some judge decide atween us,' says the Man from Saaron.

"The Snake consented, an' they set off together to hunt up a judge. The first they met was a Tree, an' they stated their quarrel. 'Now, O Tree, judge atween us,' says the Man. Says the Tree, 'No trouble about that. In the summers I let man cool himself an' his flocks under my branches, but soon as winter comes he cuts the same down for fuel. Nothing in the world so ongrateful as man. Take an' throttle en,' says the Tree.

"The Man from Saaron cried out for another judge. 'Very well,' the Snake agreed, an' they came to Sheep. 'You Sheep, decide atween us.' 'No

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trouble at all,' says the Sheep. 'I gave that man my fleece to cover his back. In return he robbed my lambs from me, and to-morrow he 'll turn me over to the slaughterer. Throttle en,' says the Sheep.

"But the Man from Saaron cried out for a fairer judge. They came to a Spring. She fairly choked when they put her the question. 'I've a hundred daughters,' she said, 'that in pure good natur' turned this fellow's mills, washed his flocks, an' laid bare their ore for him along the bank. In return he defiled them. Throttle en, I say, an' quick!'

"Still the Man cried for another judge. They came to a Rabbit, an' stated the cause. The Rabbit said to hisself, 'Here 's a ticklish business, judgin' atween a Man and a Snake,' and rubbed his nose for a bit to gain time. 'You've come to a mean critter, an' poor of understandin',' says he after a while. 'Would you mind settin' out the quarrel from the start?' 'Well, to begin with,' says the Snake, 'the Man found me in this here bag.' 'Oh, but you'll excuse me,' says the Rabbit, looking sideways for fear to meet the Snake's eye, 'in that tiny bag, did you say?' 'I'm not accustomed to have my word doubted by rabbits,' says the Snake, 'but I'll forbear a bit yet, and give ye the proof.' He coiled himself back into the bag. The Rabbit wasn't sayin' anythin', but his eyelids went flickety-flink, an' the Man from Saaron didn't miss the hint! He sprang fore 'pon the bag an' closed the neck o' it with a twist!"

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Here the old man struck his hands together and looked round on his audience with a knowing smile of triumph. His face for the moment had grown animated.

The company, too, clapped their hands as they laughed.

“ Bravo, Un’ Matthey ! ” they cried.

As Annet applauded, Jan plucked her by the sleeve.

“ But that’s not the end of the story,” he objected.

“ Eh ? ”

“ There’s more to come—more about the Rabbit
—— ”

“ A lot you know about stories ! Why, not an hour ago—— ”

“ What’s the child saying ? ” asked her mother, who had taken the opportunity to step down to where the children sat, and was making forward for an empty centre-dish to replenish it with thick bread and butter.

“ He says Un’ Matthey hasn’t finished yet.”

“ Well, and that’s true enough,” said Mrs. Hender, who had heard the story many times. “ But how came you so wise, little man ? ”

Jan could not tell. He had a queer sense—it had been haunting him ever since he landed and the farmer shouldered his box—that everything happening had happened to him before, somewhere, at some time. This was impossible, of course ; but with Annet especially he had once or twice forestalled the

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very words she would say next, and then, as she said them, the trick of her voice, some movement of the hands, some turn in the poise of her head, came back as parts of a half-remembered lesson. In just the same way scraps of Un' Matthey's story had come back as it might be out of some dream the boy had dreamed and forgotten.

But meanwhile Un' Matthey had resumed:—

“The Man from Saaron went home-along, an' the Rabbit sat by his hole an' smiled to hisself, thinkin' how clever he 'd been. He was still smilin' there next day, when he looks up an' sees the Man comin' back, an' with a bag in his hand—either the same bag or another. . . .

“‘Hullo!’ thinks the Rabbit, ‘he's bringin' me a gift for my wise judgment. Well, I deserve one. But,’ says he, ‘gratitude has a knack o' shrinkin’,’ for he saw that whatever the bag held 'twas of no great size. The Man gripped it half-way down. The Man came close.

“‘Good mornin’,’ says he. ‘Yesterday I was in too much of a hurry to stay an' thank you. A second Solomon you be, an' no mistake.’ .

“‘In justice, as in other things, a body can but do his best,’ answers the Rabbit, modest-like.

“‘You deserve a reward, anyway,’ says the Man.

“‘Justice is blind, my lord,’ says the Rabbit, edgin' up towards the bag.

“The Man opened it; out jumped a ferret, and *clk!*”—here Un' Matthey made a sudden uncanny

noise in his throat—"in two twos Master Rabbit lay stretched out dead as a doornail. The Man from Saaron kicked the ferret away off the body.

" 'He 's very properly punished!' said the Man from Saaron. 'Justice ought to be without fear or favour, an' his wasn' neither. But he 'll make very good eatin.' "

Un' Matthey had scarcely finished and been applauded when Young Matthey called for prayers. The farmer had pulled out his watch once or twice during the story, for in the daffodil season business is business. He himself read a chapter from the Bible—to-night it was the story of the Shunamite's son—and afterwards put up an extempore prayer when the family had dropped on their knees—all but the three old people, who sat in a row and sat with hands spread palm down on to the board, thumb touching thumb, much as children play the game of 'Up Jenkins!'

The young folks on the window-seat slipped down and knelt with their faces to it. This, of course, brought Jan's small legs calves upward well hidden under the table, and of a sudden, midway in the prayer, a sharp pinch almost made him cry aloud with pain. This was a trick played on him by the tow-headed boy, who had dodged beneath the form on the opposite side, and as he pinched uttered a derisive hiss, meant to resemble a snake's; but the trick was by no means a success, for the hiss itself ended in a squeak as a hand reached out after the

joker, caught him by the ankle, and twisted it with a sharp wrench.

The farmer's prayer, after invoking God's blessing on the household in general, went on to ask a number of things in particular. It entreated: "That Thy loving care may go with the steamer to-morrow and prosper her," whereupon all answered "Amen." It glanced at Mary Martha: "That it may please Thee to lighten the burden of one in our midst lately afflicted with breakages." Jan himself was not let off: "And that Thy mercy may be tender upon a newcomer, a child to-day brought to the circle of these Thy servants." It took the farmer's fields in their order, particularising their crops (whether *Emperors*, *M.J. Berkeleys* or *Ornatuses*), and separately asking favours for each. In short, it was just such a prayer as that of the Athenians, commanded by Marcus Aurelius: "*Rain, rain, dear Zeus, down on the ploughed fields of the Athenians and on the plains.*" "In truth (says the Emperor) we ought not to pray at all, or to pray in this direct and noble fashion."

On its conclusion the farmer, rising from his knees with the rest, looked down along the board sternly with a masterful eye, and demanded to know "Who it was just now makin' light of our supplications under the table?" There was a constrained silence—Young Farmer Matthey, not a doubt of it, was master in his own household—until the tow-headed boy stood up, yellow with fright, looking as

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though he desired the earth to open at his feet and cover him. At the same moment a dark, good-looking lad seated beside him—a boy probably two years his senior—glanced across at Jan with a smile.

“Billing’s boy, is it?” said Young Matthey sternly. “Then you, Billing’s boy, will step over yonder and stand with your face to the corner while the others pass out.”

The others passed out there and then—the elders to the glass-houses to finish the packing, the youngsters to bed.

To Jan was assigned a small attic chamber, barely furnished, clean as a pin, smelling potently of onions that had been kept to dry the winter through on its naked floor. From its windows, between the eaves, he looked straight out upon the red sea-light on North Island, and just within the edge of the frame, as he lay down in his bed, the far Stones Lightship repeated its quick three flashes of white.

They were the same lights he had watched from his garret window on St. Lide’s; but they were nearer, and it seemed to him that he was nearer the edge of the spell. He dropped asleep. At intervals in his dreams he saw the face of the dark, good-looking boy smiling at him across the table, while still through his dreams, until midnight and after, sounded the tap-tap of a hammer from the outhouse, nailing boxes for the daffodils.

CHAPTER V

TOM TIDDLER'S GROUND

“ Here we are on Tom Tiddler's ground
Picking up gold and silver ;
Daisies and lilies
And daffadownlilies—
O, who wouldn't be a delver ! ”

NEXT morning the farmer took him out to the fields, having first provided him with a pair of small leggings, for some rain had fallen during the night, and wading among the flowers would be wet work.

They came to a strip of ground, in size about an acre, set about with a low hedge of veronica and ablaze with yellow trumpet daffodils—yes, ablaze, though most of the buds were but half open. Half a dozen boys were already at work here, headed (to Jan's delight) by the brown, smiling boy ; for most of the men of the farm had started before daybreak to row Young Matthey's barge, laden with flower-boxes, down to the landing on the south point of Iniscaw, where the Lady's launch would take them in tow across the Sound to St. Lide's Pier, under the lee of which the steamer lay.

The farmer, having briefly instructed Jan what flowers to choose, how to pluck them low down by

the base with a sharp snap, and how to basket them when plucked, assigned him his row and left him in charge of Dave, as he called the brown boy.

The field lay on the slope above the cliffs in a sheltered hollow, facing southward; so that, over the sheets of daffodils and over the dwarf hedge, you saw the blue water of the archipelago, right away south to St. Lide's and to Garrison Hill with the Star Castle crowning it, and at its base (so clear was the morning) the smoke of the steamer as she lay getting up steam. The sunshine, falling warm on the wet flowers, drew from them the rarest fragrance. (They were trumpet daffodils, as has been said, and nine out of ten of us would have called them odourless; but little Jan, it was to be discovered, had a sense of smell keen almost as a wild animal's.) The fragrance mingled with the wafted brine of the sea, and between them—what with the breeze and the myriad heads of gold it set nodding and the spirit of youth dancing inside of him—they flooded the child's soul with happiness—a happiness so poignant that once, straightening himself up in a pause of the picking, he felt his eyes brim with tears, through which the daffodils danced in a mist. Brushing the back of his hand across his eyes, he glanced shyly across at Dave, fearful lest Dave had detected his weakness.

And Dave had, but set it down to the wrong cause.

“Takes ye in the back, first-along, hey?” said Dave kindly. “Never mind, little 'un; within a

week you 'll get over the cramps, an' it's not bad ye 're doin', for a beginner."

Jan blessed him for misunderstanding. What a splendid fellow Dave was—so brown and strong! But Dave, though he could smile most of his time, had very little mouth-speech, as they say on the Islands. He contented himself with showing Jan how to arrange his flowers in the "maund" or basket—they had one maund between them, and were working down two parallel rows—and he did it mostly by dumb show. Once, however, he called out, standing up and pointing—

"There she goes!"

—and all the boys paused for a minute and gazed southward at the steamer heading out from St. Lide's Quay for the Main. As he watched her, the old longing came upon Jan with a rush; the old question, as a sudden cloud upon his glee.

They fell to work again. But a few minutes later word arrived that Dave must attend the farmer in an upper field, where he had an ingenious device of forcing some rarer bulbs as they stood by covering them with small portable glass-houses mounted on wheels. This matured the plants better than the old way of transferring them to boxes and forcing them in a large greenhouse; but the glass-frames needed handling, and the most of his grown men had not yet returned with the barge. So Dave was requisitioned.

He had no sooner left than the industry of the

boys in the field sensibly slackened. Jan, bending over the row, did not perceive it, and was rudely awakened by a light cuff on the ear. Above him stood the tow-headed boy, grinning and showing the gaps in his teeth.

“ Sneak ! ” said the tow-headed boy, “ that ’s for telling tales on me last night. ”

A sudden fury leapt up in Jan. He wanted to kill the tow-headed boy—who was so ugly and told lies. Without waiting to consider, Jan leapt on him, and the attack was so sudden that both rolled over among the dripping daffodils, crushing the flowers as they rolled. For a few seconds Jan was on the top, and his hands felt for the tow-headed boy’s throat, to grip it ; but by-and-by age and weight prevailed.

“ Little devil, I ’ll teach you ! ”

The tow-headed boy first clutched the nape of his neck and rubbed his face into the soil, then caught at one of the writhing arms and began to twist it.

“ Now sing small, little devil ! ”

“ I won’t,” gasped Jan, almost faint with pain. “ You tell lies, and are ugly—ugly ! ”

“ Hullo ! ”

It was Dave’s voice, and Dave descended on the scrimmage like a young god. He cuffed the two apart ; but Jan, white with passion, flew again at his adversary, and had to be caught by the jacket-neck and flung among the wet flowers.

“ Little spitfire ! ” laughed Dave, after doing this

gently but firmly. "Seemin' to me, Ben Lager, this field is'n safe for you, and you 'd better come along an' help with the glass boxes. Farmer sent me down to fetch up another hand."

So the tow-headed boy was marched off, and Jan, picking himself up, fell to work again. He was trembling from head to foot. He had never in his short life known such a fit of rage, and it affected him like an ague. For a full hour the trembling lasted, at intervals broken by a sob that convulsed all his limbs.

The harvest had begun late this year, in contrast with last season's, when picking started before New Year's Day and went on steadily until May month. Up to the opening days of February Young Matthey had carried a gloomy face about his fields, consoling himself with market reports of unusually high prices (due to severe weather in the South of France, where the gardens of his trade rivals, the Mediterranean growers, had lain under snow for three weeks on end). Young Matthey ever spoke with asperity of these distant Frenchmen, his mind confusing them in a queer fashion with what he had read in newspapers concerning Monte Carlo. He imagined them at the end of a season, when he banked his few hard-earned pounds, as flocking to the tables with large sums of money (that ought by rights to be in *his* pocket), and gambling it away upon *roulette*, a game happily unknown in the Islands. Indeed, the Islanders knew no games at all. Strange to say, even the

children played none—until Jan taught them, as you shall hear.

In February the flowers awoke and came on with a rush. The previous summer had been a hot one, baking and ripening the bulbs in the ground; but with November had come a spell of cold, and an obstinate one, lasting through December and January and holding (as the farmer argued) the head of the procession in check while the later regiments of flowers pressed up and trod on their leaders' heels, all waiting the signal of fine weather; so that when the sunshine came all burst into bloom together, and bloomed riotously. The Islands had never known such a March. In the first week the workers had to give over saving the flowers in bud and bunching them in water jars under shelter, for they opened faster than the whole population could pick. The sky was clear; the weather-glass stood at 'Set Fair.' The maidens left their glasshouses and worked afield with the lads. In the last week of the holidays the farmers met and sent a deputation to the Lady, protesting that if the schools re-opened as usual the flower industry would perish amid plenty.

“What was Government, with its Education Grant, compared with this hundreds of pounds' worth that must rot in the fields!” The Lady snapped her fingers at the Board of Education in London, and extended the holidays a fortnight. There was even talk of hiring another steamer to ply from the Main.

The present one would carry but fifty tons at a time, for flower boxes take up much room for their weight. Fifty tons thrice a week—say seventy thousand flowers to the ton—between nine and ten millions of flowers!—which means a million and half picked every day, since the Islanders do not work on Sundays.

So instead of a month Jan dwelt six weeks upon Brefar, until all the trumpet daffodils and the Leedsii were either picked or overblown, and even the Poet's Narcissus, latest of all—in those days little grown on the outer Islands, but chiefly under apple trees in the few orchards on St. Lide's and in the Lady's gardens at Iniscaw—were past their prime. They were happy days for the boy, but they were also days of almost constant labour, so that often after supper and prayers he would climb to his attic almost too weary to drag off his clothes—far too weary to loiter at his window picking out and naming the sea-lights—before tumbling into bed and into a dreamless sleep.

On the last "steamer day" Young Matthey gave him leave to travel across with him to St. Lide's in the barge and prepare the Treachers for his return. As he stepped ashore on the quay he had a queer feeling of having been absent for years instead of for weeks. The steamer lay alongside, as he had seen her lie some scores of times; the carts were rattling down from the island; the laden boats hurrying across the Sound, from St. Ann's in the south, from St. Michael's in the north (where, local report said, the men grew tails and spoke an outlandish

language). The boxes were being shipped at high pressure, some sliding down shoots into the hold, others overpiling an already monstrous deck cargo; and, as usual, the skipper was holding two altercations at once with shippers who had attempted to encroach beyond their allotted space. But it seemed to Jan that either he had grown or Garland Town had shrunk. He came back to it as one who had seen the world.

At the head of the street, where the rough path climbed to the Garrison gate, he ran against Dr. Hervey.

“Hullo, youngster! Well, it’s fine and brown you are!” cried the Doctor genially. “And you’ve shot up, I protest. Is it Brefar air, or has the world grown for ye?”

Jan, with a new air of independence, yet modestly enough, returned the Doctor’s smile.

“It’s different, sir.”

“Aye, aye! *Cælum, non animum, mutant*—worse rubbish was never uttered. But, boy, ye’ve missed your Latin—precious days of it. We must make up leeway; and from Latin, in a year’s time or so, I’ll lead ye to Greek, which is a baptism, look ye,—a baptism into a cult, and the only true key to freedom. There be other ways more alluring, that look easier, but if you’d be a free man—free of these Islands, free of the Main, free of the Mediterranean, which is the sea of seas, and of Rome, to which all the roads lead—ye’ll avoid short cuts, and sit down with me again to *mensa, mensam, mensæ*.”

CHAPTER VI

MARY MARTHA'S TOMBSTONE

YOUNG Farmer Matthey having much business to transact in Garland Town, the return journey was not made until late in the afternoon. Half-way across, the farmer called Jan aft to speak with him.

“I’d a sudden thought to-day,” he said, “and meeting Sergeant Treacher on the quay just now I broached it to him. You seem to be a quiet, steady boy, an’ I hear good reports of ’ee, besides what I’ve seen with my own eyes. What d’ye say to livin’ ’long with us at Chy-an-Chy, an’ goin’ to Brefar school along with my own childern? You needn’t be in a hurry with ‘yes’ or ‘no,’” he added, as Jan stood with face flushed and stammered for words. “Because, anyway, we’d have to get the Mistress’s leave first. But I was thinkin’ that I’ve a shortage of boys—maids in plenty, but no boys to mention, or none to be depended on. There’s Little Matthey, my eldest. He’s a grown man, an’ the farm’ll come to him in God’s time, but he’ve no understandin’ for flowers, an’ never had. As for Mark, his mother spoils ’en. Goin’ outside my own, Dave is a good lad; but Dave, when he grows up, ’ll go into service with Trinity House. His parents

have settled 'pon that, and a very good lightkeeper he 'll make. Lager's boy is no good at all, nor Aby Hicks, nor his small brother Sam, nor Seth Piper. What I want is a lad pretty bright at learnin'— What's that in your hand?" he asked, breaking off.

Jan opened the parcel—a scrap of old newspaper. It enwrapped a flat-cupped narcissus, with a belt of earth about the bulb.

"Hullo! That's what they call carryin' coals to Newcastle, eh? Ha'nt we Ornatuses enough on Brefar, these days?"

"It grows up at the Castle, sir, in the ditch between the house and the outside wall, but near by the door where the sun gets to it. And the red in the cup is quite different to any on Brefar. I was carrying it home to—to show to——"

"So it is, now you mention it," said the farmer, examining the flower and not noting Jan's confusion. He handed it back. "Some freak, I shouldn't wonder . . . But that only proves what I was sayin'. You've a quickness for flowers, a naptitood; and I was reckonin', maybe, if I brought ye up an' gave ye board an' keep, one o' these days you'd reward me by turnin' out a pretty useful apprentice, an' then who knows but ye won't finish up as a hind?—at sixteen shillin' a week an' your meals!"

But this part of the alluring prospect did not touch Jan, who had never possessed any money and knew nothing of its value.

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“ Please, sir, what did Sergeant Treacher say ? ” he ventured.

“ Oh, the Treachers are ready enough ! It’s for your good, and,” added the farmer not very lucidly, “ ’tisin’ as if you was their own flesh an’ blood.”

The barge was brought ashore at the little beach where Jan had made his first landing on Brefar. The children, their harvest work over, were all gathered there to welcome it, and Mary Martha, as the custom was at end of harvest, had brought them down a’ picnic tea from the farm, and had already smashed two cups. The kettle sang on a fire under the cliff’s shadow. All around the head of the cove grew clumps of narcissus poeticus—castaway flowers, unmarketable, the most of them by this time overblown, but beautiful yet—beautiful as white ghosts when the shadows crept down the beach and covered them ; for some blossomed even among the stones at the water’s edge, and would bloom again next year unless meanwhile an abnormally high tide came and washed the bulbs away. Jan joined the tea-drinkers, his heart swelling with his news. Thanks to Mary Martha’s affliction (as she had come to call it) there was no cup for him, and he was told to go shares in Annet’s, taking sip and sip with her—the bliss !

But the bliss did not endure.

“ What’s that you’ve brought me ? ” asked Annet, nodding towards the parcel, which he had laid beside him.

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“ How did you know I brought it for you ? ” he asked, his heart beating.

She pouted.

“ Is it for Linnet, then, or for Bennet ? ”

“ But it *is* for you ! ”

He unwrapped it, and held it out. Her pretty face darkened.

“ Is it mocking me ? A silly old Ornatus ! ”

“ But it ’s *different*,” he began stupidly, afraid of the wrath in her voice.

“ As if you didn’ know that I am sick of flowers—yes, sick of them ! ”

She tossed the bulb away pettishly, and sat staring before her, with tears in her eyes. The heel of her boot ground a pebble or two in the sand. Poor Jan looked at her ruefully. He had meant to give her pleasure, and a moment ago his own happiness had been brimming. The news he had to tell, news so good for him—Would that, too, make her angry ?

But at this point Mary Martha let fall a plate, and upon the crash of it uplifted her voice in a wail.

“ An’ now it ’s plates ! Oh, my misguided hands ! Plates an’ cups an’ candlesticks will ever be my cross ; and no hopes for it, maister, till we meet in the land o’ marrow an’ fatness, where there ’s no candle an’ the crockery tumbles light.”

“ Never mind a plate, Mary Martha, up or down,” said the farmer genially.

He had done satisfactory business that morning

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with the bank at Garland Town, and could afford the loss of a plate or two at harvest-ending.

To cheat her remorse he suggested that since she was talking of crosses she might tell them about the one she had put up to her deceased husband.

" 'Tis a story that never fails to cheer," he assured the company tactfully.

" It cost the all of twenty pounds," began Mary Martha, cheering up at once. " I got Hugh and Co.'s receipt for the money here in my purse, an' ne'er will I part with it."

She opened the purse and showed the paper, greasy with much folding and unfolding.

" But don't 'ee go callin' it a Cross, maister, when 'tis a Collum."

" Dear me, so 'tis." The farmer took her correction. " Iss, iss, a collum, an' I beg your pardon, woman."

" A broken collum, an' polished granite, with the ivy growin' round it nat'ral as life. Not real ivy, you'll understand, but granite too, same as the collum. . . . When my poor dear man went off in a decline an' died—an' a kinder man the Lord never put heart into—I went to Hugh and Co. an' told him I wanted a tombstone. Hugh and Co. is the tombstone-maker over to Garland Town; his real name is William Hugh, an' I never saw any Co. about him. I told Hugh and Co. I wanted to be measured for a stone, if he'd understand, because all my savin's had gone in the funeral, an' I wouldn'

have the stone until I 'd paid for it, every penny—let alone that the dear man never could abide debt in his lifetime, an' 'd ne'er have rested easy wi' that weight o' credit 'pon his remains. Hugh and Co. was very nice about it, an' accommodatin'; offered to put up one for me on a sort of hire system, an' made a lot o' useful suggestions. But I stuck out that I 'd have no stone till he had his money; only I wanted to choose the thing aforehand so 's to have a notion o' what I 'd be savin' for. Seein' how firm I was about the payment, he took me into his yard—such a place, my dears! Tombstones by the scores, with 'Sacred to the Mem'ry' ready carved 'pon 'em, and then a blank, waitin' till the person died, so that you got the creeps wonderin' if it mightn' be your turn next. But I didn't get no creeps, not carin' just then how soon I was taken. Hugh and Co. showed me all kinds o' patterns. Bein' used to his trade, he was as easy about it as a butcher with a calf, an' yet very kind all the time. He wanted to know if I 'd have it in Delabole Slate or in a kind o' what he called Compo, that he praised up for standin' all weathers. 'We 've a cheap line in boards, too,' says he, 'all seasoned wood, with two coats o' best paint besides primin', an' the whole concern to be repainted, often as you like, at contrack prices.' But I was looking at something quite different that had caught my eye, standin' in the middle o' the yard. 'That there pillar would be my fancy,' says I, 'if only 'tweren't broken. How

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did you meet with such a naccydent?' 'Broken?' says he. 'That's done a-purpose, to show the life underneath was a-snapped off afore its time.' When I come to look closer I saw he was tellin' the truth. 'Just like my poor dear!' says I, an' asks en the price. He seemed a bit absent-minded of a sudden. 'Oh, that there collum's a masterpiece,' he says, 'done by one of our best workmen on the Main! 'Twas meant for a deceased party whose name I won't mention, bein' actionable, perhaps; but the relatives quarrelled over the will, an' here the blessed thing is, back 'pon my hands. I can't tell you the whole story, missus,' says Hugh and Co., 'but here it be, through an act o' carelessness in the foreman who took the order, an' I've stuck it up here to show what we can do when we try.' 'How much might it be, sir?' I asks, my heart in my mouth. 'Well,' says he, 'if you should know anyone who happens to be in want of such a thing, you can tell 'em that, misfit tho' 'tis, I can't let it go under twenty pound.' I stood there of a sudden all of a tremble. 'I'll take it,' says I, hardly believing the sound o' my own voice. 'What!' says he. 'That is, if you're sure they relatives won't put in no claim, an' if you'll let me bring the money from time to time, just to show how I'm gettin' on, an' that I mean honest.' 'Well!' says Hugh and Co., surprised out of hisself, 'you'll excuse me, missus, but this beats cock-fightin'!' 'It may or it mayn't,' says I; 'but there's one other thing I'd

like to mention. Could ye saw off the broken end clean for me?' I says, 'for I see what it means, now you've told me, but other people won't, maybe. They'll think I got so far wi' the payments an' no further, or maybe they'll think I picked up with a damaged article, or again maybe they'll think I let it fall, like everything else in the world. I couldn' be in the churchyard all the time explainin', besides which I'm goin' over to Brefar to Young Matthey Hender, who've been a father to the fatherless, at five pounds a year and my keep.' "

"Get along with your story, woman," said the farmer hastily.

"Which he agreed," continued Mary Martha, "and I came over here an' saved an' saved till I had five pound put by! An' then I turned-to again, an' saved and saved till I had another five pound—if someone will be good enough to count. An' after that I saved an' saved another five. An' last of all I saved an' saved another five, an' that made *TWENTY!*"

Mary Martha ran up to the climax with a shout of triumph, and, ceasing abruptly, looked round the circle of her audience for the applause which was duly given.

"It's gospel truth, too, the woman be tellin'," said the farmer, rising from his meal and preparing to walk away.

Long years of ceaseless daily labour—and in the beginning, before the daffodils brought prosperity,

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they had been years of daily planning and contriving against want—had left him unapt for relaxation. He had been restless for some time before the close of Mary Martha's enthralling story.

"She hid it from us, too; though the Lord knows we'd ha' been ready to make a push an' help her t'wards the money."

"But 'twouldn't ha' been the same thing, maister," chuckled Mary Martha gleefully.

"No, woman, you're right there," he answered, and went his way to look over his harvested fields; also, if truth must be told, to rest a minute at the gate of each, bless God's mercy, and entreat it for his children, of whom the younger were all too young to remember less prosperous times.

CHAPTER VII

HOW THE CHILDREN LEARNED TO PLAY

“ It must be a fine thing to live on the Main,” said Annet thoughtfully.

The children turned their eyes together over the sea, across which the sunset, behind the cliff that shaded them, spread a soft radiance, warming a few high clouds with its afterglow. The Main was not visible from the low beach where they sat, but they knew where it lay afar, beyond the point of Iniscaw.

“ Aye,” said Dave, “ and be rich enough to order a tombstone like that ; and, when it’s made, to tell the mason you’ve changed your mind.”

“ For my part,” said Linnet, who was a practical little body, “ I don’t want to make acquaintance with any such whimsical people. You may be sure they’d look down on you, bein’ so rich as they are ; and I’d hate to live where I was looked down upon.”

“ I wasn’t meaning,” said Annet, “ that I’d like to go over from here an’ be treated as *they* chose. I meant it would be fine to be one o’ them, an’ so rich that you could look down on everybody else.”

“ But why *should* you ? ” put in Jan, puzzled.

“ Oh, you don’t understand ! ”

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Here Bennet, who was practical as Linnet, but in a different way, opined that on the Main the Queen rode in a glass coach, which even the Mistress never did in the Islands.

"She couldn', not very well," retorted Linnet, ever a loyal Islander. "But there's glass windows to the cabin of her launch."

Here Mary Martha, whom the children allowed to listen to their talk, feeling no shyness with one so simple-hearted, laid her hands in her lap with a sigh.

"I've longed sometimes to be Queen of England," she confessed; "though it don't happen to me so often as it did when I was savin' up for the tombstone. But *that* cures me. Fancy me ridin' in a glass coach, with my unfortunate habits!"

"Let's pretend that one of us is goin' across to the Main to-morrow," suggested Bennet; "and we'll each choose what we'd like for a present. Dave's the eldest. Dave, you're to start by the steamer to-morrow, and——"

"But the steamer went to-day," Dave objected.

"Well, then, the day after to-morrow. It don't make any difference to our pretendin'."

"I didn't want to disappoint you, that's all. Very well, I'm to go the day after to-morrow," Dave announced. "Now fire ahead, and choose what you want me to bring back."

"It's like the beginning of *Beauty and the Beast*," said Annet. "'Once upon a time there lived a

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merchant who had three daughters. A message came to him that he had to travel and do business in a country a long way off. So he called his daughters together, and asked what they would like him to bring home for fairings. The first daughter asked for a necklace of ruby stones and satin slippers and a canary bird in a golden cage. The second wanted a new kitten and some strings for a harp and a dress all over diamonds. But when it came to the third——’”

“Well, what did *she* want?” asked Dave, as Annet came to a halt.

Her face had flushed of a sudden.

“I don’t know. . . . I didn’ set out to tell you all the story.”

“But *I* know!” cried Jan, sitting up suddenly and clutching two small pebbles he had been tossing idly in his hand. “The third one wanted a flower.”

“She didn’t!” Annet contradicted angrily. “Not first along, at any rate. And you don’t know any stories; you told me so yourself, the day you came.”

Jan passed the back of his hand over his eyes.

“No, first-along she didn’t want anything; but after that, because she didn’t like to disappoint her father, she chose a flower. When her father was away on the main, and just about to start back for home, he found himself walking in a beautiful garden, and it came into his mind that he’d remembered to buy the other fairings, but forgotten about the flower

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for his youngest daughter. So he picked the prettiest he could see, when out from the bushes jumped a great roaring lion.

“ ‘ Who gave you leave to pick my flowers ? ’ roared the lion. The merchant dropped on his knees, and cried out that he had only picked one. It was for his daughter who lived on the other side of the sea, and had made him promise to bring her home a flower. ‘ By right I ought to kill you,’ said the lion, ‘ and I will only spare you if you promise to go home and fetch your daughter to me. Bring her to my palace and leave her here. You won’t see anybody. But if you don’t obey me, be sure I will kill you.’ The merchant had to promise, and when he reached home, and told the news, they were all very sad. But the youngest was brave and said she must go, so her father took her back with him to the lion’s palace and left her. They saw nobody, and when her father had gone she wandered about alone until she was tired, and at last, coming to a bedroom, she lay down and slept. But by and by she woke up. It was dark, and there was somebody talking to her in the dark, and although she couldn’t see his face she knew he was a beautiful Prince. He went away before daylight, but before going he told her that he would always love her, but he must always come in the dark, and she must never try to see his face.”

“ You’re telling it all wrong!” broke in Annet.
“ That’s not the story at all.”

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“It’s a very good yarn, anyway,” said Dave, as the child came to a stop, all confused; “and I don’t see why you want to interrupt. Go on, Janny boy.”

“She—she was never to see his face,” pursued Jan; but the words came halting, and he seemed to be casting about for the broken thread of the story.

“She wanted too, more and more, and—oh, yes!—it goes on that one night while he was sleeping she lit a lamp—it was a lamp like the *chill** up in the kitchen—and bent over to look at him. He was handsome, ten times handsomer than she had ever supposed. He was so handsome that her hand shook, and a drop of the hot oil fell on his shoulder. He opened his eyes, and then——”

Jan came to a halt again.

“Tell us what happened!”

Annet was as eager now as the others.

“He—he flew away, out of her sight. She had broken her promise, you see. I don’t rightly know the end,” Jan confessed, rubbing his eyes perplexedly. Where had he learnt the story? It all came to him so clearly, up to a point. “I think she searched after him—yes, and at last they were married, and lived happy ever after,” he wound up, like one repeating a lesson.

“I don’t think much of a story that breaks off

* *Chill*, a stone lamp shaped like a candlestick and having a shallow saucer on top. A little train (fish) oil was poured into the saucer and a floating rush served for wick. Such a lamp was used up to recent years on the Islands; and the glimmer it gave was called by the housewife an “idle light,” meaning that she and her maidens could not see to sew by it.

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in the middle," said Annet cruelly. "Linnet, 'tis your turn. Tell us about Peter Piper that went down to the bottom of the sea and married a mermaid."

Linnet told the story of Peter Piper, and when Linnet had done another child told about the Piskies—how they stole a baby out of its cradle, and how the mother made them bring it back by boiling a crockful of eggshells.

Jan listened, tossing his two pebbles idly and catching them. It was queer. These stories also he had heard at sometime, somewhere, or else he had dreamed them—not exactly as the children were telling them, but so nearly that to all intents they were the same.

Dave's turn came next ; but Dave for some minutes had been watching Jan and the way he tossed the pebbles, turning his hand and catching them neatly on the back of his knuckles.

"That 's a funny game you are playin', little Jan. Who taught 'ee the trick of it ?"

"Nobody," answered Jan, after considering a moment. "It came into my head one day, and I've been playing at it ever since, off and on. There are lots of different ways."

He added a third small pebble, tossed up all three and caught them on the back of his hand, where they lay disposed as though they had been carefully placed there. With a quick upward jerk he sent them in air again, to fall just as neatly upon the back of his other hand.

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The children watched him curiously. One or two chose out pebbles, and tried to imitate these tricks. Within five minutes every child in the circle was engaged in the game, and laughing at one another's awkwardness. In this way Jan taught them the beginnings of a game old as the hills, played by shepherds and fisher boys on far-away Grecian Isles before ever Homer sang; and thus it came about that the Brefar children play at knucklebones to-day with oddly-shaped pebbles. Also, unknowingly, he taught them to laugh. They were laughing yet when the bell tinkled, up at the farm, summoning them home to supper and bed; and as they climbed the hill echoes of their laughter floated back to the deserted beach.

The echoes died away, faded into the perpetual low hum of the tide races sweeping around the northern isles. In the twilight a belated bee continued at work — *z-z-zoom* — busy among the glimmering flowers of the Poet's Narcissus. The bee pitched on a flower which lay broken among them where Annet had tossed it, and entered its cup inquisitively.

CHAPTER VIII

THE APPRENTICESHIP

You that build the shade-roof, and you that court the rays,
You that leap besprinkling the rock stream-rent :
He has been our fellow, the morning of our days ;
Us he chose for house-mates, and this way went.

Phæbus with Admetus

So Jan continued with Young Farmer Matthey and grew up as one of the household. Our story has no concern with these years, beyond telling that he went with the other children to Brefar school, and was passably sharp with his books ; and that he grew into a handsome lad, fair-skinned, beautifully-limbed, cheerful and docile of temper. He never quarrelled, but would walk away whenever the children started bickering among themselves. On the other hand, he never quite broke through his shyness. He craved for their love, but (save unconsciously) could go no way to meet it, even when he taught them to laugh and play games. Only with Dave he had no reserve. If Dave was David, Jan as surely was Jonathan. As a rule, between growing lads two years' difference of age is a gulf : but Jan (as the farmer put it) was old for his age, and in one particular he established a mastery which helped to bring them level.

They learned to swim together ; and at swimming

from the start the younger boy out-paced and out-distanced the elder. Dave had no jealousy in his nature. He toiled admiringly in Jan's wake, and it was he, not Jan, who boasted of Jan's beautiful diving. When they grew up and fitted out an old boat of the farmer's, it was Dave's turn to resume the mastery. Dave had a turn for carpentering. In steering and handling a boat, too, Dave was the teacher, Jan the learner. Moreover, Dave had a sense of navigation which Jan lacked; he seemed, being born to the Islands, to have an instinct for their rocks, shoals, and dangers, the set and run of the tides, what the wind would do next, and how far to trust it.

One other gift of Jan's must be mentioned, since by virtue of it he repaid the farmer's kindness. He developed a wonderful sense of flowers, so that none of the other children, between harvest and harvest, could compare with him. For to harvest the daffodils is simple enough: the grower's real skill shows itself in the between-times, in divining when to lift and transplant, in sorting out the strong from the weakly bulbs, in strengthening the soil, in choosing new situations and aspects. At the age of fourteen Jan appeared, merely by turning a bulb over in his hand, to know what it wanted. It was he, too, who discovered for the farmer that daffodil leaves, duly dried, made good fodder. The green leaves are poisonous for cattle; and hitherto the rakings of the fields—when the flowers' sap had run back into

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the bulbs—had been gathered in heaps and burnt. The farmer saved some, however, and used it for litter, never supposing that the cows would eat the dried stuff. Jan pointed out that they ate their bedding with relish, and moreover that they took no harm. Next year the farmer surprised his neighbours by building a rick of daffodil leaves alongside his hay-ricks.

Little by little, as the boy grew, the old longings, the old questionings, faded out of his mind. Work at Chy-an-Chy Farm was hard, if cheerful: the day over, he climbed the stairs to bed, too wholesomely tired to lie awake and fret, as he had been used to fret, asking "Who am I?" "How came I here?"

Maybe, too, the companionship of the patient cattle, the lesson of the flowers—so obedient, so unexact, so eager and happy to do their best when the appointed time came, in spite of wind and storm—helped to discipline him.

The lily is most fair,
But says not, 'I will only blow
Upon a southern land'; the cedar makes no coil
What rocks shall owe
The springs that wash his feet;
The crocus cannot arbitrate the foil
That for its purple radiance is most meet.—
Lord, even so
I ask one prayer;
The which if it be granted,
It skills not where
Thou plantest me, only I would be planted.

But the trouble awoke again.

One evening in early summer,—he was now in his fifteenth year,—he and Dave took a long swim together out to a naked island that stands about midway in Cromwell's Sound. The pair had spent the day in trimming hedges, working under a hot sun with their shirts open at the throat. The pollen of flowers, the blown seeds of early grasses, clung stickily to the sweat of their young bodies, and they sought the water as a salmon seeks the freshet to rid himself of sea-lice.

As usual, Jan quickly out-distanced Dave, and by and by, close under the rocks of the island, ceased swimming and turned over on his back, floating, waiting for Dave to come up. As he lay so, a sound came borne to him across the waters—a sound of a woman's voice singing.

He had never heard singing, save by the children in school, or by their elders in chapel, or at evening prayer, droning out Wesley's hymns at distressful length. He had never imagined that any sound could ravish the ear as did this. He turned about and trod water gently, lifting his head to listen. On the Iniscaw shore a light shone among the dark deodars,—for twilight was falling,—and thence the voice sang to him.

With a few easy strokes he reached the island. He groped for a landing in the shadow of the rocks, found handhold and scrambled ashore. Still the divine voice floated over the waters.

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He stood, naked, rigid as a statue, every nerve strung taut by it. Below his feet, somewhere in the shadow, Dave called up to him that the swim had been long—it was time to return.

“ But listen ! ”

“ It 's the Lady, singing to herself. She has her window open, and sometimes, they say, you can hear every note as far as Brefar. Come back, Jan ! ”

Dave headed back as Jan dived. But Jan neither overtook him nor heeded his shouts. Dave, judging that he himself had barely strength enough left to swim back, swam doggedly on. Within a hundred yards of the beach his limbs began to feel as heavy as lead. But he struggled on and reached shore, his teeth chattering, his body shaking woefully as with an ague.

Meanwhile Jan was swimming for Iniscaw and the voice. Of the long return he recked nothing. No thought crossed his mind that Dave might perhaps be in danger. He would at any time have given his life for Dave's ; but just now he was oblivious of all save the voice, and he swam toward the lighted window as a moth is drawn to a lamp.

Within her room, high above the terrace, the Lady sang to herself ; and her song was “ Caro Nome.” Whoso will, let him despise ; but when a great singer understands Verdi, it is a great and wonderful song. While the Lady sang, the moon—almost at its full—swam up above the deodars, and toward it Jan swam, toward the lamp beneath it, toward the scent wafted

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across the summer night from garden flowers and dark pines.

Loyal Dave, although his teeth chattered, had no sooner reached the shore than he dragged down the boat and—all naked—pushed across in search of his friend. The rowing by degrees brought back warmth to his blood. When he reached the farther side the Lady had ceased singing and pulled down the blind. He found Jan stretched naked on the sand, shivering, sobbing with exhaustion, and carefully ferried him home.

That was Dave all over—Dave, the good friend, solid, always ready at need.

But the time came when Dave must put on the uniform of the Trinity House and go off to the lightship on the Stones.

The children saw him off tearfully, though he was cheerful enough. From the upper windows of Chy-an-Chy farmhouse they could see the white flash travelling across the waters from the lightship—three white flashes in twenty-four seconds, followed by darkness for thirty-six seconds—and knew, when the flashes came round again, that Dave was alive and well, and keeping watch.

The joy of Jan's life, however, was to welcome Dave home when the relief-boat brought him off; for life on a lightship is deadly trying to the nerves of most men, and the rule is—or then was—to relieve one-third of the crew every month, each man

spending two months on board and taking a month's furlough on shore. Dave had no nerves; he said that with so much cleaning and polishing to do, out yonder, there was no time to be melancholy; and besides, there was a great deal more to talk about than anyone would think—tramp steamers heading round land (in time you got to know one and another like old friends, and to time their comings and goings); full sail to the southward making for the Channel; at the worst a school of porpoises, or a sun-fish, or a line of little murrs flying, or a gannet to watch by the hour, counting his dives. And sometimes the fishing-fleet would come out toward sunset, down sail, and hang out their riding-lights, which gave a friendly feeling, though to be sure they came from the Main. By night, of course, there were the other sea-lights to watch, particularly the red light on North Island, which (said Dave) put him in mind of Chy-an-Chy window at supper-time.

Nevertheless, Dave allowed that it was good to be home; especially on the first Sunday, when he put on his best shore-going clothes (Trinity House uniform) and the girls—Annet, Linnet and Bennet—wore their white frocks to church in the morning and to meeting-house in the evening, this division of worship being the comfortable rule in the Islands (and, I dare say, no one a penny the worse for it). He said in his matter-of-fact way that even the smell of rotten fish at the corner of St. Lide's quay was good enough to come back to, but the best smell was that of the

lilac-bush by the lych-gate of Brefar Church, because it had been in full bloom, with the early bees about it, at his first home-coming.

The next year he returned in the very height of the daffodil harvest, and Jan—kept busy from morning to night—saw little of him. Somewhere deep down in his heart was a feeling that Dave, having nothing to do on his furlough, might have spared more time to stand by his side in the fields and chat. He understood when Dave, the night before departure, drew him aside and told him shyly—after much pretence of asking advice—that he and Annet had ‘made it up.’ “Of course,” added Dave, “that don’t make any difference to you and me.”

“Of course,” agreed Jan, believing him.

His own heart had not been seriously engaged, though from the first (now he came to think of it) Annet was by far the prettiest girl on Brefar, and therefore marked out to be Dave’s sweetheart.

“I’d take it kindly,” said Dave quite solemnly, “if you’d just bear that in mind. It was you, as a fact, that brought us together.”

“Was it?” said Jan doubtfully, wondering when and how this could have happened.

“She thinks a lot of you, too,” said Dave. “She’ve told me so.” He said it in a tone which conveyed that Jan ought to be proud, and proud Jan accordingly was. “Now I’m thinking that she’ll be feelin’ my goin’ out to the Stones, this time, more’n ordinary.”

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"Of course she will," Jan agreed.

"An' that," said his friend, "is where you can help. We can't be married till the summer after next; but meantime you can do a lot for us."

"Can I?" asked Jan doubtfully. "Well, I'll do my best. If only you mean what you say—that it—that *this*—'ll make no difference between us."

"Why should it?" (How splendid Dave looked as he asked the question!)

Jan never said a word to Annet concerning her troth with Dave, nor she a word to him. But on the day after Dave's departure he took her for a sail to cheer up her spirits, and they talked much of the hero by the way. Somehow it came to be understood that Jan, as Dave's friend, in a sense belonged to Annet, to be at her beck and call, and during that summer the pair sailed on many an excursion together among the off-islands, being absent at times for a whole afternoon—always after getting leave from the farmer.

There could be no harm in it. The farmer, though inclined to spoil Annet, knew her to be a shrewd girl and level-headed. (He was delighted, by the way, that she had chosen Dave; for Dave, in addition to his other good qualities, was an only son, and his parents had a little money laid up in the savings bank. A better son-in-law could not be wished for.)

As for Jan, his loyalty to his friend was a household

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word, almost a household jest at Chy-an-Chy Farm. In these trips he now and again came near to wearying Annet with his hero-worship.

But when the relief-boat brought Dave home, Jan would efface himself, asking no better reward than the old quiet understanding.

CHAPTER IX

THE SAILING

And the spring comes slowly up this way.

ONE day early in the next spring Annet suggested that instead of tacking among the off-islands they should sail boldly out for the Stones and pay a surprise visit to the light-vessel.

The enterprise was not so very audacious, after all. A steady, northerly breeze had been blowing all day and would certainly hold until sunset ; it was a "soldier's breeze," too, and would serve them going and coming. Moreover, this would be their last opportunity ; for the daffodil harvest was close at hand, and while it lasted there could be no more holidays.

Jan blamed himself because the suggestion had not come first from him—that Annet should have been left to make it.

On the way out they talked gaily for a while, anticipating Dave's astonishment. Then they fell to discussing the prospects of harvest. All pointed to a good crop and good prices. The farmer would enjoy another prosperous season, and in the summer there would be a merry wedding.

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“It’s good to think,” said Annet graciously, “that you and Dave will always be friends.”

“We shall always be friends,” said Jan, and added quickly, “Whatever becomes of me, I could never do other than love Dave.”

His hand was on the tiller and trembled slightly; his eyes were fixed on the water ahead. The boat had broken the charmed circle of the island tides and danced over open sea.

“‘*Whatever becomes of you?*’” echoed Annet. “Why, you never mean to leave Brefar, surely!”

“This summer, perhaps; after the wedding. Dave knows. I haven’t told your father yet, and it won’t be easy. But I belong to the Main, you know—somewhere.” His gaze travelled ahead, eagerly. “I can’t explain; but when you *belong* to the Main, you know——”

“Dave ought to have told me,” said Annet pettishly. She was silent for a full minute. Then she asked, “And when you get to the Main, what will you do?”

“Who knows? I shall fall on my feet, never you fear.”

“I heard father telling mother the other day that he was lucky to keep you. You could get good gardener’s wages anywhere, and his wonder was the Mistress hadn’t heard of you and snapped you up.”

“I don’t suppose the Mistress wants a gardener more than she has,” said Jan. “But anyway she’d never bear the sight of me—the teacher told me that.

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The Commandant was a friend of hers, you know ; and he lost his life saving me."

Annet nodded, but she was not heeding.

"I don't see," she said, "that one needs belong to the Main to want to live there. I've longed for that, all my life. Dave, now—he's happy anywhere. I've asked him again and again how he can stand it, bobbing up an' down, up an' down, out yonder at the end of a chain. Then he laughs and says something foolish—that there's the holidays to look forward to, or some nonsense of that sort."

"And so he feels it."

"But 'tis no life for a man," insisted Annet, tapping her foot on the bottom-boards. "Up an' down on the end of a chain, and looking forward to nothing but that all your life long."

"If he's happy——" began Jan.

"What about *me*?" asked Annet, almost fiercely.

She recovered her graciousness as they neared the light-vessel, and answered Dave's ecstatic signals with a sufficiently affectionate wave of her handkerchief.

Dave was in transports. He had recognised the boat at two miles' distance, and as she rounded up alongside you would have thought the good fellow clean out of his mind.

"What a notion, too!" he kept shouting. "What a notion! Now, which of 'ee thought of it?"

"Why, Annet, of course," answered Jan.

"Ha, ha! Did she now? Did she really?" he

fairly bellowed, while Annet blushed, and the crew—bronzed, friendly fellows—grinned down overside.

“ Oh, hush—*please!* ” Annet entreated him in a vexed voice. “ Makin’ such a noise, an’ before folks. If I ’d known you ’d behave like this——”

But honest Dave was not to be denied. He reached down his arms to lift her on board, and no sooner had her on deck than he kissed her unblushingly, whereat the crew laughed aloud. They caught the painter thrown by Jan, and as he jumped aboard after Annet, let the boat fall astern, to be made fast there.

The next hour was spent in admiring the ship, the machinery of the lantern, the hundred-and-one cunning little contrivances for economising space in galley, pantry, sleeping-bunks. It was all very wonderful and amazingly cosy, yet Jan kept marveling how Dave, having once broken away from the Islands, could endure (as Annet put it) to live out his life tethered thus.

Annet had recovered her composure, and at tea—the crew insisted on making tea for them before they started for home—she reigned as a queen in the small cabin. The ship smelled potently of oil and brick-dust from end to end, and the smell was disagreeable to Jan.

“ Well, an’ what news o’ the flowers ? ” demanded Dave.

They told him.

“ As if I didn’t know ! ” he shouted delightedly.

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“ We can taste the flowers, even out here. There 's the birds arrivin', too, to tell us that spring is comin' along.”

On the whole, the surprise visit proved a great success. Yet Jan felt that something was lacking. He noted with some wonder that Dave, the lover, seemed to detect nothing amiss, and to be entirely, even to foolishness, content with Annet's behaviour and bearing.

The time came to say good-bye, and he and Annet sailed back towards the sunset, followed for a long way by the cheers of the lightship's crew. Jan steered. Annet sat on the mid-ship thwart gazing out to leeward under the sail.

For a mile and more they exchanged not a word.

At length Annet said slowly—

“ That kind of life don't improve Dave, seemin' to me.”

“ Dave don't want improvin',” Jan answered her shortly.

There was a long pause, during which Annet watched the froth rushing by under the boat's lee. She broke it, saying—

“ You must ha' noticed that I didn't like it.”

“ Aye,” Jan replied, “ I took note o' that.”

Another long pause followed.

“ An' that 's to go on for ever an' ever, I suppose. An' with any pluck he might have gone to the Main and made his fortune.”

“ But he 's content as he is, lookin' forward to you.”

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“ An’ what about *me* ? ” she cried for the second time that day. “ D’ ye think that ’s all I ’m worth ? Oh,” she broke off, “ some folk have no eyes in their head ! ”

But Jan had—and so had Annet. Wicked, enticing eyes hers were, albeit demurely dropped. They watched him from under their long lashes, and he read their meaning. They were asking him to betray his friend.

A shiver ran down his body. She was fair and desirable, but his grip tightened on the tiller as he lied bravely—

“ I don’t know what you mean, Annet.”

She said no more until they reached the entrance of Cromwell’s Sound and ran the boat in for shore at the accustomed cove, but her face was dark.

“ It ’s late,” said Jan ; for indeed twilight had already gathered. “ They ’ll be getting anxious about us, up yonder. You ’d best run along and tell them it ’s all right, while I stow sail and haul the boat up.”

Annet lingered. She had a mind to tell him that she was afraid of the gathering dark, but she knew very well that he would not believe her. But the devil was in her now, and she would not lose her game without a last throw. She went up some way along the path, and dashed aside among the darkling furze-bushes. There she would wait for him, and springing out, seize his arm as he came along. The

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scent of the furze-blossom was intoxicating as it floated close about her on the evening air.

The boat's keelson grated on the beach below. He was hauling her up, then, before lowering sail. Or had she missed to hear the creak of the sheave? If he was hauling the boat up, in another moment the keelson would grate again.

But half a minute passed. He was stumbling about in the boat. Then she heard the soft splash of a paddle, and not knowing what to make of it, stepped out into the pathway for a look. She was barely in time. While she stood there, doubting her eyes, the white sail slid past the southerly point of the cove and out of sight.

“Jan! Jan!”

Annet tore down to the beach, calling, demanding to know where he was bound,—what he meant by it? But Jan looked back once only as he paid out sheet. The northerly wind still held behind him, and he headed the boat straight down Cromwell's Sound for the roadstead. A light glimmered above the trees on Iniscaw shore; but the Lady might sing at the window now if she listed. No spell could any longer bind him. He had tasted liberty to-day and looked on fear; and while the one beckoned him, the other shouted him away from the Islands to his fate.

Still with a free sheet he ran across the roadstead, and hauling close under the lee of St. Lide's, fetched out past the land. He was in open water now, with

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the sea-lights and the stars for guides. The sea was smooth, and he could make no mistake.

At daybreak he saw the tall cliffs of the Main at no more than a mile's distance, rising sheer from the sea, their fissures pencilled with violet shadows ; and following the coast-line southward, he came to a bay, wherein was a harbour thrice the size of St. Lide's Pool.

He steered in boldly. Half a dozen tall ships lay alongside the quay there, and on one of them a man was hauling up a red-white-and-green flag. Having hauled it chock-a-block, he proceeded to make fast the halyards at the rail, and grinned down in friendly fashion as the boat slid close.

“ Hi ! ”

“ Hola ! ”

“ Want a hand, do you ? ” asked Jan.

“ *Siete Italiano ?* ”

Jan rounded alongside.

EPILOGUE.

The good harvest was over. The family had celebrated its close, as usual, by a "tea-drinking" on Brefar beach, and were wending homeward up the hill through the dusk; but on the beach a young man and a maid loitered, listening to their voices.

"Poor old Jan!" said Dave thoughtfully. "I wonder what took him? Didn't notice anything queer with him that day, did you? *I* didn't."

"He was always queer," answered Annet. "You never can depend on folks from the Main."

"You used to worry me about going to live there, one time," Dave reminded her.

"Girls can't help havin' their silly notions."

"No, I suppose. But poor old Jan! I wonder if he'll write to us some day. He ought, you know, for I never had no other real friend," mused Dave wistfully.

"What does it matter?" asked Annet. "Haven't we one another?"

At their feet, unnoted by them, a narcissus bloomed; a flower with white perianth and a cup of flame. This year it must bloom in patience and fade—this year, and another, and another, until Young Farmer Matthey comes along with a sharper eye than any of his children's and discovers it, the glory of the Islands.

Pipes in Arcady

I HARDLY can bring myself to part with this story, it has been such a private joy to me. Moreover, that I have lain awake in the night to laugh over it is no guarantee of your being passably amused. Yourselves, I dare say, have known what it is to awake in irrepressible mirth from a dream which next morning proved to be flat and unconvincing. Well, this my pet story has some of the qualities of a dream; being absurd, for instance, and almost incredible, and even a trifle inhuman. After all, I had better change my mind, and tell you another——

But no; I will risk it, and you shall have it, just as it befel.

* * * *

I had taken an afternoon's holiday to make a pilgrimage: my goal being a small parish church that lies remote from the railway, five good miles from the tiniest of country stations; my purpose to inspect—or say, rather, to contemplate—a Norman porch, for which it ought to be widely famous. (Here let me say that I have an unlearned

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passion for Norman architecture—to enjoy it merely, not to write about it.)

To carry me on my first stage I had taken a crawling local train that dodged its way somehow between the regular expresses and the “excursions” that invade our Delectable Duchy from June to October. The season was high midsummer, the afternoon hot and drowsy with scents of mown hay; and between the rattle of the fast trains it seemed that we, native denizens of the Duchy, careless of observation or applause, were executing a *tour de force* in that fine indolence which has been charged as a fault against us. That we halted at every station goes without saying. Few sidings—however inconsiderable or, as it might seem, fortuitous—escaped the flattery of our prolonged sojourn. We ambled, we paused, almost we dallied with the butterflies afloat over the meadow-sweet and cow-parsley beside the line; we exchanged gossip with stationmasters, and received the congratulations of signalmen on the extraordinary spell of fine weather. It did not matter. Three market-women, a pedlar, and a local policeman made up with me the train’s complement of passengers. I gathered that their business could wait; and as for mine—well, a Norman porch is by this time accustomed to waiting.

I will not deny that in the end I dozed at intervals in my empty smoking compartment; but wish to make it clear that I came on the vision (as I will

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call it) with eyes open, and that it left me staring, wide-awake as Macbeth.

Let me describe it. To the left of the line as you travel westward there lies a long grassy meadow on a gentle acclivity, set with three or four umbrageous oaks and backed by a steep plantation of oak saplings. At the foot of the meadow, close alongside the line, runs a brook, which is met at the meadow's end by a second brook which crosses under the permanent way through a culvert. The united waters continue the course of the first brook, beside the line, and maybe for half a mile farther ; but, a few yards below their junction, are dammed by the masonry of a bridge over which a country lane crosses the railway ; and this obstacle spreads them into a pool some fifteen or twenty feet wide, overgrown with the leaves of the arrow-head, and fringed with water-flags and the flowering rush.

Now I seldom pass this spot without sparing a glance for it ; first because of the pool's still beauty, and secondly because many rabbits infest the meadow below the coppice, and among them for two or three years was a black fellow whom I took an idle delight in recognising. (He is gone now, and his place knows him no more ; yet I continue to hope for sight of a black rabbit just there.) But this afternoon I looked out with special interest because, happening to pass down the line two days before, I had noted a gang of navvies at work on the culvert ; and among them, as they stood aside

to let the train pass, I had recognised my friend Joby Tucker, their ganger, and an excellent fellow to boot.

Therefore my eyes were alert as we approached the curve that opens the meadow into view, and—as I am a Christian man, living in the twentieth century—I saw this vision: I beheld beneath the shade of the midmost oak eight men sitting stark naked, whereof one blew on a flute, one played a concertina, and the rest beat their palms together, marking the time; while before them, in couples on the sward, my gang of navvies rotated in a clumsy waltz watched by a ring of solemn ruminant kine!

I saw it. The whole scene, barring the concertina and the navvies' clothes, might have been transformed straight from a Greek vase of the best period. Here, in this green corner of rural England, on a workaday afternoon (a Wednesday, to be precise), in full sunlight, I saw this company of the early gods sitting, naked and unabashed, and piping, while twelve British navvies danced to their music. . . . I saw it; and a derisive whistle from the engine told me that driver and stoker saw it too. I was not dreaming then. But what on earth could it mean? For fifteen seconds or so I stared at the vision . . . and so the train joggled past it and rapt it from my eyes.

I can understand now the ancient stories of men who, having by hap surprised the goddesses bathing,

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never recovered from the shock but thereafter ran wild in the woods with their memories.

At the next station I alighted. It chanced to be the station for which I had taken my ticket ; but anyhow I should have alighted there. The spell of the vision was upon me. The Norman porch might wait. It is (as I have said) used to waiting, and in fact it has waited. I have not yet made another holiday to visit it. Whether or no the market-women and the local policeman had beheld, I know not. I hope not, but now shall never know.

. . . The engine-driver, leaning in converse with the stationmaster, and jerking a thumb backward, had certainly beheld. But I passed him with averted eyes, gave up my ticket, and struck straight across country for the spot.

I came to it, as my watch told me, at twenty minutes after five. The afternoon sunlight still lay broad on the meadow. The place was unchanged save for a lengthening of its oak-tree shadows. But the persons of my vision—naked gods and navvies—had vanished. Only the cattle stood, knee-deep in the pool, lazily swishing their tails in protest against the flies ; and the cattle could tell me nothing.

* * * *

Just a fortnight later, as I spent at St. Blazey junction the forty odd minutes of repentance ever thoughtfully provided by our railway company for those who, living in Troy, are foolish enough to travel, I spied at some distance below the station a

gang of men engaged in unloading rubble to construct a new siding for the clay-traffic, and at their head my friend Mr. Joby Tucker. The railway company was consuming so much of my time that I felt no qualms in returning some part of the compliment, and strolled down the line to wish Mr. Tucker good-day. "And, by the bye," I added, "you owe me an explanation. What on earth were you doing in Treba meadow two Wednesdays ago—you and your naked friends?"

Joby leaned on his measuring rod and grinned from ear to ear.

"You see'd us?" he asked, and, letting his eyes travel along the line, he chuckled to himself softly and at length. "Well, now, I'm glad o' that. 'Fact is, I've been savin' up to tell 'ee about it, but (thinks I) when I tells Mr. Q. he won't never believe."

"I certainly saw you," I answered; "but as for believing——"

"Iss, iss," he interrupted, with fresh chucklings; "a fair knock-out, wasn' it? . . . You see, they was blind—poor fellas!"

"Drunk?"

"No, sir—blind—'pity the pore blind'; three-parts blind, anyways, an' undergoin' treatment for it."

"Nice sort of treatment!"

"Eh? You don't understand. See'd us from the train, did 'ee? Which train?"

"The 1.35 ex Millbay."

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“Wish I ’d a-knowed you was watchin’ us. I ’d ha’ waved my hat as you went by, or maybe blawed ’ee a kiss—that bein’ properer to the occasion, come to think.”

Joby paused, drew the back of a hand across his laughter-moistened eyes, and pulled himself together, steadyin’ his voice for the story.

* * * *

“I’ll tell ’ee what happened, from the beginnin’. A gang of us had been sent down, two days before, to Treba meadow, to repair the culvert there. Soon as we started to work we found the whole masonry fairly rotten, and spent the first afternoon (that was Monday) underpinnin’, while I traced out the extent o’ the damage. The farther I went, the worse I found it; the main mischief bein’ a leak about midway in the culvert, on the down side; whereby the water, perc’latin through, was unpackin’ the soil, not only behind the masonry of the culvert, but right away down for twenty yards and more behind the stone-facing where the line runs alongside the pool. All this we were forced to take down, shorein’ as we went, till we cut back pretty close to the rails. The job, you see, had turned out more serious than reported; and havin’ no one to consult, I kept the men at it.

“By Wednesday noon we had cut back so far as we needed, shorein’ very careful as we went, and the men workin’ away cheerful, with the footboards of the expresses whizzin’ by close over their heads, so ’s

it felt like havin' your hair brushed by machinery. By the time we knocked off for dinner I felt pretty easy in mind, knowin' we 'd broke the back o' the job.

“ Well, we touched pipe and started again. Bein' so close to the line I'd posted a fella with a flag—Bill Martin it was—to keep a look-out for the down-trains; an' about three o'clock or a little after he whistled one comin'. I happened to be in the culvert at the time, but stepped out an' back across the brook, just to fling an eye along the embankment to see that all was clear. Clear it was, an' therefore it surprised me a bit, as the train hove in sight around the curve, to see that she had her brakes on, hard, and was slowin' down to stop. My first thought was that Bill Martin must have taken some scare an' showed her the red flag. But that was a mistake; besides she must have started the brakes before openin' sight on Bill.”

“ Then why on earth was she pulling up? ” I asked. “ It couldn't be signals.”

“ There ain't no signal within a mile of Treba meadow, up or down. She was stoppin' because—but just you let me tell it in my own way. Along she came, draggin' hard on her brakes an' whistlin'. I knew her for an excursion, and as she passed I sized it up for a big school-treat. There was five coaches, mostly packed with children, an' on one o' the coaches was a board—'Exeter to Penzance.' The four front coaches had corridors, the tail one just ord'nary compartments.

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“ Well, she dragged past us to dead-slow, an’ came to a standstill with her tail coach about thirty yards beyond where I stood, and, as you might say, with its footboard right over-hangin’ the pool. You mayn’t remember it, but the line just there curves pretty sharp to the right, and when she pulled up, the tail coach pretty well hid the rest o’ the train from us. Five or six men, hearin’ the brakes, had followed me out of the culvert and stood by me, wonderin’ why the stoppage was. The rest were dotted about along the slope of th’ embankment. And then the curiouesest thing happened—about the curiouesest thing I seen in all my years on the line. A door of the tail coach opened and a man stepped out. He didn’ jump out, you understand, nor fling hisself out ; he just stepped out into air, and with that his arms and legs cast themselves anyways an’ he went down sprawlin’ into the pool. It’s easy to say we ought t’ have run then an’ there an’ rescued ’im ; but for the moment it stuck us up starin’ an’—Wait a bit. You han’t heard the end.

“ I hadn’t fairly caught my breath, before another man stepped out ! He put his foot down upon nothing, same as the first, overbalanced just the same, and shot after him base-over-top into the water.

“ Close ’pon the second man’s heels appeared a third. . . . Yes, sir, I know now what a woman feels like when she’s goin’ to have the scritch.* I’d have asked someone to pinch me in the fleshy part o’ the

* Hysterics.

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leg, to make sure I was alive an' awake, but the power o' speech was taken from us. We just stuck an' stared.

“ What beat everything was the behaviour of the train, so to say. There it stood, like as if it 'd pulled up alongside the pool for the very purpose to unload these unfortnit' men; an' yet takin' no notice whatever. Not a sign o' the guard—not a head poked out anywheres in the line o' windows—only the sun shinin', an' the steam escapin', an' out o' the rear compartment this procession droppin' out an' high-divin' one after another.

“ Eight of 'em! Eight, as I am a truth-speakin' man—but there! you saw 'em with your own eyes. Eight, and the last of the eight scarce in the water afore the engine toots her whistle an' the train starts on again, round the curve an' out o' sight.

“ She didn' leave us no time to doubt, neither, for there the poor fellas were, splashin' an' blowin', some of 'em bleatin' for help, an' gurglin', an' for aught we know drownin' in three-to-four feet o' water. So we pulled ourselves together an' ran to give 'em first aid.

“ It didn' take us long to haul the whole lot out and ashore; and, as Providence would have it, not a bone broken in the party. One or two were sufferin' from sprains, and all of 'em from shock (but so were we, for that matter), and between 'em they must ha' swallowed a bra' few pints o' water, an' muddy water at that. I can't tell ezactly when or how we

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discovered they was all blind, or near-upon blind. It may ha' been from the unhandiness of their movements an' the way they clutched at us an' at one another as we pulled 'em ashore. Hows'ever, blind they were ; an' I don't remember that it struck us as anyways singular, after what we'd been through a'ready. We fished out a concertina, too, an' a silver-mounted flute that was bobbin' among the weeds.

“ The man the concertina belonged to—a tall fresh complexioned young fella he was, an' very mild of manner—turned out to be a sort o' leader o' the party ; an' he was the first to talk any sense. ‘Th-thank you,’ he said. ‘ They told us Penzance was the next stop.’

“ ‘ Hey ? ’ says I.

“ ‘ They told us,’ he says again, plaintive-like, feelin' for his spectacles an' not finding 'em, ‘ that Penzance was the next stop.’

“ ‘ Bound for Penzance, was you ? ’ I asks.

“ ‘ For the Land's End, ’ says he, his teeth chatterin'. I set it down the man had a stammer, but 'twas only the shock an' the chill of his duckin'.

“ ‘ Well,’ says I, ‘ this ain't the Land's End, though I dessay it feels like it. Then you wasn' thrown out ? ’ I says.

“ ‘ Th-thrown out ? ’ says he. ‘ N-no. They told us Penzance was the next stop.’

“ ‘ Then,’ says I, ‘ if you got out accidental you've had a most providential escape, an' me an' my mates

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don't deserve less than to hear about it. There's bound to be inquiries after you when the guard finds your compartment empty an' the door open. May be the train 'll put back ; more likely they 'll send a search party ; but anyways you're all wet through, an' the best thing for health is to off wi' your clothes an' dry 'em this warm afternoon.'

“ ‘ I dessay,’ says he, ‘ you 'll have noticed that our eyesight is affected.’

“ ‘ All the better if you 're anyways modest,’ says I. ‘ You couldn' find a retirededer place than this—not if you searched : an' *we* don't mind.’

“ Well, sir, the end was we stripped 'em naked as Adam, an' spread their clothes to dry 'pon the grass. While we tended on 'em the mild young man told us how it had happened. It seems they'd come by excursion from Exeter. There's a blind home at Exeter, an' likewise a cathedral choir, an' Sunday school, an' a boys' brigade, with other sundries ; an' this year the good people financin' half-a-dozen o' these shows had discovered that by clubbin' two sixpences together a shillin' could be made to go as far as eighteenpence ; and how, doin' it on the co-op' instead of an afternoon treat for each, they could manage a two days' outin' for all—Exeter to Penzance an' the Land's End, sleepin' one night at Penzance, an' back to Exeter at some ungodly hour the next. It's no use your askin' me why a man three-parts blind should want to visit the Land's End. _ There's an attraction about that

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place, an' that 's all you can say. Everybody knows as tish' worth seein', an' yet everybody wants to see it—so why not a blind man?

“ Well, this Happy Holiday Committee (as they called themselves) got the Company to fix them up with a special excursion; an' our blind friends—bein' sensitive, or maybe a touch above mixin' wi' the school children an' infants—had packed themselves into this rear compartment separate from the others. One of 'em had brought his concertina, an' another his flute, and what with these an' other ways of passin' the time they got along pretty comfortable till they came to Gwinear Road: an' there for some reason they were held up an' had to show their tickets. Anyways, the staff at Gwinear Road went along the train collectin' the halves o' their return tickets. ‘ What 's the name o' this station? ’ asks my blind friend, very mild an' polite. ‘ Gwinear Road, ’ answers the porter; ‘ Penzance next stop. ’ Somehow this gave him the notion that they were nearly arrived, an' so, you see, when the train slowed down a few minutes later an' came to a stop, he took the porter at his word, an' stepped out. Simple, wasn't it? But in my experience the curiouseth things in life are the simplest of all, once you come to inquire into 'em.”

“ What I don't understand,” said I, “ is how the train came to stop just there.”

Mr. Tucker gazed at me rather in sorrow than in anger. “ I thought,” said he, “ 'twas agreed I should tell the story in my own way. Well, as I

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was sayin', we got those poor fellas there, all as naked as Adam, an' we was helpin' them all we could—some of us wringin' out their under linen an' spreading it to dry, others collectin' their hats, an' tryin' which fitted which, an' others even dredgin' the pool for their handbags an' spectacles an' other small articles, an' in the middle of it someone started to laugh. You 'll scarce believe it, but up to that moment there hadn't been so much as a smile to hand round; an' to this day I don't know the man's name that started it—for all I can tell you, I did it myself. But this I do know that it set the whole gang like a motor-engine. There was a sort of 'click,' an' the next moment——

“Laugh? I never heard men laugh like it in my born days. Sort of recoil, I s'pose it must ha' been, after the shock. Laugh? There was men staggerin' drunk with it and there was men rollin' on the turf with it; an' there was men cryin' with it, holdin' on to a stitch in their sides an' beseechin' everyone also to hold hard. The blind men took a bit longer to get going; but by gosh, sir! once started they laughed to do your heart good. O Lord, O Lord! I wish you could ha' seen that mild-mannered spokesman. Somebody had fished out his spectacles for en, and that was all the clothing he stood in—that, an' a grin. He fairly beamed; an' the more he beamed the more we rocked, callin' on en to take pity an' stop it.

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“Soon as I could catch a bit o’ breath, ‘Land’s End next stop!’ gasped I. ‘O, but this is the Land’s End! This is what the Land’s End oughter been all the time, an’ never was yet. O, for the Lord’s sake,’ says I, ‘stop beamin’, and pick up your concertina an’ pitch us a tune!’

“Well, he did too. He played us ‘Home, sweet home’ first of all—‘mid pleasure an’ palaces—an’ the rest o’ the young men sat around en an’ started clappin’ their hands to the tune; an’ then some fool slipped an arm round my waist. I’m only thankful he didn’t kiss me. Didn’t think of it, perhaps; couldn’t ha’ been that he wasn’t capable. It must ha’ been just then your train came along. An’ about twenty minutes later, when we was gettin’ our friends back into their outfits, we heard the search-engine about half a mile below, whistlin’ an’ feelin’ its way up very cautious towards us.

“They was sun-dried an’ jolly as sandhoppers—all their eight of ’em—as we helped ’em on board an’ wished ’em ta-ta! The search party couldn’ understand at all what had happened—in so short a time, too—to make us so cordial; an’ somehow we didn’ explain—neither we nor the blind men. I reckon the whole business had been so loonatic we felt it kind of holy. But the pore fellas kept wavin’ back to us as they went out o’ sight around the curve, an’ maybe for a mile beyond. I never heard,” Mr. Tucker wound up meditatively, “if they ever reached the Land’s End. I wonder?”

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“ But, excuse me once more,” said I. “ How came the train to stop as it did ? ”

“ To be sure. I said just now that the curiousest things in life were, gen’rally speakin’, the simplest. One o’ the schoolchildren in the fore part of the train—a small nipper of nine—had put his head out o’ the carriage window and got his cap blown away. That’s all. Bein’ a nipper of some resource, he wasted no time, but touched off the communicatin’ button an’ fetched the whole train to a standstill. George Simmons, the guard, told me all about it last week, when I happened across him an’ asked the same question you’ve been askin’. George was huntin’ through the corridors to find out what had gone wrong ; that’s how the blind men stepped out without his noticin’. He pretended to be pretty angry wi’ the young tacker. ‘ Do ’ee know,’ says George, ‘ it’s a five pound fine if you stop a train without good reason ? ’ ‘ But I *had* a good reason,’ says the child. ‘ My mother gave ’levenpence for that cap, an’ it’s a bran’ new one.’ ”

Our Lady of Gwithian

“ Mary, mother, well thou be !
Mary, mother, think on me ;
Sweetè Lady, maiden clean,
Shield me from ill, shame, and teen ;
Shield me, Lady, from villainy
And from all wicked company ! ”

SPECULUM CHRISTIANI.

HERE is a little story I found one day among the legends of the Cornish Saints, like a chip in porridge. If you love simplicity, I think it may amuse you.

Lovey Bussow was wife of Daniel Bussow, a tin-streamer of Gwithian Parish. He had brought her from Camborne, and her neighbours agreed that there was little amiss with the woman if you overlooked her being a bit weak in the head. They set her down as “ not exactly.” At the end of a year she brought her husband a fine boy. It happened that the child was born just about the time of year the tin-merchants visited St. Michael’s Mount ; and the father—who streamed in a small way, and had no beast of burden but his donkey, or “ naggur ”—had to load up panniers and drive his tin down to the

shore-market with the rest, which for him meant an absence of three weeks, or a fortnight at the least.

So Daniel kissed his wife and took his leave ; and the neighbours, who came to visit her as soon as he was out of the way, all told her the same story—that until the child was safely baptised it behoved her to be very careful and keep her door shut for fear of the Piskies. The Piskies, or fairy-folk (they said), were themselves the spirits of children that had died unchristened, and liked nothing better than the chance to steal away an unchristened child to join their nation of mischief.

Lovey listened to them, and it preyed on her mind. She reckoned that her best course was to fetch a holy man as quickly as possible to baptise the child and make the cross over him. So one afternoon, the mite being then a bare fortnight old, she left him asleep in his cradle and, wrapping a shawl over her head, hurried off to seek Meriden the Priest.

Meriden the Priest dwelt in a hut among the sandhills, a bowshot beyond St. Gwithian's Chapel on the seaward side, as you go out to Godrevy. He had spent the day in barking his nets, and was spreading them out to dry on the short turf of the towans ; but on hearing Lovey's errand, he good-naturedly dropped his occupation and, staying only to fill a bottle with holy water, walked back with her to her home.

As they drew near, Lovey was somewhat perturbed

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to see that the door, which she had carefully closed, was standing wide open. She guessed, however, that a neighbour had called in her absence, and would be inside keeping watch over the child. As she reached the threshold, the dreadful truth broke upon her: the kitchen was empty, and so was the cradle!

It made her frantic for a while. Meriden the Priest offered what consolation he could, and suggested that one of her neighbours had called indeed, and, finding the baby alone in the cottage, had taken it off to her own home to guard it. But this he felt to be a forlorn hope, and it proved a vain one. Neither search nor inquiry could trace the infant. Beyond a doubt the Piskies had carried him off.

When this was established so that even the hope-fullest of the good-wives shook her head over it, Lovey grew calm of a sudden and (as it seemed) with the calm of despair. She grew obstinate too.

“ My blessed cheeld ! ” she kept repeating. “ The tender worm of en ! But I ’ll have en back, if I ’ve to go to the naughty place to fetch en. Why, what sort of a tale be I to pitch to my Dan ’l, if he comes home and his firstborn gone ? ”

They shook their heads again over this. It would be a brave blow for the man, but (said one to another) he that marries a fool must look for thorns in his bed.

“ What ’s done can’t be undone,” they told her. “ You ’d best let a two-three of us stay the night and coax ’ee from frettin’. It ’s bad for the system, and you so soon over child-birth.”

Lovey opened her eyes wide on them.

“ Lord’s sake ! ” she said, “ you don’t reckon I’m goin’ to sit down under this ? What ?—and him the beautifullest, straightest cheeld that ever was in Gwithian Parish ! Go’st thy ways home, every wan. Piskies steal my cheeld an’ Dan’ll’s, would they ? I’ll pisky ’em ! ”

She showed them forth—“ put them to doors ” as we say in the Duchy—every one, the Priest included. She would have none of their consolation.

“ You mean it kindly, naybors, I don’t say ; but tidn’ what I happen to want. I wants my cheeld back ; an’ I’ll *have ’n* back, what’s more ! ”

They went their ways, agreeing that the woman was doited. Lovey closed the door upon them, bolted it, and sat for hours staring at the empty cradle. Through the unglazed window she could see the stars ; and when these told her that midnight was near, she put on her shawl again, drew the bolt, and fared forth over the towans. At first the stars guided her, and the slant of the night-wind on her face ; but by and by, in a dip between the hills, she spied her mark and steered for it. This was the spark within St. Gwithian’s Chapel, where day and night a tiny oil lamp, with a floating wick, burned before the image of Our Lady.

Meriden the Priest kept the lamp filled, the wick trimmed, year in and year out. But he, good man, after remembering Lovey in his prayers, was laid asleep and snoring within his hut, a bowshot away.

OUR LADY OF GWITHIAN

The chapel-door opened softly to Lovey's hand, and she crept up to Mary's image, and abased herself before it.

"Dear Aun' Mary," she whispered, "the Piskies have taken my cheeld! You d'know what that means to a poor female—you there, cuddlin' your liddle Jesus in the crook o' your arm. An' you d'know likewise what these Piskies be like; spiteful li'l toads, same as you or I might be if happen we'd died unchristened an' hadn' no share in heaven nor hell nor middle-earth. But that's no excuse. Aun' Mary, my dear, I want my cheeld back!" said she. That was all Lovey prayed. Without more ado she bobbed a curtsy, crept from the chapel, closed the door, and way-to-go back to her cottage.

When she reached it and struck a light in the kitchen she more than half expected to hear the child cry to her from his cradle. But, for all that Meriden the Priest had told her concerning the Virgin and her power, there the cradle stood empty.

"Well-a-well!" breathed Lovey. "The gentry are not to be hurried, I reckon. I'll fit and lie down for forty winks," she said; "though I do think, with her experience, Mary might have remembered the poor mite would be famished afore this, not to mention that the milk in me is beginnin' to hurt cruel."

She did off some of her clothes and lay down, and even slept a little in spite of the pain in her breasts; but awoke a good two hours before dawn, to find no

baby restored to her arms, nor even (when she looked) was it back in its cradle.

“ This ’ll never do,” said Lovey. On went her shawl again, and once again she faced the night and hurried across the towans to St. Gwithian’s Chapel. There in her niche stood Our Lady, quite as though nothing had happened, with the infant Christ in her arms and the tiny lamp burning at her feet.

“ Aun’ Mary, Aun’ Mary,” said Lovey, speaking up sharp, “ this iddn’ no sense ’t all! A person would think time was no objic, the way you stick there starin’, an’ my poor cheeld leary with hunger afore now—as you, bein’ a mother, oft to know. Fit an’ fetch en home to me quick. Aw, do’ee co’, that ’s a dear soul!”

But Our Lady stood there and made no sign.

“ I don’t understand ’ee ’t all,” Lovey groaned. “ ’Tiddn’ the way I’d behave in your place, and you d’know it.”

Still Our Lady made no sign.

Lovey grew desperate.

“ Aw, very well, then!” she cried. “ Try what it feels like without your liddle Jesus!”

And reaching up a hand, she snatched at the Holy Child that fitted into a stone socket on Our Lady’s arm. It came away in her grasp, and she fled, tucking it under her shawl.

All the way home Lovey looked for the earth to gape and swallow her, or a hand to reach down from heaven and grip her by the hair; and all the way she

OUR LADY OF GWITHIAN

seemed to hear Our Lady's feet padding after her in the darkness. But she never stopped nor stayed until she reached home; and there, flinging in through the door and slamming-to the bolt behind her, she made one spring for the bed, and slid down in it, cowering over the small stone image.

Rat-a-tat! tat!—someone knocked on the door so that the cottage shook.

“Knock away!” said Lovey. “Whoever thee be, thee 'rt not my cheeld.”

Rat-a-tat! tat!

“My cheeld wouldn' be knockin': he's got neither strength nor sproil for it. An' you may fetch Michael and all his Angels, to tear me in pieces,” said Lovey; “but till I hear my own cheeld creen to me, I'll keep what I have!”

Thereupon Lovey sat up, listening. For outside she heard a feeble wail.

She slipped out of bed. Holding the image tight in her right arm, she drew the bolt cautiously. On the threshold, at her feet, lay her own babe, nestling in a bed of bracken.

She would have stooped at once and snatched him to her. But the stone Christling hampered her, lying so heavily in her arm. For a moment, fearing trickery, she had a mind to hurl it far out of doors into the night. . . . It would fall without much hurt into the soft sand of the towans. But on a second thought she held it forth gently in her two hands.

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“ I never meant to hurt 'en, Aun' Mary,” she said. “ But a firstborn 's a firstborn, be we gentle or simple.”

In the darkness a pair of invisible hands reached forward and took her hostage.

* * * * *

When it was known that the Piskies had repented and restored Lovey Bussow's child to her, the neighbours agreed that fools have most of the luck in this world ; but came nevertheless to offer their congratulations. Meriden the Priest came also. He wanted to know how it had happened ; for the Piskies do not easily surrender a child they have stolen.

Lovey—standing very demure, and smoothing her apron down along her thighs—confessed that she had laid her trouble before Our Lady.

“ A miracle, then ! ” exclaimed his Reverence. “ What height ! What depth ! ”

“ That's of it,” agreed Lovey. “ Aw, b'lieve me, your Reverence, we mothers understand wan another.”

Pilot Matthey's Christmas

PILOT MATTHEY came down to the little fishing-quay at five p.m. or thereabouts. He is an elderly man, tall and sizeable, with a grizzled beard and eyes innocent-tender as a child's, but set in deep crow's-feet at the corners, as all seamen's eyes are. It comes of facing the wind.

Pilot Matthey spent the fore-half of his life at the fishing. Thence he won his way to be a Trinity pilot, and wears such portions of an old uniform as he remembers to don. He has six sons and four daughters, all brought up in the fear of the Lord, and is very much of a prophet in our Israel. One of the sons works with him as apprentice, the other five follow the fishing.

He came down to the quay soon after tea-time, about half-an-hour before the luggers were due to put out. Some twenty-five or thirty men were already gathered, dandering to and fro with hands in pockets, or seated on the bench under the sea wall, waiting for the tide to serve. About an equal number were below in the boats, getting things ready.

There was nothing unusual about Matthey, save

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that, although it was a warm evening in August, he wore a thick pea-jacket, and had turned the collar up about his ears. Nor (if you know Cornish fishermen) was there anything very unusual in what he did, albeit a stranger might well have thought it frantic.

For some time he walked to and fro, threading his way in and out of the groups of men, walking much faster than they—at the best they were strolling—muttering the while with his head sunk low in his jacket collar, turning sharply when he reached the edge of the quay, or pausing a moment or two, and staring gloomily at the water. The men watched him, yet not very curiously. They knew what was coming.

Of a sudden he halted and began to preach. He preached of Redemption from Sin, of the Blood of the Lamb, of the ineffable bliss of Salvation. His voice rose in an agony on the gentle twilight: it could be heard—entreating, invoking, persuading, wrestling—far across the harbour. The men listened quite attentively until the time came for getting aboard. Then they stole away by twos and threes down the quay steps. Meanwhile, and all the while, preparations on the boats had been going forward.

He was left alone at length. Even the children had lost interest in him, and had run off to watch the boats as they crept out on the tide. He ceased abruptly, came across to the beach where I sat smoking my pipe, and dropped exhausted beside

PILOT MATTHEY'S CHRISTMAS

me. The fire had died out of him. He eyed me almost shamefacedly at first, by-and-by more boldly.

"I would give, sir," said Pilot Matthey, "I would give half my worldly goods to lead you to the Lord."

"I believe you," said I. "To my knowledge you have risked more than that—your life—to save men from drowning. But tell me—you that for twenty minutes have been telling these fellows how Christ feels towards them—how can you know? It is hard enough, surely, to get inside any man's feelings. How can you pretend to know what Christ feels, or felt—for an instance, in the Judgment Hall, when Peter denied?"

"Once I did, sir," said Pilot Matthey, smoothing the worn knees of his trousers. "It was just that. I'll tell you:—

"It happened eighteen or twenty years ago, on the old *Early and Late*—yes, twenty years come Christmas, for I mind that my eldest daughter was expectin' her first man-child, just then. You saw him get aboard just now, praise the Lord! But at the time we was all nervous about it—my son-in-law, Daniel, bein' away with me on the East Coast after the herrings. I'd as good as promised him to be back in time for it—this bein' my first grandchild, an' due (so well as we could calculate) any time between Christmas an' New Year. Well, there was

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no sacrifice, as it happened, in startin' for home—the weather up there keepin' monstrous, an' the catches not worth the labour. So we turned down Channel, the wind strong an' dead foul—south at first, then west-sou'-west—headin' us all the way, and always blowin' from just where 'twasn't wanted. This lasted us down to the Wight, and we'd most given up hope to see home before Christmas, when almost without warnin' it caughted in off the land—pretty fresh still, but steady—and bowled us down past the Bill and half-way across to the Start, merry as heart's delight. Then it fell away again, almost to a flat calm, and Daniel lost his temper. I never allowed cursin' on board the *Early and Late*—nor, for that matter, on any other boat of mine; but if Daniel didn't swear a bit out of hearin' well then—poor dear fellow, he's dead and gone these twelve years (yes, sir—drowned)—well then I'm doin' him an injustice. One couldn't help pitying him, neither. Didn't I know well enough what it felt like? And the awe of it, to think it's happenin' everywhere, and ever since world began—men fretting for the wife and firstborn, and gettin' over it, and goin' down to the grave leavin' the firstborn to fret over *his* firstborn! It puts me in mind o' the old hemn, sir: 'tis in the Wesley books, and I can't think why church folk leave out the verse—

“ ‘The busy tribes o' flesh and blood,
With all their cares and fears'—

PILOT MATTHEY'S CHRISTMAS

Ay, 'cares and fears;' that's of it—

“‘Are carried downward by the flood,
And lost in followin' years.’

“Poor Daniel—poor boy!”

Pilot Matthey sat silent for a while, staring out over the water in the wake of the boats that already had begun to melt into the shadow of darkness.

“’Twas beautiful sunshiny weather, too, as I mind,” he resumed. “One o’ those calm spells that happen, as often as not, just about Christmas. I remember drawin’ your attention to it, sir, one Christmas when I passed you the compliments of the season; and you put it down to kingfishers, which I thought strange at the time.”

“Kingfishers?” echoed I, mystified for the moment. “Oh, yes”—as light broke on me—“Halcyon days, of course!”

“That’s right,” Pilot Matthey nodded. “That’s what you called ’em. . . . It took us a whole day to work past the tides of the Start. Then, about sunset, a light draught off the land helped us to Bolt Tail, and after that we mostly drifted all night, with here and there a cat’s paw, down across Bigbury Bay. By five in the morning we were inside the Eddystone, with Plymouth Sound open, and by twelve noon we was just in the very same place. It was Christmas Eve, sir.

“I looked at Daniel’s face, and then a notion

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struck me. It was foolish I hadn't thought of it before.

“ ‘See here, boys,’ I says. (There was three. My second son, Sam, Daniel, and Daniel's brother, Dick, a youngster of sixteen or so.) ‘Get out the boat, I says, and we'll tow her into Plymouth. If you're smart we may pluck her into Cattewater in time for Daniel to catch a train home. Sam can go home, too, if he has a mind, and the youngster can stay and help me look after things. I've seen a many Christmasses,’ said I, ‘and I'd as lief spend this one at Plymouth as anywhere else. You can give 'em all my love, and turn up again the day after Boxin' Day—and mind you ask for excursion tickets,’ I said.

“They tumbled the boat out fast enough, you may be sure. Leastways the two men were smart enough. But the boy seemed ready to cry, so that my heart smote me. ‘There!’ said I, ‘and Dicky can go too, if he'll pull for it. I shan't mind bein' left to myself. A redeemed man's never lonely—least of all at Christmas time.’

“Well, sir, they nipped into the boat, leavin' me aboard to steer; and they pulled—pulled—like as if they'd pull their hearts out. But it happened a strongish tide was settin' out o' the Sound, and long before we fetched past the breakwater I saw there was no chance to make Cattewater before nightfall, let alone their gettin' to the railway station. I blamed myself that I hadn't thought of

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it earlier, and so, steppin' forward, I called out to them to ease up—we wouldn't struggle on for Cattewater, but drop hook in Jennycliff Bay, somewhere inside of the Merchant Shipping anchorage. As things were, this would save a good hour—more likely two hours. 'And,' said I, 'you can take the boat, all three, and leave her at Barbican steps. Tell the harbour-master where she belongs, and where I'm laying. He'll see she don't take no harm, and you needn't fear but I'll get put ashore to her somehow. There's always somebody passin' hereabouts.'

“‘But look 'ee here, father,' said the boys—good boys they were, too—'What's to happen if it comes on to blow from south or sou'-west, same as it blew at the beginning of the week?'

“‘'Tisn't goin' to do any such thing,' said I, for I'd been studyin' the weather. 'And, even if it should happen, I've signals aboard. 'Tisn't the first time, sonnies, I've sat out a week-end on board a boat, alone wi' the Redeemer.'

“That settled it, sir. It relieved 'em a bit, too, when they spied another lugger already lyin' inside the anchorage, and made her out for a Porthleven boat, the *Maid in Two Minds*, that had been after the herrings with the rest of us up to a fortni't ago, or maybe three weeks: since when we hadn't seen her. As I told you, the weather had been cruel, and the catches next to nothing; and belike she'd given it up earlier than we and pushed for

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home. At any rate, here she was. We knowed her owners, as fishermen do; but we'd never passed word with her, nor with any of her crew. I'd heard somewhere—but where I couldn't recollect—that the skipper was a blasphemous man, given to the drink, and passed by the name of Dog Mitchell; but 'twas hearsay only. All I noted, or had a mind to note, as we dropped anchor less than a cable length from her, was that she had no boat astern or on deck (by which I concluded the crew were ashore), and that Dog Mitchell himself was on deck. I reckernised him through the glass. He made no hail at all, but stood leanin' by the mizzen and smokin', watchin' what we did. By then the dark was comin' down.

“Well, sir, I looked at my watch, and there was no time to be choice about position; no time even for the lads to get aboard and pack their bags. I ran forward, heaved anchor, cast off tow-line, an' just ran below, and came up with an armful o' duds which I tossed into the boat as she dropped back alongside. I fished the purse out of my pocket, and two sovereigns out o' the purse. ‘That'll take 'ee home and back,’ said I, passin' the money to Daniel. ‘So long, children! You haven't no time to spare.’

“Away they pulled, callin' back, ‘God bless 'ee, father!’ and the like; words I shan't forget . . . Poor Daniel! . . . And there, all of

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a sudden, was I, left to spend Christmas alone: which didn't trouble me at all.

“ 'Stead o' which, as you might say, havin' downed sail and made things pretty well ship-shape on deck, I went below and trimmed and lit the riding light. When I came on deck with it the *Maid in two Minds* was still in darkness. 'That's queer,' thought I; but may be the *Early and Late's* light reminded Dog Mitchell of his, for a few minutes later he fetched it up and made it fast, takin' an uncommon long time over the job and mutterin' to himself all the while. (For I should tell you that, the weather bein' so still and the distance not a hundred yards, I could hear every word).

“ 'Twas then, I think, it first came into my mind that the man was drunk, and five minutes later I was sure of it: for on his way aft he caught his foot and tripped over something—one o' the deck-leads maybe—and the words he ripped out 'twould turn me cold to repeat. His voice was thick, too, and after cursin' away for half a minute it dropped to a sort of growl, same as you'll hear a man use when he's full o' drink and reckons he has a grudge against somebody or something—he doesn't quite know which, or what. Thought I, ' 'Tis a risky game o' those others to leave a poor chap alone in that state. He might catch the boat afire, for one thing: and, for another, he might fall overboard.' It crossed my mind, too, that if he fell overboard I hadn't a boat to pull for him.

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“ He went below after that, and for a couple of hours no sound came from the *Maid in Two Minds*. ‘ Likely enough,’ thought I, ‘ he’s turned in, to sleep it off ; and that’s the best could happen to him ;’ and by-and-by I put the poor fellow clean out o’ my head. I made myself a dish o’ tea, got out supper, and ate it with a thankful heart, though I missed the boys ; but, then again, I no sooner missed them than I praised God they had caught the train. They would be nearin’ home by this time ; and I sat for a while picturin’ it : the kitchen, and the women-folk there, that must have made up their minds to spend Christmas without us ; particularly Lisbeth Mary—that’s my daughter, Daniel’s wife—with her mother to comfort her, an’ the firelight goin’ dinky-dink round the cups and saucers on the dresser. I pictured the joy of it, too, when Sam or Daniel struck rat-tat and clicked open the latch, or maybe one o’ the gals pricked up an ear at the sound of their boots on the cobbles. I ’most hoped the lads hadn’t been thoughtful enough to send on a telegram. My mind ran on all this, sir ; and then for a moment it ran back to myself, sittin’ there cosy and snug after many perils, many joys ; past middle-age, yet hale and strong, wi’ the hand o’ the Lord protectin’ me. ‘ The Lord is my shepherd ; therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul

. . .

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“ I don't know how it happened, sir, but of a sudden a well o' warmth ran through me and all over me, just like a spring burstin'. 'Waters o' Comfort?' Ay, maybe . . . maybe. Funny things happen on Christmas Eve, they say. My old mother believed to her last day that every Christmas Eve at midnight the cattle in their stalls went down on their knees, throughout the land . . .

“ But the feelin', if you understand me, wasn't Christmas-like at all. It had started with green pastures: and green pastures ran in my head, with brooks, and birds singin' away up aloft and bees hummin' all 'round, and the sunshine o' the Lord warmin' everything and warmin' my heart . . . I felt the walls of the cuddy chokin' me of a sudden, an' went on deck.

“ A fine night it was, up there. Very clear with a hint o' frost—no moon. As I remember, she was in her first quarter and had gone down some while. The tide had turned and was makin' in steady. I could hear it clap-clappin' past the *Maid in Two Minds*—she lay a little outside of us, to seaward, and we had swung so that her ridin' light come over our starboard bow. Out beyond her the lighthouse on the breakwater kept flashin'—it's red over the anchorage—an' away beyond that the 'Stone. Astern was all the half-circle o' Plymouth lights—like the front of a crown o' glory. And the stars overhead, sir!—not so much as a wisp o' cloud to hide 'em.

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“ ‘ Where is He that is born King of the Jews ? for we have seen His star in the east . . . ’ I ’d always been curious about that star, sir,—whether ’twas an ordinary one or one sent by miracle : and, years before, I ’d argued it out that the Lord wouldn’t send one like a flash in the pan, but—bein’ thoughtful in all things—would leave it to come back constant every year and bring assurance, if we looked for it. After that, I began to look regularly, studying the sky from the first week of December on to Christmas : and ’twasn’t long before I felt certain. ’Tis a star—they call it Regulus in the books, for I ’ve looked it out—that gets up in the south-east in December month : pretty low, and yet full high enough to stand over a cottage ; one o’ the brightest too, and easily known, for it carries five other stars set like a reap-hook just above it.

“ Well, I looked to the south-east, and there my star stood blazin’, just over the dark o’ the land, with its reap-hook over its forehead. ‘ The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light . . . ’

“ While I stood staring at it, thinkin’ my thoughts, there came a noise all of a sudden from the other lugger, as if someone had kicked over a table down below, and upset half-a-dozen pots and pans. Then, almost before I had time to wonder, I heard Dog Mitchell scramble forth on deck, find his feet in a scufflin’ way, and start travisin’ forth and back, forth and back, talkin’ to himself all the while and

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cursin'. He was fairly chewin' curses. I guessed what was the matter. He had been down below toppin' things up with a last soak of neat whisky, and now he had the shakes on him, or the beginnings of 'em.

"You know the sayin', 'A fisherman's walk—two steps, an' overboard? . . . I tell you I was in misery for the man. Any moment he might lurch overboard, or also throw himself over—one as likely as another with a poor chap in that state. Yet how could I help?—cut off, without boat or any means to get to him?"

"Forth and back he kept goin', in his heavy sea-boots. I could hear every step he took, and when he kicked against the hatchway-coamin' (he did this scores o' times) and when he stood still and spat overboard. Once he tripped over the ship's mop—got the handle a-foul of his legs, and talked to it like a pers'nal enemy. Terrible language—terrible!

"It struck me after a bit"—here Pilot Matthey turned to me with one of those shy smiles which, as they reveal his childish, simple heart, compel you to love the man. "It struck me after a bit that a hemntune mightn't come amiss to a man in that distress of mind. So I pitched to sing that grand old tune, 'Partners of a glorious hope,' a bit low at first, but louder as I picked up confidence. Soon as he heard it he stopped short, and called out to me to shut my head. So, findin' that hemns only excited him, I sat quiet, while he picked up his tramp again.

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“ I had allowed to myself that 'twould be all right soon after eleven, when the publics closed, and his mates would be turnin' up, to take care of him. But eleven o'clock struck, back in the town; and the quarters, and then twelve; and still no boat came off from shore. Then, soon after twelve, he grew quiet of a sudden. The trampin' stopped. I reckoned he'd gone below, though I couldn't be certain. But bein' by this time pretty cold with watchin', and dog-tired, I tumbled below and into my bunk. I must have been uneasy though, for I didn't take off more'n my boots.

“ What's more I couldn't have slept more than a dog's sleep. For I woke up sudden to the noise of a splash—it seemed I'd been waitin' for it—and was up on deck in two shakes.

“ Yes, the chap was overboard, fast enough—I heard a sort of gurgle as he came to the surface, and some sort of attempt at a cry. Before he went under again, the tide drifted his head like a little black buoy across the ray of our ridin' light. So overboard I jumped, and struck out for him.”

At this point—the exciting point—Pilot Matthey's narrative halted, hesitated, grew meagre and ragged.

“ I got a grip on him as he rose. He couldn't swim better 'n a few strokes at the best. (So many of our boys won't larn to swim—they say it only lengthens things out when your time comes) . . . The man was drownin', but he had spoil enough to catch at me and try to pull me under along with him.

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I knew that trick, though, luckily . . . I got him round on his back, with my hands under his armpits, and kicked out for the *Maid in Two Minds*.

“ 'Tisn't easy to climb straight out o' the water and board a lugger—not at the best of times, when you've only yourself to look after; and the *Maid in Two Minds* had no accommodation-ladder hung out . . . But, as luck would have it, they'd downed sail anyhow and, among other things, left the out-haul of the mizzen danglin' slack and close to the water. I reached for this, shortened up on it till I had it taut, and gave it into his hand to cling by—which he had the sense to do, havin' fetched back some of his wits. After that I scrambled on to the mizzen-boom somehow and hauled him aboard mainly by his shirt collar and guernsey. It was a job, too; and the first thing he did on deck was to reach his head overside and be vi'lently sick.

“ He couldn't have done better. When he'd finished I took charge, hurried him below—my! the mess down there!—and got him into somebody's dry clothes. All the time he was whimperin' and shiverin'; and he whimpered and shivered still when I coaxed him into his bunk and tucked him up in every rug I could find. There was a bottle of whisky, pretty near empty, 'pon the table. Seein' how wistful the poor chap looked at it, and mindin' how much whisky and salt water he'd got rid of, I mixed the dregs of it with a little hot water off the stove, and poured it into him. Then I filled up the

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bottle with hot water, corked it hard, and slipped it down under the blankets, to warm his feet.

“‘That’s all right, matey,’ said he, his teeth chatterin’ as I snugged him down. ‘But cut along and leave me afore the others come.’

“Well, that was sense in its way, though he didn’t seem to take account that there was only one way back for me—the way I’d come.”

“‘You’ll do, all right?’ said I.

“‘I’ll do right enough now,’ said he. ‘You cut along.’

“So I left him. I was that chilled in my drippin’ clothes, the second swim did me more good than harm. When I got to the *Early and Late*, though, I was pretty dead beat, and it cost me half-a-dozen tries before I could heave myself on to the accommodation ladder. Hows’ever, once on board I had a strip and a good rub-down, and tumbled to bed glowin’ like a babby.

“I slept like a top, too, this time. What woke me was a voice close abeam, hailin’ the *Early and Late*; and there was a brisk, brass-bound young chap alongside in a steam-launch, explainin’ as he’d brought out the boat, and why the harbour-master hadn’t sent her out last night. ‘As requested by your crew, Cap’n.’ ‘That’s very polite o’ them and o’ you, and o’ the habour-master,’ said I; ‘and I wish you the compliments o’ the season.’ For I liked the looks of him there, smiling up in an obliging way, and Plymouth bells behind him all sounding

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to Church together for Christmas. 'Same to you, Cap'n!' he called out, and sheered off with a wave o' the hand, having made the boat fast astern.

"I stared after him for a bit, and then I turned my attention to the *Maid in Two Minds*. Her boat, too, lay astern of her; and one of her crew was already on deck, swabbin' down. After a bit, another showed up. But Dog Mitchell made no appearance.

"Nat'rally enough my thoughts ran on him durin' breakfast; and, when 'twas done, I dressed myself and pulled over to inquire. By this time all three of his mates were on deck, and as I pulled close they drew together—much as to ask what I wanted.

"'I came across,' says I, 'to ask after the boss. Is he all right this morning?'

"'Why not?' asked one o' the men, suspicious-like, with a glance at the others. They were all pretty yellow in the gills after their night ashore.

"'What's up?' says Dog Mitchell's own voice on top o' this: and the man heaved himself on deck and looked down on me.

"'It's the skipper of the *Early and Late*,' said one of the fellows grinning; 'as seems to say he has the pleasure o' your acquaintance.'

"'Does he?' said Dog Mitchell slowly, chewing. The man's eyes were bleared yet, but the drink had gone out of him with his shock: or the few hours' sleep had picked him round. He hardened his eyes

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on me, anyway, and says he—‘ Does he? Then he ’s a bloody liar!’

“ I didn’t make no answer, sir. I saw what he had in mind—that I’d come off on the first opportunity, cadgin’ for some reward. I turned the boat’s head about, and started to pull back for the *Early and Late*. The men laughed after me, jeering-like. And Dog Mitchell, he laughed too in the wake o’ them, with a kind of challenge as he saw my lack o’ pluck. And away back in Plymouth the bells kept on ringing.

“ That’s the story. You asked how I could tell what the blessed Lord felt like when Peter denied. I don’t know. But I seemed to feel like it, just that once.”

The Mont-Bazillac

I HAVE a sincere respect and liking for the Vicar of Gantick—"th' old Parson Kendall," as we call him—but have somewhat avoided his hospitality since Mrs. Kendall took up with the teetotal craze. I say nothing against the lady's renouncing, an she choose, the light dinner claret, the cider, the port (pale with long maturing in the wood) which her table afforded of yore: nor do I believe that the Vicar, excellent man, repines deeply—though I once caught the faint sound of a sigh as we stood together and conned his apple-trees, ungarnered, shedding their fruit at random in the long grasses. For his glebe contains a lordly orchard, and it used to be a treat to watch him, his greenish third-best coat stuck all over with apple-pips and shreds of pomace, as he helped to work the press at the great annual cider-making. But I agree with their son, Master Dick, that "it's rough on the guests."

Master Dick is now in his second year at Oxford; and it was probably for his sake, to remove temptation from the growing lad, that Mrs. Kendall first discovered the wickedness of all alcoholic drink.

Were he not an ordinary, good-natured boy—had he, as they say, an ounce of vice in him—I doubt the good lady's method might go some way towards defeating her purpose. As things are, it will probably take no worse revenge upon her than by weaning him insensibly away from home, to use his vacation-times in learning to be a man.

Last Long Vacation, in company with a friend he calls Jinks, Master Dick took a Canadian canoe out to Bordeaux by steamer, and spent six adventurous weeks in descending the Dordogne and exploring the Garonne with its tributaries. On his return he walked over to find me smoking in my garden after dinner, and gave me a gleeful account of his itinerary.

“ . . . and the next place we came to was Bergerac,” said he, after ten minutes of it.

“ Ah ! ” I murmured. “ Bergerac ! ”

“ You know it ? ”

“ Passably well,” said I. “ It lies toward the edge of the claret country ; but it grows astonishing claret. When I was your age it grew a wine yet more astonishing.”

“ Hullo ! ” Master Dick paused in the act of lighting his pipe and dropped the match hurriedly as the flame scorched his fingers.

“ It was grown on a hill just outside the town—the Mont-Bazillac. I once drank a bottle of it.”

“ Lord ! You too ? . . . Do tell me what happened ! ”

“ Never,” I responded firmly. “ The Mont-

Bazillac is extinct, swept out of existence by the phylloxera when you were a babe in arms. *Infandum jubes renovare*—no one any longer can tell you what that wine was. They made it of the ripe grape. It had the raisin flavour with something—no more than a hint—of Madeira in it: the leathery tang—how to describe it?”

“ You need not try, when I have two bottles of it at home, at this moment ! ”

“ When I tell you —— ” I began.

“ Oh, but wait till you ’ve heard the story ! ” he interrupted. “ As I was saying, we came to Bergerac and put up for the night at the *Couronne d’Or*—first-class cooking. Besides ourselves there were three French bagmen at the *table d’hôte*. The usual sort. Jinks, who talks worse French than I do (if that ’s possible), and doesn’t mind, got on terms with them at once. . . . For my part I can always hit it off with a commercial—it ’s the sort of mind that appeals to me—and these French bagmen *do* know something about eating and drinking. That ’s how it happened. One of them started chaffing us about the *ordinaire* we were drinking—quite a respectable tap, by the way. He had heard that Englishmen drank only the strongest wine, and drank it in any quantities. Then another said: ‘ Ah, messieurs, if you would drink for the honour of England, *justement* you should match yourselves here in this town against the famous Mont-Bazillac.’ ‘ What is this Mont-Bazillac ? ’ we asked: and they

told us—well, pretty much what you told me just now—adding, however, that the landlord kept a few precious bottles of it. They were quite fair in their warnings.”

“ Which, of course, you disregarded.”

“ For the honour of England. We rang for the landlord—a decent fellow, Sébillot by name—and at first, I may tell you, he wasn’t at all keen on producing the stuff; kept protesting that he had but a small half-dozen left, that his daughter was to be married in the autumn, and he had meant to keep it for the wedding banquet. However, the bagmen helping, we persuaded him to bring up two bottles. A frantic price it was, too—frantic for *us*. Seven francs a bottle.”

“ It was four francs fifty even in my time.”

“ The two bottles were opened. Jinks took his, and I took mine. We had each *arroséd* the dinner with about a pint of Bordeaux; nothing to count. We looked at each other straight. I said, ‘ Be a man, Jinks! *À votre santé messieurs!* ’ and we started. . . . As you said just now, it’s a most innocent-tasting wine.”

“ As a matter of fact, I didn’t say so. Still, you are right.”

“ The fourth and fifth glasses, too, seemed to have no more kick in them than the first. . . . Nothing much seemed to be happening, except that Sébillot had brought in an extra lamp—at any rate, the room was brighter, and I could see the bagmen’s faces

more distinctly as they smiled and congratulated us. I drank off the last glass 'to the honour of England,' and suggested to Jinks—who had kept pace with me, glass for glass—that we should take a stroll and view the town. There was a fair (as I had heard) across the bridge. . . . We stood up together. I had been feeling nervous about Jinks, and it came as a relief to find that he was every bit as steady on his legs as I was. We said good evening to the bagmen and walked out into the street. 'Up the hill or down?' asked Jinks, and I explained to him very clearly that, since rivers followed the bottoms of their valleys, we should be safe in going downhill if we wanted to find the bridge. And I'd scarcely said the words before it flashed across me that I was drunk as Chloe.

"Here's another thing.—I'd never been drunk before, and I haven't been drunk since: but all the same I knew that this wasn't the least like ordinary drunkenness: it was too—what shall I say?—too brilliant. The whole town of Bergerac belonged to me: and, what was better, it was lit so that I could steer my way perfectly, although the street seemed to be quite amazingly full of people, jostling and chattering. I turned to call Jinks's attention to this, and was saying something about a French crowd—how much cheerfuller it was than your average English one—when all of a sudden Jinks wasn't there! No, nor the crowd! I was alone on Bergerac bridge, and I leaned with both elbows on the parapet

and gazed at the Dordogne flowing beneath the moon.

“ It was not an ordinary river, for it ran straight up into the sky : and the moon, unlike ordinary moons, kept whizzing on an axis like a Catherine wheel, and swelled every now and then and burst into showers of the most dazzling fireworks. I leaned there and stared at the performance, feeling just like a king—proud, you understand, but with a sort of noble melancholy. I knew all the time that I was drunk ; but that didn’t seem to matter. The bagmen had told me —— ”

I nodded again.

“ That ’s one of the extraordinary things about the Mont-Bazillac,” I corroborated. “ It ’s all over in about an hour, and there ’s not (as the saying goes) a headache in a hogshead.”

“ I wouldn’t quite say that,” said Dick reflectively. “ But you ’re partly right. All of a sudden the moon stopped whizzing, the river lay down in its bed, and my head became clear as a bell. ‘ The trouble will be,’ I told myself, ‘ to find the hotel again.’ But I had no trouble at all. My brain picked up bearing after bearing. I worked back up the street like a prize Baden-Powell scout, found the portico, remembered the stairway to the left, leading to the lounge, went up it, and recognising the familiar furniture, dropped into an armchair with a happy sigh. My only worry, as I picked up a copy of the *Gil Blas* and began to study it, was about

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Jinks. But, you see, there wasn't much call to go searching after him when my own experience told me it would be all right.

“ There were, maybe, half a dozen men in the lounge, scattered about in the armchairs and smoking. By and by, glancing up from my newspaper, I noticed that two or three had their eyes fixed on me pretty curiously. One of them—an old boy with a grizzled moustache—set down his paper, and came slowly across the room. ‘ Pardon, monsieur,’ he said in the politest way, ‘ but have we the honour of numbering you amongst our members ? ’ ‘ Good Lord ! ’ cried I, sitting up, ‘ isn't this the *Couronne d'Or* ? ’ ‘ Pray let monsieur not discommode himself,’ said he, with a quick no-offence sort of smile, ‘ but he has made a little mistake. This is the *Cercle Militaire*.’

“ I must say those French officers were jolly decent about it : especially when I explained about the Mont-Bazillac. They saw me back to the hotel in a body ; and as we turned in at the porchway, who should come down the street but Jinks, striding elbows to side, like a man in a London-to-Brighton walking competition ! . . . He told me, as we found our bedrooms, that ‘ *of course*, he had gone up the hill, and that the view had been magnificent.’ I did not argue about it, luckily : for—here comes in another queer fact—*there was no moon at all that night*. Next morning I wheedled two more bottles of the stuff out of old Sébillot—which leaves him two for the wedding. I thought that you and I

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might have some fun with them. . . . Now tell me *your* experience.”

“That,” said I, “must wait until you unlock my tongue; if indeed you have brought home the genuine Mont-Bazillac.”

As it happened, Master Dick was called up to Oxford unexpectedly, a week before the beginning of term, to start practice in his college “four.” Our experiment had to be postponed; with what result you shall hear.

About a fortnight later I read in our local paper that the Bishop had been holding a Confirmation service in Gantick Parish Church. The paragraph went on to say that “a large and reverent congregation witnessed the ceremony, but general regret was expressed at the absence of our respected Vicar through a temporary indisposition. We are glad to assure our readers that the reverend gentleman is well on the way to recovery, and indeed has already resumed his ministration in the parish, where his genial presence and quick sympathies, etc.”

This laid an obligation upon me to walk over to Gantick and inquire about my old friend’s health: which I did that same afternoon. Mrs. Kendall received me with the information that her husband was quite well again, and out-and-about; that in fact he had started, immediately after luncheon, to pay a round of visits on the outskirts

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of the parish. On the nature of his late indisposition she showed herself reticent, not to say "short" in her answers; nor, though the hour was four o'clock, did she invite me to stay and drink tea with her.

On my way back, and just within the entrance-gate of the vicarage drive, I happened on old Trewoon, who works at odd jobs under the gardener, and was just now busy with a besom, sweeping up the first fall of autumn leaves. Old Trewoon, I should tell you, is a Wesleyan, and a radical of the sardonic sort; and, as a jobbing man, holds himself free to criticise his employers.

"Good afternoon!" said I. "This is excellent news that I hear about the Vicar. I was afraid, when I first heard of his illness, that it might be something serious—at his age——"

"Serious?" Old Trewoon rested his hands on the besom-handle and eyed me, with a twist of his features. "Missus didn' tell you the natur' of the complaint, I reckon?"

"As a matter of fact she did not."

"I bet she didn'. Mind you, *I* don't know, nuther." He up-ended his besom and plucked a leaf or two from between the twigs before adding, "And what, makin' so bold, did she tell about the Churchwardens?"

"The Churchwardens?" I echoed.

"Aye, the Churchwardens: Matthey Hancock an' th' old Farmer Truslove. They was took ill right

about the same time. Aw, my dear"—Mr. Trewoon addresses all mankind impartially as "my dear"—"th' hull parish knaws about *they*. Though there war'nt no concealment, for that matter."

"What about the Churchwardens?" I asked innocently, and of a sudden became aware that he was rocking to and fro in short spasms of inward laughter.

"—It started wi' the Bishop's motor breakin' down; whereby he and his man spent the better part of two hours in a God-forsaken lane somewhere t'other side of Hen's Beacon, tryin' to make her go. He'd timed hisself to reach here punctual for the lunchin' the Missus always has ready on Confirmation Day: nobody to meet his Lordship but theirselves and the two Churchwardens; an' you may guess that Hancock and Truslove had turned up early in their best broadcloth, lookin' to have the time o' their lives.

"They were pretty keen-set, too, by one o'clock, bein' used to eat their dinners at noon sharp. One o'clock comes—no Bishop: two o'clock and still no Bishop. 'There's been a naccydent,' says the Missus: 'but thank the Lord the vittles is cold!' 'Maybe he've forgot the day,' says the Vicar; 'but, any way, we'll give en another ha'f-hour's grace an' then set-to,' says he, takin' pity on the noises old Truslove was makin' wi' his weskit. . . . So said, so done. At two-thirty—service bein' fixed for ha'f-after-three—they all fell to work.

THE MONT-BAZILLAC

“ You d’know, I dare say, what a craze the Missus have a-took o’ late against the drinkin’ habit. Sally, the parlourmaid, told me as how, first along, th’ old lady set out by hintin’ that the Bishop, bein’ a respecer o’ conscience, wouldn’ look for anything stronger on the table than home-brewed lemonade. But there the Vicar struck ; and findin’ no way to shake him, she made terms by outin’ with two bottles o’ wine that, to her scandal, she ’d rummaged out from a cupboard o’ young Master Dick’s since he went back to Oxford College. She decanted ’em [chuckle], an’ th’ old Vicar allowed, havin’ tasted the stuff, that—though he had lost the run o’ wine lately, an’ didn’ reckernise whether ’twas port or what-not—seemin’ to him ’twas a sound wine and fit for any gentleman’s table. ‘ Well, at any rate,’ says the Missus, ‘ my boy shall be spared the temptation : an’ I hope ’tis no sign he ’s betaken hisself to secret drinkin’ ! ’

“ Well, then, it was decanted : an’ Hancock and Truslove, nothin’ doubtful, begun to lap it up like so much milk—the Vicar helpin’, and the Missus rather encouragin’ than not, to the extent o’ the first decanter ; thinkin’ that ’twas good riddance to the stuff and that if the Bishop turned up, he wouldn’t look, as a holy man, for more than ha’f a bottle. I ’m tellin’ it you as Sally told it to me. She says that everything went on as easy as eggs in a nest until she started to hand round the sweets, and all of a sudden she didn’ know what was happenin’ at

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table, nor whether she was on her head or her heels. . . . All I can tell you, sir, is that me and Battershall"—Battershall is the vicarage gardener, stableman, and factotum—"was waitin' in the stables, wonderin' when in the deuce the Bishop would turn up, when we heard the whistle blown from the kitchen: which was the signal. Out we ran; an' there to be sure was the Bishop comin' down the drive in a hired trap. But between him and the house—slap-bang, as you might say, in the middle of the lawn—was our two Churchwardens, stripped mother-naked to the waist, and sparring: and from the window just over the porch th' old Missus screaming out to us to separate 'em. No, nor that wasn't the worst: for, as his Lordship's trap drove up, the two tom-fools stopped their boxin' to stand 'pon their toes and blow kisses at him!

"I must say that Battershall showed great presence o' mind. He shouted to me to tackle Truslove, while he ran up to Matthey Hancock an' butted him in the stomach; an' together we 'd heaved the two tom-fools into the shrubbery almost afore his Lordship could believe his eyes. I won't say what had happened to the Vicar, for I don't rightways know. All I can get out o' Sally—she's a modest wench—is that—that—*he wanted to be a Statoo!* . . ."

"Quite so," I interrupted, edging towards the gate and signifying with a gesture of the hand that I had heard enough.

Old Trewoon's voice followed me.

THE MONT-BAZILLAC

“ I reckon, sir, we best agree, for the sake o’ the dear old fella, that such a sight as them two Churchwardens was enough to make any gentleman take to his bed. But ”—as the gate rang on its hasp and rang again—“ I’ve been thinkin’ powerful *what might ha’ happened if his Lordship had turned up in due time to partake.*”

Master Dick is a good boy : and when we met in the Christmas vacation no allusion was made to the Mont-Bazillac. On my part, I am absolved from my promised confession, and my lips shall remain locked. That great, that exhilarating, that redoubtable wine, has—with the nuptials of M. Sébillot’s daughter—perished finally from earth. I wonder what happened in Bergerac on that occasion, and if it had a comparable apotheosis !

The Three Necklaces

“ A GREAT nation ! ” said the little Curé. “ But yes, indeed, the English are a very great nation. And now I have seen them at home ! But it passes expression, monsieur, what a traveller I find myself ! ”

We stood together on the deck of the steamer, watching—after an eight hours’ passage from Plymouth—the Breton coast as it loomed out of the afternoon haze. Our crossing had been smooth, yet sea-sickness had prostrated all his compatriots on board—five or six priests, as many *régieuses*, and maybe a dozen peasants, whom I supposed to be attached in some way to the service of the religious orders the priests represented. (Of late years, since the French Government expelled them, quite a number of these orders have found a home in our West-country.) On my way to the docks that morning I had overtaken and passed them straggling by twos and threes to the steamer, the men in broad-brimmed hats with velvet ribbons, the women coifed and bodiced after the fashion of their country,

each group shepherded by a priest; and I had noted how strange and almost forlorn a figure they cut in the grey English streets. If some of the strangeness had worn off, they certainly appeared no less forlorn as they sat huddled in physical anguish, dumb, immobile, staring at the sea.

The little Curé, however, was vivacious enough for ten. It was impossible to avoid making friends with him. He had nothing to do, he told me, with his companions, but was just a plain parish priest returning from an errand of business.

He announced this with a fine roll of the voice.

“Of business,” he repeated. “The English are a great nation for business. But how warm of heart, notwithstanding!”

“That is not always reckoned to us,” said I.

“But *I* reckon it . . . *Tenez*, that will be Île Vierge—there, with the lighthouse standing white—as it were, against the cliffs; but the cliffs belong in fact to the mainland. . . . And now in a few minutes we come abreast of *my* parish—the Île Lezan. . . . *Sec, see!*” He caught my arm as the tide raced us down through the Passage du Four. “My church—how her spire stands up!” He turned to me, his voice shaking with emotion. “You English are accustomed to travel. Probably you do not guess, monsieur, with what feelings I see again Île Lezan—I, who have never crossed the Channel before nor indeed have visited any foreign land. But I am glad: it spreads the mind.” Here

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he put his hands together and drew them apart as though extending a concertina. "I have seen you English at home. If monsieur, who is on tour, could only spare the time to visit me on Île Lezan!"

Well, the end of it was that before we parted on the quay at Brest I found myself under half a promise, and a week later, having (as I put it to myself) nothing better to do, I took the train to a little wind-swept terminus, whence a ramshackle cart jolted me to Port Lezan, on the coast, whence again by sail and oar a ferry-boat conveyed me over to the Island.

My friend the Curé greeted me with something not far short of ecstasy.

"But this is like you English—you keep your word. . . . You will hardly believe," he confided, as I shared his admirable déjeuner—soup, langouste, an incomparable omelet, stuffed veal, and I forget what beside—"you will hardly believe with what difficulty I bring myself back to this horizon." He waved a hand to the blue sea-line beyond his window. "When one has tasted progress——" He broke off. "But, thanks be to God, we too, on Île Lezan, are going to progress. You will visit my church and see how much we have need."

He took me to it: a bleak, decayed building, half ruined, the slated pavement uneven as the waves of the sea, the plastered walls dripping with saline ooze. From the roof depended three or four rudely-

carved ships, hung there *ex voto* by parishioners preserved from various perils of the deep. He narrated their histories at length.

“The roof leaks,” he said, “but we are to remedy that. At length the blessed Mary of Lezan will be housed, if not as befits her, at least not shamefully.” He indicated a niched statue of the Virgin, with daubed red cheeks and a robe of crude blue over-spread with blotches of sea-salt. “Thanks to your England,” he added.

“Why ‘thanks to England’?”

He chuckled—or perhaps I had better say chirruped.

“Did I not say I had been visiting your country on business? Eh? You shall hear the story—only I tell no names.”

He took snuff.

“We will call them,” he said, “only by their Christian names, which are Lucien and Jeanne. . . . I am to marry them next month, when Lucien gets his relief from the lighthouse on Île Ouessant.

“They are an excellent couple. As between them, the wits are with Lucien, who will doubtless rise in his profession. He has been through temptation, as you shall hear. For Jeanne, she is *un cœur simple*, as again you will discover; not clever at all—oh, by no means!—yet one of the best of my children. It is really to Jeanne that we owe it all. . . . I have said so to Lucien, and just

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at the moment Lucien was trying to say it to me.

“ They were betrothed, you understand. Lucien was nineteen, and Jeanne maybe a year younger. From the beginning, it had been an understood thing: to this extent understood, that Lucien, instead of sailing to the fishery (whither go most of the young men of Île Lezan and the coast hereabouts) was destined from the first to enter the lighthouse service under Government. The letters I have written to Government on his behalf! . . . I am not one of those who quarrel with the Republic. Still—a priest, and in this out-of-the-way spot—what is he ?

“ However, Lucien got his appointment. The pay? Enough to marry on, for a free couple. But the families were poor on both sides—long families, too. Folk live long on Île Lezan—women-folk especially; accidents at the fishery keep down the men. Still, and allowing for that, the average is high. Lucien had even a great-grandmother alive—a most worthy soul—and on Jeanne’s side the grandparents survived on both sides. Where there are grandparents they must be maintained.

“ No one builds on Île Lezan. Lucien and Jeanne—on either side their families crowded to the very windows. If only the smallest hovel might fall vacant! . . . For a week or two it seemed that a cottage might drop in their way; but it happened to be what you call picturesque, and a rich man

snapped it up. He was a stranger from Paris, and called himself an artist; but in truth he painted little, and that poorly—as even *I* could see. He was fonder of planning what he would have, and what not, to indulge his mood when it should be in the key for painting. Happening here just when the cottage fell empty, he offered a price for it far beyond anything Lucien could afford, and bought it. For a month or two he played with this new toy, adding a studio and a veranda, and getting over many large crates of furniture from the mainland. Then by and by a restlessness overtook him—that restlessness which is the disease of the rich—and he left us, yet professing that it delighted him always to keep his little *pied-à-terre* in Île Lezan. He has never been at pains to visit us since.

“ But meanwhile Lucien and Jeanne had no room to marry and set up house. It was a heavy time for them. They had some talk together of crossing over and finding a house on the mainland; but it came to nothing. The parents on both sides would not hear of it, and in truth Jeanne would have found it lonely on the mainland, away from her friends and kin; for Lucien, you see, must in any case spend half his time on the lighthouse on Île Ouessant. So many weeks on duty, so many weeks ashore—thus it works, and even so the loneliness wears them; though our Bretons, being silent men by nature, endure it better than the rest.

“ Lucien and Jeanne must wait—wait for

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somebody to die. In plain words it came to that. Ah, monsieur ! I have heard well-to-do folk talk of our poor as unfeeling. That is an untruth. But suppose it were true. Where would the blame lie in such a story as this ? Like will to like, and young blood is hot. . . . Lucien and Jeanne, however, were always well conducted. . . . Yes, yes, my story ? Six months passed, and then came word that our rich artist desired to sell his little *pied-à-terre* ; but he demanded the price he had given for it, and moreover what he called compensation for the buildings he had added. Also he would only sell or let it with the furniture ; he wished, in short, to disencumber himself of his purchase, and without loss. This meant that Lucien less than ever could afford to buy ; and there are no money-lenders on Île Lezan. The letter came as he was on the point of departing for another six weeks on Île Ouessant : and that evening the lovers' feet took them to the nest they had so often dreamed of furnishing. There is no prettier cottage on the island—I will show it to you on our way back. Very disconsolately they looked at it, but there was no cure. Lucien left early next morning.

“ That was last autumn, little before the wreck of your great English steamship the *Rougemont Castle*. Days after, the tides carried some of the bodies even here, to Île Lezan ; but not many—four or five at the most—and we, cut off from shore around this corner of the coast, were long in hearing

the terrible news. Even the lighthouse keepers on Île Ouessant knew nothing of it until morning, for she struck in the night, you remember, attempting to run through the Inner Passage and save her time.

“ I believe—but on this point will not be certain—that the alarm first came to Lucien, and in the way I shall tell you. At any rate he was walking alone in the early morning, and somewhere along the shore to the south of the lighthouse, when he came on a body lying on the seaweed in a gully of the rocks.

“ It was the body of a woman, clad only in a nightdress. As he stooped over her, Lucien saw that she was exceeding beautiful; yet not a girl, but a well-developed woman of thirty or thereabouts, with heavy coils of dark hair, well-rounded shoulders, and (as he described it to me later on) a magnificent throat.

“ He had reason enough to remark her throat, for as he turned the body over—it lay on its right side—to place a hand over the heart, if perchance some life lingered, the nightdress, open at the throat, disclosed one, two, three superb necklaces of diamonds. There were rings of diamonds on her fingers, too, and afterwards many fine gems were found sewn within a short vest or camisole of silk she wore under her nightdress. But Lucien’s eyes were fastened on the three necklaces.

“ Doubtless the poor lady, aroused in her berth as the ship struck, had clasped these hurriedly about her throat before rushing on deck. So, might her

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life be spared, she would save with it many thousands of pounds. They tell me since that in moments of panic women always think first of their jewels.

“ But here she lay drowned, and the jewels—as I said, Lucien could not unglue his eyes from them. At first he stared at them stupidly. Not for some minutes did his mind grasp that they represented great wealth; and even when the temptation grew, it whispered no more than that here was money—maybe even a hundred pounds—but enough, at all events, added to his savings, to purchase the cottage at home, and make him and Jeanne happy for the rest of their lives.

“ His fingers felt around to the clasps. One by one he detached the necklaces and slipped them into his trousers’ pocket.

“ He also managed to pull off one of the rings; but found this a more difficult matter, because the fingers were swollen somewhat with the salt water. So he contented himself with one, and ran back to the lighthouse to give the alarm to his comrades.

“ When his comrades saw the body there was great outcry upon the jewels on its fingers; but none attempted to disturb them, and Lucien kept his own counsel. They carried the poor thing to a store-chamber at the base of the lighthouse, and there before nightfall they had collected close upon thirty bodies. There was much talk in the newspapers afterwards concerning the honesty of our poor

Bretons, who pillaged none of the dead, but gave up whatever they found. The relatives and the great shipping company subscribed a fund, of which a certain small portion came even to Île Lezan, to be administered by me.

“ The poor lady with the necklaces ? If you read the accounts in the newspapers, as no doubt you did, you will already have guessed her name. Yes, in truth, she was your great soprano, whom they called Madame Chiara, or La Chiara : so modest are you English, at least in all that concerns the arts, that when an incomparable singer is born to you she must go to Italy to borrow a name. She was returning from South Africa, where the finest of the three necklaces had been presented to her by subscription amongst her admirers. They say her voice so ravished the audiences at Johannesburg and Pretoria that she might almost, had she willed, have carried home the great diamond they are sending to your King. But that, no doubt, was an invention of the newspapers.

“ For certain, at any rate, the necklace was a superb one ; nor do I speak without knowledge, as you shall hear. Twenty-seven large stones—between each a lesser stone—and all of the purest water ! The other two were scarcely less magnificent. It was a brother who came over and certified the body ; for her husband she had divorced in America, and her father was an English clergyman, old and infirm, seldom travelling beyond the parish where

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he lives in a château and reigns as a king. It seems that these things happen in England. At first he was only a younger son, and dwelt in the rectory as a plain parish priest, and there he married and brought up his family ; but his elder brother dying, he became squire of the parish too, and moved into the great house, yet with little money to support it until his only daughter came back from studying at Milan and conquered London. The old gentleman speaks very modestly about it. Oh, yes, I have seen and talked with him. And what a garden ! The azaleas ! the rhododendrons ! But he is old, and his senses somewhat blunted. He lives in the past—not his own, but his family's rather. He spoke to me of his daughter without emotion, and said that her voice was undoubtedly derived from three generations back, when an ancestor—a baronet—had married with an opera-singer.

“ But we were talking of the necklaces and of the ring which Lucien had taken. . . . He told his secret to nobody, but kept them ever in his trousers' pocket. Only, when he could escape away from his comrades to some corner of the shore, he would draw the gems forth and feast his eyes on them. I believe it weighed on him very little that he had committed a crime or a sin. Longshore folk have great ease of conscience respecting all property cast up to them by the sea. They regard all such as their rightful harvest : the feeling is in their blood, and I have many times argued in vain against it.

Once while I argued, here in Île Lezan, an old man asked me, ' But, father, if it were not for such chances, why should any man choose to dwell by the sea ? ' If, monsieur, you lived among them and knew their hardships, you would see some rude sense in that question.

" To Lucien, feasting his eyes by stealth on the diamonds and counting the days to his relief, the stones meant that Jeanne and happiness were now close within his grasp. There would be difficulty, to be sure, in disposing of them ; but with Jeanne's advice—she had a practical mind—and perhaps with Jeanne's help, the way would not be hard to find. He was inclined to plume himself on the ease with which, so far, it had been managed. His leaving the rings, and the gems sewn within the camisole—though to be sure these were not discovered for many hours—had been a masterstroke. He and his comrades had been complimented together upon their honesty.

" The relief came duly ; and in this frame of mind—a little sly, but more than three parts triumphant—he returned to Île Lezan, and was made welcome as something of a hero. (To do him credit, he had worked hard in recovering the bodies from the wreck.) At all times it is good to arrive home after a spell on the lighthouse. The smell of nets drying and of flowers in the gardens, the faces on the quay, and the handshakes, and the first church-going—they all count. But to Lucien these things were for once as

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little compared with the secret he carried. His marriage now was assured, and that first evening—the Eve of Noël—he walked with Jeanne up the road to the cottage, and, facing it, told her his secret. They could be married now. He promised it, and indicated the house with a wave of the hand almost proprietary.

“ But Jeanne looked at him as one scared, and said : ‘ Shall I marry a thief ? ’

“ Then, very quietly, she asked for a look at the jewels, and he handed them to her. She had never set eyes on diamonds before, but all women have an instinct for jewels, and these made her gasp. ‘ Yes,’ she owned, ‘ I could not have believed that the world contained such beautiful things. I am sorry thou hast done this wickedness, but I understand how they tempted thee.’

“ ‘ What is this you are chanting ? ’ demanded Lucien. ‘ The stones were nothing to me. I thought only that by selling them we two could set up house as man and wife.’

“ ‘ My dear one,’ said Jeanne, ‘ what happiness could we have known with this between us ? ’ What with the diamonds in her hand and the little cottage there facing her, so long desired, she was forced to shut her eyes for a moment ; but when she opened them again her voice was quite firm. ‘ We must restore them where they belong. It may be that Pere Thomas can help us ; but I must think of a way. Give them to me, and let me keep them while I think of a way.’

NEWS FROM THE DUCHY

“ ‘ You do not love me as I love you,’ said Lucien in his anger and disappointment ; but he knew, all the same, that he spoke an untruth.

“ Jeanne took the diamonds home with her, to her bedroom, and sat for some time on the edge of her bed, thinking out a way. In the midst of her thinking she stood up, walked over to the glass, and clasped the finest of the necklaces about her throat. . . . I suppose no woman of this country ever wore the like of it—no, not in the days when there were kings and queens of Léon. . . . Jeanne was not beautiful, but she gazed at herself with eyes like those of a patient in a fever. . . . Then of a sudden she felt the stones burning her as though they had been red-hot coals. She plucked them off, and cast herself on her knees beside the bed.

“ You will remember that this was the Eve of Noël, when the children of the parish help me to deck the *crèche* for the infant Christ. We take down the images—see, there is St. Joseph, and there yonder Our Lady, in the side chapel ; the two oxen and a sheep are put away in the vestry, in a cupboard full of camphor. We have the Three Kings too. . . . In short, we put our hearts into the dressing-up. By nightfall all is completed, and I turn the children out, reserving some few last touches which I invent to surprise them when they come again on Christmas morning. Afterwards I celebrate the Mass for the Vigil, and then always I follow what has

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been a custom in this parish, I believe, ever since the church was built. I blow out all the candles but two, and remain here, seated, until the day breaks, and the folk assemble to celebrate the first Mass of Noël. Eh? It is discipline, but I bring rugs, and I will not say that all the time my eyes are wide open.

“Certainly I closed them on this night of which I am telling. For I woke up with a start, and almost, you might say, in trepidation, for it seemed to me that someone was moving in the church. My first thought was that some mischievous child had crept in, and was playing pranks with my *crèche*, and to that first I made my way. Beyond the window above it rode the flying moon, and in the rays of it what did I see?

“The figures stood as I had left them. But above the manger, over the shoulders of the Virgin, blazed a rope of light—of diamonds such as I have never seen nor shall see again—all flashing green and blue and fieriest scarlet and piercing white. Of the Three Kings, also, each bore a gift, two of them a necklace apiece, and the third a ring. I stood before the miracle, and my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, and then a figure crept out of the shadows and knelt in the pool of moonlight at my feet. It was Jeanne. She caught at the skirt of my soutane, and broke into sobbing.

“‘My father, let the Blessed One wear them ever, or else help me to give them back!’”

NEWS FROM THE DUCHY

“ You will now guess, monsieur, on what business I have been visiting England. It is a great country. The old clergyman sat among his azaleas and rhododendrons and listened to all my story. Then he took the box that held his daughter’s jewels, and, emptying it upon the table, chose out one necklace and set it aside. ‘ This one,’ said he, ‘ shall be sold, my friend, and with the money you shall, after giving this girl a marriage portion, re-adorn your church on Île Lezan to the greater glory of God ! ’ ”

On our way back to his lodging the little Curé halted me before the cottage. Gay curtains hung in the windows, and the verandah had been freshly painted.

“ At the end of the month Lucien gets his relief, and then they are to be married,” said the little Curé.

The Wren

A LEGEND

EARLY on St. Stephen's Day—which is the day after Christmas—young John Cara, son of old John Cara, the smith of Porthennis, took down his gun and went forth to kill small birds. He was not a sportsman ; it hurt him to kill any living creature. But all the young men in the parish went slaughtering birds on St. Stephen's Day ; and the Parson allowed there was warrant for it, because, when St. Stephen had almost escaped from prison, a small bird (by tradition a wren) had chirped, and awakened his gaolers.

Strange to say, John Cara's dislike of gunning went with a singular aptitude for it. He had a quick sense with birds ; could guess their next movements just as though he read their minds ; and rarely missed his aim if he took it without giving himself time to think.

Now the rest of youths, that day, chose the valley bottoms as a matter of course, and trooped about in parties, with much whacking of bushes. But John went up to Balmain—which is a high stony moor

overlooking the sea—because he preferred to be alone, and also because, having studied their ways, he knew this to be the favourite winter haunt of the small birds, especially of the wrens and the titlarks.

His mother had set her heart on making a large wranny-pie (that is, wren-pie, but actually it includes all manner of birdlings). It was to be the largest in the parish. She was vain of young John's prowess, and would quote it when old John grumbled that the lad was slow as a smith. "And yet," said old John "backward isn't the word so much as foolish. Up to a point he understands iron 'most so well as I understand it myself. Then some notion takes him, and my back's no sooner turned than he spoils his job. Always trying to make iron do what iron won't do—that's how you may put it." The wife, who was a silly woman, and (like many another such) looked down on her husband's trade, maintained that her boy ought to have been born a squire, with game of his own.

Young John went up to Balmain; and there, sure enough, he found wrens and titlarks flitting about everywhere, cheeping amid the furze bushes on the low stone hedges and the granite boulders, where the winter rains had hollowed out little basins for themselves, little by little, working patiently for hundreds of years. The weather was cold, but still and sunny. As he climbed, the sea at first made a blue strip beyond the cliff's edge on his right, then

THE WREN

spread into a wide blue floor, three hundred feet below him, and all the width of it twinkling. Ahead and on his left all the moorland twinkled too, with the comings and goings of the birds. The wrens mostly went about their business—whatever that might be—in a sharp, practical way, keeping silence ; but the frail note of the titlarks sounded here, there, everywhere.

Young John might have shot scores of them. But, as he headed for the old mine-house of Balmain and the cromlech, or Main-Stone, which stands close beside it—and these are the only landmarks—he did not even trouble to charge his gun. For the miracle was happening already.

It began—as perhaps most miracles do—very slowly and gently, without his perceiving it, quite trivially and even absurdly. It started within him, upon a thought that wren-pie was a foolish dish after all ! His mother, who prided herself upon making it, did but pretend to enjoy it after it was cooked. His father did not even pretend : the mass of little bones in it cheated his appetite and spoiled his temper. From this young John went on to consider, “ Was it worth while to go on killing wrens and shamming an appetite for them, only because a wren had once informed against St. Stephen ? How were these wrens guilty ? And, anyway, how were the titlarks guilty ? ” Young John reasoned it out in this simple fashion. He came to the Main Stone, and seating himself on the turf, leaned his back against

one of the blocks which support the huge monolith. He sat there for a long while, puckering his brows, his gun idle beside him. At last he said to himself, but firmly and aloud :

“ Parson and the rest say 'tis true. But I can't believe it, and something inside says 'tis wrong. . . . There ! I won't shoot another bird—and that settles it ! ”

“ Halleluia ! ” said a tiny voice somewhere above him.

The voice, though tiny, was shrill and positive. Young John recognised, and yet did not recognise it. He stared up at the wall of the old mine-house from which it had seemed to speak, but he could see no one. Next he thought that the word must have come from his own heart, answering a sudden gush of warmth and happiness that set his whole body glowing. It was as if winter had changed to summer, within him and without, and all in a moment. He blinked in the stronger sunshine, and felt it warm upon his eyelids.

“ Halleluia ! ” said the voice again. It certainly came from the wall. He looked again, and, scanning it in this strange, new light, was aware of a wren in one of the crevices.

“ Will he ? will he ? ” piped another voice, pretty close behind his ear. Young John, now he had learnt that wrens can talk, had no difficulty in recognising this other voice : it was the half-hearted note of the titlark. He turned over on his side and peered into

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the shadow of the Main-Stone ; but in vain, for the titlark is a hesitating, unhappy little soul that never quite dares to make up its mind. It used to be the friend of a race that inhabited Cornwall ages ago. It builds in their cromlechs, and its song remembers them. It is the bird, too, in whose nest the cuckoo lays ; so it knows all about losing one's children and being dispossessed.

“ We will give him a gift,” chirruped the wren, “ and send him about his business. He is the first man that has the sense to leave us to ours.”

“ But will he ?—will he ? ” the titlark piped back ghostlily. “ One can never be sure. I have known men long, long before ever you came here. I knew King Arthur. This rock was his table, and he dined here with seven other kings on the night after they had beaten the Danes at Vellandruchar. I hid under the stone and listened to them passing the cups, and between their talk you could hear the stream running down the valley—it turned the two mill-wheels, Vellandruchar and Vellandreath, with blood that night. Even at day-break it ran high over the legs of the choughs walking on the beach below—that is why the choughs go red-legged to this day. . . . They are few now, but then they were many : and next spring they came and built in the rigging of the Danes' ships, left ashore—for not a Dane had escaped. But King Arthur had gone his way. Ah, he was a man ! ”

“ Nevertheless,” struck in the wren, “ this is a good

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fellow, too ; and a smith, whose trade is as old as your King Arthur's. We will prosper him in it."

"What will you give him?" asked the titlark.

"He is lying at this moment on the trefoil that commands all metals. Let him look to his gun when he awakes."

"Ah!" said the titlark, "I told you that secret. I was with Teague the Smith when he discovered it. . . . But he discovered it too late ; and, besides, he was a dreamer, and used it only to make crosses and charms and womanish ornaments."

"It's no use to *us*, anyhow," said the practical wren. "So let us give it away. I hate waste."

"I doubt," said the titlark, "it will be much profit to him, wonderful though it is."

"Well," said the wren, "a present's a present. Folks with a living to get must give what they can afford."

* * * *

It is not wise, as a rule, to sleep on the bare ground in December. But Young John awoke warm and jolly as a sandboy. He picked up his gun. It was bent and curiously twisted in the barrel. "Hullo!" said he, and peered closely into the short turf where it had lain. . . .

When he reached home his mother cried out joyfully, seeing his game-bag and how it bulged. She cried out to a different tune when he showed her what it contained—clods and clumps of turf, matted over with a tiny close-growing plant that might have been

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any common moss for aught she knew (or recked) of the difference.

“ But where are all the birds you promised me ? ”

He held out his gun—he had promised no birds, but that mattered nothing. His father took it to the lamp and glanced at it ; put on his horn spectacles slowly, and peered at it. He was silent for a long while. Young John had turned inattentively from his mother’s reproaches, and stood watching him.

The old man swung about at length. “ When did ye contrive this ? ” he asked, rubbing the twist of the gunbarrel with his thumb. “ And the forge not heated all this day ! ”

“ We ’ll heat it to-night after supper,” said Young John.

* * * *

In the Church of Porthennis, up to twenty-five years ago, there stood a screen of ironwork—a marvel of arabesques and intricate traceries, with baskets of flowers, sea-monsters, Cherubim, tying the filigree work and looping it together in knots and centres. One panel had for subject a spider midmost in a web, to visit which smiths came hundreds of miles, from all over the country, and wondered. For it was impossible to guess how iron had ever been beaten to such thinness or drawn so ductile. But unhappily—and priceless as was the secret Young John Cara had chosen to let die with him—the art of it was frail, frail as the titlark’s song. His masterpiece, indeed, had in it the corruption of Celtic art. It

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could not endure its native weather, and rusted away almost to nothingness. When the late Sir Gilbert Aubyn, the famous neo-Gothic architect, was called in (1885) to restore Porthennis Church—or, as we say in Cornwall, to “restroy” it—he swept the remnants away. But the legend survives, *ferro perennius*.

Not Here, O Apollo!

A Christmas Story heard at Midsummer

WE sat and talked in the Vicarage garden overlooking Mount's Bay. The long summer day lingered out its departure, although the full moon was up and already touching with a faint radiance the towers on St. Michael's Mount—the guarded Mount—that rested as though at anchor in the silver-grey offing. The land-breeze had died down with sunset; the Atlantic lay smooth as a lake below us, and melted, league upon league, without horizon into the grey of night. Between the Vicar's fuchsia bushes we looked down on it, we three—the Vicar, the Senior Tutor and I.

I think the twilit hour exactly accorded with our mood, and it did not need the scent of the Vicar's ten-week stocks, wafted across the garden, to touch a nerve of memory. For it was twenty years since we had last sat in this place and talked, and the summer night seemed to be laden with tranquil thoughts, with friendship and old regard. . . .

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Twenty years ago I had been an undergraduate, and had made one of a reading-party under the Senior Tutor, who annually in the Long Vacation brought down two or three fourth-year men to bathe and boat and read Plato with him, for no pay but their friendship: and, generation after generation, we young men had been made welcome in this garden by the Vicar, who happened to be an old member of our College and (as in time I came to see) delighted to renew his youth in ours. There had been daughters, too, in the old days. . . . But they had married, and the Vicarage nest was empty long since.

The Senior Tutor, too, had given up his Fellowship, and retired. But every summer found him back at his old haunts; and still every summer brought a reading-party to the Cove, in conduct now of a brisk Junior Fellow, who had read with me in our time and achieved a 'first.' In short, things at the Cove were pretty much the same after twenty years, barring that a small colony of painters had descended upon it and made it their home. With them the undergraduates had naturally and quickly made friends, and the result was a cricket match—a grand Two-days' Cricket Match. They were all extremely serious about it, and the Oxford party—at their wits' end, no doubt, to make up a team against the Artists—had bethought themselves of me, who dwelt at the other end of the Duchy. They had written—they had even sent a two-page

telegram—to me, who had not handled a bat for more years than I cared to count. It is delicious to be flattered by youth, especially for gifts you never possessed or possess no longer. I yielded and came. The season was Midsummer, or a little after; the weather golden and glorious.

We had drawn stumps after the first day's play, and the evening was to be wound up with a sing-song in the great tent erected—a marvel to the 'Covers,' or native fishermen—on the cricket-field. But I no longer take kindly to such entertainments; and so, after a bathe and a quiet dinner at the inn, it came into my mind to take a stroll up the hill and along the cliffs, and pay an evening call on the old Vicar, wondering if he would remember me.

I found him in his garden. The Senior Tutor was there too—'the grave man, nicknamed Adam'—and the Vicar's wife, seated in a bee-hive straw chair, knitting. So we four talked happily for a while, until she left us on pretence that the dew was falling; and with that, as I have said, a wonderful silence possessed the garden, fragrant with memories and the night-scent of flowers . . .

Then I let fall the word that led to the Vicar's story. In old rambles, after long mornings spent with Plato, my eyes (by mirage, no doubt) had always found something Greek in the curves and colour of this coast; or rather, had felt the want of it. What that something was I could hardly have defined: but the feeling was always with me. It

was as if at each bend of the shore I expected to find a temple with pillars, or a column crowning the next promontory; or, where the coast-track wound down to the little haven, to happen on a votive tablet erected to Poseidon or to 'Helen's brothers, lucent stars'; nay, to meet with Odysseus' fisherman carrying an oar on his shoulder, or even, in an amphitheatre of the cliffs, to surprise Apollo himself and the Nine seated on a green plat whence a waterfall gushed down the coombe to the sandy beach . . . This evening on my way along the cliffs—perhaps because I had spent a day bathing in sunshine in the company of white-flannelled youths—the old sensation had returned to haunt me. I spoke of it.

“‘Not here, O Apollo——’” murmured the Senior Tutor.

“You quote against your own scepticism,” said I. “The coast is right enough; it *is*

“‘Where Helicon breaks down
In cliff to the sea.’”

It was made to invite the authentic gods—only the gods never found it out.”

“Did they not?” asked the Vicar quietly. The question took us a little aback, and after a pause his next words administered another small shock. “One never knows,” he said, “when, or how near, the gods have passed. One may be listening to us in this garden, to-night. . . . As for the Greeks ——”.

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“Yes, yes, we were talking of the Greeks,” the Senior Tutor (a convinced agnostic) put in hastily. “If we leave out Pytheas, no Greeks ever visited Cornwall. They are as mythical hereabouts as”—he hesitated, seeking a comparison—“as the Cornish wreckers; and *they* never existed outside of pious story-books.”

Said the Vicar, rising from his garden-chair, “I accept the omen. Wait a moment, you two.” He left us and went across the dim lawn to the house, whence by-and-by he returned bearing a book under his arm, and in his hand a candle, which he set down unlit upon the wicker table among the coffee-cups.

“I am going,” he said, “to tell you something which, a few years ago, I should have scrupled to tell. With all deference to your opinions, my dear Dick, I doubt if they quite allow you to understand the clergy’s horror of chancing a heresy; indeed, I doubt if either of you quite guess what a bridle a man comes to wear who preaches a hundred sermons or so every year to a rural parish, knowing that nine-tenths of his discourse will assuredly be lost, while at any point in the whole of it he may be fatally misunderstood . . . Yet as a man nears his end he feels an increasing desire to be honest, neither professing more than he knows, nor hiding any small article of knowledge as inexpedient to the Faith. The Faith, he begins to see, can take care of itself: for him, it is important to await

his marching-orders with a clean breast. Eh, Dick ? ”

The Senior Tutor took his pipe from his mouth and nodded slowly.

“ But what is your book ? ” he asked.

“ My Parish Register. Its entries cover the years 1660 and 1827. Luckily I had borrowed it from the vestry box, and it was safe on my shelf in the Vicarage on the Christmas Eve of 1870, the night when the church took fire. That was in my second year as incumbent, and before ever you knew these parts.”

“ By six months,” said the Senior Tutor. “ I first visited the Cove in July, 1871, and you were then beginning to clear the ruins. All the village talk still ran on the fire, with speculations on the cause of it.”

“ The cause,” said the Vicar, “ will never be known. I may say that pretty confidently, having spent more time in guessing than will ever be spent by another man . . . But since you never saw the old church as it stood, you never saw the Heathen Lovers in the south aisle.”

“ Who were they ? ”

“ They were a group of statuary, and a very strange one ; executed, as I first believed, in some kind of wax—but, pushing my researches (for the thing interested me) I found the material to be a white soapstone that crops out here and there in the crevices of our serpentine. Indeed, I know to a

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foot the spot from which the sculptor took it, close on two hundred years ago."

"It was of no great age, then?"

"No: and yet it bore all the marks of an immense age. For, to begin with, it had stood five-and-twenty years in this very garden, exposed to all weathers, and the steatite (as they call it) is of all substances the most friable—is, in fact, the stuff used by tailors under the name of French chalk. Again, when, in 1719, my predecessor, old Vicar Hichens, removed it to the church and set it in the south aisle—or, at any rate, when he died and ceased to protect it—the young men of the parish took to using it for a hatstand, and also to carving their own and their sweethearts' names upon it during sermon-time. The figures of the sculpture were two; a youth and a maid, recumbent, and naked but for a web or drapery flung across their middles; and they lay on a roughly carved rock, over which the girl's locks as well as the drapery were made to hang limp, as though dripping with water. . . . One thing more I must tell you, risking derision; that to my ignorance the sculpture proclaimed its age less by these signs of weather and rough usage than by the simplicity of its design, its proportions, the chastity (there's no other word) of the two figures. They were classical, my dear Dick—what was left of them; Greek, and of the best period."

The Senior Tutor lit a fresh pipe, and by the flare of the match I saw his eyes twinkling.

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“Praxiteles,” he jerked out, between the puffs, “and in the age of Kneller! But proceed, my friend.”

“And do you wait, my scoffer!” The Vicar borrowed the box of matches, lit the candle—which held a steady flame in the still evening air—opened the book, and laid it on his knee while he adjusted his spectacles. “The story is here, entered on a separate leaf of the Register and signed by Vicar Hichen’s own hand. With your leave—for it is brief—I am going to read it through to you. The entry is headed:—

‘Concerning a group of Statuary now in the S. aisle of Lezardew Pish Church: set there by me in witness of God’s Providence in operation, as of the corruption of man’s heart, and for a warning to sinners to amend their ways.

‘In the year 1694, being the first of my vicariate, there lived in this Parish as hind to the farmer of Vellancoose a young man exceeding comely and tall of stature, of whom (when I came to ask) the people could tell me only that his name was Luke, and that as a child he had been cast ashore from a foreign ship; they said, a Portugal ship. [But the Portugals have swart complexions and are less than ordinary tall, whereas this youth was light-coloured and only brown by sunburn.] Nor could he tell me anything when I questioned him

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concerning his haveage ;* which I did upon report that he was courting my housemaiden Grace Pascoe, an honest good girl, whom I was loth to see waste herself upon an unworthy husband. Upon inquiry I could not discover this Luke to be any way unworthy, saving that he was a nameless man and a foreigner and a backward church-goer. He told me with much simplicity that he could not remember to have had any parents ; that Farmer Lowry had brought him up from the time he was shipwrecked and ever treated him kindly ; and that, as for church-going, he had thought little about it, but would amend in this matter if it would give me pleasure. Which I thought a strange answer. When I went on to hint at his inclination for Grace Pascoe, he confused me by asking, with a look very straight and good-natured, if the girl had ever spoken to me on the matter ; to which I was forced to answer that she had not. So he smiled, and I could not further press him.

‘ Yet in my mind they would have made a good match ; for the girl too was passing well-featured, and this Luke had notable gifts. He could read and write. The farmer spoke well of him, saying, “ He has rewarded me many times over. Since his coming, thanks to the Lord, my farm prospers : and in particular he has a wonderful way with the beasts. Cattle or sheep, fowls, dogs, the wild

* Lineage, descent.

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things even, come to him almost without a call." He had also (the farmer told me) a wonderful knack of taking clay or mud and moulding it with his hands to the likeness of living creatures, of all sorts and sizes. In the kitchen by the great fire he would work at these images by hours together, to the marvel of everyone: but when the image was made, after a little while he always destroyed it; nor was it ever begged by anyone for a gift, there being a belief that, being fashioned by more than a man's skill, such things could only bring ill-luck to the possessors of them.

'For months then I heard no more of Grace Pascoe's lover: nor (though he now came every Sunday to church) did I ever see looks pass between the Vicarage pew (where she sat) and the Vellancoose pew (where he). But at the end of the year she came to me and told me she had given her word to a young farmer of Goldsithney, John Magor by name. In a worldly way this was a far better match for her than to take a nameless and landless man. Nor knew I anything against John Magor beyond some stray wildness natural to youth. He came of clean blood. He was handsome, almost, as the other; tall, broad of chest, a prize-winner at wrestling-matches; and of an age when a good wife is usually a man's salvation.

'I called their banns, and in due time married them. On the wedding-day, after the ceremony,

I returned from church to find the young man Luke awaiting me by my house-door; who very civilly desired me to walk over to Vellancoose with him, which I did. There, taking me aside to an unused linhay, he showed me the sculpture, telling me (who could not conceal my admiration) that he had meant it for John and Grace Magor (as she now was) for a wedding-gift, but that the young woman had cried out against it as immodest and, besides, unlucky. On the first count I could understand her rejecting such a gift; for the folk of these parts know nothing of statuary and count all nakedness immodest. Indeed I wondered that the bridegroom had not taken Luke's freedom in ill part, and I said so: to which he answered, smiling, that no man ever quarrelled with him or could quarrel. "And now, sir," he went on, "my apprenticeship is up, and I am going on a long journey. Since you find my group pleasing I would beg you to accept it, or—if you had liefer—to keep it for me until I come again, as some day I shall." "I do not wonder," said I, "at your wish to leave Lezardew Parish for the world where, as I augur, great fortune awaits you." He smiled again at this and said that, touching his future, he had neither any hope nor any fear: and again he pressed me to accept the statuary. For a time I demurred, and in the end made it a condition that he altered the faces somewhat, concealing the likeness to John and Grace Magor:

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and to this he consented. "Yet," said he, "it will be the truer likeness when the time comes."

' He was gone on the morrow by daybreak, and late that afternoon the farmer brought me the statuary in his hay-wagon. I had it set in the garden by the great filberd-tree, and there it has stood for near five-and-twenty years. (I ought to say that he had kept his promise of altering the faces, and thereby to my thinking had defaced their beauty: but beneath this defacement I still traced their first likeness.)

' Now to speak of the originals. My way lying seldom by Goldsithney, I saw little of John and Grace Magor during the next few years, and nothing at all of them after they had left Goldsithney (their fortunes not prospering) and rented a smaller farm on the coast southward, below Rosudgeon: but what news came to me was ever of the same tenour. Their marriage had brought neither children nor other blessings. There were frequent quarrels, and the man had yielded to drinking; the woman, too, it was reported. She, that had been so trim a serving-maid, was become a slut, with a foul tongue. They were cruelly poor with it all; for money does not always stick to unclean hands. I write all this to my reproach as well as to theirs, for albeit they dwelt in another parish it had been my Christian duty to seek them out. I did not, and I was greatly to blame.

' To pass over many years and come to the 2nd

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of December last (1718). That night, about 11 o'clock, I sat in my library reading. It was blowing hard without, the wind W.N.W.; but I had forgotten the gale in my book, when a sound, as it were a distant outcry of many voices, fetched me to unbar the shutters and open the window to listen. The sound, whatever it was, had died away: I heard but the wind roaring and the surf on the beaches along the Bay: and I was closing the window again when, close at hand, a man's voice called to me to open the front door. I went out to the hall, where a lamp stood, and opened to him. The light showed me the young man Luke, on whom I had not set eyes for these four-and-twenty years: nor, amazed and perturbed as I was, did it occur to me as marvellous that he had not aged a day. "There is a wreck," said he, "in the Porth below here; and you, sir, are concerned in it. Will you fetch a lantern and come with me?" He put this as a question, but in his tone was a command; and when I brought the lantern he took it from me and led the way. We struck across the Home Parc southward, thence across Gew Down and the Leazes, and I knew that he was making for the track which leads down to the sea by Prah Sands. At the entry of the track he took off his coat and wrapped the lantern in it, though just there its light would have been most useful, or so I thought. But he led the way easily, and I followed with scarce a stumble. "We shall

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not need it," he said ; " for see, there they are ! " pointing to a small light that moved on the sands below us. " But who are they ? " I asked. He strode down ahead of me, making swiftly for the light, and coming upon them in the noise of the gale we surprised a man and a woman, who at first cowered before us and then would have cast down their light and run. But my companion, unwrapping the lantern, held it high and so that the light shone on their faces. They were John Magor and his wife Grace.

' Then I, remembering what cry of shipwrecked souls had reached to my library in the Vicarage, and well guessing what work these wretches had been at, lifted my voice to accuse them. But the young man Luke stepped between us, and said he to them gently, " Come, and I will show what you seek." He went before us for maybe two hundred yards to the northern end of the beach, they behind him quaking, and I shepherding them in my righteous wrath. " Behold you," said he, and again lifted the lantern over a rock dark with seaweed (and yet the weed shone in the light)— " Behold you, what you have wrecked."

' On their backs along the flat of the rock lay two naked bodies, of a youth and a maid, half-clasped one to another. He handed me the lantern for a better look, and in the rays of it the two wretches peered forward as if drawn against their will. I cannot well say if they or I first

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perceived the miracle; that these corpses, as they lay in the posture, so bore the very likeness of the two lovers on my sculptured slab. But I remember that, as John and Grace Magor screamed back and clung to me, and as by the commotion of them clutching at my knees the lantern fell and was extinguished, I heard the young man Luke say, "Yourselves, yourselves!"

'I called to him to pick up the lantern; but he did not answer, and the two clinging wretches encumbered me. After a long while the clouds broke and the moon shone through them; and where he had stood there was no one. Also the slab of rock was dark, and the two drowned corpses had vanished with him. I pointed to it; but there was no tinder-box at hand to light the lantern again, and in the bitter weather until the dawn the two clung about me, confessing and rehearsing their sins.

'I have great hopes that they are brought to a better way of life; and because (repent they never so much) no one is any longer likely to recognise in these penitents the originals upon whom it was moulded these many years ago, I am determined to move the statuary to a place in the S. aisle of our parish church, as a memorial, the moral whereof I have leave of John and Grace Magor to declare to all the parish. I choose to defer making it public, in tenderness, while they live: for all things point as yet to the permanent saving

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of their souls. But, as in the course of nature I shall predecease them, I set the record here in the Parish Register, as its best place.

‘*Signed* MALACHI HICHENS, B.D.

‘21st Jan., 1719.’

“And is that all?” I asked.

“Yes and no,” said the Vicar, closing the book. “It is all that Mr. Hichens has left to help us: and you may or may not connect with it what I am going to relate of my own experience . . . The old church, as you know, was destroyed by fire in the morning hours of Christmas Day, 1870. Throughout Christmas Eve and for a great part of the night it had been snowing, but the day broke brilliantly, on a sky without wind or cloud; and never have my eyes seen anything so terribly beautiful—ay, so sublime—as the sight which met them at the lych-gate. The old spire—which served as a sea-mark for the fishermen, and was kept regularly white-washed that it might be the more conspicuous—glittered in the morning sunshine from base to summit, as though matching its whiteness against that of the snow-laden elms: and in this frame of pure silverwork, burning without noise and with scarcely any smoke—this by reason of the excessive dryness of the woodwork—the church stood one glowing vault of fire. There was indeed so little smoke that at the first alarm, looking from my

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bedroom window, I had been incredulous ; and still I wondered rather than believed, staring into this furnace wherein every pillar, nook, seat or text on the wall was distinctly visible, the south windows being burnt out and the great door thrown open and on fire.

“ There was no entrance possible here, or indeed anywhere : but, being half-distraught, I ran around to the small door of the north aisle. This too was on fire—or, rather, was already consumed ; and you will say that I must have been wholly distraught when I tell you what I saw, looking in through the aperture through which it would have been death to pass. I saw *him*.”

“ You saw the young man Luke ? ” I asked, as he paused, inviting a word.

“ He was standing by the stone figures within the porch . . . And they crumbled—crumbled before my eyes in the awful heat. But he stood scatheless. He was young and comely ; the hair of his head was not singed. He was as one of the three that walked in the midst of Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace . . . When the stone slab was crumbled to a handful of dust, he moved up the aisle and was gone . . . That is all : but, as you accept your friend for a truthful man, explain, O sceptic ! ”

—And again there fell a silence in the garden.

Fiat Justitia Ruat Solum

IN the days of my childhood, and up to the year 1886, the Justices of the Peace for the Gantick Division of the Hundred of Powder, in the county of Cornwall, held their Petty Sessions at Scawns, a bleak, four-square building set on the knap of a windy hill, close beside the high road that leads up from the sea to the market town of Tregarrick. The house, when the county in Quarter Sessions purchased it to convert it into a police station and petty sessional court, had been derelict for twenty years—that is to say, ever since the winter of 1827, when Squire Nicholas, the last owner to reside in it (himself an ornament in his time of the Gantick Bench), broke his neck in the hunting field. With his death, the property passed to some distant cousin in the North, who seldom visited Cornwall. This cousin leased the Scawns acres to a farmer alongside of whose fields they marched, and the farmer, having no use for the mansion, gladly sub-let it. The county authorities, having acquired the lease, did indeed make certain structural adaptations, providing tolerable quarters for the

local constabulary, with a lock-up in the cellarage (which was commodious), but for the rest did little to arrest the general decay of the building. In particular, the disrepair of the old dining-room, where the magistrates now held Session, had become a public scandal. The old wall-paper drooped in tatters, the ceiling showed patches where the plaster had broken from the battens, rats had eaten holes in the green baize table-cloth, and the whole place smelt of dry-rot. From the wall behind the magistrates' table, in the place where nations more superstitious than ours suspend a crucifix, an atrocious portrait of the late Squire Nicholas surveyed the desolated scene of his former carousals. An inscription at the base of the frame commemorated him as one who had consistently "Done Right to all manner of People after the Laws and Usages of the Realm, without Fear or Favour, Affection or Ill-will."

Beneath this portrait, on the second Wednesday in July, 1886, were gathered no fewer than six Justices of the Peace, a number the more astonishing because Petty Sessions chanced to clash with the annual meeting of the Royal Cornwall Agricultural Society, held that year at the neighbouring market town of Tregarrick. Now, the reason of this full bench was at once simple and absurd, and had caused merriment not unmingled with testiness in the magistrates' private room. Each Justice, counting on his neighbour's delinquency, had separately resolved to

pay a sacrifice to public duty, and to drop in to dispose of the business of Sessions before proceeding to the Show. The charge-sheet, be it noted, was abnormally light: it comprised one single indictment.

“ Good Lord ! ” growled Admiral Trist, Chairman of the Bench, Master of the famous Gantick Harriers. “ Six of us to hear a case of sleeping out ! ”

“ Who ’s the defcendant ? ” asked Sir Felix Felix-Williams. “ ‘ Thomas Edwards ’—Don’t know the name in these parts.”

“ I doubt if he knows it himself, Sir Felix,” answered Mr. Batty, the Justices’ Clerk. “ The Inspector tells me it ’s a tramping fellow the police picked up two nights ago. He has been in lock-up ever since.”

“ Then why the devil couldn’t they have sent round and fished up one of us—or a couple—to deal with the case out of hand ? ”

“ Damned shame, the way the police nurse this business ! ” murmured Lord Rattley, our somewhat disreputable local peer. “ They ’re wanted at Tregarrick to-day, and, what ’s more, they want the fun of the Show. So they take excellent care to keep the charge-list light. But since Petty Sessions must be held, whether or no, they pounce on some poor devil of a tramp to put a face on the business.”

“ H’m, h’m.” The Admiral, friend of law and order, dreaded Lord Rattley’s tongue, which was

irresponsible and incisive. "Well, if this is our only business, gentlemen——"

"There *is* another case, sir," put in Mr. Batty. "Wife—Trudgian by name—wants separation order. Application reached me too late to be included in the list."

"Trudgian?" queried Parson Voisey. "Not Selina Magor, I hope, that married young Trudgian a year or so back? Husband a clay-labourer, living somewhere outside Tregarrick."

"That's the woman. Young married couple—first quarrel. The wife, on her own admission, had used her tongue pretty sharply, and, I don't doubt, drove the man off to the public house, where he sat until sulky-drunk. A talking-to by the Chairman, if I might suggest——"

"Yes, yes," agreed Parson Voisey. "And I'll have a word with Selina afterwards. She used to attend my Young Women's Class—one of my most satisfactory girls."

"We'll see—we'll see," said the Admiral. "Are we ready, gentlemen?"

He led the way into Court, where all rose in sign of respect—Mr. Batty's confidential clerk, the Inspector, a solitary constable, a tattered old man in the constable's charge, and the two Trudgians. These last occupied extreme ends of the same form; the husband sullen, with set jaw and eyes obstinately fixed on his boots, the young wife flushed of face and tearful, stealing from time to time a defiant glance at her spouse.

In face of this scanty audience the six Justices solemnly took their seats.

“ Thomas Edwards ! ” called the Clerk.

The tattered old man cringed up to the table, with an embarrassed smile, which yet had a touch of impudence about the corners of the mouth.

“ Thomas Edwards, you stand charged for that on a certain date, to wit, July 6th, you, not having any visible means of subsistence, and not giving a good account of yourself, were found lodging in a certain outhouse known as Lobb’s Barn, in the Parish of Gantick, contrary, etc. Do you plead Guilty or Not Guilty ? ”

“ Guilty, y’r Worships.”

The constable, on a nod from the Inspector, cleared his throat, and stated the charge: “ On the 6th instant, y’r Worships, at 10.45 in the evening, being on duty in the neighbourhood of Lobb’s Barn,” etc. Defendant, on being arrested, had used the filthiest language, and had for some time stoutly resisted being marched off to the lock-up.

“ That will do,” the Chairman interrupted. “ You, Edwards—if that’s your real name—— ”

“ It ’ll do for this job,” put in the prisoner.

“ Very well. Have you anything to say ? ”

The prisoner ran his eye along the array of Justices.

“ Seems a lot o’ dogs for one small bone ! ”

The Admiral stiffened with wrath, and the crimson of his face deepened as Lord Rattley threw himself back in his chair, laughing.

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“Forty shillings, or a month!”

“Oh, come—I say!” Lord Rattley murmured.

The Admiral, glancing to right and left, saw too that three or four of his colleagues were lifting their eyebrows in polite protest.

“I—I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for not consulting you! Correct me, if you will. I would point out, however, that in addition to the offence with which he is charged, this fellow was guilty of violent and disgusting language, and, further, of resisting the police.”

But his colleagues made no further protest, and Thomas Edwards, having but two coppers to his name, was conducted below to the cellarage, there to await transference to the County Jail.

“Selina Trudgian!”

The Admiral, viewing the young couple as they stood sheepishly before him, commanded Selina to state her complaint as briefly as possible, avoiding tears.

But this was beyond her.

“He came home drunk, your Worship,” she sobbed, twisting her handkerchief.

“I didn’,” corrected her husband.

“He came home d-drunk, your Worship . . . he c-came home d-drunk——”

“Now hearken to me, you two!”

The Admiral, fixing a severe eye on them, started to read them a lesson on married life, with its daily discipline, its constant obligation of mutual

forbearance. For a confirmed bachelor, he did it remarkably well ; but it must be remembered that this was by no means his first essay in lecturing discordant spouses from the Bench. Lord Rattley, whose own matrimonial ventures had been (like Mr. Weller's researches in London) extensive and peculiar, leaned back and followed the discourse with appreciation, his elbows resting on the arms of his chair, his finger-tips delicately pressed together, his gaze pensively tracking the motions of a bumble-bee that had strayed in at an open window and was battering its head against the dusty pane of a closed one.

Just then, the Admiral, warming to his theme, pushed back his chair a few inches. . . .

For some days previously a stream of traction-engines had passed along the high road, dragging timber-wagons, tent-wagons, machinery, exhibits of all kinds, towards the Tregarrick Show. This heavy traffic (it was afterwards surmised) had helped what Wordsworth calls "the unimaginable touch of Time," shaking the dry-rotted joists of Scawns House, and preparing the catastrophe.

The Admiral was a heavy-weight. He rode, in those days, at close upon seventeen stone. As he thrust back his chair, there came from the floor beneath—from the wall immediately behind him—an ominous, rending sound. The hind legs of his chair sank slowly, the seat of justice tilted farther and farther ; as he clutched wildly at the table, the table

began to slide upon him, and with an uproar of cracking timber, table, chairs, magistrates, clerks, together, in one burial blent, were shot downwards into the cellarage.

The Inspector—a tall man—staggering to his feet as the table slid from him into the chasm, leapt and clutched a crazy chandelier that depended above him. His weight tore it bodily from the ceiling, with a torrential downrush of dust and plaster, sweeping him over the edge of the gulf and overwhelming the Trudgians, husband and wife, on the brink of it.

At this moment the constable, fresh from locking up Thomas Edwards below, returned, put his head in at the door, gasped at sight of a devastation which had swallowed up every human being, and with great presence of mind, ran as hard as he could pelt for the hamlet of High Lanes, half a mile away, to summon help.

Now the Inspector, as it happened, was unhurt. Picking himself up, digging his heels into the moraine of plaster, and brushing the grit from his eyes, he had the pleasure of recognising Lord Rattley, the Parson, Mr. Humphry Felix-Williams (son of Sir Felix), and Mr. Batty, as they scrambled forth successively, black with dust but unhurt, save that the Parson had received a slight scalp-wound. Then Mr. Humphry caught sight of a leg clothed in paternal shepherd's-plaid, and tugged at it until Sir Felix was restored, choking, to the light of day—or rather, to the Cimmerian gloom of the cellarage,

in which an unexpected figure now confronted them.

It was the prisoner, Thomas Edwards. A collapsing beam had torn away some bricks from the wall of his cell, and he came wriggling through the aperture, using the most dreadful oaths.

“Stir yourselves — Oh, —, —, stir yourselves! Standin’ there like a — lot of stuck pigs! Get out the Admiral! The Admiral, I tell you! . . . Hark to the poor old devil, dammin’ away down ther, wi’ two hundredweight o’ table pressin’ against his belly!”

Mr. Edwards, in fact, used an even more vulgar word. But he was not stopping to weigh words. Magistrates, Inspector, Clerk—he took charge of them all on the spot—a master of men. The Admiral, in the unfathomed dark of the cellar, was indeed uttering language to make your hair creep.

“Oh, cuss away, y’ old varmint!” sang down Mr. Edwards cheerfully. “The louder you cuss, the better hearin’; means ye have air to breathe an’ nothin’ broke internal. . . . Eh? Oh, I knows th’ old warrior! Opened a gate for en once when he was out hare-huntin’, up St. Germans way—I likes a bit o’ sport, I do, when I happens on it. Lord love ye, the way he damned my eyes for bein’ slow about it! . . . Aye, aye, Admiral! Cuss away, cuss away—proper quarter-deck you ’re givin’ us! But we ’re gettin’ to you fast as we can. . . . England can’t

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spare the likes o' you—an' she won't, not if we can help it!"

The man worked like a demon. What is more, he was making the others work, flailing them all—peer and baronet and parson—with slave-driver's oaths, while they tugged to loosen the timbers under which the magistrates' table lay wedged.

"Lift, I tell ye! Lift! . . . What the ——'s wrong with that end o' the beam? Stuck, is it? Jammed? Jammed your grandmothers! Nobbut a few pounds o' loose lime an' plaster beddin' it. Get down on your knees an' clear it. . . . That's better! And now pull! PULL, I say! Oh, not *that* way, you rabbits!—here, let me show you!"

By efforts Herculean, first digging the rubbish clear with clawed hands, then straining and heaving till their loins had almost cracked, they levered up the table at length, and released not only the Admiral, but the two remaining magistrates, whom they found pinned under its weight, one unharmed, but in a swoon, the other moaning feebly with the pain of two broken ribs.

"Whew! What the devil of a smell of brandy!" observed Lord Rattley, mopping his brow in the intervals of helping to hoist the rescued ones up the moraine. At the top of it, the Inspector, lifting his head above the broken flooring to shout for help, broke into furious profanity; for there, in the empty court-room stood young Trudgian and his wife, covered, indeed, with white dust, but blissfully

wrapt in their own marvellous escape ; and young Trudgian for the moment was wholly preoccupied in probing with two fingers for a piece of plaster which had somehow found its way down his Selina's back, between the nape of the neck and the bodice.

“ Drop it, you fool, and lend a hand ! ” objurgated the Inspector ; whereupon Mrs. Trudgian turned about, bridling.

“ You leave my Tom alone, please ! A man's first call is on his wedded wife, I reckon.”

The rescued magistrates were lifted out, carried forth into fresh air, and laid on the turf by the wayside to recover somewhat, while the rescuers again wiped perspiring brows.

“ A thimbleful o' brandy might do the Admiral good,” suggested the prisoner.

“ Brandy ? ” cried Lord Rattley. “ The air reeks of brandy ! Where the —— ? ”

“ The basement's swimmin' with it, m' lord.” The fellow touched his hat. “ Two casks stove by the edge o' the table. I felt around the staves, an' counted six others, hale an' tight. Thinks I, 'tis what their Worships will have been keepin' for private use, between whiles. Or elst —— ”

“ Or else ? ”

“ Or else maybe we've tapped a private cellar.”

Lord Rattley slapped his thigh.

“ A *cache*, by Jove ! Old Squire Nicholas—I remember, as a boy, hearing it whispered he was hand-in-glove with the smugglers.”

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The prisoner touched his hat humbly.

“ This bein’ a magistrates’ matter, m’ lord, an’ me not wishin’ to interfere — ”

“ Quite so.” Lord Rattley felt in his pockets. “ You have done us a considerable service, my man, and—er—that bein’ so — ”

“ Forty shillin’ it was. *He’s* cheap at it ”—with a nod towards the Admiral. “ A real true-blue old English gentleman! You can always tell by their conversations.”

“ The fine shall be paid.”

“ I counted six casks, m’ lord, so well as I could by the feel — ”

“ Yes, yes! And here’s a couple of sovereigns for yourself—all I happen to have in my pocket — ”

Lord Rattley bustled off to the house for brandy.

“ England’s old England, hows’ever you strike it!” chirrupped the prisoner gleefully, and touched his forehead again. “ See you at the Show, m’ lord, maybe? Will drink your lordship’s health there, anyway.”

He skipped away up the road towards Tregarrick. In the opposite direction young Mr. and Mrs. Trudgian could be seen just passing out of sight, he supporting her with his arm, pausing every now and then, bending over her uxoriously.

The Honour of the Ship

I

“ 'ERBERT 'ENERY BATES ! ”

“ Wot cheer ! ”

It was the morning of Speech-day on board the Industrial Training Ship *Egeria*—July the 31st, to be precise. At 3 p.m. Sir Felix Felix-Williams, Baronet, would arrive to distribute the prizes. He would be attended by a crowd of ladies and gentlemen ; and the speeches, delivered beneath an awning on the upper deck, would be fully reported next day in the local newspapers. The weather promised to be propitious.

Just now (11 a.m.) some half a dozen of the elder boys, attired in dirty white dungaree and bare-footed, were engaged in swabbing out what, in her sea-going days, had been the *Egeria's* ward-room, making ready to set out tables for an afternoon tea to follow the ceremony. They were nominally under supervision of the ship's Schoolmaster, who, however, had gone off to unpack a hamper of flowers—the gift of an enthusiastic subscriber.

“ Step this way, 'Erbert 'Enery Bates.”

“ You go to hell, Link Andrew ! ” But the boy stopped his work and faced about, nevertheless.

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“ See this flag ? ” Link Andrew dived his long arms into a pile of bunting that lay ready for decorating the tea-room. “ Wot is it ? ”

“ Union Jack, o’ course, you silly rotter ! ”

“ Oh, you good, good boy ! . . . Yes, dear lads,” went on Link Andrew, in a mimicking voice, “ it is indeed the meet-your-flag of our ’oly Motherland, and ’Erbert ’Energ Bates, our Good Conduct Medallist, will now oblige by going down on his knees and kissing it. Else I ’ll put an eye on him ! ”

Master Bates—“ Good Conduct Bates ”—stepped forward, with his fists up. He was something of a sneak and a sucker-up, yet by no means a coward. He advanced bravely enough, although he knew that Link Andrew—the best boxer in the ship—was provoking him of set purpose.

The rest of the boys liked Link and disliked Bates ; yet their sense of fair play told them that Link was putting himself in the wrong ; and yet again, despite their natural eagerness to see a fight, they wanted to save Link from what could but end in folly. He was playing for a fall.

“ Here comes Schoolmaster ! ” shouted one, at a venture.

At that moment, indeed, the Schoolmaster appeared in the doorway.

“ What ’s this noise about ? ” he demanded. “ You, Link Andrew ! I thought your interest was to avoid trouble for twenty-four hours.”

THE HONOUR OF THE SHIP

II

By the Industrial Schools Act of 1866, 29 & 30 Vict. c. 118, it is ordained that any youngster apparently under the age of fourteen found begging, or wandering destitute, or consorting with thieves, or obstinately playing truant from school, or guilty of being neglected by his parents, or of defying his parents, or of having a parent who has incurred a sentence of penal servitude—may by any two justices be committed to a certified Industrial School, there to be detained until he reaches the age of sixteen, or for a shorter term if the justices shall so direct. Such an Industrial School was the ex-battleship *Egeria*.

She had carried seventy-four guns in her time ; and though gunless now and jury-masted, was redolent still of the Nelson period from her white-and-gold figure-head to the beautiful stern galleries which Commander Headworthy had adorned with window-boxes of Henry Jacoby geraniums. The Committee in the first flush of funds had spared no pains to reproduce the right atmosphere, and in that atmosphere Commander Headworthy laudably endeavoured to train up his crew of graceless urchins, and to pass them out at sixteen, preferably into the Navy or the Merchant Service, but at any rate as decent members of society. Nor were the boys' nautical experiences entirely stationary, since a wealthy sympathiser

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(lately deceased) had bequeathed his fine brigantine yacht to serve the ship as a tender and take a few score of the elder or more privileged lads on an annual summer cruise, that they might learn something of practical seamanship.

The yacht—by name the *Swallow*—an old but shapely craft of some 200 tons, lay just now a short cable's length from the parent ship, with sails bent and all ready for sea ; for by custom the annual cruise started on the day next after the prize-giving.

The question was : Would Link Andrew be allowed to go ?

He would have sold his soul to go. He even meditated ways of suicide if the Commander, for a punishment, should veto his going. During the last three weeks he had run up an appalling tally of black marks, and yet it was generally agreed that the Commander would relent if Link would only keep his temper and behave with common prudence for another twenty-four hours.

But this was just what Link seemed wholly unable to do. He hated the ship, the officers, everything in life ; and the hot July weather worked upon this hatred until it became a possessing fury.

III

AT dinner-time he very nearly wrecked his chance for good and all.

Shortly before a noon a mild-looking gentleman, noticeable for his childlike manner and a pair of large round spectacles, came alongside the *Egeria* in a shore-boat. It appeared that he bore a visitor's ticket for the afternoon function and had arrived thus early by invitation of one of the Committee to take a good look over the ship before the proceedings began. Apparently, too, the Committee-man had sent Commander Headworthy no warning—to judge from that officer's wrathful face and the curt tone in which he invited his visitor to luncheon.

The mild-looking gentleman—who gave his name as Harris—declined courteously, averring that he had brought a sandwich with him. The Commander thereupon turned him over to the Second Officer under whose somewhat impatient escort Mr. Harris made a thorough tour of the ship, peering into everything and asking a number of questions. The boys—whom he amused by opening a large white umbrella, green-lined, to shield him from the noonday sun on the upper deck—promptly christened him “Moonface.”

This Mr. Harris, still in charge of the Second Officer, happened along the gun-deck as they finished singing “*Be present at our table, Lord,*” and were sitting

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down to dinner. From their places they marched up one by one, each with his dinner-basin, to have it filled at the head of the table.

“Hullo, you, Andrew!” called out the Second Officer. “Fetch that basin along here. I want the gentleman to have a look at the ship’s food.”

Link came forward, stretched out a long arm, and thrust the basin under the visitor’s nose.

“Perhaps,” said he, “the toff would like a sniff at the same time? There’s Sweet Williams for a summer’s day!”

“There, that’ll do, Link! Go to your place, my lad, and don’t be insolent,” said the Second Officer hastily, with a nervous glance at Mr. Harris.

But Mr. Harris merely blinked behind his glasses.

“Yes, yes, to be sure,” he agreed. “Pork *is* tricky diet in such weather as we’re having!”

IV

HALF an hour later, having detached himself gently from his escort, Mr. Harris wandered back to the upper deck. It appeared to be deserted; and Mr. Harris, unfolding his umbrella against the sun's rays, wandered at will.

In the waist of the vessel, on the port side, he came upon a dais and a baize-covered table with an awning rigged over them; and upon the ship's Schoolmaster, who was busily engaged in arranging the prize-books.

"Good afternoon, sir!" The Schoolmaster, affecting to be busy and polite at the same time, picked out a book and held it up to view. "*Smiles on Self Help*," he announced.

"You don't say so!" answered Mr. Harris, halting. "But—I mean—they can't very well, can they?"

"*Eric, or Little by Little*, by the late Archdeacon Farrar. My choice, sir; some light, you see, and others solid, but all *pure* literature. . . . They value it, too, in after life. Ah, sir, they've a lot of good in 'em! There's many worse characters than my boys walking the world."

Mild Mr. Harris removed his glasses.

"Are you talking like that from force of habit?" he asked. "If so, I shall not be so much annoyed."

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The Schoolmaster was fairly taken aback. He stared for a moment and shifted his helm, so to speak, with a grin of intelligence and a short laugh.

“ Not quite so bad as that, sir,” he remonstrated. “ It ’s—it ’s—well, you may call it the *atmosphere*. On Speech-day the ship fairly reeks of it.”

“ And, like the pork, eh! it ’s just a little bit ‘ off ’ ? ” suggested the visitor, returning his smile. “ By the way, I want to ask you a question or two about a boy. His name is Link—Something-or-other.”

“ Link Andrew ? ” The Schoolmaster gave him a quick look. “ You don’t tell me he ’s in trouble again ? Not been annoying you, sir, I hope ? ”

“ On the contrary, I ’ve take a fancy to the lad ; and, by the way again, Link can’t be his real name ? ”

“ Short for Abraham Lincoln, as baptised,” explained the Schoolmaster. “ At least, that ’s one theory. According to another it ’s short for ‘ Missing Link.’ Not that the boy ’s bad-looking ; but did you happen to notice the length of his arms—like a gorilla’s ? ”

“ I could not avoid it.”

Mr. Harris related the incident.

“ It was exceedingly kind of you, sir, to pass over his conduct so lightly. The fact is, if Link Andrew had been reported again he ’d have lost his hammock in the yacht. We all want him to go : some to get rid of him for a spell, and others because we can’t

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help liking the boy. He hates us back, you bet, and has hated us from the moment he set foot on deck, five years ago. . . . Whitechapel-reared, I believe. . . . Yet fond of the sea in his way. Once shipped on the yacht he 'll behave like an angel. But here on board he 's like a young beast in a trap."

V

MR. HARRIS mooned away to the poop-deck, from the rail of which he watched the guests arriving. As Sir Felix's gig was descried putting off from the shore, the boys swarmed up the ratlines and out on the yards, where they dressed ship very prettily. A brass band in the waist hailed his approach with the strains of "Rule, Britannia!" At the head of the accommodation-ladder a guard of honour welcomed him with a hastily rehearsed "Present Arms!" and the boys aloft accompanied it with three shrill British cheers. The dear old gentleman gazed up and around him, and positively beamed.

By this time a crowd of boats had put off, and soon the guests came pouring up the ladder in a steady stream. There were ladies in picture hats. A reporter stood by the gangway taking notes of their costumes. They fell to uttering the prettiest exclamations upon the shipshapeness of everything on board. Mr. Harris saw the First Officer inviting numbers of them to lean over the bulwarks and observe a scar the old ship had received—or so he alleged—at Trafalgar. "How interesting!" they cried.

Well, to be sure, it was interesting. Nelson himself—there was good authority for this at any rate—had once stood on the *Egeria's* poop; had leaned, perhaps, against the very rail on which Mr. Harris's

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hand rested. . . . And the function went off very well. The boys clambered down upon deck again, the band played—

“ ’Tis a Fine Old English Gentleman,”

and all gathered about the awning. Sir Felix, nobly expansive in a buff waistcoat, cleared his throat and spoke of the Empire in a way calculated to bring tears to the eyes. The prize-giving followed.

As it proceeded Mr. Harris stole down the poop-ladder and edged his way around the back of the crowd to the waist of the ship, where the boys were drawn up with a few officers interspersed to keep discipline. He arrived there just as Link Andrew returned from the dais with two books—the boxing and gymnasium prize. The boy was foaming at the mouth.

“ See, here—*Fights for the Flag!* And, on top of it, *Deeds What Won the Silly Empire!* And the old blighter ’oped that I ’d be a good boy, and grow up, and win some more. For the likes of *him*, he meant—Yuss, I *don’t* think! . . . Oh, hold my little hand and check the tearful flow, for I ’m to be a ship’s boy at ’arf-a-crown a month, and go Empire buildin’!”

“ There!” said Mr. Harris, indicating a coil of rope. “ Sit down and have it out.”

VI

SOME five or six years later, Mr. Harris—who resides in a small West-country town, the name of which does not concern us—was seated in his library reading, when his parlourmaid brought him a card—“ Mr. Wilkins, I.T.S. *Egeria*.”

“ I scarcely hoped that you would remember me, sir,” began the Schoolmaster, on being introduced. “ But, happening to pass through—on a holiday trip, a walking tour—I ventured to call and ask news of Link Andrew. You may remember our having a conversation about him once on board the *Egeria* ? ”

“ I remember it perfectly,” said Mr. Harris ; “ and you ’ll be glad to hear that Andrew is doing remarkably well ; is saving money, in fact, and contemplates getting married.”

“ Indeed, sir, that is good hearing. I was afraid that he might have left your employment.”

“ So, to be sure, he has ; taking with him, moreover, an excellent character. He is now a second gardener at a steady wage.”

“ You can’t think, sir, how you relieve my mind. To tell the truth, I met him, less than an hour ago ; and by his manner . . . But I had better tell you how it happened : I knew, of course, that you had interested yourself in Link and found a job for him. But after he ’d left the ship he never let us hear word of his doings. . . . Well, passing through your town just now, I ran up against him. He was coming along the street, and I recognised him on

the instant ; but all of a sudden he turned and began to stare in at a shop-window—an ironmonger’s—giving me his back. I made sure, of course, that he hadn’t spied me ; so I stepped up and said I, ‘ Hullo, Link, my lad ! ’ clapping a hand on his shoulder. He turned about, treated me to a long stare, and says he, ‘ Aren’t you makin’ some mistake, mister ? ’ ‘ Why,’ says I, ‘ surely I haven’t changed so much as all that since the days I taught you vulgar fractions on board the old *Egeria* ? I ’m Mr. Wilkins,’ says I. ‘ Oh, are you ? ’ says he. ‘ Then, Mr, Wilkins, you can go back to hell and take ’em my compliments there.’ That’s all he said, and he walked away down the street.

“ That ’s queer,” said Mr. Harris, polishing his spectacles. “ Yes, he came to me as gardener’s boy—I thought it would be a pleasant change after the ship ; and he served his apprenticeship well. I remember that in answer to my application the Secretary wrote : ‘ Of course we prefer to train our lads to the sea ; but when one has no aptitude for it—— ’ ”

Mr. Harris paused, for the Schoolmaster was smiling broadly.

“ Good Lord, sir!—if you ’ll excuse me. Link Andrew no aptitude for the sea ! Why, that lad’s seamanship saved my life once : and, what ’s more, it saved the whole yacht’s company ! Hasn’t he ever told you about it ? ”

“ Not a word. I think,” said Mr. Harris, “ our friend Link chooses to keep his past in watertight compartments. Sit down and tell me about it.”

VII

THIS was the Schoolmaster's story :—

“ It happened on that very cruise, sir. The *Swallow* had been knocking around at various West-country regattas—Weymouth, Torquay, Dartmouth, finishing up with Plymouth. From Plymouth we were to sail for home.

“ We had dropped hook in the Merchant Shipping Anchorage, as they call it ; which is the eastern side of the Sound, by Jennycliff Bay. That last day of the regattas—a Saturday—the wind had been almost true north, and freshish, but nothing to mention : beautiful sailing weather for the small boats. The big cracks had finished their engagements and were making back for Southampton.

“ Well, as I say, this north wind was a treat ; especially coming, as it did, after a week of light airs and calms that had spoilt most of the yacht-racing. Some time in the afternoon I heard talk that our skipper—well, I won't mention names—and, as it turned out in the end, everyone was implicated. Anyhow, at six o'clock or thereabouts the gig was ordered out, and every blessed officer on board went ashore in her ; which was clean contrary to regulations, of course, but there happened to be a Cinematograph Show they all wanted to see at the big music hall—some prize-fight or other. I don't set much store by prize-fights

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for my part, and living pictures give me the headache : so, to salve everybody's conscience, I was left in sole charge of the ship.

“ Everything went smooth as a buttered cake until about nine o'clock, when the wind, that had been dying down all the time, suddenly flew west and began to gather strength hand over fist. . . . I never, not being a seaman, could have believed—till I saw and felt it—the change that came over Plymouth Sound in the space of one half-hour. The gig had been ordered again for nine-thirty, to pull to the Barbican Steps and be ready at ten to bring the officers on board. But before nine-thirty I began to have my serious doubts about sending her. It was just as well I had.

“ For by nine-forty-five it was blowing a real gale, and by ten o'clock something like a hurricane. Just then, to top my terror, Master Link Andrew came aft to me—the wind seemed to blow him along—and ‘ I beg your pardon, Mr. Wilkins,’ said he, ‘ but in my opinion she 's dragging.’

“ Just think of it, sir ! There was I, sole in charge of a hundred boys or so, and knowing no more what to do than the ship's cat. . . . She *was* dragging, too ; sagging foot by foot in towards the dark of Jennycliff Bay.

“ ‘ If you 'll take a word from me, sir,’ said Link, ‘ we 'd best up sail and get out of this.’

“ ‘ What about the other anchor ? ’ I suggested.

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“ ‘Try it if you like,’ said he. ‘In my belief it won’t hold any more than a tin mustard pot.’

“Nor did it, when we let go. He came back after a few minutes from the darkness forward. ‘No go,’ said he. ‘Nothing to do but slip and clear.’

“There was no question, either, that he spoke sense. ‘But where?’ I shouted at him. ‘Drake’s Island? . . . And who’s to do it, even so?’

“ ‘The anchorage is crowded under Drake’s Island,’ he shouted back. ‘It’s the devil-among-the-tailors we’d play there, if we ever fetched. . . . Breakwater’s no shelter either.’

“He seemed to whistle to himself for a moment; and the next I heard him yell out sharply to the boys forward to tumble on the mainsail, strip her covers off, double-reef and hoist her. He took command from that moment. While a score of them flew to tackle this job, he beat his way forward and called on another lot to get out the staysail. Back he ran again, cursing and calling on all and sundry to look smart. Next he was at my side ordering me to unlash the wheel and stand by. ‘It’s touch-and-go, sir.’

“ ‘Hadn’t we better send up a flare?’ I suggested feebly.

“ ‘Flare your bloomin’ grandmother!’ From this moment I regret to say that Link Andrew treated me with contempt. He next ordered a dozen small boys aloft, to reef and set her upper square-sail. When I urged that it was as good as asking them to

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commit suicide, he cursed me openly. ‘Drown the poor pups, will I? I thought—damn you all!—you laid yourselves out to breed seamen! You *say* you do, at prize-givings!’ He ran forward again to get the hawsers buoyed before slipping them.

“I never remember a sound more sickening to the stomach than those chains made as they ran out through the hawse holes. The one mistake Link committed was in ordering the upper square-sail to be reefed. By the mercy of God not a child was blown off the yards in that operation; yet it was no sooner concluded than, having by this time found a megaphone, he shouted up to them to undo their work and shake out the reef.

“‘That’s madness!’ I yelled from the wheel, where I clung dripping, blindly pressing down the spokes and easing them as he checked me. ‘Look to leeward, you blighter!’ he yelled back.

“The ship had payed off slowly, and while she gathered way, was drifting straight down upon an Italian barque that two hours ago had lain more than a cable’s length from us. . . . I thought our lower yard—we heeled so—would have smacked against her bowsprit-end; and from the outcries on board the Italian I rather fancy her crew expected it. But we shaved her by a yard or so, as Link pushed me away from the wheel and took charge. A moment later she had dropped behind us into the night, and we were surging in full-tilt for Plymouth, heaving over at the Lord knows what angle.

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“ But we were off ; we were clear ; and, strange to say, the worst of it was over. The wind was worsening, if anything, and we continued to drive at a frightful angle. Now and again we slanted to a squall that fairly dipped us till the sea poured half-way across her decks. As I staggered forward—clutching at anything handy—to assure myself that none of the boys had been flung off the fore-yard and overboard, I heard a sea burst the starboard bulwarks, and in another moment, while I yet wondered if the sound came from something parting aloft, with a ‘ Wa-ay-oh ! ’ Link had put over her helm, and the suddenly altered slant flung me into the scuppers, where I dropped after taking a knock against the standing rigging, the mark of which I shall carry on my forehead till I die.

“ By this time, sir, I was pretty well dazed. I forget if it was in a couple of short tacks, or in three, that we fetched Picklecombe Point on the western side. Then we put about on a long tack that carried us well outside the breakwater and came in for Cawsand Bay and safety. On this last fetch Link kicked me up and gave me the wheel again, while he went forward to hunt up the spare anchor.

“ We brought up, well in shelter, at something before two in the morning, not a hand lost ! Before anyone was allowed to turn in, Link had every sail stowed and covered—‘ for the honour of the blasted ship,’ as he put it.

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“ The skipper and his precious lot came aboard next day not long before noon, and after a wholesome scare. It seems they were late, and all pretty so-so by the time they reached the Barbican Steps ; and, let be that there was no boat for them, the watermen one and all declined to take them off in any such weather. Nothing for it but to doss the night ashore, which they did. But I wouldn't give much for their feelings next morning when they put off and, lo ! there was no *Swallow* in the Merchant Shipping Anchorage. In Cawsand Bay, you understand, we were well hidden by the land, and it cost them at least a couple of hours to guess our whereabouts.

“ Long as the time was, it wasn't enough to wear out the effects of the—well, the Cinematograph. A yellower set, or a bluer in the gills, you never set eyes on. They came aboard, and the skipper, having made some inquiries of me, called up Link, cleared his throat quite in the old approved style, and began to make a speech.

“ Link cut it short.

“ ‘ All right, my precious swine ! Now step below and wash off the traces. If you behave pretty, maybe I 'll not report you.’ ”

VIII

“THAT finished the lot,” wound up the Schoolmaster. “There *was* no answer to it, if you come to think.”

“And Link never told?”

“Never a word, sir. Nor did I. But the story leaked out somehow, and it gave the Commander the whip-hand of his Committee, to ship a new set of officers. Ship and tender, sir, the *Egeria* nowadays is something to be proud of. But for my part I don't go on any more of these summer cruises. The open sea never suited my stomach, and I prefer a walk for my holiday.”

Lieutenant Lapenotière

THE night porter at the Admiralty had been sleeping in his chair. He was red-eyed and wore his livery coat buttoned at random. He grumbled to himself as he opened the great door.

He carried a glass-screened candle, and held it somewhat above the level of his forehead—which was protuberant and heavily pock-marked. Under the light he peered out at the visitor, who stood tall and stiff, with uniform overcoat buttoned to the chin, between the Ionic pillars of the portico.

“Who’s there?”

“Lieutenant Lapenotière, of the *Pickle* schooner—with despatches.”

“Despatches?” echoed the night porter. Out beyond the screen of masonry that shut off the Board of Admiralty’s fore-court from Whitehall, one of the tired post-horses started blowing through its nostrils on this foggy night.

“From Admiral Collingwood—Mediterranean Fleet off Cadiz—sixteen days,” answered the visitor curtly.

“Is everyone abed?”

“Admiral Collingwood? Why Admiral Colling-

wood?" The night porter fell back a pace, opening the door a trifle wider. "Good God, sir! You don't say as how——"

"You can fetch down a Secretary or someone, I hope?" said Lieutenant Lapenotière, quickly stepping past him into the long dim hall. "My despatches are of the first importance. I have posted up from Falmouth without halt but for relays."

As the man closed the door, he heard his post-boy of the last relay slap one of the horses encouragingly before heading home to stable. The chaise wheels began to move on the cobbles.

"His Lordship himself will see you, sir. Of that I make no doubt," twittered the night porter, fumbling with the bolt. "There was a terrible disturbance, back in July, when Captain Bettsworth arrived—not so late as this, to be sure, but towards midnight—and they waited till morning, to carry up the despatches with his Lordship's chocolate. Thankful was I next day not to have been on duty at the time . . . If you will follow me, sir——"

Lieutenant Lapenotière had turned instinctively towards a door on the right. It admitted to the Waiting Room, and there were few officers in the service who did not know—and only too well—that Chamber of Hope Deferred.

"No, sir . . . this way, if you please," the night porter corrected him, and opened a door on the left. "The Captains' Room," he announced, passing in and

steering for the chimney-shelf, on which stood a pair of silver sconces each carrying three wax candles. These he took down, lit and replaced. "Ah, sir! Many's the time I've showed Lord Nelson himself into this room, in the days before Sir Horatio, and even after. And you were sayin'——"

"I said nothing."

The man moved to the door; but halted there and came back, as though in his own despite.

"I can't help it, sir . . . Half a guinea he used to give me, regular. But the last time—and hard to believe 'twas little more than a month ago—he halts on his way out, and says he, searchin' awkward-like in his breeches' pocket with his left hand. 'Ned,' says he, 'my old friend'—aye, sir, his old friend he called me—'Ned,' says he, pullin' out a fistful o' gold, 'my old friend,' says he, 'I'll compound with you for two guineas, this bein' the last time you may hold the door open for me, in or out. But you must pick 'em out,' says he, spreadin' his blessed fingers with the gold in 'em: 'for a man can't count money who's lost his right flapper.' Those were his words, sir. 'Old friend,' he called me, in that way of his.

Lieutenant Lapenotière pointed to his left arm. Around the sleeve a black scarf was knotted.

"Dead, sir," the night porter hushed his voice.

"Dead," echoed Lieutenant Lapenotière, staring at the Turkey carpet, of which the six candles, gaining strength, barely illumined the pattern.

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“Dead, at the top of victory; a great victory. Go: fetch somebody down.”

The night porter shuffled off. Lieutenant Lapenotière, erect and sombre, cast a look around the apartment, into which he had never before been admitted. The candles lit up a large painting—a queer bird’s-eye view of Venice. Other pictures, dark and bituminous, decorated the panelled walls—portraits of dead admirals, a sea-piece or two, some charts . . . This was all he discerned out in the dim light; and in fact he scanned the walls, the furniture of the room, inattentively. His stomach was fasting, his head light with rapid travel; above all, he had a sense of wonder that all this should be happening to *him*. For, albeit a distinguished officer, he was a modest man, and by habit considered himself of no great importance; albeit a brave man, too, he shrank at the thought of the message he carried—a message to explode and shake millions of men in a confusion of wild joy or grief.

For about the tenth time in those sixteen days it seemed to burst and escape in an actual detonation, splitting his head—there, as he waited in the strange room where never a curtain stirred . . . It was a trick his brain played him, repeating, echoing the awful explosion of the French seventy-four *Achille*, which had blown up towards the close of the battle. When the ship was ablaze and sinking, his own crew had put off in boats to rescue the Frenchmen, at close risk of their own lives, for her loaded guns, as

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they grew red-hot, went off at random among rescuers and rescued . . .

As had happened before when he felt this queer shock, his mind travelled back and he seemed to hear the series of discharges running up at short intervals to the great catastrophe . . . To divert his thoughts, he turned to study the view of Venice above the chimney-piece . . . and on a sudden faced about again.

He had a sensation that someone was in the room—someone standing close behind him.

But no . . . For the briefest instant his eyes rested on an indistinct shadow—his own perhaps, cast by the candle-light? Yet why should it lie lengthwise there, shaped like a coffin, on the dark polished table that occupied the middle of the room?

The answer was that it did not. Before he could rub his eyes it had gone. Moreover, he had turned to recognise a living being . . . and no living person was in the room, unless by chance (absurd supposition) one were hidden behind the dark red window curtains.

“Recognise” may seem a strange word to use; but here had lain the strangeness of the sensation—that the someone standing there was a friend, waiting to be greeted. It was with eagerness and a curious warmth of the heart that Lieutenant Lapenotière had faced about—upon nothing.

He continued to stare in a puzzled way at the window curtains, when a voice by the door said—

“ Good evening !—or perhaps, to be correct, good morning ! You are Mr. —— ”

“ Lapenotière,” answered the Lieutenant, who had turned sharply. The voice—a gentleman’s and pleasantly modulated—was not one he knew ; nor did he recognise the speaker—a youngish, shrewd-looking man, dressed in civilian black, with knee-breeches. “ Lapenotière—of the *Pickle* schooner.”

“ Yes, yes—the porter bungled your name badly, but I guessed. Lord Barham will see you personally. He is, in fact, dressing with all haste at this moment . . . I am his private secretary,” explained the shrewd-looking gentleman in his quiet, business-like voice. “ Will you come with me upstairs ? ”

Lieutenant Lapenotière followed him. At the foot of the great staircase the secretary turned.

“ I may take it, sir, that we are not lightly disturbing his Lordship,—who is an old man.”

“ The news is of great moment, sir. Greater could scarcely be.”

The secretary bent his head. As they went up the staircase Lieutenant Lapenotière looked back and caught sight of the night porter in the middle of the hall, planted there and gazing up, following their ascent.

On the first-floor landing they were met by a truly ridiculous spectacle. There emerged from a doorway on the left of the wide corridor an old gentleman clad in nightcap, nightshirt and bedroom slippers, buttoning his breeches and cursing vigorously ;

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while close upon him followed a valet with dressing-gown on one arm, waistcoat and wig on the other, vainly striving to keep pace with his master's impatience.

"The braces, my lord—your Lordship has them fore-part behind, if I may suggest——"

"Damn the braces!" swore the old gentleman. "Where is he? Hi, Tylney!" as he caught sight of the secretary. "Where are we to go? My room, I suppose?"

"The fire is out there, my lord . . . 'Tis past three in the morning. But after sending word to awake you, I hunted round and by good luck found a plenty of promising embers in the Board Room grate. On top of these I've piled what remained of my own fire, and Dobson has set a lamp there——"

"You've been devilish quick, Tylney. Dressed like a buck you are, too!"

"Your Lordship's wig," suggested the valet.

"Damn the wig!" Lord Barham snatched it and attempted to stick it on top of his nightcap, damned the nightcap, and, plucking it off, flung it to the man.

"I happened to be sitting up late, my lord, over the *Æolus* papers," said Mr. Secretary Tylney.

"Ha?" Then, to the valet, "The dressing-gown there! Don't fumble! . . . So this is Captain _____"

"Lieutenant, sir, Lapenotière, commanding the *Pickle* schooner."

The Lieutenant saluted.

“ From the Fleet, my lord—off Cadiz ; or rather, off Cape Trafalgaro.”

He drew the sealed despatch from an inner breast-pocket and handed it to the First Lord.

“ Here, step into the Board Room . . . Where the devil are my spectacles ? ” he demanded of the valet, who had sprung forward to hold open the door.

Evidently the Board Room had been but a few hours ago the scene of a large dinner-party. Glasses, dessert-plates, dishes of fruit, decanters empty and half empty, cumbered the great mahogany table as dead and wounded, guns and tumbrils, might a battle-field. Chairs stood askew ; crumpled napkins lay as they had been dropped or tossed, some on the floor, others across the table between the dishes.

“ Looks cosy, eh ? ” commented the First Lord. “ Maggs, set a screen around the fire, and look about for a decanter and some clean glasses.”

He drew a chair close to the reviving fire, and glanced at the cover of the despatch before breaking its seal.

“ Nelson’s handwriting ? ” he asked. It was plain that his old eyes, unaided by spectacles, saw the superscription only as a blur.

“ No, my lord : Admiral Collingwood’s,” said Lieutenant Lapenotière, inclining his head.

Old Lord Barham looked up sharply. His wig sat awry, he made a ridiculous figure in his hastily-donned garments. Yet he did not lack dignity.

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“ Why Collingwood ? ” he asked, his fingers breaking the seal. “ God ! you don’t tell me—— ”

“ Lord Nelson is dead, sir.”

“ Dead—dead ? . . . Here, Tylney—you read what it says. Dead ? . . . No, damme, let the captain tell his tale. Briefly, sir.”

“ Briefly, sir—Lord Nelson had word of Admiral Villeneuve coming out of the Straits, and engaged the combined fleets off Cape Trafalgar. They were in single line, roughly ; and he bore down in two columns, and cut off their van under Dumanoir. This was at dawn or thereabouts, and by five o’clock the enemy was destroyed.”

“ How many prizes ? ”

“ I cannot say precisely, my lord. The word went, when I was signalled aboard the Vice-Admiral’s flag-ship, that either fifteen or sixteen had struck. My own men then engaged, at the time, in rescuing the crew of a French seventy-four that had blown up ; and I was too busy to count, had counting been possible. One or two of my officers maintain to me that our gains were higher. But the despatch will tell, doubtless.”

“ Aye, to be sure . . . Read, Tylney. Don’t sit there clearing your throat, but read, man alive ! ” And yet it appeared that while the Secretary was willing enough to read, the First Lord had no capacity, as yet, to listen. Into the very first sentence he broke with—

“ No, wait a minute. ‘ Dead,’ d’ ye say ? . . .

Lieutenant, pour yourself a glass of wine and tell us first how it happened."

Lieutenant Lapenotière could not tell very clearly. He had twice been summoned to board the *Royal Sovereign*—the first time to receive the command to hold himself ready. It was then that, coming alongside the great ship, he had read in all the officers' faces an anxiety hard to reconcile with the evident tokens of victory around them. At once it had occurred to him that the Admiral had fallen, and he put the question to one of the lieutenants—to be told that Lord Nelson had indeed been mortally wounded and could not live long; but that he must be alive yet, and conscious, since the *Victory* was still signalling orders to the Fleet.

"I think, my lord," said he, "that Admiral Collingwood must have been doubtful, just then, what responsibility had fallen upon him, or how soon it might fall. He had sent for me to 'stand by' so to speak. He was good enough to tell me the news as it had reached him——"

Here Lieutenant Lapenotière, obeying the order to fill his glass, let spill some of the wine on the table. The sight of the dark trickle on the mahogany touched some nerve of the brain: he saw it widen into a pool of blood, from which, as they picked up a shattered seaman and bore him below, a lazy stream crept across the deck of the flag-ship towards the scuppers. He moved his feet, as he had moved them then, to be out of the way of

it: but recovered himself in another moment and went on—

“He told me, my lord, that the *Victory* after passing under the *Bucentaure’s* stern, and so raking her that she was put out of action, or almost, fell alongside the *Redoubtable*. There was a long swell running, with next to no wind, and the two ships could hardly have cleared had they tried. At any rate, they hooked, and it was then a question which could hammer the harder. The Frenchman had filled his tops with sharp-shooters, and from one of these—the mizen-top, I believe—a musket-ball struck down the Admiral. He was walking at the time to and fro on a sort of gangway he had caused to be planked over his cabin sky-light, between the wheel and the ladder-way . . . Admiral Collingwood believed it had happened about half-past one . . .”

“Sit down, man, and drink your wine,” commanded the First Lord as the despatch-bearer swayed with a sudden faintness.

“It is nothing, my lord——”

But it must have been a real swoon, or something very like it: for he recovered to find himself lying in an arm-chair. He heard the Secretary’s voice reading steadily on and on . . . Also they must have given him wine, for he awoke to feel the warmth of it in his veins and coursing about his heart. But he was weak yet, and for the moment well content to lie still and listen.

Resting there and listening, he was aware of two sensations that alternated within him, chasing each other in and out of his consciousness. He felt all the while that he, John Richards Lapenotière, a junior officer in His Majesty's service, was assisting in one of the most momentous events in his country's history ; and alone in the room with these two men, he felt it as he had never begun to feel it amid the smoke and roar of the actual battle. He had seen the dead hero but half a dozen times in his life : he had never been honoured by a word from him : but like every other naval officer, he had come to look up to Nelson as to the splendid particular star among commanders. *There* was greatness : *there* was that which lifted men to such deeds as write man's name across the firmament. And, strange to say, Lieutenant Lapenotière recognised something of it in this queer old man, in dressing-gown and ill-fitting wig, who took snuff and interrupted now with a curse and anon with a "bravo!" as the secretary read. He was absurd : but he was no common man, this Lord Barham. He had something of the ineffable aura of greatness.

But in the lieutenant's brain, across this serious, even awful sense of the moment and of its meaning, there played a curious secondary sense that the moment was not—that what was happening before his eyes had either happened before or was happening in some vacuum in which past, present, future and the ordinary divisions of time had lost their bearings.

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The great twenty-four-hour clock at the end of the Board Room, ticking on and on while the Secretary read, wore an unfamiliar face . . . Yes, time had gone wrong, somehow: and the events of the passage home to Falmouth, of the journey up to the doors of the Admiralty, though they ran on a chain, had no intervals to be measured by a clock, but followed one another like pictures on a wall. He saw the long, indigo-coloured swell thrusting the broken ships shoreward. He felt the wind freshening as it southered and he left the fleet behind: he watched their many lanterns as they sank out of sight, then the glow of flares by the light of which dead-tired men were repairing damages, cutting away wreckage. His ship was wallowing heavily now, with the gale after her,—and now dawn was breaking clean and glorious at the entrance of Mount's Bay. A fishing lugger had spied them, and lying in wait, had sheered up close alongside, her crew bawling for news. He had not forbidden his men to call it back, and he could see the fellows' faces now, as it reached them from the speaking-trumpet: "Great victory—twenty taken or sunk—Admiral Nelson killed!" They had guessed something, noting the *Pickle's* ensign at half-mast: yet as they took in the purport of the last three words, these honest fishermen had turned and stared at one another; and without one answering word, the lugger had been headed straight back to the mainland.

So it had been at Falmouth. A ship entering port

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has a thousand eyes upon her, and the *Pickle's* errand could not be hidden. The news seemed in some mysterious way to have spread even before he stepped ashore there on the Market Strand. A small crowd had collected, and, as he passed through it, many doffed their hats. There was no cheering at all—no, not for this, the most glorious victory of the war—outshining even the Nile or Howe's First of June.

He had set his face as he walked to the inn. But the news had flown before him, and fresh crowds gathered to watch him off. The post-boys knew . . . and *they* told the post-boys at the next stage, and the next—Bodmin and Plymouth—not to mention the boatmen at Torpoint Ferry. But the country-side did not know; not the labourers gathering in cider apples heaped under Devon apple trees, nor, next day, the sportsmen banging off guns at the partridges around Salisbury. The slow, jolly life of England on either side of the high-road turned leisurely as a wagon-wheel on its axle, while between the hedgerows, past school-houses, church-towers and through the cobbled streets of market towns, he had sped and rattled with Collingwood's despatch in his pocket. The news had reached London with him. His last postboys had carried it to their stables, and from stable to tavern. To-morrow—to-day, rather—in an hour or two—all the bells of London would be ringing, or tolling! . . .

“He's as tired as a dog,” said the voice of the

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Secretary. "Seems almost a shame to waken him."

The lieutenant opened his eyes and jumped to his feet with an apology. Lord Barham had gone, and the Secretary hard by was speaking to the night porter, who bent over the fire, raking it with a poker. The hands of the Queen Anne clock indicated a quarter to six.

"The First Lord would like a talk with you . . . later in the day," said Mr. Tylney gravely, smiling a little these last words. He himself was white and haggard. "He suggested the early afternoon, say half-past two. That will give you time for a round sleep . . . You might leave me the name of your hotel, in case he should wish to send for you before that hour."

"The Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane, Cheapside," said Lieutenant Lapenotière.

He knew little of London, and gave the name of the hostelry at which, many years ago, he had alighted from a West-country coach with his box and midshipman's kit . . . A moment later he found himself wondering if it still existed as a house of entertainment. Well, he must go and seek it.

The Secretary shook hands with him, smiling wanly.

"Few men, sir, have been privileged to carry such news as you have brought us to-night."

"And I went to sleep after delivering it," said Lieutenant Lapenotière, smiling back.

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The night porter escorted him to the hall, and opened the great door for him. In the portico he bade the honest man good-night, and stood for a moment, mapping out in his mind his way to The Swan with Two Necks. He shivered slightly, after his nap, in the chill of the approaching dawn.

As the door closed behind him he was aware of a light shining, out beyond the screen of the fore-court, and again a horse blew through its nostrils on the raw air.

“Lord!” thought the lieutenant. “That fool of a post-boy cannot have mistaken me and waited all this time!”

He hurried out into Whitehall. Sure enough a chaise was drawn up there, and a post-boy stood by the near lamp, conning a scrap of paper by the light of it. No, it was a different chaise, and a different post-boy. He wore the buff and black, whereas the other had worn the blue and white. Yet he stepped forward confidently, and with something of a smile.

“Lieutenant Lapenotière?” he asked, reaching back and holding up his paper to the lamp to make sure of the syllables.

“That is my name,” said the amazed lieutenant.

“I was ordered here—five forty-five—to drive you down to Merton.”

“To Merton?” echoed Lieutenant Lapenotière, his hand going to his pocket. The post-boy’s smile, or so much as could be seen of it by the edge of the lamp, grew more knowing.

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“ I ask no questions, sir.”

“ But—but who ordered you ? ”

The post-boy did not observe, or disregarded, his bewilderment.

“ A Briton ’s a Briton, sir, I hope ? I ask no questions, knowing my place . . . But if so be as you were to tell me there ’s been a great victory —— ” He paused on this.

“ Well, my man, you ’re right so far, and no harm in telling you.”

“ Aye,” chirruped the post-boy. “ When the maid called me up with the order, and said as how *he* and no other had called with it—— ”

“ He ? ”

The fellow nodded.

“ She knew him at once, from his portraits. Who wouldn’t ? With his right sleeve pinned across, so . . . And, said I, ‘ Then there ’s been a real victory. Never would you see him back, unless. And I was right, sir ! ’ he concluded triumphantly.

“ Let me see that piece of paper.”

“ You ’ll let me have it back, sir ? — for a memento,” the post-boy pleaded. Lieutenant Lapenotière took it from him—a plain half-sheet of note-paper roughly folded. On it was scribbled in pencil, back hand-wise, “ Lt. Lapenotière. Admiralty, Whitehall. At 6.30 a.m., not later. For Merton, Surrey.”

He folded the paper very slowly, and handed it back to the post-boy.

“Very well, then. For Merton.”

* * * *

The house lay but a very little distance beyond Wimbledon. Its blinds were drawn as Lieutenant Lapenotière alighted from the chaise and went up to the modest porch.

His hand was on the bell-pull. But some pressure checked him as he was on the point of ringing. He determined to wait for a while and turned away towards the garden.

The dawn had just broken ; two or three birds were singing. It did not surprise—at any rate, it did not frighten—Lieutenant Lapenotière at all, when, turning into a short pleached alley, he looked along it and saw *him* advancing.

—Yes, him, with the pinned sleeve, the noble, seamed, eager face. They met as friends . . . In later years the lieutenant could never remember a word that passed, if any passed at all. He was inclined to think that they met and walked together in complete silence, for many minutes. Yet he ever maintained that they walked as two friends whose thoughts hold converse without need of words. He was not terrified at all. He ever insisted, on the contrary, that there in the cold of the breaking day his heart was light and warm as though flooded with first love—not troubled by it, as youth in first love is wont to be—but bathed in it ; he, the ardent young officer, bathed in a glow of affection,

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ennobling, exalting him, making him free of a brotherhood he had never guessed.

He used also, in telling the story, to scandalise the clergyman of his parish by quoting the evangelists, and especially St. John's narrative of Mary Magdalen at the sepulchre.

For the door of the house opened at length ; and a beautiful woman, scarred by knowledge of the world, came down the alley, slowly, unaware of him. Then (said he), as she approached, his hand went up to his pocket for the private letter he carried, and the shade at his side left him to face her in the daylight.

The Cask Ashore

(1807)

I

Rum for Bond

AT the head of a diminutive creek of the Tamar River, a little above Saltash on the Cornish shore, stands the village of Botusfleming; and in early summer, when its cherry-orchards come into bloom, you will search far before finding a prettier.

The years have dealt gently with Botusfleming. As it is to-day, so—or nearly so—it was on a certain sunny afternoon in the year 1807, when the Reverend Edward Spettigew, Curate-in-Charge, sat in the garden before his cottage and smoked his pipe while he meditated a sermon. That is to say, he intended to meditate a sermon. But the afternoon was warm: the bees hummed drowsily among the wall-flowers and tulips. From the bench his eyes followed the vale's descent between overlapping billows of cherry blossom to a gap wherein shone the silver Tamar—not, be it understood, the part called Hamoaze, where lay the warships and the

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hulks containing the French prisoners, but an upper reach seldom troubled by shipping.

Parson Spettigew laid the book face-downwards on his knee while his lips murmured a part of the text he had chosen : ‘ *A place of broad rivers and streams . . . wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. . . .* ’ His pipe went out. The book slipped from his knee to the ground. He slumbered.

The garden gate rattled, and he awoke with a start. In the pathway below him stood a sailor ; a middle-sized, middle-aged man, rigged out in best shore-going clothes—shiny tarpaulin hat, blue coat and waistcoat, shirt open at the throat, and white duck trowsers with broad-buckled waistbelt.

“ Beggin ’ your Reverence’s pardon,” began the visitor, touching the brim of his hat, and then upon second thoughts uncovering, “ but my name’s Jope—Ben Jope.”

“ Eh ? . . . What can I do for you ? ” asked Parson Spettigew, a trifle flustered at being caught napping.

“ — of the *Vesoovius* bomb, bo’s’n,” pursued Mr. Jope, with a smile that disarmed annoyance, so ingenuous it was, so friendly, and withal so respectful : “ but paid off at eight this morning. Maybe your Reverence can tell me whereabouts to find an embalmer in these parts ? ”

“ A—a *what* ? ”

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“Embalmer.” Mr. Jope chewed thoughtfully for a moment or two upon a quid of tobacco, “Sort of party you ’d go to supposin’ as you had a corpse by you and wanted to keep it for a permanency. You take a lot of gums and spices, and first of all you lays out the deceased, and next——”

“Yes, yes,” the Parson interrupted hurriedly; “I know the process, of course.”

“What? to *practise* it?” Hope illumined Mr. Jope’s countenance.

“No, most certainly not . . . But, my good man,—an embalmer! and at Botusfleming, of all places!”

The sailor’s face fell. He sighed patiently.

“That’s what they said at Saltash, more or less. I got a sister living there—Sarah Treleaven her name is—a widow-woman, and sells fish. When I called on her this morning, ‘Embalmer?’ she said; ‘Go and embalm your grandmother!’ Those were her words, and the rest of Saltash wasn’t scarcely more helpful. But, as luck would have it, while I was searchin’, Bill Adams went for a shave, and inside of the barber’s shop what should he see but a fair-sized otter in a glass case? Bill began to admire it, and it turned out the barber had stuffed the thing. Maybe your Reverence knows the man?—‘A. Grigg and Son,’ he calls hisself.”

“Grigg? Yes, to be sure: he stuffed a trout for me last summer.”

“What weight, makin’ so bold?”

“ Seven pounds.”

Mr. Jope’s face fell again.

“ Well-a-well ! I dare say the size don’t matter, once you’ve got the knack. We’ve brought him along, anyway ; and, what’s more, we’ve made him bring all his tools. By his talk, he reckons it to be a shavin’ job, and we agreed to wait before we undeceived him.”

“ But—you’ll excuse me—I don’t quite follow——”

Mr. Jope pressed a forefinger mysteriously to his lip, then jerked a thumb in the direction of the river.

“ If your Reverence wouldn’t mind steppin’ down to the creek with me ? ” he suggested respectfully.

Parson Spettigew fetched his hat, and together the pair descended the vale beneath the dropping petals of the cherry. At the foot of it they came to a creek, which the tide at this hour had flooded and almost overbrimmed. Hard by the water’s edge, backed by tall elms, stood a dilapidated fish-store, and below it lay a boat with nose aground on a beach of flat stones. Two men were in the boat. The barber—a slip of a fellow in rusty top hat and suit of rusty black—sat in the stern-sheets face to face with a large cask ; a cask so ample that, to find room for his knees, he was forced to crook them at a high, uncomfortable angle. In the bows, boathook in hand, stood a tall sailor, arrayed in shore-going clothes similar to Mr. Jope’s. His face was long, sallow, and expressive of taciturnity, and he wore a beard—not, however, where beards are usually

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worn, but as a fringe beneath his clean-shaven chin.

“Well, here we are!” announced Mr. Jope cheerfully. “Your Reverence knows A. Grigg and Son, and the others you can trust in all weathers; bein’ William Adams, otherwise Bill, and Eli Tonkin—friends o’ mine an’ shipmates both.”

The tall seaman touched his hat by way of acknowledging the introduction.

“But—but I only see *one!*” protested Parson Spettigew.

“This here’s Bill Adams,” said Mr. Jope, and again the tall seaman touched his hat. “Is it Eli you’re missin’? He’s in the cask.”

“Oh!”

“We’ll hoick him up to the store, Bill, if you’re ready? It looks a nice cool place. And while you’re prizin’ him open, I’d best explain to his Reverence and the barber. Here, unship the shore-plank; and you, A. Grigg and Son, lend a hand to heave . . . Ay, you’re right: it weighs more’n a trifle—bein’ a quarter-puncheon, an’ the best proof-spirits. Tilt her *this* way . . . Ready? . . . then w’y-ho! and away she goes!”

With a heave and a lurch that canted the boat until the water poured over her gunwale, the huge tub was rolled overside into shallow water. The recoil, as the boat righted herself, cast the small barber off his balance, and he fell back over a

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thwart with heels in air. But before he picked himself up, the two seamen, encouraging one another with strange cries, had leapt out and were trundling the cask up the beach, using the flats of their hands. With another *w'y-ho!* and a tremendous lift, they ran it up to the turfy plat, whence Bill Adams steered it with ease through the ruined doorway of the store. Mr. Jope returned, smiling and mopping his brow.

"It's this-a-way," he said, addressing the Parson. "Eli Tonkin his name is, or was; and, as he said, of this parish."

"Tonkin?" queried the Parson. "There are no Tonkins surviving in Botusfleming parish. The last of them was a poor old widow I laid to rest the week after Christmas."

"Belay there! . . . Dead, is she?" Mr. Jope's face exhibited the liveliest disappointment. "And after the surprise we'd planned for her!" he murmured ruefully. "Hi! Bill!" he called to his shipmate, who, having stored the cask, was returning to the boat.

"Wot is it?" asked Bill Adams inattentively. "Look here, where did we stow the hammer an' chisel?"

"Take your head out o' the boat an' listen. The old woman's dead!"

The tall man absorbed the news slowly.

"That's a facer," he said at length. "But maybe we can fix *her* up, too? I'll stand my share."

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“ She was buried the week after Christmas.”

“ Oh? ” Bill scratched his head. “ Then we can't—not very well.”

“ Times an' again I've heard Eli talk of his poor old mother,” said Mr. Jope, turning to the Parson. “ Which you'll hardly believe it, but though I knowed him for a Westcountry man, 'twas not till the last I larned what parish he hailed from. It happened very curiously. Bill, rout up A. Grigg and Son, an' fetch him forra'd here to listen. You'll find the tools underneath him in the stern-sheets.”

Bill obeyed, and possessing himself of hammer and chisel lounged off to the shore. The little barber drew near, and stood at Mr. Jope's elbow. His face wore an unhealthy pallor, and he smelt potently of strong drink.

“ Brandy it is,” apologised Mr. Jope, observing a slight contraction of the Parson's nostril. “ I reckoned 'twould tauten him a bit for what's ahead. . . . Well, as I was sayin', it happened very curiously. This day fortnight we were beatin' up an' across the Bay o' Biscay, after a four months' to-an'-fro game in front of Toolon Harbour. Blowin' fresh it was, an' we makin' pretty poor weather of it—the *Vesovius* bein' a powerful wet tub, an' a slug at the best o' times. 'Tisn' her fault, you understand: aboard a bombship everything's got to be heavy—timbers, scantling, everything about her—to stand the concussion. What with this an' her mortars, she sits pretty low ;

but to make up for it, what with all this dead weight, and bein' short-sparred, she can carry all sail in a breeze that would surprise you. Well, sir, for two days she 'd been carryin' canvas that fairly smothered us, an' Cap'n Crang not a man to care how we fared forra'd, so long the water didn' reach aft to his own quarters. But at last the First Lutenant, Mr. Wapshott, took pity on us, and—the Cap'n bein' below, takin' his nap after dinner—sends the crew o' the maintop aloft to take a reef in the tops'le. Poor Eli was one. Whereby the men had scarcely reached the top afore Cap'n Crang comes up from his cabin an' along the deck, not troublin' to cast an eye aloft. Whereby he missed what was happenin'. Whereby he had just come abreast of the mainmast, when—sock at his very feet—there drops a man. 'Twas Eli, that had missed his hold, an' dropped somewhere on the back of his skull. 'Hullo!' says the Cap'n, 'an' where the devil might *you* come from?' Eli heard it, poor fellow—an' says he, as I lifted him, 'If you please, sir, from Botusfleming, three miles t'other side of Saltash.' 'Then you 've had a damn quick passage,' answers Cap'n Crang, an' turns on his heel.

"Well, sir, we all agreed the Cap'n might ha' showed more feelin', specially as poor Eli 'd broke the base of his skull, an' by eight bells handed in the number of his mess. Five or six of us talked it over, agreein' as how 'twasn' hardly human, an' Eli

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such a good fellow, too, let alone bein' a decent seaman. Whereby the notion came to me that, as he'd come from Botusfleming—those bein' his last words—back to Botusfleming he should go, an' on that we cooked up a plan. Bill Adams being on duty in the sick bay, there wasn' no difficulty in sewin' up a dummy in Eli's place; an' the dummy, sir, nex' day we dooly committed to the deep, Cap'n Crang hisself readin' the service. The real question was, what to do with Eli? Whereby, the purser and me bein' friends, I goes to him an' says, 'Look here,' I says, 'we'll be paid off in ten days or so, an' there's a trifle o' prize money, too. What price'll you sell us a cask o' the ship's rum—say a quarter-puncheon for choice?' 'What for?' says he. 'For shore-going purposes,' says I. 'Bill Adams an' me got a use for it.' 'Well,' says the purser—a decent chap, an' by name Wilkins—'I'm an honest man,' says he, 'an' to oblige a friend you shall have it at store-valuation rate. An' what's more,' said he, 'I got the wind o' your little game, an' ll do what I can to help it along; for I al'ays liked the deceased, an' in my opinion Captain Crang behaved most unfeelin'. You tell Bill to bring the body to me, an' there'll be no more trouble about it till I hand you over the cask at Plymouth.' Well, sir, the man was as good as his word. We smuggled the cask ashore last evenin', an' hid it in the woods this side o' Mount Edgcumbe. This mornin' we

re-shipped it as you see. First along we intended no more than just to break the news to Eli's mother, an' hand him over to her; but Bill reckoned that to hand him over, cask an' all, would look careless; for (as he said) 'twasn' as if you could *bury* 'im in a cask. We allowed your Reverence would draw the line at that, though we hadn' the pleasure o' knowin' you at the time."

"Yes," agreed the Parson, as Mr. Jope paused, "I fear it could not be done without scandal."

"That's just how Bill put it. 'Well then,' says I, thinkin' it over, 'why not do the handsome while we're about it? You an' me ain't the sort of men,' I says, 'to spoil the ship for a ha'porth o' tar.' 'Certainly we ain't,' says Bill. 'An' we've done a lot for Eli,' says I. 'We have,' says Bill. 'Well then,' says I, 'let's put a coat o' paint on the whole business, an' have him embalmed.' Bill was enchanted."

"I—I beg your pardon," put in the barber, edging away a pace.

"Bill was enchanted. Hark to him in the store, there, knockin' away at the chisel."

"But there's some misunderstanding," the little man protested earnestly. "I understood it was to be a *shave*."

"You can shave him, too, if you like."

"If I th—thought you were s—serious——"

"Have some more brandy." Mr. Jope pulled out and proffered a flask. "Only don't overdo it, or

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it'll make your hand shaky. . . . Serious? You may lay to it that Bill's serious. He's that set on the idea, it don't make no difference to him, as you may have noticed, Eli's mother not bein' alive to take pleasure in it. Why, he wanted to embalm *her*, too! He's doin' this now for his own gratification, is Bill, an' you may take it from me when Bill sets his heart on a thing he sees it through. Don't you cross him, that's my advice."

"But—but——"

"No, you don't." As the little man made a wild spring to flee up the beach, Mr. Jope shot out a hand and gripped him by the coat collar. "Now look here," he said very quietly, as the poor wretch would have grovelled at the Parson's feet, "you was boastin' to Bill, not an hour ago, as you could stuff *anything*."

"Don't hurt him," Parson Spettigew interposed, touching Mr. Jope's arm.

"I'm not hurtin' him, your Reverence, only—
Eh? What's that?"

All turned their faces towards the store.

"Your friend is calling to you," said the Parson.

"Bad language, too . . . that's not like Bill, as a rule. Ahoy there, Bill!"

"Ahoy!" answered the voice of Mr. Adams.

"What's up?" Without waiting for an answer Mr. Jope ran the barber before him up the beach to the doorway, the Parson following. "What's up?" he demanded again, as he drew breath.

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“ Take an’ see for yourself,” answered Mr. Adams darkly, pointing with his chisel.

A fine fragrance of rum permeated the store.

Mr. Jope advanced, and peered into the staved cask.

“ Gone ? ” he exclaimed, and gazed around blankly.

Bill Adams nodded.

“ But *where* ? . . . You don’t say he’s *dissolved* ? ”

“ It ain’t the usual way o’ rum. An’ it *is* rum ? ”

Bill appealed to the Parson.

“ By the smell, undoubtedly.”

“ I tell you what’s happened. That fool of a Wilkins has made a mistake in the cask. . . . ”

“ An’ Eli ?—oh, Lord ! ” gasped Mr. Jope.

“ They’ll have returned Eli to the Victuallin’ Yard before this,” said Bill gloomily. “ I overheard Wilkins sayin’ as he was to pass over all stores an’ accounts at nine-thirty this mornin’.”

“ An’, once there, who knows where he’s got mixed ? . . . He’ll go the round o’ the Fleet, may be. Oh, my word, an’ the ship that broaches him ! ”

Bill Adams opened and shut his mouth quickly, like a fish ashore.

“ They’ll reckon they’ve got a lucky-bag,” he said weakly.

“ An’ Wilkins paid off with the rest, an’ no address, even if he could help—which I doubt.”

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“ Eh ? I got a note from Wilkins, as it happens.” Bill Adams took off his tarpaulin hat, and extracted a paper from the lining of the crown. “ He passed it down to me this mornin’ as I pushed off from the ship. Said I was to keep it, an’ maybe I’d find it useful. I wondered what he meant at the time, me takin’ no particular truck with pursers ashore. . . . It crossed my mind as I’d heard he meant to get married, and maybe he wanted me to stand best man at the weddin’. W’ich I didn’ open the note at the time ; not likin’ to refuse him, after he’d behaved so well to me.”

“ Pass it over,” commanded Mr. Jope. He took the paper and unfolded it, but either the light was dim within the store, or the handwriting hard to decipher. “ Would your Reverence read it out for us ? ”

Parson Spettigew carried the paper to the doorway. He read its contents aloud, and slowly :—

“ To Mr. Bill Adams,

“ Capt. of the Fore-top, H.M.S. *Vesuvius*.

SIR,—It was a dummy Capt. Crang buried. We cast the late E. Tonkin’ overboard the second night in lat. 46/30, long. 7/15, or thereabouts. By which time the feeling aboard had cooled down and it seemed a waste of good spirit. The rum you paid for is good rum. Hoping that you and Mr. Jope will find a use for it,

Your obedient servant,

S. WILKINS.”

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There was a long pause, through which Mr. Adams could be heard breathing hard.

“ But what are we to do with it ? ” asked Mr. Jope, scratching his head in perplexity.

“ Drink it. Wot else ? ”

“ But where ? ”

“ Oh,” said Mr. Adams, “ anywhere ! ”

“ That ’s all very well,” replied his friend. “ You never had no property, an’ don’t know its burdens. We ’ll have to hire a house for this, an’ live there till it ’s finished.”

II

The Multiplying Cellar

ST. DILP by Tamar has altered little in a hundred years. As it stands to-day, embowered in cherry-trees, so (or nearly so) it stood on that warm afternoon in the early summer of 1807, when two weather-tanned seamen of His Majesty's Fleet came along its fore street with a hand-barrow and a huge cask very cunningly lashed thereto. On their way they eyed the cottages and gardens to right and left with a lively curiosity; but "Lord, Bill," said the shorter seaman, mis-quoting Wordsworth unawares, "the very houses look asleep!"

At the Punch-Bowl Inn, kept by J. Coyne, they halted by silent consent. Mr. William Adams, who had been trundling the barrow, set it down, and Mr. Benjamin Jope—whose good-natured face would have recommended him anywhere—walked into the drinking-parlour and rapped on the table. This brought to him the innkeeper's daughter, Miss Elizabeth, twenty years old and comely. "What can I do for you, sir?" she asked.

"Two pots o' beer, first-along," said Mr. Jope.

"Two?"

"I got a shipmate outside."

Miss Elizabeth fetched the two pots.

"Here, Bill!" he called, carrying one to the door.

Returning, he blew at the froth on his own pot meditatively. "And the next thing is, I want a house."

"A house?"

"'Stonishing echo you keep here. . . . Yes, miss, a house. My name's Jope—Ben Jope—o' the Vesuvius bomb, bo's'un; but paid off at eight this morning. My friend outside goes by the name of Bill Adams; an' you'll find him livelier than he looks. Everyone does. But I forgot; you ha'n't seen him yet, and he can't come in, havin' to look after the cask."

"The ca—" Miss Elizabeth had almost repeated the word, but managed to check herself.

"You ought to consult someone about it, at your age," said Mr. Jope solicitously. "Yes, the cask. Rum it is, an' a quarter-puncheon. Bill and me clubbed an' bought it off the purser las' night, the chaplain havin' advised us not to waste good prize-money ashore but invest it in something we really wanted. But I don't know if you've ever noticed how often one thing leads to another. You can't go drinkin' out a quarter-puncheon o' rum in the high road, not very well. So the next thing is, we want a house."

"But," said the girl, "who ever heard of a house to let hereabouts!"

Mr. Jope's face fell.

"Ain't there none? An' it seemed so retired, too, an' handy near Plymouth."

“ There’s not a house to let in St. Dilp parish, unless it be the Rectory.”

Mr. Jope’s face brightened.

“ Then we ’ll take the Rectory,” he said. “ Where is it ? ”

“ Down by the river. . . . But ’tis nonsense you ’re tellin’. The Rectory indeed ! Why, it’s a seat ! ”

Mr. Jope’s face clouded.

“ Oh,” he said, “ is that all ? ”

“ It’s a fine one, too.”

“ It’d have to be, to accomydate Bill an’ me an’ the cask. I wanted a house, as I thought I told ye.”

“ Oh, but I meant a country-seat,” explained Miss Elizabeth. “ The Rectory is a house.”

Again Mr. Jope’s face brightened.

“ An’ so big,” she went on, “ that the Rector can’t afford to live in it. That’s why ’tis to let. The rent’s forty pound.”

“ Can I see him ? ”

“ No, you can’t ; for he lives up to Lunnon an’ hires Parson Spettigew of Botusfleming to do the work. But it’s my father has the lettin’ o’ the Rectory if a tenant comes along. He keeps the keys.”

“ Then I’d like to talk with your father.”

“ No you wouldn’t,” said the girl frankly ; “ because he’s asleep. Father drinks a quart o’ cider at three o’clock every day of his life, an’ no one don’t dare disturb him before six.”

“ Well, I like reggilar habits,” said Mr. Jope, diving a hand into his breeches’ pocket and drawing forth a fistful of golden guineas. “ But couldn’t you risk it ? ”

Miss Elizabeth’s eyes wavered.

“ No, I couldn’,” she sighed, shaking her head “ Father’s very violent in his temper. But I tell you what,” she added: “ I might fetch the keys, and you might go an’ see the place for yourself.”

“ Capital,” said Mr. Jope. While she was fetching these he finished his beer. Then, having insisted on paying down a guinea for earnest-money, he took the keys and her directions for finding the house. She repeated them in the porch for the benefit of the taller seaman ; who, as soon as she had concluded, gripped the handles of his barrow afresh and set off without a word. She gazed after the pair as they passed down the street.

At the foot of it a by-lane branched off towards the creek-side. It led them past a churchyard and a tiny church almost smothered in cherry-trees—for the churchyard was half an orchard: past a tumbling stream, a mill and some wood stacks ; and so, still winding downwards, brought them to a pair of iron gates, rusty and weather-greened. The gates stood unlocked ; and our two seamen found themselves next in a carriage drive along which it was plain no carriage had passed for a very long while. It was overgrown with weeds, and stragglng laurels encroached upon it on either hand ; and as it rounded

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one of these laurels Mr. Jope caught his breath sharply.

“Lor’ lumme!” he exclaimed. “It is a seat, as the gel said!”

Mr. Adams, following close with the wheelbarrow, set it down, stared, and said—

“Then she’s a liar. It’s a house.”

“It’s twice the size of a three-decker, anyway,” said his friend, and together they stood and contemplated the building.

It was a handsome pile of old brickwork, set in a foundation of rock almost overhanging the river—on which, however, it turned its back; in design, an oblong of two stories, with a square tower at each of the four corners, and the towers connected by a parapet of freestone. The windows along the front were regular, and those on the ground-floor less handsome than those of the upper floor, where (it appeared) were the state-rooms. For—strangest feature of all—the main entrance was in this upper story, with a dozen broad steps leading down to the unkempt carriage way and a lawn, across which a magnificent turkey oak threw dark masses of shadow.

But the house was a picture of decay. Unpainted shutters blocked the windows; tall grasses sprouted in the crevices of entrance steps and parapet; dislodged slates littered the drive; smears of dust ran down the main roof and from a lantern of which the louvers were all in ruin, some

hanging by a nail, others blown on edge by long-past gales. The very nails had rusted out of the walls, and the creepers they should have supported hung down in ropy curtains.

Mr. Adams scratched his head.

“What I’d like to know,” said he after a while, “is how to get the cask up them steps.”

“There’ll be a cellar-door for sartin,” Mr. Jope assured him cheerfully. “You don’t suppose the gentry takes their beer in at the front, hey?”

“This,” said Mr. Adams, “is rum; which is a totally different thing.” But he set down his barrow, albeit reluctantly, and followed his shipmate up the entrance steps. The front door was massive, and sheeted over with lead embossed in foliate and heraldic patterns. Mr. Jope inserted the key, turned it with some difficulty, and pushed the door wide. It opened immediately upon the great hall, and after a glance within he removed his hat.

The hall, some fifty feet long, ran right across the waist of the house, and was lit by tall windows at either end. Its floor was of black and white marble in lozenge pattern. Three immense chandeliers depended from its roof. Along each of the two unpierced walls, against panels of peeling stucco, stood a line of statuary—heathen goddesses, fauns, athletes and gladiators, with here and there a vase or urn copied from the antique. The furniture consisted of half a dozen chairs, a settee, and an octagon table, all carved out of wood in pseudo-

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classical patterns, and painted with a grey wash to resemble stone.

"It's a fine room," said Mr. Jope, walking up to a statue of Diana: "but a man couldn' hardly invite a mixed company to dinner here."

"Symonds's f'r instance," suggested Mr. Adams. Symonds's being a somewhat notorious boarding-house in a street of Plymouth which shall be nameless.

"You ought to be ashamed o' yourself, Bill," said Mr. Jope sternly.

"They're anticks, that's what they are."

Mr. Adams drew a long breath.

"I shouldn' wonder," he said.

"Turnin' 'em wi' their faces to the wall 'd look too marked," mused Mr. Jope. "But a few tex o' Scripture along the walls might ease things down a bit."

"Wot about the hold?" Mr. Adams suggested.

"The cellar, you mean. Let's have a look."

They passed through the hall; thence down a stone stairway into an ample vaulted kitchen, and thence along a slate-flagged corridor flanked by sculleries, larders and other kitchen offices. The two seamen searched the floors of all in hope of finding a cellar trap or hatchway, and Mr. Adams was still searching when Mr. Jope called to him from the end of the corridor—

"Here we are!"

He had found a flight of steps worthy of a cathedral

crypt, leading down to a stone archway. The archway was closed by an iron-studded door.

"It's like goin' to church," commented Mr. Jope, bating his voice. "Where's the candles, Bill?"

"In the barrer long wi' the bread an' bacon."

"Then step back and fetch 'em."

But from the foot of the stairs Mr. Jope presently called up that this was unnecessary, for the door had opened to his hand—smoothly, too, and without noise; but he failed to note this as strange, being taken aback for the moment by a strong draught of air that met him, blowing full in his face.

"There's daylight here, too, of a sort," he reported: and so there was. It pierced the darkness in a long shaft, slanting across from a doorway of which the upper panel stood open to the sky.

"Funny way o' leavin' a house," he muttered, as he stepped across the bare cellar floor and peered forth. "Why, hullo, here's water!"

The cellar, in fact, stood close by the river's edge, with a broad postern-sill actually overhanging the tide, and a flight of steps, scarcely less broad, curving up and around the south-west angle of the house.

While Mr. Jope studied these and the tranquil river flowing, all grey and twilit, at his feet, Mr. Adams had joined him and had also taken bearings.

"With a check-rope," said Mr. Adams, "—and I got one in the barrer—we can lower it down here easy."

He pointed to the steps.†

THE CASK ASHORE

“ Hey ? ” said Mr. Jope. “ Yes, the cask—to be sure.”

“ Wot else ? ” said Mr. Adams. “ An’ I reckon we’d best get to work, if we’re to get it housed afore dark.”

They did so : but by the time they had the cask bestowed and trigged up, and had spiled it and inserted a tap, darkness had fallen. If they wished to explore the house further, it would be necessary to carry candles ; and somehow neither Mr. Jope nor Mr. Adams felt eager for this adventure. They were hungry, moreover. So they decided to make their way back to the great hall, and sup.

They supped by the light of a couple of candles. The repast consisted of bread and cold bacon washed down by cold rum-and-water. At Symonds’s—they gave no utterance to this reflection, but each knew it to be in the other’s mind—at Symonds’s just now there would be a boiled leg of mutton with turnips, and the rum would be hot, with a slice of lemon.

“ We shall get accustomed,” said Mr. Jope with a forced air of cheerfulness.

Mr. Adams glanced over his shoulder at the statuary, and answered “ yes ” in a loud unflinching voice. After a short silence he arose, opened one of the windows, removed a quid from his cheek, laid it carefully on the outer sill, closed the window, and resumed his seat. Mr. Jope had pulled out a cake of tobacco, and was slicing it into small pieces with his clasp knife.

“Goin’ to smoke?” asked Mr. Adams, with another glance at the Diana.

“It don’t hurt this ’ere marble pavement—not like the other thing.”

“No”—Mr. Adams contemplated the pavement while he, too, drew forth and filled a pipe—“a man might play a game of checkers on it; that is o’ course, when no one was lookin’.”

“I been thinking,” announced Mr. Jope, “over what his Reverence said about bankin’ our money.”

“How much d’ye reckon we ’ve got?”

“Between us? Hundred an’ twelve pound, fourteen and six. That’s after paying for rum, barrer and oddments. We could live,” said Mr. Jope, removing his pipe from his mouth and pointing the stem at his friend in expository fashion—“we could live in this here house for more ’n three years.”

“Oh!” said Mr. Adams, but without enthusiasm.

“Could we now?”

“That is, if we left out the vittles.”

“But we ’re not goin’ to.”

“O’ course not. Vittles for two ’ll run away with a heap of it. And then there ’ll be callers.”

“Callers?” Mr. Adams’s face brightened.

“Not the sort you mean. Country folk. It’s the usual thing when strangers come an’ settle in a place o’ this size. . . . But, all the same, a hundred an’ twelve pound, fourteen and six is a heap: an’ as I say, we got to think over bankin’ it. A man feels solid settin’ here with money under his belt; an’

yet between you an' me I wouldn't mind if it was less so, in a manner o' speakin'."

"Me, either."

"I was wonderin' what it would feel like to wake in the night an' tell yourself that someone was rollin' up money for you like a snowball."

"There might be a certain amount of friskiness in that. But contrariwise, if you waked an' told yourself the fella was runnin' off with it, there wuldn'."

"Shore living folks takes that risk an' grows accustomed to it. W'y look at the fellow in charge o' this house."

"Where?" asked Mr. Adams nervously.

"The landlord-fellow, I mean, up in the village. His daughter said he went to sleep every arternoon, an' wouldn' be waked. How could a man afford to do that if his money wasn' rollin' up somewhere for him? An' the place fairly lined with barrels o' good liquor."

"Mightn't liquor accumulatte in the same way?" asked Mr. Adams, with sudden, and lively interest.

"No, you nincom'," began Mr. Jope—when a loud knocking on the outer door interrupted him.

"Hullo!" he sank his voice. "Callers already!"

He went to the door, unlocked and opened it. A heavy-shouldered, bull-necked man stood outside in the dusk.

"Good evenin'."

“Evenin’,” said the stranger. “My name is Coyne, an’ you must get out o’ this.”

“I don’t see as it follows,” answered Mr. Jope meditatively. “But hadn’t you better step inside?”

“I don’t want to bandy words——” began the publican, entering as though he shouldered his way.

“That’s right! Bill, fetch an’ fill a glass for the gentleman.”

“No thank you. . . . Well, since you have it handy. But look here: I got nothin’ particular to say against you two men, only you can’t stop here to-night. That’s straight enough, I hope, and no bones broken.”

“Straight it is,” Mr. Jope agreed: “and we’ll talk o’ the bones by an’ by. Wot name, sir?—makin’ so bold.”

“My name’s Coyne.”

“An’ mine’s Cash.” Mr. Jope fumbled with the fastening of a pouch underneath his broad waist-belt. “So we’re well met. How much?”

“Eh?”

“How much? Accordin’ to your darter ’twas forty pound a year, an’ money down: but whether monthly or quarterly she didn’ say.”

“It’s no question of money. It’s a question of you two clearin’ out, and at once. I’m breakin’ what I have to say as gently as I can. If you don’t choose to understand plain language, I must go an’ fetch the constable.”

“I seen him, up at the village this afternoon, an’

you 'd better not. Bill, why can't ye fill the gentleman's glass ? ”

“ Because the jug 's empty,” answered Mr. Adams.

“ Then slip down to the cellar again.”

“ No ! ” Mr. Coyne almost screamed it, rising from his chair. Dropping back weakly, he murmured, panting, “ Not for me : not on any account ! ” His face was pale, and for the moment all the aggressiveness had gone out of him. He lifted a hand weakly to his heart.

“ A sudden faintness,” he groaned, closing his eyes. “ If you two men had any feelin's, you 'd offer to see me home.”

“ The pair of us ? ” asked Mr. Jope suavely.

“ I scale over fourteen stone,” murmured Mr. Coyne, still with his eyes closed ; “ an' a weight like that is no joke.”

Mr. Jope nodded.

“ You 're right there ; so you 'd best give it over. Sorry to seem heartless, sir, but 'tis for your good : an' to walk home in your state would be a sin, when we can fix you up a bed in the house.”

Mr. Coyne opened his eyes, and they were twinkling vindictively.

“ Sleep in this house ? ” he exclaimed. “ I wouldn't do it, not for a thousand pound ! ”

“ W'y not ? ”

“ You 'll find out ‘ why not,’ safe enough, afore the mornin' ! Why 'twas in kindness—pure kindness—I asked the pair of ye to see me home. I

wouldn't be one to stay in this house alone arter nightfall—no, or I wouldn't be one to leave a dog alone here, let be a friend. My daughter didn' tell, I reckon, as this place was ha'nted ? ”

“ Ha'nted ? ”

“ Ay. By females too.”

“ O—oh ! ” Mr. Adams, who had caught his breath, let it escape in a long sigh of relief. “ Like Symonds's,” he murmured.

“ Not a bit like Symonds's,” his friend corrected snappishly. “ He 's talkin' o' dead uns—ghosts—that is, if I take your meanin', sir ? ”

Mr. Coyne nodded.

“ That 's it. Ghosts.”

“ Get out with you ! ” said Mr. Adams, incredulous.

“ You must be a pair of very simple men,” said landlord Coyne, half-closing his eyes again, “ if you reckoned that forty pound would rent a place like this without some drawbacks. Well, the drawbacks is ghosts. Four of 'em, and all females.”

“ Tell us about 'em, sir,” requested Mr. Jope, dropping into his seat. “ An' if Bill don't care to listen, he can fill up his time by takin' the jug an' steppin' down to the cellar.”

“ Damned if I do,” said Mr. Adams, stealing a glance over his shoulder at the statues.

“ It 's a distressin' story,” began Mr. Coyne with a very slight flutter of the eyelids. “ Maybe my daughter told you—an' if she didn't, you may have found out for yourselves—as how this here house is

properly speakin' four houses—nothing in common but the roof, an' the cellar, an' this room we 're sittin' in. . . . Well, then, back along there lived an old Rector here, with a man-servant called Oliver. One day he rode up to Exeter, spent a week there, an' brought home a wife. Footman Oliver was ready at the door to receive 'em, an' the pair went upstairs to a fine set o' rooms he 'd made ready in the sou'-west tower, an' there for a whole month they lived together, as you might say, in wedded happiness.

“ At th' end o' the month th' old Rector discovered he had business takin' him to Bristol. He said his farewells very lovin'ly, promised to come back as soon as he could, but warned the poor lady against setting foot outside the doors. The gardens an' fields (he said) swarmed with field mice, an' he knew she had a terror of mice of all sorts. So off he rode, an' by an' by came back by night with a second young lady: and Oliver showed 'em up to the nor'-east tower for the honeymoon.

“ A week later my gentleman had a call to post down to Penzance. He warned his second wife that it was a terrible year for adders an' the ground swarmin' with 'em, for he knew she had a horror o' snakes. Inside of a fortnight he brought home a third——”

“ Bill,” said Mr. Jope, sitting up sharply, “ what noise was that ? ”

“ I didn't hear it,” answered Mr. Adams. who was turning up his trousers uneasily. “ Adders, may be.”

“ Seemed to me it sounded from somewheres in the cellar. Maybe you wouldn’t mind steppin’ down, seein’ as you don’t take no interest in what Mr. Coyne’s tellin’.”

“ I’m beginning to.”

“ The cellar’s the worst place of all,” said Mr. Coyne, blinking. “ It’s there that the bodies were found.”

“ Bodies ? ”

“ Bodies. Four of ’em. I was goin’ to tell you how he brought home another, havin’ kept the third poor lady to her rooms with some tale about a mad dog starvin’ to death in his shrubberies—he didn’t know where——”

“ If you don’t mind,” Mr. Jope interposed, “ I’ve a notion to hear the rest o’ the story some other evenin’. It’s—it’s agreeable enough to bear spinnin’ out, an’ I understand you’re a fixture in this neighbourhood.”

“ Certainly,” said Mr. Coyne, rising. “ But wot about you ? ”

“ I’ll tell you to-morrow.”

Mr. Jope gripped the arms of his chair, having uttered the bravest speech of his life. He sat for a while, the sound of his own voice echoing strangely in his ears, even when Mr. Coyne rose to take his leave.

“ Well, I can’t help admirin’ you,” said Mr. Coyne handsomely. “ By the way the rent’s by the quarter, an’ in advance—fours into forty is ten ; I

mention it as a matter of business, and in case we don't meet again."

Mr. Jope counted out the money.

When Mr. Coyne had taken his departure the pair sat a long while in silence, their solitary candle flickering on the table between them.

"You spoke out very bold," said Mr. Adams at length.

"Did I?" said Mr. Jope. "I didn't feel it."

"What cuts me to the quick is the thought o' them adders outside."

"Ye dolt! There ain't no real adders outside. They're what the chap invented to frighten the women."

"Sure? Then," mused Mr. Adams, after a pause, "maybe there ain't no real ghosts neither, but he invented the whole thing."

"Maybe. What d'ye say to steppin' down an' fetchin' up another mugful o' liquor?"

"I say," answered Mr. Adams slowly, "as how I won't."

"Toss for it," suggested Mr. Jope. "You refuse? Very well then I must go. On'y I thought better of ye, Bill—I did indeed."

"I can't help what ye thought," Mr. Adams began sulkily; and then, as his friend rose with the face of a man who goes to meet the worst he sprang up quaking. "Lord's sake, Ben Jope! You ain't a-goin' to take the candle an' leave me!"

"Bill Adams," said Mr. Jope with fine solemnity,

“if I was to put a name on your besettin’ sin, it would be cowardice—an’ you can just sit here in the dark an’ think it over.”

“When I was on the p’int of offering to go with ye!”

“Ho! Was you. Very well, then, I accept the offer, an’ you can walk first.”

“But I don’t see——”

“Another word,” announced Mr. Jope firmly, “an’ you won’t! *For I’ll blow out the candle.*”

Mr. Adams surrendered, and tottered to the door. They passed out, and through the vaulted kitchen, and along the slate-flagged corridor—very slowly here, for a draught fluttered the candle flame, and Mr. Jope had to shield it with a shaking palm. Once with a hoarse “What’s that?” Mr. Adams halted and cast himself into a posture of defence—against his own shadow, black and amorphous, wavering on the wall.

They came to the iron-studded door.

“Open, you,” commanded Mr. Jope under his breath. “And not too fast, mind—there was a breeze o’ wind blowin’ this arfternoon. Steady does it—look out for the step, an’ then straight forw——”

A howl drowned the last word, as Mr. Adams struck his shin against some obstacle and pitched headlong into darkness—a howl of pain blent with a dull jarring rumble. Silence followed, and out of the silence broke a faint groan.

“Bill! Bill Adams! Oh, Bill, for the Lord’s

THE CASK ASHORE

sake——!" Still mechanically shielding his candle, Mr. Jope staggered back a pace, and leaned against the stone door-jamb for support.

"Here!" sounded the voice of Bill, very faint in the darkness. "Here! fetch along the light, quick!"

"Wot 's it?"

"Casks."

"Casks?"

"Kegs, then. I ought to know," responded Bill plaintively, "seing as I pretty near broke my leg on one!"

Mr. Jope peered forward, holding the light high. In the middle of the cellar stood the quarter puncheon and around it a whole regiment of small barrels. Half doubting his eyesight, he stooped to examine them. Around each keg was bound a sling of rope.

"Rope?" muttered Mr. Jope, stooping. "Foreign rope—left-handed rope——" And with that of a sudden he sat down on the nearest keg and began to laugh. "The old varmint! the darned old sinful methodeerin' varmint!"

"Oh, stow it, Ben! 'Tisn' manly." But still the unnatural laughter continued. "What in thunder——"

Bill Adams came groping between the kegs.

"Step an' bar the outer door, ye nincom! *Can't you see?* There's been a run o' goods; an' while that Coyne sat stuffin' us up with his ghosts, his boys were down below here loadin' us up with neat furrin'

sperrits—*loadin' us up*, mark you. My blessed word, the fun we 'll have wi' that Coyne to-morrow ! ”

Mr. Adams in a mental fog groped his way to the door opening on the river steps, bolted it, groped his way back and stood scratching his head. A grin, grotesque in the wavering light, contorted the long lower half of the face for a moment and was gone. He seldom smiled.

“ On the whole,” said Mr. Adams, indicating the kegs, “ I fancy these better 'n the naked objects upstairs. Suppose we spend the rest o' the night here ? It's easier,” he added, “ than runnin' to and fro for the drink. But what about liquor not accumylatin' ? ”

PART II

Priam's Cellars

PRIAM'S CELLARS lie by the harbour-side over against TroyTown, as is meet and proper : nor was their name invented by me—you may find it on the Admiralty charts. But as there are, or have been, Troys and Troys, so the Priam here commemorated is not he whom Neoptolemus slew. Indeed, there are found folk who spell my Priam's name "Prime," or "Old Prime," and insist that he derived it from the quality of the beer he brewed here and purveyed. He is dead and gone, anyhow, these many years ; and the ale-house he kept open for seamen is now a store for dunnage-wood, a ruin almost, upon a dilapidated quay.

It must have been, as Mr. W. Bones described *The Admiral Benbow* 'a pleasant sittuated grog-shop ;' but ticklish of access ; and (one may surmise) even more ticklish for the retreating guest. A steep cliff backs it ; cliff, with a foreshore of rock and slippery weed, closes it in upon either hand ; no road leads to it, nor even a footpath. In short, it can only be reached by boat ; and of this no doubt Mr. Priam, or Prime, took account when he brewed.

From the cliff overhanging the rear of the cellars a wilderness climbs the hillside, terrace by terrace ; based with a line of sizeable trees that droop their boughs to the high tides, and mounting through orchards of apple, pear, plum, cherry, and thickets of hawthorn, blackthorn, spindlewood, elder, to a high amphitheatre which is all gorse and bracken, with here and there a holly or an ilex standing up from the undergrowth. The fruit trees are decrepit, twisted with age or by the climbing ivy. The cherries have reverted to savagery, and serve only to make a pretty show of blossom in April. No one knows when they were planted for human delight : but planted they once were, and for that purpose, for my wilderness six hundred years ago for certain—and possibly seven or eight hundred years ago—was a terraced garden, pleasance of the great house that stood where now stands the farmstead of Hall, a little beyond the brow of the hill.

Listen ; for this, if you please, is history. Some time in the reign of King Edward II there sailed into the harbour below a young knight, Sir Reginald de Mohun by name, with a company of soldiers drafted for Ireland—our port being in those days a frequent rendezvous for the Irish wars. Now either the expedition was held windbound, or some units were late in arriving ; at all events, young Sir Reginald, being detained here, landed one day to kill time, and let fly his hawk at some game. Hawk and quarry fell together into this garden,

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then owned by Sir John FitzWilliam, of Hall, who held £20 per annum of land of King Edward with "summons to attend the King in parts beyond the sea," as his ancestors had held it since the Conquest. But he had no sons. His sole heir was his daughter Elizabeth. As she wandered in her garden, young Mohun, bursting in hotfoot to reclaim his hawk, came face to face with her, "and," concludes the chronicle, "being a very handsome personable young gentleman, qualities which his descendants retained to the last, the young lady fell in love with him: and, having a great fortune, the match was soon made up between them by the consent of their friends on both sides."

This Reginald de Mohun was the fourth or fifth son of John de Mohun, Lord of Dunster, in Somerset; and the Mohuns of Dunster had been great folk since the Conquest and before. "Be it known," says Leland, "that in the year of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ one thousand and sixty-six, on Saturday the feast of St. Calixtus, came William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy, cousin of the noble King St. Edward, the son of Emma of England, and killed King Harold, and took away the land from him by the aid of the Normans and other men of divers lands: among whom came with him Sir William de Moion the old, the most noble of all the host." But Leland must have copied some flattering document. Moion or Mohun was no more noble and no more powerful than Mowbray or Marmion,

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Bigot or Mortimer, Montfichet or Lacy or Courcy. Still, he was noble and powerful enough.

Le viel William de Mohun
Ont avecq li maint compaignon

—and he became Sheriff of Somerset, and one of the wealthiest landowners in the West of England. The Empress Matilda made his son Earl of Somerset, a title which subsequent Mohuns could not get confirmed until a great-great-grandson, “a man of singular gentleness and piety,” recovered it in a highly romantic manner.

“When Sir Reginald saw that done” [*that* being the dedication of a Cistercian Abbey he had built at Newenham, on the borders of Devon and Somerset] “he passed to the Court of Rome, which was then at Lyons, to confirm and ratify his new Abbey to his great honour for ever; and he was at the Court in Lent, when they sing the office of the Mass *Lactare Jerusalem*, on which day the custom of the Court is that the Apostle (the Pope, to wit) gives to the most valiant and the most honourable man who can be found at the said Court a rose or flower of fine gold. They therefore searched the whole Court, and found this Reginald to be the most noble; and to him Pope Innocent gave this rose or flower of gold, and the Pope asked him what manner of man he was in his own country. He answered, ‘A plain knight bachelor.’ ‘Fair son,’ said the Pope, ‘this rose or flower has never been given save to Kings or to

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Dukes or to Earls ; therefore we will that you shall be Earl of Este ' ; that is, of Somerset. Reginald answered and said, ' O Holy Father, I have not wherewithal to maintain the title.' The Apostle therefore gave him two hundred marks a year, to be received at the Choir of St. Paul's, in London, out of the pence* of England, to maintain his position." So Sir Reginald returned home with the Papal bulls confirming his title, his pension, and his new Abbey, and henceforward the sleeved hand which he bore on his coat-of-arms (*gules, a manche argent*) is depicted with Pope Innocent's flower in its grasp.

You perceive, then, that this other Sir Reginald, whom we have left an unconscionable while face to face with Elizabeth FitzWilliam in the garden, was scion of a very noble stock indeed. For a generation or two the Dunster house continued to increase in dignities. One of its daughters married a prince of the blood royal. The last of its sons won special favour in Court and camp, Edward III including him among the twenty-five original Knights of the Garter, and the Black Prince presenting him with a war horse, Grizel Gris by name. But he died without male issue, and his widow, Joan de Burgersh, promptly sold the barony of Dunster, lock, stock and barrel, to pass after her death to the Lady Elizabeth Luttrell. Five hundred marks (£3,333 6s. 8d., an enormous sum in those days) was

* Peter's pence.

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the price paid for the succession: and since the Lady Joan lived for thirty years after the bargain, in one sense she had the better of it. But the Luttrells have made up for that trifling delay by holding Dunster Castle ever since.

Meanwhile our Reginald and Elizabeth had married and settled in the old FitzWilliam house of Hall, here in the parish of Lanteglos-by-Troy; and they and their children and children's children "cultivated their garden," which is the very garden I am inviting you to view. In Elizabeth's time these Mohuns of Hall became important, and built themselves a fine house, shaped like an E in compliment to the Virgin Queen. In 1602 Sir Reginald Mohun, Kt., attained to the dignity of baronet, and thirty years later (in the fourth of Charles I) his son, Sir John, was created Lord Mohun of Okehampton. A brass upon the tomb of one of his ancestors, in Lanteglos Church, reads us the moral, *Provideant cuncti, sic transit gloria mundi*—"Take warning all that so passes this world's glory." But the new peer ignored this in choosing his motto, *Generis revocamus honores*.

This Lord Mohun was one of Charles' commanders in the West during the Civil War, albeit Clarendon (who plainly disliked him) hints that it was touch-and-go which cause he should embrace. Clarendon further tells us, in that urbane way of his, that the appointment caused some indignation, for that the Lord Mohun "had not the good fortune to be very

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gracious in his own country." At all events, he quitted himself well in the victory of Stamford Hill by Stratton: and in the later campaign of the West, which ended in Essex surrendering an army, entertained His Majesty at his new house of Boconnoc, some few miles to the northward of the old family seat. "From thence," I quote from a rough diary kept by one Richard Symonds, a Royalist lieutenant, "Satterday, 17 Aug. 1644, his Majestie went to Lanteglos, to the manor house belonging to the Lord Mohun just over against Troye, where his royall person ventred to goe into a walke there which is within halfe musket-shott from Troye, where a poore fisherman was killed in looking over at the same time that his Majestie was in the walke, and in the place where the King a little afore passed by." This walk runs just above our garden, and last year in digging we happened upon a round shot of the period.

I fancy that Clarendon was not alone in misliking Lord Mohun, and that the race had already developed some of those unamiable qualities which culminated in Charles, the fourth and last baron—"bloody Mohun," the villain of Thackeray's *Esmond*. For his career and the fatal duel with the Duke of Hamilton you are referred to the pages of that immortal novel. He was a bad man, and his wife no better a woman; who, when his body came home, swore at the bearers for making a nasty mess of her clean linen sheets. So he perished and went to his place: but I have sometimes amused myself with picturing

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the man, on one of his infrequent visits to the family estate, lolling in the great Mohun pew—as Carlyle would put it, “ a blustering dissipated human figure, with a kind of blackguard quality air,” the cynosure of a congregation of rustics, his bored gaze conning a spot of red in the eastern window of the south aisle, where on a shield *gules* a sleeved hand kept its hold on Pope Innocent’s rose.

He died without heir, and his estates—or so much of them as had escaped the gaming table—were dispersed ; the great new house where his grandfather had entertained King Charles going to Governor Pitt, who bought it with the proceeds of the famous Pitt diamond. (That is another story, as Mr. Kipling used to say : but you begin to feel the sense of history that pervades my small wilderness.) The old house of Hall, being sold with the rest, gradually declined to a farmhouse, and its private chapel to a cow-byre, where to-day you may see the cattle munching turnips under a corbelled roof. As for the terraced garden, I have not been able to follow its vicissitudes of fortune, but imagine that the inhabitants of Hall—now “ Hall Farm ”—either themselves tilled it neglectfully or let it out in patches to their labourers. By the date of my own recollections it had passed into the tenancy of one man, and was known as “ Little Tonkin’s Garden.”

The tragedy of Little Tonkin’s Garden has haunted its way through more than one story of mine. I can just remember the man as hale and hearty, a demon

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to work, bald-faced, diminutive of stature, a friend of all, and respected by all. He "never spoke out of his turn," as they say; but would return your greeting heartily, even extra-heartily, in a high-pitched voice that shook with good feeling. Of what that voice was capable the whole town learned from time to time, usually of a Sunday evening, when from his side of the harbour, where he dwelt with an invalid wife and her sister, Miss C——, in a cottage by the quay, he spied the crew of a foreign vessel raiding his strawberries or green peas or apples. The voice he would uplift then, and continue at topmost pitch, while pressing across the water in a boat, had to be heard to be believed. For, apart from the care lavished on his bed-ridden wife—his "bed-rider," as he called her—the garden claimed all his waking thoughts. And the strawberries he grew there! and the apples! not to mention the grapes and peaches.

Namque sub Oebaliae memini me turribus altis
Qua niger umectat flaventia culta Galaesus
Corycium vidisse senem—

For once beneath Oebalia's skyey tow'rs,
Where black through yellowing wheat Galaesus pours,
I mind an old Corycian swain I found,
Lord of some starveling acres—hopeless ground
For grazing, harvestless of grain, for grape
Ill aspected. Yet 'mid the briers he'd scrape
For kale and herbs, scant poppies, lilies white,
Blithe as a king! and, shouldering home at night,

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Shoot down an unbought banquet on the board.
Him first would Spring her rose, him first afford
Autumn her apples. Winter next unkind
Might split the rock with ice. the streamlet bind,
But forth he 'd chirp to crop the hyacinth's head,
Twitting the tardy heats, the west wind slug-a-bed.

Even such a man was Little Tonkin—the *epitheton ornans* always went with the surname. In the prime of life he had taken tenancy of this wilderness, and for years he grappled with it—hacking down undergrowth, rebuilding old terraces; digging, weeding, planting, watering; reclaiming plot after plot, winning all the while. The garden, strange to say, was waterless; or, to be accurate, it included a square yard or two of plashy soil where some ooze might be collected in a sunken bucket. He soon acquired a permanent stoop from the constant haulage of water barrels and portage of manure in “maunds” or great wicker baskets up and down the toilsome slopes.

I dare say the man himself never knew accurately when the tide turned against him and the tragedy began. One year he built himself a vinery; the next a peach-house. After this, as was meet, he took things easily for a while; yet went on enlarging his bounds. Then followed half a dozen years during which his conquests languished, paused, stood still. And then—I have often wondered at what point, in what form, the assaulted wilderness found its Joan of Arc. At all events the briars and brambles

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rallied somehow, stood up to him, pressed in upon him, and began slowly to drive him back. Poor Little Tonkin!

Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee!

Even in the days when we children praised his strawberries—no such strawberries as Little Tonkin's!—he was a beaten man. Year by year, on one excuse or another, an outpost, a foot or two, a rod of ground, would be surrendered and left to be reclaimed by the weeds. They were the assailants now, and they had him on the run; until there came a summer and found my friend at bay in a small patch by the vinery, with a line of last retreat barely open along a nettle-grown orchard to the peach-house, once his pride.

I may call him my friend, for in those sad latter days he came often to consult with me; not seeking help—which indeed could not have been offered without offence to his pride. I gathered that, albeit well-disposed towards everyone, and living his life through among neighbours well disposed towards him, he had never found one upon whom he had cared to unburden his heart; and I think that his wife's long illness had closed that best part of married life, the sweet sharing of troubles. He could not at any rate confide in her—might not even let her suspect—the one awful shadow of his life.

She must die before him. As God was merciful that must assuredly happen! Otherwise, what in

the world would become of her? . . . He could not tell if she ever thought of that; had not dared so much as to hint at it. He had spoken to her sister, Miss C——, about it, once. He confessed this, nobly reproaching himself: for Miss C——, too, would be derelict if he died, and Miss C—— had on her own part (he felt sure) a horror of the workhouse. Miss C—— had heartened him up; the invalid upstairs had never so much as hinted at this dreadful possibility. “Folks with ailments,” said Miss C—— stoically, “han’t got time for supposin’ this an’ supposin’ that, you may be sure. Put it that *you’d* been laid a-bed this score o’ years with a running leg! Come now, I ask you.”

But I am morally sure that the invalid upstairs lay thinking about it all the time. Quite quietly she arranged matters in the end by dying just a month before her husband; and Miss C——, mercifully broken in health by the strain of nursing the pair, retired to the Infirmary, whence up to the last she sent cheerful messages to her friends; for you can use the Infirmary as a place of address without loss of self-respect.

Little Tonkin’s Garden went derelict again, and for a year or so remained derelict.

One day my late friend, A. D——, merchant of this town, desired to see me “to consult upon a small matter of business; which,” the letter went on to say, “can better be discussed in my house than in yours.” In any event, I should have gone to

him, knowing that for some time he had been in indifferent health. I called accordingly, and found him in his dining-room.

Now A. D——'s dining-room window, overlooking his waterside yard, faced directly across the narrow harbour upon Little Tonkin's Garden. "I have been thinking a great deal about that garden yonder," said A. D——. "All these weeks, sitting here ill, I've found it a real delight to the eyes. A thousand pities it will be if anybody comes along and breaks it up for potatoes or strawberries." "There's no danger of that, I hope?" said I. "Well, I've heard rumours," said he; "and that is why I sent for you, knowing how keen you are about everything that's beautiful in this place. Couldn't we rent it together—the rent must be a trifle—and just keep it as it is? Of course," he sighed, "I shall never be able to visit it; my heart is weak, and would never stand the climb. But you might use it as you pleased—make a playground of it for your children. I know you would keep whatever was worth keeping, and I should have the pleasure of looking across on it. Now, I dare say," he added wistfully, "you think it doting of me, to set this store on a spot just because it pleases the eye?"

But I did not: and so it was agreed that we should rent Little Tonkin's Garden together, if upon inquiry—which he promised to make—the price should prove to be moderate. A week or two later, however, he sent me another message. The rent was not

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worth our dividing, and he proposed (with my leave) to become sole tenant, on the understanding that "if anything happened to him" the reversion would be mine. Meanwhile I was to use the place as I chose, and at any time. I thanked him, and straight-way let the small compact slip out of mind.

I forgot it even at my friend's funeral, some months later; and again when a key was brought me (as it happened in the midst of some public business) I put it thoughtlessly aside in a drawer. In short I had been tenant of the Garden for close upon six months, when one day, as we rowed beneath its overhanging trees, Cynthia let fall a word of regret for its unkempt condition, and for Little Tonkin and the strawberries he had grown—*mais où sont les fraises d'antan?* or words to that effect. "Heavens!" I cried, "and it belongs to me!" "What!" shouted the family, with one voice; and when I had made my halting confession, nothing would do but we must all land and explore at once. A crazy ladder, slippery with weed, its lower rungs rotted by the tides, led up alongside Priam's Cellars to good foothold on the garden; and there the brambles met us. Brambles and blackthorns—it took us that whole summer to clear paths through the undergrowth and explore our domain, which for the children was even such an enchanted tangle as held the Sleeping Beauty; and every fresh clearing brought its joyous surprise. Here the vine, after bursting the glass-house and littering the ground

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with broken panes, had lifted its framework bodily and carried it to the branches of an ash some twenty paces distant, where it dangled to wind and rain. There, stripping the ivies, we disclosed a terrace wall, with steps leading up to a bastion where a belvedere had once stood. Here—its tenement decayed and dropped like an old skirt about its feet—a peach tree climbed the face of the rock; while there, again, over another terrace, sprawled a bush of the Seven Sisters rose, of a girth not to be compassed by us though we tried all to join hands around it.

But best of all was our finding of water.

The credit of it, which is disputed by two of us, does not at any rate belong to Euergetes (I call our boatman Euergetes, because the name so differs from his real one that neither he nor his family will recognise it); and this, although it was his foot that, happening to sink in a plashet among the ferns, put us on the track. When, after acclaiming the discovery, we seized spade and pick and began to dig, Euergetes took a sardonic view of the whole business. To our enthusiasm he opposed an indifference in manner respectful enough, but deadly critical in effect; would return to the subject of water as if by an effort of memory, lost no occasion to leave us and resume his work of stripping away ivy to give the trees air and sunlight, and plainly nursed the pleasure of conveying to us at the last that we were all fools, and he, if consulted, could have warned us.

The plashet lay but a few yards from the shallow

pan where Little Tonkin had collected water painfully by sinking a bucket. It lay also in a line between the pan and an outcrop of rock ; towards which, after enlarging the pan to a well, and digging it out to the depth of five feet, we led our trench. As we dug, the water rose about our feet—whence it oozed we could not say, for the subsoil was a grey lias, very difficult to work and apparently almost watertight. We indued sea-boots and fishermen's jumpers for the work ; and I recall an afternoon when in this costume I was haled from the pit and carried off to make up the quorum of an Old Age Pensions Committee. Before crossing on this beneficent errand, I had to stand knee-deep in the harbour tide and lave me. . . . I believe it was two days later that we tapped the living rock, and the water came with a gush (the thrill of it !) under stroke of my pick. Having cleaned out a grotto for the spring, we arched it with stones, and planted the archway cunningly, so that now, after two years, roses bedrape it—Hiawatha and Lady Gay—and small ferns thrive in the crevices, the *asplenium marinum* among others—while taller ferns crowd the dingle around, beneath the shade of two pear trees. Of the soil tossed out by our spades we built a hard plateau around a spreading hawthorn ; piped the overflow of the well downhill through a line of sunken tubs in which we planted a few of the rarer water-lilies (the tiny yellow *odorata*, with *lilacea* and the crimson *Froebeli*), and finally, with our own hands, dug out and cemented

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a cistern some thirty feet long on a lower terrace, where the larger white and yellow lilies already thrive. Also, we built a waterfall which in winter makes a passable show ; but throughout the summer the monkey-plant chokes it and hides the rocks in a cascade of orange-scarlet. For the sake of some childish memories I thrust a few roots of this into the moist crevices, and lo ! in one season it had ramped over the slope, choking the arums, the bergamot, the myosotis, and some rare Japanese irises on which my heart was set. We tear it up by handfuls from time to time ; but it has taken charge and will not be denied.

Now the rules of the garden are three, and we made them at the start :—

Rule I.—We do everything with our own hands—be it forestry, masonry, carpentry or tillage. As ours is the well and the cistern, so ours is the table beneath the hawthorn and ours are the garden seats, whence, at luncheon or at tea in the pauses of labour, we look down on the water-lilies and the sagged roof of Priam's Cellars and the open decks of the ships that lie close below moored in tier to a great buoy—so close that one could almost jerk a biscuit over their bulwarks. They are barques for the most part ; Glasgow built, to ply around the Horn ; in these later days, by one of the freaks of the shipping industry, sold away to Italian firms and manned by Italian crews. These crews are terrible thieves, by the way : but—

Rule II.—We resolved to treat our wilderness as a wilderness, and not to fash ourselves over any rights of property. Decent precautions against theft we might take, and against trespass; but neither theft nor trespass should be allowed to upset our tempers. To this resolution we have kept pretty constant; and, if they cannot quite understand us, the crews of these vessels are coming to know us. For an instance—the season before last was a great one for apples, and it occurred to us to fill a couple of maunds and carry them off to the crew of the *Nostra Signora del Rosario*, anchored below; a light-hearted crowd that, to the strains of a mandolin, had delighted us through one Sunday afternoon by their dancing. At first, as we rowed alongside, they did not understand; they waved us off; they were not buying. When in broken English, mixed up with the recollections of Dante, I managed to convey to them that the apples were a gift for their kindly acceptance, all caps flew off. But the best happened some ten days later when, reading a book in my own garden lower down the harbour, I looked up to see an Italian barque passing seaward in charge of a tug, and dipping her flag; whereupon, dropping Calderon, I hurried to my own flagstaff and dipped the British ensign, and the *vivas* of the *Nostra Signora del Rosario* floated back to me as she met the Channel tide.

Our Third Rule (I maintain, a wise one) is to weep over no loss that we have planted, but simply to

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plant for thriving, and thereafter let each root do the best it can. For roses we use the free-growing, not to say rampant, kinds: Penzance sweet-briers, Wichurianas and the like, with such old favourites as Dundee Rambler, Carmine Pillar, the Garland. In the rock garden, one of our newer toys, the plants are hardy, as the rock is as Nature placed it, creviced it, ribbed it. Cistus you will find there, with helianthemums, heaths, foxgloves, tall daisies; creeping sedums, veronicas; pockets of purple aubretia, yellow alyssum, white arabis; but none of the expensive alpiners dear to amateurs. To be sure we free our fruit-trees from the strangling creepers, and trench and clean the ground for sweet peas, as for the strawberries, which I dare say our children find as delectable in flavour as ever we found Little Tonkin's. But our interference with Nature does not amount to much; and all the flowers we train add but a grace to the feast of wild-flowers she spreads for us, the sheets of primroses, wild hyacinth, red robin, lady-smocks, blue scabious, succeeding the snowdrops and daffodils left by Little Tonkin for us to inherit. He lives in the garden still—

Aestatem increpitans seram zephyrosque morantes—

We are constantly happening on reminders—a golden or crimson garden primrose among the pale wild ones, a Sweet-William standing tall and alone in the grasses, a columbine, a Jacob's-ladder—that he, gentle soul, has passed this way.

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Here, then, amid all this unbought wealth, I sit—preferably by the pool whence the water trickles—and, musing on the many who have walked in this garth, under these orchard boughs, glad to

hold a green earth leased
Briefly between two shades—

break off to watch a blue-finch taking his bath, or a wren feeding her young in a cranny of the stones (having overcome her fear of me, so quiet I sit); while the runnel keeps its murmur, and still from distant parts of the garden the children's voices come borne to me. Their voices have deepened in tone, as their hands have grown stronger and more skilful with bill-hook, spade, digger, since first they ran shouting upon this undiscovered country. . . .

I remember paying a visit once to a friend—an old clergyman—in the north of Cornwall. In the twilight before dinner he took me forth to show me his garden. The flowers grew valiantly in it—as valiantly as ever; but every turn of the path, every clearing, brought me face to face with something fallen to ruin—a summer-house, a swing, an arbour collapsed among the honeysuckle. My host had his explanation for each. “Dick and Grace built this swing.” “I put this up soon after we came here, when my two eldest were children.” “Ruth had a fancy to sling a hammock here.” “Harry made this seat as a birthday present for his mother.” . . . But Harry, Dick, Ruth, Grace, and the rest

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had grown up years ago, and married and settled afar. Three of the boys had emigrated; three—two girls and a boy—were dead.

He that hath found some fledg'd bird's nest, may know
At first sight if the bird be flown;
But what fair well or grove he sings in now,
That is to him unknown.

“In last year's nests,” said Don Quixote, dying, “you look not for this year's birds.” So no doubt it will happen again, as it has happened often before, in Little Tonkin's Garden. But meantime the afternoon sun is warm. I shall have had my day.

On a Marble Stair

*I can't afford a mile of sward,
Parterres and peacocks gay ;
For velvet lawns and marble fauns
Mere authors cannot pay.*

BUT I possess a Marble Stair.

A stair, I say ; not a staircase. The late Mr. Dan Leno, of pleasant memory, had a song upon the amenities of his place of residence, and, as was customary with him, interspersed the melody with passages of joyous prose. " There 's a river, and trees, at the bottom of my garden," he would tell us expansively ; and then, checking himself, with a look of anxious candour, " Well yes, in a way the river 's at the bottom of the garden ; but *most* of the time the garden 's at the bottom of the river." (A pause, a quick inward struggle, and more candour.) " When I say ' river ' it 's not—altogether—what *you* might call a river ; it 's—it 's—er—it 's the overflow from the gasworks. . . . And the trees ? Well, they *are* trees ; but *split*, if you take me ; palings ; er—in fact, they 're a bill-hoarding."

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Even so might I proceed and confess that my Marble Stair is only the half of a garden step, and a back garden step at that. But it is of marble; and moreover from this sequestered platform, without aspiring like Archimedes to move the world, I can at any time project myself like a bold diver into the great mundane movement.

But to understand this, and other magical properties of my Marble Stair, you must first hear how I came by it.

Not long ago I discoursed of a wilderness garden called Priam's Cellars, and mentioned, as no small part of its charm, the tier of shipping that lies moored in deep water, yet close under the cliff. Of these vessels by far the most beautiful are the barques—Scottish-built and Italian-owned—which come to us in ballast, and depart with cargoes of china clay for the Mediterranean. They are not only beautiful in themselves: in our eyes they wear a double beauty because we are so soon to lose them. It is but a few years since they began to visit us. In a very few years they will have vanished utterly—perished from off the seas.

To tell at length why they visit us and why, under our eyes, they are perishing, would be to write a curious chapter in the history of the world's mercantile marine. Briefly, it has all come about through the Panama Canal. These most shapely craft, varying in size from six hundred to two thousand tons, were all launched from the Clyde to

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sail around Cape Horn and make money for British owners. In them the winged spirit of the sailing ship lingers out, surviving only because steamships cannot profitably stow the coal necessary for so far a voyage. But the Panama Canal will soon be cut ; and then farewell to tall masts, sails, rigging, all the lovely vision !

But what do the survivors here, under the Italian flag ?

Why, as the day of Panama approaches, British owners are selling them as fast as they can. And the Italians (or, to speak more particularly, the Genoese) are buying ; for sundry reasons, of which two may be mentioned. (1) These blue-water ships have a considerable draught, and would be useless for traffic in shallow seas such as the Baltic ; whereas the Mediterranean ports are deep and can accommodate them. But (2) actually the Italian purchaser does not propose to employ them for more than a voyage or two. The cunning fellow has discovered that while his Government levies a crippling duty on imported iron, iron imported in the shape of a ship is allowed to escape the tax ; and so the noble hull, riding here so swan-like—" a thing of life "—has her sentence already written. A short respite there may be : but she goes to Genoa to be slaughtered, smashed up into old iron, which, having passed under the rollers, will be re-issued almost as good as new—and considerably cheaper.

A fair number of these barques keep their original

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Scottish names ; possibly because the Italian firms have caught hold of our northern superstition that it is unlucky to re-christen a ship. On my list of them I find the *Banffshire* (800 tons), the *Loch Etive* (1230), the tall *Cressington* (2053), the *Bass Rock* (990), the *King Malcolm* (whose tonnage I forget), the *Emma Parker* (1157)—all of Genoa. (The *Emma Parker* has a skipper named Angelico, and carries a dolphin's tail for a talisman on her bowsprit end.) But the most of them have been re-baptized : the *Pellegrina O.* (1507), the *Maria Teresa* (1772), the *Giacomo* (1295), the *Penthesilea* (1661), the *Giuseppe d'Abunda* (993), the *Nostra Signora del Rosario* (899), the *Santa Chiara* and *Precursore M.* [both of 674] ; the *Bettinin Accame* (967), *Checco* (798), *Avante Savona* (1283)—all Clyde-built ; all manned now by Italians, who on Sunday afternoons dance upon deck to the strains of fiddle and accordion, to delight us as we sit looking down from the terraced garden like gods on Olympus.

They are pleasant fellows, these Italian seamen, but terrible apple-stealers ; and I confess this Olympian or (shall I say ?) Phæacian atmosphere was shaken the other day by a severe thunderstorm on my discovery that a small but promising orchard had been stripped to its last fruit. Ulysses came *alone* to Phæacia, you will remember, having lost all his mariners by shipwreck ; else I wonder what would have happened in that famous garden of King Alcinoüs, where grew tall trees blossoming, pear

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trees and pomegranates, and apples with bright fruit, and sweet figs and olives in their bloom.

The fruit of these trees never perisheth neither faileth, winter nor summer, enduring through all the year. Evermore the west wind blowing brings some fruits to birth and ripens others. Pear upon pear waxes old, and apple on apple, yea and cluster ripens upon cluster of the grape, and fig upon fig.

And there, as you remember too, King Alcinous reclined in his chair and drank wine like an immortal :

τῷ ὄρει οἴνοποτάζει ἐφήμενος ἀθάνατος ἄς.

(a truly royal picture), while beside him his queen, having taken her work out to the garden, "sat weaving yarn of sea-purple stain, a wonder to behold" . . . I am very sure that my Italian visitors would never have spared those trees: and the Greeks, they say, are worse apple-stealers than the Italians—the worst in the world, in fact, with the single exception of my friend Mr. A. G—— and his crew of yachtsmen, who as pillagers of orchards are admittedly *hors concours*.

The King sits in Phæacia town

Drinking the blude-red wine;

'O what I will give this skeely skipper?

A seven days, or a fine?

It sall be ten-and-six, and-six,

But and the costs forbye. . . .'

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Cynthia and Euergetes (I call our boatman Euergetes because it is not his real name nor anything like it) clamoured for an instant call on the police and revenge by legal process. I cleared my throat and thus addressed them: "Cynthia," said I, "and you, Euergetes, be good enough to remember that when we took over the tenancy of this plot one of our first resolutions was to keep an equable mind, no matter what we might be called upon to suffer in the way of trespass." But this (urged Cynthia) was stealing, and moreover forbidden in the Bible, not to mention the Ante-Communion Service; while Euergetes at once fetched up that masking smile of his which conveys quite respectfully, yet as plainly as words could put it, that I am about to make a fool of myself. I accepted the challenge as usual. "Euergetes," said I, "you are a brave man in some respects: but in the matter of snakes I think you are the biggest coward known to me. Last week you spied a solitary adder in this garden"—here Euergetes looked around him—"and had to go home incontinently and change your trousers, so certain were you that they harboured the rest of the brood." Euergetes admitted that snakes went against nature to a man bred on the sea. "The Ancient Mariner," said I, "blessed them once, in a passage of remarkable beauty; but I take you at your word. You shall paint a notice-board warning these seamen that this garden fairly teems

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“with snakes.” And I sketched out the following advertisement :

TO MARINERS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THESE GROUNDS SHELTER A NURSERY OF SERPENTS, TO BE HAD FOR THE TROUBLE OF TAKING AWAY, AS OWNER HAS GIVEN UP COLLECTING.

AMONG THE SPECIES REPRESENTED ARE :—

SCORPION AND ASP (NAMED VARIETIES).

AMPHISBÆNA DIRE :

CERASTES (HORNED), HYDRUS ;

ELOPS DREAR (EARLY, PROLIFIC) ;

AND DIPSAS (RECOMMENDED).

Paradise Lost, Book X.

INSPECTION INVITED.

“But,” objected Cynthia, “I have heard you say the most dreadful things about landlords and others who decorate the country with notice-boards.” “True,” said I, “and this one might help to discredit a bad custom. It is one of the uses of ridicule.” “The bad custom we want to correct just now,” she retorted, “is the custom of stealing our apples.” She gazed down with disapproval on the deck of the Italian, where a half-dozen swarthy villains were turning a winch very half-heartedly, drawing up

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basketfuls of ballast from the hold. Two men stood by the bulwarks to handle the basket and tip its contents down a wooden chute overside, whence it fell with a rush into the Harbour Commissioners' ballast lighter. I watched this operation for some moments, and two things struck me; of which the first was that the two Cornish lightermen, whose business it was to receive this ballast and pack it away smoothly with their long-handled shovels, kept easily ahead of the eight men on deck, not to speak of the unseen workers in the hold. I pointed this out to Euergetes, who answered that it was a poor job at which two of our fellows couldn't keep pace with a dozen foreigners. Now Euergetes, whatever his faults, is no vocal patriot, inclining rather to be most caustic upon that portion of mankind with which he is best acquainted—so much so, indeed, that if ever he lays down his life for us it will be entirely for the sake of our shortcomings. It surprised me, therefore, to hear his testimonial to two working men with whom I knew him to be on neighbourly terms; but "It's the food," he explained. "What they give these foreign crews to eat on board wouldn't put heart into a ——" Here he came to a sudden halt. He had been about to say "rabbit"; but there were nets to be hauled that evening, and (as every Cornishman knows) if he had once uttered that ill-omened word, good-bye to all chance of fish! He substituted "cat." "But," objected Cynthia, "that doesn't account for

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it at all ; because these men have been eating our apples, and the very best." " Then," I hazarded, " perhaps they are suffering from incipient gastritis. We must account for it somehow." " At any rate," she replied with calm, " they seem to be working harder than any of *us*, at this moment " ; whereat in some haste Euergetes took up his mattock and went off to dig potatoes.

After a pause Cynthia suggested that, if I didn't mean to take the boat and row off for the police, there were some roses that badly needed an autumn pruning ; an infelicitous reminder as it turned out, and as you shall learn. For just at that moment I had made my second observation—that the Italian's ballast seemed to consist largely of cinders and small ashes. Now, when you come to think of it, ships do not usually employ ashes for ballast. . . . Just as I started to wonder at it Cynthia's interruption shook these ashes out of my mind as through a sieve.

But I had no intention at all of rowing off for the police. " The *Nostra Signora del Rosario* ? " said I, reading the barque's name. " Now I have a mind to put off and treat her crew to a sermon on that name ; since, as it happens, Our Lady of the Rosary has a particular interest in thieves and the gallows. If you ever designed to read my published works you would know that there is a story to that effect in the second chapter of *Sir John Constantine*. I found it in a commonplace book of Southey's, who got it from Vieyra ; and mine was a short,

rough rendering. But I have since discovered that it forms the theme of a beautiful story by the Portuguese writer Eça de Queiroz (he called it *Defunto*, and it has been translated into English, under the title of *Our Lady of the Pillar*, by Mr. Edgar Prestage, of the Lisbon Royal Academy). Briefly, the story tells that a young hidalgo, riding by night to keep an assignation with a lady whose lover he had hopes to be——”

“Do you propose telling this story to the Italians?” interrupted Cynthia.

“It is,” I assured her, “as full of morals as an egg of meat. To resume—this young hidalgo on his road happened to pass a gallows from which four corpses hung, and was pricking past when a voice said to him, ‘Stay, knight; come hither!’ And it goes on to tell how, being assured that the voice had proceeded thence, he rode up under the gallows and demanded to know ‘Which of you hanged men calls for Don Ruy de Cardenas?’ Whereupon (says the narrative) one of them, that swung with his back to the full moon, replied—speaking down from the noose very quietly and naturally, like a man talking from his window to the street, ‘It was I, sir. Do me the favour to cut this cord by which I am suspended, and afterwards light the small heap of twigs by your feet that I may warm myself back to life and run beside you to your mistress: for my limbs are stiff.’ The young knight, then, having cut down the corpse—for a corpse it was——”

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“And this,” broke in Cynthia, “is positively the nastiest story I have ever listened to. . . . And if you *won't* fetch the police, I am off to my roses.”

“Wait a moment,” said I. “These countrymen of Dante, these mariners from the port of Columbus, must have their better instincts, and to them let us appeal. They have pretty certainly stolen our apples, and in large quantities: but they have left us plenty and to spare. Come, let us carry them a maundful as a free gift!—and I will lay you odds that they show themselves honest fellows.”

Cynthia shook her head.

“Honest fellows don't climb other folks' apple trees.”

“Not often. Dante, indeed, has been before you in noting it.

Rade volte risurgi per li rami
L'umana probitate.

And yet,” I added, with a sigh for lost youth, “we may happen up such trees on our way to honesty—or God help most English boys!”

The end was that we filled a ‘maund’ (deep apple basket) and put off with it to the *Nostra Signora del Rosario*. There was no hope to dodge Euergetes, no matter in what corner of the garden we might invent occupation for him: for nothing escapes his cunning subdolent eye. But we could dumbfounder him by an act of open lunacy, and for the fun of this Cynthia joined the

plot. We took a second and smaller basketful to propitiate the lightermen.

The Italians dropped their work as we came alongside and hailed them. They made no difficulty at all about dropping their work. But when we asked in English and again in our best Italian (which is the worst) if they would do us the favour to accept some apples, they stared down and at one another and laughed, and answered (shaking their heads) that they were not buying any. "No, my friends, and good reason for why," I murmured, but persisted aloud, "*E dono.—Corban—it is a gift!*" It was fun (as Cynthia afterwards allowed) to note the glances that passed between them and the shamefaced laughter that mingled with their polite expressions of thanks as they lowered the empty ballast basket to receive the apples I poured into it from the maund; and the fun was doubled as, glancing up and over my shoulder as the filling went on, I caught sight of Euergetes on a high terrace, resting on his mattock and contemplating us.

Now you may urge (as Cynthia urged once or twice that evening) that the whole business, since it did not even force a confession, was as lunatic as it appeared to Euergetes. But wait!

A week or so later, sitting by my window here, I heard a confused noise of cheering, and looked up to catch sight of the *Nostra Signora del Rosario*, laden, passing down to sea in the wake of our harbour tug. Her crew were waving hats and shouting *vivas*; and as

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the calls of my family fetched me forth, and it broke on me that this flattering demonstration must be meant for us, I saw the Italian tricolor dipping and rising on the halliards of the barque's crossjack-yard. There was a fresh outbreak of cheering as I ran to my own flagstaff and dipped the British ensign in response; and so the *Nostra Signora del Rosario* passed out to sea and faded away, a thing of beauty.

“She never came back, she never came back,” any more than the various animals in Lear's haunting lyric. At Genoa they broke up her beauty for old iron, and you may jump to the suspicion that her crew were merely bidding a boisterous farewell to a fool. But wait again . . . I have a notion that these men, separated and drafted into various other Italian vessels, must have returned to us many times, or at any rate must have spread some mysterious masonic word through the Italian mercantile marine. I begin to think so because not only have our apples been immune ever since, but the crews of all these barques have ever since treated us with the jolliest politeness. We are positively afraid, now, to let our dinghy get left for a few moments by the tide, lest on Cynthia's re-appearance at the landing quay a boat's crew of these merry ruffians push off to the help of *la donna*—help of which she has (despite all I can say) the liveliest horror.

Do you complain that in the narrative I have

rambled far from the Marble Stair from which I started? Wait yet once again, for I am returning to it, and the thrill in my narrative has yet to come.

It happened that, some weeks before, I had called in my friend H. H., mason, to repair—or rather, to rebuild—a back stairway in the garden. The job was to be a rough one—that is to say, I wished the stone to be so laid that one could plant sedums, stone-crops, and the like in the crevices; and after a brief talk I left it to him to find the material.

He fell to work in due course, and sent in word to me at breakfast one morning that he had fairly started and would like my opinion on the stones he was using. I lit a pipe and went out to examine them.

“First-class stones,” said I. “But where did you pick them up?”—for the step he was laying was composed of wrought slabs of a drab colour, and in texture somewhat like the Caen stone the old builders imported for our churches. A quarry of it anywhere, in our neighbourhood, would be beyond price: but obviously these slabs came from no quarry direct.

“Why, sir,” he answered and with some pride, “off the Italian that went out two days ago.”

“Ballast?” said I.

“Ballast,” said he; and for the moment I took it for no more than a pleasant windfall. All these Italians, and various other vessels, come to us with ballast; and I laugh still as I remember my late good friend A. B. (a Cambridge man, learned in most subjects and not without skill in geology) going

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almost on hands and knees before a heap of road metal and demanding to know where the devil these particular fossils found themselves in Cornwall? They had been carted up, a week before, from the hold of a French schooner.

My visitors get these surprises from time to time. Here I again intercept my climax with the story of another Cambridge man, whom I had led for a walk through woods where bamboos were among the commonest of exotic growths. "A stranger," said he with the accent of conviction, as we left the woods and regained the highway, "might easily suppose himself in the tropics"—and, as he said those very words, we rounded a corner of the road and came on an elephant! It was a real elephant, placidly sucking up water from a wayside pool; and of a sudden I understood what hysteria means, yet kept sufficient grip on it to steer him wide of a travelling circus which had encamped in a neighbouring field.

To resume—"It's a pretty stone, sir," said my friend H. H., "and, I should say, came out of a fine building. But here's something better still." He brushed the dust and grit carefully, with the palm of his hand, from a block he was preparing to lay.

"Hullo!" I exclaimed. "Marble?"

"White marble, sir."

"From the same ship? . . . What ship?"

H. H. could not tell me her heathen name: but of course it was the *Nostra Signora del Rosario*. "And the stones were all mixed up with a terrible

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lot of ashes. Smell? . . . My word, how those ashes smelt!"

"Yes, I remember," said I, and went off to seek the Harbour Master, who is another friend of mine. "Tell me—where was the *Nostra Signora* likely to have picked up that ballast she brought in the other day?"

The Harbour Master took down his great ledger, opened it, found the page, and ran his finger down the column headed "Port of Sailing." The finger came to a halt and I read—

"MESSINA."

I shall not moralise this story, or write pages on the thesis, It is a bad earthquake—and Messina's was a hideous one—that brings nobody good. Rich men may decorate their houses with Egyptian porphyries, Spanish *broccatello*, green Carystian, orange of Verona, *rosso antico* and the rest. But mine is one marble stair, one white stone of the true romance. It is very small (it measures no more than fifteen inches by twelve); but I can stand on it; and the stairway so closely overhangs the sea that, had I the skill, I could take a naked dive from it of fifty feet sheer. From what palace it was dislocated I shall never know, any more than I shall know how many of its companions, shot amid the ashes of a Sicilian city, have been carried out and dropped for ever beneath these Cornish waters. But this one survives: it is mine. "Which things"—although the story is true—

"Which things are an allegory, Philip!"

The Election Count

POLLING-DAY was wet and depressing to the last degree: wet and doubly depressing as hour after hour weighted my sense that we were steadily losing ground. In the shop-parlour, which served us for Liberal Committee-room, someone had blocked up half the small window with a poster. It exhibited to the street the picture of an old couple, Darby and Joan, seated beside their cottage-porch, embowered in roses and basking (thanks to Old Age Pensions) in the golden rays of a setting sun. It was a pleasing composition, even when studied in reverse as a transparency; but it darkened the parlour. In this atmosphere of "inspissated gloom" our two volunteer clerks worked with set faces at the register, ruling out the voters—red pencil for Liberals, blue for Unionists, black for Doubtfuls—as messengers ran in with the returns. On the whole these returns were satisfactory. In our own small polling-district we felt reasonably sure of getting our "reliables" (abominable word) to the poll in strength. But ours is no very populous one, and lies at the extreme west

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of the constituency; from the other end came disquieting rumours, some even talking of a "land-slide."

"Hullo!" says one of the clerks, looking out over the Darby and Joan poster. "There goes Polly W—— up the hill with a bouquet."

"That's for the Women's Committee to present to Lady Caroline." (Lady Caroline is the wife of our opponents' candidate, the Admiral.) "They're due there soon after midday."

Our candidate has already come and gone—quite early in the morning, in a pitiless shower of rain. Few were aware of his visit, of which he had sent us no warning; and of these but a handful left their breakfasts to cheer him.

It is suggested that my presence at the polling-station will put a little heart into the faithful band gathered there and talking with their enemies in the gate. I doubt it; but, at any rate, I can make sure that our fellows yield the Admiral and Lady Caroline a polite reception. I go, therefore. This makes the fourth time I have climbed the hill to-day.

If the Committee-room was depressing, the streets are disheartening. Our opponents have all the motors, with at least one carriage-and-pair, and a general air of insolent prosperity. Motors do not seem to mind the rain. They rush by at a speed which dissembles the poverty of their harvest; and as they pass they scatter mud over me. A solitary

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one-horse vehicle crawls up the hill with our colours (blue and gold) pendant about it and dripping like Ophelia's muddy weeds. It contains three voters, and one of them sings out to me, "ARE we down-hearted?" To which the other two, snatching off their hats and waving them till each sheds a spray—a *moulinet*—of raindrops, respond vociferously "NO-O!"

At the summit, in the road outside the Council School-house, which serves for polling-booth, the foe has it all his own way. The red-white-and-blue is everywhere, the causeway populous with ladies, and in the midst of the throng a pretty child ready with the bouquet. The rain has ceased for a while, and the scene moves to a stir of pleasurable excitement. I pass cheerfully through it and am booed as I pass. I enter the school gates, cross the quag of a playground, and exchange a word or two with the tally-keepers by the door—two of each party, polite as seconds in a duel—who, albeit the sky has been brightening for some minutes, still huddle like disconsolate poultry—

Counting the frequent drip from reeded eaves.

I stroll back to the roadway, and am booed again. . . . It is excellent discipline to be booed and to keep an indifferent face. Only, when the booers are friends and neighbours to whom you have always wished well, a mean thought will arise now and again—just a thought of which you are instantly ashamed

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—So-and-so, over there, with cheek distended and face inflamed against me—might he not remember that only six weeks ago——? “What?” Never mind what. It’s baser, perhaps, in me to remember it than in him to forget. . . .

The “gentry” in the roadway are slightly puzzled, as I dally and talk with one and another quite as if nothing is happening to make us less friends to-day than we were yesterday and shall be to-morrow or the day after: puzzled and slightly constrained. . . . This is fun: for not only do I mean it and like nine-tenths of them, but I have them at a beautifully polite disadvantage, since they cannot well order me off a public roadway. This is also battle; and my spirits rise.

A damsel of the party—she is a “good sort,” and we were friends long before she put up her hair and lengthened the skirts in which she used to go bird’s-nesting—tells me that she is a Suffragette and only joins in this demonstration on the other side because our party will not give women the vote.

“We are beating you to-day,” she assures me.

“Well,” say I, “one can’t win always. At the worst, then, we shall have you on our side next time.”

She pauses to consider this, and a distant rolling cheer down the road announces that the Admiral and his Lady are coming. . . . They arrive and alight from the motor. The child steps forward with the bouquet. . . . It is all quite pretty, though

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Lady Caroline's thanks and the Admiral's short speech are alike inaudible amid the cheering. At the conclusion the Admiral catches sight of me, and we lift our hats. He (excellent fellow) would like to introduce me . . . and so Lady Caroline and I converse for a few seconds, and I wish her every joy in life, saving the one on which her heart is, for the moment, set.

A gleam of sunshine—the first and last for the day—spreads a dazzle down the wet road as they climb into the car and are driven off. Certainly they are having all the luck. . . . I turn amid the cheering, and walk back to the Committee-room. On the way I grow conscious that my feet are keeping time to an idiotic air which has been haunting me since I rose and dressed. In my bath I started humming it: I am whistling it dumbly now. Confound the thing! It is the *Funeral March of a Marionette!*

So the day drags on: and at its close we have polled all but three of our men. As the church clock strikes eight, we in the Committee-room look at one another and draw a long breath. "Now all is done that men can do"—and a swift checking of the red and blue lines on the register assures us that, even if we allow a wide margin for human perfidy, the fight has not been lost in this corner of the division. The workers come clustering in, and find room to range themselves around, in the parlour's tiny ambit. Their oilskins and mackintoshes shine

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wet in the lamplight as I speak the few words of thanks that are expected (as, indeed, they have been earned), . . . and so home, as Pepys says, and to dinner; still with that infernal *Funeral March* dogging my feet.

Thank Heaven, in the act of changing my garments I put it all aside. The tune is lost, the depression lifts, all care drops from me. How good it is to sit at home and to dine!—for I am hungry as a hunter. And again after dinner I sit and smoke in a deep peace. . . . Cynthia is eager to hear of the day's doings, and I describe them disconnectedly, laughing now and again over their oddities. She harks back to speculating on the issue. . . . The issue? Mercury has carried it aloft and laid it on the knees of the gods. It rests somewhere on Olympus, a thousand miles away. In this mood I go to bed, and drop asleep as soon as my head touches the pillow, and sleep without a dream, while abroad the ballot-boxes are being driven through the night, all converging upon Lescarrow, central market-town of our division. Maybe the *Funeral March of a Marionette* has passed out from me and jig-jigs somewhere along those miry roads, under the stars, to the trot of a horse.

All this happened yesterday. To-morrow (says the song) is another day. It is also a very different one. I awake to sunshine and the chatter of a starling, and for the moment to a blithe sense of

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liberty. Some weight has been rolled away : at length I am free for an after-breakfast chat with the gardener and a morning devoted to my own quiet business :

Libertas, quae sera tamen respexit inertem—
Respexit tamen et longo post tempore venit.

But as consciousness widens there grows a small cloud of foreboding. . . . Yes, now I remember. The Polling is over, but there is yet the Count. The Count begins at ten o'clock in the Municipal Council Chamber at Lescarrow ; and I must catch an early train to attend it, having received a paper appointing me to watch on behalf of our candidate, and having taken oath to observe certain secrecies (none of which, by the way, this paper of mine is going to violate) . . . I arise, protesting against fate. Why did I ever permit myself to be entrapped into politics ?

O limèd soul that struggling to be free
Art more engaged !

In the intervals of dressing I pause and contemplate, through an open window, the harbour spread at my feet ; riant wavelets twinkling and darkening when the faint breeze runs counter with the tide ; white gulls flashing, sliding in delicate curves against the blue ; vessels and fishing-boats swinging gently to their moorings. The Election—all of it that truly matters—is over, I beg to state. The fight is dead and done with. What sensible man should be

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hurried from such amenities to fret a day upon what is already settled beyond revoke? I seem to hear the voices of our two candidates fading away into the blue distance, contending as they fade. Their altercations tinkle on the ear like thin echoes from a gramophone. Return, O Muse, and bring me back the authentic rivals, Thyrsis and Corydon!

Despite these pauses, I catch the early train. Our branch railway follows the right bank of an estuary as fair as you will find in England, its embankment running a very few feet above high-water mark; nor can I ever decide whether the estuary be lovelier when beneath the sunset and between overhanging woodlands it is brimmed with

Such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam;

or when, as now, across the drained flats morning sparkles on the breasts of gulls, divers, curlews, congregated in hundreds, and here and there a heron flaps his wing upon a lilac shadow or stands planted, and fishes, master of his channel. Solitary bird! be it mine henceforth to watch, with you, my true, if narrow, channel, and leave these others to chatter about the flats, the shallows!

I change trains at the junction, and on the platform run against Squire —. We are bound on the same errand; he to watch the count for the Admiral. He is a Whig of the old breed—one of those lost to us in '85; an English gentleman of the best sort;

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giving, year in and year out, an unpaid devotion to the business of his county. I hope and believe that he likes me a little : if only it be half my liking for him, it is much more than a little. We exchange salutations ; but some ladies are with him, travelling up to hear the poll declared. They all wear the red-white-and-blue. So I get a smoking compartment to myself, and he travels next door, where I hope they allow him his cigar. They seem very confident. . . . If they only knew how faintly, at this moment, I desire their discomfiture !

I hate to hear the Duchy miscalled " the Riviera of England." It has a climate of its own, and yesterday the out-voters had a taste of it which I hope they enjoyed. But certainly our winter gives us some exquisite days : and this is one. The railway still follows up the vale of my best-beloved river ; but climbs now, and is carried high on the hillside--on viaducts sometimes, across giddy depths where the lateral coombes descend. Below us the woods lift their tree-tops, and far below runs the river and glances up through their delicate winter traceries :

O ancient streams, O far-descended woods !

Was ever a day " so cool, so calm, so bright," so lustrally pure ? Last night my indifference came of sheer physical weariness : now I let drop the window-sash and bathe me, body and spirit, in the rush of air. . . .

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The train comes to a stop in Lescarrow station, and with a jerk. A small crowd pours out, and a jolly farmer, as I open the door of my compartment, rushes up to me.

“ Well, is Troy all right? *We* did splendidly—splendidly! . . . Gloomy tales, though, about t’other side of the division. Hope it’s all right. What’s your candid opinion now? ”

It begins to occur to me that I am interested in the question. I begin some banal answer, when he interrupts, “ Why, you ’re not wearin’ the colours! ”

I search my pockets, and discover an old rosette, crumpled with service in three campaigns. He watches whilst I pin it on my coat-lappet. “ That’s better. Must show one’s colours! ” His own breast is largely occupied by a blue-and-gold rosette at least five inches in diameter. I answer that it is not customary for those attending the Count to show any party colours; but that, to please him, I will wear mine along the street. So we leave the station together, and walk up to the town. . . . Eh, what is this? I have not taken a dozen steps before the *Funeral March of a Marionette* is back, out of nowhere, jigging at my heels—*túm-ti-tiddety, túm-ti-túm*, etc.

I look in at our Central Committee-room, the Temperance Hall. “ A paper-man in a cyclone, ” runs a nautical simile. The aspect of the Temperance Hall suggests that a hundred bacchanals have been dancing there in as many cyclones of waste-paper.

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On my word, I never saw such a litter. It rises to my ankles. In the midst of it stand three pale red-eyed men, "clearing-up," as they profess. They show me calculations, over which I run a wary, experienced eye. They say that the Chief Agent has figures I may depend on, and has left word that he wishes to see me. He is at this moment breakfasting at the hotel.

To the hotel (there is but one) I go, and find the Chief Agent seated at breakfast before an unappetising dish of eggs-and-bacon. There is something Napoleonic about the Chief Agent—a hard, practical man with a face scarred as if by actual battle. He shows me his paper of figures, and rapidly explains to me (but I know it already) his method, with the percentage he knocks off the canvassers' and local committees' too sanguine calculations. It is a very large percentage, yet the figures stand the test surprisingly well. The Chief Agent, though, is no fool. He admits that there has been a slump during the last three days, chiefly among the dockyardsmen and the lower decks of the Fleet: if the slump became a "slide" yesterday it may have upset all these figures. . . . At this point Our Man's valet appears. His master has just finished dressing, and would like a chat with me while he breakfasts. My watch tells me that I have still twenty minutes to spare. So up I go, and on the stairs the valet (who believes with me that Our Man has all along been over-confident) turns and confides

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that "He's in capital fettle this morning, sir; but the night before last I never saw him so down."

I find the room dressed with childish devices in blue-and-gold, and Our Man's two little daughters still busy with decorations. They have even fixed up a large placard of cardboard with "Vote for Daddy" in blue and yellow letters. Their mother, Lady Mabel, moves about helping one or the other. She is not a politician, like Lady Caroline; but she is an admirable wife and mother, and I feel something in my throat as she turns and laughs and I note her brave smile. As for Our Man, he has ridden in the Grand National before now, and can face music. He greets me cheerfully, and chats as he makes an excellent breakfast. Only an unnatural brightness in the white of the eyes and now and again a tired droop of the lids tell of these three weeks and their strain. There is no hurry for him to attend the Count, which begins with a tedious checking of the ballot-boxes. He will run down by and by and see how we are getting on. So I leave him and walk down to the Municipal Buildings.

In the Council Chamber, to which a policeman admits me after scanning my paper, I find most of the company gathered and the Under-Sheriff already getting to work. The ballot-boxes—each with the name of its polling-station lettered in white upon its black-japan varnish, each strapped with red tape and sealed—stand in a row along one side of the room, with two constables in charge. The counting

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and checking clerks have pulled in their chairs around the long baize-covered table. Aloft, on a balustraded platform, in the mayoralty throne, with a desk before him, the High-Sheriff is taking his seat. He is frock-coated, portly, not to say massive. He has a double chin, and one of those large aristocratic faces which combine fleshiness with distinction; from start to finish it keeps an impenetrable impassivity and suggests a vast boiled ham. He wears lemon-coloured kid-gloves. He takes off his beautiful silk hat and looks about for a place to deposit it. Finding none, he dons it again, draws off his gloves, again removes his hat, bestows the gloves in it, and has another look about him. (All council chambers known to me are dusty and ill-kept.) My attention at this point is distracted, and to the last I have no notion what the High-Sheriff has done with his hat.

We invigilators meanwhile are strolling about, chatting in small groups. We number twenty-six—a baker's dozen for either candidate—and I remark that my fellow-Liberals have a shocking taste in ties. We have pocketed our party colours, and the two sides treat one another with careful politeness. The most of us gravitate around a sullen stove; for this waiting does not make for warmth, and, though the sunshine outside may flatter, the Council Chamber is chilly. A few gather towards the table as at length the Under-Sheriff calls for silence, and a constable fetches up the first ballot-box; but this

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brings a warning that until all the ballot-boxes have been opened and the number of papers in each checked separately by the returning-officer's figures, we are not to approach—a precaution against our learning how the poll has run in separate districts—and a futile one, since the counting-clerks are men of like political passions with ourselves, and secrets always leak out. As it is, I regret to observe that two or three of us from time to time wander absent-mindedly within the forbidden zone and cast long glances at the table. . . . For my part I stick close to the stove, with my back to it, and watch the idle ceremonial from afar; passing, as it drags its slow length, through chilliness to a sort of numb misery. My next-hand neighbour mutters complaint of the draught, while all the while perspiring, frothing like a colt. . . . I observe cynically with what ease a man might spirit away one of these ballot-boxes we are treating with such absurd solemnity. Half a dozen of us at least—the High-Sheriff, the Under-Sheriff, the Chief Constable (who has sauntered in), the two Agents, two or three of the clerks—have brought great-coats and hand-bags and set them down carelessly. One bag lies on top of a ballot-box midway down the line. I might, strolling about with the more restless invigilators, cast my burberry across one, known to me to be adverse, which stands pretty near the door; then presently, when the constables are carrying up another box, and (as I observe) every eye in the room is glued upon the

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Under-Sheriff while he breaks the seals and empties the contents, I might catch up the box under the burberry and briskly step out of the door, saluting as I go the Admiral, who is at this moment entering and demanding in his breezy way to know how we are getting on. With a bold front the chances against escape might be reduced to short odds.

I amuse myself with the fancy that maybe the High-Sheriff has smuggled one of the boxes away under his enormous hat. Such a trick would exactly accord with his face—in a story by Dumas *Père*.

“Four-six-seven!” snaps out the Under-Sheriff, announcing the numbers of the last box.

The High-Sheriff consults his list of returns. “Polling station, Gantick. Four - six - seven. Right.”

The papers are swept back into the box. Now the real business is about to begin, and we are marshalled up for it—two invigilators to stand behind each counting-clerk and watch that he does his work correctly, letting no spoilt or doubtful paper pass. At first I range myself alongside an opponent who has been politely discussing with me for ten minutes (now I come to remember it) a small antiquarian matter in which we are both interested. But it seems that we are too many on this side of the table, and I walk around to find myself posted shoulder to shoulder with Squire ——, who accepts me with a friendly nod. I glance across the table

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and catch, all involuntarily, the eye of a counting-clerk opposite. I know him, but am unaware of his politics. He is, of course, aware of mine, and I seem to detect a faint shake of the head and lift of the eyelid, which together hint that I may prepare myself for the worst. So I clutch at stoicism and prepare myself; but until this moment I had not known how strong my hopes really were.

The contents of the boxes are now shot out upon the table in one great heap, and while the constables do this the counting-clerks reach forward with both hands and mix the papers in one huge mad salad. This mixing lasts for a couple of minutes, maybe. Then the count begins in earnest. We have wasted an hour and a half, and already the crowd in the street grows impatient. We can hear them hurling challenges, starting party war-songs, hooting each other down.

My counting-clerk scoops a pile of papers in front of him and begins to sort rapidly. On each paper are two names with a pencilled cross against one, and he sorts them to right and left—Our Man to the left, the Admiral to the right. Blank, Dash—Blank—Dash, Dash, Dash. (Blank stands for Our Man, who heads each paper by alphabetical precedence; Dash for the Admiral.) The Admiral is running three for Our Man's one. . . . This is going to be Waterloo! After ten minutes of it I abandon hope and fall to composing the telegram I shall send home.

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I glance down the table. The faces of my fellow-Liberals are grave, yet somehow they give me a ray of hope that we at our corner, in spite of the mixing, have struck a peculiarly unfavourable sample of the total pile, and that (to change metaphors) the tide will turn for us presently. But my eyes ought not to be wandering. I am warned of this by a gentle "Excuse me" from Squire —— at my side. He touches the clerk on the shoulder and with a finger indicates that he has laid one of our votes on the Admiral's heap. It was my business to discover the mistake, but (as I have said) Squire —— is an English gentleman. Hereafter for ten minutes I keep my eyes glued upon the papers flitting under the clerk's hand, until the quick succession of crosses lulls me to a kind of stupor. The tide is turning, but very slowly. . . . When the clerk thinks he has papers enough on one or another of the heaps he counts back one hundred of them, pats the hundred into a neat packet, and passes it up to one of the four "checking-clerks," who count it over again, verify it, and pass it to the Under-Sheriff, who in turn passes it up to the High-Sheriff, who after a glance through his glasses, lays it to the left or right of his desk according as it belongs to Our Man or to the Admiral. . . . My rising hopes are dashed as I perceive that the Admiral already leads by six of the "centuries" (as I will call them). He (good fellow) stands a pace or two behind me, watching the business. His Agent steps back to him, and

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I catch the words, "Very well indeed, so far." I wonder that his tone is not more confident . . . when, again glancing along the table, I perceive that six "centuries" are lying there ready for the checking-clerks; and on three of them I can see that cross is for Our Man. He, by the way, has turned up, and is warming his back at the stove. He passed behind me a minute ago and clapped a hand on my shoulder; and I turned and gave him as steady a smile as I could.

Sure enough, four out of the next five "centuries" go to his pile: three now in arrear. Then another comes up for the Admiral: four. But the votes beneath my eye are running almost dead level now, with a slight—the slightest possible—advantage for Our Man. Three "centuries" go up for Blank, one for Dash, another for Dash, two for Blank . . . the great pile at length diminishes perceptibly. . . . So, as a child, have I watched the reaping machine make narrower circles in a harvest field, rounding up the rabbits in the central patch of standing wheat. . . . The two are running almost neck and neck. I see, or seem to see, that every one's face is white. The clerks work in a dead silence. . . . Of a sudden, Squire — at my elbow, says quietly—

"Your Man is going to do it."

I command my voice to answer, as quietly, that I doubt it. . . . Two "centuries" go up for the Admiral, one for Our Man; but under our eyes

another has just been told for him. The clerks, who have counted all the papers they can reach, and are left with remnants of "centuries," pass these remnants across to be added to other packets. . . . All the great heap has been sorted now, and the piled packets, right and left of the High-Sheriff, stand exactly level!

The clerks have done. Three packets have yet to be handed up. One close by contains a hundred—I know, for I saw it counted—and belongs to Our Man. The other, a little beyond, is, I can see, for the Admiral: and this seems of equal bulk. At the far end of the table a methodical little clerk is slowly counting up the third—a thin one. Whose?

"Twenty-one—twenty-two—twenty-three——"

The clerk who has counted the Admiral's parcel holds it up and says, "Seventy-seven in this."

"Twenty-four—twenty-five—twenty-six," counts the methodical little man at the end.

"Whose?"

"Twenty-seven," says the little man, patting his parcel. "For Mr. Blank."

Our Man is in, by just fifty votes.

* * * *

I turn—turn to find myself almost face to face with the Admiral, who is receiving his friends' condolences. Good fellow, he takes it splendidly. Only a flush on the face betrays him. "Moral victory," I hear one assure him. "Moral victory, be d—d," he answers back. "You win or you're beaten. We've given

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'em a run for their money." I pass down the length of the room to Our Man, and we shake hands ; but I want more to shake hands with the Admiral, as by and by I find a chance to do. " Devilish good of you ! A fair fight," blurts he, and I am speechless.

There is plenty of time for this, for our imperturbable High-Sheriff, while the crowd below rages with impatience, is solemnly adjudicating upon six doubtful papers. The Agents argue points as though each paper were important as a separate suit in Chancery. . . . At length it is over, and we all move out to an anteroom, where one of the Agents throws up the sash of a window. A roar ascends, and is followed by a hush, as the High-Sheriff mounts on a stool in full view of the street ; this, again, by a lesser roar as the knowing ones on our side perceive how the two candidates arrange themselves beside him—Our Man on his right, the Admiral on his left.

The High-Sheriff is terse. " I declare," he calls out, as soon as the noise gives him opportunity, " the result of the poll to be :

Blank	4316
Dash	4266"

and is about to declare that in consequence Mr. Blank is duly elected, when a wild clamour drowns the utterance. He makes two attempts at speech, and withdraws from the window.

THE ELECTION COUNT

We stream down the stairs. I see Our Man seized at the doorway and mounted shoulder-high. A tumult pours after him. I wait until the press has gone by, and slip into a by-lane. Fetching a circuit of empty streets, I find myself in face of the hotel, on the porch-roof of which stand victor and vanquished, side by side, bawling thanks to their supporters. They shake hands after the fight, British fashion.

I edge my way through the throng, into the hotel, and upstairs. A couple of journalists intercept me, demanding my comments on the victory. "Victory!" On my word, that is the last thought in my head. I answer them somehow, and on the landing blunder against Lady Caroline, of all people!

Contrition sweeps over me like a wave. "I am sorry," I stammer. "Your husband took it just splendidly."

"Ah," she answers quickly, proudly, "if only you knew him! He is always splendid."

The new Member's room is spread for luncheon. At least a score of folk have taken charge. He drags me into his dressing-room, where the valet brings us two plates of tepid roast mutton, with a whisky and soda apiece. This is our victory! The Member and I push our plates among the shaving-gear and brushes on his dressing-table and lunch hilariously.

* * * *

I am in the train again. Dusk is already descend-

ing on the woodlands, and I have lost one of our few perfect days of winter. But my spirit has resumed its morning peace, and the Election is a thousand years away. At each station hands reach in at the window and grasp mine. I answer with unmeaning words. I am still elated, but inclined to wonder what it is all about.

I reach home, and find the streets deserted. In Troy, as I have hinted, our opponents command all the alarums and excursions. They have heard the news by telephone and telegraph, and are digesting it indoors, behind drawn blinds. It might comfort them if they knew with how little of triumph, with how deep a sense of all human vanity, I pass their windows. . . . I come to my own hall, and it is hospitably bright. My footfall on the threshold brings a household about me. For a minute or two I wrestle with their joy, answering it as best I may. Then, breaking away to my small lit library, I reach for a pipe and look around on the shelves.

“O my books, my friends! You have taught me that for ten years a man should desert you for the crowd. That time is almost up, and life passes. A little while now, and we will spend the rest of it in wisdom together—in wisdom and blessed quiet!”

The Merry-go-Round at Troy

I

The merry-go-round, the merry-go-round, the merry-go-round at Troy!

They whirl around, they gallop around—man, woman, and girl, and boy!

So sang Roden Noel, a genuine poet ; and the theme was worthy of his muse. For annually, you must know, in the first or second week of August, the Regatta frenzy descends upon us ; and for three days we dress town and waterside in bunting and bang starting guns and finishing guns, and put on fancy dresses, and dance and walk in procession and stare at fireworks. But the centre and axis of our revelry is always the merry-go-round (locally 'the Whirlies') on the town quay. There yachtsmen, visitors, farmers, and country wives, sober citizens, and mothers of families gather centripetally and are caught together in a whirl under the naphtha

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lights around the crystal, revolving pillar. But let the poet take up the tale :

They circle on wooden horses—white, black, and
brown, and bay—

To a loud, monotonous tune that hath a trumpet
bray.

All is dark where the circus stands on the narrow
quay,

Save for its own yellow lamps that illumine it
brilliantly.

—the Parish Council being far too wise to waste any public gas on Regatta nights. They spare the rates and leave public illumination to the private enterprise of sweet-stalls (or 'standings'), confetti stalls, stalls at which you shoot at eggs, or bob celluloid balls at narrow-necked bowls of gold-fish, or hurl wooden ones at bottles, to be rewarded for your success with a penny cigar or walking cane. Above all, our Public Lights Committee trusts to the merry-go-round, as it

Pours a broad, strong glow

Over an old-world house with a pillar'd porch
below ;

For the floor of the building rests on bandy
columns small,

And the bulging pile may, tottering, suddenly
bury all.

Well, and I dare say this might easily have happened in the days before modern enterprise pulled down the plaster front of the King of Prussia Inn and

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND AT TROY

converted the ' bulging pile ' into a nice, respectable tied house. But Lord bless you !—we never thought of it as we rode the merry-go-round.

And there upon wooden benches, hunch'd in the
summer night,
Sit wrinkled sires of the village—

' Village ' quotha ! Troy Town a village ! It is a mystery to me how so many of our London visitors suffer this strange hallucination : and I discussed it one day with Long Phillips, one of the said ' sires.' He told me that it had been just the same in his young days : there was something in London which caused folks to lose all their sense of proportion, and they came down in August to get cured. . . .

The poet proceeds to liken our merry-go-round to this world vainly revolving under the cold scrutiny of the stars, and to reflect that in an hour the fair will be over, the lamps extinguished ;

For the young may be glad and eager, but some
ride listlessly,
And the old look on with a weary, dull, and life-
less eye. . . .

Eh ? The dickens they do ! Wait a bit, if you please. . . .

II

Some few years ago, and not long after the 'bulging pile' of the old 'King of Prussia' had been shored up, faced with stucco, and converted (as I said) into a nice up-to-date tied house, there arrived as temporary 'landlord' a pink-complexioned young man who walked mincingly and thought it would be good business to convert the old 'public' into a hotel for August visitors, cold-shouldering out the rude sailors on whose custom it had depended for a hundred and fifty years. At once, as you may guess, he found it intolerable that for a whole week or ten days of the month on which he most counted for this elegant patronage a disgusting steam organ should be allowed to blare out popular tunes under his very windows. Now I will admit, as a whilom lodger at the old inn, who once lived out a week with the steam organ and its

loud monotonous tune that hath a trumpet bray,

that such an experience is not for all tastes. But I happened to be in love at the time, and nothing else mattered. I converted all its sounds of woe into "hey, nonny, nonny!" And now, on hearing that the new landlord was agog for an injunction to restrain the nuisance, I had a mind to advise him cheerfully to seek his *clientèle* among lovers only

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND AT TROY

(large numbers of whom visit us every season), and to advertise his 'Dark Room' for rejected ones, letting the Amateur Photographer seek elsewhere. But he was an obstinate man, as these pink-complexioned fellows so often are, and he petitioned the Parish Council.

Nobody took it seriously at first, as, indeed, at that time only a few far-sighted men had begun to take the Parish Council seriously. But the mischief was that one of our periodical merry crazes had caught hold of Troy just then, and this particular craze happened to be for Reform, of all things in the world! When I spoke of the rumour airily to Long Phillips he dismayed me by taking it in all seriousness.

"They'll do it," prophesied Long Phillips, gloomily watching the showmen as they erected the frame of the merry-go-round (for it was the eve of regatta week). "They've called a 'mergency meeting of the Parish Council; and to-morrow you'll find the quay swept bald as my head."

"We must stop it," said I firmly.

"Who must stop it?"

"Well"—I caught sight of Mr. Binks, show proprietor, and beckoned him to join us. "Here's three of us, for a start, and kindly remember that desperate diseases require desperate remedies."

The Parish Council holds its meetings in the Working Men's Institute, which occupies the northern side of the town quay, running out at right angles

from the ' King of Prussia ' ; and the Parish Council upstairs that night conducted its business to the full blare of the merry-go-round, the steam whistle of which broke out at intervals with ribald ear-piercing blasts. So deafening were these that the chairman shortened debate by exclaiming (in effect) : " How need we any further evidence ? " The motion to suppress the nuisance was put and unanimously carried, and the councillors descended to the steps of the institute, within five feet of which the edge of the merry-go-round rotated. . . . Sing now, O Muse, what a sight met their eyes, as a roar of Homeric laughter rose from the crowd and drowned for a full minute even the reboant steam organ !

There—before them—mounted on wooden horses, white, black, brown, and grey—circled all the aged and infirm of the parish ! with not a few citizens of credit and renown and their respectable wives. Indeed the clamour for seats (or, shall we say, saddles ?) had been so overwhelming that the stewards of the demonstration had much ado to adjudge in haste on the social claims of those who fought for the honour of saving the State.

For an instant the Parish Councillors seemed in two minds about running back upstairs and rescinding their resolution. To their credit, however, they put on brave faces and dispersed not without dignity, albeit amid galling laughter.

But I need not tell you that their precious resolution was never enforced. The Troy merry-go-round

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND AT TROY

has continued to rotate annually ; and to-night—this very night—I have tasted reward for my share in that past demonstration. For Mr. Binks has bought a new steam organ ; and to-night, as I mounted a wooden horse, the organ stopped for a few seconds and burst forth triumphantly into a fresh tune. Into what tune, think you ?

Why—the Hallelujah Chorus !

A Yachting Adventure

I

AT the very conclusion of our Regatta—when the Territorial Band had played “God Save the King,” the Royal Troy Yacht Club had banged off its sunset-gun, the yachts in harbour had undressed ship, and we were all preparing to sup in haste, to be ready for the first rocket of the fireworks—there came sailing in through the twilight, late for everything as usual, the 50-ton yawl notorious along the south coast as the *Maiden Aunt*. She carries, for owner, the dearest little old gentleman in the world (everywhere known as “Uncle,” because we all profess to have expectations from him); and for crew the laziest bean-fed set of pirates that ever, by being late for everything, missed Execution Dock. Their skipper, a fine-gentleman sort of rascal who has improved on a Brightlingsea dialect by putting in his h’s all wrong, is popularly supposed to have kidnapped his patron many years ago, and to have been hurrying him ever since from port to port, that he may get into no communication with his friends. But this is legend. As a matter of fact,

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the little old gentleman believes his crew to consist of honest salts who at need would lay down their lives for him.

Well, the *Maiden Aunt* came beating up through the crowded harbour with a very light breeze and a strong tide running under her. As usual, she fouled, or just missed to foul, everything within reach, and either of natural offensiveness or because it had not agreed with his temper to be addressed as "Crippen" by the various crews that had hung out fenders against collision or climbed out on bobstays to thrust his too-attentive bowsprit clear, her skipper chose to pick up his anchorage in the very midst of a crowd of small craft that for three days had been living on excellent terms together—living and letting live, as all good yachtsmen should. Having dropped hook, he lowered his dinghy to carry out the kedge rope.

"I say," hailed a voice from the bows of his next-door neighbour, a 20-ton ketch, "be careful how you lay that kedge! Our chain lies that way, and we're sailing early. Pretty silly game, isn't it, to drop right on top of us? We're starting before daybreak, I warn you!"

"Rce-ly? I wouldn't meet trouble 'alf-way, young gentlemen, at your age, if I was you," responded the skipper, and his crew started to whistle, yet more offensively, the chorus of a music-hall song, of which the refrain runs, "I cannot go home in the dark!"

II

Now the crew of the ketch—the *Fayaway*—consisted of four hands, who happened to be undergraduates of the University of Oxford. They had learnt their seamanship (such as it was) elsewhere; but in their residence at that Seat of Learning they had amassed a fund of animal spirits more than sufficient for most immediate purposes. The Regatta being over, they meant to lose no time in taking the seas again, but to catch the tide as it drained out in the small hours of the morning.

At about 3 a.m., while the yachts around slumbered and the crew of the *Maiden Aunt* were (so to say) snoring it off, these four young men started to shorten chain. They soon found that—quite as they had expected—they were fishing up the *Maiden Aunt's* kedge, and, having possessed themselves of it, they held a council of war. It is still disputed among them—as I understand—upon whom the inspiration first descended; but within ten minutes Number One had hold of a disreputable pair of grey flannels and was stuffing them with bottle-straws and cotton-waste; Number Two was doing the same to the sleeves of an old jersey; Number Three was attaching a pair of worn-out shoes to the limp ankles; while Number Four was covering the ship's mop with linen (to represent the bleached face of a drowned seaman), and nailing a yachting cap

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securely on the occiput. An enormous empty ginger-beer jar formed the torso, the shortened mop-handle was thrust into the neck, and when the jersey had been drawn on and the grey flannels belted securely around its waist, the corpse was pronounced—in the words of one of the conspirators—to be truly life-like. Nothing remained but to attach it by a short line to the kedge, carry them out together, and drop them softly in their watery grave. Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note . . . and the crew of the *Maiden Aunt* still slumbered.

III

Strange to say, before the end of these operations the four conspirators had changed their mind about putting to sea. A sweet little cross wind helped them, after weighing, to drop a couple of hundred yards on the tide and take with accuracy a nice unencumbered berth, where they waited for what the dawn would bring forth. It hardly needs saying that while these attentions were paying to her kedge, the *Maiden Aunt*, under the influence of this same sweet cross wind, had been sagging away considerably out of her position, ill-chosen at the best. The wretched skipper, casting a look around him in the now widening dawn, and being doubtless misled by the *Fayaway's* altered bearings, began to shout orders, first to tighten up on to the kedge, then to tumble into the dinghy again and shift it. In the response of the crew, a certain "Bill" appeared to be missing. "Bill!—get forward, Bill! Where the dickens is Bill?"

"If I don't mistake——" murmured one of the *Fayaway's* crew, rapturously. "If I don't mistake, it was Bill went ashore by himself in the punt last night. Any sign of the punt?"

"No."

"Then he's ashore yet. . . . Oh, here are going to be developments!"

"Bill!—where's Bill?" The call on board the

Maiden Aunt had been taken up derisively, and as three of her crew tumbled out and cast off the dinghy to shift the kedge they were exhorted from two or three decks to break the news gently to Bill's widow.

There fell an ironical hush as they reached the end of the rope and began to heave the kedge up. A derisive cheer followed as they got it on board; then another hush, with some chuckles, as it became evident they were yet foul. They were hauling at something heavily reluctant, which yet yielded and came up to them slowly out of the ooze.

"Shouldn't wonder if 'twas Bill!" suggested a voice amid more laughter.

"Hush!—oh, *hush*," trembled back a voice from the dinghy. "It—it *is* Bill!"

In the *Fayaway* one of the conspirators growled, "Do you think I'm not watching? What's the sense to keep pinching me?"

"Oh, but look!" fairly sobbed the other, nodding his head towards the *Maiden Aunt*. There, leaning over her bulwarks, stood the little owner vainly trying to comprehend the scene, and there, hidden from him under her counter, unobserved, painfully anxious to elude observation, was Bill—the authentic Bill—creeping on board by the stern ladder from the punt after his night ashore.

"'Tis *suicide*!" said a voice, very solemn and distinct, from the stern of the dinghy. Then, as the man collared the corpse to drag it aboard, his clutch pulled the jersey up and disclosed—a ginger-beer

A YACHTING ADVENTURE

jar. . . . "What, *again*, Crippen?" piped a voice.

"But what are they all laughing at?" asked the little owner, turning around to the real Bill, who by this time had gained the deck, and stood crapulous at his elbow. "Eh? . . . As I understood someone has been playing a practical joke. I don't *quite* understand, though. I will ask the captain to explain it to me at breakfast." And he went below.

It was the *Maiden Aunt*, after all, that weighed earliest, and was well at sea before breakfast-time. The other yachts somehow did not like the look of the weather and preferred to stay in port, where they discussed the story. So, for once in her career, she earned the reputation of having put out when the rest did not dare.

The Dive of the Gannet

IN the days when I was breaking away from the chains of Fleet Street—never mind how long ago—there happened a pause of six months during which, though my native county had become again my actual home, I travelled up every Wednesday by the night express, reaching London at 3.30 a.m. or thereabouts (of all cheerful hours !), and on Fridays, again through the night, returned to my cottage at Troy. As it happened, just at that time a Cornish youth on the staff of another weekly newspaper was doing, though at less regular intervals, precisely the converse ; and because he was in a hurry—poor fellow, he had to be !—he got ahead of me, who am constitutionally indolent, in writing a book about these queer journeys. No doubt our expresses rattled past each other many a night, and it used to give me the uncanniest feeling when, week after week, I picked up the *National Observer* and found my own experiences related, so to say, at topsy-turvy.

I did not know the man, and we never met to compare notes until some few months before his premature death—which, by the way, was a real loss to letters, though by this time no doubt a

scarcely remembered one. Meanwhile his book had been written. Its preface lies open here before me, in which, after a word or two on the staff which Henley gathered around him, and their good fellowship, the apologist pleads that 'he had a limitless affection for the society of the band, and enjoyed the inexpensive dissipations that came in the way of its members with a gusto never exceeded.' (That pet Henleyan word 'gusto'! How one can see, and forgive, the lad's working it in for his 'Master's' approval!) 'Yet he was one whose presence could never be counted upon unless a promise had been given; and it was the habit of his friends, at any meeting after a week during which they had not come across him, to inquire how he had been faring in Cornwall.' And, again: 'The interminable journey he must take who would reach the West Country daunted him not at all. He was a veritable lover, and would travel twenty dreary hours for the sake of scarce as many in the land of his desire.'

Well, the book was written, and the chapters I might have contributed as a queer sort of complementary record will now never see the light. But here are the notes of one.

* * * * *

. . . . It is less than twenty hours since I cashed the cheque that pays for my holiday. The tall clerk at the City Bank on Ludgate Hill seemed to guess all about it, for he looked at me in a knowing way as he counted out the notes. He has the make of a

THE DIVE OF THE GANNET

cricketer, and somehow, on these too rare occasions, we have built up a friendly understanding. I suspect him of reading my books; I know that regularly towards the end of Lent I am tempted to propose that we have half a crown on the Boat Race, but forbear upon reflection that the bank would probably frown upon the innocent wager, and I remember also that when I drew out a frightening sum for the purpose of getting married his smile followed me to the door.

. . . . On my way up Fleet Street, in the thronged luncheon hour, I came on the strangest sight. As usually happens in early August, a part of the roadway was 'up' and roped off; and there in the roped space, amid a pile of wood blocks, sprawled four navvies in the profoundest slumber. The wheels of the omnibuses, moving on between checks of traffic, almost grazed their heads; the passing crowd on the pavement skirted their hob-nailed boot-soles by a bare six inches. But there they slept, all four, with faces upturned to the noon-day sun—supine, gigantic, confident as babes—while Fleet Street roared by them.

. . . . 9.30 p.m., Paddington, and the night express pulling out from the platform.

With three great snorts of strength,
Stretching my mighty length.
Like some long dragon stirring in his sleep,
Out from the glare of gas
Into the night I pass
And plunge alone into the silence deep.

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. . . . And now 7 a.m. I am standing over the transparent tide that surges close under my garden wall and preparing to take the dread, delicious plunge. . . . Towelling myself after it, I catch sight of two gannets wheeling against the blue, a little beyond the harbour's mouth ; and having lit a cigarette and pulled the bath gown about me, I seat myself luxuriously to watch them.

* * * * *

There is nothing in the world quite comparable with the dive of a gannet. He wheels about in immense circles at a steady speed, with sometimes a long glide as a rest between the interlooping curves. At this time you judge him to be a good two hundred feet above the surface of the water. Of a sudden he sights his prey, shoots a few feet higher yet (but you must have quick eyes to detect this), and with wings laid close to his side drops like a plummet, striking the water with a splash that is clearly visible to me here at more than a mile's distance. The column of spray he sends up must be ten feet high. There is no more glorious diving in the world ; it goes on around our Cornish coast almost incessantly, and I could watch it for hours together.

My friend M. D——, of the County Council, would declare an inexorable war on these birds, and we wage great combat in the Council over them. He comes to me and urges gravely that the Bass Rock

THE DIVE OF THE GANNET

alone harbours a million of these gannets, or Solan geese—a computation which I promptly challenge, knowing the incurable inaccuracy of statisticians. He demonstrated to me further that each of these ravenous birds consumes—I forget what—say six pounds of fish per diem, and asks me to meditate on the appalling total. I answer his figures by quoting back the million or so of potential fish spawned by a single herring or pilchard ; I urge (and he cannot deny) that a single school of these fish sometimes extends in a pretty closely-packed mass for a hundred miles and more. (Think of it !) And I go on to urge that, if Nature did not provide these gannets and other depredators, in a few years the Atlantic liners would find their progress clogged by fish, and that in a few years further the whole habitable globe would perish miserably under accumulations of ichthyis guano. Upon this he retorts with a really brilliant theory—that until Messrs. Watt and Stephenson invented railways there continued a fair balance. The depredators in the sea up to that time left a sufficient harvest for man ; but of late years the fisherman, who used to get a living from the fish he could pile into jowters' carts, has opened markets in London, Birmingham, Manchester, etc., and that to protect these markets we must declare war on the gannet. Again I insist that all the fish trains run by all the railways in the world can only nibble at the fringe of productivity of an army of fish a hundred miles long, every female of which has something like

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a million eggs to shed. And so we go on, each arguing heatedly.

* * * * *

But I am too weary after the night journey from London to pursue the argument—even here, where I can sit alone with a cigarette and have it all my own way. I am wondering how the gannet, even with his thick plumage, can drop plump from such a height and yet not break his neck. Sometimes, while not able to detect it, I have told myself that at the last moment he *must* take the water at a glancing angle. But that is nonsense. Apart from my inability to detect any such trick, the impact on the water is visibly terrific.

Well, well! Here at the start of my holiday I am far too tired for speculation. Up in Fleet Street yesterday four workmen lay stretched asleep in the sun's eye as doubtless workmen dozed at noonday on the steps of Cheops' pyramid abuilding; and down here—by twenty hours removed—I see, as I throw the end of my cigarette away,

The gannets dive as Noah saw them dive
O'er sunken Ararat.

If ?

I

If I Were a Millionaire

“ IF I were a millionaire—— ”

“ Was it a publisher who invited you to imagine that ? ” asked Cynthia. “ If so, the man must want to add insult to injury.”

When Cynthia interrupts me in the throes of composition I sometimes miss the point and answer inattentively.

“ I don't see where the insult comes in,” said I. “ A story-teller has at times to imagine himself all sorts of unpleasant characters—a pirate, for instance, or an anarchist. Why not a millionaire as well as any other enemy of society ? If I were a millionaire —— ”

“ Ah ! ” Cynthia drew a long breath, laid down her knitting, and leaned forward with her hands spread to the fire and a soft rapture in her eyes. “ You should put away pen and paper and never trouble to write another book in your life ! ” she murmured.

“ I—I had hoped that one or two masterpieces yet remained to be written,” was my faint protest. She ignored it.

“ And you could have that six months in Rome, and the long tour in Greece, with the cruise to the Ionian Islands, and that other cruise up the Nile—all the journeys, in fact, that you have always been planning but could never afford.”

“ Alas ! no.”

“ And that winter in Italy, with all those pictures to see. You have told me often enough, when in a bad temper, lamenting your fate, that Italy was necessary to every Englishman who tried to be an artist, and that, except for the shortest of visits, you had missed it.”

“ Alas ! yes. But if I am to write no more books it would scarcely seem to matter.”

“ And Japan and Quebec—not to mention Seville and Salamanca, and the pilgrimage to Madrid to see Velazquez’ ‘ Surrender of Breda.’ We could contrive them all.”

“ Contrive ! ” I echoed. “ You don’t seem to realise your luck. With a million of money we can buy a steam-yacht, and order it to take us whither-soever we list. It would be worth while to contrast it with our old voyages in the little *Vida*, when I cooked breakfast in the cockpit whilst you tidied the cabin—do you remember ? ”

She smiled at this. As if either of us could ever forget !

“I detest steam,” she answered. “We would start with a comfortable schooner—a safe, roomy one, with high bulwarks.”

“Already,” said I, “you begin to evince the creeping cautiousness of affluence. There were no bulwarks on the little *Vida*; and when we were young, and it really mattered if we drowned, a sea on board used to be rather good fun. Anyhow, we might start in your comfortable schooner; assuredly in the time left to us we should never arrive at all the ports we desire to visit.”

“I don’t see why you need make us out older than we are,” objected Cynthia, and the rebuke will ever be convincing while she can pout so becomingly.

“You forget,” I replied, “I have just come into a million of money, and am feeling the strain.”

“Anyhow,” she said, “we could enlarge the library—as you planned, two years ago.”

“That is true,” I agreed, looking around the narrow workshop in which we sit after dinner, preferring it to the drawing-room. The books stand two-deep on its shelves, and Heaven alone knows how much loss of time and temper this has cost me at one time and another. “At this moment I am wondering where to dig for my volume of Clough, to turn up the poem that begins:

How pleasant it is to have money—heigho!

How pleasant it is to have money!

and resumes the strain (as I seem to recollect)

da capo. I don't see what else could be done with so absolute a thought."

"It is the absurdest room for a library," Cynthia announced with the air of one making a discovery. "It ought to be at least twice as large again."

"But if I am to have done with books it scarcely seems necessary——"

"And then," she pursued, "we could have a floor above, which would just take that other guest-chamber we have been wanting so long, with a dressing-room, extra bathroom, and perhaps a new heating-cupboard——"

At this point I arose and took the hearth firmly, standing above her with my hands deep in my pockets. "I must beg you to listen," said I, "as one millionaire to another."

"But I thought it was only one million between us."

"Don't trifle, please—as one joint owner in a million to another, if you prefer it." Cynthia murmured that she didn't, but I went on unheeding. "You don't seem to know what a million of money means. You talk about enlarging this box of a house when a moment's reflection should tell you that people in our position cannot possibly be content with less than a country seat, with the sort of garden you see illustrated in *Country Life*, and at least a couple of thousand acres of rough shooting, not to mention a home-farm, a deer-park, and such trifles."

“ I have always wanted that,” agreed Cynthia sweetly ; “ with a house (or at least a flat) in London. But I began with this house because we must have this too ; the children think there ’s no such home in the world.”

“ God bless them for that ! But how many days in the year are we already leaving them to enjoy it ? For I know that, while you can help it, you will never let them out of your care. Well, *imprimis*, we tour the world in a fine schooner yacht, wherein I listen for their footsteps on deck, myself seated in my cabin signing cheques—the most abhorrent occupation in the world. You, meanwhile, are not only engaged in wondering what deterioration our absence will work in our own domestics—and I should say that no living woman had ever been luckier in her servants, if I didn’t know that with you it’s no luck at all, but just a combination of steady government with steady liking—I repeat you are not only worrying about them, but fretting yourself about servants to be engaged for London : how to engage them, and then how to trust them—untried creatures, exposed (in our frequent absences) to a hundred temptations of which our tried ones know nothing. While our yacht explored—say the South Sea Islands—you would be worrying over servants. On top of that you would want me to stand for Parliament.”

“ Women are ambitious,” said Cynthia, musing.

“ So are some men, in their way. I once had an

ambition to write books. But as yet we have faced only the inconvenience of living up to our income. We have still to consider the far more difficult problem of getting rid of the capital before we die."

"I don't understand you at all," said Cynthia.

"A racing stable would bore me to death. When we visited Monte Carlo some years ago, we agreed in disliking the smell around the tables. To distribute the money among the deserving poor would take all the time we have already set aside for foreign travel. Yet something must be done, for the necessity is urgent. You remember the American millionaire we met at Basle? To be precise, it was I who encountered him after his womenfolk had driven me to escape from the compartment in which for forty minutes their talk had been torture. I abandoned you to them; yes, I confess my cowardice. I plunged into the nearest refuge, a second-class smoker, and there I stumbled over the Steel King. He sat picking at a paper bag stained with the juices of decayed cherries. They had handed out this refuse to him at the station before last, when he looked in to see 'how they were getting on.' Having finished his meal of offal, he lit an unsavoury cheap cigar, and asked (for he recognised me) what I thought of his Show—that was the word; and actually I conceived then and there a respect for this man (ostensibly the meanest of human products), and could understand his pride in escorting such a wife and such daughters on the

mission of making Europe sit up. I found something great in this showman who could so cheerfully accept the charity of his exhibits and take its orts, with his dignity, off to a second-class smoking carriage. But I felt no desire to emulate his greatness. My dear," I exclaimed upon a sudden happy thought, "I have it! We can make over the bulk of this silly wealth to the Bodleian, retaining enough only to pay our passages handsomely around the world and keep us on our return in comfort all the rest of our days."

"The Bodleian!" said Cynthia. "Doesn't that already get a copy of every one of your books for nothing? I never could see why?"

"Nor I. But since you condemn me to write no more, I suggest that we owe it some compensation."

II

"If Every Face Were Friendly"

It actually happens to most of us when we are born, and for some time after; but this must be simply because we are weak. Few infants are beautiful; still fewer meritorious; and indeed the friendliest face of all is hers whom our one exploit has just afflicted with intolerable pain. To some of us again it will happen when we die, and again (I suspect) because we are helpless and nothing matters. We protest against the first insult with a feeble wailing:—

On parent knees, a naked new-born child,
Weeping thou sat'st while all around thee smiled.

To the last we oppose that mask of scorn, calm, set, impassive, which even a weakling must win in the end—yea, though all his days have been spent in truckling to his fellows. In the interim we have our job to do in the world, and he to whom every face is friendly may be sure that he is shirking it.

When this question was posited, I passed it on to Cynthia. "You, of all men!" she commented, having reason only too dire to know my instinct for lost causes and forsaken beliefs—or rather, for causes that have nothing left to lose, and beliefs that still await the compliment of betrayal. In truth on

ninety-nine points out of the hundred she finds me a dubious, hesitating Christian ; whereas on the hundredth I am (to her equal if not greater disappointment) firm as a rock. The rock stands on no base of doctrine, though I drag in doctrine to support it when we argue across the table. I have an incurable trick of liking my adversary.

She, always practical, demands to know if I agree with mine adversary while in the way with him ; and there undoubtedly she may score a point. But I yet maintain that an enemy serves you more constantly than a friend, *for he seldom disappoints*. It is good sense if poor rhyme, that

He who would love his fellow-men
Must not expect too much of them.

We expect too much of friends, too little of enemies, and so the enemies get more than their share of chances. Upon us, on the other hand, rests an obligation to be more constant in amity than in hate, especially in public life. " It is our business," says Burke, " to cultivate friendships and to incur enmities ; to have both strong, but both selected ; in the one to be placable, in the other immovable." A man is permitted to rest under illusion concerning his friends, as woe betide him if he do not cherish a lifelong illusion concerning his wife ! But if he truly desires to see himself steadily as others see him as a help to the *know thyself* recommended by sages, let him keep an eye on his enemies rather than any

looking-glass which reflects him in his favourite postures. There is a story of a man whose hate of another man went deep as hell. In the end he could endure the other man no moment longer; so he killed him and buried him deep (as nearly as he could to hell). But the corpse was no sooner out of the way than the survivor began to suffer from a loneliness, which turned into an intolerable restlessness and drove him at length to visit the grave and disinter his victim. He dug down and down, in the end tossing aside his spade and digging with clawed hands, ghoulishly. So he dug until, laying bare a face, he gazed and recognised it for his own.

Of all parables known to me this is about the truest. As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his—enemy, and is sharpened and shaped by it. I am not preaching that in public life a man shall be a Phocion or a Coriolanus. Coriolanus held his fellow-creatures in a scorn which (had he possessed logic) stultified all service of them. He was, to be short, a mere monstrous egoist. I think better of Phocion for the legacy which, when his countrymen put him to death, he left to his son—“Bid him never revenge the wrong the Athenians do me.” That was noble; it anticipated practically on the lips of a man going to his doom a truth which Marcus Aurelius afterwards expressed at leisure: “The best kind of revenge is, not to become like unto them.” Yet I am sure Phocion was vain and wrong when, making a speech which the public

interrupted with applause, he turned to a friend at his elbow and asked, "Have I said anything foolish?" If he so despised assent, why need he have made any speech at all? Unless a man be hopeful of some power to persuade I cannot conceive what business he has, or can think he has, upon a platform.

We are here, as I suppose, to strive with the multitude; not to be its slaves and as little to be its scorners; to persuade it, and as a preliminary, to understand it; to understand even its wrath, for its wrath at best pays us the compliment of being interested in us. If we believe with Ecclesiasticus, that no man is more faithful than the counsel of our own heart, that "a man's mind is sometimes wont to tell him more than seven watchmen that sit above in a high tower"—and if we have the pluck to stand by that belief, we may likely enough at some time in our lives find that wrath denounce us as enemies of our country or of religion, and be under the bitter necessity of learning, with Ibsen's Doctor Stockmann, that the strongest man on earth is he who stands alone. How terrible, for example, was that ordeal of a nation's hate through which Bright and Cobden passed in the first year of the Crimean War, and how gloriously they stood it! Recall Bright's letter, written in the worst of it, to a Mayor of Manchester who had invited him to attend a meeting for the Patriotic Fund:—

"You must excuse me if I cannot go with you :

NEWS FROM THE DUCHY

I will have no part in this terrible crime. My hands shall be unstained with the blood that is being shed. The necessity of maintaining themselves in office may influence an Administration ; delusions may mislead a people ; Vettel may afford you a law and a defence. But no respect for men who form a Government, no regard I have for *going with the stream*, and no fear of being deemed wanting in patriotism, shall influence me in favour of a policy which in my conscience I believe to be as criminal before God as it is destructive of the true interest of my country."

There are cranks in this world, some of whom seem to shape their actions with an eye on posterity. There are even stranger cranks—and I think Phocion was one—who would seem to posture for the approval of antiquity. ("D——n the age. I will write for antiquity!" vowed Lamb when an editor rejected a sonnet of his as likely to shock the contemporary public.) But the above letter of Bright's has no sly glance forward, or backward, or upward at Her Majesty's Ministers of that date, the nation's watchmen seated above in the high tower ; but inward, upon the counsel of his own heart, and to be fired by the pride of his own manliness. "A little touch of something like pride," says an old seventeenth-century writer, "is seated in the true sense of a man's own greatness, without which his humility and modesty would be contemptible virtues!"

Indeed a man has in the end less to fear from this wrath of the public than from the smiles of a world

IF ?

that would allure him to be one with it, and one at the same time with the flesh and the devil. When the powerful change their face and flatter us, that is the time to beware. There lies the crisis, to maintain good manners and yet keep up the combat. "It is easy," says Emerson, "to live after the world's opinion ; it is easy in solitude to live after one's own ; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

Yet I suppose we all have a longing to end well-beloved. But a few of us can hope for any continuance of fame ; and as the poorest look forward to something of a funeral, so the mass of the better-to-do hanker for a handful at least of genuine mourners :—

All I can
My worldly strife shall be ;
They one day say of me,
"He died a good old man."

The shortest way to this would seem to be by living bravely, loving where we can, dealing courteously, endeavouring to give our adversaries credit for good intentions. No one—if men were frank—can give us sixpennyworth of information concerning any other world we may hereafter inhabit ; but there's a pleasure in leaving a name to call up, when men happen to remember it, a certain light in the eyes and the impulsive words, "I wish you had known him !"

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