



THE
LOST VIOL
BY
M. P. SHIEL

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THE LOST VIOL

The Lost Viol

BY M. P. SHIEL



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“ He struck his breast, and thus reproved his heart:
‘ Endure, my heart! thou heavier fate hast borne.’ ”

“ Let us consider it, then,” said I, “ for the discourse is not about a trifle, but about the manner in which we ought to live.” “ Consider, then,” said he. “ I will,” said I.

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CHAPTER I

“**Y**ES, a grand night,” was the thought in Miss Kathleen Sheridan’s mind, as she passed into the west lodge-gates of Orrock Park on the evening of the 21st of November, ’98: an evening of storm, with the roar of the sea in the ear. The young lady stopped at Embree Pond in the park to watch the sheet of water shivering to its dark heart under the flight of the squalls; then with her long-legged walk (she was a hunchback), went on her way, showing in her face her delight in this bleak mood of nature.

Some way further, however, on hearing the hoofs of a horse, her expression changed to one of very real fright, for she had a thought of one Sir Percy Orrock, beheaded by Cromwell, whose ghost gallops about on a headless horse in rough weather; but this turned out to be only Mr. Millings, the land-steward: for, on coming round to the manor-house, the young lady found Millings there talking to Sir Peter Orrock, who at a window was holding his ear forward to hear the land-steward’s news.

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“Good evening, Mr. Millings,” called Miss Kathleen, laughing from ear to ear, with strings of black hair draping her face. “Well, uncle, I have been sketching it all on the heath — witches on broomsticks, ‘strange screams of death in the air.’ That silver lime of Farmer Carr’s is blown flat. Uncle, if you ask me to stop and dine, I may consent.”

“Hm,” muttered Sir Peter to himself, “better stick to your own dinner. Go on, Millings — same old story, eh?”

“Same old story, Sir Peter,” answered Mr. Millings: “there won’t be any of Norfolk left soon, at this rate. Mrs. Dawe’s cottage gone, and with it her son, James Dawe, and three of the boats —”

“Well, it is their own fault!” called out the little maid, “living on the edge of the cliffs, when they know —”

“Got nowhere else to live,” muttered Sir Peter. “Dawe drowned, Millings?”

“No, Sir Peter, but I’m afraid I must say rescued at an awful cost: he was rescued by Miss Langler, who has just been taken home to Woodside in a dying state.”

“Hannah? Hannah Langler?” breathed Sir Peter, turning very pale.

“The lad was carried out two hundred yards,” said Mr. Millings, “where he clung to the bottom of one of the three boats; on the cliffs I found a crowd watching him, including Fagan, the coast-guardsman, who

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told me that the lifeboat was coming round from Wardenham; but I thought from the first that it would come too late, for I could see Dawe nearer in every time the lighthouse beam swept over him: and so it proved, for, as the lifeboat-light appeared round the north headland, Dawe was thrown up by a breaker on a strip of sand —”

“But Hannah?” said the baronet.

“Miss Langler was in the crowd with her father,” said Millings; “she had been holding up Dawe’s mother, who was fainting, but when Dawe was all of a sudden lying on the strip of sand below us, I saw Miss Langler running among the fishermen, begging one and another to save him before the next wave. ‘There’s nothing like venturing,’ I heard her say twice or thrice, but they answered that that would only mean two deaths instead of one, and I fully agreed with them. When the next breaker drew back from the cliffs we all looked to see Dawe gone with it: but there he still was, and I now heard Miss Langler cry out to Horsford, the lighthouse-keeper, ‘Now, now, Horsford, venture now,’ and then, all at once, I was aware that she herself was going down the cliff-side by that little foot-path near the church-tower.”

“But, God’s name, man, couldn’t some of you stop her, a whole crowd of you there?” said Sir Peter.

“It couldn’t be done, Sir Peter, I regret to say. Two or three did make a try to hold her, but she was gone like the wind. Personally, I confess, I was

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rather paralyzed: she looked pretty small down there in the mouth of the sea, like a fly in an engine at work; it was rather painful. Old Farmer Langler fell on his knees; no one had a word to say. I don't suppose it lasted ten minutes on the whole, but I shouldn't care to live through it again. Dawe's a heavy lout, a head taller than she, and twice she was felled by the sea with him in her arms. When a wave withdrew, we saw them still there, and another wave coming. Two of the womenfolk fainted. I with some other men ran half-way down to see better, and got drenched. However, she won back to the path with her unwieldy prize, and there gave in. We then ran down and got them somehow to the top; Dawe was taken to the postmistress's cottage, and Miss Langler home to Woodside. Both are in a pretty bad way, they say."

"Well, it is her own fault!" called the quaint maid shrilly against the wind from the outer hall. "Hannah has a secret pride in her physical powers which stood in need of a ducking."

The baronet muttered something, turned from the window, and in five minutes was passing out of the house, well wrapped up, with his rusty top-hat pressed on his head, and a footman swinging a lantern before his steps.

"What, going to Woodside, uncle?" asked Kathleen, who still stood in the outer hall, "how wonderfully good of you!"

The baronet did not answer. She went out with

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him. Beyond the east gates they saw the lighthouse beam traveling over land and sea in turn, the one thing which the storm could not fluster. A drizzle, like spray caught from the sea, struck the face. It was very bleak. They met only a manure-cart whose driver saw, head-to-wind, his horses' manes, tails, and forelocks floating out at random on the streams of the storm. Sir Peter was silent, but the quaint maid had ever something to say in her laughing way. "Isn't it fine?" she cried out: "one feels as if one were oneself the storm!" Then presently: "Did you read all that about Chris Wilson? That boy is going to be *the* maestro of the day, you'll see. He has won the year's prize-violin, and been publicly embraced by Strauss. Yvonne writes me that he's the wildest of madcaps, and leaves broken hearts in every capital: this is the boy that I am supposed to be engaged to."

At this Sir Peter stooped sharply to her ear, saying: "Better drop that talk, and think of something besides *men*."

"But what do you mean?" cried back Kathleen: "wasn't it arranged before I was born that he should marry me? Not that I care at all, or would marry him, if he wanted me"; in a lower tone she added: "you have no humor, mon oncle."

"This is Hannah Langler's birthday, too!" she called out presently: "did you know? She will remember the date of her ducking. Isn't it an extraordinary thing that on each of her birthdays that girl

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receives a present from some unknown person? This time it is a ring that must have cost two hundred pounds."

"How old is she to-day?" asked Sir Peter, stooping to her ear.

"Twenty-four."

"No — twenty-three."

"Excuse me, uncle, twenty-four. But what does it matter to you, really? I believe you cherish some sort of odd weakness for this Langler girl. She tells me that every time you see her you whisper into her ear always the same words, 'Uglier than ever, I see.' Well that might be a pleasantry, if she were pretty, but as what you say happens to be true, it is hardly polite, is it? The rector has suggested that perhaps this yeoman's daughter is destined to become — Lady Orrock. I told him that things of that sort don't happen."

"Hm!" muttered Sir Peter; "talk too much."

Kathleen now went up a lane on the left leading to her own place, "The Hill," while Sir Peter and the footman went on down yew and hawthorn hedges, till the light of Woodside Farm appeared; and great was the wonder of the old farmer and of Mrs. Langler when they saw Sir Peter come to see Hannah, for the baronet was a rather crusty and rusty type — tall, with a stoop and an asthmatic chest — from whom a jerk of the head was about all that people on the estate expected in the way of friendliness.

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Sir Peter saw Hannah, who lay unconscious from her drenching, stayed a little with the old couple and old Dr. Williams, and then trudged back to the Hall.

He sat up so late that night, sniffing his three dried apples, that Bentley, his old house-steward, became uneasy. He was writing a long letter; for his discovery that night that Hannah Langler was twenty-four, not twenty-three, as he had somehow thought, was now hurrying him to an action which for fifteen years had lain planned in his heart.

“Better,” he wrote to his nephew Chris Wilson, “come here for two or three months, and let me see if I like you. As I have not seen you since you were sixteen, and then only for a few minutes in Paris, it is impossible for me to know what sort of being you are: but I was attached to your mother, and if you have any touch of her, it is possible that both myself and the young lady to whom I refer may care to have you permanently about us. Your income, if I remember rightly, hardly amounts to more than £500, and if Miss Hannah Langler will marry you, she will have from me a jointure of £3,000 a year, and will, moreover, be my heiress: in which case you may decide to give up scraping fiddles for the rest of your days,” etc., etc.

This letter went off to Paris the next day. Four days later came the reply, written apparently in a heat of haste:

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“MY DEAR SIR AND UNCLE:

“I am obliged by your most kind invitation to Orrock Hall, and delighted that I have so near a relative as my uncle to remember me. I shall certainly come to visit you, if the good people here will let me, and I will marry whomsoever you desire, since that is your caprice. You should expect me, therefore, let us us say, next Tuesday.

Ever yours sincerely,

“CHRIS WILSON.”

CHAPTER II

THE appointed Tuesday came, but Chris Wilson did not come with it; nor did he send any excuse.

After a month Sir Peter wrote again, angrily this time; in two weeks the answer came from Vienna, saying that Chris would find it a "genuine delight" to visit so near and dear a relative as his uncle during the month of February next. But February, March, April, and May passed, and Chris Wilson did not come to Orrock, nor send any excuse.

Once more Sir Peter wrote, no longer an invitation, but a letter bitter to the point of invective; he received no answer to this, but on a day in June when no one expected him at Orrock, Chris Wilson sat in the Wardenham train from London, with the score of *Fidelio* open on his knees and three violins about him.

At Wardenham, of course, no carriage awaited him, and there he stood, a violin-case in each hand, looking up and down the road with a pathetic dismay. He believed that he had written to Sir Peter the date of his coming, and had perhaps expected a procession with flags to meet him, but no one even noticed him. "Well, the languid people," he said with his meek

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smile, for it seemed to him odd that any one should be unconscious of his arrivals and departures.

At last one of the donkey-baskets peculiar to Wardenham was got; an old box, which was the master's, and a more costly portmanteau, which was the valet's, were put into it, and they set off through a land of cornfields and farms, past the lighthouse, the windmill on the hill, the village with its clothes hung out to dry in the sunlight. Anon the sea was in sight with sails on it, and the cliffs in their colored carpet of poppy, thistle, and sea-daisy; and anon the basket-chaise was among hills of heather and fern. There was hardly a sound, save the martin's wing, the bee fumbling into its lavender-bed, and dream-laughter borne from some boys and girls playing cricket in a meadow. Three men mending a net before a cottage door, among them that Willie Dawe whom Hannah had rescued from the sea, seemed to work in a doze. But Chris Wilson, who was a native of cities, and was being jolted in the lanes, had no eye for all this, and cried out anon to his driver: "Is it far, my friend?"

Beyond the ruined church-tower on the cliffs, the chaise turned inland between hedgerows full of wild yellow tulip, and in a lane promenaded by geese passed Woodside peeping through its nest of old trees. At Woodside gate stood a young lady, looking up and down the lane with shaded eyes, who suddenly felt ashamed of her hair, but the moment the chaise had passed, beckoned eagerly, whereat another young

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lady spending the day at the farm ran out to her.

“Too late,” said Hannah Langler: “a Wardenham chaise with a young man in it, my dear! the squire’s nephew, I believe, has violins — you should have run quicker! Saw without seeing me at first, then suddenly realizing a petticoat about, looked back and smiled at me with little nods in an easy, cheeky kind of a sort of a way —”

“Did you nod back, Hannah?”

“Get thee behind me, Satan! Of course not. But it wasn’t done anyhow, my dear, but prince-like —”

“What is he like, Hannah?” asked Anne, highly interested.

“Not handsome, I think — broad-faced — stout — a bit overgrown — more body than head, top of his nose browned, my dear, like an apple just turning, a split cloth hat cocked well back, so that I could see his hair parted in the middle, spreads out behind in a mass of curls over his shoulders — brown, lighter than mine, his eyes blue and heavy — drowsy, tipsy-like — forehead small and flushed —”

“You saw enough of him all in a moment!”

“But it was that quietly wicked little smile, with little movements of his eyebrows —!”

“He must be fast, Hannah.”

“But a dear boy, I should think.”

“I wonder if Miss Kathleen will be falling in love! for all that girl thinks about is love and marriage.”

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“Poor little dear,” sighed Hannah, with a change from very gay to very grave: “it is her poor little body that’s to blame for that, Anne. I believe she is ever wondering if everybody finds her as plain as she finds herself: the big doubt of her life, that; so she’s ever on the watch with her sharp grey eyes to solve it one way or the other, with a fear of the verdict trembling in her poor heart all the time.”

“Hannah, sometimes I believe you see right into people’s hearts,” remarked Anne.

“Know what’s in Kathleen’s, anyway,” answered Hannah with a pleased laugh: “she would give all she is worth and a penny more to enter somebody else’s mind for one minute to watch herself, and, of course, she cares most what the male gender thinks of her, so every farm-lad she sees, she asks herself, ‘How does *he* like me?’ And to think that she’s doomed to stew in that pot to the day of her death! Ah, we ought —”

A voice from the farmhouse called “Hannah!” and “Coming, mother!” called Hannah — “no peace to the wicked” — and ran away inward.

The chaise and violinist, meanwhile, had arrived before the low front of Orrock with its array of many-shafted oriels; whereat Sir Peter, hearing of it, hurried from his work of docketing old documents in the library, and found Chris Wilson tapping with his foot on the floor of the inner hall.

“You Chris Wilson?” asked Sir Peter, gazing over his glasses.

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"The same, sir," answered Chris.

"Well, what do you want now, sir?"

"Absolutely nothing, sir," answered Chris, with his meek smile.

"I don't like erratic persons, sir," said Sir Peter. "I don't allow any one about me to be erratic, except myself. You promised —"

"Then you are my own uncle, sir, for I am of precisely the same turn of mind myself. If you are as erratic as your footman, I have only to wish you a good day —"

"Stop, sir; did you not promise to be here since the month of February last?"

"I'm sure I can't remember, sir. What happened in the month of February last are among the things in which I no longer take an interest. I am here now; let that suffice you."

"Why, he chooses some of his words something like a Frenchman," muttered Sir Peter. "Why on earth, sir, didn't you let me know that you were coming?"

"Didn't I, sir? I think so."

"Hm! memory wants brushing up. But, sir —"

"May I remind you, sir, that I am holding an Amati fiddle in a terrible draft? If you invite me to come in, I will."

"Then, sir — come in."

Sir Peter turned inward muttering, and the stranger was presently led to his own apartments, whence he would not stir for the rest of that day; till late into the

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night sounds of music — studies in chords, songs — were heard coming from behind the locked doors of the musician's quarters, so that near midnight Sir Peter stamped his list slippers in one of the library bear-skins and covered his ears with his palms.

The next morning there was much ado when Chris sent Grimani, his valet, to ask that, since *déjeuner* was to be "breakfast," it should be put off to ten o'clock. The baronet at first refused, but yielded afterwards; and Chris came down in a better mood, asking as he sat to table: "Have I been in this place before, sir?"

"I think you have when a boy," answered Sir Peter.

"Charming place! Does the whole of this place become my property at your death, sir?"

"No, sir, unless I am foolish enough to die without a will; and you should not contemplate my death, sir."

"God retard it, sir. I don't contemplate it, I only conceive it. May you live a thousand years."

"Hm — and you ten thousand."

"By the way, sir, was my mother an elder sister of yours, or a younger?"

"You don't know much about your family, my friend."

"My good sir, if you had ever produced four simultaneous A flats on the violin before the age of, say, twenty, you would understand that my time for family histories has been short."

"Why, the fellow takes offence for nothing," thought Sir Peter.

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“So you know more about your violin than about your mother, sir?”

“My violin is my wife,” said Chris.

“Got three wives.”

“A full harem, sir! and all are sirens. But was my mother older or younger than you?”

“Younger, sir.”

“What would be my own age now, sir?”

“Memory gone crazy!” muttered Sir Peter.

“I remember my nineteenth birthday,” said Chris, “my father being then still alive, but since his death no one tells me anything.”

“You are now three months over twenty-two, sir.”

“But as to your other sisters, sir, there were — how many?”

“Your aunts Margaret and Jane, sir.”

“I remember; one married the Marquis de Pencharry-Strannik. And the other?”

“Jane married an Irish judge named Sheridan.”

“Both dead, sir?”

“Yes. Your mother, too, is dead, sir.”

“I know it well, sir, for though she died when I was quite young, I loved her with enthusiasm. Excellent woman! And my two aunts, did they leave behind them any family?”

“Each left one daughter: Margaret’s daughter is Yvonne de Pencharry-Strannik whose place, ‘Château-brun,’ is near Toulouse; Jane’s daughter is Miss Kathleen Sheridan, whose English seat, ‘The Hill,’ is

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not a mile from here. She's pretty sure to come peeping about here to-day, so you'll see her, if you don't lock all the doors of the place."

"Are they charming people, my two cousins?"

"I know little of Yvonne, though I'm supposed to be one of her guardians. She was here five years ago when she was sixteen. I believe she's considered a beauty, and a leader of fashion in the south of France. The other one, Kathleen, is a spiteful little hunchback —"

At that very moment the quaint maid herself entered, laughing with all her beautiful teeth, while Chris rushed headlong from the table to meet her, and hung over her hand in a rapture.

"Heartiest welcomes to Orrock, cousin Chris," said Kathleen; "we have not met since you were a little thing of six —"

"That meeting is delightfully stored in my memory," murmured Chris. And Sir Peter went, "Hm!"

"I had no idea that you were come till late last night!" said Kathleen, putting her bunch of pink hollyhocks and grasses into a china bowl. "Uncle Peter, you might have sent to tell one! The difficulty now that we have him will be to keep him!"

She played her fine eyes so coquettishly, that Chris said:

"I will stay as long as you wish."

"That is sweet of you, then. But the wonder is that you came! Did Uncle Peter write to ask you?"

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He never told me! If I could flatter myself, now, that *I* was a motive —”

“Who else?” said he, half with his lips and half with his eyebrows.

The little maid’s eyes rested upon him, and she thought to herself, “Is not this a dear boy?”

“But how are we to amuse him?” she asked. “He won’t like wild flowers and sea-bathing, you know, Uncle Peter, nor Friday-night whist-parties, nor the county people, nor the Marstons and Iliffes. We must have dances —”

“Can you accompany?” asked Chris.

“Why — yes.”

“And excellently, I am certain.”

“Oh, I know that hardly any woman can accompany, but you try me and see!” she laughed, half-nervously, half-conscious of a cleverness that was quite Puck-like.

But something was not right with the musician’s chocolate! he gave one sad look of reproach at Grimani, whose clasped fingers were heard to crack for nervousness; and this for some time threw an awkwardness over the breakfast.

“I don’t know how you will find Uncle Peter’s pianos,” said Kathleen when they rose, “but I think something of my own grand; better let me take you to the Hill at once!”

Chris let her do this before lunch, and stayed with her for hours. The moment he was gone the little maid flew to gaze in her mirror at a yellow face wedged

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between high shoulders; she smiled, and her young mouth was enclosed in a series of wrinkles, like brackets; she walked, and it was from a waist up at her chest. Or perhaps the mirror lied a little to *her* eyes? She had that doubt, that hope, within her. Chris had been meant for her before her birth, and she was born like this, *if* the mirror was quite true. She knew pain and fear in that hour. Many had been her loves and fevers before, but Chris Wilson compared with other men was like a moon wailing music in its orbit, and upon him henceforth her ambitious heart was set.

Nor was she in despair. "He is delighted with me!" she said to one Miss Olivia, her companion at the Hill since childhood. "He told me that he had rarely met an accompanist who so foreknew the 'history of his emotions'; and in going he said, 'Thank you very much: you are among the virtuosi.' I never dreamt that I could play like that, Olivia; my soul seemed to mix with his, and my fingers became his."

"What a terrible lot of Schubert!" said Miss Olivia. "But do you think Mr. Wilson really great?"

"Divine, you mean," said Kathleen. "This boy is one of the sons of thunder, and lords of the soul, I tell you. From the moment his bow touched his Amati's sweet, sweet A to his last note, it was all up with me, Olivia. Oh, the technicality of his infinite cadenzas, his heavenly grace — and his hands! just made for stopping intervals, with two of the fingers quite deformed by his awfully high bridge. I must go out."

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“But it is near dinner-time, and drizzling —!”

“I don’t care, I can’t stop in the house.”

It was already dark, but Kathleen went out, and within an hour a stable-boy was galloping to fetch Dr. Williams to her bedside.

“Miss Sheridan has seen Shuck, sir,” the boy answered when the doctor asked what was the matter — “Shuck” being the ghost of a headless dog which travels furiously across-country from Marsham to St. Fay’s about that hour. “Tut, tut,” said Dr. Williams, “your mistress has caught sight of a white rabbit, boy.”

“Whatever it was,” said the boy, “she went out for a walk and ran back screaming all the way at the top of her voice, and you’ve got to come at once, doctor, for she’s very bad.”

Kathleen was subject to these transports and breakdowns, and for a week she lay tossing, with those two images, “Shuck” and Chris Wilson, blazing like day-stars in her fever.

During this time Hannah Langler had been greatly exalted, for Sir Peter had had her to dinner at the Hall, and Hannah had heard his whisper at her ear, “Mustn’t tell you how ugly you are to-night, because you are my guest.” She was, indeed, from of old, quite at home at the Hall, for she would allow no hand but hers to make Sir Peter’s special pound of Jersey butter at Woodside, and liked to bring over presents of cream-cheese, lark’s eggs, sometimes help-

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ing old Bentley in the management; but dining among the great ones was rather another matter. The news of a strange creature at Orrock was abroad, the "county" was coming to hear him play, and all among the "county" Hannah found herself, with a rose in her hair, and on her finger that mysterious ring, sent her — by whom? — on her twenty-fourth birthday. It was Sir Peter's will.

"Can you accompany?" Chris asked her when she begged him to play.

"Oh!" she laughed, "Hymns New and Old is *my* musical level!"

"Never mind, I'll play for you."

He struck round his long Tourte clouds of rosin, tossed his hair back, chinned his thick-stringed Bergonzi, and flooded the drawing-room with Rode's air in G. Hannah gazed as if alarmed at something happening without or within her, and at one point pressed the hand of Mrs. Horsnel, the rector's wife. Chris had chosen his fiddle of greatest sonority to move her by mere power; and she, too, admitted him, in Kathleen's words, one of the "sons of thunder."

"Isn't he a dear boy?" murmured Mrs. Horsnel when it was all over.

"Yes," breathed Hannah, like one who sees the sea for the first time.

Some time afterwards when Chris and Sir Peter were alone late at night after a card-party, the baronet suddenly asked: "What do you think of Miss Langler?"

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“Nice and plump,” said Chris.

“That all you see in her, my friend?”

“No, not all, sir. I like her immensely; she has both power and charm. How came she by that scar on her forehead?”

“A little mule in the village which wouldn’t let anyone ride it; must take it into her head to tame it — used to be a regular tom-boy, got on it barebacked, the thing threw her off, and kicked her there.”

“Well, she seems nice and healthy. But the English have no instinct for dress. Why on earth should she wear her hair brushed back in that fashion?”

“Free country, sir. By the way, are you in love with the Honorable Edith Cardew? I have noticed you —”

“I may have thought of undertaking her conquest, sir; it is my habit to be in love, but, frankly, Norfolk is not rich in seductions of that sort. I’m afraid I must announce my departure, sir. I came for a week, and have been here perhaps months now, kept by your own good company, and Miss Kathleen’s perfect accompanying. She is among the virtuosi.”

“You are not — er — taken with Miss Hannah Langler, I see, sir.”

“Taken? But stay, stay: didn’t you once write me something about marrying some one, sir? and wasn’t this very Hannah Langler the lady in question? It *was* so. I have often wondered what brought me to this corner of the world; it was that! You promised me some thousands of pounds a year.”

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“Well, I’ve heard of the musician Beethoven forgetting his own name, and you are almost as bad. You can’t think much of money, sir?”

“On the contrary, sir, I admire gross, handsome sums of money to an extent that might be called a weakness; I am supposed to be a spendthrift, but I throw away only silver: I am pound wise, but shilling foolish.”

“So, if you married Miss Langler, it would be for the money only?”

“Let me see. You know, sir, that on the Continent marriages are commercial contracts, and that I have a Continental mind; but it should not be difficult to me to get fifty wives with far larger dowries than some few thousand pounds a year; so that, if I married Miss Langler, it would be partly for the money, partly to make myself agreeable to a wish of my good Uncle Peter, partly because the lady is rather pleasing to my fancy, and partly because I don’t consider the matter of great importance.”

“That ends it, then, that ends it; you take the wrong tone, sir, in speaking of that lady,” said Sir Peter, sniffing one of his dried apples quickly with alternate nostrils. “If you think, because you can scrape fiddles —”

“What horror, sir; you know nothing about bowing; one does not scrape, one strikes —”

“Hence the term fiddlesticks, sir,” said Sir Peter. “I say that if you think you would do Hannah Langler

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an honor in marrying her, then you shall lose her, Chris. My proposal to you arose solely from my wish to do a great kindness to my sister's son — but I despair of making a fellow like you understand what you get, if you get *her*; will have to teach you that herself in time. I know her; have watched her twenty odd years; and if you love not only a bright companion, but a most faithful hand on your head when it aches, will love her. I fancy she's taken with you, fancy so, she can't hide much from me, and in that case you are in luck's way. And let me tell you, sir, that in marrying her you marry no farmer's daughter, but a lady of ancient lineage and high race —”

“Ah, I thought there was some mystery —”

“Not much mystery. I'll tell, on the understanding that herself nor any one ever learns facts from you. Her father was an old friend of mine” — Sir Peter meant himself, for none but him was Hannah's father — “who married a farmer's daughter, and had this child by her. My friend's father was a baronet, alive at the time of the marriage, marriage had to be kept secret, and five months after child's birth its mother died, leaving child on its father's hands. Well, my friend knew a farmer-couple named Langler in Devonshire, worthy people, who were childless, and deciding to bring up his child in the social status of its mother, status which he always considered by far the best, he fixed upon these Langlers; offered to buy their Devonshire farm from them, and to give them instead the

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large farm they now have here, together with an annuity, on condition that they took little Hannah, and let it be understood in new county that she was their own child. All this arranged by lawyer's-letters, and to the present old couple don't know who is Hannah's father, though they may suspect, may suspect. That, at any rate, is all the mystery; baronet's daughter instead of farmer's."

"That makes her all the more interesting, sir," said Chris. "I must take the matter seriously, I see. It might produce a rather eccentric and pretty effect, an English country-girl for one's lawful wife"

CHAPTER III

THIS thing seemed to stick in Chris Wilson's vague memory, for three days later he put his cloth hat on his curls, and took a stroll to Woodside, where he begged Mrs. Langler to take him to Hannah, was led upstairs to the foot of a ladder which he climbed, then stooped through an opening, and found Hannah in a sweet-smelling loft among festoons of apples, thyme, and marjoram. She let slip a cry on seeing him, rather vexed, and quickly let down her skirt which had been pinned up in front.

"Charming, this place," said Chris, panting.

"Can't shake hands," said Hannah. "How on earth came you up here, so near heaven?"

"Near Hannah," said Chris, sitting on a tub.

"Oh! a man may not flirt with his grandmother in a loft!"

"But I have come expressly to court you."

"You mayn't find that all milk and honey, even so high up! I could lock you up nicely in here till you had done every scrap of this work. I am pretty ruthless, too, if I take a thing into my head."

"Provided you lock yourself in, too."

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“Ah me, how Somebody finds mischief still. You had no right up here, Mr. Wilson.”

“You called me Chris last night.”

“Because you had the heroism to call me Hannah! But give him an inch and he takes an ell, of course.”

“L is for Langler. Shall I take a Langler?”

“His Majesty is pleased to hunt to-day.”

“I find you admirable.”

“Do you? If Miss Edith Cardew — but I won't utter rashness with my lips. Come, work first and play after; help me with these artichokes —”

“You would not be jealous if you were not in love.”

“Who?”

“You.”

“But what has brought him here this day, for my sins? I'd as soon think of being in love with the Archangel Israfel! Well, no peace to the wicked, I suppose — must just make the best of a bad bargain.”

In such talk they spent an hour up there, Chris murmuring short remarks with his quiet smile and movements of the eyebrows which said for him most of the little that he had to say, till he dropped the remark, “Seriously, I think of marrying,” whereat she, with a spin towards him, said quickly:

“Seriously? of marrying Kathleen?”

“Some one else,” said Chris.

“Ah, well, now that I have the chance I am going to say my say about that. You don't mean any harm, but you are too friendly with Kathleen, you know.

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Oh! you can't dream what misery you may be making for this poor girl, Mr. Wilson! You have a way, for instance, of hanging over ladies when you shake hands in a sort of silent rapture; but you shouldn't to *her*. Oh, my heart aches! It isn't her fault. Promise me this now, and mean it."

"I like the eyes; nice and clear."

"Ugh! it is no good; he can't be serious. I'd like to — beat you!"

"Kathleen has nothing to do with the matter. I wish to marry *you*."

"Oh! that would be nice! to be Mrs. Fiddle!"

"But seriously."

"How many strings to your bow, madame? That would be nice! With bells on her fingers, and bells on her toes, she shall have music —!"

"No, but seriously. Will you?"

"But you should not say such things, Chris, O, you should not, it is not right to me —!"

"But don't think that I am jesting. My Uncle Peter and I have even spoken together of it."

"You and Sir Peter have spoken of *you* marrying *me*?"

"Quite true."

At this Hannah stood silent with her back to Chris, dashed away a moisture from her eyes, then with instant swiftness was on her knees, fondling his hands, saying, "Don't say it, if you don't mean it, dear; mine isn't summer-love, but the whole silly Hannah, with

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her heart and everything thrown in, for good. If you knew how I have prayed to be saved from loving you, for you are like water slipping through one's fingers; only an angel could have and hold you. Sometimes I've longed to beat you, and smash all the fiddles; but tell me once in my ear that you love me, that you do love me—"

Chris smiled with little nods, meaning "yes," saying, "I like the hair, quite a burden of womanhood here behind, nice and fat," whereat Hannah leapt up with rather a sobbing laugh, saying to herself: "It will be a work to be Mrs. Fiddle, I know; but I'll tackle it gladly, since it is His Will."

His Will! But while some marriages are made in Heaven, some are made on the Continent, and this of Chris was rather of this latter type. Hannah, however, could dream of no motive, except love, in the mind of Chris, for she knew nothing of Sir Peter's hand in the matter, and in her joy believed that here was the heavenly type. When Chris returned to the Hall, he was able to tell Sir Peter that Hannah was willing to marry him within four weeks, before Chris should quite sicken of Norfolk.

Hannah had been on the point of becoming a London hospital-nurse, but all that was changed now. No secret was made of the affair, and the countryside was in a state of wonder; old Mr. and Mrs. Langler pondered it in their hearts; the quaint maid was made ill, and when she heard of the dowry that Sir Peter gave

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with Hannah, her amazement went mad. She now understood that Sir Peter was the cause of all, and she was as angry with the old man as with Hannah.

Everything was made ready in haste; the five villages round Orrock and the coast forefelt what was coming; great things were in the air; Woodside no more recognized itself; partridge-shooting, dancing, and guests were at the Hall, hearing strange music at night.

All this, however, was upsetting for Sir Peter, who was of a fretful and fidgety build, and delicate in the chest. Some days after Kathleen had risen from her fever, she came down to the Hall, and found the old man in an exhausted sleep. The house-party had gone out picnicking, and, hearing this, the little maid had wandered in search of Sir Peter to ply him with questions about Chris and Hannah. She found him with some documents on his knees breathing in sleep among the nine thousand volumes which made the fame of Orrock; and she made long steps from one white bear-skin to another, so as to come softly to him.

The thought came into her head, "If you slept on for a week, our wedding would have to be put off."

Sir Peter was in a nook, with an oriel window on each side of him. Kathleen softly opened a leaf of one oriel, and looked out at the autumn sunlight on the land. "He always disliked me," she thought, "and I have always disliked him for it. Why should they dislike me? I have two eyes, one nose, like human

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beings — perhaps they guess that I am myself, the sole of my kind, and that there's something in me that rankles and is at war; for it is all a struggle with me somehow to hold my poor head above water — a weary thing, God knows. Do they see into me at all? I should shriek with shame; but not even God could quite know this knot of nerves. Then, if they don't guess, why do they dislike me, and make me hate? As to that old man there! I'll look out through that other oriel to see the glass-houses."

She softly opened the oriel on the other side of Sir Peter, without closing the first, and looked out anew, thinking, "There is quite two acres under glass on this side. He is well asleep; that isn't my fault if he sleeps where there is a draught, and he hasn't had asthma lately, so it is nothing, and not my fault. What could have put this marriage into his head? By what witchcraft has Hannah Langler enthralled him to this extent? He has a lot under glass over here; there must be a dozen gardeners. Not that I should wish to harm any one, even if it was in my power. But oh! how I am trembling!"

She turned inward, and without closing either of the windows, fled away over the bear-skins. She reached home in such a state of panting and fever, that she had to be put to bed, while Sir Peter, for his part, slept on an hour in the draft, and awoke hoarse. The next morning he did not rise from bed; three days later he was so ill, that it was decided that

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the wedding of Hannah and Chris must be put off; in a week it was given out by the doctor that Sir Peter was dying.

It was in this state of affairs that old Bentley wrote the news to the baronet's niece and "ward," Yvonne de Pencharry-Strannik; and on the ninth evening of Sir Peter's illness, Kathleen, walking in Orrock Park, heard a voice scream out "*Kathleen!*" and, looking round, saw a chaise with two women, one of whom was leaping out to rush to her; in a moment she was being kissed by the young *marquise*, Yvonne.

"Yvonne! you?" cried Kathleen.

"It is I! I arrive from Paris," panted Yvonne.

"You smell of Paris, and of all the scent-bottles on earth —"

"Such an *escapade*, my dear! I arrive alone with my chamber-woman, in order to see our uncle who is dying; is it not that I am good?"

"And tall, and astonishing, and most wonderfully pretty, Yvonne! It is four years since — You know, of course, that your cousin, Chris Wilson, is here?"

"You yourself, wrote you not to me of it? Am I not here? therefore, I knew it!"

"The darling English that you speak, Yvonne! *p'tite jaseuse!* I believe I could never be jealous of you, you are too much like a bird-of-paradise."

"Oh, no one is jealous of me, my dear, I have too good a heart. In effect, I am without a single defect.

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I am rich, I am free, I am pretty, and I have a good heart."

"Delightful of you to say it! Are you going to stay with me at the Hill — or at the Hall?"

"The violinist, where stays he?"

"At the Hall."

"Then, me also, I stay at the Hall."

"But you have heard that he is to be married?"

"I have heard it! And as to the lady, is she charming?"

"A yeoman's daughter, Yvonne — just think! — without graces, without beauty. It is such a scandal. You have just come in time to rescue Cousin Chris, thank Heaven."

"Oh, the heavy rôle! I only play in comedy."

"But you *will* do this, won't you? This match is all through Uncle Peter, who has taken a crack-brained fancy to the girl, and is giving vast sums of money with her. Remember that Chris is our cousin, and not rich like you and me, so it is our duty to rescue him from this mercenary person. All she has is superabundant health and a back-bone — I dislike her. Besides, you are about to fall in love yourself, for every woman at once says of him, 'What a dear boy!' He looks so meek and demure, yet one guesses the wayward fires in him —"

"Oh, save me from fires! Châteaubrun is already purgatorial! But if my Uncle Peter dies, Mr. Wilson may no more marry —"

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“Uncle Peter won’t die. Ah, I couldn’t live in England afterwards.” The little maid said this rather to herself, but Yvonne, hearing it, asked:

“You love much, then, our uncle, my poor Kathleen?”

Kathleen answered by asking: “Aren’t you afraid of ghosts, Yvonne?”

“Ghosts? Not at all!” said Yvonne. “In France one no longer believes that the spirit lives after death, my dear.”

“I don’t either, not with my head, but I do with my nerves; I know that there are no ghosts, but I live in a horrible terror of them, Yvonne.”

“My little cousin droll and dear,” murmured Yvonne. “But shall we go farther?”

“Droll and little without being dear,” thought Kathleen, shrinking on a sudden like the sensitive plant.

They drove through the darkling park together to the Hall, before which they found a knot of men, Chris Wilson among them, and with an evil eye Kathleen saw Chris start at sight of Yvonne, whom he had never met before, and, on being presented, hang over her hand in a rapture. Chris had seen nothing French or dazzling for months, so Yvonne came like an armed man upon him, and he went with her into the Hall with quite a new briskness and heat in him (his hair lifting in a mass at each step), like a fresh fizzing-up and ado in stale-gone champagne.

CHAPTER IV

“WELL, is he a dear boy?” Kathleen asked Yvonne one evening in her laughing way.

“Of my part, my dear,” answered Yvonne, who, being in England, duly spoke in *Engleesh*, “that which I repeat to myself is not that he is a dear boy, but that he is dear to another. I have a good heart, Kathleen, I must not take part in a treason.”

The quaint maid, standing with her hat on beside Yvonne, whose yellow hair was being *ondulés*, said again, “But is he a dear boy?”

“I know nothing of it — there! Leave me tranquil,” answered Yvonne.

“Tranquillity and Chris don’t live in the same parish, Yvonne.”

“Oh, *pas tant que ça!*” went Yvonne. “And is not Miss Langler, of her part, admirable? Why, you told me that she is without charm! Me, on the contrary, I find something of even angel-like in her eyes which twinkle and smile, and in a certain light on her forehead.”

“The beauty of holiness heightened by perspiration —”

“Well, for me she is beautiful in her type,” said

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Yvonne. "And her devotion to the bedside of our Uncle Peter! No one would imagine that she has a lover whom she adores. Miss Praed has told me that during three days and nights she will not once sleep, and still remains gay and fresh; what a Britannic physique!"

"And if you want to make her your slave for life, just tell her 'How splendid and strong you are, Hannah!' She is vainer of it than a coquette of her dresses. However, it is not her business to nurse Uncle Peter, there are the proper nurses; but Hannah knows where her nest is feathered."

"No, she is not mercenary, my dear, I am sure of it. But a little jealousy is the salt of country-life, is it not?"

"*You* should be jealous!" said the little maid with lightning eyes.

"And why?"

"Isn't there some danger? Do be careful, dear. Chris, I can see, likes her racy bell of a tongue with its touch of buffoonery, and her warm-hearted moods and changes. While she is away from everything at Uncle Peter's bedside, you should be specially killing —"

"Oh, as to that, my dear, let neither Miss Langler nor you have any delusions," said Yvonne. "It is only because I have a good heart."

"*That's* where to fire her," thought Kathleen — "in her sense of another woman's rivalry: she is more emulous than she is lovesick."

"There! it is finished," said Yvonne before the

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mirror. "Is it not that I am charming to-night? Let us descend."

All day Yvonne would lie torpid, like a Spanish woman, but began to brighten up before dinner, and shone out at night like a moon, dimming every star. Then would be the feast of music in an old drawing-room, with a gallery and a chimney-piece made of the figures of Alchemy, Astronomy, Justice, and Truth, Hannah at such times being mostly absent with Sir Peter, who had twice rallied and twice got worse; but one night, stealing into the drawing-room and sitting apart in shadow with a long cloak on, she saw and heard what put her into a heavy mood. Chris and Yvonne were sitting together, and Kathleen playing a polonaise; when Kathleen rose, Chris said to her, "Now, you played that with great fancy and virtuosity," whereat she made a mock courtesy, and glanced round to see what everyone was thinking of her. Yvonne then said, "Chris wishes that I play with him a duet of Spohr, Kathleen, if you will accompany us," to which Kathleen answered "Certainly," trying to dry her palms in her already wet little handkerchief, for these evenings with Chris were to her like the hours which go before a death on the scaffold, fierce with an inward excitement which was betrayed by her sweating palms and the blaze in her eyes.

The three cousins, Chris, Kathleen, and Yvonne, then moved to the piano, Yvonne with Chris's *Nicolo*, and Chris with his loud *Bergonzi*. Hannah's eyes

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smiled with pleasure upon the smart movements of Yvonne's body and right elbow, even while the music that streamed from Chris brought a tear to her cheek. Some genteel hand-clapping went round when it was finished; and as the three cousins sat again, Yvonne said: "What a violin, this Nicolo! Puff! one may blow it into the air; it is nothing but a soul which cries out before one touches it."

"Pity it lacks power in the G," said Chris.

"Where did you get it, Chris?" asked Kathleen.

"A present from the Baronne Veszcolcza, a Hungarian."

"Ah, those Hungarian ladies!" said Yvonne in French, "they know how to give!"

"And take," said Chris.

"Are you going to stick to your Nicolo for concert, Chris?" asked Kathleen.

"Only for chamber-music. I want to get a Joseph del Gesù."

"Rather than a Strad?"

"I think so; more carrying and masculine. Paganini played one, which I have seen in the Genoa town-hall blushing like an angel."

"Are there many about?"

"A fair number, with many counterfeits; but you know them at once by their grim scrolls."

"There's a theory that each composer is suited to a certain maker," said Kathleen. "Handel to a Strad, Mozart to a Maggini —"

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“Oh, I adore Magginis! so full and plaintive,” said Yvonne.

“It is his violas that count,” remarked Chris.

“I have seen one in London,” said Kathleen. “A queer thing with short corners and upright sound-holes.”

“Delicious orange varnish,” said Chris.

“Sweet! orange and golden; and such purfling.”

“My maternal grandmother brought into our family a viol d’amore with seven strings,” said Yvonne. “At least, they say it is a viol d’amore; oh, so quaint! But one can induce wonderful arpeggios from it.”

A fourth person now joined in to tell of another viol d’amore which he had seen, or thought that he had seen, and the talk went on about makers and labels, Mittenwald and Cremona, Joachim and Lulli, and, at last, about how Calvé plays Carmen and how Coquelin plays Cyrano, till, dropping into French, it became doubly-Dutch to Hannah in her shadow under an old gallery; and sitting there with her chin on her palm, she became ever more grave, thinking: “What part could *you* take, Hannah, in all that chatter? Oh, I see it more every day; it will be a work to be Mrs. Fiddle! I shall have to screw all that into my hard nut if I am to keep him a year. But there’s nothing like venturing; it shall be done. French first, then music from A to Z.” She got up and stole away through a little Gothic door as quietly as she had come in.

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Just then Chris was murmuring to Yvonne: "Nice moonlight, I see; I might take you out to the cliffs."

Yvonne's eyes mused upon him in a certain French way, and her lips formed the word "No," with a smile.

"It is nothing," said he; "we are now in England, not in France."

"But I am French."

"Kathleen might come."

"In that case, perhaps. I wish first to go to my Uncle Peter's room, and I may bring back Miss Langler to go with us!"

But at Sir Peter's door Yvonne learned that Hannah was not in the house. "I have forced her out for a breath of air," said one Miss Praed, a nurse; "she will not be back till one o'clock."

"Is he better now, my uncle?" asked Yvonne.

"Yes, I think it will be all right now. But two hours ago it was touch-and-go with him, I can tell you. The doctor said that he wouldn't live through the night. Miss Langler got on the bed with him again, and kept breathing into his mouth."

"But what could that do to him?"

"What good? I don't know. She said that she felt impelled to act in that way. Certainly, he rallied wonderfully after it, and this is the second time, too. Chance, perhaps."

"Well, tell her, will you, when you see her, that I came to see if she wished to go out with me and my two cousins," said Yvonne, and ran off to get ready.

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It was eleven o'clock, a full hunter's-moon was abroad in the sky, and there could be no stranger stillness than that in which the country slept, nothing stirring anywhere save ground-game, a squirrel in the fir-wood, or the white owl on a well in the courtyard of some old gabled farmhouse. Without knowing it, the three cousins chatted and laughed in lower voices, the moon and the earth were in such an elfin tryst. They passed by Woodside, lying dark but for one gleam among its old trees, then up the lane by cottages of cobble, with the mill-house and the lighthouse on the right and left. But when they came under the group of Spanish chestnuts before St. Peter's churchyard, and could see yonder the ruined tower where drowned sailors are laid, the little maid was for hanging back, not liking graves and dead people, nor had they gone ten steps further when she turned white, and whispered "*What is that?*" to Chris.

Chris could see only the graves in their grasses and poppies, and one ghost-ship becalmed where the moonshine gloated upon the sea, till Kathleen whispered again, "*There!*" and he now saw at one point among the grasses a shade like a sitting form. Wishing to be brave, he whispered to the ladies, "You wait here," and alone went forward.

When he had got near enough to the form he saw that it was a tall woman seated in the grass in a hooded cloak, with her back toward him; just then she was gazing up into the sky, speaking aloud to herself, and he heard the words:

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“Who God possesseth in nothing is wanting,
Alone God sufficeth”;

Immediately afterwards she melted into tears, repeating the same words with her brow on a gravestone, and was so taken up with her thoughts, that Chris was able to lay his lips on her hand before she saw him.

“Why, it is you!” said Hannah, leaping up. “I was just preparing for a tussle with a ghost.”

“Extraordinary to find you here,” said Chris.

“Oh, I often sit out here late at night. This slab here covers the brick grave of your mother’s family; so here Sir Peter will come some day, and you perhaps, Chris, and I, too, now, no doubt, after we have had our fling. Meanwhile, it isn’t a bad thing sitting out on graves. If they make you cold below, they warm you up above. I’ve heard ’em say some things, I can tell you.”

Chris laughed at her lively tongue — as near laughter as he ever got.

“But how came you here?” she asked. “Am I to flatter myself that you followed me from the Hall? Say yes.”

“No; I came with Kathleen to see the moonlight. Yvonne came, too.”

“Ah, there they are. Let’s all run down to the sands and have a good romp.”

“But have you had any sleep?”

“Oh, I’ll sleep to-morrow or some time. Never say die when Shuck and all the fairies are about. Look,

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you can even read the names on the gravestones, the moon stares so, like a big baby let loose in a bazaar.”

The other two now came up, and all went downward by a path on the cliff-side. Yonder, along the cliffs, was to be seen the spot where Mrs. Dawe's cottage had been carried away by the landslip a year before, when Hannah had rescued Willie Dawe from the waves, and, ever vain of her mannish feats, Hannah wished now that Kathleen would mention this to Chris; but the little maid was mum as to that and everything in this neighborhood of graves. At one place they could see a strange thing — coffin-ends sticking out from the cliffside, and when Chris asked, “What are those things?” Hannah answered, “Coffins! All this coast is going, you know; every year the sea wears away a bit, like a cake of soap left in a tub of water. So many a poor corpse that died on its bed round about has found in the end a watery grave.”

CHAPTER V

“WELL, it’s all over,” said old Mrs. Dene, the house-keeper, only nine days after that moonlit midnight in the churchyard and on the sands. “And it has been like a whirlwind, hasn’t it? Perhaps one may have a little peace now.”

“Hasn’t Sir Peter been splendid?” answered Miss Praed, the nurse. “To think that only ten days ago he lay at death’s door, and there he is now in his white waistcoat, looking as hard and dry as a pebble.”

“But he doesn’t believe that his recovery will last long,” said Mrs. Dene, “and I believe that that’s why he insisted on hurrying on the wedding. Well, it has been a trying time for us all. My dear, you can’t realize the strangeness of this marriage, not being one of us. To me it is like some great dream —”

“But why so strange? They make a fine match,” said Miss Praed. “He just wanted some one like Mrs. Wilson to keep him in order —”

“Yes; but if you had told me four months ago that some day Hannah Langler might come to the Hall to eat her wedding breakfast, I should have thought you crazy! It is true that Sir Peter always had a sneaking liking for her; used to whisper into her ear, ‘Well,

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uglier than ever, I see' — he said it to-day again, I think, as they were sitting to the breakfast — but those were about the only words he addressed to her for years. She used to bring round a special pound of butter every three days, but seldom saw Sir Peter, though I have caught him prying after her from a library window. At any rate, no one could possibly have foretold all this sudden — And yet, do you know, Hannah has latterly been receiving rich birthday presents from some mysterious quarter? Perhaps Sir Peter — I don't know what to think!"

"But what a jolly bride!" said Miss Praed. "Between-maid Jane says that early this morning you could hear her clear voice singing hymns a mile from Woodside. Did you notice her cry once, though, during the service?"

"Did she cry, really?"

"Aye, she did — was going to, anyway — he was just putting on the ring — and I saw her face work, but she made a fight for it, and pulled through dry-shod."

"And hasn't she been blooming ever since, to be sure!"

"Hasn't she? I followed her out when she went to the villagers' marquee; she sat at one of the tables, and in five minutes had the lot of them in fits of laughter at her jokes and stories. She is a wonderful mimic and romp."

"Always was. But, between us, isn't our highly-

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gifted bridegroom just a little — how shall we put it — absent-minded?”

“It strikes me that Mr. Wilson’s eyes have been following another woman more often than his wife to-day!” said Miss Praed, bluntly.

“The *marquise* has looked sweet, it must be admitted,” said Mrs. Dene. “What a costume! and her manners have a certain absolute bouquet, to which, I think, none of our ladies ever attains: there’s an equal distinction in each case, but *mademoiselle’s* has, besides, a naturalness, an easy worldliness — the difference between very old wine and wine not so old. One can’t blame the men: I’ve wanted to take her in my arms myself.”

“But a man should be in love with his bride,” said Miss Praed. “I’d just like to give the genius a piece of my mind in some quiet spot! I had a suspicion of something before, but to-day it was as plain as a pike-staff. And his poor, dear bride, for all her sharp eyes, quite unconscious of everything! Oh, it puts me in a rage!”

“And what a day of mishaps,” added Mrs. Dene, “all through our gifted bridegroom. First, the lack of a frock-coat, then the forgotten ring, then the missing of the train —”

The two gossips drew back from a rush of dancing couples sweeping past them. The married pair had started off on their honeymoon at four-thirty, but half-way to the station had turned back when Hannah’s

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watch showed that the train must be already gone — this lateness being due to the violinist's practise after the "breakfast," for five hours' practise a day was his habit, and for lack of it he had felt like a fish out of water, wedding or no wedding: so he had missed his train, as fiddlers do; and when the carriage came back amid laughter, the evening had been turned into a romp-ball, many of the guests staying on.

Mrs. Praed and Mrs. Dene were still deep in their gossip when Kathleen in pink crêpe came making her way among the dancers, to ask Mrs. Dene if she knew where Yvonne was. Yvonne was out on a balcony among some men, and out there Kathleen, taking her aside, said at her ear: "Yvonne, Chris pleads for one last word with you."

"Kathleen, I cannot," was the sad answer.

"He is pacing about a corridor up there like one out of his mind. We can't let him suffer like that, dear. He says he didn't realize that he really loves you till this afternoon when you pinned the flower in his coat and he smelled your hair, and he says that music will be hateful to him, if you don't do something to cool his fever. Grimani tells me that he has dashed down his Nicolo, and broken one of the blocks. A boy is a strange mechanism, Yvonne, and this is the wildest and dearest of them all. Come. Won't you have pity on poor Cousin Chris?"

"Alas, my dear, what can I do there?" said Yvonne

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with a sad *naïveté*. "I too am enamored, and what may not happen if I go to him?"

"Never mind, only come, and leave the rest to Providence."

"And this is his day of marriage, *mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* Where, then, is his wife at present?"

"Wife, indeed! If she is his wife, it is you who are to blame, Yvonne, for I warned you. Why, she isn't even jealous of you; she thinks that he is hers —"

"Oh, as to that, no woman has the right to be so unconscious! But if I go, it is on the condition that you assist at the interview, Kathleen."

"Come, then."

But no sooner had they come to Chris, than Kathleen left Yvonne with him, though she hid behind the pedestal of a statue near enough to hear. The corridor was dim, but still the meeting there was most imprudent, seeing that in a bedroom not twenty yards away old Mrs. Langler was busy round Hannah, putting her in a gown, packing, hinting, fussing, with the tears and petty ministries of mothers at such a time. It was near eleven o'clock. In the morning Chris and Hannah were to depart for the Continent.

The French "interview," meantime, went on in the corridor, Yvonne touching her eyes with her handkerchief, her face turned from Chris, he in a *grande passion*, pleading, while the little maid peeped with an evil eye. To most things that Chris said Yvonne replied ruefully:

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“But your wife, *mon ami*, your wife. I have a good heart.”

“But one is not expected to be in love with one’s wife!” cried Chris. “Certainly not on the first day of marriage! I do her no wrong: it is the custom of the world, except in this quixotic country of Quakers. Why am I to be different from every one, merely because my parents were English people? I am not English —!”

“Oh, but *she* is, *mon ami*. She expects you to love her, I am certain of it,” said the rueful Yvonne.

“And I do love her very much,” said Chris. “Dear excellent girl! But as a wife only, not, of course, as a sweetheart. How can I, when I am in flames for you? At least give me some hope. Promise to see me in Paris.”

“*Mon ami*, no — no, *mon ami*. Oh, Chris, let us love henceforth apart and in silence, carrying, each of us, the image of the other as a holy and sad symbol in the soul.”

“You do love and pity me, then, Yvonne? Tell me how much you pity me,” said Chris.

“*Mon ami*, you know well that I love you with all my heart.”

“But what shall I do? How can I sleep to-night? How am I to practice to-morrow? I seem to be in the greatest trouble! I have eaten very little. Can’t anything be done for a poor man?”

Yvonne’s cheeks dimpled into a smile. “The rem-

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edy is even more abstruse than the disease is painful," she said.

"Could you not come with me and Hannah on our honeymoon?" asked Chris. "You could come in our train to-morrow —"

"Heaven! what a proposition," murmured Yvonne, casting up her eyes. "You see, you are only a dear, spoilt child. No, *mon ami*, I must go now; your wife awaits you, Chris. But see, since my woman's heart is weak, I give you one proof, the last forever." Holding his face between her palms, Yvonne kissed him with a tender chastity on the lips, once and once again. Chris took those kisses with a blessed face, and was about to clasp her, but her caress all at once changed into a smart escape down a near stairway, whereat he, left alone, leant his forehead on the arras, and shed some tears.

Hannah, meantime, as Yvonne had truly remarked, awaited her husband in a boudoir of the suite which the married couple were to occupy for the night. She believed that he was still at the ball, and wondered that he was slow in coming, for he had said that he would be with her soon. She sat on a footstool in a flowing robe, her ears on the alert, thinking that this, then, was how it felt to be a married woman. All that day she had been riding on some dream-whirlwind — she saw it now, looking back — and marriage was going up in a balloon! But in a few days she would be on good old *terra firma*, and the old Hannah once more.

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"Only be with me," she murmured, "only let Thy strength be perfect in my weakness."

But Chris did not come. Mrs. Langler, who could not be got rid of so soon, peeped in with the awful whisper, "Isn't he come?"

"He will soon come, mummie," said Hannah.

Ten minutes later Chris entered, and Hannah was up to him, saying: "At last! They have hardly let you speak ten words with me all day. But now I'm the woman in possession. Shall I lock all the doors of the cage? Shall I? But, then, how will the dishes be brought in? You must be hungry and tired, too."

A table stood laid for two near an apple-wood fire.

"I can't eat," said Chris with a forlorn smile, kissing her on each cheek.

"Oh, I have set my mind on our supper for two, so it must be. What a day of strain — the fierce light that beats upon a bride — I don't think that marriages should be so public. But now I feel in a nice harbor, with my captain on board, and the everlasting hills round about. Say that you will eat something, and I'll ring: who is it that would do anything to please me?"

"I, I think."

"Cool as a cucumber with eyebrows! genius gone weary! but so dear, so dear."

"Do you love me, Hannah?"

"There, he asks me that. It is the one duty which I perfectly fulfil: even in God's delicate scales I love you as much as I ought to."

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"You are very good. I'm most fond of you, too. But my dear girl, I am *énervé*. I can't feel musically; I am hungry, yet can't eat; I don't seem to want to smoke; no one seems to know what to do for me."

Chris threw himself upon a sofa, and Hannah, petting his hands, said: "You want a good sleep, that's it; we won't eat anything, then, but I will make you a nice glass of syllabub, and put you to bed; then I shall brush your hair till you go to sleep, and watch over you all night."

"I couldn't sleep, you know. I seem to be in the greatest trouble."

"Trouble?"

"Perhaps the good people oughtn't to have made me marry, Hannah. I shall probably make every one unhappy. I have begun badly already —"

"But what is it?" asked Hannah in a state of astonishment. *Made* you marry, Chris? How have you begun badly already? If you mean missing the train —"

"No, don't ply me with questions. You are the last that I should tell, perhaps."

At this Hannah did not say anything, but kissed his hand, took off his boots quickly, ran and put on his slippers; then, sitting again on the footstool, said, "Shall I make the syllabub first, or will you tell me first?"

"You had better not know, perhaps," said Chris.

"Yes, I had," said she, "and there's no way of

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escape; you are hemmed in between the back of a sofa and a curious woman, so it may as well come first as last."

"You would only make a conjugal scene, and give me a headache. I wish I was in Paris or somewhere. This place has brought me into foolish embarrassments."

"But tell me; there's nothing like making a clean breast of things; tell Hannah. That's what I am for, you know, to bear everything of yours. I'm the sea; you can't put too much into me. I'll either bear or swallow the lot. Conjugal scene indeed! I am such a little pet, aren't I? That is just why I can't stand women, because they are all so puny and silly. Come, better tell. I can't guess — yet I thought I knew you all through —"

"I'm afraid I shouldn't tell you; and yet it might be better, for I suppose you will find out. My dear girl, I am in love."

"And not with me?"

"My poor —"

"Not with me, Chris? not with me? on my wedding night?"

"Oh, I am most sorry!"

"Why, —" her head bent down upon Chris's leg while he, murmuring over her, kissing her hair for some time, but soon changing to peevishness again, said, "I knew that you would make a scene."

At this she was up on her feet, and old Mrs. Langler,

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peeping from the inner room on hearing a river of words, saw Hannah, tall and bright, striding up and down, pouring out her anger against some "she": it was all "she" — *she* going about like some one with the measles, spreading mischief and vanity, doing evil continually and not good — *she* using her God-given beauty and trumpety arts as a poison, not as a medicine, of life — and so on. It all fell upon the head of the poor Yvonne, who had done her best, or her second-best, to be good, while the guilty Chris got off without any blame. Hannah had never been jealous of Yvonne — for strong natures are little given to jealousy — but at once now by a flash of instinct she knew that Yvonne was the canker, without needing for Chris to name Yvonne.

"It is not Yvonne's fault," Chris managed to say in the midst of her flow of words; but this only stung Hannah the more, that he should defend Yvonne; and "Horrid Frenchwoman!" she said, with a touch of bile now.

But in the very middle of a sentence her stream of words dried up; she turned to a window and stood there some minutes, humming to herself, playing a tune on the window-pane, till, with sudden swiftness, she was sitting on the footstool again, saying to Chris, "Let's shake hands!"

"We are friends for life now, Chris," said she, "and nothing can alter that; cut me into ten bits, and in each bit you'll find a friend cropping up: friends

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first, and other things after. So tell me everything, and then we shall know how to go on. First of all, are you very badly in love?"

"I'm afraid I am," answered Chris with a troubled brow. "I am like that, I suppose: I go crazy after things."

"That's the genius maggot, you see. But ah, Chris, an ounce of good conduct is worth a pound of genius, believe me."

"You are very likely quite right. Perhaps, if the truth were known, I am not at all worthy of you."

"No, don't say that to me, dear: it is because of my utter unworthiness of you that this has come about. But what I want to know is, why did you wish to marry me in the first place? Did you love me, and then change? and if so, oh, why didn't you give me some hint of it, even one day before our marriage? Then I should have saved you."

"My Uncle Peter hurried on everything so bewilderingly," answered Chris; "and it is only this afternoon that I began to be so much in love."

"Oh!" cried Hannah with a laugh, "'only this afternoon.' It is the Frenchwoman's bridesmaid's dress that you are in love with! I believe that *I* am the true love, really. Hers is only passion, not love."

"What difference between passion and love?" asked Chris. "That is one of those quixotic phrases which you English trot out so confidently, as though there were the least reason in them. Love *is* a passion."

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“At any rate,” said Hannah, “haven’t you been in love like this before?”

“Never half so seriously, I’m afraid.”

“You have. This only seems more serious because it is the last; it will pass in its turn, and the everlasting Hannah will remain. Did I ever tell you about Mrs. Simpson in the village and her son? She lives apart from her husband, and her son, Fred, a ne’er-do-well working at Wardenham, comes to see her once a month. So the first time he came, she asked, ‘How are you going?’ and when he answered ‘Grand, mother,’ she said, ‘Well, better go and tell that to your father, I want none o’ you here’; second time it was the same, ‘Grand, mother,’ and ‘Go to your father’; third time he said, ‘I’ve broke my arm, mother, and lost my job.’ ‘Well, come in, boy,’ she said, ‘you’ve got nothing for a father now, but a mother’s gratis.’ Well, that’s Hannah, gratis, whenever you need her, as you will. But meantime, whose side, Chris, do you mean to take in the fight between that woman and me?”

“Is there a fight?”

“To the death!”

“Then I will take your side, if you tell me what you wish. But be sure that I shall never cease to be in love with Yvonne.”

“Oh, I shall have you all straight in three weeks. You would cease to-night, if I showed her to you with her hair all shaved off. So you must help me by promising, firstly, not to see her again without my leave.”

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“She won’t let me see her.”

“Won’t she? She ought to be ashamed of herself for her miserable lack of self-restraint! Yes, she will, fast enough, if she gets the chance. So promise me that.”

“Well, I’ll try to keep from seeing her.”

“That’s a brave. You see, you do love me, or you could never be so dear and good to me. So promise me, secondly, not to go away from me. Promise me that. Of course, we can only live together on a footing of friendship —”

“Perhaps we had better part, Hannah. It would be most awkward —”

“It *will* be awkward for us both, but awkwardness is always the wages of some one’s kicking over the traces, and I am prepared to put up with it, if *you* will. I foresee that that will be best all round: so say yes for me.”

“Well, perhaps I had better do as you wish. I believe in your wisdom and goodness. But better let me think it out first for myself. Perhaps I could smoke. I will put on my boots, and walk out in the park; early in the morning we will talk again. You ought to go to bed, I suppose. Oh, I am in the greatest trouble now, on both our accounts. I had no right in this place, —” etc., etc.

“That one yonder is your room,” said Hannah. “I will tell Grimani about the lights, and leave the syllabub on this table. All else is ready for you. Good night, Chris: I hope for better —”

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She could say no more, and his back was hardly turned when all her strain and self-rule tottered and was half in ruins. Stumbling to the frightened Mrs. Langler, she said in a weak voice, "Mummie, I am not well to-night," and gave way to a sob on the old lady's bosom.

Chris, meantime, went down by a back stair to think out alone the question of parting or not parting from Hannah. Down there in a shrubby stood Kathleen, gazing up at the windows of the married couple: and she, seeing Chris come out, followed behind some way, and then joined him.

CHAPTER VI

IN that doubly-locked journal of hers the little maid wrote some days later:

“I was hiding on the wedding-night near those three steps at the chapel-side, watching to see the shadow of Chris or Hannah pass by their windows. It was after eleven. I was all trembling with cold, but enjoyed the suffering in that physical way. For a long time I saw nothing. Lights were going out here and there in the windows. Bentley came to the door opening upon the little courtyard by the housekeeper’s room, shutting up for the night. The guests had mostly gone to bed. One could still see the glare on Freat Hill of the wedding bonfire. There was a bright half-moon, and a frost. Once I saw Hannah’s shadow at a window; she must have stayed there five long minutes. How I wondered and hoped then! Since she was alone there, I guessed that she had found out everything from Chris’s manner, and had made a row. I prayed from my heart that he would leave her straight away, before she could have the triumph of sleeping once with him. What a darling thing is marriage, after all! Those windows were to me the windows of the seventh heaven, from

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which I was shut out in hell. Yes, I suffered. But the battle is not to the strong, but to the *fin*.

“After seeing Hannah at the window, I waited on about fifteen minutes, when the door which Bentley had just bolted was undone, and, to my wonder and joy, out came Chris. He looked strange to me in his frock-coat, more stout and heavy; his hair fell rumped over his shoulders, he had no hat, and was smoking a cigar. I thought I must die for the shocking, slow thumps of my heart. But I would not let him out of my sight, for I thought, ‘I have him now, and if he ever goes back to Hannah, I must in truth be a paltry, feeble being.’ He went westward, and I followed till we were between the rhododendrons and Embree Pond: then all at once I found myself saying to him, ‘Well, Chris, this is not well, a bridegroom wandering alone on his wedding night. I am so sorry for you! I assume that there has been a row.’

“‘Not at all,’ he answered. ‘I have told Hannah everything, but she took it beautifully. I am most wretched, Kathleen. I think Hannah the most perfect lady I ever met.’

“I thought to myself, ‘Present company *not* excepted’; and I thought, too: ‘He would soon get fascinated by her like the rest of them, if he once lived with her.’ So I said: ‘Yvonne isn’t in bed yet; shall I try to induce her to come out here to you to hold another consultation?’

“‘Do you think she’d come?’ he asked quickly.

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‘That would be splendid of you! But then, I promised Hannah not to see her.’

“‘But surely,’ I said, ‘that is no promise, to promise the impossible. You would go mad, if you kept it, for *I* know men, they go mad if they don’t have what they want, especially geniuses like you. People think that I am a foreigner in the world, Cousin Chris, an outsider who can make only purblind guesses at the nature of others; but, really, I am just like everybody in every respect, though it is sad to be even thought outside the pale.’

“‘Never mind, never mind,’ said he twice, patting the hunch. But why, why should I have said all that about people thinking me different? It was so dragged in! He must have guessed at once that it is I who know myself to be different, and only spoke out of the fulness of my own heart; and when I said ‘I am like everybody, and so can guess their nature,’ he must have thought instantly, ‘It is because she is not, that she is so eager for me to think that she is.’ And to say ‘*in every respect* like every one’! I wonder if he thought that indelicate? He must have understood that I wished to reassure him as to my completeness in case he ever wishes to marry me. Oh, God, how I have betrayed myself to Chris on every occasion, if he has the least insight! I can’t help it. In his presence I get into such a stew, my hands become like wet rags. I say out the first thing that rises to my tongue, revealing to him my inmost nature, and then I hurriedly

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cover up my blurtings with obvious lies and half-lies and turns of meaning; and afterwards what tortures in grieving over every word that I have said, and in seeing too late what I might have said! That day when I drew the caricature of him in his presence in my sketch-book, shall I ever cease to feel the bliss and shame of it? I did it in a few strong lines, and he took up this bony hand and said, 'This hand has craft; you are one of the artists'; then, slowly, he pressed his lips on it. Lord, how it poured from every pore of me. I laid my head on his shoulder, and fainted. Oh, Chris, what did you think of me then? Did you not kiss me once while I slept in you?

"With regard to his promise to Hannah not to see Yvonne, I said to him: 'But you should not help a woman for whom you have no regard against Yvonne, who loves you too. Better let me run and fetch her.'

"At this he got into a sudden temper, dashing down his cigar, and crying out, 'But, good God, can't you let me be? I tell you I made a distinct promise! Do you all wish to drive a poor man m-m-mad?'

"I was so startled, that all I could find to say, very foolishly, was: 'This is all due to Uncle Peter.' I had no wish to drive a poor man m-m-mad; but I suppose he was irritated by my tempting him to do what he was longing to, yet could not do, because of his pledged word to Hannah. He seems to be a stickler for what he would call 'his honor.' Men must have been originally made on the moon, or else *I* was.

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“‘What I came out here for,’ Chris next said, ‘was to think out alone the question whether I am to live with Hannah, or what to do.’

“‘If you wish to be alone,’ Chris, you have only to say so,’ I said.

“‘Mmm,’ he went, with his murmur of pitying good-nature, ‘my own dear friend, forgive my peevishness, and stay by my side, I beg. You see what a plight I am in. If it was any one but Hannah, I shouldn’t care in the least, for really a wife has no claim upon the amorous longings of a husband. But Hannah is a personality apart: her pain seems to wound me in a wonderful way, and it is keener, I know, than she has wanted me to guess. She still wishes to live with me on a footing, as she says, of friendship —’

“‘But the false relation, Chris,’ I murmured.

“‘Grotesquely false,’ said he, ‘in the case of an English wife. Still, I somehow feel a longing to please her, Kathleen.’

“I began to see now that, if I was to keep him from her, it must be by showing that the separation would be for Hannah’s good, as well as his own; so I set to work. By this time I was not so excited, and I brought out my arguments, and pleaded so well, that I actually began to feel like Hannah’s best friend, for one must either speak as one feels, or else feel as one speaks. I wonder if I should have made a great actress, a great anything, if I had tried. There is something special somewhere in the little box. But perhaps everything

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in me faltered and went crooked in sympathy with my back. At any rate, I shed tears, and enjoyed them, when I spoke of 'the tragedy of poor Hannah's life'; I showed that if he lived with her, that would only be making her 'pain' permanent, which time would otherwise heal. 'Don't see her even once again,' I pleaded; 'you still have time to catch the twelve-thirty train —'

"'But what will the good people think?' he asked.

"'Oh, Chris, which good people?' I said to him. 'How can that matter, when your life, and the life of poor Yvonne, and of poor dear Hannah, are all at stake? If you mean Uncle Peter, hasn't it all happened through his own quixotic folly? Let him bear the consequences; an old man's feelings are not to be considered as against the lives of three young people. Go now: don't let us waste the precious minutes in talk. From what I know of Hannah, she will certainly try to find you, but if you make that impossible by merely going under another name for say six months, by then all will be well. Don't let a soul know where you are, except me — not even Yvonne, if you can help it, for you know her 'good heart,' and she may think it her duty to tell Hannah. If you would like to hear from time to time how your wife is getting on, I will meet you anywhere in England or France, as often as you please, to tell you; or I could even let you know by letter, if you are not anxious to see me.' So I kept on, heaping words upon him, and it is pretty easy to throw dust in his eyes and persuade him, when

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he isn't being hurried the opposite way by one of his heats. He walked by my side staring on the ground, his forehead all puckered with perplexity. At last he said, 'But could I get off without being seen and worried?'

"'Easily,' I said. 'You can leave Grimani behind till to-morrow, when I will tell him where to join you. We won't take a carriage from the Hall stables, but one of my own.'

"'But my violins,' he said with a start.

"'Can't you leave them for one day?' I asked.

"'I couldn't!' he said.

"'Then I will run now into the house, and get them,' I said promptly, to save more words.

"'But I must write a line of farewell to Hannah —' he began to say; but I cut all that short — no time, no time. 'Come, Chris,' I said, 'it is now or never: aren't you decided to go?'

"'Yes, quite,' he said; and from that moment he became as eager and breathless as I was. He ran half of the way back to the Hall with me, then I showed him Hewersfield Lane, and told him to wait for the carriage at Shoen's Clause. After watching him start up Hewersfield Lane, I ran my fastest to the Hall, then in by the little courtyard door, and flew to find Grimani. I found him on a sofa in Chris's private sitting-room; he couldn't have long come back from the bride's suite, I think, yet he was certainly drunk: not with alcohol, though — some other drug. I panted to

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him, 'Quickly Grimani, give me Mr. Wilson's hat and three violins,' and that man looked at me, and went off into the sweetest, scornfulest chuckling. I'm sure I never heard laughter so pure, so full of delight. I understood at once that it must be due to some drug, but oh, I was cross! However, I hunted out for myself all the fiddles and the old cloth hat, Grimani laughing for joy at me all the time, and with them I flew. Only fifty minutes were left before the last train, and I have never got home from the Hall so quickly. I ran direct to the stables, knocked up everybody, ordered the brougham, then into the house, woke up Olivia, borrowed five pounds from her, then back for the stables. I met the brougham coming, got in, and drove fast to Shooen's Clause.

"Chris was there, waiting by the hedge-gate. I beckoned in advance, and he got in as the carriage stopped. I was all but mad with haste and excitement there alone with him in the dark of the brougham; and how I loved him then! I wanted to go with him to the world's end, at least to the station; but I didn't dare. Little time was left. 'You have only nineteen minutes to get to Wardenham in,' I said to him. 'Here are the violins, your hat, and some money to pay your fare.'

"He pressed my hand, saying, 'You are a treasure; you forget nothing.'

"Tell me where Grimani is to join you to-morrow.'

"Say at the Langham Hotel in London.'

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“And you will write me soon? You promise?”

“Can you doubt it?”

“Then all at once my heart and soul were in my mouth, for I found myself saying: ‘Good-by, Cousin Chris, kiss me.’ I felt as if I had cast myself into an abyss and was falling forever, with something whispering at me, ‘*Suppose he won’t?*’ It seemed an age before he kissed me on each cheek French-fashion. If I could only have been satisfied with that! but I went crazy for more while I had him at that last moment of parting, and I fastened my lips to his, and couldn’t stop, but kept on. He dared to draw back from me. At least, I think so. I have an impression that I was irksome to him, that he felt sick at that sort of kiss from me. Oh, may thunder crush me, since shame doesn’t kill! After that I knew no more, till I found myself lying near the hedge, the brougham gone. I don’t remember getting out.

“I came back home, they put me to bed, and I slept from sheer exhaustion. The next morning I took one of my long early rambles, and gathered a fine lot of grasses for my botany-table; came home laughing, and Olivia said, ‘Why, you are looking as fresh as a rose this morning.’ Yellow roses, my Livie. She didn’t know what was in me. I asked for news from the Hall: she hadn’t heard, and I was impatient, so drank just a cup of coffee, and went down. It was only just eight. No one was down. I walked about the breakfast and morning rooms, waiting. Bentley

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and some men-servants came and went. Presently in looked the white face of Mrs. Langler, and vanished. Ten minutes later I heard Uncle Peter's cough on the front terrace. He had been out for a walk; I saw him in his muffler and top-hat, talking with his head gardener. On coming in, he walked straight into the morning room; must have been surprised to see me, looked at me rather strangely under his eyes without saying anything; I don't know what he could have been thinking of. He always disliked me, and I have disliked him since he fell ill this last time, for it isn't any one's fault if he is weak in the chest. There are things which will not be written: only the heart treasures them. Heaven only grant that he doesn't die for many a long day: I couldn't ever be alone after dusk.

"I had just begun to laugh and say something to him, when Mrs. Langler came in, smiling, but horridly agitated. 'Well,' muttered Uncle Peter, 'how's bride?' 'I was looking everywhere for you, squire,' said she. 'Well, well,' muttered Uncle Peter, 'fine morning for first winter-sowings.' 'Squire, I have to tell you that the married pair are gone.' 'Gone, gone,' muttered Uncle Peter, 'gone where?' 'Gone off to London, squire,' said she. 'What, what,' he muttered, 'Hannah gone without telling me good-by?' 'Oh, forgive her, squire,' she said, beginning to cry, 'all's not well.' 'All not well? What's the matter now, what's it, what's it?' muttered Uncle Peter. 'Well,' said she, 'Miss Kathleen here being one of the family, one may

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speaking before her: they haven't gone together, squire, for all's not well. Mr. Wilson went away last night, and Hannah followed by this morning's train. Not that any one need know it, but they haven't gone together, squire. He left her at eleven last night, didn't come back, and I couldn't get Hannah to go to bed. At three in the morning she went to his apartments, and found out that he was gone away. From then to a quarter past six she sat without saying a word, until she said, 'I shall be starting for Paris by the first train, mother, to look for my husband.' I went on my knees to her, squire, beseeching her only to wait and consult you; but you know that one might as well pray to the tides as beg that girl to alter her mind. She's gone, Hannah's gone. I wanted to wake you up, but she wouldn't let me. She started on foot for Wardenham at a quarter to seven with nothing but a small bag. She left this note for you, squire.'

"The note trembled in Uncle Peter's hand, and I thought to myself, 'You see now, you see, what mischief you have done by your quixotism'; yet I couldn't help pitying him. I don't know why he took it with such frightful agitation. I heard him read three half-sentences half aloud: 'Gone to look for him,' and 'Do forgive him,' and 'He is as good as gold'; then all at once, before he had read all, the awful thing came: his mouth seemed to go crooked, and he staggered half-way round the table, struggling to keep up, but apparently without power on the left side, then gave

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in and sank down, bawling out something. It made me feel sick, his vain struggle to manage his left leg. But I was pretty brave, I didn't run, I stood over him while Mrs. Langler ran, calling out; his hat lay on the floor near him, the letter still in his right hand; his sick eyes seemed to dwell on my face.

“He was taken away in the middle of a crowd of them, and I sat there for hours, staring before me. Quite an ado was soon going on on the terrace with carriages, trunks, and departing guests, and, on my right, breakfast, talk, and hurrying feet; but I sat on alone, without moving, in a sad mood, I don't know why. The cook cooks and sweats, and adds the gravy, and then has no appetite for all her work: it is a nice world. Once Bentley looked in with his long face, and told me that Dr. Williams said that Uncle Peter had hemiplegia, a stroke all down the left side. I could have told *him* that. I sat there till the clock struck eleven, when I got up and went to tell Grimani where he was to meet Chris, but found him lying in the same position as during the night, in a sort of trance now apparently, with half-open eyes. When I shook him, his only answer was a murmur. I then scribbled on a bit of paper, ‘Go to Miss Sheridan when you wake,’ and put it into his hand. Then I came home. Grimani did not turn up till near four in the afternoon, looking smart and wide-awake. He is rather a handsome fellow. I asked him what had made him laugh so heartily the night before when I wanted his master's

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violins: he answered that he had no recollection of having seen me; then I asked what drug it was which he took, and he very modestly answered — hashish. I gave him the Langham Hotel address, warning him not to mention it to any one, and he went away.”

CHAPTER VII

SHE says at a later date: "It is five months since the wedding, and this of to-day is only the second letter I have from Chris. I have lived without seeing him, I couldn't tell why. What a passion for itself this little hunch must cherish! Let worlds perish, it says, but let *me* continue to bulge about under the sun. Life is nothing, and I know it: but still I like it, I cling to it, and a scratch on one little darling hump hurts more than if all the straight backs on earth were broken. What keeps every one from suicide? It used to be fear, as Hamlet and Plato say, when there was hell-fire; but now it is hope of better things to-morrow and the love of one's personality — chiefly Hope, 'the anchor' which keeps life from drifting into death. For me there is only one hope — somehow, at the last, to have Chris. I care about nothing else. No doubt I shall fail in it, as I failed before my birth, as failure runs like a crack through my being, but I live in order to try. I must go out of this place: Chris and Yvonne must be brought together again, if I can do it; if I only had power and craft, Yvonne could be made my stepping-stone to Chris. He writes that he has kept his word to Hannah and not seen Yvonne, that he

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thinks of Hannah, and would like to come here to see her, if he did not fear to 're-open her healing wound.' He has no suspicion that Hannah is away searching Europe for him; he thinks that she is still here, for I have written him that I see her, and no one here but me knows where he is to write him. My belief is that Chris is trying to 'be good,' and will return to Hannah, if something can't be contrived to send him off at a new tangent. And it should be done soon, for he comes out definitely on the third of next month, when he gives his first recital at Queen's Hall. Hannah can't fail to find him after all that publicity. But what can I do? I can only wish and dream of doing. I wish that Yvonne was in England. If Hannah once gets him again, she will keep him. The marriage bond is always such a power in itself, and that girl certainly has some sort of fascination for many people. A fisher-boy named Cooper trudges all the way from Wardenham every Saturday afternoon to ask after her, and the villagers besiege the Langlers with questions and messages. The love of some of them for her really has a touch of passion in it. I hate her. Chris's twenty-five pounds a month continues to come for her, and old Langler forwards it on. What a tax on that poor boy! He has behaved beautifully all round in the money way, refusing, Mr. Bretherton tells me, to touch a penny of the vast sums with which Uncle Peter bribed him into this marriage. I suppose, however, that his beloved Joseph will soon bring him riches — he writes

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that he has a Joseph now, another present from a lady! He sends me a prelude and fugue of his own writing, with the air of 'get your hair cut' for theme: it is awfully sad. He has been doing orchestral practise at a first desk on the quiet in Berlin under Strauss's *bâton*, and is 'in a sea of music,' working hard — for the recital perhaps. I wonder if he still drinks such a terrible lot of wine. It is rather a pity, but he wouldn't be half so dear without the touch of inflammation in his nose. If he were mine, I should keep him tipsy, and we should live and die in Lethe. Hannah would 'pull him all straight,' as she says in her off-hand vernacular, and just spoil him. The day before yesterday I got a third letter from her, and she continues to write once a week to her parents and Uncle Peter, enclosing hosts of little notes to Tom, Dick, and Harry round about. She irritates me: something in me hisses at the tone of her nature, as cat detests dog. I don't know what she says to Uncle Peter, or he to her. He still babbles when he tries to talk, and old Bentley, who does all his writing now, has a still tongue: however, he has let out to me that Uncle Peter has several times ordered Hannah back — as though any power on earth was ever going to draw that woman off her quest! She has the nature of a bull-dog. But if she doesn't come pretty soon, she will never see 'her benefactor' again, for since the stroke Uncle Peter becomes every week feebler: so I hear, for I don't see him now, I simply don't wish to.

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What shall I do, if he dies? I wonder if I shall peep at the body? I shall want to awfully, I know: but shouldn't I pay for it afterwards, if I am ever so mad! Perhaps I shall see him when his spirit is 'passing,' for he always disliked me. I should simply die, I couldn't live after. I wonder if he will have a white ghost or a black. They say it isn't serious to see anything white, but that the black ones are terrible. At any rate his Hannah is really 'uglier than ever' now, for she takes no notice of his command to come back. She is still at Weimar," etc., etc.

This last was not a true statement, for under the same date Hannah herself writes:

"Arrived in Paris last night after jolly voyage from Brussels: met in train two Americans, named Moore, sisters, very rich, with their English *masseuse* — elder sister has weak heart, but full of fun; wanted me sudden and quick to go with her to Yankee-land! Not Hannah! for what woman, having lost a piece of silver, doth not seek diligently till she find it? Came back to Madame Brault, and, to my delight, found old room free: 197 francs, 3 francs less — a bargain! Woke up blooming, singing, this morning, and, as usual, Paris brought me luck and high spirits. First of all, walking down rue Scribe on my way to rue Croix des Petits Champs, met full-butt a monsieur on pavement, nice fat Frenchman, beautifully dressed: we *couldn't* get past each other! He dodged to right, *I* dodged to right; I dodged to left, *he* dodged to left; wherever I went I

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found him, wherever he fled, there I was, barring his way; we kept it up for a good half-minute, trying to escape each other, but fastened together by destiny. Kept face stern as I could, but a grieved look came into his eyes, and then I couldn't help, screamed right out. He lifted his hat as we got clear, with a look which meant, 'I forgive.' This has kept me going in laughter for the day every time I think of it. Well, Hannah, a merry heart doeth good like a medicine. It is a shout only to live. My soul shall magnify the Lord, and my spirit shall rejoice in God.

"Didn't go straight to rue Croix des Petits Champs, as I had meant, but off at a tangent to rue de Berri to visit the Gauds. Sad news there, Hannah. Everything squalid again, children uncared for, Gaud gone back to the absinthe! Saw it at a glance. Just planted myself down, and had a good old cry, in which madame and little Lucille joined. Said 'Never mind, soon pull him all straight again.' First Frenchman, I suppose, who ever signed a pledge, and what I've made him do once, can make him do twice. But what time does news at rue Croix des Petits Champs leave for anything? Must be in London within a week. Pray, pray for them. 'Alone God sufficeth.'

"Thence straight to rue Croix des Petits Champs" — this is the violin-street of Paris — "and to my dear old friend, Meunier. The old soul's joy at seeing me! His face lit up gloriously. Said I was talking French like a *française*, wicked flatterer. Had great news for

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me! What news? No, wouldn't tell: must first hear me play in parlor behind shop on a new Lupôt which he has, bought from the year's gold-medalist at Conservatoire; so I in parlor, fiddle 'well up' at chin, he and madame all smiles and fat, listening critically, played air from 'Sonnambula' with variations. Meunier's verdict, that I had got on wonderfully, fine tone and taste, would soon get fluency; hoped I wasn't killing myself. 'Fifteen hours most days,' I told him, and the astonishment of the pair of them! They didn't say, 'What a woman!' but 'What a race!' as though all Englishwomen were not a lot of dolls. Then, after much sweet fuss and preparation, came the great news: Chris found, the darling of my soul to be mine again. Let all that is within me shout His Name. Meunier showed English newspaper: great stir in musical London; Chris already known as 'rising star,' 'coming man,' and taker of Vienna 'by storm'; recital on 3d of next month at Queen's Hall; every one on the lookout to be taken 'by storm.' Hannah, too, will be there, will wait at stage-door, will follow Chris home. And then — what next? Shall I be turned out of doors? Don't know. The Lord judge between me and thee. Meunier sure now that Chris must have changed name after leaving Vienna, or I must have found him long since. Strange that he should go so far as that — not kind, not very like him; perhaps put into his head by some friend. I should certainly have found out about Queen's Hall recital without

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Meunier's help, but so thankful that it was from him and no other that I learned it, for he sent me all the way to Brussels on a false scent, and that must have been heavy on his poor old heart, but now he will say, 'Yes, I sent her on false scent, but at the last it was *I* who found him for her.' In three days, then, for London: must lose fortnight's *pension*, paid in advance, 98 francs, 50. Don't care, all in the day's work."

CHAPTER VIII

CHRIS WILSON was in chambers in Gray's Inn when the morning of his recital, the third of the month, came round. He had meant to do his day's practice early, so as to have fresh nerves for the evening, but he lay late abed that morning — awake, indeed, but uncalled. The clock's hands moved on from nine to ten, to half past, and it was pathetic, his meek, smiling patience, the stirring of his eyebrows for wonder that Grimani did not come, and his lack of power to rise without Grimani. He was not altogether sorry to be let alone, for he had sat up till four A. M. with a gay crew in Victoria; but when it became eleven, that was too much, and Chris began to call out for Grimani.

There was no answer.

At last, at twenty past eleven, Chris leapt from bed: and he was no sooner on his feet than he had a fresh insight into the value of time, like a fresh sense and pair of eyes, of which he had been bereft while he lay pleasing himself abed. And he became on a sudden very angry.

Hurrying straightway, therefore, into Grimani's room, Chris began to use strong words, but soon saw that they were wasted, for Grimani lay in the trance

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which the Arabs call the "*kief*" — the last of the three states through which one passes under the power of hashish; so Chris, without more words, fell upon his valet, pulling and beating him.

When he had got Grimani more or less awake, he said to him: "I will bear it no longer. Off you go this very day, and this time I mean it. It is simply pitiful how you neglect me. Get me my breakfast quickly, call the woman in, pack your trunk, and never come back to me again."

Grimani, in a bad temper at being hustled down thus suddenly out of heaven, began to answer back that he was glad enough to get out of such a place, that, if he took hashish, Chris took wine, and it was six of one and half-a-dozen of the other, etc., etc., whereat Chris fled from his valet's tongue with the words, "Off you go."

Grimani then pulled himself together, and got the breakfast. Not a word was said while he waited at table, till, toward the end, he asked, "Do you really mean me to go away?" to which Chris answered, "Yes, off you go; I mean it this time."

"C'est très-bien!" (All right!) said Grimani in the tone of a threat.

He did his work, summoned before her time the house-woman, or "laundress," as they are called in the Inn, and lingeringly packed his trunks, half expecting Chris to come and make friends before it should be too late. But Chris was now in another world,

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with a fiddle under his chin. At last Grimani, having no excuse to stay longer, went to be paid his wages, still hoping that Chris would say something pleasant. But Chris paid him with a flushed forehead in an irritated haste at being stopped in his morning work; and Grimani left the room with his check in a grim, Italian mood.

He knew that that night was to be one of the greatest in Chris's musical career, and he made up his mind that Chris, if he played at all, should play badly. Grimani and Chris had been so long and closely bound together, that to be turned off in this way was, naturally, a painful shock to the valet. Something of this kind had, indeed, happened often before, but had never gone so far; and a Neapolitan does not go un-avenged. Grimani, accordingly, after being paid, went back to his portmanteau, and took out a little tin box. This box had in it a substance something like greengage jam, but paler; it was hashish, the so-called "fat extract" of cannabis (hemp boiled with butter). One takes only a teaspoonful of this in order to get up into one of Grimani's heavens, but Grimani now took out nearly a tablespoonful of it; he next took out a decanter of wine from a cabinet in the sitting-room, poured in the hashish, shook it up, put back the decanter; from the next room came the music which Chris was making. The Italian's lips were banefully set; when his wicked work was done, he made haste to leave the flat.

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He knew that Chris, before setting out to play, always drank of the Alicante wine in that particular decanter, which followed Chris from city to city. Grimani was sure, therefore, that the very hashish for which he was being sent away would not fail to bring him his revenge.

That, on the whole, was a day of flurry and trouble for Chris. About one P. M. a mob of idle young men came upon him, and the "laundress" being gone, no one opened the door to them. "Grimani!" shouted Chris, but no Grimani answered. Chris had to let them in himself, and ever and anon broke in upon the babel of their talk by shouting "Grimani!" in a pathetic way, till it dawned upon his memory that he had sent Grimani away; then he had to go out to meet several people, such as his accompanist, a famous Polish pianist, Hill's, the hall-manager, his agent, and some others whom he was bound to see, but either forgot, or had not enough time. Late in the afternoon the quaint maid with Miss Olivia called upon him, but no one opened to them. When at last Chris returned home to dress with four or five young men at his heels, it was already time for the concert to begin. In the midst of his dressing he ran and poured out a tumbler of the wine drugged by Grimani, but some one speaking to him drew off his mind, and he was in such a prickly heat of haste, that in the end he rushed out of his chambers without having drunk any of the drugged Alicante. Chris was always late for concerts, and for

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everything; so the tumbler of drugged wine was left standing on the table of his sitting-room.

When he drove up with his friends to Queen's Hall, his audience was already getting restless for him. Hannah wrote of it that "Though I didn't know who was who, I felt that 'everybody' was there; I well in front, area, five shillings; he scandalously late; crowd waiting on one boy; Hannah's heart wild as a bird. Then these eyes saw him — frock-coat, stout, forehead flushed with haste, nose a bit shiny, and very modest and dear he looked, with his meek, drowsy eyes, his meek, dear smile. People clapped; he and H—— bowed; in another half-minute he had one by the ears — fugue of Bach. That wasn't much, perhaps, but, if I were paid, couldn't describe how it all went on after the Kreutzer bit, I in a kind of ecstasy, and toward the end a scene of really high-wrought excitement throughout that hall, not at all the ordinary applause, but bursting out uncontrollably, like cries of the heart; I, too, clapping without knowing; old gentleman whispered agitatedly at my ear, 'The first English maestro.' During the Kreutzer his E string went — hundreds of opera-glasses bent upon his fingers — didn't mind a bit, on he went, his two hands all over the place at once, plucking, striking, darting, face flushed, hair trembling, octaves coming like one note, harmonics precise as fate; seems greatest in *f* and bravura passages, 'rides the storm,' has a Joseph now from somewhere — sounded to me like a Joseph; and

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all the time something whispering to me, 'This boy who is shaking this hall as one shakes a child by the shoulders, as one stirs a pot, as angel troubled waters of Siloam, he is married to you, Hannah, all this crowd strangers to him, but you his own wife.' I cried and laughed, proud of him. Yes, Chris mayn't be a saint or a hero, but a hero in his way, like Samson 'brings down the house,' can do one thing wildly well, is God's workman. If a man can do his work, forgive him all his sins. Chris doesn't play to audience, plays to himself, audience just happens to overhear him playing. That's right! — in all art, in art of living: 'Let not thy left hand know!' Hearty sincerity, 'the inner life': then don't much heed what anybody thinks, just jog stubbornly along the right path, humming to yourself, 'Let's all be jolly, boys.' Chris *has* this sincerity and inner musical life, and it streams from him in psychic waves which thrill those capable of being thrilled by high things: that's his secret. Others stir, seldom so powerfully. Hall continued to be crowded long after concert, handkerchiefs and programs waving, recalled eighteen times, gave two extra pieces, a Lied, and nocturno out of M. N's Dream; felt pained for him coming and going in and out so often; even when hall had slowly emptied, still a sprinkling of enthusiasts calling him back, ladies pressing upon stage-steps to shake hands, then outside another mob besieging carriage, he meek and good, shaking most hands. Procession of four cabs full of men followed his off,

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don't know who they were, friends: the sixth was mine.

“The lot of us to Grosvenor Square, stopped at big house with porch, where all went in, I waiting in my cab with the empty cabs: something told me he didn't live there, waited a long time, drizzly dark night, hardly any one about there. Then heard fiddling in house, not his at first, but presently his, I was certain, then piece after piece by him. Didn't know what to make of it, at last got out of cab and rapped; asked footman if Mr. Wilson lived there: ‘No, was there, didn't live there.’ ‘Whose house?’ ‘Lord L——’s,’ musical patron and amateur. Waited till near midnight, when out they came again, pitched into waiting cabs, and away, I following, noisy laughter from cabs in front. They got out in narrow street near Leicester Square, and into drinking-place called *Gambrinus*.’ I waited twenty minutes, till they came noisier than ever, then followed to quiet sort of nook called ‘the Albany,’ behind Regent Street — residential chambers. All went into a house, I waiting with other cabs to see if he would come out, my heart weary for him. One o'clock, half past, two: London well asleep. Soon after two they came again, he arm in arm with loud-laughing, bearded foreigner. The five cabs started off once more, I, as usual, following ten yards behind; in Piccadilly they parted, his going eastward into Long Acre, I after him. Drove into Holborn, where he and two others got out at a gate and rang bell; night-porter

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opened, they went in; soon I, too, rang, went in, passed through one square into another, and saw them just entering house, he between the other two, arm in arm. I followed into house, and, guided by their noise, went up quaint, rickety stairs with large banisters to second floor. Waiting on landing, heard them behind massive black door which had 'Mr. Chris Wilson' on it in white letters; could just see by light burning on landing below. Knew now where he lived, so ran down and out to gate again, paid cabman — ten shillings after a wrangle! — then in again and up to landing before door. Why couldn't I have waited till next day now that I knew? If I only had! Impulse and warm heart will bring these silly, erring feet into some nice trap some day, Hannah.

“Waited on landing fifteen minutes for two friends to leave, heart literally in my mouth. It had come to the point now. Something said to me, 'It would be far better all round to wait till to-morrow, especially as you are in such a blue fright now'; but the more everything in me urged flight, the more my feet stuck where they were. Headlong self-will passing itself off in the guise of 'duty that lies nearest,' and what has it brought me into now! Oh, it was God's will to humble me horribly that night, that I may know better the poor thing that I am.

“They came out at last, the two friends — miserably tipsy; I stole into the dark higher up the stairs, till Chris had slammed his 'oak' after them; then all was

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still, till a town-clock struck three; hung up there on stairs fully five minutes, then with a rush was down, knocking at his door.

“Heard him coming, laughing to himself, and the moment he saw me he upset me by bursting out into heartiest laughter! ‘What, a woman?’ said he. ‘Chris, it is I,’ I said. ‘Who are you?’ he asked, laughing. ‘Look at me, Chris,’ I said, ‘it is Hannah.’ He thought it over a moment, then said, ‘What, my own lawful wife?’ — and he went off afresh into the same delicious giggling. Oh, he was tipsy! I should have had to laugh, too, if I hadn’t been so jumpy. ‘If you are glad to see me,’ I said, awfully agitated, ‘I will come in for twenty minutes.’ ‘Mmm,’ he went, ‘my own dear friend, I am charmed to see you; come in instantly.’ Another moment and he was laughing again, his cheek against mine, arm round my waist, drawing me to sofa, where he sat beside me. It was cozy in there, those old rooms most artistically furnished, with a French touch. I felt all shut in with him, alone in a world, and couldn’t help being soft-soaped at my hearty reception, but didn’t quite like the wine-inspired kisses or mocking laughter, and made up my mind sharply, inflexibly (as I thought), to tear myself away within five minutes, for my fiddler began to be pressing, and when I was coy, said, ‘Mmm, are you not my wife?’ as though nothing had ever happened between that boy and me! But that wasn’t good enough for Hannah, though inwardly pleased as Punch, and I

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thought, 'He shall never say that I got over and bound him irrevocably to me when he was tipsy: it is urgent that I go quickly!' It was hard to do, he so fond, endearing, boylike, but still I was on the very point of going: I remember that much distinctly. Then, why, as a matter of fact, didn't I go till two P. M. the next day? What a mystery! Did I, too, get tipsy? Seems utterly impossible! True, haven't drunk wine for ten years, except in church, but I hardly took more than at Holy Communion! Two sips, perhaps three. Did that get into my head? Wonderful sort of wine! No, can't think that: no head so weak. But something did happen to me: am as sure of it as of sitting here. In any case, the shame, the weakness and pain of it!

"There was a tumbler half full of wine and a decanter on table near sofa where we sat; twice or thrice Chris sipped from tumbler; I was talking about recital, just ready to fly, when he, left arm round me, held tumbler to my lips with his fond murmur; I shook my head, but when he pleaded 'Oh, just a little Alicante,' sipped a little. Have a fancy now that it tasted funny — buttery like: not sure; but from that time remember clearly nothing, nothing that happened: all like wonderful, but most shameful, dream. Either once or twice afterwards, I sipped more Alicante; don't remember; it might have been a dozen times, really, I lived through that night in such a profound haze. Haze of tar-rainbows! Ungodly Utopia! The state I allowed myself to get into! What, what can have

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happened to me? Every power of mind and body seemed so enlarged! How enormously I loved that night! How we two giggled to each other! Shame, to my last breath. Was it *I* really? *No* good thing in me, then? Seem to have utterly forgotten promise to myself to fly from him! Can any will be quite so godlessly forgetful? And the wicked pride which puffed me! Remember feeling that whatever I did must be right, had been a fool all my life, but now was 'all there,' all the world fools, except Chris and me; and this kept growing, I fancy, beyond measure into impiety, till at last I said, satisfied, 'Well, I am God; and Chris is with me in the Heavens.' Can't be too sure, all very muggy and far-off; only know that I must have either gone raving mad, or very drunk.

"Another woman might have sworn that Chris drugged wine! Have heard of such things. But impossible to him in any case, and in *my* case how foolish, being his already. No, something happened inside my brain, the will of God to humble my womanhood to the dust. Shall I ever laugh again?

"Some time or other I fell into a sleep full of trances and visions that seemed to last a hundred years, and though I only dimly remember whatever I did, I clearly remember whatever I dreamt, for reality seems to have become a dream, dreaming the only reality. When I woke was by the side of Chris, who was asleep. Had never known complete wretchedness till that moment; woke sane, slight pain in head, conscience heavy, like

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waking in Hell, and, like stab to the heart, a guess, a knowledge of all. Clock pointed to one-thirty — in the day! but room still very dim. Sat up quickly, pulled myself together, saw at once my life done for, since Chris would and must hate me always for tricking him into this while hopelessly tipsy. Dared to pray, even then, for a bruised reed He will not break, and has regard to the humble in heart: and answer came quickly — a flood of inspiration, saying, ‘Get away quickly, for since he was so very tipsy when you came, and his memory always bad, he may forget that you were ever here; then all will be as if nothing had happened; to-morrow or some time you can come afresh.’ Looked close at dear face — fast asleep, eyes a little open; in a moment was up, dressing, never dressed so quickly, not minding buttons, hair anyhow, laces all over the place; was in the act of rushing out with jacket hanging over arm, hatpins, umbrella in hand, when something said, ‘But suppose, suppose: may you not some day need proof that you once passed a night in these rooms?’ Stopped, thought it quickly out; made up my mind to take away something peculiar, precious, which would be at once known, if ever tendered as proof and pledge. Looked about — four violins; didn’t like to take, lest he might want, but, hung up here and there, museum of out-of-date fiddles, old viol d’amore, six-stringed Duiffoprugcar, small viol di Gamba with neck gone, a rebec, crowth, rotta; took viol di Gamba, then, to make sure, took from dressing-

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table watch and chain, old amethyst ring with intaglio, and nail-brush engraved with word 'Chris' in silver; then made escape.

"Outside on 'oak' five cards pinned up — visitors — also bit of paper with 'Mrs. Hewett, the laundress, called, but could not get in.' What a sleep! All those people knocking, and neither of us hearing a sound!

"Finished dressing on landing, went down, broad day seeming strange to my eyes, got into first cab, and home to Guilford Street. Fresh trouble waiting there for Hannah, as sparks fly upward! Letter from mama: Sir Peter really dying at last, asks for me. Should have started at once, but not equal to it to-day; head still going round, round, hands shaky; but nothing must keep me from *his* death-bed: sent telegram, 'Come by early train to-morrow.' Am writing now in bed, half-past ten: last night at this time was following his cab about London, self-sure, silly, little dreaming what trap lay waiting for my feet. How much has happened since! The short distance we see before! 'A little longer lend Thy guiding Hand to these dark steps, a little further on.' To-morrow morning by the nine-fifteen for home. Will write first a note, 'Am at Orrock'; then, if he remembers and cares, he will come to me."

Hannah did duly depart the next morning to Sir Peter Orrock's dying bed, after writing a word to Chris. But her hope that Chris would forget all about

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her visit when he woke was perfectly fulfilled. Hashish has that effect of blotting out and drowning real happenings under dreams, and Chris had already well drunk of the wine drugged by Grimani before ever Hannah rapped at his door and appeared before him. Even the little that Hannah in her diary remembers of what happened after she had drunk is remarkable, and due only to her very powerful memory. As to Chris's memory, it was even weaker than hers was strong, for it often happened to him, when his head was full of music, to stand still in a street and look about in a lost way, asking himself, 'Am I in Paris now or in London? Whither am I going, and for what?' When therefore he woke from the hashish it was with all memory of Hannah's visit cleared from his mind. She, for her part, had the instinctive feeling that he would forget because of her own very vague memory of all that had happened: hence she had taken the viol and other things as her proofs, and had done well.

Chris, on missing these, made up his mind that he had been robbed by a burglar, and was furious at the loss of his viol di Gamba. He meant to put the matter into the hands of the police, but shirked the boredom of it, and soon forgot.

CHAPTER IX

MEANWHILE, Hannah had left off the chase of a husband to give herself to the dying man; the strain of her mind turned from Chris to Sir Peter in the easiest way; and as to her nursing, Miss Praed, the nurse, said to Mrs. Dene, the housekeeper, "Certainly, whatever her hand finds to do she does with her might; and she is a born nurse, though rather untidy sometimes."

Miss Praed had not left the Hall since that first breakdown of Sir Peter's due to sleeping in a draft seven months before.

"It is extraordinary, too," answered Mrs. Dene, "how the old man rallied when she came. He was expected to die, you remember, that very day of her arrival just five weeks ago, and he is still holding out. I suppose it is because he is so wonderfully attached to her, for he no longer tries to hide it."

"Or it may be simply animal magnetism," said Miss Praed, "the actual passing of power out of a powerful life into a dying one. When old King David was dying they put a young damsel into bed with him, and that kept him living; and so it may be in this case, for I never knew anyone with such beaming health as

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Mrs. Wilson. Perhaps we all rise better after sitting near those sort of people, and that's why we like them, being just conscious that we get something out of them."

"But is Hannah quite well at present?" said Mrs. Dene. "Hardly quite herself, I have thought — a little falling off in the laughter and fresh color. Haven't you noticed anything?"

Miss Praed smiled mysteriously at this, saying, "Perhaps she and the genius have met oftener than we suppose!"

"Oh, no — nothing," said Mrs. Dene. "They have not met since the wedding day; I have questioned Mrs. Langler — there's nothing, nothing."

"Oh, Mr. Wilson, shall I never meet you again to pour out to you a piece of my mind?" sighed Miss Praed, just as Hannah herself passed swiftly through the apartment, smiling upon them with her eyes; for another nurse having just taken her place at the sick-bed, she was going out for her night-walk. Coming home again had been a gladness to her, she had such a love for small things, and for each tree and face in the old place; but even now, after five weeks, she had not yet peeped afresh at everything, and that night she went all along the cliffs, watching to see what fresh bits the sea had washed away during her months of absence, for she knew every yard of the coast, and wherever change had taken place her memory stored it. A yard more had gone just where Mrs. Dawe's

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cottage had slipped, and three more coffin-feet were showing — for the coffins are buried with their feet to the east. Up and down the cliff-paths she climbed and slid, or walked along the broad sands, nothing moving in the vast of nature but her, for it was late, the harvest-moon was shining as on that night before her marriage when Chris, Yvonne, Kathleen, and she had strolled thereabouts together; and lonesome she looked in that scene, yet she was of it, the soil was in her blood, the sea had a meaning there which she knew by heart from of old. Paris and London were nice as shows, but here was home and the old rock: and she looked at everything with the feelings of an owner.

After her long stroll she sat down in her favorite spot, the Orrock grave in old St. Peter's churchyard, and there had a spell of what she called "the blues." Her future was so dark. Chris would leave London again before she could leave Sir Peter. Writing again to Chris, she thought, was no good; she had received no answer to her note, 'I am at Orrock'; but she had such a settled faith in her power of "influencing" every one, that she did not doubt that all would be well, if she once got the chance of "influencing" him at close quarters. However, he would be off again somewhere, and she was most eager now to be with him because of a thing which lay locked in her bosom, unknown, she believed, to any one.

But the thing was known to the quaint maid, who

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about that time wrote of it, "I am burning with fever. Hannah is going to have a child. What a depth of reserve must be in the woman! Her mother or no one has the faintest suspicion! I haven't slept the whole night; read it all in her diary yesterday, for, with all her innate secrecy, she hasn't a scrap of caution, and leaves things about. I knew that she keeps a diary, and have often felt a wish to read about her travels, little imagining that it would ever be gratified, or that I should read the awful things that are in that book. Yesterday when I went down to ask after Uncle Peter, Miss Praed told me that Hannah was with him, so, in passing by Hannah's room, I went in, I don't know why — the pleasure of doing something unseen — certainly, I had no thought of her diary: but there on the top of her clothes it lay. She is by nature untidy, I have heard her mother say, and only tidy by habit; her trunk lay open, a black note-book on the clothes. I pounced upon it — her diary! — one of the entries only a day old. I stood just inside the door, ready to drop it and fly. How very little courage must the gods have breathed into this box at my birth! little courage, much desire. If I had been caught, I should have died, but if I had had to die, I should still have read. There was no real danger of any one coming for hours perhaps, the house up there as soundless as the grave, and I might have read the whole thing at my ease, but read only a few pages, then threw it back, and ran. But I had seen enough.

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“She hasn’t written it down in so many words, but from hints in the last few pages it is evident that she is *grosse*. I nearly fainted. She was at Chris’s recital! but how the woman locks things up in her interior! She has given every one the impression that she has not seen Chris, and now she will have to pay for it, for she is evidently in a pretty scare at what is going to be born without any assignable father. Yes, she was at the recital, followed Chris about London in a cab, then forced herself into his chambers at three in the morning when she knew that he was tipsy. This is the staid Hannah Langler! What a scandal! Uncle Peter’s pet! the ‘saint of Woodside!’ ‘How enormously I loved that night,’ writes this saint on the spree. If she had dropped dead at his door! How dared she? What claim has she upon Chris, when he has shown clearly how he regards her? Her calm self-assurance! How I hate her! And after wantonly drinking with him and getting excited, to insinuate to herself that Chris drugged the wine, and to whine to God to forgive her on that account, when she had well eaten her cake! Oh, Hannah, we are all saints after the fifth act. ‘Follow me as I follow — Chris!’

“After eating her cake she proceeded to steal Chris’s viol de Gamba, his watch and chain, a ring, and a brush, thinking that, if he forgets everything, these would serve as proofs in case of motherhood; so this explains the mystery of the ‘burglar’ of which Chris told me in London. Chris apparently *has* absolutely

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forgotten that any one was in his chambers that night, so that, if the proofs were stolen from Hannah — but that way trouble lies, I mustn't think of that.

“The things must lie in her trunk — unlocked — easy enough to get at; she is careless; and I will surely do it, if I let my mind dwell upon it like this. Lord keep me out of all madness and dangers.

“Uncle Peter won't last many days now, and when he is dead I shall certainly have to fly from here; so, if I am to do anything as to the viol and trinkets, it must be quickly. They don't belong to Hannah Langler; I am Chris's cousin; and they should be easy enough to get, if I only had the courage, if I am not too hopelessly ill.

“If she becomes a mother, possessing these proofs, she will have Chris. Chris is *bête*, a stickler for his French ‘honor.’ There isn't any hope left — unless I steal the things from her; and I will, even if I drop with them in my hands, . . .” etc., etc.

CHAPTER X

THE little maid was soon making her threatened attempt to take Hannah's viol and trinkets; her diary shows her thrice in Hannah's room, but each time she found Hannah's trunk locked, and the fierceness of her wishes was such, that she was even dreaming of forcing the lock, when on the fourth morning, as she was returning from one of her early walks, Miss Olivia ran out of the Hill-house to meet her, saying, "Well, — have you heard the bell tolling?"

A bundle of ferns and grasses in Kathleen's hand trembled.

"Sir Peter passed away at four-fifteen this morning," said Miss Olivia.

"Thank God, I was asleep, Livie," breathed Kathleen in a meek voice.

"He passed away peacefully in Hannah's arms —"

"Don't say 'pass away,' say 'die.'"

"But how pale you have gone! Come, bear up, now. We shall be going away somewhere, and you will soon be quite all right again."

"Livie, I have been in Scoble's Cave all alone for twenty minutes, getting dolomites, never dreaming —"

"Well, but you didn't see anything! You see, it is

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all right: you are not going to see anything, believe me. Cheer up, now. We must all die, death isn't so very much —"

"Isn't it? Hasn't the very air become sick with it? Oh, promise me, Livie, that you will be my friend and stick well to me!"

"Of course, I shall stick to you," said Miss Olivia; "what nonsense! You will soon be all right, I tell you! The funeral will be on Friday —"

"Am I bound to stay till the funeral?"

"Why, what would people think? It is only four days away! Mr. Bretherton has charge of everything, is already at the Hall, John says, and you know that he doesn't let the grass grow under his feet. Well, well! Sir Peter is gone, I can't realize it; one by one we all go, and it will be my turn some day."

The quaint maid would not be alone all that day; in every sough of the autumn wind a ghost sighed away for her; death was in her water and food. But the fly braved the lion in his very den; for toward evening she went down to the house of death, which fascinated her. Hannah with the nurses and some cronies were there, all in one apartment, telling and hearing tales of Sir Peter's life; and Kathleen came also among them. It was after dinner; the one lamp in the apartment left in shadow the portraits on the wainscot; in a chamber near lay the body. Mrs. Langler told of one ghost, Mrs. Dene of another, and Miss Praed, who was a spiritualist, of a third, while

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Kathleen, saying never a word, drank it all in, with Miss Olivia petting her wet hand. The little maid suffered; but there is a bliss in that kind of sickness, as when men can't help casting themselves into precipices, or die adream in snow, or revel in the trances of drowning.

"Ever heard of Jig-Butt?" asked Hannah of Miss Praed.

"No," said Miss Praed, all ears for the twentieth anecdote.

"His name is Butt, but we call him Jig-Butt," said Hannah with twinkling eyes: "little ten-acre farmer with a wall-eye. A set of them were dancing at the Orrock Arms, when Sir Peter passed, heard the noise, and looked in. Everybody dancing, except Jig-Butt in a corner. 'Well, Butt, why don't dance?' asked Sir Peter. 'Lord bless us all, squire,' answered Jig-Butt, 'if a man can't jig, he can't jig.' So ever since then he goes by the name of Jig-Butt."

It cannot be written as she told it. Her perfect way of taking off Sir Peter and the squeaky country voice saying, "If a man can't jig, he can't jig," set all the cronies laughing.

"Poor old Jig-Butt," said Mrs. Dene, as her laughter died down.

"Tell them, Hannah, about Sir Peter and Harriet Davis," said Mrs. Langler.

"Oh, 'Rest I cannot!'" cried Hannah, nothing loth, with lively eyes. "Greatest liar in the world. Locked

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up her husband in their cottage one day, and when she came back found him dead. So, five months afterwards, getting somehow into talk with Sir Peter in the home-covert, and wanting to interest him in her, she said, 'I've heard an awful voice in the night, squire, at my bedside.' 'Hm, and what did voice say?' asked Sir Peter. 'Squire, I heard it say, "Rest I cannot — rest I cannot — rest I cannot" — three times.' Sir Peter thought it over, and said, 'Better not go telling that to any of boys about, woman.' 'You think not, squire?' asked Harriet Davis. 'I do.' 'Then, squire, I *wunt*,' she said."

"Ah, he had a wonderful dry way with him," said Mrs Dene.

"Aye, and a kindly heart, a kindly heart," added Mrs. Langler. "There never was another like him, no, nor ever will be."

"Look at what he did to Mrs. Dawe," said Hannah. "You know, Miss Praed, that all this coast is going, the churchyard itself — you must have seen the coffin-ends sticking out — they say that some day the sea will be up to Orrock Park; well, Mrs. Dawe's cottage went two years ago this November, and being left homeless, she didn't, of course, expect to have to pay lease-rent on the bit of useless land left; but Sir Peter said she must, a bargain always a bargain for *him* — hard as nails! and oh! she was in a way, poor thing. Two days before Lady-day she received a heap of bank-notes — hundred pounds — brought them to

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show me, quite broken down, choking, made me feel lumpy myself, didn't know where it all came from, never found out. Because he did it to the least of these, God accept him."

"And he was awfully good to those Prices, too," said Mrs. Dene, wiping her eyes.

"Ever heard of Brother Kate?" asked Hannah with sparkling eyes. "She's the eldest of the Price family. One day Sir Peter met her brother Tom — a boy of six then — so he said to Tom, 'Got an elder brother, boy?' Now, Tom *had* had an elder brother, but he was dead, and the silly fellow answered, 'Yes, sir.' 'What's name?' asked Sir Peter. Tom got confused, mixing up the dead elder brother with his elder sister, and he answered, 'Kate, sir.' So ever since the whole family goes by the name of 'Brother Kate'; and if you're fond of black eyes, just murmur 'Brother Kate' to yourself when one of them is about."

"They practically owe their farm to Sir Peter," said Mrs. Dene.

"What is that story?" asked Miss Praed.

Hannah told this also, ending it with a red nose-tip and wet eyelashes, and so they went on, telling anecdotes of Sir Peter's pilgrimage here below, with anon a weird story, talking of the funeral, of the opening of the grave, of how the estate might be devised, and of the chances of Chris and Yvonne coming. It was near ten o'clock when the quaint maid spoke almost her first word, and then secretly at the ear of Miss

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Olivia — “*Come with me*”; and they two went out, almost unmarked by the others, who were taken up with their talk. In the corridor outside Kathleen whispered to the other, “You wait just here, till I come back.”

“Kathleen, you are not going to dare look at the body?” said Miss Olivia, staring.

“Perhaps I am, yes, I am,” said Kathleen. “Don’t come after me, wait just here, and if you hear me scream, run to me round that corner.”

“But you mustn’t!”

“Sh-h-h — have *pity!*”

Kathleen, as she whispered this, was gone. In that corridor was a door of the death-chamber, but, passing this, she went round a corner into another corridor in which was also a door of the death-chamber. Miss Olivia thought that she would go in by that second door, but Kathleen had no intention of seeing the body, and only made that an excuse for her going away, crafty even in her utmost terror; her aim was to get to Hannah’s room for a fourth try at the trunk, while Hannah was gossiping. It had taken her two hours to screw her courage to the height of daring the dead man to this extent, and now she was in for it. On she hurried with that long-legged walk which hunchbacks have, and that swaying aside of the head at each step. The passing of the second door of the death-chamber was awful to her, but the corridor being more or less lit, it was only when she entered the gloom of Hannah’s

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room that her fears became as it were mortal, and her face had the ugliness of death. There was no electric set in the house, she did not know where to look for matches, had neither the power nor the time. When her eye fell upon the trunk and saw it shut, her heart accused the ghost of shutting it against her; and when she tried and found it unlocked, her heart accused the ghost of leaving it unlocked, in order that he might touch and blight her during her search for the things. She stooped at the trunk, groping to the bottom, every instant awaiting the icy hand. When she found the viol, she understood that she had been allowed to find it only in order that he might touch her during her search for the smaller things, and her hairs bristled when the wind stirred the arras. But Hannah's clothes were not many, and Kathleen had soon in her hand the watch and chain, the ring, and the nail-brush, all in a little cardboard box. She had enough wit left to pat down the clothes and shut the trunk again — the work of an instant; and with a gurgle of escape found herself once more outside in the light.

But having now got the things at so much cost, what was she to do with them? She had not thought of this, having never believed that she would really get them. Hannah, she felt, would soon miss them: they must not, therefore, be taken to the Hill, even if she could pass through the Hall without being seen with them. She had no furnace into which to throw them. If she buried them outside the Hall, she felt

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that the earth would cast them up again, and the burying would take time — with Olivia waiting for her. In the end, the thought arose in her to hide them in the library bureau, and catching at the first suggestion, she was off at once. A near stair led down to a lobby which opened into the library, and down this she stole swiftly. But there was no light down there, and her terrors now again thickened upon her. When she stumbled over a bear-skin in the darkness, she moaned; but she went straight, and reached her end. Knowing that a bunch of keys often hung in the center of the bureau, she groped, but could not find it; the darkness was deep there; and it was now that it flashed upon her that this was the spot at which she had once opened two oriels while Sir Peter slept. Not another instant would Kathleen stay in that place: she just pushed the viol and cardboard box in the space behind the bureau, and moved away, her soul flying, but not her feet, for she feared to fly, rather moving slowly, with moans. It was only when she saw the light above the stair, that she flew, and only when she was up in the corridor again that she screamed a little, and presently fell with a sob into Miss Olivia's arms.

“You have looked at the body?” asked Miss Olivia.

The little maid could not speak, but she nodded. She was got home at once, and had to stay in bed three days, even though she knew that at any moment Hannah's things might be seen in that rather open place between the bureau and the wall. Every hour

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she waited to hear that Hannah had missed them from her trunk; but no news came. Those three nights she surrounded her bed with a crowd of women till a late hour, reveling in the terrors of the ghost stories which they told; when they went away, Miss Olivia remained to sleep with her.

“Will you be able to get up for the funeral, do you think?” Miss Olivia asked her.

“You know that I shan’t,” answered Kathleen, who did not intend to be up till the day after the funeral, in order then to remove the viol and box from behind the bureau.

“But you must try to be up for the reading of the will, you know,” said Miss Olivia.

“*The will?*” breathed Kathleen—she had forgotten about the will. It lay in that very bureau; it would be read on the evening of the funeral, probably; people would then be crowding about the bureau, might see the viol and box; or the bureau might be moved. She at once made up her mind to be up and at the funeral the next day, and to remove the viol and box beforehand.

After three days of thought she had decided to hide the viol in a coffer of which she knew in a disused region of Orrock Hall, if she could reach it unseen, and to bury the box in a sea-cave. She was wariness itself, understood that hidden things have a way of working up into daylight, looked forward fifty years, and meant to run as little risk as possible.

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On the funeral day she did not drive down till near the "lifting" hour, so that she might act at a time when every one was taken up with what was going forward. A number of people were already there, their carriages, with the hearse, being drawn up before the house. The little maid easily escaped from among the mourners, got into the library, and saw behind the bureau the viol and box quite safe. She was too soon, however. It would be ten minutes yet before the "lifting," when the eyes of the servants and of every one would be preoccupied. She looked out from a window at the glass-houses, but her knees trembled so under her, shaking even the black plume in her hat, that she had to sit down at the bureau. It was open, Mr. Bretherton, the lawyer, had been at it, and it now came into Kathleen's mind to read the will. In this she had no motive save that of doing something secretly wayward, and of filling up the time of waiting; so, unlocking three drawers and a panel, she penetrated to the nook of the will, for from childhood she had thoroughly known the mazes of this old piece of cabinet work. To her surprise, the will was in duplicate, for Sir Peter had lately sent over for the copy at Bretherton's in order to make some notes, but had been surprised by illness and death. Kathleen glanced down the parchment, and her glance caused her to spring up with wonder in her looks: everywhere she saw "the said Hannah Wilson"; it seemed as if everything was to be Hannah's. She herself was rich and

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not miserly, wanted none of her uncle's wealth, but she was offended at the "wrong" done to the absent Chris and Yvonne in favor of this outsider, for the estate was not much entailed; and she was also afraid of the power of riches thus put into the hands of Hannah. An impulse to meddle in this overcame her, and when she again locked up the drawers of the bureau, the two copies of the will had been pushed into Hannah's viol through the sound-holes.

This new impulse drove her to run to hide the viol rather sooner than she had meant; so, covering the viol and box as best she could under her cape, she came out into the lobby, ran up the stairs into a corridor, passed Hannah's room. No one was to be seen, but just there by Hannah's door she heard behind her a step running up the stair. A sense of the unseen power that is in the world at once turned her faint. The crazy thought came into her mind that the step was Hannah's, who must suspect, and was following her; for it sounded like a woman's step. In fact, it was only Miss Olivia's, who was seeking for Kathleen; but there was a moment when the little maid, bewitched by it, was on the point of stopping, of dropping everything, and of screaming out. However, she ran on. The trinkets in the box and the two wills in the viol made sounds, being shaken up, and the steps continued to chase her, for Miss Olivia wished to ask whomever it was that she heard before her where Kathleen was. Here was real trouble for Kathleen, unlike her ghostly

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fears in this, that in one's fear of ghosts there is always a doubt whether they are really any ghosts; but here was real trouble and shame. When she came to the first door of the death-chamber, the steps behind were about to turn a corner, and in another moment Kathleen would have been seen, if she had not plunged into the room with the corpse. There she stood, staring with her eyes at the coffin, staring with her ears at the footsteps. The footsteps came and went past, but even when they were no longer to be heard, Kathleen stood rooted, unable to move. The coffin was on the bed, the dead man in it, the sheet which had covered it already drawn away, the lid lying askew on it. The chamber was large and airy. No one was there. It was a sunshiny afternoon of autumn. Outside in the dying year a wind arose with the voice of the viol, and died away with that universal meaning at which the soul faints. The little maid now lacked the power to run any farther: her eyes stole round the chamber, seeking a temporary hiding-place for the things. There was the wardrobe. She stepped toward that on tiptoe, her eyes fixed on the coffin. But the wardrobe would not open to her: she should have turned the key twice, but was too much out of herself to think of this; and while fumbling, she heard a troop of steps coming. Now she stood at bay, feeling herself undone: her eyes moved basely a little from side to side. But all at once her craft sprang up and flourished in spite of all things against her, and she was in action the most

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gallant, as when little timid birds face a wolf. Her eyes, still fixed upon the coffin, saw the safest, surest hiding-place in the world. She guessed that the footsteps were those of the undertaker and his men, coming to screw down and "lift." She understood that no eye would peep into that coffin again forever: and she was soon touching what she loathed. Pushing the lid a little more aside at the foot, she fixed the viol between the two legs of the dead; in placing with it the little box, her hand touched what was as cold as marble. When she had fixed the viol and box, she drew back the shroud over them — all in some seconds. The footsteps were now near, but she had still time to take one flying peep at the face, she could not help it now that she was so near: she dared to lift the face-cloth a little, and saw . . .

When the men came in the little maid was kneeling at the bedside, sobbing faintly, one of them bore her away, while the others hurriedly screwed down, for they were some minutes late. Kathleen lay on a sofa shaken with sobs almost till the funeral started; a month afterwards she wrote in her diary, "I am perfectly convinced that he scowled at me."

"We had cards given us," she wrote, "to show our places. I drove behind Sir George Iliffe, in front of whom were Hannah and her parents. Olivia kept plying me with smelling-salts. The tolling of the bell was awful: that, I think, is the worst of all, the soprano of the knells shivering at the grave. Who invented

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bell-tolling? How wild a soul! What a poet! No one knew how much was being buried: only I. I felt old and wrinkled; for doing certain things makes one old. Moral people are best off; but there never were any, and never will be. We are all alike, a saint is the same thing as a sinner, and all men are liars. Very regrettable but true: fie, the hand of the Potter shook. I shan't care; when you are once on a road, you must go on. *J'accuse, et je défie!* I didn't fashion my soul any more than I fashioned my back, and we are all humped inside, a happy-go-lucky crew. Look at Hannah, with her 'How enormously I loved that night!' — praying, nursing, hymn-shouting Hannah. Christian talk, that! modest behavior! I wish she had dropped dead. She would have loved just the same 'that night,' if she hadn't been married to Chris, and if she hadn't loved so 'enormously' I shouldn't have had to bury her viol and things deep in brick whence even the hand of Time shall never unearth them. Yes, Uncle Peter, you loved her and disliked me, in each case without cause; but you shall guard her treasure well from her for me. 'The wicked' mostly have their way and 'flourish,' and the rewards of vice and virtue are about equal. Vice is brackish afterwards; there is a certain failure of satisfaction after the deed is done; but virtue is bitter beforehand, though nice after: so they are about equal. I am pretty happy in my own way, and will jog along. It is only a month since the funeral, and already I am

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no longer afraid during the daytime; this old Châteaubrun of Yvonne's is too charming a place to harbor many ghosts. But I suffered truly that day: the tolling of the bell, and the dead-march, it can't be uttered what they sang to the very quick of me. I wouldn't go into the church, but the march reached me outside. Then, standing about twenty yards from the grave, I looked on at the lowering, the horrid ropes grating; Olivia could not get me away; I stayed to the very end and after it, till only Hannah was left, with Mrs. Langler and old Watts, the relieving-officer, who was one of the pall-bearers. It was nearly night, and still they stood there, looking down, Hannah with a red nose, at the foot of the grave toward the sea. She did not know all that was just under her feet," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XI

“CHRIS was staying with Count Orsi and giving concerts at the Fondo in Naples at the time of the funeral,” writes the quaint maid further. “Yvonne was at Châteaubrun, entertaining, so couldn’t come. I didn’t mean to leave the Hill for two days, for I was not ready, but the first thing I heard on opening my eyes the morning after the funeral was that Hannah was gone; and I at once made up my mind to go, too. How crazy, I thought, must she be to be with Chris! She had hardly had the decency to go home from the grave with her mother, when she was off. She must certainly have hoped that Uncle Peter had left her something, but she didn’t even stay to see if there was a will, or what was in it. Even if Chris had been nothing to me, the mere heat of the woman to have him would have made me wish to disappoint her; but what irritates me most is her calm assumption of ownership in Chris, as though she was anything to him. At any rate, she was gone, evidently without missing the viol and things from her trunk — believing them still there! She will never now be able to trace even where she lost them. I felt that if she once got at Chris, who had been trying to be good, and had not

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seen Yvonne for months, then Chris would easily become her prey, and that nothing could prevent this — except Yvonne; and I at once telegraphed to Yvonne, begging her to invite me to Châteaubrun, since I couldn't stay at the Hill. I got the answer at noon, 'Come at once'; and Olivia and I slept in London that night.

"It is an ill wind that blows no one any good, and the death of Uncle Peter, besides making me nearly twice as rich, has left me as free as a bird. True, he never presumed when alive to meddle in my goings and comings, but he was my 'guardian' — tender 'guardian'! — and I had the consciousness of his old eyes and grumpy censorship being always there. That first night in London I had such a feeling of liberation and of being out on the spree; and Olivia and I enjoyed ourselves thoroughly, like Bohemians. Piccadilly Circus is no fit place for ghosts, mon oncle.

"As soon as we got out of the train at Liverpool Street, I sent a long telegram, like a letter, to the Orsi Palace, telling Chris that since Uncle Peter had died intestate, and most of the oof would be his, it was essential to his interests to meet me after his farewell at the Fondo, so that I might talk over matters with him; and I added that I was on my way to Yvonne at Châteaubrun, which would be a good half-way meeting place.

"I thought to myself, 'This will furnish an excuse to his conscience, for he can say to himself that he is

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only coming on business, and, if he has the least longing left to see Yvonne, he will deceive himself, and come.'

"The next morning I left for Paris, and reached Toulouse at 2.15 P. M. the day after. Yvonne was outside the station in a carriage, and almost her first words were, 'There is a telegram for you at the château.' From Chris! 'I shall be with you on Thursday the 5th.'

"How I expected him on that 5th! and on the 6th and 7th the same wretchedness over again. He didn't come, and I began to make sure that Hannah had entrapped him.

"But at eleven in the morning of the 8th, I on the terrace saw him coming. I waved my handkerchief like a flag of victory. There he was in the old short jacket, the Tyrolese cloth hat on the back of his curls, and Grimani (taken back at last!) with the elaborate case of the Joseph in his hand. Ah, what a different Châteaubrun it suddenly became that bright day! The cicadas, the trees, became parts of an orchestra, the world turned into an Olympian concert-hall. There was no end to the music till dinner, and, oh Heaven, what sweets that day! It was one swoon to me. Music isn't music in England, it must be here in the South, where the sun ripens the heart like a grape, and sets the blood whispering like passionate wine; and I am sure that nobody in the world can really accompany Chris but me: he as good as said

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so; I do it by nature, with an over-perfection and an over-ease which purrs and becomes voluptuous.

“‘This is a surprise, monsieur,’ said Yvonne on shaking hands. I had not told her a word beforehand, for I wished her to be taken by surprise, but she got through the meeting with perfect *chic* and unconsciousness — much better than *he*. ‘Didn’t Kathleen tell you that I was coming to talk over some affairs?’ he blurted out. Yvonne looked at me and said pointedly, ‘Kathleen is always at her best when she speaks, but she often has reasons to be silent.’ I disliked her for it. I, too, have a tongue with a point, and it may sting some day.

“She took no part in the music all the afternoon; her manner was as if she and Chris had not met before. The old baronne d’Estampe, looking like a *dame Louis Seize*, played her old chords and arpeggios on the harp, and Arbos gave his canzonets: the rest was Chris and I, Yvonne meantime keeping up an elaborate gaiety and aloofness. She loves Chris, *cela se voit*. In the evening Chris and I in the pine-avenue: Yvonne declined to come; and I unwisely glad of it. He liked the château: ‘Charming place!’ I told him the names of plants, and showed him their structure. He said, ‘You know everything; you are both virtuoso and savant.’ I suppose I *am* a special little one — better somehow perhaps in my essence than anybody! If I could only always feel it, have the pluck of it! Then I should not struggle and stew in this self-consciousness.

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But I am only conceited when alone. My soul has no skin, every wind blisters it. It is the hump!—this millstone, this prison. ‘Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this dead body?’

“I pretended great interest in his Orrock affairs, advised this and that. ‘But,’ said he, ‘how comes it that our good Uncle Peter died without a will? I distinctly remember his telling me that Hannah was to be his heiress.’

“‘It happened so,’ I said; ‘old men are capricious, Chris.’

“‘Or, more likely, it is a mere accident,’ he said. ‘Perhaps I ought to make over to Hannah all this property. It will be only fitting, for Hannah, you know, is not really of yeoman race —’

“‘What *do* you mean, Chris?’ I asked, too soon, for he said, checking himself, ‘I am under a promise.’

“What could he possibly have meant? I pressed him, but he wouldn’t tell. Something he has dreamt! Hannah would laugh to hear that old Langler isn’t a yeoman. As to making over his inheritance to her, I treated that with derision, telling him that the world is a practical place, not cloud-land. I hope I persuaded him, but am not sure. He couldn’t be so feeble. I asked him if he had seen Hannah since the wedding night: his answer was, ‘You know that I have not been to Norfolk since.’ This relieved me, showing that he still imagines her down in Norfolk, that he has really forgotten her night in his London

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chambers, and that she has not run across him during his delay in coming to Châteaubrun from the 5th to the 8th, though she was then pretty certainly somewhere about Naples, seeking him. I thoroughly enjoyed that walk with him up and down the pine-avenue, but I saw that he still thinks so much of Hannah, that, if she once said to him, 'A child is going to be born to you and me, I swear it,' he would be inclined to believe her, however deeply buried in brick the proofs of it may be — unless he had first got well entangled with Yvonne, and so become deaf to Hannah. Yvonne, as before, was the pivot. I asked him how long he would be staying at Châteaubrun? He answered meekly, 'I have not been asked to stay. I shall go back to Toulouse to-night.' This did not suit me. When we got back to the terraces they were all pacing about in the moonlight, with something eighteenth-century in the scene of statues, waterworks, and pacing groups. Yvonne was with de Marsillac. I left Chris with madame la baronne and Marthe Wesendonk, and joined her. 'Chris,' I said 'is going back to Toulouse presently.' 'Is he?' said she, 'then I must give the necessary orders, or will you see to everything?' 'I will see to everything at once,' I said. At this we both stood silent, until she asked, 'Has he a courier? Will he be sleeping in Toulouse?' 'Yes,' I said, 'but you know, Yvonne, that there is no really comfortable hotel in Toulouse.' 'Oh, everywhere is a palace to poets,' said she; 'but is Lady Wilson with him at

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Toulouse? I forgot to ask him.' 'There is no Lady Wilson, Yvonne,' I said, 'you know that, though there *will* be one in three days' time, if Chris is sent away.' 'I'm glad of that,' said she; 'you pronounce it like a threat, but you must mean it as a promise, his wife is in all respects so admirable a lady.' 'That is just where the danger lies,' I said, vexed, 'in the fact that he thinks more of her than of — any one.' 'You excepted, I am certain, Kathleen,' she said. 'And you, perhaps,' I retorted in my rage. 'I perhaps and you certainly,' she said: 'That is an exception and a half.' She referred to my dwarfishness, of course, and the smartness of her repartees don't lessen their smart; but her half-a-cousin has *finesse*, too, in plenty, when collected, and my revenge may come. I dared not hit back then: my object was to get her to ask Chris to stay, and I was afraid to exasperate her, though I knew that she was hungering to keep him. For a minute I was in too much torture to speak. We stood half turned away, threatening each other to go, but lingering, afraid to part. At last I began to say, 'Well, I will go and tell Grimani,' when she said, 'Have you finished the discussion about money matters with your cousin?' 'Not quite,' I said. 'Well,' said she, 'as he is such a wanderer — it is nine months, for instance, since *I* had the honor of meeting Monsieur Wilson.' 'That's not his fault, Yvonne,' I said, 'he was under a promise to Hannah Langler with regard to you.' 'To me?' 'Yes, she really would be amused,

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if you send him away.' 'But this is the second time you speak of "sending him away"! Have I not asked him to stay?' Thus ignominiously mademoiselle gave in to her heart's lusts. Nothing of the sort had been done, of course: she had been tempted to, had resisted all day, and now could resist no longer. We are all alike, hunch or no hunch. I said, 'No, you may have meant to ask him, but have forgotten.' 'I was almost sure — Well, perhaps you will repeat to him my request, Kathleen,' she said, going quickly off to rejoin de Marsillac. That was nearly three weeks ago, and Chris must be riding back with her now from the picnicking at La Risolette," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XII

“HANNAH,” continued Kathleen a little later, “is in Paris. I have a letter from her. She has heard from her parents that I am at Châteaubrun, and asks if I can give her any hint as to the whereabouts of Chris! I am afraid that Chris is also at Châteaubrun, and enjoying himself very much indeed, but what business can that be of Miss Langler of Woodside? She flew from the graveside of Uncle Peter to Italy, knowing that Chris was playing at the Fondo; but by the time she reached Naples he had got my telegram summoning him to Châteaubrun. He stopped on his journey to give a concert at the Milan Scala, and she followed to Milan, but a day too late. Chris had left for Châteaubrun. So, on losing him, she went back to Paris, which seems to be her headquarters, and is there waiting till he turns up somewhere.

“She writes a lot of tattle about Orrock affairs, such as that my groom Parker has influenza, that a bit of coast has slipped just south of Wardenham, etc., etc.: no one would imagine that she has a great grief gnawing at her. No reproach at not being left anything by Uncle Peter, not a mention about the viol and box; but this mayn’t mean that she hasn’t discovered their

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loss, for miss (or Mrs.?) certainly doesn't wear her heart on her sleeve. She *must* have found out by this time; and what a tenfold mystery to her! They are buried pretty deep, my Hannah, and you feel now, don't you, how headlong and naughty it was of you to forget all the hymns and texts, and force yourself into Chris's chambers that morning?

"I doubt if she will ever now get Chris. My scheme here has prospered more than I care to witness. Chris is as badly in love again as ever he was at Orrock, and Yvonne ten times more so. No Frenchwoman loves quite disinterestedly: Chris with two decorations, fore-run by a shudder of expectancy in every town which he enters, is not the same boy of ten months ago; and because he is more, she loves him more. I alone should love him as well in rags, so no one has any real right to him but me.

"The day before yesterday Yvonne went into a sort of hysterics. It was down at the village, where a lot of us had gone to patronize the *fête* in the afternoon. We had left Chris at the château, practising in his rooms. Yvonne drove with de Marsillac, flirting as ostentatiously as usual. I was in the brougham with the Comtesse Choderlos de Hanska. We left the carriages at the Villa des Sapins, and walked down to look at the *fête*. It was jolly — a great crowd of people in bright-colored clothes. I don't know how de Marsillac lost Yvonne, but presently she was missed. I suspected that she might have a rendezvous with

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Chris, and this sent me looking for her in the *Sapins* (pine-wood). She had no rendezvous, however, for I and the comtesse, who would come with me, found her sitting alone on a tree-trunk in the forest-glade which they call 'le Rond Point.' There she sat, her face buried in her hands; and the moment the comtesse spoke to her, Yvonne burst out into the most astonishing laughter and sobbing, like hysterics. Her face was just crimson, and I never heard such a thing, it made me want to laugh and cry myself.

"Old Choderlos de Hanska put her hand on mine as we two were driving home again, saying, 'My dear, after what we have witnessed together, there is no longer any indelicacy in expressing ourselves to each other, for here, you have seen, is that which demands discussion.'

"So it seems, madame,' I said, thinking to myself, 'Words, mere words.'

"If ever a poor child was in the grip of a tragic destiny,' the old chatterbox went on, 'it is this.'

"But why *tragic*, madame?' I asked.

"Because the cause of that which is about to overtake her is in herself,' she said, 'and because she has struggled so desperately and so vainly against herself and her destiny. It is said, my dear, that "even the gods weep to see a good man struggling in vain with misfortune." Here you have a good girl, striving with all her heart to keep the moral law, but little by little losing ground and hope. It has even made me shed a

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tear to notice her punctuality on her religious duties at the church of late.'

"I tried to imagine the old monkey's tear tearing a ravine through paste, like a geologic river; she daren't cry, except in the mornings. 'But I thought that Yvonne pretends to be a pantheist,' I murmured.

"'Ah, my dear,' said the old windbag, 'but when we need a God, we reconstruct Him. Yvonne's father and mother were both good Christians, and this disease in her blood is all the more awful to her because, having been practically her own mistress since their death, she has grown accustomed to feel the responsibility of her conduct and of her high name. For the first time, she now finds herself dragged along a path which is repugnant to her principles and her tastes.'

"'Why doesn't she marry Monsieur de Marsillac, who adores her?' I said, 'then as a married woman she could more properly contract a *liaison* with Monsieur Wilson.'

"'I have taken the liberty to advise her in that very sense,' said madame, 'but the poor girl has answered me only with her shoulder. Yvonne's mother was an English lady, and her own point of view is modified in an English way. No, there is no solution but one: it is much to be desired that Monsieur Wilson could be induced to depart from Châteaubrun.'

"'You should try to induce him, madame,' I said.

"'I!' murmured the old thing, lifting her hands in dainty horror.

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“‘It cannot be done, madame,’ I said: ‘it would be intolerable, if any one presumed to interfere. And what would happen, if he did go? Yvonne would only become ill.’

“‘She is ill now,’ madame answered: ‘Ernestine assures me that she paces her room far into the mornings, and has dreams from which she awakes with cries; and you have observed her looks.’

“‘I’m afraid I can’t sympathize with all that fuss,’ I said. ‘The affair is a very ordinary one, only Yvonne happens to be of noble blood.’

“‘But that is not precisely where the thorn pierces her, I am certain,’ said madame, ‘but in the fact — is it not a fact that Monsieur Wilson possesses a wife?’

“I smiled without answering.

“‘I happen to have reasons for believing it, my dear, and you know that nothing ever escapes my old lips, so you may be open with me. In fact, Yvonne has as good as admitted it to me — an English wife. Well, I believe that that is where this poor child is excruciated: she is unwilling to wrong that other woman. It seems a little unworldly, but then Yvonne is a young girl, with a still tender conscience. Tell me, is not the name of that wife “Hannah”?’

“‘How can you know, madame?’ I asked.

“‘Tell me if it is so, and I will then tell you how I know.’

“‘Well, yes.’

“‘I thought it! For, two mornings ago, Yvonne, on

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being startled out of sleep by a vase dropped from Ernestine's hands, broke into sobs, repeating many times that word, "Hannah, Hannah." She had been dreaming of this "Hannah," and *there*, be sure of it, is where the ache lies.'

"'Well, it seems a case for the physician,' I said — 'a little phosphorus, perhaps. This only comes of people allowing their desires to wander upon forbidden objects.'

"'It is true,' said she, 'the earth has sun-stroke, but from habit I prefer it to Utopia, my dear. This poor child can't be stoned by me, for, providentially, I also am not without sin. You, no doubt, are: it is all a relation between temptation and strength. In the case of Yvonne, you have a poor child fighting a real battle in loneliness, without help or sympathy. Her guardians are merely well-wishers; her friends are merely visitors; you, her *cousine*, recommend phosphorus; I, her great-aunt, try to be distressed, but at my age, after the life of fashion, one is no longer distressed at anything, except at a disturbance in one's habits. Old people are as selfish as babies —"

"'Oh, but *you* are not in your second childhood in that respect, madame,' I murmured, giving it back to her for her 'temptation and strength'; she answered something, but the carriage was passing over gravel, I didn't hear, and immediately afterwards we got out.

"Yvonne arrived soon afterwards, 'retired,' and did not appear at dinner, which was a failure. Chris had

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nothing to say, de Marsillac's Parisian lightness seemed to have got a wetting, and the Conseilleur Municipal and old Choderlos de Hanska were allowed to talk to the air absolutely without pause. Chris escaped at the first chance. I didn't know where he had gone, went to spy, and after a search saw him in that out-of-the-way balcony behind the armory on the south, near the precipice. He was pacing up and down pretty quickly. The trellis-work being thick with vine, except over the three steps in the center, I got up to it without being seen, and sat down on the old horse trough there, just to be near. He made those old worn *dalles* of the balcony hold ground. I didn't know before he ever went there. Couldn't see him, but could hear his tread, and smell his cigar, the darling god; buried my head in its wrap in the vine leaves, and closed my eyes. It was dark there in spite of bright moonlight, the air heavy with maples and wild sarsaparilla that grow down to the precipice-edge, hosts of cicadas screeching, with a tinkling of the piano from far away. Chris must have had some musical thought in him; now and again he hummed, just a murmur. I was enjoying too deeply to move, but after a time had begun to think of speaking to him about the signing of the lawyer's documents from England, when I heard some one with him. My heart all at once was beating awfully. It was Yvonne. 'She is not too unwell for *this*,' I thought, and I pushed my ear well into the bush to hear.

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“‘Ernestine has told me that you were here, Chris,’ I heard her say, ‘so’ — something lost — ‘the answer which you demand of me.’

“‘Mum, mum, mum,’ from Chris; I couldn’t hear! They stood fifteen yards away.

“‘. . . Believe me,’ from Yvonne, ‘risen from my knees before my Creator to come here to you, hum, hum, hum.’ If they had only spoken in English! I might have caught more.

“‘Mum, mum, I prefer you to all things,’ from Chris: ‘nothing is sacred but you . . . God is less than Love . . . mum, mum, ethics is for unmusical souls who need a lower guide . . . Love in itself is right, and is enough . . . love like ours . . . love, love’ — they say it must have been grand to see Will Shakespeare in love, but wild-hearted Chris! I felt to my heart the boundless throbbings of his, but couldn’t hear! the cicadas screeching in my ears.

“‘Do not mistake me,’ from Yvonne: ‘the doing of what is right has been made too terribly hard a task! Hum, hum, hum, I have suffered, mon ami, yes, I have suffered, hum, hum, but I love you too much, Chris, my soul . . . I am too ill now . . . I can no longer bear it . . . the great decision of our lives rests henceforth with you.’

“‘Mum, mum, mum,’ from Chris, ‘nothing is so great as infinity, mum, mum.’ I heard her better than him, he mumbles so, his tongue is in his fingers.

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“‘In ten days my guests will have departed,’ from Yvonne; ‘you love me . . . tell me then . . . you are my supreme . . . do not fear . . . claim that which is yours, nothing shall dare oppose you . . . seize me, have me, destroy me, kill me . . . death . . . I know that it will end all, hum, hum, hum.’

“‘. . . destiny,’ from Chris, ‘the grave itself, mum, mum, Love like ours . . . is itself a law-giver . . . destiny . . . cannot be defeated, mum, mum,’ then the wretched castle-bell began that sort of curfew which they ring here, and for two minutes I could hear nothing.’

“‘. . . these sorts of relations,’ from Yvonne . . . ‘ashes, hum, hum, contempt . . . twenty years . . . Virtue alone is incorruptible . . . poor mortals . . . nets for our feet . . . the road to death, mon ami!’ — with a sob.

“‘To-day is as good as to-morrow,’ from Chris — ‘better, for we are younger to-day . . . next summer as unimportant as last summer, mum, mum, you may love me less.’

“‘. . . dreams,’ from Yvonne, ‘Hannah, your wedded wife . . . a good woman . . . speaking to me, pleading with me, warning me, as plainly as I see you now . . . a very strange thing . . . you can see that I am ill . . . the voices of destiny, hum, hum, hum, will end in sorrow.’

“‘. . . Things are as they are,’ from Chris, ‘we did not make the world . . . excellent woman! . . .

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out of relation with my longings . . . dare everything, sacrifice everything . . .’

“‘Yes! yes!’ from Yvonne; ‘my guests will have departed . . . twelve days . . . Venice . . . even one year of heaven . . . I shall have lived . . . afterwards one may die, hum, hum, hum, Ernestine, mon ami . . . must go away . . . soon, soon.’

“‘ . . . Write it in a song of joy,’ from Chris, ‘how amiable! . . . thievish feet of love . . . Mmm . . . joy forever . . . kiss . . . ’

“‘Yes! give!’ from Yvonne, now first *tutoying* him — ‘*Oui! donne!*’ — and I knew that they were kissing. For some minutes I must have fainted away just then, I don’t remember the moment at which Yvonne left him. I wondered at myself for letting her go without flying at her; it seemed that nothing was left me now but to throw my wretched frame into that precipice not twenty yards off; but I had no strength left even for that, I simply sat with my head in the vine, and suffered my forlornness. Lord, what a pain it is! I felt how God had made me ugly, wretched, unloved, wretched, wretched, unchangeably, Lord God, Lord God. If their sweet carryings-on were bad for Hannah, they were as bad for me; but it was all my own doing, I had no right to complain. Why had I brought Chris here? To keep him from Hannah, forsooth! with some notion in me that, since he is married and can’t be Yvonne’s husband, then, at some far-off day, he may somehow be mine. Weak dream! He thoroughly

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belongs to Yvonne *now* anyway, may always, and what do I care whether he is Yvonne's or Hannah's, if he is not mine? Certainly, I never felt toward Hannah quite the same cat-o'-mountain rancor that I felt for Yvonne that night. I don't know what kept my hands from her, for I longed to see both him and her struck down in the height of their selfish bliss, the two wantons. If I hadn't fainted when they kissed, perhaps I should have done something, for in my highest moments, when I am white-hot, this little hunchback towers a head taller than everything, casts off fear like a cloak, and her will is done. No one had better make me mad.

"Chris remained alone on the balcony a long while; he must have brought one of his counterfeit Guarneriuses with him, for he presently began to play, rendering an Ernst reverie with delicious peace and *intimité*. He seemed to do it to console me. I waited on till he went away near eleven."

CHAPTER XIII

“THE same night,” continued the quaint maid two days later, “that Chris and Yvonne met on that south balcony, Monsieur de Ballu, the *notaire*, came over from Toulouse on a visit. In passing through the *salon*, meaning to go to bed, I saw his old rat-face, which resembles Robespierre’s. All these old fogies down here have an eighteenth-century air to me. De Ballu is Yvonne’s *parrain* (godfather), and one of the guardians and administrators. I noticed him deep in talk with old Choderlos de Hanska in a far part of the *salon*, while his mountain of a wife spoke with Olivia and the Conseilleur Municipal. Little did I dream what trouble that old man was even then hatching for my poor head.

“The next morning, while I was being dressed, Olivia came with the news that Chris had gone off to Toulouse. ‘What on earth for?’ I asked. She didn’t know. I went down late with a headache to second *déjeuner*. A few people were still there, among them old Choderlos de Hanska, who, as she rose from table, passed by me, saying in that sort of court whisper in which the French *monde* is expert, ‘All will be well: Monsieur Wilson has gone to Toulouse to interview

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Monsieur de Ballu.' Before I could say a word the old windbag was gone, with her finger on her lips. I was perfectly astonished. What, I wondered, could Chris possibly have to say to this old French lawyer, or he to Chris? .

"I was soon to know! Chris came back about two-thirty o'clock. I was at a window of that huge old room on the ground floor which they call 'the *salle*,' looking out for him. He got out of his carriage precipitately, looking flushed and radiant. As he was passing by me, I stepped out to him. 'Why, Cousin Chris,' I said in a wretchedly sycophant voice, 'I have hardly spoken a word with you for two days.' I was the last thing in the world of which he was thinking at that moment! 'Mmm, my own dear friend,' he said, 'forgive me. Much has been going forward — but you will soon hear.' 'What is it? You have been to Toulouse —' 'We will speak together,' he said, and was gone with a wave of his hand. As he entered the house, I flew to watch, and caught sight of him going up the branch of the stair which leads to Yvonne's quarters; so whatever was the matter concerned Yvonne.

"I was on thorns. I went searching, for the second time, for old Choderlos de Hanska. They said she was taking *siesta*; then I found Olivia at the *salon* piano, and asked if *madame la comtesse* had not said anything about the object of Chris's interview with old de Ballu. 'Not a word,' she answered. I had to wait about in suspense, the house very still and dull, a party of them

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having gone riding to Moulin Chantepleure, the rest were scattered about the *salon*, verandas and terraces, or taking *siesta*, the sun blazing, the ladies as lightly clad as a man could wish, and strains of studies in chords reaching one's ears from time to time. They have always been sweet to me, those strains of Chris's fiddle, for I have thought then, 'He is not near her now, nor thinking of her.' At last Choderlos de Hanska came, with a raw look of sleep in her eyes, — ghastly old thing, I hate her. I'd rather be a young hunchback than an old beauty. She melted into smiles and nods on seeing my anxious face, and I got her out to the *salon* balcony, where we were alone. 'What, then, is happening?' I asked.

"Ma chère, it has all come about by the most extraordinary Providence —'

"But what?' I asked, dreading a rigmarole.

"Is it possible that you do not even yet surmise that there is about to be a wedding among us?'

"Between?'

"Monsieur Wilson and Yvonne.'

"A *wedding!*'

"A wedding.'

"I suppose you jest, madame,' I said, 'since you know as well as I do that Monsieur Wilson is already married.'

"Ma chère, I never jest after *siesta*,' said the old hag. 'Don't be so astonished. When Providence wishes to witness a situation, it devises it. Listen, and

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you shall hear. Last night Monsieur de Ballu was here. You must have seen him. He and I were in conversation, when he happened to mention the case of one of his clients who, having set up a business in London, married an English lady, but the marriage was unhappy, and the young man, on returning to France, married a lady of Toulouse. I had no idea that this could be done, and expressed my astonishment at it, but Monsieur de Ballu assured me that the affair was quite formal, since the marriage in London had not taken place before a French consul, and was therefore null and void in France, the bridegroom being a French citizen.'

"My heart ceased to beat; I could only just groan something about 'some mistake,' and 'what madmen could make such a law.'

"'Laws are like the scheme of things, my dear,' she said, 'they only seem mad because we others do not know the spirit of them. At any rate, when I heard this, Monsieur Wilson and Yvonne of course leapt into my mind. I ventured to recount everything to Monsieur de Ballu, and it was then decided between us that all would be well, provided that the musician is really a French citizen, and provided that his English marriage did not take place in the presence of a French consul. If these two things are so, he can marry Yvonne, and I have just received a telegram from Monsieur de Ballu assuring me that they *are* so.'

"'But is not Hannah, then, his lawful wife?'

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“‘Oh, yes — in England; not in France.’

“‘So a Frenchman can have two lawful wives in Europe?’

“‘Yes, four or five.’

“‘Oh, but, madame, what *lunacy!*’

“‘I thought you would be pleased,’ she sighed.

“‘I am most pleased!’ I answered, like a fool, ‘but who,’ I groaned, ‘could be expected to know this obscure French law in the country parts of England? Chris married in all good faith, not dreaming — no one dreamed — We all assumed that Chris was an Englishman: his father was English-born, his mother an English woman —’

“‘All that does not alter the law, *ma chère-r-e,*’ she said. ‘French laws are not made for the benefit of English ladies, but for the amusement of French men. And, after all, what harm is done? One wife in England and another in France are only two, nor can they be jealous the one of the other, for each will consider the other a mistress. As for me, I am a good Catholic, my dear, but, between us, Mahomet was also a prophet. And, as a matter of fact, is not polygamy more general in Paris than in Cairo —?’

“‘But at any rate, Hannah is his wife *in England!*’ I cried. ‘English law isn’t going to permit him to remarry in France, even though French law does.’

“‘No, his marriage in England is final from the English point of view,’ she said, ‘so, if he remarries in France, he will return to England at his own risk,

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Monsieur de Ballu even says that to a bigamy of that sort English justice would show itself extremely severe — if it knew of it. But then, geniuses are exempt from everything.’

“‘They are *not* — not in England! I cried, for I couldn’t restrain my rage, ‘and that settles it, for Chris will often have to be in England, and surely Yvonne would never expose him to this awful risk —’

“‘That is not the point with Yvonne, the risk,’ she answered; ‘she has not thought of that, and, in fact the risk is very slight, my dear, whatever you may say of it. But the point with Yvonne is the other lady. She absolutely refuses to marry Monsieur Wilson. After his interview with Monsieur de Ballu this morning, Monsieur Wilson hastened with the good news to Yvonne’s apartments, and Ernestine, who partly overheard their interview, tells me that Yvonne first waltzed about the room with glee, then suddenly changed, and in the end refused to hear of the marriage. She said that, even if she was willing to wrong the other lady to the extent of entering into a *liaison* with her husband, bearing the shame of it while enjoying the sin, yet she was not so wicked as to shelter herself behind an international quibble and legally usurp one who is already another’s. “The word ‘wife’ has no plural, Chris,” the poor child said. I don’t know in what grammar she found it; in my time it was ‘wives’ that had no singular, except in the breviary. So for the present there is a deadlock. But sufficient pressure,

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you may be sure, will be brought to bear upon Yvonne to induce her to be more worldly.'

"'Pressure by whom?' I asked; but before she could answer, a flunkey brought her a card. 'From Monsieur de Ballu,' she whispered me, and went off, leaving me undone. At that hour the day before such a thought as Chris marrying Yvonne had never entered a human brain; it had all come through the cackle of those two old geese. And it was I who had brought Chris to Châteaubrun! Much thanks did I get for it! I, who had done all for her, was forgotten, ignored, and she swimming in joy. I felt that if ever I should see her the wife of Chris — They have no right to make me mad.

"I wouldn't believe a word of what the old hag had told me, but at once sent Olivia to order a calèche, and by four o'clock we were off to Toulouse, leaving old Choderlos de Hanska and Monsieur de Ballu in an interview with Yvonne. In Toulouse I put the case before the first lawyer I could find. He told me that it was true, all, all, that Choderlos de Hanska had said — Chris could marry Yvonne. What a sudden, undreamt-of thing! I had never conceived anything but a short *liaison* between them, for I always had a girl-to-girl fondness for Yvonne, and could have borne to see that: but this was lifelong union. I understood that Yvonne might say no to the marriage at first, and be on the stage, as all Frenchwomen always are, but I felt that she couldn't long resist the bliss and

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greatness of owning Chris for life. When I got back to the château I went up to the sort of flat to which Yvonne 'retires'; at the top of the stairs Ernestine, hanging about in a state of suspense, whispered me: 'Madame Choderlos de Hanska and Monsieur de Ballu are still in conference with her. She is about to yield.'

"Then a head peeping out between the portières of Yvonne's ante-chamber, said, 'Ah, it is you, mademoiselle' — old Choderlos de Hanska; she put her lips to my ear with the whisper, 'I have left Monsieur de Ballu alone with her.'

"'What for?' I asked.

"'It was essential.'

"'But why not let Monsieur Wilson do his own persuading, madame?'

"'He is not to see her again till all is settled. He has very sagaciously handed over the whole *affaire* to the *tuteurs* (guardians).'

"While speaking to me she was touched from behind by Monsieur de Ballu, and they two entered into a whispering with gesticulations which must have lasted twenty minutes, rivers of words. Then Choderlos de Hanska sailed through the little *salon*, and went in to Yvonne alone, while Monsieur de Ballu sat in the little *salon*, a book on his knees, but his ferret-eyes fixedly leering at Yvonne's door. I waited in the ante-chamber, feeling all out of it, but after a time ventured to peep into the little *salon* and say to Monsieur de Ballu, 'May I see my *cousine* now?' Silly! I ought

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to have walked in boldly, for at my question that old Jack-in-office cast up his eyes and hands to heaven, then shook his head crazily, stopping and beginning again, meaning 'A thousand times no.'

"I wished to warn Yvonne of the danger of a second marriage to Chris when he should go back to England, though I knew in my heart that the danger was mainly theoretical, since no one would be busybody enough to act in the matter, even if it were known in London; but I wished to frighten her with it; so when I had withdrawn again into the ante-chamber, I stood near the portière, feeling shy and out of place, but clinging on.

"Presently Choderlos de Hanska opened Yvonne's boudoir door a little, and beckoned to Monsieur de Ballu, who went in. This was French 'intrigue'! Then came Chris almost on tiptoe along the darkling corridor, with pauses and listenings.

"'Have you seen her?' he whispered to me; 'is she about to yield?'

"'Yes, Cousin Chris, but —'

"'Sh-h-h' — with his finger on his lips. He stole off again. My heart failed me. I had nothing to say to him to which he was not deaf.

"Then came a heavy bonhomme with creaking boots and an air of business — one of the *tuteurs*, I suppose; I had never seen him before. On seeing me, he said at my ear, '*Is she about to yield?*' Monsieur de Ballu had just come out again from Yvonne, so he and the

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newcomer met warmly, and went off into whispering, of which I could only hear 'about to yield,' 'will not yield,' 'it is necessary,' 'mon ami,' 'the testament,' 'the code Napoléonique,' 'the English law,' the '*tuteurs*,' 'yield,' 'yield,' — a thousand times over. Presently Choderlos de Hanska came out, the three whispered together, and the two men went in to Yvonne. I asked Choderlos de Hanska who was the heavy man, and she said, 'Monsieur Tombarel, the mayor.'

"Then came Olivia, all fuss, wanting me to go to dinner, and I had to, for I was famished. Neither Chris nor Choderlos de Hanska appeared at table, where everyone seemed trying to be unconscious that something was going on. As I went up the stairs again, Ernestine ran down to meet me with the breathless news, 'Maître Bibesco has arrived! It is said that she is about to yield.' I neither knew nor cared who Maître Bibesco was, but on peeping into the little *salon* I saw him — a huge Danton of a man with a lowering brow. There were now four of them in there at Yvonne. I hung about the corridor and portières for hours, waiting my chance to see her, or send in a note, but it never came; one by one, or two, three, four together, they were with her. The to-do that those people made that night! The chaos of words, the plans and shifts, the wine that they drank! They were just in their element, with an '*affaire*' to let themselves loose over. About eleven I left them, and went to bed shivering and burning at once.

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“The next morning, as I lay abed, Ernestine ran in to say, ‘She has not yielded, but it is believed that she will yield this afternoon at about two’ — and rushed out again. Ten minutes later Olivia was saying to me, ‘She has not yielded.’ I said, ‘What, have you, too, caught the epidemic of “yield”?’ Presently my own maid brought me in a note from old Choderlos de Hanska, scribbled with the words, ‘She has not yielded, but signs are not wanting. Monsieur Tombarrel will be with her at eleven.’ I said to Olivia, ‘It is all French play-acting, she will “yield” soon enough; but in that case my mind is made up what to do.’ I had resolved during the night: I should tell Hannah all, and let Hannah defend her rights. I might have got dressed in time to go to warn Yvonne of Chris’s danger from English law before any of the *tuteurs* were with her, but I would not now be at the pains, for I felt that nothing in the end would keep her from ‘yielding’; and my mind was quite made up that one wife is enough for Chris.

“But the fuss all that day! The arrivals and departures, the telegrams, the mounted messengers! Though I was kept informed of most things by one or another of them, still I couldn’t grasp what it was all about, nor could conceive how the ‘*affaire*’ had become so mightily complex in so short a time. What made it worse was that those with Yvonne sent hourly telegrams to those in Toulouse: ‘She is about to yield,’ ‘She does not yield,’ ‘Send both documents,’ ‘Your

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presence is essential,' 'Consult Leyds of Paris as to droits de tutelage,' 'Influence of Madame de Ballu would prove most useful auxiliary at present juncture,' and more. Besides, there were the three visits of the physician, who himself became one of the arguers and persuaders. Near two o'clock in the afternoon Choderlos de Hanska told me that Yvonne would become dangerously ill if the strain continued; she had fainted some minutes before in attempting to sit up in bed. I pitied her, but pitied myself more. Twice she sent for Chris to go to her, but Chris was not allowed to go, her longing to see him being one of the means used to persuade her. But soon after three Ernestine ran to me with the news, 'It is finished: Monsieur Wilson is now with her. She has yielded.'

"My mind was quite made up. I at once telegraphed to Hannah in Paris, 'Will you be at the same address the day after to-morrow?' At six I got the answer, 'Yes.'

"Yvonne's rooms were still more or less full of her friends enjoying the after-taste of their victory; so, not wishing to see either her or Chris, I simply wrote her a note, saying that Olivia and I were going to Cannes to meet some one, and should soon be back.

"What on earth Hannah would or could do now I couldn't imagine, but I knew that she would do something effective, and I was determined to set her on the back of Yvonne. One wife at a time for Chris, ladies. At 7.15 I left Toulouse for Paris, arrived at," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIV

“By eleven in the morning I was at 14 rue Boissy d’Anglas,” continued the little maid three days later. “The concière told me that Hannah lived at Madame Brault’s, a *pension* at the top of the hive, so up and up I climbed — to the fifth floor, troops of work-girls hurrying all about the dark stairs. Hannah wasn’t in, but was expected in to déjeuner at noon, a servant said. I answered that I would wait, and was led into a little *salon*, where I sat a long time, trying to keep my palms dry. When any one came in I felt relieved that it was not Hannah. I don’t know why I should have been so nervous.

“At last Hannah swept in, vomiting her energy like a volcano, uttered a cry, and caught me in her arms, chattering French, slurring her r’s daintily like a Parisienne. She had quite a *chic* hat and coiffure, with a stole tossing about her, and looked tall and smart, no sign yet of anything coming. I always disliked the girl, but if I had not, I should have liked her. I ceased to be nervous the moment she flew at me and took me to her. She set me down, knelt before me, and caressed my hands, pouring out all the paltry news of a letter received by her from Orrock that morning, without letting me speak.

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“Well, it is home again to see you,’ she said at last. ‘What brought you to Paris? Tell me about yourself. I believe you have news for me. You know where Chris is.’”

“Chris is at Châteaubrun,’ I said.

“Her palms just lifted a little from me, as if hurt, then came back.

“With Yvonne?’

“Yes.’

“Oh, the rogue! he oughtn’t to be.’

“I enjoyed her struggle to hide her pang and dismay under a light air.

“Hannah, things have come to a fine pass at Châteaubrun,’ I said, ‘and I have come all this way to tell you, because you know that I have your interests at heart, and I could not say everything in a letter. Chris has been at Châteaubrun four weeks —’

“And you didn’t tell me,’ she put in.

“How could I?’ I said. ‘Yvonne is my friend, too, and my hostess. It was delicate.’

“So true. But tell me.’

“Prepare yourself to hear the most startling news, Hannah —’

“Come, Hannah, sit tight,’ she put in.

“Chris is going to marry Yvonne,’ I said.

“Again her palms started up a little, and slowly came back upon me.

“He can’t do that,’ she murmured.

“He can,’ I said, ‘there is a law in France —’

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“‘Give it to me in the good old home brogue,’ she said, for I had been speaking in French without knowing, so I changed into English, and told nearly everything. She listened at my knees at first, but presently getting up, stood at a window with her back almost turned to me, but listening attentively. When I had said all, she stood silent awhile, then, chucking up her head, said, ‘Nice young lady that.’ I was astonished at her coolness, but thought to myself, ‘Since she is cool, she will act all the more effectively.’”

“‘As to Yvonne,’ I began, ‘she ought to be ashamed —’

“‘So ought you,’ from Hannah.

“‘*I!* But why?’

“‘For staying in such a house.’

“‘Oh, as to that —’

“‘Well, God grant them joy.’

“‘You take it coolly, Hannah.’

“At this, she suddenly spun round upon me, crying out in a startlingly loud voice, ‘Oh, my dear, the flames of these fires, such is His mercy, cannot touch me!’ Her face was crimson with passion. I was frightened by the woman’s shout. She then turned sharply to the window again, and I could see her trembling from head to foot. The ‘flames of these fires’ *did* touch my Hannah. Perhaps she had been reading Dante: something like that was what Beatrice said when she came from heaven into the flames of torment. There she stood, silent and trembling; but

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in a minute or two I heard her humming ‘viens, pou-poule,’ to herself. I didn’t venture to say anything, I was so startled. Presently she spun round again, picked up a fiddle from the piano-top, and said, showing it to me, ‘I have been practising on it — fifteen hours a day sometimes — for a year, in order to make myself a little worthy of him. That’s all thrown into the deep blue sea now.’

“I was sorry for her at the moment — and alarmed at her resignation.

“‘But why thrown into the sea?’ I said. ‘Don’t take it so coolly, Hannah!’

“‘My dear,’ she answered, ‘at this moment there are ten thousand poor people lying with their death-sweats on their forehead, all worse off than I, and they have to face and bear it. What can’t be cured must be endured.’

“‘But,’ I said astonished, ‘you don’t mean that you are going to allow Yvonne to have it all her own way with your own husband?’

“‘Really, Kathleen!’ she answered, ‘what can you think of me? Am I to strive and cry? One must have *some* self-respect. I have been following Chris about, not merely because I am married to him, but because I believed that his infatuation for that woman didn’t amount to much, and that he really loved me at bottom. But when he proves beyond doubt that he does love her, and cares nothing for me, what’s left for me to do? I go back to England to-night.’

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“As she said this, all my hopes fell to the ground. Not a doubt had crossed my mind that she would find something strong to do to stop Chris and Yvonne; and now I saw my voyage to Paris taken in vain, and I saw Yvonne in sure, lifelong possession of Chris. I set myself to plead with Hannah with tears in my eyes. I tried her on every side. ‘You can never marry again, as long as Chris lives,’ I said. She laughed, crying out, ‘Oh! one marriage is plenty for a lifetime!’ Then I dared to say, ‘Of course, I don’t know whether you and Chris have ever been together all this time, but, if so, think of what may come, and be another woman’s husband.’ Her eyes, I thought, rested sharply on me a moment, as I said this; then she laughed rather wildly, but made no answer. I tried every argument, and still she remained ‘untouched’ by ‘these fires,’ till it occurred to me that I hadn’t yet mentioned about the risk which Chris would run from English law, if he married Yvonne. That did it! While I spoke of it she stood staring strangely at me, and then just breathed: ‘You don’t mean that he can be imprisoned in England?’

“‘I do mean just that,’ I said strongly, seeing the effect I had made: ‘Imprisonment, penal servitude, infamy — his high career blighted forever, Hannah, —’

“‘No one will know,’ she said in a low voice.

“‘But how do you mean? I said; ‘can a public character like Chris marry without every one knowing?’ Then, seeing the necessity to clinch the nail, I invented

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a story, and added: 'Besides, there's a man staying now at Châteaubrun named de Marsillac, who is madly in love with Yvonne and hates Chris; he and Chris have fought a duel, he knows that Chris was married before, and he swears that the moment Chris marries Yvonne he will communicate the fact to the London police —'

"'My boy,' she murmured, with her lips trembling.

"'What will you do, Hannah?' I asked. 'You can't stand quietly by and witness such a disaster.'

"She didn't answer, sat down with her palm under her chin, thinking of it. I had said all that I could now, and felt worn out. It was for her now to act, and I watched her with interest to see what she would do. Presently she sprang up, threw her hat one way, her stole another, and stood again at the window, looking out. I saw her hand steal up and wipe away a tear. Then she said behind her shoulder, 'Surely the woman doesn't know all this?'

"'She does — of course,' I said.

"'And Chris, too?'

"'Yes, of course.'

"'So it's no use any one writing to warn them?'

"'Not the least, I'm afraid.'

"'But the woman must be mad!'

"'People who are in love don't mind the future,' I said.

"'In *love*,' she repeated with contempt.

"'Will you do something, Hannah?' I asked.

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“‘Will I breathe?’ she answered. ‘Chris is my friend, Kathleen — a one-sided affair no doubt, but still — that’s all right. Husband-and-wife isn’t so much — one flesh — but friend-and-friend is one soul, you know. That goes pretty deep, that. I shall do *something*, of course; don’t know what. That will be told me later, perhaps.’

“‘But they are to be married soon!’ I said.

“‘Well, we’ll see.’

“Soon after this, déjeuner-bell began to ring, and three people came into the room. Hannah wished me to stay, but I wouldn’t. I told her that I wanted to return at once to Châteaubrun, so that Yvonne might not suspect that I had been to Paris. She kissed me coldly, I thought, at good-by. Ah, my Hannah, there is more between my soul and you than you know: I should have liked to like you, if I had not disliked you. Anyway, she will be doing something strong and effective,” etc., etc.

CHAPTER XV .

HANNAH did, indeed, do "something," going in the first place to the British consul five minutes' walk, from the rue Boissy d'Anglas, got there the address of an English solicitor, and set off in a cab to find him. But at his offices near the Grand Boulevard, she learned that he was away for a week. It was late then, four o'clock, and knowing of no other English solicitor, she determined to make short work, to go to England, and consult a London expert the next morning.

She drove through London at that early hour when men are washing the streets with hoses, went to her old lodgings in Guilford Street, and by ten A. M. was getting from her detectives in Berners Street — the detectives who were trying to find her viol and trinkets — the address of an expert in international marriage law.

By eleven she was shut in with the great man in a room in the Middle Temple. "Deep as he is long!" she wrote of him. "Never in my life beheld such a paunch: '*I* first,' it says to great little man, and *he* comes trotting after; and not only legs ridiculously short for what's up above, but trousers too short for legs." It was Mr. G——, the little judge-bullier, an Irishman, since dead.

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Mr. G—— stood with his back to a fire, gowned and wigged, ready to step over to the courts, his hands in his large pockets; and Hannah, sitting veiled by a table before him, put her case.

“And you wish to know?” he asked.

“Firstly, whether he can legally marry the Frenchwoman.”

“Is it certain that no French consul was at his first marriage?”

“Quite.”

“Then he can marry in France.”

“Yes. Secondly, I want to know how English law regards this legal marriage in France.”

“As bigamy.”

“Yes, I had heard that. But I want to know what would be the actual consequences to him in England? Surely, since he is a Frenchman, and is only acting according to the laws of his country, no English judge would actually punish him for it?”

“There you are mistaken, madam. Just the contrary — a ruffian of that sort would catch it pretty hot, I can tell you, from an English judge.”

“He is not a ruffian, only a wild boy.”

“What, to leave his English wife, and marry another woman? Shameful conduct.”

“His English wife is hardly very worthy of him, perhaps.”

“Pardon me there, she’s a long way more than worthy of him; for I know.”

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“But apart from that, I want to know, thirdly and lastly, what can be done to save him?”

“Why, what do you suppose can be done to save him? except to induce him to behave himself in a respectable manner.”

“‘His paunch laughed,’ wrote Hannah; ‘shouldn’t have known that he was laughing, but saw it going, and drew my own conclusions.’”

“But *something* must be done,” she said. “He is not an ordinary man, Mr. G——: just think, his career will be only half a career, if he never comes to England — Can this be allowed to hang over him?”

Mr. G—— looked at his watch, smiled, and said almost tenderly, “What can *I* do, madam?”

“But I felt so sure in the cab coming to you,” persisted Hannah, “that I was being guided, that you would suggest some way out. Oh, pray, think for me! I myself am so utterly at a loss — Perhaps if you only knew who he is! — such a big lot is at stake.”

Mr. G——, with a puckered brow, said: “I only wish I knew what you mean, and could help you. What way out can there be? The law is clear: if a foreigner comes to England and breaks the law of England, he must suffer. The only thing that could cause the law to condone or forgive such a gross bigamy is the wife’s previous misconduct, or the wife’s previous bigamy, of which the husband knew before his own bigamy, and which he could prove.”

“As he said this,” wrote Hannah, “it was as if God

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spoke to me by his voice. Sat electrified — all clear before me. Had known with certainty when I crossed that threshold that a message would be sent me, and here it was.”

“Well, that can be done,” she said to Mr. G——.

“What can, madam?”

“Could not his wife marry illegally, and contrive to let him know before his own second marriage that she had done so? Then he will always have the excuse to plead that she abandoned him before he abandoned her.”

“One part of him,” wrote Hannah, “again went shaky.”

“You can’t be serious, madam,” said Mr. G——.

“Could it not be done?”

“It *could* be done, certainly; all sorts of breaches of the law can be done: but woe to the woman who dares do that, I tell you.”

“Why so?”

“Doesn’t she commit a bigamy in order to save a man from the consequences of his bigamy?”

“That’s no sin, if her second marriage is unreal.”

“It’s a crime.”

“Oh, crimes that are no sin: I’d commit any number of them before breakfast.”

“Well, I never yet met a woman who respects the law,” said Mr. G——. “But, madam, if the lady in question is a — friend of yours, do let me warn you most solemnly against any such step on her part. I

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never heard the like! Tricks of that sort can't be played with the law, mark you: sooner or later it finds means to avenge itself. There now, I shall consider that I have earned my fee of you, if I have taught you this."

Hannah hardly heard. She was all inwardness, thought, and feeling; the "law" of Mr. G—— was hardly to her the highest sort of law; springing up, she warmly thanked and shook hands with the lawyer.

She drove from there to a timber-yard in Lamb's Conduit Street, leaning over the cab-doors, eager to arrive, an impulse now upon her from which nothing could have turned her. At the gate of the timber-yard she had a fifteen minutes' talk with a young workman named Willie Dawe, the same whom she had rescued from the sea at Orrock. He had come up to seek his fortune, and she, who knew everything about each Orrock life, had often seen him in London. After her talk with him, she drove the short way to the Clerkenwell Town-hall, and arranged for a marriage there in three days' time.

But during those three days her heart seems to have often failed her; her diary was filled with doubts and fears, self-accusations of "impulse," of "pride," of "stubbornness," of "self-will," of "self-love," of "rashness"; passionate prayers for "guidance," again and again repeated; terrors as to the future of her child, and of herself; love-cries of her abandoned heart. But if she imagined that to accuse herself

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many times of "stubbornness" could make less stubborn, she was mistaken, since one can by no means fly oneself: in reality, though all things else in her shrank and were weak, her founded will never budged.

"A tailor the ninth of a man," she wrote, "a genius nine men; so as I stepped from town-hall with my Willie, thought to myself, 'This your tenth marriage, Hannah.' Said to my Willie: 'Understand now, Willie, what I didn't tell you formally before, though you guessed, that I am not really a widow, Mr. Wilson still alive, so your marriage with me not binding on you, you can marry again whenever you like.' 'I guessed as much, Miss Hannah,' said my dear boy, 'that's all right between us'—shy as a squirrel, looking lovely in Sunday best. I said, 'Here's the £2, and mind how you spend it, hear you are a gay one for the girls and the beer; but promise to get back to work this afternoon, and to come to see me sometimes.' Promised, and we parted fondly. Tonight typewritten letter to be posted to Châteaubrun. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.'

CHAPTER XVI

MEANWHILE, the quaint maid at Châteaubrun was writing: "But why does she wait? If she means to do something effective, now, now, is the time, before every one here gets to know of the impending marriage. I thought that she would have been here days ago, and been at Yvonne like a fury. But nothing done. I have written to her at Paris, beseeching her to come, to do *something*; but no reply. Of what, in God's name, can Hannah be thinking? I am certain that she said she would do something: when I asked her if she would, she answered, 'Will I breathe?' Then why doesn't she come? The marriage is fixed for the 12th before the mayor. Yvonne is crazily excited. She was in bed again yesterday: one day as gay as a bird, the next down in bed. Old Choderlos de Hanska repeats in a court-whisper that she is 'In the grip of a tragic destiny,' whatever that means. Chris just smiles and stirs one eyebrow," etc., etc.

On the day after the date of this entry the little maid was sitting alone in a grape-arbor at the entrance of an avenue near the château, some torn envelopes by her side — the post had lately come — and a volume

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of Kant lying unread, for she was in distress, since among her letters was none from Hannah.

At that hour of ten it looked like noon, so glaring was the Southern morning.

Presently Kathleen heard a step, peeped out of the arbor, and saw Chris coming quickly, looking flushed, an open letter in his hand. "I heard that you were here," he said to her, "just read that."

Kathleen took the letter and ran her quick eyes over the typewritten words:

"DEAR SIR:

"Are you aware that your wife, Hannah Wilson, has lately contracted a second marriage in London? This is the truth, as you may at any time convince yourself by applying at the Clerkenwell Registry-office for a copy of the certificate.

"Yours always,

"A FRIEND."

The quaint maid went awfully pale as she read this! for her sharp wits at once pierced to the truth that Hannah had really now done "something," but the opposite to her hopes, making the new marriage safe for Chris instead of fighting it tooth and nail.

"What do you think of it?" asked Chris.

"It is true," she murmured, sitting down.

"But it can't possibly be true," said Chris.

Kathleen could hardly speak, and disliked Hannah

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far too much at that moment to be at the pains to explain to Chris what must be Hannah's motive.

"To me it is merely incredible," repeated Chris.

"You ought to be glad."

"I? Well, I suppose I ought to be glad in one way, if it can possibly be true: but, on the contrary, I am most sorry. This woman bears my name, and I was prouder of it, Kathleen, than I realized till now, it seems. I should have something to say to the good gentleman concerned, if I met him, I think!"

Kathleen did not care, nor answer: she felt too ill.

"Can Hannah Wilson be base?" asked Chris with opening arms. "If that be so, I shall never again trust a human soul! What have I done, that she should abandon me in this fashion? I who have wished to do all that I could for her, and was about to make over to her most that our good uncle left me? But this letter must be a libel: her soul had for me the noblest perfume —" *

"You couldn't have *both* Hannah and Yvonne, Chris," murmured Kathleen.

"But why not?" asked the astonished Chris, "since they would not have met each other? How sorrows come unmerited upon one's head! It is as when one owns a ring or a precious stone which he never sees, but when it is lost, he has a feeling of poverty. Can nothing be done for me? Will you write, Kathleen, to the office in London, and find out if this is true?"

"If you like," answered Kathleen, and that day she

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made Miss Olivia write, she herself being in bed with a racked brow; but before the answer came from London a great grief had fallen upon Châteaubrun, so that when it came, and Chris was shown the proof of Hannah's marriage, he saw it with bewildered eyes, for he was then bereft of Yvonne as well as of Hannah.

The day after the coming of that typewritten letter from "a friend" was one of the last of the grape-vintage in that part, and it had been arranged that a party from the château should go out as reapers to a vineyard named l'Adhémar, two or three miles away. About three, then, in the blazing afternoon they set out gaily in several kinds of carriage, the ladies looking as much like peasant *vendangeuses* as they could, with straw hats, and coarse gloves on their hands.

Chris and Yvonne drove together with Monsieur de Marsillac and the old comtesse Choderlos de Hanska; Kathleen and Miss Olivia were in an old-fashioned sort of yellow painted coach with some men. Yvonne was rather feverishly gay that day, but Chris was absent-minded: the affair of Hannah had put him into that large, yearning mood in which music is often written, so he had been trying to write his sigh, but had done nothing excellent: and this failure, this musical flea and unrest, was fretting his mind. He had said nothing as yet to Yvonne about the typewritten letter from London; was waiting to have it first proved or disproved.

As to Kathleen, it was odd that she went with the

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others that day, since she had worked herself into a fever at what would certainly now take place before Monsieur Tombarel, the mayor, in five days' time; however, no one guessed at her headache and hot skin, for she laughed and talked with the rest.

When they came to l'Adhémar, the vigneron and his family, who expected them, gave out reaping-scissors and baskets, and with a crowd of boys and girls the party went out to the terraced hills, scattered, and reaped with the other reapers.

Yvonne in the vines had filled her basket, had borne it to one of the carts, and was again filling it, when she called out, "Monsieur Wilson! are you there?" — for each reaper was hidden from the rest, the soil thereabouts being deep, and the scene very different from those scrubby vineyards of central France which, however, yield the choicest wine. L'Adhémar gives one of those strong wines, like Hermitage and the Provençal crops, which are reaped almost as late as port; and here the hills are thickly grown, with trellises and espaliers reaching well above one's head.

Chris called back in answer to Yvonne's call, followed the direction of her voice, and soon came upon her. They were there together in a little cave of shadow made of the hairy leaves, of the tendrils, and of the purple grappes (or bunches), Yvonne's gloves already soaked, for at every wound made by the scissors in the vine, sap poured plenteously out.

"You see, it is already '*she*' who seeks '*him*' rather

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than he her," she said to Chris, looking like a saucy *vendangeuse*, and holding up in her lips a half-crushed grape to his; Chris fed on grape and lips together, whereat she, pretending to be outraged, said, "But, monsieur, this is very English conduct! Oâh, shock-eeng! seeing that I have not yet the honor to be Madame Wilson."

"Five days," murmured Chris.

"Four and eight hours: tell me if it seems *long*."

Chris nodded, gazing into her eyes, and smiling.

"Sometimes, mon ami," sighed Yvonne with sudden soberness, "I have a sharp sensation that it will never be; four days — it is infinitely far, and that which is infinite has no end."

"I get very little sleep," said Chris.

"I sleep very well, but my sleep is full of dreams of one person, a woman, who is never angry, but always smiles: and this causes me to suffer, Chris."

"That will soon be well."

Yvonne sighed.

"After all," she said, "an injustice has been done to us mortals: the problem of life has been made too deep and hard for our blind understandings."

"We were not made to think, but to feel," said Chris; "whoever enjoys is the true worshiper of the Father. The grapes live rightly in their voluptuous nonchalance. In five days we shall be as defiantly perfect and happy as they."

"Very well, I am ready, let us defy: but you must

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give me a lot, a lot, a whole ocean, to poison the worm. Will you? Tell me."

Chris said yes with his eyebrows.

"Soon?"

He nodded.

"Yes, soon. One — two — three — four. Do you know beforehand how a wife kisses?"

But their passion was startled by a step. Yvonne pushed Chris from her in a frightened manner (for all this was highly improper in France), and, as Chris disappeared, Kathleen came, looking awfully wan, though trying to laugh, saying, "Oh, you are here."

"Yes, this is my second basket," said Yvonne: "and you?"

"I have filled one, but have stopped now, they are too heavy."

"You do not look well, my poor dear," said Yvonne, kissing Kathleen's cheek. "I have been sorry, Kathleen, that we have been so little together lately: you have guessed the cause of it, have you not? But you do look pale to-day; are you suffering? Would it not be better if you go and sit in the cart over there?"

"I think I will, dear," said Kathleen, "my head aches terribly."

"Stay, I will come with you."

"No, dear, don't trouble, I can go —"

The little maid turned off, disappeared, and Yvonne was left alone in her little home of leafage. For some ten minutes she now worked industriously, snipping

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off the cones of grapes, now stooping, now reaching up, and dropping them into her basket; but presently she stopped, looked slyly round, hesitated, and called out, "Monsieur Wilson! are you there?"

There was no answer; she repeated the call twice, but Chris did not come. In fact, he had wandered away, forgetting the vintaging, Yvonne and all, in his effort to catch a musical something, sad and sweet, which buzzed in his brain that day, but ever escaped him.

Yvonne left her basket there, and went a little way to seek him, but checked herself, returned to her nook and worked again; but she could find no rest without him, and again set out to find him, with death treading close now at her elbow, with, as it were, death in her eyes.

She went down-hill through the trellises until she came to a place where the hillside was rocky and bare, though lower down more vines grew; a level path ran across that bare place, and along this she went: but the setting sun was in her eyes, and stopping at one spot, she shaded them with her hand, looking abroad for any sign of Chris.

She stood there with shaded eyes for perhaps not more than a minute, perhaps two or three; but a second would have been long enough for the fate which awaited her.

Those who knew her well, who were living at the time in the same house with her, have never recovered

The Lost Viol

from the shock of it, she was so young and joyous, so beautiful, just about to be married. When they suddenly saw her lying dead that afternoon, it was like a madness to them, they could not believe their eyes.

On a ledge of the hillside perhaps twenty feet above where she stood was one of the little carts, holding the tonneau (or hogshead) into which the grapes are poured from the baskets. These carts are tilted upward toward the shafts and the donkey, and, as the hogshead is usually kept in position by a hook and eye, if the hook is slipped, the hogshead tumbles out at the tail of the cart. The tail of the cart above Yvonne was turned down-hill toward her; Kathleen was in the cart, resting; no one was there at the moment; the reapers were all buried in the vines; and during the short time that Yvonne stood below with shaded eyes, the little maid's hand, by some chance, knocked out the hook from the eye, and the hogshead, already heavy with grapes, went bounding down.

Kathleen, seeing what had happened below, stood up in the cart, spread her arms, and howled to Heaven; before any one could come she leapt and ran howling up toward the vines with a face of madness; she met two people running to her, and, half-kneeling to them, her hands trembling together in prayer, she said, "Yvonne, Yvonne, come, come," and dropped to the ground.

Chris Wilson, happily for him, was nowhere near there: he had gone wandering upward beyond the brow of the hills, not caring whither, alone with that

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sad musical motif, which enticed, yet always escaped him. A note of it came to him Memnonian from that choir of colors going down in the west; the leaves in the breeze seemed to lisp to him, "You see, we know the tune of it, but can't utter it." He woke up to himself in an olive-wood a long way from l'Adhémar, looked feebly about, and wondered what had become of him. It was getting dark. He set out at random with the aim of getting back to l'Adhémar or to Châteaubrun, meaning to ask his way of any one whom he might meet. But he had soon forgotten this aim, and wandered for another hour in roundabout ways. Near nine o'clock, a peasant who met him in an avenue asked him if he had heard of "the calamity which the lady from Châteaubrun had met with." Chris listened absently, and went on his way with a dim knowledge in him that something had happened to some one; he had not well understood: the patois of that part was strange to him. It was ten before he at last asked his way at a cottage; and it was midnight before he reached Châteaubrun.

The château seemed to be in darkness. He went in by an out-of-the-way door, and found his way up-stairs, guided here or there by a lonely night-light. Without having met any one, he was passing Yvonne's apartments toward his own, when he was struck by the strong light coming out between the *portières* of her ante-chamber. He peeped in: her *petit salon* was alight with candles, but no one was there. He went in,

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and peeped further into her cozy-corner; it, too, was ablaze with candle-light, but without any one in it; he wondered at this, and at the same time was struck by a memory of what the peasant had told him out in the country. Yvonne's chamber-door was a little open, and he could see that her chamber, too, like the other rooms, was ablaze with candle-light. He stood still some time with a beating heart. Not a sound was to be heard, save a very faint clicking sound from minute to minute. At last he peeped into the chamber, went in. Yvonne was lying on her bed, dressed for the grave, in a heap of flowers. No one was there but a nun kneeling in her black robes at the bedside, and telling her beads from minute to minute.

After gazing at the face of his lover for some minutes, Chris went away at an eager walk to his own chamber, in which he found a lamp burning. There he walked to and fro with quick steps a little while, then at an open window put out his arms to the rolling heavens, which was thronged with such stars as one never sees in northern countries; a moment afterwards he turned sharply inward with a crimson, crying face, in a jiffy had paper and ink before him, and for twenty minutes was writing music in a fierce haste and heat of the soul. What he had sought all that day he found now: for this was when his *marche funèbre quintet in E flat*, called "*Mortalité*," was written.

When it was finished he threw himself on a couch, empty, griefless, hopeless, and very weary.

CHAPTER XVII

“DEAD,” wrote Hannah (about Yvonne), “leaving me the humblest creature on God’s earth. What devil could have got into me against that girl? The wicked bile in my heart! That day in rue Boissy d’Anglas Kathleen as good as told me of her noble, brave struggle, letting it out in bits, for she did not want, I think, to say any good of Yvonne, and I should have guessed that the struggle was far greater than the hints; but no, blind to it all — none so blind as those who will not see! And she’s dead now, so young, so young, and so fair, and the sun has gone down forever on my wrath. Oh, forgive, sweet, I’ll never do that again.”

To her self-upbraiding there was no end, month after month it went on, with a grief apparently as fresh as on the first day, the same wearisome prayers for forgiveness, and stream of tears. On whatever subject she wrote it presently turned into a lament over Yvonne: but this much may be left out here.

As to Chris she wrote: “How strangely it turned out! had given him up for good and all, but the very day after my letter telling of second marriage must have reached him, Yvonne met her death, and he became mine in a way once more. But never any

The Lost Viol

more gallopings over Europe after him, Hannah: all that mere holiday-making in guise of right and duty: railway journeys, strange lands, bustle, hotels, fighting-cock fare, like Hodge up for the day in town, all very fine and large, but not doing work of Him that sent me. A woman should have a husband to beat her daily, and if she hasn't, then must beat herself, put her nose to it, and *work*. Chastity, chastisement—same things. I will have a husband some day, feel as certain of it now as of sitting here, but not for next three years anyway: it should take him quite the four to get well over death of that dear. I wonder? About that. Then will present myself before him with his son's hand in mine. Meantime, must spend my strength without stint, to quell riot within, if for no higher reason, and not let that little whelp asleep there stop me, either. If women were meant to devote themselves to brats, would have half a dozen at a litter, but one only meant to keep you laughing in play-hour," etc., etc.

"But work at London Hospital unsatisfying," she wrote in another place: "five hundred of us, seem as many nurses as patients. Have never once felt weary, and need something to pull me really down, and take it out of me. Wait, the Lord will provide. Perhaps when I become staff-nurse something better may be opened; but no seeking for 'some great thing to do,' let it be humble, so long as real and tough. Meantime, plenty of warm joy inside, and songs in the night.

The Lost Viol

“Interview yesterday” (in another place) “with Bailey at hospital: brought news that poor innocent Josef at Madame Brault’s had been arrested for theft of viol and things, but released. Over there they call being in choky, ‘être au violon,’ so just suited poor Josef with viol. Oh, I was cross! Told Bailey that if any more innocent people to be arrested, then shall stop search altogether. ‘What next?’ I asked, ‘any hope?’ ‘Plenty of hope,’ he answered: ‘the field of inquiry now definitely narrowed; Mr. Dene quite convinced now that things not lost in France, therefore in England, and in England must be looked for. ‘Looked for and found two different things,’ I said: ‘you must think I am millionaire.’ ‘We will drop investigation, if you wish,’ he said. Told him ‘No, keep it going to bitter end’; then told him dream, twice dreamt in three months, in which Sir Peter appeared to me in shroud, holding out viol and box, in such a marvelous light each time. Bailey not much impressed by dreams! Agent to go down at once to Orrock, search to be transferred there for the present. New check, £17, like getting blood out of stone. Then in afternoon went all alone to inter-’Varsity match at Lords,” etc.

“Twenty-seven to-day,” she wrote on the 21st of November, her birthday: “getting on, Hannah, but as blooming to-day as ever was — more so. ‘That ye may have life, *and have it more abundantly.*’ Spent whole afternoon here in Guilford Street with baby,

The Lost Viol

jaws sore with laughing, when, about five, two newsboys shouting in street: 'Great British disaster,' sixty-five killed and wounded, making me feel pretty choky: no end to the devilish war. Birthday letter from mummie this morning, with two turkeys and pigmeat; wants to know if she can't come up to me, since I won't go down. Yes, when my child has a father, not till then. She suspects that paper-shop address is not my real address, asks if I am 'hiding anything from her'! Imagine her stare, if she only dreamt what lies asleep there! Poor mummie, you will know some day. Meantime, 'Let not thy left hand know!' Each live life in own skin, not burden others with one's ha'penny cares, mishaps, and shames: lock it all up in own bosom, and throw key away. Don't mean to be cross-examined, either; shall go down when I want to, not before. They used to say I wasn't very devoted daughter, and now Mrs. Reid here all hints that I am not very devoted mother: 'How you can bear to leave him, I don't know!' Poor thing: so pathetic. God grant me true, manly emotions, not unreal, like most women's: there are a few other things about beside my mother and child, a God in labor pains and a world squalling, both needing nursing. As for brat, if he is neglected, that's self-neglect, for he is the same thing as myself: some things your own, some your ownest own, and some your own ownest own. Toss him about like doll, kill and eat him, if I chose, and not ask anyone's leave — would only be suicide.

The Lost Viol

“Mummie anxious about my money-matters, thinks the £10 a month since I refused Chris’s money not enough; doesn’t know that I am putting it all away in bank, and, besides, getting £12 a year as probationer, all found down to uniform. Three months hence will begin to get £2 for second year. Can’t she guess that I am not sitting down idly, waiting for husband to turn up? But why couldn’t I have told her about hospital? Liking to go one’s own way in silence may become a fault. Shall tell her in next letter, without saying which hospital.

“Five sweet birthday-letters enclosed in mummie’s, and others from Bishop W——, Kathleen, Sir F. T——, and my Willie, who never forgets date of his ducking! He working in timber-yard at Chelsea now; hasn’t been to see me for five weeks. Kathleen with Miss Olivia in Paris, still subject to bad dreams, frights, and breakdowns through death of Yvonne, now and again sees Chris, and would like to know ‘What are your plans?’ But this the odd thing: she says, ‘If you had had a child, that would have been a link between you and Chris.’ *That’s odd!* This the second time she has referred to possibility of a child, as though she knew or guessed something. But not possible. Have never yet found out whether she knows of my second marriage. She was at Châteaubrun when I wrote news of it to Chris. Do hope she doesn’t know: but all the same a hundred years hence, dear, when we both sleeping in mother’s arms, poppies whispering all

The Lost Viol

the summer, little hunch pulled quite straight then, such is His mercy, and Hannah's brawl nicely hushed.

“Oh, do so hunger and thirst lately to see the old place once more, the cliffs, geese, graves, Woodside old gables, coots on Embree Pond, the sea. Shall go first chance, but late at night, no one to see: a child, and no husband to show for it, ladies. ‘Avoid the very appearance of evil,’ and ‘Let not thy left hand know.’ But a grave in that place draws me. Is it kept fresh with flowers? He had a love for old apples and apple-blossoms, so that's what they should heap on mostly. The dead long for flowers to keep them going. How I have abandoned him! That old man's love for me! And mine for you, too, dear: If you hadn't love me so quick, I should have beaten you and loved you first. Shall soon come to you: it's the hospital, the brat, the eternal violin, and the hard, hard reading that have kept me away; must vow to give up cricket-matches all next summer.

“Chris just finished Bavarian tour, says Kathleen, and due in England in four months: will see him then without being seen — only the *second* time since marriage. What can he possibly think of me after that letter telling of second marriage? Does he guess motive? How did he take it? Would give the world to know. My complete ignorance of his mind now! But wait, all's quite well: death of Yvonne *proves* him my very own, in spite of all. No end apparently to his achievement: Kathleen says playing double har-

The Lost Viol

monics in rapidest passages, whole melodies in harmonics, in Vienna ties and walking-sticks called after him, his last sonata all the rage everywhere, tours like triumphal progresses. Have a thought of writing to him in assumed name, just to see if he will answer: but wait till my love comes to England.”

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER another month the diary becomes gloomy reading, where she writes of leaving the London Hospital. "Dismissal," she wrote, "for it comes to that. I'd rather they had said plain 'go' than say 'Please ask to be allowed to go.' It was like a thunder-bolt, I had so set my mind upon becoming staff-nurse — only eleven more months: now all dark before me again, nothing to do but stare at Foundling boys at drill in mornings, and moon with baby all day. Where-in hath she offended? Presentation-Bible from probationers at parting, everybody in tears because of my going, I inclined that way for same reason, yet going all the same, bewitched, not knowing why! Matron *must* have heard something somehow — about child? about second marriage? Seems impossible, but must be. Was down in Chelsea to my Willie yesterday, questioned him narrowly: no, had not breathed a word to a soul. Anyway, bitter and shameful enough. Oh, you could sit down and cry, Hannah, if you only would."

But scarcely two weeks had passed when she was out of this slough of despond, and once more in her brighter mood. It came about through a boy named

The Lost Viol

“Ralphie,” of whom she often wrote. She seems to have met him at a little meeting-house Sunday-school in the Euston Road, for she belonged to all the religious sects in the world, and wrote of them, “the more the merrier.” “Ralphie’s” mother fell ill, Hannah went to see her, and at the bedside met a little St. Pancras-Dispensary doctor who fell in love with her, and brought her into touch with more sick people. In all that part between Guilford Street and St. Pancras there is no lack of wretchedness and disease, and her days and nights, too, were soon as full of work and hurry as she could wish, though in an unofficial way. After only five or six weeks of it, when she had met several doctors, patrons, and influential people, she wrote the extraordinary words: “My own hospital some day perhaps,” meaning that the little so-called “Medical Mission,” now in Compton Place, which she helped to found, was already in sight. On the top of all this bustling activity came Chris Wilson, of whose first concert she wrote: “St. James’s Hall yesterday afternoon: my same boy, a little bigger, hair worn a little longer. Some difference between yesterday and that first night at Queen’s Hall, not the same thrill beforehand, but even greater emotion during, and ado after, concert. If I had had a veil, would have tried to shake hands like the rest, but hadn’t thought of veil, and didn’t dare. Not according to the plan, Hannah. Wait, only two years and a half, say two years, a man can’t love the sweetest ghost longer, then he will take you. I love

The Lost Viol

him as friend, as husband, as little papa, as sweetheart, and as workman: really wondrous tremolo use of left hand now, something like three octaves out of each string, twice changed pitch of G in height of last piece by turn of peg. See program gummed on other side. Came home 'sick with love,' and under strong impulse wrote letter straight away, signed 'Viola.' See copy, p. 71," etc., etc.

"Hip! hip!" she wrote two days later, "answer to 'Viola' this morning from Chris! Never thought he would answer! Here it is:

"4 GRAY'S INN SQUARE.

"MY DEAR VIOLA,

"I thank you infinitely for your letter, which I find no less than charming, and I have a perfect conviction that you are as charming in your person as in your writing. Imagine, then, my trouble, when, having sent my valet to-day to make inquiries at the address which you give, he brought me back the intelligence that none such as you lives there, since the place is only a little paper-shop. Let me beseech you, dear Viola, to place me at once in a better position with regard to you. The proof that I am seriously concerned is this letter, since it is well known that I am not fond of writing letters, and am daily compelled to leave missives from unknown correspondents unanswered. But yours has seriously fascinated my fancy, I picture you as a being endowed with every grace, and desire

The Lost Viol

to see you. If you do not let me see you at once, I shall become lovesick and restless, my work will be disturbed, and you would certainly not wish this. Or perhaps you do not care to give me your address at once? but mean to wait till your modesty is appeased by time? In which case, let me remind you that youth is short, that the flowers of to-morrow grow for others, but to-day is Love's opportunity; moreover, my stay in England will not be long. Do for me, then, what you can in this, will you? For if my longings are balked, everything goes wrong with me. If you can't let me see you at once, pray let me have your photograph without delay. Long as your letter was, it left in me a kind of longing desire for more, rather than a satiety. Your hand-writing, though strong, I find thrillingly feminine; and you have scented the paper with a heavenly art. Why, by the way, do you so object to this word '*art*,' and wish it 'left out of the dictionary?' Is it not too old a friend? But we will discuss your letter particularly at our near meeting.

“Sincerely yours, dear Viola,

“CHRIS WILSON.”

“Was rather afraid,” wrote Hannah of the letters, “that he might recognize my handwriting, for has seen it once or twice. However, all safe henceforth. Let two days pass, then wrote following:

“DEAR CHRIS WILSON:

“I was surprised and glad to get your letter. Let

The Lost Viol

me say at once that I shall be sorry indeed if your work is "disturbed" through me, but I can't give you my address, nor even send you my photograph. Does it follow, because you are a great "*artist*," that you may send such commands to a woman who merely wrote to express her liking for your fiddling? Just as all men are not fiddlers, so all women are not fiddles, sir! But you won't go lovesick after a shadow? I happen to know that you once took to your *bed* through longing for some odor which you had smelled, or dreamt that you had smelled. I don't call that virtuous. But you shall see me. That is a promise. Not when you order me, but when *I* see fit, perhaps a good time hence, one day I shall certainly present myself before you. And I promise also that in that day I shall bring you in my hands a present worthy of you and me — a rich one — richer than a king's ransom, cunningly made, richer than Koh-i-noor added to Le Messie, La Pucelle, and all the Strads in the world. That may sound rather wild talk, but I already have the thing by me, am keeping it for you, and you may rely upon my promise. Meantime, as I can't send my photograph, I may tell you, to keep you going, that I am by no means an old woman, am tallish, no skin-and-bones, every tooth sound in my head, figure straight as a dart and strong in the back, not bad looking up above, nice country color, a little too much *jaw* perhaps, but laughing, deep blue eyes to make up. Not a bad lot altogether, well-meaning,

The Lost Viola

but stumbling and purblind. That's Viola. But what surprises me in your letter is your 'desire to see' this unknown Viola only nineteen months after the death of Yvonne de Pencharry-Strannik. You see, I know things. Am I right or wrong in deciding that "*Mortalité*" was written with your eyes fixed on her beatified image? I am sure that that hymn is truly of God. You will let her memory fade with the tenderest slowness? I always think now of white violets when I think of her. These, too, must fade, though watered with tears, but with a lingering, sweet decay. Then I shall like you a lot, and do *anything* for you. As to my attack on the word "art," I only meant that all meaning seems to have got rubbed out of it now. It implies artfulness, thought? yes, but was "*Mortalité*" a work of thought? No: so we have a word meaning thought used to describe works purely emotional and instinctive. I want to consult you about a viola which I have come across lying under a bed in a quite poor house in Islington, looking wondrously like a Maggini, with clear-cut bouts, short corners, and upright *ff*'s, clover-leaves and trefoils on back. I could get it, if I chose, for — how much do you think? — £2, and am haunted by the possibility of its genuineness. Shall I get and send it you? Varnish orange and palest yellow, with dated label. Or will you not write again? I have a whole heartful to say to you by little and little, if you will hear.

“Your sincere VIOLA.”

The Lost Viol

This letter-writing between "Viola" and Chris Wilson was still in its earliest stage when Hannah's quietness of mind was troubled by a little thing — the disappearance of "her" Willie. "Hadn't seen him for four months," she wrote of him; "began to get anxious, and went down . . . to his timber-yard in Chelsea. Not there, had left months before — without telling me a word! One of workmen said: 'Dawe must have come into a fortune; saw him one evening five weeks ago at Charing Cross, dressed up like a lord, watch and chain and cane, with a young lady on his arm.' Can't be true! Wrote to Mrs. Dawe to ask, and this morning her answer that she doesn't know where Willie is; says that Kathleen, too, has wanted his address, and she gave it; doesn't think that since then she has got either money or letter from him; doesn't say why Kathleen wanted address. That must have been when Kathleen was in England and went down to Orrock about four months ago; she called at paper-shop address thinking to see me, about then. Anyway, my Willie gone, perhaps out of work, clothes shabby, and ashamed to come to me! But strange he hasn't written to his mother. Why did Kathleen want him? Don't even know where she is now — not at the Hill."

"Interview in drawing-room with Bailey," she wrote two days later, "and never was so utterly mystified. Something discovered at last: viol and box *seen behind bureau in Hall library* on morning of Sir Peter's funeral! If he had said, 'Man-in-the-moon seen playing cricket,'

The Lost Viol

I couldn't have been more hopelessly astonished. He heard it from under-housemaid Jane, who, when Hall-servants were put on half-pay, and some dismissed, went home to parents in Nottinghamshire; after endless bother Bailey found her down there in a coffee-house, and she is sure of facts: saw the things behind bureau — 'thing like a fiddle, a little larger, only without any *handle*, and cardboard box like a collar-box' — wondered how they had got there, didn't like to touch, next time she looked they were gone! Must be true, since she can describe them exactly. But the wonder of it! Who, and with what motive, could steal just those two things, and nothing else? Does any one know my secret, and how? Does this explain dreams about Sir Peter? But don't try to see through stone-wall, Hannah, take deep breaths, and possess your soul. Worry about this, however, that I must have left trunk open some time, and no hope for me, if I continue that sort of slovenly life. Only two days ago Drs. Lloyd and Herrick complimenting my 'powers of organization' 'would have been a general, if a man,' when I had the thought, 'but if you only knew some of the things I forget, the silly, childish mistakes and omissions in most important matters'; can't help it! a screw loose somewhere, the sex of the girl, perhaps.

"Anyway, so the matter stands about viol and box, and now, with a clue, they may turn up any day. Gave Bailey new check, £11.15; then, when he was gone, the frenzy came upon me to be in the old place

The Lost Viol

that very night! and if old Pat had got worse during absence would have served me just right. Several things forbade me to go that night; no good; had been hearing too much from Bailey about everybody down there, just wrote notes to doctors, was away by the 8.37, and now in a rage with myself for it, like drunkard's awaking. Impulse, and tearing, stumbling self-will. But enjoyed myself *thoroughly*; walked from Cromer, and between midnight and five A. M. ranged everywhere, saw everything, without being seen by a soul; cloudy, drizzling, with moon now and again a little; sat ten minutes on Woodside side-steps with Rover; at the grave half an hour in the dark o' the moon, boats out on sea at the pots; heaped it with clove-carnations, heartsease, tulip, harebell. Just over Scoble's Cave a bit of cliff gone like the wall of a house, *débris* still there at bottom, and a narrow slice, a foot thick, from south end of graveyard; makes me sad every time: no end to it. He gives, and He takes away."

The strange fact to what she refers here is to be seen more or less at work all round Britain. Yorkshire every year loses thirty acres; between Spurn Head and Whitby five feet a year are swallowed up; between Bridlington and the Humber a hundred yards are said to have vanished within fifty years. The lane where lovers plighted their troth may be gone before the wedding day, and "soon where late we stood shall no man stand," says Mr. Swinburne. It is rather a

The Lost Viol

painful thing: timber and stones may prop the cliffs here or there, but the North Sea is an army with banners whose march is long and strong, England is being invaded, and where Napoleon faltered God will effect a landing. Ravenspur, once a great seaport, is no more to be found; Auburn and Hyde are where no one can trace them. In Norfolk, one Cromer is gone, the other going; Shipden and Eccles are "as Sodom and Gomorrah"; and Sheppey has lost three hundred yards within the memory of its people. At some points there is now a superstition against burying in the east side of the church toward the sea, so common a sight have out-sticking coffins become. On the west coast, too — in Wales, in Lancashire, at many points — the Atlantic with a still longer and stronger march is pressing to effect a junction with the North Sea, and it is said that in a certain number of years, which to the Eternal is as an hour, ships will reef their sails in a rough mid-sea where the dream of England was. It is not strange if the poor fishers and tillers of the soil upon whom such-like thoughts are daily forced have a certain sigh, a certain sadness of outlook.

CHAPTER XIX

As to Kathleen, she had all this time been as quiet as a mouse, and was to be found hobbling to church services. The death of Yvonne de Pencharry-Strannik had come upon her as one of those bullying thunderclaps which overawe all men, save heroes. It was with her as when a child touches a hot grate, and touches a grate no more for years. The little maid seems to have been troubled with a doubt whether that death of Yvonne was not in some way owing to her will; it is to be feared that she suspected herself: and at this thing Kathleen gave up Chris Wilson as utterly as Hannah had given him up during those three days between her second marriage and the death of Yvonne: nothing was left in Kathleen but awe of a universe in which there is room for such outbreaks and Gorgons.

But such awes little by little lose their power, and the snail dares to peep out afresh. Kathleen saw Chris Wilson here or there, each time with a renewed feeling of worldliness and enterprise; she began to be bitter again at Hannah's claim upon him, at Hannah's probable hopes and plans; it soon occurred to her that it might be a good thing to make Willie Dawe, Hannah's second "husband," her slave, by keeping him in clover;

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then she was to be found writing that "Chris is again madly in love, this time not with a woman, but with a dream: she calls herself 'Viola,' he has never seen her, but she has promised to see him some day, bearing in her hand some marvelous present which is to outweigh all the great diamonds! So he told me last night in the lobby of the Opéra. What a boy! His romantic fancy dresses her in the rainbow. The correspondence has been going on some two years now, all about music, art, life, love. 'She inspires me,' he told me, 'guides me, loves me, and in the oddest way knows all about me, Kathleen. Her letters are the very genius of good sense, and yet contain the essence of a certain materialistic mysticism which I can't tell you of. Moreover, she is the very spirit of Woman, and always somehow about me: sometimes she knows how many glasses of absinthe I take at the *café*, and the next day writes to tell me of it. Yet I never see her; but I soon shall, for she has promised it.' All cloud, cloud. Who can it be? Some Austrian landgräfin or Russian princess, old, no doubt, and hideous: she won't send him her photograph — wise woman. I don't see why I should be so haunted and agitated by it; but it is such a pang to be jealous of the unknown. He is so interested, that the quixote actually keeps copies of some of his own letters. After a lot of praying he consented to let me peep at the packet; he has it in the rue de Rome, and I am to go this afternoon at five. . . ."

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“It was well conceived, Hannah,” Kathleen wrote three days later, “but your patience has done for you, you have waited too long. If she had come to Chris, saying, ‘I am Viola,’ may be on the sudden he would have fallen to her; but if I tell him casually one day, “‘Viola’ is only Hannah,’ that’s another matter, the spell will be broken. After all, ‘Lady Wilson’ is an inappropriate name for Farmer Langler’s daughter, with all her talents. I have read the letters; Chris allowed me to bring them to the hotel for two days, read a few of them aloud to me himself: he is gone just daft over ‘Viola.’ Who on earth taught Hannah Langler to write letters? One must admit that she has a calm, strong brain, and some grace in writing which has grown with practice: four or five of the letters are worthy of George Sand, and two or three of Madame de Sévigny. I wonder that she ventured to write them in her own hand! Her second marriage letter was typewritten, but I suppose she thought it too much trouble to get these typewritten, and risked it. Oh, if I had her calm audacity! I am bold, too, but only in white-hot fits, and then all too bold, perhaps, little hunch. Chris must have seen her handwriting somewhere, if only in Orrock church, but, of course, forgot it. He provokes me with his simplicity, men have no wits. The moment I saw the writing I felt almost certain, and soon I came across this bit: ‘I know a countryman named Butt, who, sitting still in a place where every one was dancing, was asked by a

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certain squire, "Well, why don't you dance, Butt?" "Lord bless us all, squire," answered Butt, "if a man can't jig, he can't jig." So ever since he goes by the name of Jig-Butt. Well, the same with fiddling: if a gel can't scrape, she can't scrape.' Then, of course, I knew my Hannah: who else on earth but Lady Wilson cares what name Mr. Butt of Orrock 'goes by'? She is essentially 'of the people,' but has got some *finesse* by dint of willing.

"I have spent two days over the letters, which would fill a volume, and it is to be hoped that Chris has been edified. She writes with enough aplomb! 'I understand that you have a tendency to give up practise now, and are taking to a mute, and though I repeat to myself that you must know better than I can what you are about, I have searchings of heart as to this. Consider if it is well, beloved. In the sort of feverish life which you lead "the inner life" becomes doubly precious? . . . When thou hast entered into thy closet, pray: for "working is praying," even when it is playing. . . . I myself am living a full, robustious life just now, and sometimes, after some sleep, can only just keep my feet from dancing all over the place. The last time I ran over to France, just to see your face, I did not once sleep for ninety-six hours afterwards, and some days, having only time for one meal, I carry pastry in my pocket, so whenever my envelopes reach you greasy you will know from what pit they have been drawn.' Three whole letters are a discussion of the meaning of

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'virtue'! She had written 'ladylike and unvirtuous,' and, Chris not agreeing, she answers: 'I have been hunting down "virtue" to-day, and find that the Greek is from *ar*, a male, and in Latin the same, from *vir*, a male. So virtue means vigor? In which case Tannhäuser was merely unwell? and the Venusberg a slum? Virtue is health of mind? health is virtue of body? A burglar is in the room of a sleeping saint: which of the two is the more virtuous? the burglar? for "virtue," "vigor," "health," "life," "joy" are all one? You can choose any one of them you like, and throw the rest out of the dictionary.' If she had her way, not many words would be left in the dictionary, apparently: she wants 'art' to go, and elsewhere 'spirit.' 'God is a spirit,' she says, 'but what is a spirit? I don't know, so look in the dictionary, and find that the people who wrote it had no idea either. As applied to Alicante wine, I know well what it means: and you, perhaps? But otherwise, it has no right to be about, since we don't mean anything when we say it, but thinking that we do, trick ourselves.' Her cocksure tone of 'having authority'! I wonder that it never occurred to me to enter into such a correspondence with Chris: I could have done it just like her, or better. Her phrases are, 'be ye therefore perfect,' and 'that ye may have life, and have it more abundantly'; twenty, thirty times these recur, her 'life' meaning mere 'health': *au fond* she is a materialist. Some of her little bits are not bad: 'The first duty of

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a modern man is to be modern, the second is to be modest, to know himself primeval, and feel the romance of Time'; 'health, like wealth, is the product of daily industry: happiness consists in martyrdom, torture, athletics, physical and mental; but oh, how easy is this yoke, and how joyfully light this burden!' 'I have found out that the "ma" of little children really means "food," but as food comes from mother, "ma" soon gets to mean mother'; 'health, I take it, isn't the mere absence of discomfort and sin — that's only a first step up Snowdon and Mont Blanc — but a choky lump of worship inside, tears in the eyes, and laughter all down below'; 'in the present stage of things there are existing together ape, underman, man, and overman: the product of the extremes is equal to the product of the means'; 'a quick memory, and a certain two-eyed faculty, meaning the power of seeing one thing through the right eye at the same moment as one sees another through the left eye — a question of athletics — these, I think, are the makings of the saint, of the superhuman and divine man'; 'the most important part of the body is the soul'; 'I went to see Sandow perform last night: to me he is a true saint and holy one, or at least a true half-saint; if he were as good a Christian as he is an athlete, meaning that if he kept his nerve-matter, or soul, in as good form as he keeps his muscle-matter, he would be about four times greater than all the martyrs, seers, and prophets'; 'was Shakespeare Bacon? Bacon and more! Say

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Bacon plus Ham: and hence was the father of the little Hamlet'; 'I find that my head is a magnet, though a feeble one: if I put an iron hairpin gently on my forehead, it sticks, even when I turn the forehead downward'; 'athletics is about the most effectual form of prayer: the answer hardly ever fails'; 'a moral man would live two hundred years without a hole in his teeth'; 'the higher the animal the longer his life: some animals only live a few seconds; man will be living hundreds of years a little later on'; "'purity of heart" is a hearty preoccupation with hard fact, and impurity a preoccupation with soft delusion: most nuns and nurses are impure in heart, often preoccupied with "the world," though pure in life, while the poor Magdalens of the streets are pure in heart, preoccupied with the pretty hard fact of board-and-lodging, though impure in life'; 'I think, dear, that the air which we breathe is full of sparks of life and of the Holy Ghost: people lying dead are only dead because they can't breathe it, while most living people about are only half alive because they only half-breathe it'; 'when you have walked a long way, and begin to feel tired, give yourself a rest by running'; 'how excellent to be perfect! how perfect to be excellent!' 'to be happy every morning, and to attain to joy every afternoon, isn't this the whole duty of man?' 'I am a great one for conscription, not, of course, the conscription which teaches people to kill, but one which would teach athletics; why the Governments don't at least wash

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and drill each of its citizens, male and female, every morning, it is hard to say: even the horrid Continental conscription seems better than none at all' — and so on. She sent Chris a Stainer tenor, I don't know where she got the money to buy it, and Chris promptly replied by sending her — his Nicolo. After this, 'Dear Chris Wilson' suddenly changes into 'Beloved,' and 'Dear Viola' becomes 'Adored' and 'Darling Viola.' But all the thanks he got for his Nicolo was an elaborate eulogy of Mittenwald at the expense of Cremona: 'There is something so much more Dorian in the mood of a Stainer than in all the Bergonzis, Storionis, and later Cremonese, to say nothing of the earlier. Plato would have played a Stainer, they are so wide-awake and virtuous, like Highland troops on the march with all the flags, drums, and bagpipes going; I'd rather even a Barak Norman or a Klotz than a Nicolo, though I love *my* Nicolo, since some of your passion still trembles in the sound-post? Last week, however, I came across a grand pattern Strad in a bishop's house, and must admit myself fascinated; I cuddled the golden belly against my cheek; played from "Wälküre," and "Joy, O Joy!" When the finger-tips just brood over the strings, an electric thrill burns between, as with meeting lips, and the whole thing hums like a dizzy brain. I noticed, as you say, one of the *f*'s a thought lower than the other, and now have my own theory as to that.' . . . 'I find myself in communion with you,' from Chris in answer, 'in a transcendent way;

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I am but little a mystic, and do not know the ways of the spirit; but you are certainly, as it were, my wife, and with me; just now, in playing for my amusement "Du bist die Ruh," I had an intimate sense of your womanhood and of your presence, like a vision. That will be interesting to have you accompany me on the piano: I am curious to know what will be the emotional outcome. I have a notion that still higher achievements in sensation will be mine when you are at my side. But how long? I invite you to be good to our youth.' 'It won't be long now,' is her answer, 'it would have been sooner, if so many ties didn't bind me here; I am like Gulliver bound — the threads can be snapped, but then the little ones would be hurt. Others, however, are being prepared to fill my place, and very soon I shall leave all to follow you. . . . You are my business in life and one thing needful. . . . Some women in my place would have a blue fright that you would unlove them at first sight: not I. I shan't breathe any the quicker when we meet, but shall come carelessly into my own somehow, like blind kittens born into they don't quite know what age or nook of the universe, but understanding that it is into their proper planet, to their own mother, and that they have a right to make a noise, and be kittenish . . . In my hand no price I shall bring, what I bring will be priceless, and brought not in the way of purchase-money, but as free gift; and in my face you will see the eyes of a friend: for no less than this, I believe, will

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be my pride when I shall come to review my life, that I, though a woman, was capable of friendship. "The ordinary sufficiency of women," says old Florio, "cannot answer this conference, the nurse of this sacred bond, nor seem their minds strong enough to endure the pulling of a knot so hard, so fast, and durable, and this sex could never yet by any example attain unto it"; and he says: "So many parts are required to the erecting of such a friendship, that it may be accounted a wonder if fortune once in three ages contract the like. It is a great and strange wonder, for a man to double himself, their mutual agreement being no other than one soul in two bodies, according to the definition of Aristotle; they can neither lend nor give out to each other; and each doth as wholly give himself unto his friend, that he hath nothing left him to divide elsewhere, and is grieved that he is not double, and hath not many souls, that he might confer them all upon this object." As for Viola, when she had only heard your name, before ever she had seen you, her heart quickened with friendliness, and was qualmish and fain for the altar of sacrifice. You speak of me as your "*wife*"? Truly, I am that: but if I were no nearer you, you should never see Viola.'

"It is a mercy," continues Kathleen, "that I didn't tell Chris who 'Viola' is, for a sentence in one of his letters to her has become an awful temptation to me. He says: 'That will be interesting to have you accompany me on the piano'; he feels that 'Viola' will do it

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well, but he already knows that *I* do, and there is no reason why he shouldn't be made to think that *I* am 'Viola.' Only, my heart beats too madly at the mere thought: *I* could never do it for that reason alone. But since he knows my handwriting, *I* could hint that *I* naturally got some one to copy the letters out for me. *I* should come in for some at least of *Viola's* spoils. All is fair in love, in war, and in everything. Not that it is pretty: but to be rich one must steal; all rich men are thieves, and all poor ones are would-be thieves. We are as alike as peas, the whole mass of pudding. Honesty is only a form of snobbishness, a means of looking down in turn upon one's richer neighbors who look down upon one. Still, one goes horrid, really, if one does such things, one gets worse and weaker, till some day one does something ineffably outrageous. *I* hope *I* am not going to do this thing. And could *I*? It would be horribly dangerous for many, many reasons! *Hannah* will soon be coming to *Chris* with his child's hand in hers; if the child is at all like him, she won't need the proofs buried in *St. Peter's* churchyard; even if the child is not like, *Chris* won't doubt her word when she has once explained her motive for marrying *Willie Dawe*. But mightn't *I* poison *Chris's* mind against her in advance by making *Willie Dawe* tell *Chris* that the child is his, *Willie's*? Many things occur to me now, many; my head is rank with fraud; and something is going to come of it, for they haven't any right to tempt me, and make me mad.

"*Chris* will be in *England* within a month," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XX

IT was, indeed, just a month after this that the little maid drove one night from the Savoy Hotel, where she was staying, to Gray's Inn with a young man beside her, to whom she said on the way, "Well, you are looking quite smart and prosperous: have you a house of your own now?"

"Thank you, miss, I've taken the house in Camden Town," said Willie Dawe, a lank fellow, with a loose mouth.

"And I suppose you are not so foolish as to do any work now?"

"Thank you, no, miss; I'm taking it easy just for the present, thanks to you."

"Having a good time?"

"Thank you, miss, pretty fair, thank you."

"Well, you are a lucky fellow: it is only because I have known your mother so long on the estate. That's why. If I were you, I should thoroughly enjoy myself while I could, for suppose I were to die or anything, what would become of you? You could never go back to the old work-a-day life, after tasting ease and pleasure."

"Thank you kindly, miss, thank you," said Willie Dawe.

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"But you could have been twice as well off, if you had followed my hints: for she would have been compelled to give you as much as you chose to ask for."

"Thank you, miss, I didn't quite like to do that, miss," said Willie Dawe with a blush.

"I don't see why not."

"I don't fancy she has so over-much for herself, miss, begging your pardon."

"Her father is a large farmer, with plenty of money laid by. But you are fond of her, Willie."

"I, miss? fond of her! Not me, I'll swear."

"You are. You like her better than me for saving you that time from the sea."

"No, miss, no, I tell you; don't talk of that, miss, please, begging your pardon."

"She only did it to show off her physical powers. She cared nothing about *you*."

"No, miss, thank you."

"Have you never once seen her since I came across you? Are you sure?"

"Miss Hannah, miss? Not I, miss!"

"I have told you not to call her 'Miss Hannah': say 'my wife'; it is only the truth: you married her; she is your wife, and the mother of your child."

"Well, miss, since you say so."

"Didn't you admit as much to me yesterday?"

"I did, yes, miss, in a way, thank you."

"Well, all you have to do is to repeat the same tale to the gentleman. Don't be abject before him, he

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can't bite you. Just show the certificate, say all that I have suggested, and claim your rights as a father and husband. By the way, I have thought that you would like to see Paris, and am giving you an extra thirty pounds to-night: Paris is an awfully gay place. Oh, here we are."

The carriage drew up in Gray's Inn, where Chris Wilson still stuck to his old chambers. Kathleen and her companion, both of them pale and trembling, went up, were let in by Grimani, and went into the room where Chris was; Chris was half a minute before he could tear himself from his desk, then leapt up and rushed, with a murmur of "My own dear friend," to Kathleen's hand.

"Is that a letter to 'Viola,' Chris?" asked Kathleen, showing her pretty teeth in a nervous laugh; "you were so deep in it —"

He gave some little nods, meaning "yes."

"This is the young man whom you are expecting, if you haven't forgotten my letter," said Kathleen. "I am afraid he has a grievance against you, and has brought it all to me. I have known him since I was a child; he is one of your own Orrock subjects, so I felt bound to be interested."

"What have I done?" asked Chris meekly.

"You know that this is the — husband — of some one?"

"So you wrote to say."

"Well, some busybody has been filling him with the

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notion that you intend to claim the child as your own."

"I didn't know that you had a child, my friend," said Chris gently to Willie Dawe.

"Now, Willie Dawe, are you satisfied?" asked Kathleen. "I told you that Sir Chris probably knew nothing whatever of the matter."

There was silence.

"What made her have him?" asked Chris, more with his eyes than his lips.

"Tell Sir Chris everything," said Kathleen.

"I and my wife grew up neck and neck together down at Orrock, sir, begging your pardon," said Willie Dawe, trying to remember what he had been told to say.

"But it is an incredible thing!" said Chris, his arms akimbo, looking down with disgust at Dawe, who was sitting at the last edge of a chair.

"Show Sir Chris the copy of the certificate," said Kathleen.

"But have I not already seen one?" asked Chris: "spare yourself the pains, my friend."

"The affair took place at the Clerkenwell Town hall, sir," said Dawe, his eye-corners ever wandering round to where Kathleen sat.

"Let it be so," answered Chris: "I don't at all question the formality of your proceedings. One only hopes that you never play at cards, for certainly you are most lucky in love. Have you only one child?"

"Yes, sir."

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“A boy? a girl?”

Dawe did not know! His eyes swam round to Kathleen.

“A boy,” said Kathleen quickly at a venture, flushing.

“How old?” asked Chris.

“About — four years, sir.”

“But don’t be agitated. I have no thought of taking your little one from you; it is true that I once went through the marriage ceremony with your wife, but we parted the same evening, and I have never seen her since. Her son can’t be mine. I don’t know why you are agitated.”

“It isn’t that, sir, it isn’t that, begging your pardon,” said the unfortunate Willie.

“Why did she marry you, my friend?” asked Chris.

“My wife and I grew up neck and neck together, sir,” repeated Willie, with an eye on Kathleen.

“And still you are neck and neck under the same yoke. That is idyllic! though in the books of Moses it is forbidden to yoke the ox and the ass together. But did you dare to marry her, knowing that her first husband was alive? or did you believe that he was dead?”

“She told me —”

“Well?”

“That you were dead, sir.”

“*She?*”

“Yes, sir, and that she — wor — glad of it.”

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“But the fellow is a traitor and a liar,” muttered Chris with a flushed forehead. “Go away now, go, go,” and he brushed Willie Dawe away with motions of his hands, following and brushing him out.

When he returned Kathleen was alone with him, — except for Grimani in another room, but the little maid showed no haste to go away, as would have been only proper. It was after eleven in the night.

“I hope you did not want him to stay for any reason, Kathleen,” said Chris; “he became intolerable.”

“It is all right,” said Kathleen. “I thought it would be a curiosity to you to see him, so brought him.”

“But I am grieved to the heart! How is one to explain to oneself this grotesque and beastly marriage, like Brünnhilda marrying Ghunter of her own accord? It can’t be the same Hannah Wilson whose pure eyes I knew — For that matter, ‘Hannah Wilson’ is a common name in England: why may not this man’s wife be another Hannah Wilson?”

“No, Chris,” said Kathleen, “don’t let us delude ourselves with any such hope: it is the same Hannah. Even Lucifer went wrong, and Hannah has gone so very far wrong, that even her parents and I are not permitted to know her true address.”

“Can all this be my fault?” asked Chris with opened arms.

“Why, what do you mean?”

“I was a mere boy then,” Chris muttered. “The

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good people should not have caused me to marry. God grant that it is in no way my fault."

"Oh, Chris, how can it be your fault? People go their own way and nothing can stop them. And perhaps she is as happy in her sty as you in your heaven. Well, I suppose I ought to go now, and leave you to your 'Viola.' I dare say in your heart you are wishing me to the dickens."

"Mmm, my own friend," groaned Chris. "*Grimani!* — let me offer you a glass —"

"No, thanks, no wine: it is all right, Grimani. Continue your letter to darling Viola. Can I have a peep, I wonder, at this last one?"

Chris shook his curls, with a smile.

"I shall see it all the same," said Kathleen suddenly: for though she had finally made up her mind not to pass herself off as "Viola," the little maid now on a sudden yielded to the temptation, blind to all the hundred risks and difficulties of to-morrow, her mind in the presence of Chris was always in such a state of flurry and weakness.

"How will you 'see it all the same?'" asked Chris.

"Never mind, I will," answered Kathleen, looking up at him with a pale smile.

"But I don't mean to keep any copy," said Chris.

"I shall still see it."

Chris looked at her, and said eagerly:

"Kathleen! do you know Viola?"

Kathleen smiled mysteriously, without answering.

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“Do you know her? Tell me, my friend!”

“I know her very well; and so do you.”

“I have seen her?”

“Oh, Chris, how unconscious you are! She is nearer, much nearer to you at this moment than you dream; the girl who is nearest to you, now and always, is she.”

At these words Chris stood in pain: her meaning seemed plain; he was not given to doubting the words of women; and all at once he saw melting that whole cloud-cuckoo-town which the word “Viola” meant to his fancy. He could not speak, but stood looking at Kathleen in a pathetic way.

“Chris, are you sorry?” she asked, standing up, putting her poor trembling hand on his shoulder.

“No,” answered Chris: “are *you* Viola?”

“I hoped in that way to show you — to win you,” said Kathleen with pantings and passion, “and I have succeeded; if you don’t take me now, the reason will be clear, you will insult me, you will be a brute without pity. I have not loved you as a man, but as a god above all Gods, for years and years; have pity —”

“Kathleen — my dear friend —”

“For years and years, mind you, Chris! I have dragged my soul through ignominy after you! Remember that! But I will be a slave no longer; to-night — this very night —”

At this she fastened her lips to his; he, somehow, wished to get free: and at his effort, the little maid

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threw back her head, and piled scream on scream. Grimani ran in and bore her to a sofa, where she continued to utter screams and sobs and laughter, while Chris darted about in a flurry, seeking he knew not what. They had only liqueurs to give her, her furs and hat were taken off, her forehead sprinkled with water, and a doctor sent for; but before he could come she had got somewhat better, and while still in shameful agitation insisted upon being taken to her carriage. Chris parted from her with the words: "I will write to you."

When he went up again, he stood for a long time with his forehead resting on the mantelpiece; then, noticing the letter which he had been writing to "Viola," tore it slowly into two pieces, which he threw upon the fire; then sat and wrote to Kathleen.

At that same hour Hannah's other husband, Willie Dawe, was lurking in Guilford Street at a corner of the Foundling wall, hugging himself for cold, but watching without a movement a certain window which he oftentimes liked to come and watch. It was now after one o'clock, some snow was falling, the night murky, and no one to be seen, save a policeman, whose tread came and went like echoes in desolate Balclutha.

A faint light was in that second floor window which Daw watched. Behind it lay Hannah, sleeping, but hardly undressed, with a sick girl-child of the lowest class asleep on her arm. For some time nothing happened: Dawe shivered and watched, Hannah slept,

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the policeman strolled; but soon after the Foundling clock struck two a poor woman came hurrying southward, passed by Dawe, went to the house of the lighted window, and rang a bell which was so strung as to ring in Hannah's room. At its first tinkle, Hannah was awake and up, settled the sick child comfortably, had on her boots in a jiffy, cast a glance at her little son in his cot, caught up a stethoscope, and ran down the stair, still dressing herself in her flight. Dawe guessed that the bell rung was hers, that she would presently appear in the street, and ran to hide himself: but he had hardly time to do this when she was down and hurrying northward into Brunswick Square with the poor woman. He followed some way, peering after her through the murk and snowfall, and presently saw that she had left the woman behind, and was running forward alone. Swift and happy feet, running to do well.

CHAPTER XXI

THE kind of night which the little maid passed after that scene with Chris may be guessed. She saw, for one thing, that she had put herself into a fine fix in pretending to be "Viola," since the real "Viola" would soon be writing again to Chris, without saying a word about the scene! Miss Olivia and a maid watched through the night by her bed, each holding one of her quaking arms.

And the morning's post only made things worse! Chris wrote, blaming himself for what had passed, and inviting himself to Kathleen's suite at the hotel on the second evening thence, "in order that my dear friend Kathleen and I may better understand each other." "Never shall I cease to remember 'Viola,'" he wrote, "nor all the fresh flowers which you have sent me during two years in your charming letters." All this was well enough, but in a postscript he added: "Shall we not have some music? My Bergonzi and your Nicolo will make our evening complete."

He meant the Nicolo which he had presented to "Viola"! innocently meant it, but the little maid at once had the guilty feeling that he did it in order to test whether she was really "Viola"! and she was now,

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as it were, in fire. To tell Chris that she had not the Nicolo with her would, she felt, be most lame; nor are Nicolos to be got like hairpins; even if she could buy one, Chris would know it from his own at first sight, at the first note. She felt that she would gladly part with all things in life to have "Viola's" Nicolo for two days.

Her first thought was to hasten to Hannah, and, somehow, to get the Nicolo; but she did not know where Hannah lived.

She had often asked Willie Dawe for Hannah's address, but Dawe had protested that he did not know it. That, however, was her only hope now, that Dawe had told a falsehood in some wish to keep Hannah's secret. And by eleven the brave girl had overcome her breakdown, and had had Dawe brought to her.

"I don't know where Miss Hannah is, miss," answered Dawe many times.

"Well, it is a pity for you," Kathleen answered, "for I have made up my mind to give you nothing more unless you can find out for me before mid-day."

Beads of sweat stood on Dawe's forehead; after some time he said that he knew where Miss Hannah *used* to live —

"That will do," said Kathleen; and Dawe then gave Hannah's address.

So by two in the afternoon Miss Olivia was at Hannah's door, Kathleen waiting in her carriage round

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the corner of Guilford Place. But "Mrs. Wilson" was not in.

"When will she be in?" asked Miss Olivia.

"Ah, now you are asking something puzzling," said Mrs. Reid, the landlady.

"I will call back about four."

"What name shall I say?"

"Well, perhaps I should prefer to surprise her: we are friends."

Miss Olivia came back to see Hannah three times that day before nine P. M., but always in vain.

By that hour Kathleen was in a high-wrought state, and had to be put to bed. But when it was near midnight, nothing would satisfy her but she must get up, and go to see if Hannah was in. Miss Olivia was asleep after her sleepless last night; and the little maid dressed and went out in a kind of stealth.

At Hannah's door she alighted from her cab. But her heart failed her when her hand was on the knocker. What should she say to Hannah? How explain her knowledge of Hannah's address? Hannah would think her wondrously eager to have the *Nicolo*, springing up at that hour of the night to borrow it! Would Hannah lend the precious gift? All these painful questions passed through the little head. There she stood, with a cowering heart, unable to knock, unable to go away. The door was a little open, as often in that kind of Bloomsbury caravansary, and she was peeping in when the sight of a man coming in the

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passage sent her skedaddling. He came out, slammed the door, and went his way. Kathleen now stood on the further side of the street under the Foundling wall, and thence watched the house. A light was in a window of the second floor, on which, as Dawe had told her, Hannah's rooms were, and her heart stopped to see on the blind a shadow like Hannah's: it was gone in a moment, came again, and was gone, flitting actively about. The quaint maid's soul was thrown forth of herself upon that window, as when on Hannah's wedding night she had watched the bride's windows at Orrock. For a minute or two the shadow was no more seen: then Kathleen was aware of Hannah herself down at the front door. Hannah came out, slammed the door behind her, and started northward into Brunswick Square, her face bent down, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, almost running; her nurse's uniform could be heard brabbling in the north wind; she hardly left Kathleen time to run to hide under the tree-shaded west wall of the Foundling, when, on the other side of the street, she hastened past into the square. Kathleen had come to see her, and there she was, quite near, but the little maid dared not speak to her.

Hannah gone, the little maid went back a few yards to her former stand, and again watched the window. Though robed in layers of fur to her feet, she began to suffer from cold, for those were frosty days, the pavements were caked in snow and ice, and a half-moon in the clear sky looked like a traveler lost in a cold waste.

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But still Kathleen stood where she was, doubly fascinated by the window now that Hannah was gone. Her eyes wandered between it and the front door. The door was now fastened, but it was not long before a girl came out with a jug, and ran to a near beer-house — in haste, for it was just when the beer-houses are shut up; she left the front door open, and Kathleen ran to it.

The trouble of her heart was great, for whichever way things might go, she foresaw shame: if she took the *Nicolo* from Hannah's room, the real "Viola" might write to tell Chris of its loss! But her keenest care was the meeting with Chris on the coming evening, and leaving the further future to take care of itself, she hastened in. The passage was lit, but the stairs in darkness, save for a tin lamp on a window-ledge over the first landing. She met no one. On the second landing were two front rooms: that on the left was the lighted one; in the other, a smaller one, Hannah's nurse-girl slept. Kathleen tapped at the door on the left; there was no answer; she went in, and closed the door behind her without making a sound.

Her next task was to get her breath: the little mass of furs stood swelling and sinking, amazed to find itself there. Round she cast her eyes: the bed was rumpled, the gas turned down, a fire burning, and there on an easy-chair by the fire lay the pampered *Nicolo*, a soft silk handkerchief covering the strings. But the little maid's eyes were fixed on quite another sight now than the *Nicolo* — on Hannah's little boy

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asleep with flushed cheeks. He had golden hair, fairer than both his father and his mother. "He looked like a faint water-color of an angel," Kathleen wrote of him long afterwards: "I didn't know before that flesh could be so ravishingly lovely; yet the image of Chris." She stood a strangely long time, staring at the child in its cot, forgetting the Nicolo; and her face took on a look truly elfin, wannish, as it were of Me-phisto or of Erl-king with sword and crown, one of her eyebrows pitched up beyond the other. Strange temptations, forecastings, wrought in her quick mind then, yet, as it were, in a dream, and all that she went on to do was in sleep-walking; for by living waywardly a long while the little maid seems to have reared up now within herself a second creature which in high moments arose, pushed her aside, and acted instead of her.

There was no fear of not being able to get the child down to the door without being seen: that could be done; the danger lay in his awaking on the way, and screaming! In the end, she turned the gas very low, threw her muff on the fire, took off her fur cloak, and with endless cares got it under the child; his clothes lay folded on a chair; she put them on his breast, his boots and socks into her pockets; on his clothes she laid the Nicolo with its slackened bow; and wrapping all in the fur, got the bundle in her arms. It was no slight burden for her, the child being nearly four years old! But that second Frankenstein-self which was doing all for her was strong, and, in spite of stoppages

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on the stairs, the child was hardly shaken. But it was a journey! She seemed to be bearing a horse — with the eyes of multitudes upon her — during an age. But she met no one. Down in the hall she had to put down the burden on a table, run to open the door, and run back for the bundle — all in bright gaslight. But, like the defaulting lodgers who steal out trunks from such like places, she got out safely.

She hobbled toward Russell Square, and there was another waiting for a cab — another age in which she grew old. She met four people, but they took no notice of her bundle, the child was so hidden in the fur. When at last she was putting him into a cab, the little boy awoke, stared at her strange face, and began to cry. But all was well then.

She told her driver to drive to Hampstead, and thence drove back southward to the Hotel Métropole, by which time the child was weary of crying, and dressed. She took a suite of rooms; wrote to Miss Olivia at the Savoy Hotel that she would be away most of the next day; and lay all night with her boy in her arms.

Her first care the next morning was to get other clothes for him, to burn his former ones, to hire two good nurses; and she spent the day in bribing her boy to love her, till it was nearly time to go to meet Chris at her suite in the Savoy Hotel, when she set out with the Nicolo in a new case, leaving her boy with his new nurses. . . .

CHAPTER XXII

“DON’T let us try to talk here, Chris,” said the little maid that night in her Savoy Hotel *salon*; “there is something to be said between you and me, but it can’t be said in this garish place, with five of my enemies amiably bivouacked about us. If you can make time for me to-morrow evening before dinner, I shall come to you.”

“I am in your hands,” said Chris. “I shall try to be disengaged, but perhaps —”

“Oh, there is nothing *outré* in *my* going now to your place alone, and you have no fresh scene to dread from me. Our meeting will be too serious for that. In a wild moment I let out before the time who wrote the ‘Viola’ letters, but to-morrow I shall come more seriously to you as ‘Viola,’ bringing with me the precious gift which ‘Viola’ promised.”

“My own friend,” answered Chris with compunction, “it is I who should be bringing you precious gifts for your goodness —”

“No, I; but we won’t talk of it now: let’s play the Prometheus now, as you promised. Come, Olivia.”

With the Bergonzi and the Nicolo they played a two-fiddle overture, the maestro saying afterwards to

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Kathleen, "Your virtuosity is no less refined on the violin than on the piano"; he was eager to please her, for the fact of her quaint body and of her hopeless passion touched his heart; but the interview of the coming evening was most irksome to him beforehand, though his curiosity was stirred at the wonderful gift to be given him. However, he made up his mind to go through it with a good grace, and then, his London concerts being over, to fly from the quaint maid and from England.

But when Kathleen appeared before him at six the next evening, Chris uttered a cry and rushed with a murmur to embrace the boy whom she led by the hand, the boy was such a pretty picture in his sailor dress.

"Have I seen him before, Kathleen?" he asked.

"No."

"How delicious a being! How dainty a traumbild of color! This is Eros himself, and his mother's limbs could have sprung only from the sea-foam: cluck, cluck, kiss me."

Chris sat on a sofa with the sulky boy on his knee, while Kathleen, sitting near in an armchair, said to her boy, "Tell us your name, will you?"

The answer "Chris" was got out of him after some coaxing.

"Chris!" cried out Chris the elder.

"And whom are you like, Chris?" asked Kathleen: "like this gentleman?"

The boy did not answer; Chris looked into his face

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with growing astonishment, for the likeness was indeed striking; then looked from the boy to Kathleen.

"This is the present which 'Viola' promised to bring in her hand, Chris," said Kathleen, "and now she has brought it. Is it truly priceless? Are you fully satisfied?"

"A present! May I have the boy?"

"Yes, if you have the heart to take him from me."

"But I am so wholly at a disadvantage, you see! Who are the parents of this wonderful child?"

"Can you not see your own image in him? Whose child should I bring you as a present but your own, Chris?"

Chris was pierced with laughter.

"My own?" he cried: "is this boy a son of mine?"

"Yes, Chris."

"But are you certain, my friend?"

"Chris, can't you *see*?"

"Oh, how splendid! He does, he *does* resemble me, if the celestials can resemble the autochthones. He is indeed my very self: what, can you play the fiddle, lad? You soon will, I can see: look, Kathleen, a blind man could tell that he has music in the breadth between the ears, blessed darling, kiss, kiss. But, Kathleen, are you quite sure? I must confess that you surprise me. Why have I never heard of his existence before? Who, then, is his divine — mother?"

"Chris, can you not guess that even now?"

"I declare I have no idea!" cried Chris staring, with

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one twinge of laughter; "let it suffice that he is mine, my own image and likeness! My own dear 'Viola,' you have indeed more than fulfilled your promise! But where, then, is his — mother?"

Kathleen moved shyly on her seat, and turned away her face.

"Tell me!" said Chris.

A blush overspread the face of the little maid, making her younger and prettier.

"Think whom he resembles, Chris, beside yourself," she just murmured.

"I — have no idea!" said Chris at a loss. "Is it the Baroness Vescz —? No, I am foolish."

"No, not she," murmured Kathleen, her blush deepening to red, as she added, "Is he not like me — a little — about the eyes?"

"Mmm, my own best friend," groaned Chris, who, leaning forward, had just caught the little maid's words, "yes — about the eyes — since you say so — he does distinctly resemble you."

"Well, then."

"But —"

"Don't press me, Chris: I am only a girl."

"Oh, but *tears!* — don't cry, don't cry. Forgive me: I don't understand — I am so utterly at a loss —"

"Who but his mother could have brought him to you?" asked Kathleen through sobs, with a covered face, whereat Chris, though half-crying for sympathy, again had a throe of laughter.

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“But don’t cry,” he said: “it is all right, I don’t know why you cry; at present you speak of a mystery, but all will presently be made clear.”

“He is yours and mine.”

“Quite so: don’t cry, don’t cry.”

“You don’t believe me, but it is true.”

“Well, I am most flattered: don’t cry.”

“You think me crazy, but did you never suspect that —”

“Well?”

“That I am —”

“What?”

“A little mother, Chris?”

“I didn’t know. It is the very highest dignity on earth.”

“It is sweet to be a mother, Chris, yes, it is sweet to the heart, Chris: little did I dream before, but now I know — to have something which is your very, very own, as that boy is mine.”

At this the little maid wept afresh, for for two nights she had been wallowing in the feeling that the boy was, really, her offspring, as little girls are their dolls’ true mothers, and as a hen will think a pheasant-chick truly hers because she has hatched it and it is under her wing.

“Is this divine child yours?” asked the simple, good Chris.

“Yes,” murmured the little maid, weeping quietly, without meaning to tell an untruth.

The Lost Viol

"I felicitate you from my heart! But —"

"Oh, Chris, don't doubt my word."

"I? I don't! I was only going to say —"

"You are his father, Chris: you can see it for yourself."

"Precisely! But, my own best friend, —"

"Listen, Chris: I am only a girl, and it is hard to say, but it must be said. There is a night of your life which has passed out of your memory. It is the night when you gave your first great London recital, at Queen's Hall. Try to remember it. After the concert you went to several places with a lot of men, and drank a good deal. I was in love, and followed you in a cab; then I was mad enough to come here, and you let me in."

"*Good God!*" murmured Chris under his breath.

"Try to remember," went on Kathleen: "that same night a burglar somehow entered your rooms, and stole from you a viol di Gamba, your watch and chain, and some other things —"

"I remember," breathed Chris, with a look of horror.

"And do you remember sleeping till three or four the next afternoon? I was vexed with myself, and left you asleep about two in the afternoon. But I needn't have been so vexed, for I see now that my only fault was in coming to your door, since something or other that we both drank took away our senses, our memory, and everything. This accounts for the late sleeping the next day."

The Lost Viol

"Something that we *drank*?"

"Yes: isn't it a fact that Grimani takes hashish?"

"Yes."

"Well, you won't remember, but *I* do, that just about that time you dismissed Grimani, and I have come to the conclusion that Grimani must have put some hashish into your Alicante that day, out of revenge; for I happen to know that he does take hashish, and I have lately found out that the symptoms of hashish are the same as mine and yours that night."

"Good God, can this have happened?" groaned Chris to himself, with a hopeless brow on his hand.

At this point the unhappy boy, who had wriggled from Chris' knee to the floor, and had been looking from Chris to Kathleen and from Kathleen to Chris, turned down his mouth, and began to cry, saying, "I want mama."

"He means his nurse," remarked the little maid: "come, Chris, to mama, come."

It was while she was saying this that there was a knock at the front "oak," and half a minute afterwards Grimani looked in, saying, "Lady Wilson to see you, sir."

"*Who?*" asked Chris.

"'Lady Wilson,' she told me, sir."

"Can it be Hannah?" asked Chris of Kathleen.

"Oh, God!" breathed Kathleen, half rising with a face of terror, "we mustn't meet."

The Lost Viol

“Tell the lady that I am not at home for the moment,” said Chris to Grimani.

“I told her so, sir, but she came inside, and said that she must see you at once.”

Instantly Kathleen caught up the crying child, and ran away with it into Chris’s bedroom.

CHAPTER XXIII

“DIDN’T I hear a child crying?” asked Hannah, appearing heatedly before Chris without being asked in (the crying was no more heard, for Kathleen had closed three heavy doors between).

“What do you want?” asked Chris feebly.

“I was almost sure — Was there a child here?”

“Yes; but what is the matter?”

“I thought I recognized — Oh, it is only my silliness,” she sighed, dropping into an easy-chair. “Every child I hear, I think — Bear with me a moment, I am so tired.”

She sat with closed eyes, and Chris stood looking at her with a wrinkled brow.

“I come to you in great trouble,” she said, “all that I had — a good half anyway — My child has been stolen: I come to his father; perhaps you can do something. Tried not to come, but my feet brought me.”

“Do you say that *I* am his father?” asked Chris, with half a laugh.

“Yes, then.”

Again on a sudden Chris was pierced with laughter, for every one wished to accuse him of fatherhood.

“This is sufficiently barefaced,” he said.

The Lost Viol

"Oh, well," she sighed.

"Is it not really so? What can you mean? You wear the livery of an honorable profession."

"I am quite worn out. Give me a few minutes, then I will tell you. You needn't be afraid, you will believe everything I say."

"Well, I hope so. *Grimani!* — let me get you some wine."

"Yes, but not Alicante" — her eyes twinkled a little — "I have tasted your Alicante before."

"But when?"

"Over four years ago, that night of your first recital at Queen's Hall."

"What, you, too? *Grimani*, a glass of — shall we say Chrypre, Muscat?"

"Yes, Muscat, and if you have any biscuits: I haven't tasted since yesterday."

"Quickly, *Grimani*, some mortadel sandwiches."

"That's right. He's gone — somehow — somewhere. I went out night before last at half-past twelve to be at a deathbed; he was gone when I came back, vanished, don't know how or why: God knows."

"Your son?"

"Yes."

"Have you communicated with the police?"

"Of course. No clue. No one to suspect. Oh, my soul is sorrowful unto death, Chris Wilson."

"Never mind, he shall be found for you: don't cry."

"Oh, I am not crying, but it's a nice old wrench,

The Lost Viol

you know, like having your jaw carried away. I was fond of him."

"Don't cry, don't cry: he shall certainly be found for you."

"You think so? But what will you do? What can you?"

"I can spend money, if that is any good."

"That's no good, I'm afraid. If the police can't find him, no one will. Are you never to see him, I wonder? You would merely have worshiped him: he is the loveliest — and the picture of you, only fairer."

"Ah?"

"He has your mouth, your eyes, your hands —"

"He might leave me my *hands*, to practise with."

"There, he jests. Don't believe, really? I almost forgot that I hadn't told you. Well, I feel better now: you shall hear. On the night of your first recital, I came here to you" — she told the whole story of her entrance, of the wine, of the strange drunkenness, of her waking and flight the next afternoon with the viol di Gamba, etc. Chris listened looking out on the Gardens. Having just been hearing the very same tale from Kathleen, he could only assume that one of the two had heard of the escapade from the other, and was an imposter. Both could hardly be true.

"Were you and I alone here that night?" he asked.

"Yes; I didn't see Grimani."

"No other lady was here?"

The Lost Viol

"Lady? Of course not."

By this time the little maid, who had now quieted the child, and left it in an inner room, was holding her ear at a keyhole, and undergoing the keenest strain of mind at what she heard.

"And as to the viol di Gamba, the watch and chain, and the other things which you took," said Chris, "do you happen to have any of them with you at present?"

"No; I have lost them."

"Lost them? Not *all* of them."

"Yes."

"But how?"

"They were stolen out of my trunk, I suppose. For five years I have been trying all the time to find them. No good."

"So that what was purloined by you was in turn purloined from you?"

"I couldn't purloin what was my own, you know."

"No, I forgot: they were your own. But first your 'proofs' were stolen, and now the child itself? You are very unfortunate."

"Yes; but don't blame me for that."

"I don't blame you. But can one be so unfortunate?"

"Oh, there are worse things than that. The big woes happen inside. I'd rather that than a sluggish liver, or a cold heart."

"Hannah," murmured Chris, "how excellent you — have been."

The Lost Viol

“Chris,” she said, “how flattering you — are.”

“I have the utmost faith in your liver, Hannah — though I think I should prefer a sluggish liver to the loss of my only child.”

“If your liver was sluggish, your very pity and grief would be sluggish, too. It is because mine is rather hot for me alone that I came here for your sympathy.”

“Well, I give you that, if you have lost your child, though I mustn’t pretend that my sorrow is paternal. It is the mother that interests me. I see that you are even more beautifully blooming than ever, and looking charming in that costume.”

“There, he is falling in love now. But not now, my friend, not now. Pity me now.”

“Well, you seem to suffer genuinely. Tell me if you have really lost a child.”

She started, saying gently, “Don’t believe, really?”

“Put yourself in my place,” said Chris in pain, “how can I possibly? It is most distressing. Do you still say that your child is mine also?”

Hannah’s eyes rested upon him, but she answered nothing.

“Don’t you see,” said Chris, “how impossible it looks? How long, for instance, after that night of my recital did you marry a second time?”

“About three months after.”

“And you married another man, knowing —? You wouldn’t have done that.”

The Lost Viol

“Oh, Chris, you are cross-examining me.”

“Yes, in your own interests: you have made certain statements to me, and I wish you to know that I am more or less awake, so that you may make no more of the same kind. I don't know what is your motive for saying such things, but I warn you that they are not credible.”

“Well, blessed are the wounds of a friend, Chris.”

“Yes, it is all very well to speak in that way, but drop the queer statements, and then we can truly be friends. What you say is really not credible: you would hardly have lost the viol and *all* the other things, and you would most certainly not have married a new man, if you had been about to be a mother. You admit that you did marry the man?”

“Yes: that was merely formal.”

“Now comes yet a new statement, you see, and if it were credible, I should rush gladly into belief. What could have been your motive for a merely formal marriage with this man?”

“I'm afraid I must never tell you that: I am forbidden to whisper it even to my own left hand; but it wasn't a bad motive.”

“But the left hand knows, Hannah, being the ring hand.”

“Yes, but cynicism always runs a terrible risk of being unkind,” she said with a pout.

“My own dear friend,” said Chris feelingly — “yes, runs a terrible risk of being unkind, but put yourself

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in my place. For some five, six, seven years perhaps, we have not seen each other; during that time, though I have led a busy life, never a week has passed in which I have not thought of you with tenderness and longed to see you, in spite of your abandonment of me, for I have said to myself, 'Perhaps she abandoned me because I abandoned her.' Imagine, therefore, if I wish to be cynical rather than to be kind. I would give anything. But you suddenly appear before me with a number of statements. At one time, if you had said to me, 'The sky is made of paper,' I should have trusted you. But you admit your second marriage; and suppose I tell you that not four days ago your terrible 'merely formal' husband spoke to me of your child and his?"

"Willie Dawe?"

"I think that that is his name."

Hannah sat over the fire, her chin on her palm, staring.

"My own Willie?" she said presently, "spoke of the child as his?"

"Yes," said Chris with some bitterness.

"I didn't know that he knew that I have a child."

"That is yet a statement."

"They are all pretty true, Chris."

"Granted. But you see why I disbelieve them?"

"No, I don't. I never conceived that you would really doubt me. Let all the world doubt me, but *you* believe me, Chris."

"What, against my five wits!"

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“Yes: I expect that of you.”

“By Heaven, you will either drive me mad, or force me to press you to my heart. I love you, if only for your audacity.”

“Believe me first, and press me to your heart after, my friend.”

“It would be a costly embrace! bought at the expense of my reason.”

“Never mind about reason: believe in Hannah.”

“I — almost do!” laughed Chris, with opened arms.

“That’s brave: make one rough effort against yourself, and then you will.”

“You have the very accent and face of truth!”

“There, he’s coming round,” said Hannah, laughing with pleasure: “I shall soon have you all straight now.”

“Do you laugh at my simplicity?” asked Chris.

“No, I laugh for joy because we know each other inside like brothers, and our friendship is sealed up above forever. Everything proves me a liar, and yet you believe me.”

“But I don’t!”

“You do inside — you soon will: keep looking into my eyes, and, the moment you believe, you can kiss me, and be friends.”

“Have I a longing look?”

“Oh, one can see that you are hankering to regain possession: let’s be frank.”

“‘*De l’audace, et encore de l’audace, et toujours de l’audace,*’” murmured Chris, smiling icily.

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“Ah, now, that’s backsliding. No, I’d better go, since you are in this mood. You shan’t see me again for another year” — she sprang up so sharply, that Chris was taken aback.

“Are you going?” he asked rather ruefully: “in another year we shall both be older.” He was ever a miser of his youth.

“Oh, not I!” laughed Hannah, “there’s no need for anybody to grow a day older”; then, with a fickle change of face, looking upward with triumph, she said: “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their youth: they shall mount up with wings as eagles. Good-by!” she offered her right hand sharply, covering her moist eyes with the left.

“Mmm,” groaned Chris, “don’t cry,” and wished to come near to her, but she caught away her hand from him, and slipped away round the table, saying, “No, believe first.”

“I do, I do,” he said with a flushed face.

“Fully?”

“Yes.”

“There, I have won him!” running to him and kissing him — “and only by a trick” — kissing him — “a fiddler can’t stand tears, even half-crocodile ones” — kissing him.

“Amazing chameleon,” murmured Chris, kissing her, “have you tricked me?”

“Oh, no more backsliding,” said Hannah, dropping again with a fickle change and sigh into her easy-chair,

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“and no more kissing. Oh, you don’t know, Chris: my soul is exceeding bitter and sorrowful this day, God knows. Aren’t you going to give me my little boy back?”

Chris stood in thought for some time, and then said:

“Listen, Hannah: I will tell you now what was my *chief* reason for disbelieving your story: it was, that another lady declares that she spent here the very night that you claim; you can’t both be true; and she proved her case by showing me a child, a boy, which is certainly very like me: so I couldn’t believe you. But it occurs to me now that, in case she be false, and you true, then the child which she has may be the very one which you have lost.”

“It *is*, of course!” cried Hannah, springing up in a jubilee; “he is found! and I’ll never lose sight of him again. Where is he now? Was that his crying I heard —”

“No. Wait. Describe your son to me.”

“Curly golden hair, your eyes, but much lighter and larger, your hands and large mouth, but more like an angel than like —”

“Then it *is* very likely the same.”

“But where is he? When can I have him? He only likes oaten bread — must be suffering miseries —”

“No, don’t be impatient, wait, wait. I know now what I shall do. You shall see him here — to-morrow evening at this hour.”

“But why? Why? Where is he? Who is this

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awful woman? Am I to leave my child to her tender mercies till to-morrow evening? Oh, fair's fair, Chris! Don't rob me of my child for a whole night and day!"

"But I don't understand your extreme impatience," said Chris: "just now you didn't expect to find him at all, and now you chafe at one day's delay. You must wait, since I can't do any better for you. Besides, he is in the hands of a lady who will pet him up, and keep him warm and nice."

"Oh! he'll laugh at any one's petting!"

"Still, you must wait: come to-morrow at seven, and I undertake that the child and the other woman who claims him shall be here, too. If he is your son, we shall know it in a moment by his conduct; then we shall be certain that your story is true, for there's no doubt that he is *my* son."

"But, Chris, you submit me to tests and proofs."

"Forgive me, will you? That's not because I any longer disbelieve you, but as a formal justice to the other little woman, whom I fully believed up to the moment when you came in. Now I shall keep an open mind till your interview, and then I shall judge between you. It will be a cruel ordeal for the liar, but she deserves it."

"But who can this woman be? I am perfectly bewildered! Some one came to my place four times on the day the child was stolen, asking for me, saying that she was a 'friend,' but I haven't been able to identify

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her from my landlady's description. I wonder if it is the same?"

"Probably not. I won't tell you now. You will see her to-morrow."

"But she won't come to be proved a liar! She will hide my child! —"

"No, I undertake that she will come with the child. Woe to her, if she doesn't. But I have some one waiting in yonder: will you go now? and come back in an hour to dine with me? Do you live far from here?"

"Ten minutes' walk. But I shan't come back: too tired and sad. Good-by."

"Are you pleased with me now?"

"Whatever you do is well done for me: that's all settled and done with."

"What, still? Do you still love me, Hannah?"

"Let me go. I will tell you to-morrow night."

"Why on earth did you marry that horrible man?"

"He isn't horrible, only unhappy. Good-by."

Chris just managed to steal a kiss askance from her cheek, and she was gone.

"To-morrow at seven!" he called after her.

"All right," she said over her shoulder, but —"

CHAPTER XXIV

A MINUTE after Hannah was gone, Kathleen came out to Chris leading the boy, looking a picture of nervous flurry and unrule.

"I don't know if you heard anything, Kathleen," said Chris, looking at her gravely under his eyes.

"Yes, I *did*," said the little maid with a breathless vehemence, with a twitching of the lips.

"Hannah, you see, claims your little one."

"Base thing! I had told her everything — this is the result — You ought to be ashamed, Chris —"

"Of what?"

"Of being so miserably her dupe — of kissing her like a slave — I told you how low she had fallen — I brought you her husband —"

"He is not really her husband —"

"Yes, defend her, Chris, a woman of the middle-class — a farmer's daughter — fallen to the dregs of society — I know that I am only a little hunchback, my word is not as good as hers, but not a soul knows me, I will show you all what I am, I am the greatest being that ever breathed, I defy you all —"

"Mmm, my dear friend, don't —"

"Base thing! Didn't she dare to claim to be 'Viola,'

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too? It's a wonder! for I told her about that, too; she could have said that the *Nicolo* was stolen from her, as well as the child, but she didn't dare —"

"Oh, but don't —"

"Base thing! She wants money of you to support her husband, that is the cause of this elaborate acting — and her word to be taken against mine, and she to be kissed and worshiped, and sent away in triumph, and all the time the child is mine, my very own, and every word I say is true — true because *I* say it — no other reason — that's enough — because *I* say it, you hear, Chris?"

"But, good God, do you wish to drive a poor man mad?" cried Chris with a sudden flush: "can't you let me speak?"

"Oh, let me get out of here!" said Kathleen, moving sharply to hobble off.

"Stay! stay! Do you understand, Kathleen, that Hannah will be here at seven to-morrow evening in order that she may meet you and the child?"

"But do you imagine for a moment that she will come?" screamed Kathleen, turning upon him with a face of rage. "She won't come! She knows that the child is mine!"

"She said the very same thing of *you*, that you wouldn't come."

"But I will! Whom do you believe, her or *me*? I'll come, if only to punish you, but *she* won't! *Qui vivra verra!*" and the little maid was off, with stamps

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in her hobbling, dragging the astonished child, while Chris chased her with "Don't think that I doubt you! I keep a perfectly open mind till to-morrow; but perhaps if you leave the child, I could manage —" but she went out without a backward glance or answer, Chris looking after her with his foolish, meek look till she disappeared down the stairs.

The little maid drove thence to the Hotel Métropole, but, without alighting there, sent up-stairs for the child's nurse, gave the child to her, and said to her coachman, "To Scotland Yard."

At Scotland Yard she had a ten minutes' interview with an official, to whom she reported the fact of Hannah's two marriages, with the dates, then drove back to the hotel, and spent the night there with her now doubly-dear boy. On the morrow she might be childless, but for that night at least she was a little mother, with her own offspring in her arms.

Most of the next day she spent at the Savoy Hotel with Miss Olivia, who was still in a state of wonder as to the where and why of Kathleen's nightly absences: and sharp at seven the little maid was at Chris's "oak" with the child, to keep the appointment made by Chris.

"Thanks infinitely for coming," said Chris, catching up the boy to his breast, "you are the first to arrive."

"But it is humiliating, Chris," said Kathleen, reproachfully.

"I see that; but bear with me, since it was my only way."

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They sat down and waited for Hannah to come. Little was said. Kathleen toyed with her boy, who was now becoming tamer to her caresses. The lamp was not lit; the room, though inflamed by the firelight, grew duskier and duskier. Anon Chris peered at his watch; the ticking of a clock in the room filled the silence; Kathleen, pale at first, after a time brightened up, came out like the sun from all cloud and trouble, and said smiling, "Well, I seem to be last as well as first."

"She is late," remarked Chris.

"But this is tiresome. Do play something, Chris."

"No verve," said Chris with a pathetic smile.

"I'll play," cried the little maid, starting up to the piano; she played a polonaise, anon calling out to the hoy through the noise with lively glances round, "*Dance, Chrisie!*" Then she played the third Lied of the second book, and then, with flushed cheeks, a Brahms movement, "Guten Abend, gute Nacht," in the midst of which last Chris leapt up with a start which lifted his hair in a mass, and began to pace about with a red brow. It was eight o'clock.

The little maid stood up with a laugh.

"You won't ever doubt me again, Chris?" — with her hands on his shoulders, and a happy light in her eyes.

"Forgive my unbelief," he said absently, patting her back, "you shall be recompensed. Oh, I have been a dreamer!" he brought his palm to his forehead, and threw himself desperately upon a couch: Hannah did not come, and white was black to Chris.

CHAPTER XXV

THE very morning after that failure of Hannah to come to Chris's chambers for her child, Chris left England for the Continent. The little maid wrote of it: "He felt her non-appearance — keenly, too. Well, let him write a nocturno over it, as he wrote *Mortalité* over poor some one's dead body, and then he won't care any more, when he has once made 'copy' of his sighs. I got his note at two P. M., four hours after he had gone: 'My own dear friend, I find it necessary to leave England at once, but you will be kept always informed of my whereabouts, as I hope you will keep me informed of yours, so that the future of the close relation which exists between us may be fully discussed between us by letter; moreover, we are certain to meet either at Orrock or in some quarter of the globe. Meantime, you may be sure I carry "Viola" about in my heart. Kiss the darling boy for me, mentioning every day to him the name of his father. Ever yours sincerely, Chris Wilson.' He sticks to his 'Viola.' It is rather a mercy that Hannah in her interview with him never mentioned about 'Viola,' or about the Nicolo being lost: I suppose she was too full of the loss of the child to trouble about anything else; if she had men-

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tioned it, that might have shaken Chris's certainty as to me being 'Viola,' for there are already things in the letters against it, such as 'Viola's' description of herself as tall, and the rot about 'joy,' 'health,' 'having life,' and so on. But the mere fact of my having the Nicolo must be to Chris an overwhelming proof that I am 'Viola,' and the fact of no more letters coming now from 'Viola' must be an added proof.

"At five P. M. on the day after the 'ordeal' and Hannah's arrest I went to her place, for I was eager to hear everything; had a long talk with Mrs. Reid, the landlady, and got her to take me up to Hannah's room, that I might look round the place in which I had trembled and dared. It looked pretty desolate, like a room from which the dead has been carried out. I was frightened, and didn't go right in, or stay long up there. Mrs. Reid said that Hannah had told her the morning before that she would be giving up the rooms, since she was going to live with her husband thenceforth, that the child was found, and that she was going for it to Gray's Inn at seven in the evening. 'About ten minutes to seven,' said Mrs. Reid, 'she ran down the stairs, dressed to go out. I happened to be at the front door, looking out for the coalman, so I said to her, "Going for him now?" she smiled and said, "Yes, don't be impatient, soon have more of him than is good for you." She looked as bright as an angel, God knows, and an angel is what we all thought her, though I will say she did neglect her little boy

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sometimes, and made my life wretched about the blessed mice; most people are a bit nervous of a mouse, but not like her, I've seen her stand on a bed as white as a corpse —”

“‘But about the arrest,’ I said for the twentieth time; but it was another hour before I got it all out of the endless old thing. ‘Just as Mrs. Wilson got to the door,’ she said, ‘a boy named Ralphie, who follows her about like her shadow, ran up from the Medical Mission in Compton Place, to tell her that a man from the timber-yard named Giddins was taken worse; she looked rather taken aback, glanced at her watch, hesitated a bit on the doorstep, and at last said to Ralphie, “Well, come on.” She and the boy then ran off into Brunswick Square. Half an hour afterwards I was in the kitchen, when I heard a knock, went up, and found a constable and another man at the door. They wanted to know if Mrs. Wilson was in. “She is out,” I said. “No, she isn’t,” said the one in plain clothes, “for there she comes” — and so, true, there she was coming down the stairs with some papers in her hand, for, after seeing the sick man, she must have come in to get something, and now was just starting off again to Gray’s Inn.’

“I shivered as she spoke: one minute’s difference and Hannah might have got to Gray’s Inn. There’s some star in collusion with the little hunch. They had told me at Scotland Yard that she would probably be arrested by noon.

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“‘She was passing out,’ Mrs. Reid said, ‘when the two men asked if she was Mrs. Wilson. She said yes. “Well, a warrant has been issued for your arrest,” said the one in plain clothes, and at those words I almost dropped — she that every one thought was so good! But you never know who’s who in London, miss. “What wrong have I done?” she asked, smiling with them. “You are charged,” said the officer, “with contracting a bigamous marriage with somebody at so-and-so on such a date.” “How can you know?” said she. “That’s neither here nor there,” said he; “take notice that your words are being taken down” — he had a note-book in his hand. “Well, what next?” said she. “You must come with us to the station,” said he. “Oh, not now,” said she. “Yes, now,” said he. “But do you know that I have lost my child?” said she. “We know nothing of that,” said he, “you must come.” “But listen,” said she. “We can’t,” said he, “you must come.” “For God’s sake, will you?” said she. “We can’t,” said he, “you must come *now*: if you have any statement to make, you can make it at the station.” “But listen, I am a poor mother,” said she. “Can’t help that,” said he, “you must come at once.” “But if any time is lost, a wrong will be done,” said she, “and you would not like it to be done through you.” “Very sorry,” said he, “but you must come.” “May I not even write a note?” said she. “Not now,” said he. “Well, then,” said she, “if you won’t listen to reason, I am sorry for you.”

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At this she turned and said at my ear, "Tell them at the Medical Mission that I had to go away, and don't cry, it will be all the same to me a hundred years hence." She kissed me, and walked away between them, with a little crowd of boys and girls following. I ran out into the drizzle, and whispered to one of the men, "Don't be hard on her, now." They took a four-wheeler at the Foundling rank. . . .'

"The old thing began to cry. I was listening to her till after six, then drove back full of pity and fear for poor Hannah, and joy at the awful dangers which I had escaped the evening before. It is a mercy that I didn't stay at Chris's later than eight o'clock, for undoubtedly Hannah told the police-station people that her lost child was then at Chris's place, and some one may have been sent to see if it was true. I don't suppose that much weight is given to a prisoner's statements, but, if any one was sent, I was gone when he came; Chris must have been out, too, at that hour; and the next morning early was off to the Continent.

"I meant to go down to Orrock at once, so the next thing was to introduce my boy to Olivia; I didn't mean to invent any story about having adopted him, for, far from being ashamed of it, I glory in being a mother. That night we had Charlie Podmore with Lady Roden and her Lillian and Aimée, so after they were gone I made Olivia sit at my feet in the *salon*, and I confessed to her all about the recital night, the drugged wine, the birth of the child — everything. She was amusing

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with her astonishment, didn't know to what first to apply her boundless 'but's.' 'But,' she said, and stopped, and then said 'but' again. I didn't care; I was too happy; I shall have Chris now at last; I have become quite reckless and jolly; I defy every one and everything; there's a little star somewhere that winks when I wink.

"'But you slept with me on the night of that recital!' Livie managed to get out at last.

"'I got up while you were asleep, and came back while you were asleep,' I answered.

"'But — but —'

"'Never mind, Olivia,' I said, 'reconcile yourself to facts as they are.'

"'But which facts!' she cried; 'you are only acting a part to yourself and to me! — the whole thing is wildly incredible!'

"'You won't say so when you see him,' I said. 'You will simply sit down and cry for joy that I could be the little mother of such an angel. Chris called him 'Eros' — there never was such a child — I don't say it because I am his mother; try to imagine what Chris's soul must be under hashish, Olivia, like Uriel clad in the sunset; and I, too, was under hashish, remember: the child is a peg above other children —'

"'It's all play-acting!' she cried: "where — when —? I have always been with you except those three months when you were with Louise at Davos!'

"'It was then,' I said.

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“No, if it is impossible, it is impossible,” she said. ‘I shall write and ask Louise.’

“‘Louise will deny,’ I said; ‘it is a secret between her and me.’

“‘It can’t be, it can’t be,’ she said.

“‘But, Livie, why so?’ I pleaded. ‘Didn’t you think that I was capable of being the little mother of a sweet boy? I am just like everybody, Livie, and more so. It is sweet to the heart, Livie, to be a mother —’

“‘Acting, acting, all acting!’ she cried, shaking her head; and I got angry, saying, ‘Well, we will let the subject drop now, if you please.’

“‘Yes,’ she said, ‘get angry if you please, but have I no cause for anger? What kind of thing is this which you have brought upon me?’

“‘A pure honor,’ I said, ‘not even a hint of disgrace. Chris says that it is the highest dignity on earth to be a mother. And the mother of *his* child! Don’t the haphazard sons of kings become dukes? But the world looks upon Chris as far above any king!’

“‘But still, Kathleen,’ she said, beginning to sniffle, ‘it is hard on me —’

“‘But no one need know,’ I said to comfort her, and in the end worked her round to a state of mere curiosity to see the child: when I brought him the next forenoon she was as much in love as any one. To-morrow we go down, and shall stay at the Hill till Hannah’s final trial, when I mean to come up for two or three days at the beginning of the season; they say

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that things will be quite dull until little Teddy comes into his own: all the world is in purple mourning by command. I shall spend the whole season at home with German philosophy, botany, music, and my boy, without receiving at all, but living like a recluse. Perhaps Chris may come to Orrock, . . ." etc., etc.

"This place," she wrote later, "is certainly haunted, and nothing could keep me here but Chris's promise to come down at any moment; but I must reap what I have sown; there have been moments of my life, like that day of the hiding of the viol, when I have certainly danced mad. What could have possessed me to lift the face-cloth? Some hand took mine and did it: and it is now that I am really feeling the effects of it. Oh, the terrors which this scheme of nerves can divine and foreknow! Something lately seems to threaten me, I am conscious of it afar off, it lifts its head within me for a moment and just whispers of eyeballs staring and shrieks of madness ringing through deep vaults of the earth, which some day I shall hear, and there are times when somewhere far off at the back of me ten thousand thunders seem mustering themselves to hurry and burst upon me. What is the meaning of it? Every night now I dream of him, with his rigid face. I oughtn't to have dared put the things into his coffin. But what else was left me to do? I am taking phosphorus, iron, and salicylate of soda; these last four days the rheumatic pains in the left leg, and the indigestion, have been worse than ever. Plato says that a healthy

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body will not make one virtuous, but a virtuous mind will make one healthy. I wonder? Perhaps I could have done better, better for myself. But what is virtue? Poor 'Viola' says mere 'vigor' of mind: but if you haven't got the vigor, you haven't, that's all, as when a man can't jig, he can't jig. If one's vigor of mind may be strengthened by practising goodness, as one's body by athletics, still you must have *some* vigor to start on. Everything is God's fault. People with heart disease can't do athletics. I shan't care about anything, except the physical pains, and the terrors. Life is about equally troublesome to every one, and I shouldn't change places with poor Hannah now. I have my boy, and some little day I shall be standing at an altar with a certain C. W. That's plenty to have lived for.

"Olivia returned last night at nine, after witnessing the trial. She has been away three days, staying two with Lady Roden; the coronation, she says, is already all the rage; she saw a return of mounted infantry through the Park, and on the second day Hannah in the dock. It has made poor Livie unwell, and I am glad now that I was too ill to go. She sat veiled with the common crowd in a gallery, kept an opera glass fixed upon Hannah, and was struck by Hannah's 'politeness' to every one — so she says. It didn't last long: Hannah pleaded guilty. She looked pale and ill. A lot of the poor in the gallery knew her, and their excited whispering among themselves kept Olivia

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from hearing much that was said below. She says that 'something about her forehead struck me that day as mulishly stubborn: though it is low, it would be overbearing, but for the kindly twinkling of her eyes, like a rock with bluebells. When she answered the judge or the lawyer she seemed to be treating them gently, like "patients." She made them all chuckle by telling the judge that "she tried bigamy because she found marriage a failure." They wanted to get the address of Willie Dawe, but she wouldn't, or couldn't, give it. What could have made Hannah Wilson do such a thing with such a creature surpasses mortal comprehension! Yet somehow I couldn't believe, while looking at her, that she had done any wrong; at one time I wanted to scream, it seemed to me that I was witnessing some piercing outrage, like the rending of a lamb, the harming of the harmless, the trampling of white robes in the mud, and the judgment of the higher by the lower. The name "Lady" Wilson didn't occur throughout the trial. When a doctor from some hospital spoke of the love of the poor people for her, Hannah wept passionately. When the judge was about to deliver sentence, she stood up by the side of her wardress, very pale and austere, and heard his long lecture with lowered eyes. The moment the words "nine months" passed his lips a howl of lamentation broke out a little behind me — a tall man with his head buried in his arms, howling for all he was worth. It was Willie Dawe:

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I hadn't noticed him before. I saw Hannah's eyes lift and rest steadily upon him as he was being removed in a fainting condition.' Cutting of the trial is on third fly-leaf. Olivia brought down a heap of papers, but they all say much the same things. Down here not a soul knew a word about anything, till they saw it in the papers. Both the old Langlers are ill, and all Orrock, they say, is mourning. This is great Babylon which I have built, . . ." etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVI

“LAST night,” continued the little maid later, “another quarrel with Olivia — just because I sent for Dr. Williams when my darling pricked his finger. She said that I am ‘exposing myself to the ridicule of everybody by my skittish extravagances with the boy.’ I wasn’t really angry, for I feel pleased *au fond* to have them all wondering at my adoration of him, but by pretending to be angry I became rather so. ‘I don’t seem to be any longer mistress in my own house,’ I said.

“‘The mischief is that you are too much so,’ she answered: ‘what has come over you of late, Kathleen? You didn’t use to be like this! That child has turned you into a perfect *Doña Quixote*!’

“‘Even if that be true,’ I said, ‘isn’t he sweet enough to turn any little mother’s head?’

“‘Let his sweetness be admitted,’ she said: ‘but that is no reason, Kathleen, why the tongue of a lady should be heard scolding through her house every five minutes in the day for imaginary wrongs done to a brat —’

“‘You are not to call him a brat, Olivia,’ I said.

“‘Well, a pretty child, if you like,’ she said, ‘but still a brat, for a brat’s a brat, and what I have said I

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stick to. I am sure that everybody in the place does the very best for the boy, and to turn away old servants, servant after servant, in your late tyrannical manner for imaginary wrongs — the merest figments of your brain —’

“‘I am the best judge of all that,’ I said: ‘I wish my boy to be the one grand fact of life for every one around me, and whoever fails in the slightest degree to come up to this standard must go, that’s all.’

“‘Well, go your way,’ she said, ‘but I am only doing my duty to warn you, Kathleen, that your conduct is causing astonishment and ridicule; since the end of May it becomes every day more fantastic, and I won’t hold my tongue any longer. Are there to be no bounds to your antics with this boy? I say nothing of his jewel-studded plate, his gold knife and fork, and his ivory cot — those may pass; but tell me if it is a sane thing for a young lady to bare her virgin bosom to a boy four years old, and invite him with tears in her eyes to take his nourishment from her? Look here, Kathleen —’

“‘Whose virgin bosom?’ I cried, the blood rushing to my head: ‘don’t you dare insult my motherhood, Olivia!’

“‘Well, let that pass,’ she said, turning pale with rage, ‘let us admit that you are his mother: but why publish it so? Wasn’t it agreed between us that he should pass as your adopted child?’

“‘Well, isn’t that what I tell everybody?’

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“Yes, you *tell* them so! but you take good care that they shall think you his real mother by your mysterious perks, and smiles, and hints, and fantastic carryings-on! I never heard of such a thing! A lady of high birth going out of her way to fasten upon herself so awful a scandal —’

“Well,’ I said, ‘if they know that I am his mother, they will also know that Chris must be his father, so I don’t care. I am quite reckless and happy now.’

“She cast up her eyes and hands together, sighing, ‘But where is this grotesque frenzy to end? As to the kittens and the flies —’

“I caught no less than *five* by one sweep of my hand across the table this afternoon,’ I said, ‘and he screamed with joy! My skill is now simply absolute, and he is conscious that no one in the world can really catch flies but his mama.’

“But for a girl of your attainments, Kathleen,’ she said, ‘to devote whole days to nothing but catching flies —’

“I am not a girl, Olivia,’ I said, interrupting her, ‘I am a matron. Give the devil his due, and don’t eat out your poor heart with envy.’

“*I!*’ she cried, ‘if that’s what it is to be a matron, let me be as I am, thank you! Perhaps as an old maid I shall find some nobler occupation than catching flies. And I don’t know if you think it is a good thing for that boy’s character, Kathleen, to see half a dozen kittens drowned every morning of his life —’

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“‘They would be fillies instead of kittens,’ I said, ‘if that pleased my little prince.’

“‘The supply would fall short of the demand,’ she said spitefully, ‘and even the kittens, happily, won’t last, for lamentation and a voice in Orrock among cats can’t go much farther now —’ In this way she kept on, harping on the same old strings, and I let her, for I really like it *au fond*. I left her to go to watch over his sleep: he is never quite so ravishing as when asleep. How I love him! Sometimes when I first wake in the mornings I have a sharp pang, a feeling that he is not really my child, but by noon I am sure of him, and toward evening I seem to remember the night of my pains when I travailed and bore him; then I rock my love in my arms, and pour the sweet tears over him, and ask him if he, too, remembers. God of Heaven, it is dear and holy to be a little mother, have mercy upon me, and forgive me.

“I frightened him out of sleep at two this morning. I had a dream of some one who is dead, and started out of it screaming and sobbing for mercy; the three night lights were all burning: when I looked around there he was sitting up in his cot, staring at me.”

CHAPTER XXVII

“CHRIS is back in Paris from Moscow,” continued the quaint maid in July, “and makes the Opéra-concert on Tuesday the excuse for not coming here at once. He can’t say that I haven’t been patient: but I won’t wait indefinitely; I must have a father for my child, and if I can’t get it by hints and sighs, I must get it by cries and insistence. It is two months now since he practically asked me to marry him — that was the only construction I could put upon his words; but he hasn’t once shown his nose at Orrock, in spite of all his promises, since he first saw the child. His very offer of marriage may be mere words, words; not written for my sake, or even the child’s, but to satisfy his French ‘honor.’ How I have longed and waited! It is scandalous that he doesn’t hunger to see the child. What would happen to *me*, if I didn’t see him for even an hour? I suppose I should go into a fever. Promises are easily made, my Chris, but they have no weight, and weight is what your little hunchback wants to make her a sweet, humble little wife. There’s one of my tenants on the further side of Shoen’s Clause named Joan Speight who has seventeen sons, all with straight backs. That’s the way, even if it racks you

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to pieces. Let's be patriarchal: '*travaillez, mes femmes!*' Sir C. W. is always 'coming immediately'; but never comes! He writes to ask his own 'Viola,' 'Will you marry me?' or something very like it; 'Viola' says, 'Yes: when?' and he answers, 'Immediately,' meaning fifteen years hence perhaps, if then; but it *must* be within three months, for the dangers of all sorts that will threaten me the moment some one comes out of prison are too awful to think of. He still thinks of his Hannah, *ça se voit*; speaks in his last letter of 'the extraordinary boldness of her statement that it was she who took the viol and trinkets out of his room, when she knew that she did not have them to produce, and when she knew that they were believed to have been taken by a thief. If this was lying, it was that most gallant style of lying which invites and defies disbelief.' 'If,' this was lying! Aren't we *quite* convinced, then, by her non-appearance to claim the child? What an obstinate infatuation! He wants to know if 'the poor woman' can't be found by *me*, in order to see whether she is in need of 'financial aid.' He is a divinely unconscious old Chris. Who doesn't know that Hannah Wilson is in prison? But not *he*: his head is up in the clouds. The rest of his letter is mostly talk about the different schools, says that he is fast acquiring a degenerate weakness for Italian opera, Giardini, Viotti, sends his last orchestral suite and sonata, longs to be again accompanied by 'Viola,' and says that during the height of the fuss and lamentation

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in Paris at the rumor of his death last month, he was abroad in the cafés with his friends, strangers speaking to him of his own death without recognizing him. I shall write immediately after the concert. . . .”

“ . . . Since he knows nothing about what has befallen Hannah, I wrote boldly yesterday to say that as he is causing me to suffer, and as it can only be Hannah who is at the bottom of his delay, my duty to my child has forced me to think of having Hannah punished by the law for her bigamy, unless something is done for my little one quickly. I wrote in quite a new tone, and I’ll wait and see what effect this has upon him. . . .”

“ . . . Hannah has been seen in prison. Yesterday morning Olivia ran to me in the rockery in a state of excitement, saying that a woman named Harriet Davis, who went to London two years ago, got five months’ imprisonment for neglect of her children, and has just come home again, was with Hannah in Wandsworth prison. We at once sent John packing to find and bring her, and in the afternoon had her by stealth a long time in Olivia’s boudoir. But she is known as a liar. She makes out that Hannah is quite a privileged person: had at first to wash clothes and scrub floors, but now is one of the nurses in the prison-infirmiry; ‘almost fainted’ when she saw Harriet Davis. Harriet asked her, ‘Are you guilty?’ ‘Miss Hannah’ answered, ‘So they say.’ One morning Miss Hannah hid the scrubbing-brush of another prisoner, ‘just for a lark,’ and the woman was going to beat Miss Hannah,

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but didn't after; another morning there was a riot, the women were going to set upon a wardress, if Miss Hannah hadn't quieted them; for two weeks Miss Hannah was in the infirmary ill. Livie and I sat with our chins on our hands, listening to the string of incidents — half lies; this is the same Harriet Davis that told Uncle Peter about a voice which said, 'Rest I cannot.' We gave her some money. . . ."

“. . . My threat to inform on Hannah's bigamy has drawn a quick reply from Chris. I knew that he would be horrified at me, but I mustn't mind that now. My dream of motherhood may be drawing toward its close, for when she comes out I shall have everything to fear with regard to the child at least, if I don't then belong to his father. Suppose he ever were taken from me? I should be stripped of all, I should die of ignominy, I should be a maid again. I shall repeat my threat to Chris: he seems aghast at the notion of 'that poor woman being sent to prison, . . .'" etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVIII

“ . . . So I am to be an autumn bride!” she wrote later, “if I don’t go wild beforehand. Livie says that I am ‘cracked.’ She cried on Thursday when she saw him on his little silver throne, looking every inch a monarch with his little scepter and crown, and his purple and ermine; I insisted upon her courtesying, while I knelt, and she burst into tears, saying that it was a shame to play such antics with a poor child. I don’t care, I am quite reckless and happy, but for the physical pains. When I look round my life and see to what a height I have brought it, I repeat to myself, ‘This is great Babylon which I have built.’ Last night I was amusing myself with reading over one of the old volumes” (of her diary), “seven years old, written about that time when Uncle Peter was supposed to be dying, and some one ran over from Paris to see him. I was only twenty then, Chris was twenty-two, some one was twenty-one, Hannah was nearly twenty-five. How time flies! and changes us. I must have been a perfect little goose; the diary is full of laments over my sweating palms and agitations in Chris’s presence. A shrinking little chrysalis I was, as unequal to the world as ‘the rath primrose’; whatever was said

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had a pang in it for me; if I fancied that a tenant didn't treat me with homage on the road, I wrote it down, and suffered half the night. Now I am quite reckless and jolly: I want people to look upon me as a little mama, and to stand agaze at my adoration of my boy. But Olivia says that it is only another phase of the self-same sickness, and that 'Dir kannst du nicht entfliehen.' I don't know why she is so surly lately; she forgets that, in reality, she is only part of my establishment. At any rate, I have changed, I am no longer a muling failure, I have accomplished something, everything; with these hands I have built great Babylon, and there's a trick in Nature that was in league all the time with little me. Seven years ago my highest ambition was to see some one take Chris from Hannah, and now, in a month's time, Chris is to be my own — *husband!* The quickness of the hand deceives the eye! Pick up your skirts, girls, and dance till you drop! There's a white dress making, and making for me; there's a plain gold ring forged somewhere, which is for me: its maker little thought, as he heated and polished it, that it was for *me*: but God thought, 'That one is for the little one.' Pity the pains are getting so bad: seven years ago I didn't have my left leg all in cotton wool. . . ."

“. . . Everything isn't quite smooth. Now comes the news that Willie Dawe tried to hang himself on the third evening after Hannah's trial, but was found and cut down just in time. While I was wondering

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what had become of him, he was in hospital, and now, they say, is weak in the head. Why should he have hanged himself, when he had plenty of money to go on with? Heaven grant that he doesn't let out anything to anybody about me. Olivia says that his mother has written to him to come down, and I have no means to prevent his coming; but, if he dares blab anything, I shall have him charged and sent to Norwich. . . .”

“ . . . I always love this time of the year; the leaves are beginning to fall fast, and sometimes in the early mornings there are meanings in the winds with which I am so akin, that I could faint for bliss. I wonder if any other soul is ever so pierced to the very quick by their bleakness? It isn't over this earth alone that they sorrow to me, but over the despondence of moons that no glass ever spied. Like me they are forlorn, and they bear me echoes of wailings from worlds where I, too, once beat the breast by chill waters. It is when I hear them, and when I am weeping over my boy, that I am truly religious, truly pure in heart, and I worship, understanding that some day all my crookedness will surely be blotted out, and my sins will be remembered against me no more forever. . . .”

“ . . . There have been two grand storms within three weeks, and from everywhere come lamentations of boats and houses and bits of coast-wall being washed away. This is a tempestuous, wet place, and somehow the presence of the sea is in all our lives. Some day

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perhaps the descendants of the hunchback won't have any Hill to call their own. But they say that the salt in the air is good for rheumatism, though I have had sea-baths all the summer, and am worse than ever for it. Dr. Williams says that is the continual crabs and lobsters, but it is no good, I can't give them up: I have tried, but 'Set a hunch to pick a hunch,' as ex-cook Bassett is said to have remarked. I am not going to break any habits now, I am twenty-seven, and perhaps in any case shan't live very long. 'Let us tax and stint and feed ourselves according to habit,' says Montaigne, and not try to be heroes. I am frail in every part, but do very well as I am without athletics. There was a man whom the Spanish Inquisition condemned to sleep on blunt spikes for fifteen years, and afterwards he couldn't sleep on anything else. To the average dormant person the familiar is better than the best, and so every one likes himself as he is. If I could only get the rheumatism and indigestion a little better before the wedding, I shouldn't mind. Ever since that last storm the pains have been sharper. That was an awful night for me. I can almost say that I saw Uncle Peter, though I can't swear that I was awake: but, if it was a dream, how vivid. I haven't written the details, and shan't now, it would make me ill. I woke up every one in the house; many a stronger woman would have died. They say that another storm is predicted by the coastguard next week. . . ."

“. . . I have advised Chris not to trouble himself

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about any divorce from Hannah, however slight the trouble, since there is a law that after seven years of such a marriage one is free. He has never come across her, except that evening when she went to tell him about the loss of the child, and that doesn't count: only he and I know of it; it would be a far-fetched sort of law that could regard him as in any sense her husband now. He wishes, apparently, to be very punctilious, and is quite 'on his honor.' But what his 'own friend' wants is his solid presence, and no more talk and delays. He is to be at Orrock, positively, on the 5th; on the 1st Olivia and I go to London for two days to see after everything, and will be back by the 4th to receive him; the wedding on the 10th; Hannah comes out on the 27th, when I shall be in Italy. I spent the whole of this morning with Mr. Bretherton, talking of the two estates, and the settlement. . . ."

" . . . A long talk this morning" (seven days later) "with Chris in Orrock Park, and I am far from flattered, in spite of his anxiety to be polite. He forgets that I have a pair of sharp eyes, and can read him like a book. I can see that his main motive for marrying me in a hurry isn't love for me, nor even his 'honor' toward the little mother of his child, but my repeated threats to have 'that poor woman' put into prison for her bigamy. If he only knew that I *have* done it, he wouldn't like me, I'm afraid. He may be making as great a sacrifice for Hannah now, if the truth were known, as she made for him when she married Willie

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Dawe. I wonder if it is so? If he really doesn't love me at all, there's plenty of poison in the house: I can take back the crooked back to Him that made it: perhaps He will comfort me and forgive me when no one else will. Anyway I feel that I shan't live long to strut in my Babylon; there's a pretty constant feeling now of something hanging over me, the fall of which will crush me. Some times in the mornings I can only lift my head by an effort, I am so weak and weary; and there's a crack running right through me somehow, which any shock might widen, and not one stone would be left on another. Perhaps it would be as well. C. W., too, is strangely grave: at some moments he looks quite broken-down and lost; then he will take my arm jauntily, and try to be boyish. If he doesn't love me really, I am sorry for him. Perhaps people who are not so accustomed to me as I am to myself see me in an uglier light: it *may* be so: may thunder crush me, if it is! He has only kissed me on the cheeks, everything strictly French so far, and this forenoon in the park he 'good Godded' me about Hannah. 'It is amazing,' he said, 'that a thought of harming that unfortunate woman could ever have entered your mind!' I answered, 'I believed that she was injuring me and my boy, Chris.' 'But good God!' he cried, 'why do you seek to madden me? I haven't seen or heard of the woman since that night in my London chambers! And, in any case, where is your regard for me to think of casting into the common prison a

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woman whom you know that I have already wronged and driven to despair?’

“‘But don’t be angry with me, Chris,’ I said, ‘I am not very well. I know that I have many faults, and have done many, many wrong things, but they have all been done through love of you —’

“‘Well, well,’ he said, patting me.

“‘Will you always remember that?’ I said — ‘through love of you. Our parents made a compact before I was born that we should marry, and though some imp must have been grinning behind their backs, the compact somehow embodied itself with my embryo being. I worship you, Chris, and ask you to be kind to me while I live. I know that you don’t love me —’

“‘Mmm, I do, I do,’ he said.

“‘Then, will you let me be with you after we are married?’

“‘With me! Where?’ he asked, starting.

“‘Anywhere — wherever you are. Promise me at least that for six months of the year Chrisie and I may live with you. Look, he is bringing you flowers’ — Chrisie was racing back to us with a lot of harebells and bachelor-buttons; his father patted his back absently, not thinking of him, saying, ‘I am such a wanderer: if you came with me, you would be wretched, and I shouldn’t be able to play, already I abhor —’

“‘On my account?’ I asked quickly.

“‘Oh, no, never think that, my own friend, just the contrary,’ he said. ‘But perhaps, if you will consider

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Orrock your home, then I could pay you long and frequent visits —’

“‘Chris, you mean to be the death of me, I can see,’ I said.

“‘Heavens!’ he breathed, throwing up his eyes: ‘then, be with me, be with me.’

“‘Is that a promise?’

“‘Yes, a promise.’

“‘It mayn’t be for long, Chris: I feel so frail lately.’

“‘Mmm’ — with a pat.

“‘My presence won’t be irksome to you, Chris?’

“‘Not at all.’

“‘And may I accompany you sometimes, Chris?’

“‘Not in public?’

“‘If I may. You know, Chris, that no one can really accompany you but me.’

“‘That’s only the truth. You shall accompany me.’

“‘And Chris, will you love me just a little as your own little — Oh, pray! say yes! I know that I don’t deserve it, but the great God makes his sun to shine upon the just and upon the unjust.’

“‘I shall certainly love you,’ he said with apparent sincerity, ‘and at least take better care of you than of the first one.’ Just then Chrisie fell flat in moss twenty yards ahead, and I ran down the avenue to him; when I next looked back there was Chris sitting on a tree-trunk, with his face buried in his arms. I don’t know why he was like that on a sudden. . . .”

“ . . . To-morrow evening is for the settlement of

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the estates and signing the marriage-documents. C. W., like all Frenchmen, is a stickler for form and nicety in money-matters, and I am instructed to invite friends to 'assist' at the ceremony, French-fashion: so it will be rather a function. Mr. Bretherton writes that everything is drawn up and ready, and Olivia is in a state of palish excitement. So much for Babylon, and my little star. But one star isn't enough to make one happy somehow: perhaps one should be in league with all the stars. God help me. . . ." etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIX

ON the seventh of that month (November), about nine in the evening, while the marriage documents were being read before some dozen people in the Hall library, Hannah, for her part, was sitting in the churchyard a mile away. On account of good behavior in her late trouble she had been let out a little before the term of her sentence, had now been at large over twenty-four hours, and, as the people in London had not been able to give her any news of her child, she had made up her mind to go down to Orrock, to face old Mr. Langler, and to get some money for the further search, since her funds had run low. But, on going down, she shirked the shame of showing herself, shirked the questions, the eyes of awe and reproach, and went first to her old spot in St. Peter's churchyard, to rest and talk with herself.

She was there from half-past seven to nine, sitting in wet grass, with squalls of drizzle beating upon her, for it was a rough night. She habitually treated in this amazingly reckless way that "health" which she considered divine: and, indeed, she was hardly ever unwell. That night, however, a dark fit was upon her — partly a reaction from her flush of freedom the day

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before, partly a result of seeing round her the wreck of her goods. Her child was gone, her good name, her husband. She felt that to rebuild herself in England now was a hopeless matter, and meant when the child should be found, if ever, to fly to America, where she had some "friends." In this state of her affairs, she came to the Orrock grave to strew no flowers upon it as erewhile, but really to seek a sort of comfort from the dead, since among the living there was none. She made herself fancy that if Sir Peter were living, *he*, at least, would know her, would trust her soul, when her own father, mother, and every one were strangers to her. In her heart she called the old baronet "father," little dreaming how strictly true this was; she thought of the tender shyness with which he used to whisper at her ear, "Uglier than ever, I see," and this made her smile and moan: now, perhaps, hovering about her in the dark, or streaming upon the north wind's ravings, his spirit mourned of her, "Prettier than ever." She was somehow sure of his nearness and of his sympathy, and thinking still of him, recalling his ways and words, tears of love wet her eyes.

But even the old grave failed her that night: "East railings," she wrote of it, "standing on nothing, gone askew, only held up by horizontal bar; east half of slab hanging over nothing. Made me feel really homeless, a stranger, as if nothing solid was left. The whole coast transformed: old St. Cuthbert's tower perhaps five feet nearer cliff-edge, three yards gone

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from east end of Marling's Lane, sea roaring in great breakers under spots where I have planted flowers when a girl; enough to make the geese and cows cry: hungry wash of the sea ever ravening with rough shout to wreck and bereave. 'Oh, earth, what changes hast thou seen!' Must have been some awful storms while in prison: fifteen of graves clean gone from St. Peter's; no longer the same place. 'Here have we no continuing city'; 'all flows,' changes; but thought to myself, 'the fleece of Gideon at least remains dry,' the mind 'invincible': 'therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.' Things were pretty cruel, none on earth that I could really tell my heart to, the very night unpitiful, not a star, moon, nor light over sea, gusts coming shaky from northeast like flapping sails, no one in wide world, only me, the lighthouse, and the dead, old landmarks gone; but still something left inside, one last Gibraltar, and good old whisper, 'The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed.' Through it all, felt strong curiosity to see his coffin, if visible; went to edge at last, and, clinging underneath to railings, poked head up between railings and slab, climbed on to slab, and lay on it, gazing down over east edge. Eyes could just guess out either three or four coffin-ends, five to seven feet down. Hoped eyes would get used to darkness,

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and lay on face perhaps twenty minutes, but still couldn't make out anything. Lighthouse beam in passing didn't lighten even a little the murk under there, and at last something creepy said, 'Suppose slab tips over with you,' so was off quicker than I went on.

But no sooner out in the grass again, than I felt myself bested, and thought of climbing down to see; the cliff-face now lay about half way between flat and steep up above, then twenty-five feet down came a ledge, then another, after which cliff-face went down steep; could see ledges and state of cliff-face during passage of lighthouse beam: cliff-face all white, rough chalk, not polished and hard and discolored as it soon becomes, so landslip couldn't have taken place more than a week or two before; a Y-shaped cake had been taken off cliff from top to bottom, leaving plenty of rough footway up above. Peered along edge, till I came to likely spot about ten feet south of Orrock grave; as I stood there, something said, 'Better not try it': wouldn't listen: but the moment foot was over edge, my heart leapt into my mouth; if I hadn't been a coward should have turned back, but afraid of being called a coward by myself, so went on — a coward either way. Crept northward and downward toward Orrock coffins, wary step by wary step, clinging on with hands, wind blowing clothes about, white as a sheet, if truth were known, and every instant getting more miserably jumpy. 'Go back!' said reason to will;

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no go: will deaf and blind. In daytime should have felt quite safe, have done worse bits in Switzerland, but up another street at dark night — with fifty feet below. Was actually among Orrock coffins when foot slipped — or I fancied so, and utterly lost nerve; once a woman always a woman: caught wildly at coffin just above head, caught *something*, didn't quite know what, something pretty rotten which gave way, and next moment had said my prayers and gone tumbling. Whole rain of things seemed to come with me — had that fancy — like a thousand of bricks. Had caught inside coffin-rim, where lid may have subsided, or else by a handle, and so broken coffin. Didn't fall far, perhaps twelve, fifteen feet, to first ledge, and there lay feeling wronged, like child with cut finger, my hands bruised, face hot, dignity outraged; think I lost consciousness for some minutes, not sure. Ledge five feet wide, happily lower at inner edge than outer. Sat wondering how on earth I was to get back up, absolutely hadn't the nerve to climb; put out my hand to collect my dress, and touched *tibia of leg* — not yet bare! caught back hand and touched something cold lying on dress — man's watch and chain: seemed to be the one I had taken from Chris; I felt it all over, it certainly seemed to be no other; thought I must be stunned and dreaming, but the same twisted links, elephant guard, covered watch — the very same; was pretty scared: even in blessing, the Hand of God terrible; never was afraid of ghosts in my life, but was

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then, badly; seemed to stand face to face with that which cannot be named for excessive greatness, and the wind spoke monstrously to me with human tongue; didn't see Sir Peter, but nearly did, waited, with my hair rising, on the very point of seeing him, breathing his name; at same time lighthouse-beam swept over shiny thing lying on ledge two yards away, the viol: couldn't doubt it the same — no neck, elaborate decoration all over back and belly, sloping shoulders, straight sound-holes long way from purfling — the very same. Understood that they had been buried with Sir Peter: and how awful! couldn't help crying after I had got over ungrateful terrors. Looked about for cardboard box and ring and brush, but couldn't find: box may have got blown away.

“No difficulty now about getting back up to top: for state of the mind everything, and he that has faith, *i. e.*, tip-top spirits inside, shall say to mountain, ‘Be thou removed.’ Couldn't very well take up viol with me, started up without, but after some feet up, went back, tore petticoat into strips, tied string round side-grooves, and climbed with end of string between teeth. Got up all right to coffins, stopped and had a look, heart beating foolishly again, one of them all broken, and — *no tibias!* Climbed twelve more feet to top and drew up viol, which came bumping vocally, that old salt-seasoned pine belly and chrysolite varnish still sound as a nut. Didn't stop to worry about how it had got into coffin: a haste to lay it before Chris within

The Lost Viol

forty-eight hours had me; thought he was on Continent, and made up my mind not to show face at Woodside, but to go and ask Bentley at Hall where he was, and start off straight to him. Wanted to run, but wouldn't; walked slowly. Heard something knocking about inside viol, stopped under lamp in Woodside Lane, and picked out through sound-holes with hatpin two folded parchments, copies of each other apparently; saw my name all about; they seemed to be will of Sir Peter: understood that in that case I must have offended some one, though always thought every one sweet on me, the old self-conceit wrong again. Went on past Woodside, Rover howling piteously after me (chained up); might have stopped, for not a soul anywhere about, but didn't; passed down and on to Brookend, where I washed hands, then through Orrock gates, and by south side made for second inner courtyard, hoping to meet either Bentley or Mrs. Dene on the quiet, when I saw library lighted up. . . ." etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXX

ON a sudden Hannah, with a wet face and looking bedraggled, was standing in a corner of the library with the group of people who were taking part in the rite of settlement; Chris and Kathleen were seated at opposite sides of a table, the others seated round it. Though six crowds of candles hung in a row from the ceiling, their light was somehow local about the chandeliers, and still left a gloom in that old hall; extra candles in smooth old candlesticks were on the table, which reflected their light in its surface; the little crowd of people who were gathered round the table with the candlesticks on it looked lonely and local in the bigness of the place; a butler and a footman in yellow stockings hung mutely upon the scene; all were more or less mute and stiff; Chris Wilson had the smile of a saint who is being led to the stake.

“I didn’t know that visitors were here,” said Hannah to him, “I saw your back through the little courtyard door —”

Chris leapt to his feet with the whisper, “What is it?”

“I’ll wait till another time,” said Hannah: “good evening, Kathleen, how are you, Mrs. Horsnel —?”

The Lost Viol

She was stopped by Chris pointing and crying out, "But isn't that my viol di Gamba?"

"Yes, then," said Hannah, "you may as well hear now before everybody. Some one in the Hall wished me ill six years ago, and hid the things which I took from your rooms. Here is the watch and chain, too. Can't find the ring and nail-brush. They were buried in Sir Peter's coffin, and the sea has rendered them back to me, the hammers of God, pounding doggedly —. Ah, don't mind my weakness—it seems a pretty dreadful thing, and I'm only just out of prison —"

"*Prison!*" breathed Chris, his mind flitting helplessly from one astonishment to another.

"Oh, you didn't know," said Hannah.

"*You out of prison?*" cried Chris with a flush of anger on his brow, "then, why am I going through — What dreadful thing is this, my friends?"

"Nothing very dreadful about it," said Hannah, drying her eyes, with a broken laugh: "everything nice and clean, and all found. Nothing is dreadful, except — one thing. But how came you not to know, when everybody must know?"

"I seem to have been the victim of some conspiracy! You must all be seeking to drive me mad! Bentley, why have I never been told that this lady was in such a case?"

"First of all, Sir Chris," said old Bentley, "I assumed that you knew; secondly, I had instructions not to grieve you by referring to the matter."

The Lost Viol

“Instructions! But from whom?”

“Oh, don’t trouble about that now,” said Hannah. “Look here; I found these two parchments inside the viol —”

A guttural voice stopped her with the words, “*It is all a lie.*”

All eyes had been mostly fixed upon Hannah, but now turned to Kathleen, decked that night in many jewels and flowers; they beheld her standing up, leaning forward, her right palm pressed upon the table, her left pressed against her left temple, as though there was pain there, her eyes staring toward Hannah, yet not somehow *at* Hannah, but at something, it seemed, beyond; when she said in that strange, low voice, “It is all a lie,” every one was hushed: two or three glanced behind Hannah to see whom the little maid was talking to; but before any one could say anything, Hannah’s little boy, dressed in black velvet and gold, ran toward the table out of a recess where he had been playing with one of his nurses: he was running to Kathleen, but catching sight of Hannah, stopped midway between his two mamas, both of whom he loved very much, staring from one to the other, while his father looked to see what he would do, and his mother’s eyes danced merrily at him; and presently, as his memory more awake, he moved toward Hannah, took hold of her skirt, and, with his head thrown back, murmured half to himself, “Mama.” Hannah just rumbled his hair, and pinched his cheek. “There he was again,”

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she wrote of him afterwards, "like a bad penny, prodigal son come home weary of the world." She did not kiss him before the crowd.

"So, Chris," she began to say, "you had my child —" but was interrupted by a cry from Chris and from all, for the little maid had fallen forward over the table, and at once the rather stiff gathering which Hannah had startled became a noise of tongues. "She has fainted!" "It is a stroke!" "Some water quickly!" "Make room — let me hold her head back!" "Quickly, Thomas, Dr. Williams!" — every one was moving, crowding, crying out something, while Chris, whom the sight of suffering always pierced to the quick, rushed from place to place, calling out what no one heard. In the midst of it Hannah said to Mr. Millings and the butler, "You two take her up," and soon the little maid was being borne away; but when she struggled midway, Hannah took her from the men to her shoulder, and ran up the lobby-stairs, the little boy still clinging to her skirt, the crowd following. Above, Hannah went into her old room whence the viol and box had been stolen, and shut out every one, except the boy and Mrs. Dene, with whose help she undid Kathleen's clothes, wet her brow, lit a lamp, did all that a nurse could, awaiting the doctor, then lay on the bed, almost over the dying girl, whispering at one moment of the gospel, and at the next pleading with Kathleen to make an effort, and not die. Presently Kathleen, who was breathing hard in the strait and

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article of death, said in a gross voice, "I buried the things." "Yes, yes," said Hannah, "but make an effort, will you? Summon all your powers —" "I stole him from your room," said Kathleen with fixed eyes. "Yes," said Hannah, weeping, "but Jesus cares nothing about that." Presently again Kathleen said in a feebler voice, "I was his little mother" — sinking every moment. "Were you?" said Hannah, "and you always shall be, I promise you that; here he is, if you will only live; it is a question of will, just say, 'I won't die, life is mine' — Oh! if I could do it for you!" "Too late," said Kathleen, "my will is weakened." She smiled in saying this, and laid her right hand on Hannah's arm: it was like a caress. A minute later she reared, fell back, and the room was suddenly still and rid of her death-rattle, as when a clock stops, and a death stillness is heard where a ticking was heard. Hannah's fingers shut down the lids over the sightlessness of the beautiful eyes.

As she was getting down from the bed, a tap was heard, and the voice of Chris, calling, "Mayn't one come in?"

"Tell him I'm gone to London," whispered Hannah quickly to Mrs. Dene, catching up the child, and hurrying away through a side door.

"You can come in," said Mrs. Dene to those at the door: "the doctor will arrive too late."

Some of them went in, and looked at the still face on the bed. Chris, who could not stand such sights,

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just glanced round the room, and asked, "Where is Lady Wilson?"

"She is gone to London," said Mrs. Dene.

Chris looked dumfounded. He hurried down again to the library, gazed at the viol and watch and chain, read the will, which Hannah had left on the table. No one was there. For some time he sat with his head buried in his arms. Then he rang for old Bentley.

"You know, Bentley," he said in a low voice, "that Lady Wilson contracted a second marriage?"

"Yes, Sir Chris: hence her imprisonment."

"What on earth was her reason, my friend?"

"I have no idea: all the world has been amazed at it."

"Can you remember the man's name?"

"William Dawe, Sir Chris."

"That's the name! Now, how could this man be found, Bentley?"

"Why, he is at present living with his mother at Woodside, within a mile and a half of the Hall, Sir Chris: he attempted suicide after the conviction of Lady Wilson, but was saved, though they say he's rather weak in the head now."

"Could you contrive to have him here to-night?"

"I think so, Sir Chris."

"Try, then, quickly, will you? Go yourself in a trap —"

Old Bentley hobbled off at his fastest gait; and Chris paced the library with quick steps, till in half an hour Willie Dawe, looking scared, was before him.

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"Now, tell me, my friend," said Chris: "how many children do you say that Lady Wilson has had?"

"Only one, sir," answered Willie.

"But since I am the father of that one, why did you tell me that you were?"

"Miss Sheridan told me to say so, sir, begging your pardon."

"Well, let that pass. But might you ever have been the father of a child of Lady Wilson?"

"Oh, God help us! Miss Hannah, sir?"

"I am sure that you tell the truth. But why on earth, then, did she go through a form of marriage with you?"

"As far as I could make it out, sir, she did it for your good."

"Mine! But in what possible way?"

"She heard that you were going to get married in France, sir, and was afraid that you'd get taken up for bigamy, unless she got married first."

At this Chris gazed at Willie Dawe without saying anything, then began to pace the library quickly with a flushed brow, till, dropping into a chair, he said to himself, "But it is pitiful," and buried away his face, shedding tears.

Presently he sprang up, saying, "Bentley! is it true that Lady Wilson is gone to London?"

"I heard Mrs. Dene say so, Sir Chris."

"But what for, my friend?"

"I have no idea, Sir Chris."

The Lost Viol

“But where is she to be found? You, Dawe, do you know her address in London?”

Willie Dawe gave the Guilford Street address.

“Bentley,” said Chris, “tell Grimani that I start for London at once, and find out for me the hour of the next train.”

By 10.15 Chris and his valet were in a train, London bound.

CHAPTER XXXI

NEAR 1 A. M. Chris was knocking up the house in Guilford Street; and presently Mrs. Reid, the landlady, appeared in little more than a shawl.

“I am sorry to have had to disturb you,” said Chris, “but my business is most urgent. Is Lady Wilson here?”

“There never was any Lady Wilson, sir; there’s a Mrs. —”

“It’s the same. Is she not here? Don’t say no.”

“She *was* here earlier in the night, but she’s gone to France.”

“France! What for?”

“That’s more than I can tell you.”

“But it is impossible for her to have gone to France to-night, since she was in Norfolk at 9.30.”

“That’s what she told me: that she was going to France at once.”

“And she left no address?”

“Yes, she did.”

“Ah, good news.”

“She said that if any one called, I was to give him an address which she wrote.”

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“Good news. So that was why she came to you?”

“Yes, and to get me to cash a check for her. I’ll run and get the address.”

Mrs. Reid soon returned with a piece of paper on which was written, “Hannah Wilson, chez Madame Brault, 14 rue Boissy d’Anglas.” Chris, looking at the writing, wondered why it struck some fond chord in his soul: it was because it was “Viola’s” writing; but he was as when one recognizes a face, yet forgets where one saw it.

“This will do excellently,” said he; “thank you very much.”

He then drove to Gray’s Inn; paced his sitting-room in a heat for the morning to come; slept for some time on a couch; and by the first train was off to France. By 5.30 P. M. he was on a fifth floor in the rue Boissy d’Anglas, at that door of Madame Brault’s to which the quaint maid had once come from Châteaubrun, in order to tell Hannah that Chris was going to marry Yvonne de Pencharry-Strannik.

“Is Madame Wilson here?” he asked of the *pension-boy*.

“No, sir, not here.”

“Is she expected?”

“Not that I know, sir. I’ll ask.”

It turned out that Hannah was not even expected, and Chris drove away in very low spirits. Stopping his carriage at the first post-office, he sent a telegram to one Rowland-Jones of Cavendish Square, London,

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saying, "Am in the greatest trouble. Pray come at once to me in rue de Rome."

He passed a wretched night, seeing no one; but when he opened his eyes the next morning, there was Rowland-Jones, a naval officer, a man of square brow and strong eye, at his bedside.

"Oh, thank Heaven, here you are, Jack! How splendid of you," said Chris; "now I am safe"; and he poured out the whole story of Hannah to Jack.

"But where's the trouble?" asked Jack: "how could you expect to find her in Paris at five yesterday when she couldn't possibly have left London the night before?"

"I had forgotten that," said Chris meekly.

"She's probably now at the rue Boissy d'Anglas," said Jack: "heave your old carcass overboard that dream-ship, and let us be there before she goes out."

"Had any breakfast?"

"No, and no particular appetite: I am in love with your wife, Chris."

"Isn't she splendid!"

"There seem to be other sorts of music than the 'octave and perfect cadence,' Chris."

"I shall have her to-day, Jack!"

"Perhaps: and she you to-morrow. Look alive now."

"*Grimani!*" shouted Chris, hastening out of bed, and before long the two friends were driving to the rue Boissy d'Anglas. At Madame Brault's Chris asked if Madame Wilson was come.

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“Come and gone, sir,” was the answer.

“Gone!”

“She arrived at nine last night, sir, slept here, and went away this morning at half-past seven.”

“What is one to do, my friend?” said Chris, half crying, to Rowland-Jones.

“Did she leave no address?” asked Rowland-Jones.

“An address in Normandy, sir, for letters to be sent.”

“Let us have that address.”

“She did not leave it to be given to any one, sir.”

“Oh, but we are exceptions,” said Rowland-Jones: and a battle began between him and the boy, ending in a British victory at a cost of ten francs. Hannah had left the address, “Villa des Lilas, St. Pierre-lès-Elbeuf, Normandy.”

“We must be after her instantly,” said Rowland-Jones, as they stepped into the carriage.

“But we have had nothing to eat!” said Chris.

“We must eat train food.”

“Let’s stop and wire to Grimani to follow with —”

“Ah, let’s not mind about Grimani; we mustn’t lose an instant: I’ll tell you why presently.”

But at the Gare St. Lazare they had to wait ten minutes for a train, and during that time Chris wired to Grimani to follow with the fiddles and mute. They then set out.

“Look here, Chris,” said Rowland-Jones over breakfast in the train: “one of two things, either she doesn’t want you —”

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“But can any love be like hers for me?” groaned Chris.

“You are thinking of five years ago, Chris; five years is more than a lustrum in the story of a woman’s heart —”

“Oh, she despises women.”

“But we only despise what we are in peril of resembling, lad. We worship the cow, but scorn the coward. Lady Wilson, be sure, is dimly conscious of her nether half, which duly exists. Let’s be in no doubt as to her sex, Chris. Either she doesn’t want you, or — she’s playing a game: quite possibly the latter. Why else should she scurry through Normandy, spend one night in Paris, and then be off to Normandy again in this way? I’ll bet that the woman is only playing tit for tat; you once ran away from her, and she says, ‘Now it is my turn, let him catch me, if he really wants me.’ It’s feminine because simple. Women, of course are just so elementary as the mastodon. I hope that I am right in this case. If so, our plan is to catch her *quickly* — to pounce upon her by mere grimness of forced marches, or she’ll lead us a dance over half the globe, until funds fail her.”

“It is cruel, my friend,” said Chris.

“It is anything but amusing: and it would be no use our sitting down somewhere, waiting for her to relent and turn up of her own accord. She evidently means to be won by eagerness and strategy, and will never give herself. Ah, I’d rather like to have the permanent handling of this particular gamy lass.”

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“My dear Jack, don't desire my wife.”

“Oh, after you Chris: gamy and bigamy are unrelated, to say nothing of trigamy. We'll soon see what Elbeuf has in store —”

Ninety minutes from Paris they arrived at Elbeuf, got a trap, and drove two miles to St. Pierre, to find the Villa des Lilas on the top of a hill in the middle of pine forests. But Hannah was not there. “Madame Wilson,” said the proprietress, “after an hour's stay, left for Gournay-en-Brey, messieurs”: and to Gournay-en-Brey the two friends hastened.

CHAPTER XXXII

AT the end of three days' hunt after the flights and dodges of "an Englishwoman in blue nurse's costume with a child," Chris gave up, saying:

"I can't Jack — I must have a decent night's rest — I am utterly done for with the damned trains — I am not made for this kind of work —" and he threw himself down wearily. They were now at an old inn in the romantic country round Domfront, in William-the-Conqueror land. They had just been told that Hannah was no longer at the inn. It was about nine in the night.

"But doesn't she ever *sleep*?" asked Rowland-Jones: "she must have the strength of three mules; and that boy with her — how on earth does she do it? She must have reared him on lioness-milk, the splendid wretch."

"I, for my part, couldn't keep it up to-night, my friend," said Chris. "To-morrow morning we will resume operations —"

"That's as you like, Chris, but never say that Jack Rowland-Jones was beaten by this lady. *I* am prepared to go on now, and to go on till I am no more; give me *carte blanche* to act alone, and I even say that

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I shall have her here within twenty-four hours, if she have the cunning of the devil and the vigor of a cart-horse."

"Do so, if you like," said Chris; "but when are they going to bring us something to eat —?"

"Just get up now, and write me an authorization to act for you," said Rowland-Jones.

Chris got up, and was in the act of writing out a statement that Mr. Rowland-Jones was his friend, when from behind the old wainscoting was heard the call, "*Papa!*" and he leapt to his feet.

"That your child's voice?" asked Rowland-Jones excitedly.

"I think so!"

Rowland-Jones darted to one of the two doors, only to find it locked, caught up his hat, and rushed out of the other. Though solidly built and of a certain age, he was nimble, and could run.

Chris awaited his return eagerly. But he had to eat his meal alone, for Rowland-Jones did not come. He sat, nodding with sleep, till one o'clock, but his friend did not appear.

All the next day Rowland-Jones did not come. Chris was like a lost man: had no idea what to do now, did not know where Grimani was, had no fiddles: he could only stroll about and moon, with a forlorn movement of the eyebrow.

And like that first day a second passed. Chris was now in purgatory. But on the third morning he re-

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ceived three letters: one was from his friend, and this he tore open first. It told of Rowland-Jones's adventures during the past two days, and of his failure to catch Lady Wilson. "I actually saw her," he wrote, "at the station at Bayeux. As I rushed upon the platform, I distinctly caught sight of her head in the velvet bonnet looking out eagerly of a window of the train. She drew in at sight of me. The train was already moving; and I just had time to pitch into the nearest compartment, without a ticket. I felt that I had her safe now: we were in the same train — a through train to St. Lo. Imagine my disgust on reaching St. Lo. to find that she wasn't in the train. I can only conclude that, as a signal was against us at one place, she must have leapt upon the metals on the off-side when the train stopped. That's the only hypothesis: the night was dark. I'm sure I don't know what to do next: she is quite lost, . . ." etc.

Having read this Chris tore open the second letter: the handwriting struck him as familiar: he glanced first to the bottom, and saw — "Viola"!

"Beloved," he read, "it is a long time since I have written you. There have been reasons, apart from the fact that it is you who owe me a letter. But let there be no more letter-writing between us henceforth: for the long-loved day will have come, even as you read this, when Viola will be ready to leave all to be with you. Meet me, then, at the Gare St. Lazare to-morrow at 2.15 P. M., under the clock. I shall have

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in my hand the gift beyond price which I have so long promised you.

“Yours till death,

“VIOLA.”

Chris was so accustomed to the notion of “Viola” knowing of his doings in mysterious ways that he hardly asked himself how she could know of his stay in that little inn. He had again the old thrill on reading her letter. Already he had guessed that the quaint maid could not have been “Viola,” and here was the real “Viola,” the romantic, the high-minded, about to show herself, to give herself, at last. He was all at once eager to set out, curious to see her, to see her gift. But into his eagerness stole an awkward thought of Hannah. That Hannah might be “Viola” never entered his head; if for no other reason, because the Hannah whom he had married at Orrock couldn't play the violin.

He was so flushed by Viola's letter, that he hardly had the patience to open the third letter: he did so, however, glanced at the bottom, and saw — “Hannah”!

Hannah had written this letter in a round hand very different from “Viola's,” and she said:

“DEAR CHRIS:

“If you really wish to see me, I shall be on the sea-cliffs above Barc-la-Forêt to-morrow at 2 P. M. sharp. Barc-la-Forêt is a village two miles north of

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Coutances. I hope your friend, Mr. Rowland-Jones, continues well?

“Your wife,

“HANNAH.”

On reading this, Chris was in the greatest joy and the greatest trouble at the same time. One of two ladies, he felt with bitterness, would wait in vain for his coming that day: for he could not be at the coast to meet Hannah at 2 P. M. and in Paris to meet “Viola” at 2.15. He must therefore choose between them the one that he liked the best; and he was so torn by this trial, that, at one time, pacing about the old flagstones of the inn-kitchen, he threw his arms up, crying out that all the world must be in a conspiracy to drive him mad.

However, he *had* to make up his mind, so, having sent a telegram to Rowland-Jones where to join him, by 1 o'clock, an hour too soon, he was walking about the sea-cliffs above Barc-la-Forêt. In the village itself a *fête* was going on, and very faint tones of music were caught by his ear among the noises of the wind. It was a boisterous day, but very bright and warm for that time of year. The ground up there was hard, grown in patches with grass and scrub; and pretty far away down below was the sea, a lovely sight, as it were a very great host jogging northeastward on a gay pilgrimage. Chris had to hold on his hat against the puffs of the wind, and presently, tired of its power over him, he lay with his back to a rock, gazing up at

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the clouds and blue of the sky: all was large-minded beyond wonder — the sky, the sea, the earth — the whole a-move as at some heyday and fair, and soon he had a feeling that the pillars of all that Walhalla tottered upon him, that the very cliff under him was adrift with the rest of the dream-stuff and pageant; his spirit seemed to swoon into that awful revelry of the Most High; he became *It*; and no longer knew if he was on his head or on his heels. Scrambling in a scare to his feet, he walked about again with the winds in his ears, eager to hold Hannah in his arms, but grieved to the heart, too, for “Viola.” It was 2 o’clock. At that hour “Viola,” he thought, was already perhaps on her way to the Gare St. Lazare, and she would be waiting for him in vain, with the gift in her hand, she who had for two years been his spiritual wife, to whom he had sworn many oaths of love. There, however, was Hannah coming up over the bend of the hill, with her legs expressed, and her face held sideward to it, as when a lady is shy, and blushes; and in her hand was the little boy’s. Chris hurried to meet her.

“Oh, you did come,” she said laughing.

“Is it surprising?” he asked.

“It is, a little. What about “Viola’? Did you send any one to meet her?”

“I had no one to send. How on earth do you know about ‘Viola’?”

“I know very well. If you had gone to meet her

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instead of me, you wouldn't have met her, and you wouldn't have seen *me* for another year."

"Why would I not have met her? Hannah! Are you 'Viola'?"

"You would have known it, if you had known the handwriting and mind of your wife, as a man should. As for the gift, I'm afraid it's a little stale to you now, but here it is, such as he is. See, I give him a kiss to give to you."

Chris took the boy to his breast, saying, "I love him almost as much as I worship his dear, dear mother."

"You do love me now?"

"Oh, Hannah."

"Well, it's nice to hear. Tell it me once secretly in my ear out here on this lonely hill, so that even our child mayn't hear, and then I'll never forget."

"With a joy as deep as being," whispered Chris, "with a most fresh and wonderful ravishment."

"All right, that'll keep Hannah going for some years, like everlasting bread to feed upon in the heart by faith. Here's my hand, Chris, 'with my heart in it.'"

Chris took and kissed the hand, and was about to kiss more, when Hannah said, "*Look,*" and he saw Rowland-Jones and Grimani coming along the cliffs from the north.

"That man and I will remember each other," said Hannah, with fun in the corners of her mouth.

"Lady Wilson, I think?" said Rowland-Jones when he came up.

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“Mr. Rowland-Jones?” said Hannah with a grave face: “surely we have seen each other before?”

“I have had the honor of seeing part of your ladyship,” said Rowland-Jones demurely.

“And not the best part either, I think!” cried Hannah: “I am strongest about the feet!”

“I kiss them with sincerity,” said Rowland-Jones.

“Well, no, don’t take it so abjectly,” said Hannah: “it was only a chance — if I hadn’t beaten you, you would have beaten me. I happened to overhear you in the inn at Domfront when you vowed to Chris that you would catch me or perish, so thought to myself, ‘Well, then, now for it.’ But it was only a chance — My husband’s two best friends are equals, and can shake hands.”

A hearty handshake was exchanged, and they went down the hill, till they came to the village *fête*, where all kinds of merriment were on foot; and here it came into Chris’s head to give himself to Barc-la-Forêt that one day in Time, and play. He had not handled a fiddle for days, and the spirit came upon him. He caught his Bergonzi from Grimani, and struck in with the other fiddles on the green, nor was it long before he alone was playing. Never was the ear of Barc-la-Forêt tickled by the gospel of such a mirth; every one forsook all else, and crowded to jig round the frivolous seraph dropped down among them, wondering that out of that staid monsieur such riches of fun should gush: there he stood — stout, respectable — in his

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frock-coat and top-hat; the top-hat, however, was rather cocked back, one leg cocked forward, and, if one looked closely, there was a certain butting and instigation of his brow which was in the very spirit of revel and godless company. They all came and jigged, Hannah jigging with Rowland-Jones, till he was out of breath, then with the village-lads, then with Rowland-Jones again, letting slip side-glances at Chris, her legs plying in a stubbornness of glee, answering still to the unrelenting spur of his joy, while still the brook of his improvization flowed on, and the dancing grew ever larger and crazier round the giggle of his G and the skittishness of his tittering chanterelle. It was near five o'clock when he tossed the fiddle to Grimani, smiled with Hannah, and said to Rowland-Jones, "I am hungry, my friend."

They three, with Chrisie and Grimani, then drove in a cart to high-set Coutances, dined there, and went on to Caen, from which Rowland-Jones took train to Ouistreham, the port of Caen, so as to get back to England; while Chris and Hannah went to Rouen; from Rouen they started the next day for Orrock.

THE END

