

The COLUMN-



Charles Marriott

OP.
21
90



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

7.50
e. n⁺.

The Column

NOTABLE NOVELS

- THE CARDINAL'S SNUFF-BOX. By HENRY HARLAND.
COMEDIES AND ERRORS. By HENRY HARLAND.
GREY ROSES. By HENRY HARLAND.
SENATOR NORTH. By GERTRUDE ATHERTON.
PATIENCE SPARHAWK. By GERTRUDE ATHERTON.
THE CALIFORNIANS. By GERTRUDE ATHERTON.
THE GREATER INCLINATION. By EDITH WHARTON.
DERELICTS. By W. J. LOCKE.
IDOLS. By W. J. LOCKE.
A STUDY IN SHADOWS. By W. J. LOCKE.
THE WHITE DOVE. By W. J. LOCKE.
THE REALIST. By HERBERT FLOWERDEW.
A CELIBATE'S WIFE. By HERBERT FLOWERDEW.
THE COLUMN. By CHARLES MARRIOTT.
A YEAR OF LIFE. By W. S. LILLY.
THE DISSEMBLERS. By THOMAS COBB.
CARPET COURTSHIP. By THOMAS COBB.
MR. PASSINGHAM. By THOMAS COBB.
THE JUDGMENT OF HELEN. By THOMAS COBB.
IN HIS OWN IMAGE. By FREDERICK BARON CORVO.
THE ARISTOCRATS. [Shortly.
THEY THAT TOOK THE SWORD. By NATHANIEL
STEPHENSON. [Shortly.
SEVERANCE. By THOMAS COBB. [Shortly.
THE JUST AND THE UNJUST. By RICHARD BAGOT.
[Shortly.

IN NEW YORK ONLY

- A DAUGHTER OF THE VINE. By GERTRUDE
ATHERTON.
CASTING OF NETS. By RICHARD BAGOT.
THE VISITS OF ELIZABETH. By ELINOR GLYN.
SCRUPLES. By THOMAS COBB.

JOHN LANE: LONDON & NEW YORK

THE COLUMN

A NOVEL

By CHARLES MARRIOTT

JOHN LANE: THE BODLEY HEAD
LONDON & NEW YORK . MCM1

Thirteenth Thousand

Printed by
Billing & Sons, Ltd.
Guildford

To My Wife

2136999

CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. MRS. BARGISTER INTERVENES	1
II. THE MONITORS OF TREGOTHA	8
III. DAPHNE	16
IV. A LITTLE MUSIC	23
V. THE SEA-PATH	30
VI. BASIL WARING	40
VII. MISS WILLIAMS	48
VIII. MORTHOVER HOUSE	60
IX. THE PHILOSOPHER, THE ENTHUSIA- AST, AND THE OTHER PERSON	73
X. YOUNG IDEAS	85
XI. FAUNA	95
XII. FLORA	108
XIII. THE RENUNCIATION OF MR. BAR- GISTER	120
XIV. POINTS OF VIEW	133
XV. VIE DE BOHÊME	143
XVI. RUS IN URBE	156
XVII. AUTOBIOGRAPHY	169
XVIII. ENDOGENOUS	179
XIX. HERBERT IS UNORTHODOX	189

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
XX. CATHCART DISCOURSES	202
XXI. THE CHURCH MILITANT	216
XXII. SANGRAAL	227
XXIII. GEMMATION	239
XXIV. DOWNSITTING AND UPRISING	249
XXV. WALPOLE	259
XXVI. IN EXITU ISRAEL	271
XXVII. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMOTIONAL IDEA	289
XXVIII. THE GREAT SWEET MOTHER	304

The COLUMN

CHAPTER I—*Mrs. Bargister Intervenes*

MRS. BARGISTER had the best intentions in the world, but she was heavy-handed. Her methods were eminently British; slow judgment, hasty action, and afterwards a gathering up of pieces with tears and prolonged explanation of "how it happened." She felt vaguely that she had been taken in; that Edward Hastings had no right to conceal resources so disastrous to the hand of correction; and, as she retreated through the laurels, in spite of her Roman carriage her immediate need was condolence.

Her agitation obscured her judgment, or surely Caspar Gillies was the last person she should have chosen,—Caspar Gillies, the professional cynic whom chance had made a village doctor. He, lounging meditatively in the opposite direction, met her by the gate. Wavering between curiosity as to her excitement and a desire to escape, Caspar was nailed. His training enabled him to affect solicitude, and his genius for analysis eased the flow of Mrs. Bargister's confidences.

"You see, my dear,"—Mrs. Bargister would have my-deared a Cardinal,—"you being a doctor, I can speak about such a thing; otherwise, of course——" and Mrs. Bargister's eyelids fluttered modestly.

"One has to talk about these things," said Caspar, impressively.

"Exactly what I said to George. I——"

The Column

“Apropos of——?” interrupted Caspar, without mercy.

“Well, to be plain, if girls will bathe at all hours of the day and in the public sea, so to speak, what can you expect? Not that I would say a word against bathing; I always made the woman give Emily seven dips, until I found out that her children were down with measles. However——”

“But I thought Miss Hastings always bathed under the Folly—nobody ever goes there.”

“Johnnie——”

Caspar was startled into a whistle.

“Not by *any* wish of mine, I assure you, Dr. Gillies. I often say to George, ‘Mr. Hastings’ rights extend to the foreshore, and it’s only neighbourly to respect them.’ Still, you know what boys are!”

“Then I understand that Johnnie surprised——”

“Oh, nothing so dreadful as that; and I must say in common justice that Angélique shouted to him. But Johnnie thought it was because she was afraid he would let off the gun.”

“Gun?” echoed Caspar, drearly.

“Didn’t I tell you? How stupid of me! You see, my dear, yesterday was Johnnie’s birthday, and his father gave him a most dangerous kind of gun they call a double-barrelled, hammerless ejector. If boys must play with fire-arms, I should have said that they ought to begin with something simpler,—the ordinary kind, you know.” She waved mysteriously. “You put in the gunpowder with an eggcup, or something—quite harmless. However, I suggested a magic-lantern or Peter Parley, but George is so great on the English country gentleman and all that, you know, so I gave in.”

“I see; then Johnnie went out to kill something.”

“Well, as I was saying, Johnnie took his gun and set

Mrs. Bargister Intervenes

off to shoot sea-gulls. When his father heard about it afterwards, he nearly thrashed him; he said it was only tourist cads who shot gulls, though I can't, for the life of me, see why the shots hurt them any more than they would a partridge. Of course, I know the superstition; and then there's—'He prayeth best'—how does it go on?"

Caspar coughed with meaning.

"So Johnnie went down the creek because I asked him to call at Bolitho's. Then he turned the corner by the boat wharf, and came along the sands. He had got as far as Folly corner when Angélique shouted and waved. Of course the boy thought it was because of the gun. He called out 'It's all right' or something, and was going on. But!——"

She ceased dramatically.

"Did he come back and tell you?" said Caspar, with inward scorn.

"No, and we should never have known how things were going on but for an accident. During tea Johnnie began to talk about Daphne and praised her 'stroke.'"

"Let me see," said Caspar, maliciously, "how many dogs have you?"

Mrs. Bargister gazed at him with round eyes of terror.

"You don't mean to tell me that there is hydrophobia about?"

Caspar regretted his wanton scholarship. "Oh, no," he said; "quite stamped out since I took old Hawkins to Paris. I was thinking of Johnnie's sporting habits,—the gun, you know. But with reference to Hastings, I don't quite understand how this little—accident—made him rude to you?"

"Don't you see?—that great long-legged girl—eighteen, if a day—and motherless!"

The Column

She sighed, indicating unlimited maternity.

“Of course they do these things abroad, but a certain discretion—you will understand?”

She suggested ample costume in expressive pantomime.

Caspar writhed joyously, but invisibly. He followed Mrs. Bargister's mental windings unerringly; he tracked her into the innermost recesses of domesticity, unheeding the finger-posts of discretion.

“So I said, ‘George, my dear, if it is only for her sake, somebody should speak;’ you know the advantages men are always ready to take?”

She nodded the familiar tragedy of melodrama. Caspar almost spied the Baronet in her eye.

“Of course you know what George is; he said in his absurd way, ‘If more boys had Johnnie's experience, there would be fewer libertines.’ That may be—I don't say a word against that; there's Keats, you know, and his Saint Somebody's eve. But it's the girl herself, you see.”

Caspar encouraged her with dark legends of maidens without guile, and unprincipled strangers.

“Exactly; that's just what I said. There are other things besides propriety.” She blinked sagely. “Who but a mother can—flannels, you know; and since this cheap flannelette came in—— Of course, for all I know she may be well supplied—not that Johnnie would notice, indeed he burnt the chest protector I made him; boys always do. Still, I wonder.”

She stopped to meditate.

“Shouldn't think so,” said Caspar; “shy boy, Johnnie,—get away as fast as he could, I should say.”

“Well, my dear, as I was saying, I told George that I felt it my duty as a mother,”—Caspar counted her

Mrs. Bargister Intervenes

offspring in her face,—“my duty as a mother to give Mr. Hastings a little sound advice about a proper discretion in young persons and hygienic clothing. So I put on my bonnet and came over in the most friendly way,—I assure you I never dreamed of giving offence; and—ouff!”

She quivered at the memory.

“Hastings didn’t like?” ventured Caspar.

“My dear, the man was positively indecent. ‘Picture yourself, Mrs. Bargister, as God made you, in a hay-field.’”

Caspar, with heroic mastery of life, murmured sympathy.

“Apropos of what?”

“Oh, some ridiculous theory of his about bringing up children in sympathy with nature. As I said, so far as that goes I’ve taught all mine to look at grass and things, but when it comes to taking off our clothes!”

Caspar began to see that Hastings had enjoyed the interview; that for once he had departed from his usual reticence and pelted the lady with axioms, less in the hope that she would mark and learn than for the sheer joy of perplexing her. He pictured the scene,—Hastings gazing at Mrs. Bargister with an expression of thoughtful benevolence, now and again letting fall some concentrated paradox on the Training of the Young. Mrs. Bargister would stand—Caspar felt sure of that, sitting would mean compromise—flushed, panting, passing swiftly from heated argument to helpless abuse. It was the spectacle of the swordfish and the whale. When Hastings tired of the fun, he would observe with almost abject civility,—

“And now, my dear Mrs. Bargister, I beg you will excuse me; I must now go and attend to my cows.”

The Column

Mrs. Bargister continued,—

“So I said, ‘What you say about physical education is no doubt very fine, and, for the matter of that, I like to see young people run, skip, and be happy—always within the bounds of moderation. Besides, there is such a thing as becoming and unbecoming; what is proper enough at one time may be shocking at another.’ You will understand, my dear, that I approached the subject most delicately.”

Caspar smiled inwardly.

“And all I could get out of him was, ‘Let us aspire, Mrs. Bargister, to the full-blooded chastity of the Huntress’—disgusting!

“Now I ask you, what is to become of that poor girl, with no one to guide her but a man who talks like that? And then the way she goes about! Of course there’s Angélique, but Angélique is as blind as a bat. Besides, those foreigners! Oh, don’t tell me!”

She shook herself free of any suspicion of tolerance, and Caspar, judging with disappointment that her choicer vein was exhausted, pleaded a forgotten visit. With the assurance of his sympathy he disentangled himself from the vaguer outskirts of her complaining.

“You mark my words,” came to him from Mrs. Bargister’s retreating figure. “If these things are allowed to go on, there will be a dreadful scandal.”

Caspar moved on, his features for the moment transfigured with joy.

“I would have given my back teeth to have seen that interview,” he murmured. Then with great solemnity he addressed himself to the horizon.

“Lord!” he said gloomily, “and Hastings is only a neighbour. What will she do when she has a sort of right to interfere?”

Mrs. Bargister Intervenes

He cut viciously at a nettle.

“Of course—I trust I can manage my own house; I’m not afraid, but it’s the weariness of it.”

He took off his hat and thoughtfully smoothed his crown.

“I shall be eight-and-thirty next October. I can stand George.” He took the whole landscape into his confidence. “George is decent enough; so are the rest of ’em. But she!”

He shook his head sadly and marched off down the road.

CHAPTER II—*The Monitors of Tregotha*

EDWARD HASTINGS was considered not to have done justice to the circumstances of his birth, which were of the character vaguely termed romantic. There is nothing so tickles the palate of the average person, or whets his anticipation, as romance, provided always, since a breach of social laws is implied, that it happens out of the family.

His father was a small farmer who read Virgil; hence Tragedy was almost a foregone conclusion. His mother, the Countess of Tregotha, a ten months' widow wintering at Bath, met and capped verses with the rustic scholar on a thymy down. What madness was born of the ring of verse was not on the moment disclosed, and the lady's first impulse on her return to London was in the direction of pocket generosity. There was a characteristic interview between the Countess and her solicitor,—she panted lyrically whilst the other sawed in prose. The yeoman solved the matter in a letter, also characteristic: "Come; my April lambs cry for you, and the hawthorn is budded for our bridal. Do not answer this except in one way."

There was a hurried but undeniable marriage; indeed the production of the register is to this day the one coloured streak in the gray life of a dusty sexton. But the morning after the wedding the bride was spirited away, by what ingenuity of relatives was never known.

The farmer poet rode horses to the death and himself to madness in vain pursuit; and at last, a broken man, found peace by looking down the barrels of his gun. The stratagem, if, as may be supposed, aimed at the

The Monitors of Tregotha

prevention of succession, was in vain; and on New Year's Day Edward Hastings, by his entrance into the world, cut short the headlong life of his mother. He survived a colourless childhood with guardians whose relation to himself he never cared to know; was sent to school and Oxford, money and advice always coming through the same impersonal channel. When of age he was called to an interview with the man of law, now feeble and still sawing prose.

Edward Hastings found himself of an assured though moderate income, and a small property in his mother's county. He elected to travel, and for eight-and-twenty years Penresco—so the estate was named—was given over to the sea-mew. At the end of that time he returned to England, a widower with one daughter aged nine. He was last from Greece, where it was understood he had buried his wife, though of her nothing was ever known. Penresco was set in order, and the pair settled themselves in a life of Arcadian simplicity.

As was only natural, on Hastings' return the story of his parents was revived in the corners of newspapers, and the dusty sexton earned many shillings; but no revelation was made of the identity of the actors in the abduction of the day-old bride.

From the offspring of so vivid a union the world naturally expected high romance. It found in Edward Hastings the quiet scholar, farming his own land, it is true, but devoid alike of his father's recklessness and his mother's ardour. Time passed, and as Hastings did nothing to justify his lineage, a disappointed neighbourhood was content to take him on his own merits, which were socially inoffensive. He neither shunned companionship with his kind nor courted it with alluring eccentricities; his peculiarities, such as they were, being

The Column

in the direction of his daughter's education. From the fact that this aimed at physical development more than is usual at the present day, when the object is clearly physical exercise, some rose to the hope that Hastings intended to place his daughter on the music-hall stage, thus vindicating his inherited right to startle society; but nothing of the sort happened. The simplicity of the girl herself and the reticence of the middle-aged Frenchwoman who guarded her, baffled inquiry; and Hastings, in spite of his gentleness, was not the man one would question on a personal matter.

The people of Tregotha described him as commonplace; and as he suggested their own mental superiority, he was mildly popular, his irony being turned inwards. The belated discovery that he was the author of a book of essays which had ruffled the pools of ethical opinion, though it gained for him scattered paper friends, did not alter the estimate his immediate neighbours had formed of him. In his casual intercourse with the inhabitants of Tregotha, Hastings never made the mistake of using the wrong currency. Reading his man in the lift of an eyelid, he was ready with the image and superscription common to either, and the other went away accounting himself the richer by some small change. Hastings carefully reserved his smile for the privacy of his study.

But this method, however finished, had its disadvantages, and that he should be patronised was inevitable; though for all his pliancy he possessed a toughness of fibre in what he deemed essentials, discovered sooner by the clumsy, as Mrs. Bargister; later or not at all by the more wary. Hastings lived so secure within the circle of his enthusiasms that he was seldom forced to suffer the tedium of explanation. Not that he dreaded the assaults of criticism; but a sense of humour and of pro-

The Monitors of Tregotha

portion saved him from qualifying his beliefs with argument. He, as it were, employed a light troop of mercenaries for skirmishing with debaters, whilst a ring of motionless convictions guarded himself. Now and again, as Mrs. Bargister discovered, he allowed a glimpse of these stalwarts; but this was only for the inconveniently obtuse, who are incredulous until absolutely dragooned.

His experience of life taught him the folly of a gnarled exterior; he knew that sooner or later the crust gives way or dissolves, and he practised rather the methods of the young sole, adapting his outer envelope to the colour of his environment. Therefore few, and those at a distance, suspected the enthusiast. If the man could be held local of any place, he was of Greece; here he impinged, and the intensity of contact suggested to the competent observer a key to his character, though there was but little in his habits to corroborate the theorist and nothing to encourage the bore. His sympathy with the land was neither the laboured product of the study nor the loose worn habit of the tourist; but rather as if some occult influence made him spiritually free of her cities, the belated witness of her prime. Indeed, so abstract was his devotion that, while the best authority on a fragment, he himself had never cared to play the collector; and his rooms at Penresco were innocent alike of the doubtful spoil of travel and the polished inaccuracies of the camera. Keenly aware of the futility of any attempt to graft upon an alien civilisation the actual details of antiquity, he escaped the snares that wait for the archæologist, and for whatever stimulus his imagination required relied upon symbols.

He brought home with him a single Doric column—how procured he never stated—and a few cuttings of laurel. The shaft he caused to be set up on a little

The Column

eminence overlooking the sea, and in full view of his bedroom window, that his waking eyes might rest first upon white marble and the august simplicity of sky and sea. A little plot of ground, about half an acre, surrounded the column; here he planted his laurels and allowed no greener thing. They formed a semicircle open to the sea, and at the time of Mrs. Bargister's discomfiture the place was already a grove, known locally as Hastings' Folly. From the sea the column was a sailing mark,—a slender white finger, sky pointing, backed at the base with sombre green.

The one person who found the essential Hastings was, curiously, the vicar of the parish. Priest and pagan, equally honest and in earnest, met and mingled their enthusiasms upon the soil of Athens. A frankness of intercourse impossible to men less sincere, existed between them; and neither dreamed of attacking the other's convictions. Perhaps their safety lay in their mutual ignorance and distrust of physical science; Hastings had arrived at his position by no process of reason; consequently there were no logical steps by which he could be guided back again; and Herbert Waring was too clear-sighted ever to attempt to resolve the incompatibility between inspiration and deduction.

Herbert Waring had gained his hold over Tregotha by sheer arrogance,—arrogance sweetened by a sense of humour. When he succeeded his indolent predecessor, he found the place inhabited by two classes of people,—Methodists who were at least outwardly respectable, and church-goers of doubtful reputation, given moreover to the occasional practice of stone-throwing.

Waring was too masculine to wish for martyrdom; and while refusing to abate his methods in the slightest particular, announced to his parishioners that he had

The Monitors of Tregotha

come to stay. Matters became so stormy that he received a warning from his bishop. He answered in person—and his cassock. The bishop opened his eyes, but, a victim to the young priest's manner, suggested moderation.

“My lord,” said Waring, “the church has been likened to a ship; moreover, Tregotha is a fishing village. Will you not therefore grant me the discretion of a captain, even in the matter of rope's-ending?”

“But,” said the bishop, referring to a letter, “I hear of unnecessary candles—of incense.”

“My lord,” replied Waring, “give me a year and you will hear no more of candles, nor even of incense.”

The bishop tapped on the table, and looked at the young man through half-closed eyelids for full five minutes. At the end of that time he said dryly, “Do you know my wife?”

“No, my lord,” said Waring, surprised.

The bishop blinked nervously. “You will—a—you will excuse me if I do not ask you to luncheon?”

“Certainly, my lord,” answered Waring, with an appreciative twitch of his thin lips.

The bishop was nearly betrayed into a wink, but recovered his dignity and held out his hand.

“Very well,” he said, “I will give you a year.”

As the door closed behind his visitor, the bishop filled himself a glass of port, the gift of royalty. He stood up and, nodding gravely at some imaginary person, observed in his courtliest manner,—and he was noted for his manner,—“Here's to you—for a man.”

In twelve months Waring had Tregotha under his thumb. Where he was not worshipped, he was dreaded: he took the men by sheer fellowship, and the women by holding his tongue. Celibate by nature rather than

The Column

principle, he was able to meet the latter without reticence. His misogyny only extended to young-ladyhood, with the healthful result that neither the symbolism nor the music of his services degenerated into prettiness. Admiring strangers, acquainted with the works of a certain decadent French novelist, murmured, "Primitive;" but Waring discussed neither his methods nor his authority.

He was exceptionally fortunate in his church itself. The early work of an architect now famous in two hemispheres, the building was chaste and finished as a gem; neither pretending to a period with which its purpose had nothing in common, nor an experiment in the formation of a new style. There was perhaps in its lines a suggestion of the virile beauty of the churches of Northern Italy; but it was a translation of their purpose rather than a copy of their structure. A little church poised ship-like on the last heave of the subsiding down, framed in its girdling acre of aspiring yews, it took the eye with a suggestion of alertness compensating by its adaptation to the spiritual needs of the living present for the absence of the sentimental associations of age. An imaginative person would have suggested that church and column kept dual guard over Tregotha; moreover, that whilst the church stood higher, the column held the sea. The fishermen used both indifferently for sea-marks.

To enter the church was to feel at once the influence of its east window. Whether by art or accident, it claimed the senses to the exclusion of every other idea but that of the Crucifixion, though less as the symbol of pain than of triumph. Described as the work of a forgotten amateur, it was absolutely unique; of no school, reminiscent of no period. The discussion of its qualities

The Monitors of Tregotha

divided Tregotha into two parties,—those who called it beautiful and those who called it hideous. There could be no possible mean; and the only person ever known to call it pretty was the half-witted boy who blew the organ-bellows. In the almost insolent beauty of its colouring it flung the challenge of a virile faith before the congregation; dominating their devotions as the church itself dominated the village at its feet.

The people of Tregotha were neither better nor worse than the people of other villages, but partly from the intrinsic fascination of the building itself, partly by the skilful use Herbert Waring made of its character and situation, they were loyal to the church in a degree uncommon at the present day.

Its appeal to their imagination was instant, authoritative; and the daily routine of services might be contemned but never disregarded. Every morning had its Eucharist, and three times a day the Angelus bell shook out its pathetic summons over hill and valley. Bearings were taken, work and meals were timed, and craftsmanship approved or condemned by the church—always the church.

CHAPTER III—*Daphne*

DAPHNE climbed slowly up the narrow path that wound from the beach to the base of the column. Something in the deliberate easiness of her ascent, the level carriage of her head, would have suggested to an onlooker the distinction of a frieze; though she was alone, but for Angélique, who, towel-bearing, panted behind. Neither, curiously, would one have missed the intervening figures of the procession. There are personalities that people their immediate neighbourhood with associations not the less actual for being intangible; and the interval between the girl and the woman, though empty to the bodily eye, seemed to share some hint of the former's passage, as one continues to hear the vibration of a note that has just been sounded. One might indeed call the illusion that of visible *arpeggios*,—the more so as the girl's movements seemed to obey the pulse of solemn music—for example, the march from "Alcestis."

Reaching the head of the path, Daphne sent Angélique on to the house, and seated herself at the foot of the column. The salt water had stung her face and neck to a rosy brightness, but she did not breathe faster for the exertion of climbing. She leaned back against the warm marble and half closed her eyes. In a few minutes she was surrounded by a screaming flock of gulls, whose persistence indicated the expectation of a daily function. Taking some biscuits from her pocket, the girl slowly broke them, scattering the fragments on the short, aromatic turf around her.

Daphne

The clamour of the sea-birds dropped to a gobbling murmur, so absurdly suggestive of dinner conversation that the girl laughed aloud. When one of the gulls squawked sharply, she murmured to herself, "He is calling 'Garçon.'"

The birds themselves took no more notice of her presence than if she had been part of the cliff. There perhaps was a key to the impression she produced. She belonged as emphatically to that place as a figure painted in a landscape to complete the balance of the composition. That indeed seemed for the moment her function; and the place would have lacked coherence without her. Nor was the column, though on consideration unusual, out of character emotionally. It was as if some subtle sympathy between girl, marble, and sea-cliff resolved the sentence of the first, the anachronism of the second, into unity with earth, sea, and sky.

Their meal finished, the gulls flew off with the regal nonchalance of all sea creatures; and in a few minutes the girl was fast asleep.

Daphne was straight and tall; small-breasted, cool-handed, clean-limbed like a boy. She was so natural as to appear almost strange, conforming rather to the inward heart of things than to their accidental outlines. In a drawing-room she struck one as out of scale; her movements, though graceful, requiring a certain generosity of background, the large empty spaces of sea and sky, or the support of details great by reason of their significance. A painter would have found difficulty in making a satisfactory indoor picture of her,—that is, with modern treatment. To be convincing he would have been forced to surround her with the symbols either of religion or of war,—the only surviving cults of which the attributes have any pictorial dignity.

The Column

One thought of her always with regard to her possibilities and she would not have looked ridiculous in armour. She was however essentially feminine, and one predicted that the crises of birth and death would find her watchful and possessed, though she might be at a loss in a social contretemps.

Mentally she was well balanced, a white soul by the interfusion of coloured rays emanating from people and things around her. At this age she recalled pictured moods of expectancy, from Galatea to Mary; touching the tiptoe alertness of the marble, and that radiant acquiescence which found signal expression in the Madonna of the Umbrian painters. Daphne was without those moods of petulant anticipation common to her age; she waited, it is true, for the vital moment, but in the meantime lived to the full in the present. Her nature, though undemonstrative, was so generous that a discerning lover, had he existed, would have hesitated before the responsibility of its awakening. Further he would have seen that to bend to a human passion a creature so obviously dedicated were the provoking of powers whose movement could neither be predicted nor controlled.

She was swayed by impulses that had the large movement of a ground swell; whence derived she did not know and, though she could seldom explain her actions, she was never sudden. This dependence on unreasoned pressure had its effect in her face,—a slight shadow faint as down between her brows, indicative of constant though unstrained attention, and in her figure a poise wholly indescribable, but suggestive of the bent bow.

Looking at her in her moments of absence, one felt that she lived habitually near those sources one touches furtively in dreams; that those tantalising experiences,

Daphne

rare and momentary for the general, were for her matters of daily knowledge. Happily Daphne did not know the meaning of introspection; she walked, rode, and swam with the unhindered earnestness of the child, and went about her daily occupations in the house and dairy with a zeal that ennobled them. Her intercourse with other people was marked by a candour recalling the older and better meaning of the word. She was, however, more impressed by places than by people, and inclined to name the latter after their connection with the former, and as yet could hardly take in the idea of a detached existence.

Daphne woke gradually, but deliberately; she did not fumble at consciousness, but resumed her senses as one takes up a book at the remembered place. She rose, and stretching herself with the leisurely grace of a wild creature, passed through the laurels and gained the house. Before she entered, however, she turned and flung one backward look at the column, the summit of which was visible from the door. As she did so, one might have seen in her eyes a fleeting hint as of mental confusion. She went through the large hall to the library and rang for tea.

Hastings looked up when she entered, but neither spoke. The two were in perfect sympathy, and conversation between them was normally in silences broken by occasional words that fully explained the unspoken context to either. Daphne seated herself on a footstool by her father's side, and it was noticeable that though he rested his hand on her shoulder for a moment, he did not kiss her. Indeed their intercourse was marked by the absence of that somewhat maudlin tenderness common to the widower, and usually indicative of a condition in which a second marriage is not impossible.

The Column

The library was characteristic of its owner.

Here, as throughout the house, there was no carpet, but loose rugs on a waxed floor. The fact suggested that for those who used the room there was no necessity for coddling quiet, but that they came to books with appetite or not at all. The volumes themselves defied classification, though it was evident at a glance that Hastings was no bookworm, but one to whom reading was suggestive rather than necessary.

In a few minutes Hastings laid down his pen, and wheeling round his chair took in his daughter with obvious satisfaction.

Apparently the tumbled freshness of her appearance suggested something.

"Mrs. Bargister was here this afternoon," he said.

Daphne smiled, as at some amusing reminiscence, but did not speak.

"You have changed your bathing-time," said Hastings after a pause, fingering a curl.

"Yes," said Daphne, with a slight frown, "the sun is on the beach in the afternoon."

"Well?" said Hastings, aware of some reservation.

"And in the morning there is the shadow of the column."

For a moment her father looked grave and his finger was arrested in its twining movement. Then he laughed. "Odd person—but you should not be afraid of anything."

"It is not exactly fear," said Daphne, after a moment's thought. "How can I describe it? Well, it is as if someone had underlined a word in a book without any apparent reason. The shadow seems to point somewhere, to hint some neglect of mine, and it puzzles me."

"I must go and see if I can make anything of it,"

Daphne

said Hastings, quizzically. "However, I think the morning is better. Stupid people—and then there are sometimes tourists about."

"Very well, dad," said Daphne, with simple acquiescence. She was conscious, however, that for some reason her father did not care to discuss the column with her. She read him unerringly, and his jesting tone recalled the manner he used when, as a child, she asked inconvenient questions.

The relation between father and daughter, though entirely affectionate, was at once more intimate and more remote than is usual. A person having constant intercourse with them would have noticed a curious feature in Hastings' interest in the girl—that he watched less for the development of those qualities which might be considered hers by inheritance than for the appearance of some new feature which he half expected; much as a botanist would study the growth of a plant new to him, but of whose identity he had some preconceived opinion. One would have said that Hastings was on the lookout for corroboration.

It was evident, also, that though there was no reason to suppose Hastings remembered her mother with less warmth than popular sentiment requires, Daphne was dear to him, not so much as a tie between him and a dead woman, as the outward sign of some subjective experience, connected it is true with her who had been his wife, but not primarily coloured by her personality.

Lastly, running through his pleasure in the growth of his child, was a sombre streak of anxiety,—a foreboding that could not be explained by a prevision of any of the ordinary accidents of life. The two sat in silence for a little while until Hastings, with a palpable effort to escape from his thoughts, began to talk about his work.

The Column

“I have just finished the last chapter of the first book,” he said, “and I want to read it over to you to see how it sounds. When shall we have a sitting?”

“Let me see,” said Daphne, “I can’t manage this evening because of band practice—unless I let it go for once.”

“By no means,” said Hastings, laughing. “I should have Gillies knocking me up at midnight to inquire what had become of you. No,” he continued, “any time will do. What are you practising to-night?”

“Oh, the Septet,” said Daphne, humming the “British Grenadiers” theme as she poured out tea.

CHAPTER IV—*A Little Music*

BAND practice, it was hinted by the ungenerous, spelled the glorification of Caspar Gillies; this was not quite true. Gillies craved a field not for display, but for exercise. Most men with a like yearning for mental athletics turn to some branch of mathematics; with Gillies it happened to be music. By what quaint Ariel the apostle of neutrality was lured to dabble in the most emotional of the arts it is impossible to surmise; as a matter of fact, he compromised by accepting the rôle of music-driver, and the position suited his undoubted talent for organisation.

Taking up the subject as one upon which to break his mind, he gradually succumbed to its undoubted fascinations, and began to embroider his original intention. Though practised solely for his own mental satisfaction, his methods were not unnaturally misunderstood; hence the unworthy accusation. He sought with pains for obscure composers whom he exploited as the only ones worth attention, though he was mildly tolerant of the Choral Symphony, and did not altogether despair of Wagner's later works. He sighed indulgently over "Lohengrin," and allowed that "Tannhäuser," though bourgeois in sentiment, was melodious.

In private, so Daphne declared, he wallowed in Balfe. A feverish anticipation of the latest theories gained him quite a reputation as a connoisseur; and by the skilful inversion of current enthusiasms he became locally feared as an exacting critic. Mrs. Bargister, who reverently misquoted him, wondered why he did not compose an

The Column

oratorio or something. Chaperoning her daughter to the weekly rehearsals, she hung upon the music with pathetic fidelity, and had, under the mordant civility of Caspar Gillies, already learned to swallow "How pretty."

The action was almost physical, and with every silence, accidental or designed, there was to be seen upon her face the look of the dog who is nearly surprised into the forbidden bark.

The rehearsals took place in the village schoolroom; and Herbert Waring became almost human on the 'cello. With his Napoleonic eye for the uses of men, he had early discovered Caspar's metronomic relentlessness in the matter of beat, and had laid snares for him with Jesuitic guile. Once caged, he allowed him, as he observed to Hastings, whatever trimmings he liked; and Caspar wore his trimmings with such gusto as to endanger his pose. Flushed with the newest and spiciest critical slang, he sometimes hung wavering between the apostle and the superior person. Usually the latter won, though he nearly lost his head under the dripping gray skies of Tschaikowsky.

As often happens, Caspar was more valuable than he knew, though hardly in the direction towards which he set his ambition. His trite practicality gave purpose to the vague æstheticism of the few educated amateurs who followed his beat; whilst his pathetic though immovable belief that any person who chose could "learn music," awoke responsive ardours in the breasts of the village young men. All Tregotha tootled or sawed; and something got itself done, as the Irishman fiddled,—neither by note nor ear, but by main force. Nor would Caspar stoop to the conventional programmes of village bands. The admiring tourist made note that it was the habit of

A Little Music

Cornish fishermen to solace their leisure with Berlioz and Wagner.

When Daphne with Angélique entered the schoolroom, Caspar was already controlling a warm flood of Beethoven with stick and heartening cries, as one who urges hounds.

Waring, who met Daphne's eye in an instinctive confidence, sacrificed a bar to an aside, "Xerxes and the Hellespont!"

Daphne's entrance, though silent, was a moon's influence on the tide against Caspar's breakwater. Thus aware of her through the back of his head, he pointed to the school clock, and his orchestra, floundering over a missed beat, perished in a miserable shallow of flute and whimpering horn.

"Six and a quarter minutes late, Miss Hastings," he moaned out of the welter of instruments furtively verifying their pitch. "Of course the rehearsal is done for now, but we'll go on."

Daphne smiled and nodded, opening the case of her viola with the unflushed deliberation that characterised all her movements.

Oboe and Clarionet waited breathlessly for the lift of her eyes, and the Oboe had them. He, a slim Spanish-eyed fisher lad, sounded "A" with the air of Raleigh doffing his cloak, and the memory lent a perceptible warmth to his reed for the rest of the evening. He flashed an exulting glance at the Clarionet,—a glance expiated after a week of cumulative language, stripped to the waist behind the lifeboat house on Tregotha sands.

"D string exactly one eighth of a tone sharp," observed Caspar, mildly. He leaned with ostentatious patience on the master's desk, apparently lost in his score. There was an admiring murmur, though Herbert

The Column

smiled, and the Oboe looked murder. Also the Bassoon, who, though loyal in deed, was scornful (he being professional and from the army) of Caspar's trimmings,—the Bassoon, it must be written, spat.

“When you're ready,” drawled Caspar, and once more led his turbulent forces to the attack.

In a corner, behind the cover of sound, Mrs. Bargister enveloped Angélique in the humid mantle of patronage. The Frenchwoman, with native scorn for a clumsy opponent, fenced politely, feasting her eyes maliciously on Mrs. Bargister's hygienic precautions in the matter of boots.

“Quite petite my daughter looks beside Miss Hastings,” purred the lady.

“Y-es,” drawled Angélique, naïvely, “there is the pretty leettle—how do you say?—shickweed, n'est-ce pas? and the ver' tall lily.”

“Somewhat masculine, don't you think?”

“Mais non—masculin', wis her eyes, her 'air? No; I do not sink.”

Angélique drew herself up with whatever stiffness her nationality would allow. Mrs. Bargister made another attempt.

“Have you heard whether Mr. Waring—the other Mr. Waring, I mean—has come yet?”

“I do not gossip wis the sairvants of the vicairage,” said Angélique spitefully, pushing aside the skirts of patronage.

Mrs. Bargister “tum-tummed” thoughtfully to a familiar cadence of the sobbing strings, until she caught Caspar's eye.

“Somebody singing,” he snapped.

Mrs. Bargister, taken off her guard, stammered, “How——” and swallowed.

A Little Music

Daphne and Emily Bargister, viola and second-violin respectively, claimed the license of inward parts; little dry peaks of silence upon which they stood for a breathless interchange of confidences.

“Have you seen him yet?”

“Oh, my dear—E flat—seen whom?”

“Mr. Waring’s brother—look out for the crescendo—quite a celebrated man—walking tour down the coast—expected to-day.”

“Artist?”

“Not exactly—does paint—bother the thing—University Settlement, Poplar.”

“What do they do—these people?”

“Oh, boxing—dancing—Burne Jones—a little Brown-ing.”

(“I wonder if he fences,” this the unspoken thought of Daphne.)

(“I hope he will help me with ‘Sordello,’” mused Emily.)

The little peaks were become rarer, and each dreamed into her strings her own way. One saw quick eyes and a carriage; the other, student pallor and an explanatory forefinger.

Both were Miranda-innocent, Miranda-curious for new faces; though one less natural saw Ferdinand in the guise of Prospero, whilst the other pictured the essential male.

The music, which—a proof of Caspar’s courage—was a movement from Schubert’s B minor Symphony, complaisant to their mood, silenced for the one the duenna of maternal tradition, and spiced the ignorance of the other with possibilities. There is no medium more exquisitely subtle than concerted music; where the Cornet suffers for the Trombone’s aching tooth or thrills responsive to his breaking heart.

The Column

Set vibrating at any point an emotion of tears or laughter, and it runs the circle,—an electric current sparking here and there according to the resistance of the subject. Conductors know this, hence their anxious mien and premature decay; and it is a part of the psychology of crowds. Where the sexes mingle, one gets a madness Schubert never dreamed,—more contagious than the breath of spring. So, unconsciously enough, these two girls set the mood; reflected through fine, traitorous nerves, the influence would have been perceptible to a sensitive listener.

The little schoolroom became a Cyprian shell, echoing vague sweet modulations of a theme itself disturbing. Thus exalted, its performance was an ironic comment on Caspar's arbitrary methods. For once his players, however imperfect technically, were in sight of that delectable land where the artist is reunited to his humanity. Their authentic selves were in their eyes; one saw in a flash their aspirations and their limitations. The Bassoon, old grievances forgotten, crooned like a love-sick giant; so far was he gone that he swore softly, as soldiers are said to do in the joy of battle. Herbert, transfigured, betrayed an ecstasy in which there was nothing of earth; that mystical ardour breathed in the poetry of Crashaw. The stain of passion lingering in the 'Cello faded out from the Double-bass, rumouring sheer morality,—Boanerges in the courts of Paphos.

The effect on the audience of two was interesting. Mrs. Bargister looked a mild, confused disapproval, as of orgies; whilst on the face of Angélique were reflected idylls of the Quartier. With the last bar there fell upon all of them the shamefacedness of the Briton beguiled from his wonted self-consciousness. They noticed as a new thing how badly lit was the school-room, how

A Little Music

insistent the smell of paraffin. Instruments were packed away in a speaking silence. If men spoke at all, it was shortly and with ill-temper.

Herbert Waring felt an absurd need for explanatory commonplace, to bring the affair into the region of respectability.

"A very good practice," he observed. His voice sounded hollow, as of those who protest too much.

Caspar, true to his attitude, had the last word, and that chilling.

"Of course," he said to the room in general. "If we can't do better than that, we had better chuck it and take to quadrilles."

CHAPTER V—*The Sea-Path*

WHEN Daphne left the schoolroom she entered on a new phase of her existence. Something of her remained behind irrecoverable; and by her side there stepped some new shape of herself, half revealed, wholly attractive. She was in the condition of those who wake to an unfamiliar self after some lapse of consciousness.

Up to a certain point she could trace herself; then came the music. Afterwards she began again—differently. The calyx of her heart had unclosed a little, hinting roseate possibilities to be brooded over in midnight solitudes. It was as if, fingering a familiar cabinet, she had pressed the spring of a secret drawer hitherto unsuspected; and for the time the world held for her nothing to be compared with its dim-seen, fragrant contents.

She passed from music into the scented night as from passion to its remembrance. The stars hung low and tender; abating somewhat of their remoteness, they gained in personal influence. The sea's whisper held a new meaning,—a message indissolubly entangled with her own future.

The invisible guardians of her girlhood conferred together; from vague suggestions they were come, she felt, to speak clearly; and the only hesitation was whether sea, stars, or night-wind should be ambassador to her soul. Her mind was ready with expectant composure; she awaited the revelation with humility, but without shrinking.

Events which at one time leave but the faintest pencilling at another bite with the graver's insistence; it

The Sea-Path

is not as to the intensity of the style but as to the recording power of the tablet. Whatever impression she received to-night would endure for the rest of her life; her whole nature unclosed like a mystical night-blooming flower.

In this unfolding of being the Epic is born; it is the moment of conception, the listening silence wherein the devotee hears the voice of his God walking in the garden. And, owing to human limitations, the sign, whatever it be, is accepted as authentic. For the poet, indubitable fire or twopenny candle; for the devotee, the clear call or the promptings of hysteria, whichever it may be,—it is not for him to choose.

For the woman it is always the God, whether crowned with thorns or roses,—the bleeding feet of Christ or the burning pinions of Eros.

God or Demigod, he is embraced; the sacrifice is to his altar; the incense to his nostril. Given the hour, the place, and the mood, the rest lies with blind fate.

For Daphne, mingled with the waiting hush, was a regret for things passing—on the other side of the music. The years of her girlhood, each with its remembered gift, marshalled themselves and drew closer.

“You are leaving us,” they murmured, “and we are the best of your life. You stand before the door; it is yours to open or stay your hand; choose well.”

She saw the past stretched out like a sea; pitiful white sails on the horizon of memory flashed and were gone, and far-off voices hailed her with reproach.

“Daphne, Daphne, remember the long golden summer and the untroubled hours. Were not we beautiful? What can the future give you to be compared with us? We are the days of your childhood,—all that is best of you.”

The Column

But on the other hand was the mystery. Her blood still beat to the haunting rhythm of Schubert's inspiration, and in her exalted condition she caught the promise of its fulfilment. It was impossible to go indoors; even her father's face would be a vexatious interruption.

They reached the gate of the drive.

"Will you wait here?" she said to Angélique. "I am going to the column; I will take my viola."

Angélique silently handed her the instrument, and Daphne walked swiftly along the path that led to the Folly. She emerged from the laurels into the star-lit semicircle,—warm pulsing life into a pale world of blue and silver.

The place recalled an ancient theatre; the whispering laurels a serried mass of incurious spectators, and for stage the sea and sky.

The scene in its cold sincerity appalled her; to her excited imagination the whispering laurels were inimical, and the column upreared the stern monitor of an ideal slipping from her grasp. Here was her tribunal; tried by the austere perfection of the marble, she was found wanting—too warm, too human. And yet?

Here was the dead interspace between opposing forces; watchfully neutral, withholding the answer to infinite questions. Below, the sea rumoured seriously; above, the stars were withdrawn and critical. Far off on the left the pier lights at Porth twinkled assurance of humanity; and from the church on the hill one window burned steadily, like an all-seeing eye.

Daphne approached the column,—guardian of the inviolate silence. To an observer her movements would have suggested the performance of a rite; her abstracted gaze an invocation of the marble. She touched the cold, fluted surface with hesitating fingers; laying her ear

The Sea-Path

against the shaft, she listened, but the oracle was mute ; her prayer for a sign remained unanswered.

She withdrew, and stepping to the edge of the cliff, importuned with her eyes the throbbing obscurity. There was no response.

She grew restless, almost impatient. Why did not something speak ?

Finally she placed her instrument beneath her chin and laid the bow to the strings. Half unconsciously her fingers moved to the questioning motive of the symphony.

The answer came from beneath her feet in a cry for help. It was a man's voice with a thrill of pain in it.

Daphne stood for a moment, frozen with the marble. Then, still holding the viola, she approached the head of the tortuous descent.

“Who is there ?” she called.

“I have had an accident,” was the reply ; “I fear I have broken my leg.”

Daphne laid her instrument on the rock and swiftly descended.

A few yards farther down she nearly stumbled over a man sitting propped against the cliff. He looked up at her tall figure outlined against the sky. “I am sorry to trouble you,” he said, “but I am quite helpless.”

He spoke with difficulty, as though his lips were stiff with pain and cold.

“Do you think you could walk with my help ?” said Daphne, after a moment's consideration.

The man laughed with chattering teeth. “Do you know my weight ?” he asked.

“But perhaps—if you leaned on me,” said Daphne, eagerly. “Give me your hands ; I am very strong.”

She took his hands, and to his surprise lifted him to his feet. He winced and swung heavily against her.

The Column

“No,” he gasped, “it is no use; you must get some men.”

Without answering, Daphne mounted to the top of the cliff and ran back to the drive gate. Angélique was leaning against the gate-post with closed eyes, her hands folded in her cloak.

“Quick!” said Daphne, seizing her arm, “there is a man lying hurt on the sea-path. You must go to father and tell him to bring two men with a chair. Stay,” she said, as Angélique set off in a heavy trot, “there is the stable door; tell father it will lift off its hinges easily. Be quick, for the man is cold; I am going back to him.”

She turned and sped through the laurels. She had forgotten the stars and the column; she was all action, alive to the need of the moment.

The man had lighted a cigarette, which he flung away on her approach.

“How foolish of you!” cried Daphne, reproachfully; “it would help you to bear the pain. Please light another.”

She stood watching the man whilst he obeyed her. The flare of the match picked out in a tantalising manner spectacles and a face not boyish but fresh and strenuous in its lines. Daphne noticed that the hands, which were long and well-shaped, fumbled and shook with cold.

“Indeed I am very thoughtless,” she exclaimed, unfastening her cloak. “You must cover yourself with this.” The man protested half-heartedly. “But I insist,” cried Daphne, impetuously, and with her nervous fingers she arranged the cloak about his shoulders.

“Why did you not call before?” she asked presently.

“My dear lady,” said the man, “I have been lying here for at least two mortal hours. I shouted continuously until I was tired, and afterwards at intervals.

The Sea-Path

Then I suppose I dozed, for your music seemed to wake me up—at least, I take it it was you playing?”

Daphne nodded. “What, in the name of goodness——” He stopped, as though conscious of an impertinence in the question. “Rather unkind treatment of an instrument if it is valuable,” he ventured.

“Well, yes,” said Daphne, “I did not think of that. But tell me, how did you come to fall?”

“Oh, absent-minded as usual!” laughed the stranger. “To begin with, I believe I was trespassing, so this may be considered a punishment. I walked from Penarval this morning, intending to put up in Tregotha for the night. This column attracted me; I am short-sighted and wished to examine it more closely. So I cut across the fields and climbed the wall. I couldn’t make much of the column,—it is tantalising; no inscription or anything. Then the path to the beach looked inviting. Unfortunately I turned to look up at the column—it is always a mistake to look back—and so missed the sharp corner. Lucky I didn’t pitch right over.”

Daphne shivered.

“It is eighty feet down,” she murmured, “and there are sharp stones.”

They were silent for a few minutes, each furtively exploring the dim outlines of the other.

“I am still curious about the column,” said the stranger. “How did it get here, and what is its meaning?”

“My father brought it from Greece,” said Daphne; adding quickly, “My father’s name is Hastings.”

“Hastings?” said the other, doubtfully.

“Edward Hastings.”

“The Hellenist?” cried the man, eagerly.

“I do not quite understand what that implies,” said Daphne, gravely. “My father has been called many

The Column

things,—not all of them respectable,” she added, humorously.

“Pardon me,” said the stranger, “but did your father write ‘Subsoil’?”

“Yes,” said Daphne, enthusiastic in her turn. “Have you read it? Is it not a wonderful book?”

“My friends say that it is my gospel,” said the man, with quiet conviction; adding, “Do you know I am not altogether sorry now that I have broken my leg—at least if it will lead to the acquaintance of your father.”

“I wish he would be quick; you must be very cold,” said Daphne, with sudden consciousness of a want of reticence in discussing her father with a strange person. The man smiled invisibly, was about to speak, but thought better of it, compromising with,—

“I am fairly comfortable now, thank you. I dare say Mr. Hastings has some difficulty in finding men.”

“I will go and see if they are coming,” said Daphne, naïvely, and ascended to the top of the cliff. Some intuition told the stranger that it would be an offence to ask her to stay, that she would be impervious to the compliment implied.

“So that is Hastings’s daughter,” he mused; “plays the fiddle by moonlight—at least was it a fiddle? Sounded rather deep in tone. Hanged if I can be sure! Anyhow I can’t ask now. What an ass I am—quite forgot to tell her Herbert is my brother. They are sure to know him—at least I wonder whether Herbert is sufficiently Catholic to tolerate the author of ‘Subsoil’?”

He folded the cloak round him luxuriously, fingering the edge with a smile.

“This is going one better than the Prophet’s mantle,” he thought. “Rum chap Herbert, not to say a word about Hastings living here.”

The Sea-Path

When Angélique reached the house, she was wide awake and sufficiently reduced to her national temperament to announce a catastrophe. Seeing her agitated and alone, Hastings jumped up apprehensively. He was unable at first to make sense of the woman's narrative; but a moment's consideration told him that Angélique would not have deserted his daughter in any emergency.

"Is she all right?" he shouted above her clamour.

"Yes, oh, yes, sank the Lord—which you never do, Mistaire Hastings. But men—oh horriblement wounded—killed! Oh, if you please, be quick."

She fell into a chair, closing her eyes to a vision of blood.

"Speak French," said Hastings, quietly, despairing of light. He managed to understand that there was only one man in trouble, though he was unable to make out the nature of the accident, which from Angélique's account ranged from earthquake to shipwreck. He further gathered that he was to bring two men with the stable door.

He roused the man, half gardener half boatman, who slept at the house, and directed the now resigned Angélique to make up a spare bed. The maid, a squat, calm-eyed Cornish girl, was bundled, half asleep, down the road to the nearest cottage for another man.

Daphne met the little party by the laurels.

"Well, my girl?" said Hastings.

"Oh, father—so glad you are come. He has broken his leg."

Her father took her arm.

"Why, you are nearly as bad as Angélique," he laughed. "Who is he?"

"I don't know—he seems a gentleman," she replied. She turned to the men, saying, "You had better leave the door here and carry him up to it."

The Column

Daphne seated herself beside her abandoned viola. The sight of the instrument suggested her interrupted exaltation, and now she experienced a wave of depression.

“Which is Mr. Hastings?” said Waring, as the men rounded the corner.

Hastings kneeled beside him.

“I am so vexed to have caused all this bother. My name is Waring, Basil Waring; no doubt you know my brother Herbert.”

“He is a great friend of mine,” said Hastings; “but we must get you indoors before you are quite frozen.”

He gave a few directions to the men, and they carried the injured man to the top of the cliff.

“Why, Daphne,—this is Mr. Waring’s brother,” said Hastings.

“My fault, my fault,” cried Waring, hastily. “I was unpardonably rude—I forgot to tell Miss Hastings my name.”

Daphne was very silent as they moved slowly to the house. The sudden cry for help had shattered her mood in its crisis. She had responded to the needs of the moment without reflection, and looking back to her vigil was, as it were, over a featureless chasm. She had left herself fronting the stars, her whole being one question. Another person, half conscious, had descended the path and received the answer. For here by her side was undoubtedly in some sort the answer she had craved; and as she walked behind the rude litter, she strove to avert her mind from the man whose name, casually spoken, had set her dreaming. She suffered the reaction of nerves overstrung, and half petulantly shook off her sense of what she endeavoured to call the coincidence.

Her father naturally supposed her abstraction due to

The Sea-Path

fatigue, and when they reached the house sent her at once to her room.

Caspar, roused from his first sleep, came to the patient in voluble depression. He murmured appalling technicalities, whilst he did his work in a masterly manner.

"Of course," he said gloomily on leaving, "it will be exactly eleven weeks before you are able to stir from this room,—that is, if you don't die of pneumonia. You know that the percentage of Calcium Phosphate increases enormously after thirty, and owing to the deficiency of Blastema, complete reunion is a very tedious process. You are certain to get Periostitis—it would be almost as well to amputate at once. I am going to have a bad attack of migraine. Good-night—good-morning, rather."

Daphne dreamed that she saw her mind open like a blank book, and a hand writing "Basil Waring." She seized the hand, crying, "Stop," and awoke to find Angélique shading a candle by her bedside.

"Ciel!" murmured Angélique, "how you are strong in the 'and. They have set his leg."

"Bother his leg!" said Daphne, turning to the wall.

CHAPTER VI—*Basil Waring*

“**E**HEU!—and so ends my ‘patronage of the Cornish Coast,’ as you quaintly describe it. Picture me an interesting invalid—better than invalid because the victim of an accident (there is a peerage of casualties Ibsen will assure you)—nursed by my ethical father and his daughter. ‘Ethical father’?—’twas you coined the phrase, but as your memory never kept pace with your queenly bounty (I see your pink applauding palms) I will elucidate. I am staying with Edward Hastings (of all men), whose daughter found me crippled on a sea-ledge—don’t be frightened; ’tis only a broken leg,—tibia, to be exact.

“He?—no, no; confess I am right in hearing your *What is she like?* low down in the register, with ironic twitch of lip corner. Well, I think—yes, I think—Nausicaa. Oh yes, the pitch rises bravely from gold to silver, with revelation of pearls, but I write the word again boldly; there—Nausicaa.

“Obvious suggestion of the coincidence? Certainly not. I, Ulysses? crafty, much-enduring, I? Hardly, I think; or surely this letter—and the brute world? No, not Ulysses.

“Seriously, I endeavour to nail her for your better realisation. Frank, boyish,—say, rather, of that noble period before the Persian Wars, ‘the subtle bloom of woman on the limbs of the boy’ (to quote ‘Subsoil’).

“Remember I have seen her only *en silhouette* against a night sky, and go by stride and hand-clasp. The voice is non-committal; level and tuned to a *plein-air* quality innocent of the velvet demitones I know so well. A something salt and bracing, in fact. But do I paint her?

“Hastings is hardly his book (she is nearer): he is more—how shall I say?—more artless, perhaps rustic is the word, but hospitable to a degree.

“But I must end; my doctor is uncompromising and by way of being cynical.

“I think of you always.

“BASIL.”

Basil Waring folded his letter and placed it in an envelope. About to seal the latter, he hesitated half-way in the act.

Basil Waring

He took out the paper and read it through with a reflective smile. Reaching for his stylograph, he was about to make a correction, but thought better of it. He enclosed the letter once more, leaving the envelope unsealed.

He leaned back on his pillow, his hands clasped behind his head. His expression, which was obviously habitual, suggested that though he might be generous in act, his normal occupation was that of self-contemplation.

Far enough removed from self-satisfaction, though his present reflective smile was only broken by the entrance of his brother.

“Hullo, Herbert—behold your unfortunate brother!” cried Basil.

“Well, enthusiast,” said Herbert, taking his hand, “how’s the leg? What a giddy person it is!”

Herbert’s manner to his brother was affectionately sardonic. He never quite realized that Basil was out of his teens, and failing to take him seriously, gave to his many enthusiasms that amused tolerance one uses toward the politics of a child. As was only natural, this led to an occasional soreness between them. Herbert was the last person to affect superiority, but Basil was really afraid of him.

“How’s the mutual-admiration society?”

Basil laughed awkwardly.

“We are really making some way, I think. We haven’t had to call in a policeman for more than six months,—that’s pretty good for about seventy boys, you know. Then we have achieved the Saturday night’s dance without any bloodshed. Of course they didn’t like it at first— Do you know,” he said eagerly, “on analyzing their objection I found it rooted in their unconscious Puritanism. Walpole thought it was fear of chaff,

The Column

but it is not so. Curious that the typical East-End-er should be the lineal descendant of the crop-eared citizen. I should like to work it out," he added meditatively; "interesting—quite!"

Herbert looked down at him with a smile. "There you are," he said, nodding his head. "Off he goes! gee-up, my nice new hobby, until—to-morrow morning!"

"Shut up!" cried Basil. "I say, why did you never tell me that Hastings lived here?"

"Did I not?" said the other, absently. "I suppose I took it for granted you knew—you have always raved over 'Subsoil.'"

"And his daughter—did I hear him call her Daphne?" Herbert nodded, and walked to the window.

"Who was the mother?" said Basil, after waiting in vain for fuller information.

"Don't know," said Herbert, over his shoulder. "She died in Greece—was a Greek, I believe; Hastings never mentions her."

He wheeled round.

"Are you coming over to me? What does Gillies say?"

"Hastings wouldn't hear of it; though I tried to persuade him last night. Extraordinary man, Gillies! He wanted to use the knife at once—is he always like that?"

"Oh, yes," said Herbert, gazing out of the window. "I am surprised that he did not suggest euthanasia. His statements are always inclusive—widely. I sometimes think he must be the original of Lamb's Ho-ti!" He turned sharply. "However, the pig did get roasted and Gillies will cure your leg. Don't argue, and you'll soon get used to him. Here he comes."

Gillies spurned the gravel with urgent heels, his head thrust forward, his arms swinging. He chanced to

Basil Waring

look up as he approached, and caught sight of Herbert standing at the window.

“Open that window,” he shouted; “do you want the man to die of septicæmia?”

Herbert flung up the sash and leaned with folded arms on the window-sill.

Gillies pulled out his watch. “That’s the best I’ve done yet. Listen,—the 9.35 leaving Redruth, two and a quarter minutes late as usual. Well, how many of you up there?”

“Only we two,” said Herbert.

“All right, I’ll come up,—I can stay for seventeen minutes.”

In a few seconds he entered the room, sniffing suggestively.

“Good Lord!” he said; “beastly close this room,—80·6 at least.” He walked to the fireplace and thrust his stick up the chimney. There was the look on his face of the disappointed detective as he turned to his patient. He examined the injured man with vindictive minuteness, and allowed bitterly that there were no symptoms of pneumonia.

“Pity they did not take you straight to the Cottage Hospital,” he grumbled.

“Heaven forbid!” laughed Basil; “but why?”

“Oh, Hastings and his daughter will coddle you,—worst thing in the world for an hysterical patient. Besides, there are no drains in this house, nor will be until Hastings adopts Fairbrother’s system of trapping, as I wanted him to do last year.”

He turned abruptly and walked to the window. “I have nine and a half minutes more,” he said affably; “you will excuse me talking with my head outside, but of course you know that pneumonia is communicable

The Column

even in the period of incubation. Old Bosankoe wants to go to the British Medical meeting next week, and it won't do for me to be laid up.

"Now, if Hastings would pull down that blessed thing," he observed meditatively, jerking his head in the direction of the column, "the Folly would be quite a useful place. We could stick up a little kiosk and some garden seats, and have the band out of doors all the summer. Let me see, the kiosk would be seven pounds twelve shillings, and the seats thirty-five shillings each. We should want ten, so that——"

Basil interrupted him with a shout of laughter. "By the way," he said, "Miss Hastings was playing there last night when she found me."

"What!" screamed Gillies, wheeling round. "Playing what?"

"Oh, some stringed instrument," said Basil; "sounded like a—what d' you call it?" He made quaint outlines in the air. "I'm not a musician, you know," he added, apologetically.

Gillies moaned.

"Just like a woman," he said. "Out of that flaming school-room into the night air."

"She seemed well wrapped up," said Basil, "at least until——"

"She?—oh, I wasn't thinking of her," observed Gillies, coldly; "besides, I told Hastings to see that she wore Jaeger all the year round. It's the Tenor,—I chose it myself,—got it for a song from a broken-down member of Hallé's band. There is only one other viola in Europe. It will be absolutely ruined now; she might as well use it for a—for a frying-pan."

Herbert cut short his lamentation by asking, "How long do you think it will be before Basil can get about?"

Basil Waring

“First week in December,”—it was then August,—said Gillies, without a moment’s hesitation.

“That means about a month?” suggested Herbert, quietly.

“Oh, very well,—if you know better,” retorted the other, stooping to turn up his trousers. He laughed bitterly. “In a month we shall be engaging male nurses to hold him down in bed. That reminds me,” he added, straightening himself, “I will get Miss Williams to look in every morning to attend to you. It’s rather out of her way for the district nurse, and there’s nobody here,—the precious Angélique being a born fool.”

He held out his hand.

“I’ve stayed four minutes longer than I meant, and I’ve got to meet old Bosankoe at 10.15,—case of typhoid. Good-bye. Don’t eat too much, and watch your temperature.”

He nodded to Herbert and dashed out of the room.

“Terrible person,” murmured Basil, exhaustedly, as Gillies descended the stairs.

“Neurotic ass,” growled the doctor, like an echo. Herbert laughed.

“Good enough at his trade,” he said; “these are only his frills,—you’ll get used to them.”

Gillies looked into the room where Daphne and her father were at a late breakfast.

“Good-morning, Gillies; have some breakfast,” cried Hastings. “How’s Waring?”

“No, thanks, can’t stop; oh, just as I expected, jawing himself into a fever,” said Gillies from the door; adding, “I say, Miss Hastings, will you get Miss Williams to come over every morning? I hammered at her door as I passed, but expect she was up at the church, changing the hangings or something. Good-bye.”

The Column

He disappeared, and was heard once more spurning the gravel. Daphne made a grimace at her father as the footsteps died away.

"I wonder which trimmings he exhibited to Mr. Waring," she said; "fortunately his brother was there, or he would have imagined we kept tame lunatics."

"I expect," said Hastings, gravely sipping his coffee,— "I expect Gillies told him that the only feature of interest in Cornwall is the new engine at Wheal Tranby; also he probably remarked, in passing, that the sea is absurdly overrated, and that Dawson can't paint clouds,—just so that Waring shouldn't think him one-sided, you know."

"Yes," said Daphne, "what Mr. Waring—Herbert, I mean—calls 'Trimmings in the Inverted Commonplace Order,' as 'Of course, the worst point about Keats is his Aggressive morality; now Tupper——'"

She broke off in a ripple of laughter. "Poor Caspar," said Hastings, "he needs translating, and until you've got the key I dare say he's alarming enough. Good idea of his about Miss Williams; I was rather at a loss. You will like her coming, too, won't you? I'll go upstairs now and see if Waring has everything he wants."

When her father had left the room, Daphne still sat in a brown study. She pictured the scene of the previous night, reviewing the incidents in their order. When she came to the cry for help, she shivered. "Not from the stars," she murmured, "nor from the sea, but from the earth—from under my feet. I don't see," she continued absently, "that the column had anything to do with it. But yes, if he had not looked back he would not have fallen."

A memory of the Symphony set her thoughts swaying. She closed her eyes, humming; and at the faltering bar murmured, "Basil Waring."

Basil Waring

She sat in a day-dream, tapping with her foot the syn-copated beats from which the melody hangs and swerves.

She was impelled to repeat the sequence, "Basil Waring." The association was become authentic to her mind. She played fancifully with other names.

"Now I will forget and try at random."

She wiped her mind clean of him and hummed again. "Casil," she began absently.

"How stupid I am!" she exclaimed with petulance, her hand to her forehead. "But I will do it."

She patiently went through the exercise again. This time the words came unflinchingly, "Caspar Gillies."

The effect was so egregious that she flung back her head and laughed aloud. "Cobwebs! cobwebs!" she cried, springing from her chair. "Now for Miss Williams."

Getting ready to go out was an experience unknown to Daphne, and in a few seconds she was flashing down the drive. She ran with fearless use of limb, from hip to light-falling foot. A memory of her caught on an instant poise would have recalled a figure on an Etruscan vase; the slanting form from forehead to knee outlined by the wind—most daring of draughtsmen—and the quick flutter of drapery—the live crumpled line—behind.

She ran, intimate with sun and wind, boon-fellow of the elements; and though she avoided their exponent, the column, her invisible guardians had her momentarily their own. The laurels stirred by her passage, no longer inimical, beat their leaves as in ecstasy.

Upstairs Basil Waring, now alone, added a postscript to his letter,—

"I forgot to say that Nausicaa plays the viola to the listening stars. The very name of her instrument is suggestive, is it not?"

He did not add that he had waited to make sure of the "name of her instrument" before sealing his letter.

CHAPTER VII—*Miss Williams*

“ ‘ O N yesternight,
I saw a sight,
A star as bright as day,
And all along,
I heard a song,
Lullay, lullay, lullay—

Go away! Bless me, how you do keep on a-keepin’ on!
It’s not a bit of use buzzing about me, there isn’t a scrap
of sugar in the house—

‘ A Lovely Lady sat and sang,
And to her Child she spake,
My Son, my Brother, Father dear,
It makes my heart to ache
To see ’—

Who *is* that scuttling along the lane? Looks like—no,
it isn’t. Well, if people like to tear about on a broiling-
hot day like this, I suppose it’s no concern of mine—

‘ To see Thee there,
So cold and bare,
A King upon this hay ’—

How people can be so stupid I can’t imagine; as I said
to the Poor Thing, all moony creatures ought to be kept
under lock and key, and only let out with keepers, like
the lunatics.

‘ But hush Thy wail,
I will not fail
To sing lullay, lullay.’ ”

The last “lullay” of the quaint wandering tune was
coincident with the final flourish of the hard broom; and
the jubilant though gasping “There, *that’s* finished!”
might have applied equally to carol or cleansing.

Miss Williams leaned on the handle of her weapon,

Miss Williams

famous in its way as Excalibur, and passed at once from fierce though musical energy into a wide-eyed trance; piquant gloss to her denunciation of moony creatures.

She stood in the little paved court before her cottage. A pink sunbonnet, the strings hanging loose, shadowed her eyes; her sleeves were uprolled to the elbow, and her white skirt, kilted high, betrayed a striped blue petticoat and withered evening slippers. The open doorway framed a rich background for her figure, a dusky interior alive with reflections from many-coloured surfaces; alluring hints of brass and china, and the shifting warmth of a crimson curtain.

A low wall divided the court from the road, which was gained by three irregular steps. The hot stones, newly flushed, exhaled little spirals of steam and the faint earthy fragrance as of a fern-house.

From the bottom step, oily-looking rivulets coursed erratically, with sudden stops and runs, over the white dust of the roadway. A few giant blackberry canes, their leaves beaded with water, swung heavily against the sun-baked wall of the cottage.

The air was so still that for a few seconds one could hear the faint, measured clank of the half-filled bucket rocking on the uneven pavement. The only other sound was a drowsy murmur from the infant school hard by.

At twelve yards Miss Williams passed for thirty; in a *tête-à-tête* one saw that at least fifteen years more had etched innumerable fine lines about her eyes and mouth, lines that converged in the channels of laughter rather than of care.

Whence she came people had forgotten; her recorded history was the history of Tregotha church for a like period, and in point of time she claimed a more intimate relation with it than Herbert Waring himself. His rule

The Column

over Tregotha might be compared to a monarchy limited by Miss Williams. A weaker man would have quarrelled or succumbed; but he, though entirely holding his own, gave it such complexion that she supposed herself in command.

How Miss Williams came by her office was never made quite clear to him. He came and found her there, and had wit enough to appreciate her value without questioning her privileges. She was perpetual curate to Tregotha, godmother to half its children, and, before the advent of the district nurse, had closed the eyes of most of its dead. She controlled the parish clubs, and was the terror of drunkards; and the cry, "Here's Miss Williams," sealed at once the lips of profanity and quenched the ardour of warfare. She had almost grown to believe that the church belonged to her, and only half acquiesced in its use by the congregation; though she was indefatigable in hunting up deserters.

Waring she tolerated as a necessary evil, but she was unable to speak calmly of the organist. As part of the service, she carefully explained, she made no definite charge against him; but practising was another matter. She allowed him to understand that what she could not actually forbid she did not countenance; and to level scores with her conscience she pestered his blower with small commissions exacted judiciously in moments of Full Organ.

Whenever the wind failed his pipes, Mr. Ormandy, conscious of the intervention of higher powers, waited humbly until Albert Edward returned to his bellows.

There was a tradition that in the beginning he had protested—as only the feeble man dares. What was said was never revealed, but Miss Williams did not find it necessary to argue the matter again. Whenever the

Miss Williams

organist showed signs of restlessness, Miss Williams followed his footsteps with floor-cloths and murmuring. He became abject ; the outward signs of his humiliation the abandonment of Fugue, and the adoption of "tunes" to which Miss Williams might sing the while she refilled the vases or changed the surplices in the vestry.

Miss Williams emerged from her trance with a jerk. She picked up her bucket, and, dashing the remaining water into the white road, passed into her cottage, murmuring with conviction,—

"Well, it's a rum world."

A few minutes later Daphne whistled at the gate. A muffled scream sounded from the interior.

"That you, Daphne? Come in, and please wipe your feet on the mat."

Entering the room, Daphne found Miss Williams engaged upon one of her fortuitous meals. She kissed the bulging cheek extended to her and dropped into an easy-chair.

"Fine doings down at your place! How's Mr. Waring?" said Miss Williams.

"That's just what I've come to see you about, my dear creature, if you'll only give me time."

"Hope he doesn't want to marry me," gurgled Miss Williams, cutting another slice of bread-and-butter.

"He didn't say so; shouldn't wonder, though, if this chair is part of the bargain," said Daphne, stretching herself luxuriously.

"Dr. Gillies wants to know if you will run over every morning, while he is in bed, to straighten him up."

"Like his cheek," cried Miss Williams, her cup half-way to lip. "As if I had nothing better to do than wait upon stray lunatics! Bless me, why on earth can't Angélique attend to him?"

The Column

“Angélique?” laughed Daphne. “Angélique is an old dear, but it would be sheer inhumanity to trust a sick man to her. Besides, Dr. Gillies wouldn’t allow her to nurse him.”

“Well, I suppose I must,” grumbled Miss Williams, with just that amount of over-emphasis which told of her sense of compensation.

She swept the crumbs off the table into her lap with her curved hand, looking as cheerful as the prospect would allow. She walked to the step, and carefully scattered the crumbs in the roadway. Returning, she kicked off her shoes, and leaning her elbows on the table repeated: “I suppose I must. Well, what sort of a person is Mr. Basil Waring? Writes poetry or something, doesn’t he? Idiot—to go falling about like that! Pity he didn’t break his head—might have let some sense into it. I’ve no patience with such people.—What have *you* been doing with yourself lately?”

She leaned her chin on her folded hands, scanning the girl closely and affectionately.

Daphne came next in her heart to the church, and it was her secret hope and purpose that the two should be united. Her love for the girl put a severe strain upon her habitually undemonstrative manner; and she explained away her occasional tenderness with a pathetic ingenuity afterwards trying to her conscience. As she looked at Daphne now, the fine wrinkles round her eyes deepened, betraying at once her years and her anxiety.

“You’re tired,” she said, nodding emphatically, “of course you’re tired. Up late last night and after band practice, too; and then the excitement of this accident—silly fool!—and all the bother of arranging. Of course you *must* be tired,” she repeated, deafening her alarm with voluble explanations. She saw, or thought she

Miss Williams

saw, in Daphne's face some hint of that unrest for which she had often prayed and now, on the moment, feared. She considered Herbert Waring over-scrupulous, and chafed under his request that she should never attempt to influence the girl in matters of religion. She was loyal under pressure, but never abandoned the hope that Daphne herself would at some time make advances or at least betray indubitable signs of spiritual need.

Under such circumstances Herbert's restriction was removed. Miss Williams held by the doctrine, usually associated with Methodism, that there were moods of particular susceptibility,—of "souls awakening."

Hitherto Daphne's untroubled words and ways had given her no encouragement; and now from the first shadow of the Angel's wing hovering over the pool, Miss Williams shrank in dismay. All at once she saw the risks and mistrusted her power of handling the situation. It was so easy to chill and repulse, so terribly difficult to find the right word. Unable through fear to make use of the apparent opportunity, woman-like, she denied it. She hastened to assure herself of a commonplace reason for Daphne's unusual appearance.

"What *is* the use of knocking yourself up? Why doesn't your father give you a change?"

"My dear Cockatoo," said Daphne, "I don't want a change. I am serenely happy, and at this moment supremely comfortable."

"Don't be silly, dear,—you know quite well what I mean. It's always a mistake to get into a groove; and in a dull place like this——"

"Dull?—the sea dull? Cockatoo, you are a heretic. It is the most fascinating place on the face of the earth; and there is only one thing wanting to crown my joy."

"Eh,—what?" said Miss Williams, in a flutter.

The Column

“Some lemonade.”

Miss Williams rose, and shuffled into the humid cave she called kitchen.

Daphne followed softly, peering round the curtain that divided it from the sitting-room. The place was built into the side of the hill, which at the back was level with the roof. It was the humorous practice of the bolder youths of Tregotha to charge down the hill and up the tiles. There was just time, if you were quick at the short cut, to drop into the school-yard and away before Miss Williams burst round the corner.

The “kitchen” was dim-lit by one window high up in the far gable. A rude bench ran along one side of the room; there was a heap of coal in one corner, a zinc bath in another, and by way of corroborative detail an oil stove. From the bare rafters depended by strings a chop, a jug of milk, and a loaf of bread.

Daphne was familiar with a great part of Miss Williams’ domestic economy, but the suspended provisions excited her curiosity.

“Do you stand on the floor and peck at it?” she said, nodding her head at the loaf.

Miss Williams jumped, to the detriment of her workmanlike operations with the lemonade bottle.

“Gracious, how you startled me! Those? Oh, rats, my dear, rats. Couldn’t keep a thing until I thought of that dodge. That settles ’em. There’s your lemonade—have some sherry in it?”

Daphne shook her head.

“Better—it’s Amontillado; some of Mr. Bargister’s, and *he* knows— Oh, all right, please yourself,” as Daphne set down her empty glass.

“Now, for goodness’ sake, sit down and make yourself comfortable.”

Miss Williams

She settled the girl in the chair, and pushed a hassock under her feet. "What's Mr. Basil Waring like?" said Miss Williams, harking back to her first question; "stained-glass sort of person, like the Poor Thing?"

Miss Williams, though eloquent on the evils of matrimony, had the abstract feminine contempt for bachelors, leading her to the use of disparaging nicknames in alluding to Herbert Waring.

"So far as I know, he consists of spectacles and rather a nice voice," said Daphne; "I only saw him by the light of a match."

"Why, I thought you saved his life,—carried him up in your arms or something. Mrs. Bargister said so. I wondered why she turned up at Celebration this morning. Wanted to pump me, I suppose; for once, you see, I didn't know."

Miss Williams was the best of listeners, uttering the appreciative exclamation just in the nick; and without the worst of vices,—anticipating the story-teller,—she knew how to give the accelerating touch; more a matter of gesture than of words.

"So you don't know what he's like," she said in a disappointed tone when the tale was ended. "I asked the Poor Thing, but he stuck out his chin and marched down the drive at ten miles an hour.

"'Like that,' he said; 'can't get anything out of that man.'"

"Mrs. Bargister can," said Daphne, wickedly.

"Yes; because it does him good to see her absorb it. He declares she reminds him of a pig when you scratch its back with a bramble."

"Emily says he does work in the East End somewhere—Poplar, I think it is. He belongs to the University Settlement."

The Column

“Oh, *that* sort of person, is he?” cried Miss Williams, rocking in ecstasy, the light of comprehension and of reminiscence in her eyes.

“I knows ’em—worse than stained glass, much worse. There was—let me see what *was* the man’s name—oh, Backhouse. He was down here for the autumn, and gave lectures in the schoolroom on Early Italian Painters with the oxy-what-you-may-call-it light; and the boys would keep treading on the pipes, and he got in a fluster—such a business as never was. He told the Poor Thing I reminded him of the cool, clean handling of a Frank Hals, whatever that may mean, and wanted to photograph me with this room for a background. Lucky there wasn’t enough light, and all that came out on the negative was my apron and the tip of my nose. So *that’s* the sort of person he is—well, I never did.”

She rocked backwards and forwards, her lips pursed up, and the fine network of amusement gathered about her eyes. Her imagination was rapidly constructive. Whether on further acquaintance Basil would tally with the image she formed of him did not concern her. She had him pigeon-holed in a convenient thinkable shape; for the rest it was clearly his business to adapt himself, rather than hers to modify her opinion.

“Gracious!” she cried, springing from her chair. “Five minutes to twelve. Now sit still just where you are and go to sleep. I’m going up to ring Angelus and put fresh flowers in the vases. Sha’n’t be back for an hour. If you want to go before I come back, pull the gate to behind you. If any one comes, tell them I shall be in all the afternoon.”

The last sentence came in a diminishing scream as Miss Williams passed round the corner of the cottage. The smile faded out of Daphne’s eyes, and she leaned

Miss Williams

back in a reverie. For the moment she envied Miss Williams.

After all, this cabined life of ordered nothings had its charm. It exacted so little, and apparently rewarded its votaries with an unfailing cheerfulness. The knowledge of a clear duty aptly performed—a duty prescribed in the smallest detail by an authority from which there was no appeal—was an escape from responsibility.

She picked up a little Manual bound in red morocco, and opened it with curiosity. Here were directions for every action of the day; a handbook of spiritual drill,—one's very meditations ordained. It suggested to Daphne a certain restfulness; for, unused as she was to artificial methods, it seemed that the step once taken the abiding by the rules became a matter of pleasant repetition, as one learns the laws of a game.

To be handmaiden to the large impulses of nature had its emotional compensations, but was in comparison exhausting. There was nothing to guide; one might be so terribly mistaken through imperfect vision, and the penalty for ignorance was still the same as for guilt.

Daphne was perfectly familiar with what her father called the Christ Myth, but it had never before appealed to her except æsthetically.

The idea of sacrifice, of forgiveness, stimulated her mind in common with other beautiful ideas; but as a rule of conduct it appeared not only impracticable but sheer waste of existence. The world was very beautiful, so beautiful that if she lived to a thousand years she could never have her fill of it; yet renunciation of the world was the keynote of the teaching of the Founder of Christianity. His followers were to consider the world but as the anteroom to another; to be endured as a necessary discipline, but never embraced. She was to believe that

The Column

the delight she took in her young body was at best a snare, her keen senses so many possible doors to perdition; the flesh inexhaustible in its beauty, its mystery, but the casual handiwork of a Creator who with stupendous egoism bade His creatures turn from it, lest they forgot Him in His work. For it was the essential fact—the Cross—that appealed to her; she would have put aside contemptuously, had she been acquainted with it, the comfortable doctrine of reconciliation. She saw things in uncompromising outlines,—on the one side the Ascetic, on the other the Earth-worshipper.

She was far from questioning her convictions, and had the most perfect trust in her father, but was so little given to self-analysis that she made no allowances for temperament. Imagining herself the common type, she was unable to comprehend the adoption by others of a creed she found so intolerable. Yet she half coveted its compensations,—she weighed her own alternating moods of rapture and indolence against the sparkling equanimity of those who had forsworn the world.

The plaintive iteration of the Angelus bell brought her back from the abstract to the concrete and Miss Williams.

Her eyes wandered round the room,—a very museum of trifles. The structure of the walls was lost in the overlaying of indescribable bric-à-brac, details trivial in themselves made worthy by the accident of association. Etchings, photographs, fans, pieces of china,—some rare and beautiful, others in the nature of rustic “keepsakes,” retained for kindly memories—were arranged with that apparent artlessness which cannot be imitated. There was not a single erring tone; for all their seeming confusion, colours played into each other with the inevitableness of a chemical reaction.

Chairs and tables were littered with books of every

Miss Williams

description ; here the "Imitation of Christ" shouldered a translation of Balzac ; and Meredith and Newman showed equal signs of use.

Over all, dominating the rich medley of form and colour, was the Cross. It was as if these were offerings like those trifles left by pilgrims at a shrine,—not condemned, not unused, but only deriving their value from their dedication.

Daphne lifted from the wall a little crucifix, and admired the symbolic perfection of the strained limbs and tortured brow.

She pictured the strange history,—the miraculous birth, the agony in the garden, the awful death which was no death. If these had any meaning, it was this : "Renounce."

It was true that Christ was bound to humanity by the common accidents of life ; but He wore the garment of flesh only to preach its humiliation.

Gazing at the inexplicable symbol, she passed from thought to dreaming, from dreaming to heavy slumber.

Herbert Waring on his way to church shadowed the doorway. He tapped, and receiving no answer entered the room. His eyes fell on the sleeping girl with the crucifix on her lap. An observer would have traced three distinct emotions in his face.

First, a quick flush of anger—he supposed hastily that Miss Williams had been indiscreet. Next a queer twitching smile, as if he were spectator to some contest where the odds were equal, though Herbert's wishes were obviously all on one side. Lastly, an expression so alien to his type, so transient that for a flash he was a man whom his familiars had never seen. He extended his right hand, palm down as in benediction, over the girl's head ; then he turned, and softly left the cottage.

CHAPTER VIII—*Morthover House*

“**Y**ES, my dear; from what Dr. Gillies told me, I should think he is a most dangerous young man.”

Mrs. Bargister's appreciation of the last four words was almost voluptuous. She hastened to drink coffee ere the flavour of them had passed from her lips.

“Um—Gillies only tolerates one sort of vice.”

“George!”

“Well, m' dear—I don't think badly of Gillies, you know—not at all; most estimable young person—man, I should say; but as a model of rectitude—a—common-sense, I mean—I——”

Mr. Bargister, who resembled a guinea-pig in form and expression, became inarticulate and nibbled his toast apprehensively.

When he had time to think out his remarks, they were generally of sound character; but a natural slowness in getting the right word, coupled with a secret passion for Hansard, betrayed him into the dangerous practice of taking ready-made short cuts. Despairing of the common aids to expression, he caught feverishly at the unqualified English of his favourite orator; representing rather the superlative of what was in his mind than what he would have chosen to say.

Thus, when he said “vice” he meant “peculiarity,” but couldn't think of it in time. In ordinary conversation he made futile attempts to dilute his first pungent communications, as one would wash down a too emphatic drawing; and if his listener were patient, and Mr. Bar-

Morthover House

gister evaded the alluring grooves of Burke, there was gold to be had from him.

The more perceptive of his friends were able to discount him; but his wife nailed him to his original statements, when he generally took refuge in lies—frank lies.

His mild demeanour and nervous delivery enhanced the robust character of his language, and Herbert Waring called him a gondola turned to the uses of a torpedo-boat.

As might be supposed, he was in reality afraid of his wife, though she fortunately was not aware of it. Her boneless commonplace stifled him; in argument with her he fought as against pillows or enervating mists.

This breakfast-time Mrs. Bargister exasperated and appalled him with cetacean outlines of Basil Waring; taking her measurements from the doubtful versions of his brother and Caspar Gillies. The one had humorously exaggerated, the other unconsciously distorted his details; and in the limbo of Mrs. Bargister's imagination the monstrous hybrid took on a seeming of direst malignity.

Her attempts to be concise in presenting the wonder led her to sum up his rumoured eccentricities under the general heading of Socialism.

“Positively rank, my dear—his brother assures me that in London he goes about in his shirt-sleeves—flannel shirts too. He spends his income in teaching the working classes things they should never hear about,—Brownrigg and pictures of naked women.”

Mrs. Bargister's vehemence was prompted by leviathan cunning. Basil Waring himself did not concern her; but Basil Waring as the guest of Edward Hastings was, to her thinking, a natural enemy. There existed between the two houses a vague hostility. Mrs. Bargister's attitude was that of virtuous disapproval; her husband's grievance was at once more concentrated and more recent.

The Column

Mr. Bargister thought worlds of Hastings, and the difference between them caused him acute discomfort. His wife was momentarily disconcerted by his direct championship of the enemy.

The unwilling cause of the feud was the boy Johnnie. Mr. Bargister lived in the hope that he would one day see Johnnie taking that place in the world of affairs from which he himself was debarred by the unfriendliness of nature. He had applied himself almost so soon as the boy entered the world to the task of rearing a statesman. For the necessary reputation he relied on the Bar, and selected Winchester and Oxford as the places to be honoured in the formation of Johnnie's mind.

His conflict with circumstances began early; Mrs. Bargister would not hear of a public school, a place where she was led to believe the authorities devoted their energies to the obliteration of maternal impressions.

Impervious to reason, she won by sheer humidity; and when Johnnie left the preparatory school in Truro, he was handed over to Herbert Waring, until he should be ready for matriculation. This brought him into contact with Hastings and his daughter; and from them rather than from his tutor he received his intellectual baptism. But for Hastings it is possible that Johnnie would have set his face contentedly in the direction indicated by his father; but one free run in the library at Penresco had awakened the plastic instinct within him. Johnnie was a boy of unhesitating temperament; once called, he was vowed heart and brain to the worship of curve and surface.

Hastings was interested; he observed in Johnnie's first crude models a quality singularly uncommon. Most youths of artistic temperament are at first vaguely "artists"; Johnnie's instinct led him straight to the clay.

Morthover House

He showed little appreciation of colour, and was respectfully tolerant of drawing only as a means of training. From the first his fingers itched to mould and carve; he had the significant savage joy in his material.

Before Hastings knew anything of the paternal bias he had joined himself with the boy's ambition. When he heard of his offence through Herbert, he was pained rather by the Bargisters' want of perception than by any sense of error. He felt sure of his discovery, and was far-sighted enough to predict disaster if the boy were forced in any other direction.

He ceased, however, to give Johnnie any encouragement, though he frequently discussed the matter with Herbert Waring. The latter, though agreeing with him, was loyal to his trust, and ingeniously directed Johnnie's attention to the possibilities of a dilettante courtship of his Goddess.

"My dear boy," he said, after one of Johnnie's outbursts, "the orator should above all men be a person of cultivated tastes. I need only point to Seymour and Lord Anstruther to remind you how happily a knowledge of art lends itself to the uses of eloquence. Besides," he continued, fired by his own special pleading, "the very art of the speaker is akin to that of the sculptor,—the same patient shaping of material, the balance, the finish, all are there."

"But—but—Mr. Waring—I don't want to talk about shapes; I want to make them," cried Johnnie, with a convincing gesture.

The action was so pathetically luminous that Waring was thrown back on the tamer argument of the tutor,—the appeal to Duty.

The effect on the boy was the worst conceivable. Creeping sullenly between inclination and duty, he

The Column

embraced neither ; and though he honestly tried to shut his ears to the voice of instinct, he could not always resist temptation.

His sister galled him with sympathy and contraband supplies of modelling clay ; and though he argued feebly against deception, he shared with her the furtive use of an outhouse.

As yet he had, of course, no training ; and the fact of his coming at once to the life, as illustrated in Emily's head, hands and feet, made his appetite so much the keener.

In his first conversation with Basil Waring, now convalescent, Johnnie betrayed his passion ; and Basil, misunderstanding the warning forefinger of his host, talked of schools of art. He fed the boy's willing ears with alluring gossip of heroes of the chisel,—their tricks of style, the clothes they wore, the tobacco they affected,—these fortunate men who earned their bread by the conquest of marble.

Johnnie plied him with eager questions.

Was it possible to learn of these giants? Who was the greatest of them, and how could one become his pupil?

It was a new and inviting aspect of his dream to the country-bred boy. Hitherto he had come to his chosen material armed only with instinct and vague ideas gathered from the biographies of great sculptors,—mostly of past ages. He knew by heart the half-legendary anecdotes of their powers, the quaint records of their outworn methods. It was now made real to him, almost for the first time, that here in England patient hands and keen eyes were being initiated into the absorbing mysteries.

He saw strenuous faces bent over their work ; and his ears tingled with the ring of chisel and mallet releasing

Morthover House

form from chaos. The dear difficulties, the self-sacrifice, the brief compensations of the studio life were possible to him who had courage to begin his apprenticeship.

He made another appeal to his father, declaring, with tears in his eyes, that it was useless to think of Oxford; that unless his father would allow him his way he had better find him a clerkship in the bank in Truro.

"I can do that, Pater," he said humbly, "without thinking about it, but I cannot keep my mind to my books."

Mr. Bargister was obdurate. He delivered hesitating but appalling threats in the mildest of voices; declaring that if he heard any more of "this depraved and criminal hankering after putty," he would have him packed off to a refractory school.

He was the more emphatic in his refusal because of his suspicion that he was playing a losing game. He was aware that the intelligence of the neighbourhood was united against him, and to his fancy the critics became mockers; he saw grinning faces behind hands.

The thing had gone so far that his jealously guarded purpose was blown upon; and he writhed under the comments his imagination suggested to him. "Parliament?—preposterous!"

"Poor old Bargister—so *that's* his loose tile, is it?"

In consequence he was goaded out of reasonable opposition into sheer pigheadedness.

On top of it all came treachery in the house.

Mrs. Bargister, who had been loudest in her denunciation of "artists and people," was already melting before her son's diminished appetite and paling cheek.

She hinted at breakfast the desirability of compromise, and covered her defection by the vilification of Basil

The Column

Waring. To her confusion, her husband had spoken of him with tolerance, almost enthusiasm.

She was not sufficiently acute to see that this appreciation of an opponent was the sign of unwavering purpose. Her methods in warfare were those of mediæval witchcraft,—the construction and mutilation of a moral effigy of the offending person.

The absence of bitterness in her husband's position disarmed her, and she advanced with trembling joy to assist in the reduction of his crumbling defences.

Her experience resembled that of the ill-fated schooner "Hesperus,"—the "carded-wool" of an apparently vacillating purpose landed her on the "horns" with frightful celerity.

"Jane," said Mr. Bargister, "if you are ever again so besotted as to suggest so disastrous a policy, I shall refuse to dwell any longer under this roof. As for that monster of filial ingratitude,—I speak of our unhappy son John,—I shall subject him to the most exemplary chastisement of which I am capable, a—I say I shall speak to him very seriously."

For a few seconds he muttered alternative terrors in a diminishing ratio.

Mrs. Bargister diluted her coffee with tears. She had supposed that the time for persuasion was arrived, and had risen with hope to the opportunity.

Having shown her hand, she grew reckless.

"I'm sure, George, you're very hard on the poor boy. These wretched people, though you do think such a lot of them, have stuffed his head with absurd ideas about the Academy,—Westminster Abbey, and all that. Not but what Westminster Abbey—tombs—monuments—There was his poor grandfather the Colonel; to be sure, he died of typhoid at Canterbury. However, that may

Morthover House

be. The boy is getting poor-spirited, and I'm sure what he eats wouldn't keep a sparrow alive."

"That will do, Jane," said Mr. Bargister, beginning to sniff his letters short-sightedly.

Presently he looked up, and observing his wife still reminiscent in mood and attitude of Canterbury over her coffee-urn, suggested the absence of any necessity for her presence.

Mrs. Bargister flushed.

"Emily and—they, I mean, haven't breakfasted yet."

Mr. Bargister laid down his letter and cleared his throat.

"Madam," he said, "your shameless duplicity is more creditable to your maternal solicitude than to your sense of duty—I should say your habits of order. Do you mean to assert, on your word as a Christian woman, that John has not risen from his bed at—let me see—nine o'clock on this beautiful morning?"

"Indeed, George," pleaded Mrs. Bargister, "he was out of the house, both he and Emily, at seven. I heard them say—at least I expect," she added, with feeble dissembling, "they may have gone fishing."

"Fishing," sneered Mr. Bargister. "Let me tell you, madam, this will not do. This wanton profligacy—this unpunctuality on the part of your son, will, if permitted, bring dishonour upon—will cause me considerable annoyance. I shall at once issue orders——"

He was interrupted by the opening of the door. Emily and Johnnie edged in together, and silently took their places at the table. Johnnie's coat-sleeve bore undeniable traces of modelling clay, and his sister's hair was powdered here and there with the same damning evidence.

Johnnie was in the most thrilling stage of a model of Emily's head. From information supplied by Basil

The Column

Waring, he had procured the more orthodox tools of his craft ; and in the mysteries of callipers and "butterflies" the pair had forgotten the lapse of time.

"John," observed Mr. Bargister, after a sickening silence.

Johnnie straightened his back ; his frank features hardened, and he fixed his eyes moodily on his plate.

"John," repeated his father, "not content with outraging my feelings by the practice of the most degrading of vices, you have the insolence to come into my presence with hands bearing the hideous marks of your guilt—I say, sir, you might have washed your hands. Your unhappy sister I leave to her conscience."

The corners of Emily's mouth quivered—not with remorse.

'It is evident," continued the little man, "that your new acquaintance Mr. Basil Waring is a most unprincipled person—a—extremely indiscreet. It is obvious that his conversation has aroused in you those abandoned impulses I trusted you had overcome. I shall at once put a stop to your intimacy—that is to say, I must really request him to be more careful. Continue the meal you so little deserve."

He pushed back his chair and trotted fiercely from the room.

Mr. Bargister was hardly more distressed by the obstacles thrown in the way of his programme by its obstinate subject than by the knowledge that it had been torn from the shy recesses of his mind into the garish light of discussion. In the privacy of his garden he had smoothed and patted the scheme into shape until it had become the better part of his being.

He retired to it daily as to a fragrant arbour of contemplation. He brooded over it in the delicious moments

Morthover House

before dropping off to sleep, and it held empire over his dreams; when he beheld the fruition of his labours. Johnnie was never less than a Cabinet Minister, and once had even worn the cares of Premiership.

Mr. Bargister wedded the name and the office with the trembling audacity of the girl who writes her name "Mrs. ——" to see how it looks, immediately tearing up the paper with furious blushes.

He studied Johnnie in every character,—as Leader of the Opposition nobly enraged, scorching a time-serving Government with vitriolic eloquence; as the imperturbable Pilot weathering a European crisis,—the Pilot whose heavy-lidded inscrutable eyes ached with wider horizons than his critics dreamed; from whom the virulent abuse of his base opponents turned aside as the spume-flakes slip from the bows of an ironclad.

Or—perhaps best of all—he saw him in the presence of Royalty; vindicated after years of suspicion, bending godlike brows in proud humility to receive the gratitude of his Sovereign.

It was glorious! There was something to wake to every morning,—some problem solved, some happy addition to the forecast of Johnnie's career.

And now this warm-nurtured creation, this babe swaddled in the most intimate bands of consciousness, was flung to the world to be pitilessly dissected before the scoffing herd. Each delicate web unrolled with the contemptuous appraisal of the auctioneer; every detail a peg upon which to hang some vulgar pleasantry.

The air was thick with jeering faces; his memory spiked on "fat bulls of Basan;" even in his misery he found comfort in the phrase.

His disappointment was so massive, so immovable, that a surface come and go of speculation left it untouched.

The Column

He was alive to the morning and the place; but it was all meaningless. Why did the sun trouble to shine?—and the much praised vista from the hall door was a futile exercise. The division in his household, the wavering colours of his wife, were mere specks on the eyeball; though he marvelled with a dull sense of wonder that Mrs. Bargister could still concern herself with the affairs of her daughter.

Johnnie himself he was unable to consider; such wanton rejection of a career was among the unthinkable.

He stumbled into the garden,—his garden, the cradle of his Plan, every shrub of which was consecrated by some association with the future Statesman.

He paced feverishly up and down the walks until the essential charm of the place began to pluck at his senses.

Before the birth of his son this garden had been his one alternative with Hansard; and it bore triumphant witness to his taste and determination. He had fought for it with the courage of the lover, and had lived to hear his obstinacy commended by unquestionable authority.

Morthover House had been the neglected property of the Earl of Tregotha, who, dividing his attention between Tattersall's and a wicked little theatre in Porth, supported it is said by his Lordship for private and disreputable purposes, had found little time or inclination for playing the country gentleman.

When George Bargister succeeded his father in the banking firm of Bargister and Trevoise, he was convalescent from the discovery that oratory was not for him, and under the double sway of Hansard and the novels of Lord Beaconsfield.

The latter undoubtedly influenced him in the choice of his residence, and he got it for a song.

At this time all persons of taste were Gothic; the works

Morthover House

of Mr. Ruskin were fermenting in men's minds, and the country was infested by hungry architects ready to convert the most uncompromisingly Palladian structure into a habitation fit for a gentleman of culture.

There must have been a touch of genius in Mr. Bargister. He saw that the character of the place was Georgian, and Georgian he decided it should remain.

This led to the first quarrel of his married life. Mrs. Bargister, slim and vaguely romantic, was fresh from undigested Stones of Venice, and vowed that she could never sleep under a pediment. She had many friends all of the same architectural tincture.

There were arguments and tears; but George Bargister, though he made concessions in the matter of internal decoration, was immovable on the question of structural alterations.

But it was the garden, the Retreat, that won his special protection. He tried and dismissed five gardeners before he secured the threadbare Scotchman who had learned to respect a Period.

Together they recaptured the place from the advancing wilderness.

The smothered outlines of the walk were painfully retrieved; the plaster gods were set upon their pedestals; peacocks, "arborescent and iridescent," again usurped the lawn, and the resinous alleys gloomed as when they echoed the dangerous wit of the Regency.

In Mr. Bargister's eyes the place, with its ordered irregularity, pictured the eloquence of his favourite models,—the artful punctuation of urns, the studied lift and cadence of shadowed pathways. Here one was seduced—as from a main argument to some flower of rhetoric—to a drooping Psyche, now, alas, broken-nosed, generously spaced with silence.

The Column

A stone seat, sprinkled with yew berries, invited to contemplation ; as the orator holds his audience dallying with images before landing them into conviction over the easy slope of a graceful period.

“The Golden Age!” Mr. Bargister would exclaim when surprised out of his nervousness by a sympathetic listener, “when intellect was careful of its mould, and men were not ashamed to set and polish their jewels.”

Here, on this morning, he was safe from interruption.

Mrs. Bargister, though an excellent digestion had rounded her, body and mind, from mediæval aspirations into an appreciation of Hanoverian comfort, was never at home in the garden. It was as though she were conscious of lurking irony in the clipped hedges ; a reflection upon her serviceable qualities in the serious frivolity of the strutting peacock ; she felt like Mrs. Primrose at a masked ball. Therefore Mr. Bargister knew that he should be alone ; abandoned to the sympathy of stucco deities, the suave condolence of level cedars.

He gradually acquiesced in the mood of the place ; his walk took on the heroic serenity of those who in its flower had rippled and ruffled over desperate hearts.

He linked arms with Brummell, snuffed with Sheridan ; and in the contagion of his company arrived at that stage when he could frame a jest at his unhappiness.

He stopped before the Faun, the leaping figure frozen between two cymbal clashes. “Perhaps,” he murmured,—and who shall say what Exquisite inclined his ear?—“perhaps it was this very figure that awoke emulative ardours in the breast of the graceless young dog.”

CHAPTER IX—*The Philosopher, The Enthusiast, and the Other Person*

" I AM interested in your Nausicaa ; tell me, when addressed, does she turn her head quickly or swim round ? This is of the first importance. If she pecks at you eagerly, she is a mere girl ; a second too long is coquetry overdone, which spells—I fear it must be written—vulgarity.

" Do you know you are becoming reticent, and one is so apt to misconstrue. Please understand that I must have everything,—her mouth, her eyes, and—most stupid of men—what she wears.

" I can, of course, put every confidence in your judgment ; but don't you think her midnight music a little—what shall I say?—affected ?

" I am not all for sweet simplicity—Heaven forbid !—but perhaps there is a choice in foibles that stamps——

" As you say, she is country-bred, and I despair of the hats and boots I picture. She surely can't go barefoot, even in so primitive a place as Tregotha ; though, for all the details you give, she might be—I claim the frigidity of paper—well draped.

" By the way, the pitch seldom rises now, and as for pearls ! Reason ?—oh, headaches, of course, and tiresome maids, you giddy-pate ; what would you have me confess ?

" I will be reckless. Picture me—' pink applauding palms ' rough with housemaid's duty, slippers, dressing-gown, and—the Danae-shower, if you will have it.

" This letter is, don't you think, like one of those little vanilla sandwiches ; uninteresting on the outside and just one tiny mouthful ?—Ogre ! your eyes burn me——

" Do you know, Annette remarks with her inimitable drawl,—

" ' Is it that Madame will have the screen before the fire ?'

" But I spoil you. When is this bothersome leg going to be fit for duty ? Your boys are demoralised. They are embarrassingly acute ; the other day the big dark printer—Joe Simmonds—isn't he ?—waylaid me.

" ' W'en is Mr. Warin' comin' back ?' menacingly almost, as if I had hidden you. I was nearly tempted to give him Cain's answer. You really shouldn't compromise me so.

" Write to some of them ; the letter will keep them quiet (that is,

The Column

if they don't fight over it). Poor Mr. Walpole assures me that he is getting grey in trying to keep order.

"I played to them the other night 'Les Adieux,' 'L'Absence'—I shall keep 'Le Retour' till when?"

"GERTRUDE.

"P.S. This last was more than you deserve.

"P.P.S. Perhaps it *was* because I was writing to you."

It was now six weeks since Basil Waring met with his accident. Contrary to the prediction and the apparent desire of Caspar Gillies, he had made a rapid recovery and was able to hobble respectably about the house. He lay on the couch in the big hall of Penresco, turning over on his mental palate the contents of his letter; and the expression of his face suggested something unsatisfactory in the flavour. There was but little in the written lines to cause uneasiness, but he fancied a vague complaint between them. He was adept in self-torture, and the slight over-statement here and there conveyed to him the assumption of proprietorship over his soul, the expectation that he was to consider himself answerable to the writer.

Basil Waring was inclined to credit other people with a knowledge of his emotional disturbances possessed only by himself. Their interest he took for granted, gracefully and without the inward agonies of the merely self-conscious. The habit resulted as much from the circumstances of his life as from a defective sense of proportion.

At home he had been the favourite son, at school and Oxford always the leader of a set,—his actions the subject of discussion, his opinions quoted as conclusive. Always reminded of his audience, it is not surprising that not only his words but his thoughts were in a manner arranged with an eye to the impression they would produce.

The Philosopher, Etc.

Less happy than the complete egoist, he happened to be born double,—one half engaged in the exhibition of poses, whilst the other was critical. In moments of doubt the Other Person became audible, and marked the raree show with a running fire of the frankest commentary.

It might be said of Basil Waring that he never made a fool of himself but he knew it and at the time. This, though it saved him from the inconvenience of repentance, was trying to his temper, since he could never be quite in earnest even to himself.

There was, it is true, the advantage of rehearsal ; and the elimination of more obvious blunders in carpentry enabled him to get through his parts without many cat-calls.

The imagined spectator — for he always played primarily to a single intelligence—changed from time to time, and he was even now addressing himself to unknown perceptions.

He habitually steeped himself in the atmosphere of the moment, and at intervals examined his soul as one would a meerschaum—to see how it was colouring.

Before the arrival of the post he had been heaving the lead into his consciousness and picking over samples of the deposit of the last few weeks.

The result was satisfactory to his self-esteem, and the congenial task of raking among the contents of his mental dredger revealed many pretty things.

Hastings evidently liked him ; and Basil was expert in the art of cumulative pleasing, producing daily some delicate gradation of attractiveness. It was his misfortune to identify the admirable in his associates with outlying provinces of himself, to consider ideas as colonies from his own mother wit ; and here his keen sensibility was pander to his egoism.

The Column

He claimed a percentage, as the crown has right to a certain proportion of discovered treasure. So with "Sub-soil;" when Basil first read the book, it was with the joy of recognition rather than of illumination.

He felt he could have written it "if he had had a mind to," and he impressed his fellows rather as the appreciator than the disciple of Hastings. His assumption of the mantle was unconscious; therefore, when he became acquainted with Hastings, the one did not recognise his garment, nor did the other suffer the pangs of the impostor.

Basil was far too acute to indulge in compliment; but he had cultivated allusion to a pitch of extreme subtlety and, without the grossness of quotation, was constantly reminding Hastings of his influence.

Here Hastings was vulnerable; he was not vain, but intercourse with a man able to follow him beyond the boundaries of language was grateful to him, and he naturally overestimated the personality of his disciple.

His increased cheerfulness did not escape the notice of his daughter. Daphne was thus led to consider the person who had such a beneficial effect upon her father, and the household had settled into that simmering condition of friendliness when anything is possible.

Basil had not yet allowed himself the luxury of considering the most romantic possibility. He would have described his feeling as that of interest in a new type. How far his interest might carry him he reserved, as one abstains from skipping ahead in the pages of a new book.

It is such a pity to confuse the sequence of one's appreciations.

The arrival of his letter had all the irritating effect of an importunate visitor in the library, just when one has forgotten all but the book.

It was the reminder of another phase of himself already

The Philosopher, Etc.

obscured by the attractions of the present. He thought to be summary; to hit upon the particular need or grievance of his correspondent, so that he might answer it out of hand.

His exercises were interrupted by the entrance of his host.

Hastings came into the room with the quiet firmness of the physically strong. He brought with him the stimulating atmosphere of the sea, an element to which he seemed to belong rather than to the artificial seclusion of the study.

The effect of his entrance on Basil was as the intrusion of daylight into a lamplit chamber, at once disturbing and invigorating. He felt that he had to adapt himself to bolder conditions, to a more emphatic light and shade; and though there was an increased sense of stability, the effort was perceptible. It was the abandonment of finicking analysis for a clean statement of things. Hastings was not an easy person to talk to; indeed, to a man of Basil's loose methods, conversation with him was distinctly an effort. He thought and spoke painter-fashion, in planes which, imperceptible as to their edges, were found, on closer examination, to be uncompromising in their logical relations. He was at once subtle and exact and, in addition, his memory was absolutely water-tight.

He came over to Basil, laying a hand on his shoulder in a manner that was already paternal.

"I am afraid," he said, in his hesitating voice, "that I have neglected you. It must be very wearisome to lie here boxed up away from it all."

The touch of his hand had the reality of outdoors, and Basil, conscious of his letter, felt the contrast acutely,—on the one side a feverish manipulation of circumstances, on the other a calm childlike acceptance of whatever came

The Column

next. He found it difficult to say anything; and Hastings' curious trick of earnest attention to, and consideration of the most trivial remark was not encouraging to the piling up of commonplace.

"You will be about in time for our south-west winds," resumed Hastings; "no one can be said to have seen the Cornish coast except under those conditions."

It was here the Other Person appeared, finger on lip, attentive, counselling discretion.

Basil caught at Hastings' implied question. "But really—there is my work in London. Indeed, I was considering whether I ought not to go back next week."

"Impossible," said Hastings. "Dr. Gillies assures me that you must not think of getting into harness for another month at least."

"Oh, Gillies!" began Basil.

Both men laughed.

"Seriously," said Hastings, "I shall be more than pleased if you can winter with us."

The Other Person signalled a crisis. Basil knew that the sincerity of the invitation was unquestionable; it was so alluring that he shrank from the crudity of eagerness.

He simulated a careful consideration of his arrangements, sternly assuring the Third Person that he should be guided by the voice of duty.

The Other Person smiled.

"Of course," said Hastings, "if you feel that you would be neglecting your work, I won't press you; otherwise——"

Basil sighed.

"Perhaps I take my poor influence too seriously," he said, "but frankly they do miss me in Poplar. I got a letter this morning,—it is hardly fair to the others, you know. We all have to work very hard, and when one is

The Philosopher, Etc.

away— Of course it is difficult for you to see things in the same way; you are not sanguine of what we hope to do—of the masses.”

“I?” said Hastings, whimsically. “I assure you I think they are what Carlyle used to call a fact; but I also think you and your friends are inclined to spoil them. They are going to swallow us all up eventually, are they not? and till then it doesn’t seem very selfish to desire to forget them.”

“Yes; but,” said Basil, “if one feels that one can do anything—ever so little, but something—to prepare them for their privileges,—to teach them to use that power when it comes.”

“Exactly the line I should advise,” murmured the Other Person; “insist on the magnitude of your Duty, but be persuaded. This will suggest his overpowering attraction, also hers.”

The last two words were mouthed with a smirk.

“I think we should try——” observed Basil, after a thoughtful pause.

“To sharpen the wits and the weapons of Demos, so to speak.”

“Oh, no, you are unfair; one would first of all show them the beauty of renunciation,—educate their appetite for those better things they may share with us amicably. One would strive to persuade them that there are more enviable pleasures than unlimited beer, objects worth striving for other than money.”

Hastings shook his head.

“You remember the story of the African bishop who went back to his people?”

“Ah, yes,—of course ethnological differences can’t be got over,—that is the last infirmity; but this is not a parallel case,—these people are our own flesh and blood,

The Column

and the evils we would combat are artificial and of comparatively recent origin. A few centuries ago they still possessed—though imperfectly, I grant you—those aspirations we would foster. In Shakespeare's time, even in London, they had their village green; the song and the dance brightened the lives of the poorest, and the craftsman produced things of beauty we to-day are only too eager to imitate. Look at the men who built our cathedrals; surely you will not deny them the sense of beauty?"

The Other Person applauded softly.

"Don't overdo it," he murmured; "he will take you for a follower of Ruskin."

"Don't you think," said Hastings, "that they are happier with their steam-engines and things? It seems to me that your only hope is to build upon what they really care for."

Basil saw his opening.

"But don't you see that they need to be told what they really care for? Personally I am convinced that their passion for machinery and the machine-made is only a transitory craze; that with a little help they may be brought back to their older, truer interests."

"Do you look at the popular magazines?"

"I admit they are terrible; we fight them with Botticelli and William Morris. Of course it is only inch by inch, but at least we move."

"This," said the Other Person, turning up his eyes, "is edifying; but if you are not careful it will end in a swamp of discussion. He will take you at your word, and you will go back to London next week. Poplar is all very well, but Tregotha and—eh?"

"You see," said Hastings, "they have their own prophets, exalters of the crank and piston-rod, who are

The Philosopher, Etc.

—you will pardon my frankness—nearer to them than you can ever hope to be; born of them, sharing and understanding their instincts.”

“Oh,” cried Basil, enthusiastically, “there you hit my pet scheme. It is quite true that however we strip ourselves of the conventions of class, they can’t get over the initial fact that we are missionaries. It is an old fancy of mine,” he spoke like a centenarian, “that if two or three devoted men would not only live among them, but, by marrying their women, identify themselves with their hopes and fears, their appetites and prejudices—there are difficulties, of course——”

“Soap and water,” suggested Hastings.

“Not exactly; that is where Kingsley, though well-meaning, went so terribly astray. They don’t want to hear about drains and things. Dirt, properly considered, is only a sign of weakness, of slavery. The strong man is naturally clean. Take him out into the air, teach him to value his body, and he will turn to soap and water as by instinct. We steer a middle course, you see,—between the blundering science of Kingsley and the vague culture of Ruskin, and, I might add, Arnold. The one irritated them by directing their attention to their bad habits; the others chilled them with abstractions, desirable enough in their way, but above their comprehension. We, as you say, get hold of their possibilities and work on them. A little dancing—organised exertion, some of the more human poets, but above all things pictures and music; which, without preaching, will excite any idealism they may possess.”

Basil was warming to his work. He faced the Other Person defiantly, and for the moment persuaded himself that his devotion to the cause was uninspired by any personal motive.

The Column

“Quixotic, I fear, Quixotic,” said Hastings. “Let me tell you that I appreciate the nobility of your purpose, but I doubt if it will have any lasting effect. Perhaps we are quarrelling over the two sides of the shield. I don’t know England very well—I say it to my shame—and my idea of the mob—of the masses, I should say—is no doubt taken from another race. Don’t think that I despise anyone, but I think that the mob has its peculiar, I might say Roman, use—the stone in the handkerchief—the dead weight, so valuable for the purposes of the leader. See what soldiers your East-Enders make! I think that whatever tends to impair its unthinking solidity is a step in the wrong direction. I would feed it, house it; but I would not give it—frills. Perhaps I am selfish; however, supposing these people really do love Shakespeare and the musical glasses, it seems to me that the man of intellect can best help them by being himself. I don’t think Praxiteles preached culture to the populace, but I doubt if the results even of your devotion are to be measured with what he did for the people of Athens.”

“Ah! you speak of artists. We, though of course alive to the value of the Perfect Thing as an educational influence, are but a band of humble workers,—showmen, if you like. We leave creation to others,—we are content with elucidation.”

Hastings was silent for a few minutes, and his manner suggested embarrassment.

“I want your advice,” he said; “you must understand that what I say about the undesirability of encouraging the ‘mute inglorious Milton’ only applies to him in the lump. When you stumble on your jewel in the rubbish heap, polish it by all means; and here, I think, is a more useful field for your powers. It is the exceptional indi-

vidual who lifts his time,—and that not by preaching; you don't get development, either in life or art, through a collection of average persons. Perhaps when genius takes its stride the others manage to scramble after somehow; but you must have your bell-wether. It seems to me cheaper, and decidedly more hopeful, to nurse the obviously unusual."

"Find him," said Basil, sententiously.

It is astonishing what a sense of ease comes with the perception that one's opponent is about to indulge in special pleading.

Basil was able to look about him; he had acquitted himself of his *apologia*, and it was his turn to sit in judgment.

The Other Person had his ear.

"He is coming to personalities," he said; "it is your fault if you let him wander off again into abstractions. I suggest your acceptance of his invitation is a graceful concession."

"There is young Bargister, you know," said Hastings; "don't you think you could do something—as an independent witness, I mean? Of course one can't interfere in a family matter, but it seems to me that in a case like this common sense comes first, etiquette afterwards; and with your powers of persuasion——"

He smiled and put out his hand. "Now here," he said, "is a reason for remaining that would satisfy your conscience."

Basil hesitated. The Other Person averted his face and was presently heard stating a case.

Life—he was ostentatiously general—was very desirable down here. It was of course noble to shape men in Poplar, but one should never forget the instrument. The good workman is kind to his tools. What finer tempering could one desire than a few weeks of lettered sim-

The Column

plicity open to the sea and air? To put a frank edge to it, there was surely no need for evasion?

Daphne was positively unique, and to neglect the study of her was throwing away an opportunity for self-culture.

He quoted a favourite author,—

“While all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge, that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment.”

“For a month at least,” urged Hastings, as in echo; “Daphne has had so little of your society.”

“He said it himself!” shrieked the Other Person, jubilantly. “She is now off the Index; absolved from any doubtful appeal to sensibility into a plane of cold, sea-braced intellect. She also is anxious to make use of a moment. Really,” purred the Other Person, “it is a question of common courtesy.”

“Until the worst of the winter is gone, town is more tolerable in spring.”

“If it is not trespassing too much on your hospitality,” quavered Basil.

Hastings dismissed the idea with a gesture.

“Very well,” said Basil, “I will write to Walpole,” he half pulled Gertrude’s letter from his pocket, “and tell him not to expect me for a few weeks.”

Then Basil and the Other Person shook hands.

“I thought,” observed the latter, unctuously, “that you would show your good sense.”

CHAPTER X—*Young Ideas*

“RACE you to the column!”

“All right—ten yards?”

“Girl!—suppose I must; ready?—off.”

Johnnie was three years short of the age of chivalry and exacted the rigour of the game; nor would Daphne have thanked him for any consideration beyond the ten yards due to her inch less from knee to ankle.

Each, unhampered by any consciousness of sex, meant serious work.

It was pretty to watch the difference. The boy's earnestness spoke from jaw, fist, and eyebrow; Daphne raced with hands but lightly closed and parted lips that drank the wind, though she knew the athlete's trick of nostril.

The unfeminine in her came out in the gradual increase of ten to fifteen yards between them; most girls scoring heavily at the take-off, for pitiful, giggling collapse after the first few seconds.

Both carried level heads with shoulders down, and the difference in stride was imperceptible.

The goal shot up sparkling before Johnnie nibbled at her license, though she never turned her head to know.

Where the laurels ended, she stood sharp, as at a signal; and the boy shot by like a bird out of a bush.

He, ungenerous, paced a hop, skip, and jump,—putting a flourish on victory,—and swung round exulting. “Blown?” he cried.

Daphne shook her head and walked soberly across the open.

The Column

“ I don't run here.”

Johnnie, stooping for a blade of grass, chewed, and shot a side glance into her absent eyes.

Johnnie was too delicate to inquire into anything uncommon in Daphne's manner. He masked his curiosity behind rough counsel.

“ You're stuffy—come and swallow the sea.”

They crossed to the column, and seated themselves facing the sea.

“ Now,” said Johnnie.

They closed their eyes simultaneously, and gravely opening their mouths, inhaled a deep draught of sea-air.

The action was repeated to three times, with the solemnity of those taking the waters at a Spa.

“ Better ?” said Johnnie.

Daphne nodded and leaned back against the column.

Johnnie turned sharply. “ Where's the cripple ?”

“ In the hall, I think.”

“ Swapping epigrams with the governor; why don't he come out? Can't understand people prating about poetry and then flopping about indoors on a blessed day like this. Besides, I want him to see my workshop.”

The note of defiance in the last sentence brought Daphne's eyes round to him.

She leaned forward and laid her hand on Johnnie's arm.

“ I'm very, very sorry, old chap.”

The boy's jawbone showed white for a moment under his brown skin. “ Oh, that !” he muttered, and whistled through his teeth.

“ Won't your father give you any hope ?”

The whistle grew tenser with tattoo accompaniment.

Daphne carefully studied the horizon until the sound grew more natural.

“ Do you know,” she said, “ you are a very rude boy.”

Young Ideas

“Sorry, old fellow, but please don’t sympathise with me,—Emily is quite enough. It’s no good; the Pater won’t hear about it. Let’s talk about something else—the cripple—like him?”

“Um-m-m,” the Basil motive sounded faintly in her ears.

She hoped Johnnie would not look at her.

“He’s all right, you know,” observed the boy, tolerantly, “understands all about books and pictures and all that; but he talks too much for me. He’s like those chaps the Pater is always ramming down my throat.”

“Somebody was very glad to listen,” said Daphne, quietly.

“Can’t stand a man who’s always jawing,” said Johnnie, ignoring her aside; “why don’t he do something?” He illustrated with his fingers.

“He does a great deal,” said Daphne, to test her steadiness.

“So does a schoolmaster so far as that goes,” retorted the boy. “But I don’t call that doing; it’s only like chucking stones into the water, and the water don’t thank you. It makes a splash, though,” he added with unconscious satire.

“Father says that a man may carve with words,” said Daphne, evasively.

“What’s the use? You can’t feel the shape of it when it’s done,” said the boy, palming invisible contours.

“Perhaps because it’s too big,” replied the girl, softly; “perhaps in a hundred years somebody else will be able both to feel and see the shape of it.”

“That’s beyond me; I want something now, while it’s hot. It may be right, it may be wrong; but it’s there. I say, I’m going to make a cast of that head of

The Column

Emily. Do you think the cripple will help me? I've not tried yet, and I'm funky of spoiling the model."

"Ah!" cried Daphne; and her grey eyes kindled.

"Well,—wisdom?"

"You've made me think of something."

"Let's have it, then."

"Only—something."

"Just like a girl—I don't believe it was anything."

"Wait and see—something to your advantage, as the newspapers say."

"Oh," the boy's mouth and eyes rounded. "Anything to do with the cripple?"

"Johnnie?"

"Yes?"

"Do you care for what I wish?"

"What a question! Of course I do. Why?"

"Don't say cripple."

"Oh, all right! But I say, what is it—to my advantage, I mean?"

"Can't tell you now, it would spoil it."

"You're jolly close, I must say. If it's eggs, you needn't trouble; I've given my collection to Edmund."

"It isn't eggs, and once more I'm not going to tell you. How's Emily?"

"Oh, the same as usual; a new fad every day. She's given up sugar now because Gillies told the Mater about inherited gout."

Daphne laughed merrily.

"Enough to make a fellow ill, those two," continued Johnnie, viciously. "If they'd only spoon like the people do in books, it would be bad enough, but they make such a beastly row. They squalled and fiddled through the whole of Wagner, and now they're at a thing by a fellow named—oh, I forget; something to do with hens."

Young Ideas

“Hens—Henselt?” suggested Daphne.

“No, you duffer—I mean the noise they make. Oh, I know—Gluck—Glook, as Gillies calls him.”

“What’s the name of the piece?” said Daphne, interested.

“Wait a minute,” said Johnnie, covering his eyes with his hands, his thumbs in his ears. “I know the name quite well—I saw it in Mr. Waring’s ‘Euripides’—oh—Iphigenia in something or other—in fits, I should think, by the fuss she makes.”

“‘Iphigenia in Aulis’?” said Daphne, her eyes adream.

“Yes, that’s it; and now I remember something Emily said that made me think. It was on Sunday evening—I was gooseberry, you know.”

“Well?”

“Emily said, ‘Doesn’t that remind you of Daphne Hastings?’ and Gillies said, ‘No; Daphne Hastings would kick, or I’m very much mistaken.’”

“Yes; I think Daphne would kick,” laughed the girl. “Dr. Gillies is a very clever person.”

“Beastly clever,” murmured Johnnie, “but he can jump. I should like to catch him in the take-off,—model him, I mean; there’s a way his arm goes—so,” he illustrated.

The careful reader will understand that, after some years of indifference, Caspar Gillies had begun to subject Emily Bargister to certain abusive attention. He betrayed his interest in didactic observations with a personal bearing on music and hygiene. Mrs. Bargister translated his behaviour as towards the mental and physical improvement of a bride-elect. Gillies was of a myriad clan with more than hopes on the decease of a kilted chieftain. Whilst Mrs. Bargister coddled his quaint ardours, Mr. Bargister “saw no reason to object.”

The Column

"If he would only drop saying clever things just to see how you look," observed Johnnie, "Gillies isn't a bad sort. I like him out of doors, but inside he always seems to be trying so hard. It gives you a pain in your neck,—like when you are watching an acrobat. Of course——"

"Can't us get married avore,
My own sweet Nicholas 'ood?
Dost want to get married this marnin' ?
A b'leeve the wench has gone mad."

The laurels behind them parted, and Miss Williams emerged.

"Hullo, your Lordship, and how's the diocese?" shouted Johnnie from round the column.

Miss Williams crossed the open, swinging her hat by the strings. She did not speak until she was with them, when, flopping beside Daphne, she observed with cheerful emphasis,—

"Cheeky boy."

It was significant of their intimacy that there was no greeting between her and Daphne. In the presence of a third person as now, Mrs. Williams concealed, or perhaps to the acute betrayed, her affection in light banter.

"Quite interesting, you two, I'm sure—when's the happy day? Just come from the house—la, bless me!—talk about women! Well, if your father and Mr. Basil Waring haven't made my head ache."

Daphne tucked her hand under Miss Williams' arm. Johnnie looked the image of superfluity, but did not move.

"Hope I'm not intruding, as the rattlesnake said to the white rabbit; but I've got a holiday,—your mother's doing the clubs, John; she wants you to call for her at four."

"Is it Mothers' Meeting?" asked Johnnie.

"Yes; why?"

Young Ideas

“Bet you three to one in shillings that the Mater will read ‘How Horatius kept the Bridge,’ and fat old Mrs. James will go to sleep after the first page, that’s all.”

Neither of the others showing any inclination to consider his odds, Johnnie rose.

“I want to cut over to Porth before I call for the Mater,” he observed in obvious explanation of his inglorious retreat. “Mind you two don’t go to sleep and fall over.”

He whistled round the corner and was gone.

The two women sat in a long contented silence.

Neither found the other a hindrance to her thoughts, though they were worlds asunder.

They might have sat for Mary and a more tolerant Martha, captive to the trivial round, but respecting her sister’s pregnant indolence.

The relapse in Daphne illuminated her joyous comradeship with Johnnie. With him she was impelled to effortless chatter, and the most apprehensive of matrons would have suffered no misgivings as to their future, even had he been precocious in sentiment.

The boy absent, Daphne grew nearer to her environment with each beat of her blood; or rather her surroundings intruded themselves into her personality. The breadth, the greyness of the sea ebbed into the chambers of her brain, informing her with something of its spacious quality; and the amphitheatre behind her seemed to advance, or she recede, backed and supported by her natural guardians. She was only aware of herself as the screen upon which her setting was made visible, tangible though always just eluding her grasp. It was not sea she beheld, but “the sea” personate, illimitable.

Miss Williams noted the flash and ripple of water, the crawl of sails, and was separately alive to every sound

The Column

and scent around her. Unless it had been pointed out to her, she would not have known that she realised Daphne as merged in the rest. Although not a single detail escaped her intelligence, the foreground of her mind was yet a battlefield for infinitesimal problems.

Something wouldn't come right; and whilst Daphne relaxed, more and more interfused with sky and sea and earth, Miss Williams' cross currents of noted fact and irresolvable difficulties chafed her into language; perhaps the ultimate test of natures in their power of supporting unexacted silence,—the less able being less responsive to the unheard voices. However, Miss Williams spoke first.

“Penny for your thoughts.”

Daphne's thoughts returned like grey doves to temple eaves, and looked dovelike from her eyes.

“Was I thinking?”

“I don't believe you are happy,” said Miss Williams, emphatically.

“Define happy,” laughed Daphne.

“Oh, everything settled; all the loose ends joined, and not an odd copper to bother you.”

“The odd copper wouldn't bother me.”

“It drives me desperate,” said Miss Williams, viciously. “I've been doing up the books, and I'm twopence out in the coal.”

“Credit, or the other thing?” said Daphne.

“Oh, the other thing,” sighed Miss Williams.

“I'll give you the twopence if that will smooth matters,” observed Daphne, wickedly. Miss Williams recoiled in horror.

“But it's the principle of the thing, don't you see; and I can't rest till I get it square. The Poor Thing says it's no wonder with my System, but I know it's all right, except just when I have to balance up. It's the same

Young Ideas

with everything; some people don't mind muddling along, but I must have a plan. I was just arguing the same thing with Mr. Basil Waring. He says, 'Let it alone; take what comes, and make the best of it.' He says if he worried over his people he should go mad. It doesn't matter where they live or what they do. They may be murderers, for anything he knows; he just takes them in hand while they are with him. Most unsatisfactory, I call it; I should want to follow them home, and see if they kept their houses clean, and whether the children had any dinner. Unless I can see the whole thing from beginning to end, I can't do anything."

"I think his a very noble work," said Daphne, in a low voice.

Miss Williams hummed for a moment. "Y-es," she said grudgingly, "I suppose it is; but it all seems so higgledy-piggledy."

"My father says in his book, 'The distaff and the shears are not ours to know; our place is forever at the loom. We cannot trace the threads, but in the mingling of warp and woof we may for a moment catch and follow some turn of the pattern.'"

Miss Williams was silent, and the grey doves brooded.

"They are good friends, are they not?" The grey doves scattered.

"Oh, yes," cried Daphne, eagerly; "his being here has done father so much good I shall be sorry——"

"He's not going yet," said Miss Williams, briskly; "they were just settling it as I went in. He is staying for another month." The grey doves betrayed it.

Then Miss Williams forgot the odd twopence, and certain loose ends were united to her satisfaction.

They sat until the warning Angelus reminded her of the iron rule.

The Column

She laid her hand on Daphne's arm, and for once her ready tongue faltered with embarrassment.

"Dear," she said, "do you think your father would allow you to come up to church with me sometimes?"

"Why should he not?" exclaimed Daphne, in wonder; "of course I will come if you wish it."

CHAPTER XI—*Fauna*

DAPHNE sat in her own room, brooding over the wonderful thing that had come to her. Since the night her question had been answered, the background of her thoughts had been haunted by the image of her dream. Whenever she closed her eyes, whenever as now her wide-open eyes took on the white blindness of the antique, she saw inwardly the faint page scored with the words "Basil Waring."

She accepted the sign rather as the work of Destiny than as a thing desirable in itself, though she faced the knowledge that she had in a measure chosen. Now that her feet were set in a particular direction she was vaguely conscious of ways diverging from behind her. There had been flashed upon her immature judgment two alternatives,—to abide in patience for what meaning time or chance should evoke from the circling forces about her, or to accept the fair-seeming gift of the moment.

She never doubted that the presence of the stranger was the expedient of unseen powers, but only questioned her interpretation of the omen.

How if it were a test and she proved unworthy? For this was ever the way of heaven with women,—she remembered Pandora, and Psyche with the obsidian pyx. She did not regret her reading of the event; only, she feared. Her heart went with her choice, though she flung a backward look at her lost communion with silence; as her namesake, stiffening into her laurel, may have shot one desiring glance over her shoulder at the baffled god. For with acquiescence came a clearer perception of

The Column

relapse. She was obviously less worthy than before—why she was unable to determine; she only felt that she had parted with an austere ideal for the comfortable warmth of a human association.

It was as though she had returned from the fine solitude of mountain heights to soothe her hands at a cottage fireside.

She cheated her sense of weakness by dwelling on the happiness of her condition. She had no definite desire for love, but it was supremely restful to find a centre round which her emotions might group themselves, an altar upon which she might lay the sacrifice of her heart.

She recognised that the want of her life had been some concrete object of worship. For love her father was enough; but she, as a woman, must make of herself a gift.

Of courtship and marriage she knew nothing. She pursued her romances imagined or observed only so far as the eternal statement of lovers.

That such a man and such a woman loved each other, was for her the end of the story.

Marriage was clearly and rightly a matter for parental arrangement, and that the policy of a father and the heart of his child should indicate the same person was a fortunate accident, nothing more.

That such an accident should happen to her seemed incredible; yet, but an hour ago, her father had told her that Basil Waring would shortly ask her to be his wife.

“Wife”—the word meant little to her; merely suggesting to her mind pictures of domestic occupations,—a more considered care of linen, keener interest in the preparation of meals, and quiet communion by evening fires.

It struck her with a sudden pang that none of these pictures held any place for her father, and she had answered him quickly.

“But, father, I am very happy with you.”

Hastings shaded his face with his hand, that she might not see its greyness.

“Yes, dear girl,” he said, after a moment, “we are very happy, we two, but there is the future. It is impossible that we shall always be together; you have all your life before you, and your life must not be wasted. It will be a great comfort to me to have this anxiety removed; to know that whatever happens you will have some one to take care of you.”

He did not tell her that for him Fate had already knocked at the door; that for the last few weeks his mind was haunted by “the two-oared boat and him staring from beneath black eyebrows.”

Careful as he was, the quick sympathy of the girl caught the implication of his words. She had never pictured an existence without her father; whenever she thought of death, she imagined that it would be as if they passed hand and hand into a dark room. Even now she could not face the intolerable idea.

“Father,” she cried, “why do you talk like this—you are not unwell? Why should I need any one but you? Indeed I cannot go away. But if you should at any time be ill, that is all the more reason why I should stay with you.”

Hastings could not nerve himself to speak more clearly.

“Don’t distress yourself, dear girl,” he said, patting her head. “I shall take care that—that whoever you marry shall keep a corner in the house for me.” He spoke jestingly. “I don’t take up much room, you know—just a place for my books and things.”

Daphne said nothing. She drew closer to her father, and the tears forced themselves through her lashes.

It was part of her trial that her father’s urgency should

The Column

come with the swing of her own impulse. Had she been less willing, she would have felt less guilty; she would have obeyed her father's unspoken wish, but the unhappy conviction that his desire was based upon some betrayal of hers would have been absent. The homely fires seemed very worthless, and the irretrievable heights upreared in all their pale, clear beauty.

"Come, come," said Hastings, "this is not like you. Let us talk sober business—we are such practical people, are we not?"

Daphne laughed through her tears at the extravagant statement.

"Need I think about it just now?" she said bravely.

"Yes," replied Hastings, seriously, "it is better to have things quite clear. I want you to understand that whatever comes of it neither you nor I shall leave Penresco. Also you must not suppose that I shall be angry if you cannot give Waring the answer he desires. I would remind you," he added, "that he is making a sacrifice. I made him promise that if—well, that if you take him he will give up his work in London; at least for——"

He did not finish the sentence, but the unspoken words were hammer strokes on Daphne's brain,—“for the time that I am alive.”

She slipped away to her room with the mingled sweet and bitter in her heart. Too frank to deny her instinctive leaning towards Basil, she was yet shaken with honest and passionate regret that her father would not save her from herself.

Whatever struggle it had cost Hastings to arrive at the contemplation of Daphne's marriage he did not disclose.

He had the classic horror of the indefinite, the unfinished. He kept his plans underground until they were matured,

partly from this æsthetic feeling, partly because he disliked the discussion of ways and means.

He betrayed his limitations in his estimate of Basil Waring. His ignorance of English manners led him to overrate the apparent self-abnegation of the social worker. He saw in him the idealist who strove to live up to his illusions, and, though he entirely disagreed with his aims, his heart went out to him. That an association with the populace should be pursued as a hobby, even as a field for intellectual coxcombry, would to him have appeared preposterous; and he was of course ignorant of any more personal motive.

He saw only the abstract renunciation of privacy, to him heroic; and that a man of Basil's resources should so pawn his leisure, stamped him as a person deserving serious consideration.

The parent in him satisfied by his estimate of Basil's character, he watched his intercourse with Daphne, first with speculative interest, next with pleasure. His turn for experiment led him to play off one upon the other; and Basil's rapid enslavement was an unlooked-for vindication of his ideas. He triumphed in the obvious victory of his theories without allowing for the appeal of contrast, or the intrinsic and unique charm of the girl herself.

Basil was caught most surely because against his intentions. He had assured himself that he would preserve his detachment, so that his appreciations might remain unhampered.

He found that Daphne allured him precisely because appreciation on those terms was impossible. She had for him the baffling charm of Da Vinci's sketches, of Shakespeare's sonnets; evading any attempt at direct investigation, returning the moment her image was

The Column

relinquished. After three weeks Basil found that he knew her not at all; in another that no other knowledge concerned him. Hastings gathered so much from his eyes, more from his lips.

Basil showed his judgment in following a somewhat obsolete custom. Instinct and the manners of his set exalted the importance of personal liberty in the choice of partners into a gospel; but he assumed correctly that Hastings had very strong prejudices in the direction of the earlier convention. Hastings asked a day to think over the matter, and at the end of that time gave his permission, with the condition that Basil should give up his work in London and live at Penresco.

"I know," he said, "that it is a very great thing to ask of you, but I am not able to reconcile myself to parting with Daphne. This, of course, is only for my lifetime; afterwards there will be no reason—that is to say, it will then depend upon Daphne and yourself."

Basil presented an interesting picture of the noble mind struggling between love and duty. In reality he found in Hastings' condition an opportunity of such aptness that he was shy of seizing it, and his unreadiness aided his picturesque situation admirably. He was all for an effective exit, and he was already beginning to tire of the Settlement. Moreover, his torturing self-consciousness had begun to suggest an uneasiness in his colleagues. They were, he thought, speculating when he was going to begin. His university reputation had preceded and inconvenienced him. He succeeded to wild legends of his distinction, and the Settlement was beside itself with grateful astonishment when he descended. Walpole, a man of his own college, in particular, had played the Boswell, and fired the Settlers with extravagant expectations.

Fauna

Of late Walpole's slow eyes had followed him with a deepening expression of disappointment.

Basil almost hated him.

"What right," he asked himself, "had the fellow to blow my trumpet? Lord save me from my friends."

A moment later he reflected bitterly that he could quote from so obvious a writer.

Here was clearly the opportunity for a dramatic retreat from Poplar. The inevitable howl of reproach would be rather a compliment than otherwise, for was he not displaying the most characteristic weakness of genius?

He was honestly in love with Daphne, but it was impossible for him to lose sight of his appearance. So far as Poplar was concerned he felt he could save his face.

Gertrude was the real complication—how serious he was unable to judge, and had endeavoured to divine from her letters. She was for him still full of possibilities. A natural daintiness on his part, a fantastic idealism on hers, rather than a stern morality, had kept their relations out of the actual mud. Consequently Basil had been spared the swiftest road to disillusion,—satiety.

But here lay the difficulty,—how easily would she let him go? And if she refused to release him, how far would she make the world confidant of her woes?

There was in her letters an ominous note of authority, though she could not advance any claim upon him that would not damage her more than it would inconvenience him. But supposing she were too infatuated to consider her reputation?

Basil trusted he had never been guilty of the mediocre pastime of flirtation,—that fingering of loaded weapons ending in disaster, and Gertrude for a woman of her warmth of temperament was singularly elusive; still

The Column

her art might have failed her,—some finger-tip of apprehension once captured, and the whole woman blundered after, heedless alike of reason or the opinion of her fellows.

His first meeting with her had been distinctly an adventure. Basil, though he claimed a position outside if not above the circle of creeds, was keenly susceptible to the glamour of Catholic ritual. Unable to distil his poetry direct from nature, he, in his moods of exaltation, turned instinctively to that storehouse of the concentrated essences of poetic ideas. Too self-indulgent to bind himself by any confession of faith, he was the victim of a spiritual drug habit; the ecstasy of the Mass stimulated his imagination with more than the power of opium: and he was regular in his church-going while sparing himself the inconvenience of an adherence to dogma. He admitted his position with the frankness of the deliberate drunkard.

“Catholicism,” he said, “is the Burgundy of religion; Methodism is lukewarm tea.” A church door, he vowed, held him with the attraction of a dram-shop; and he was ingenious in the discovery of out-of-the-way nurseries of mysticism.

One of his more regular haunts was the Church of the Carmelites in Kensington. One winter afternoon he slipped inside the doors towards the close of the Benediction service. He gave himself up unrestrainedly to his soul-bath, as he termed it; and in the ebb of his mood lingered in the church until it was almost empty. The warmth of the place after the outside air, the poignancy of the ritual, the music, the dusk subdued him to that condition of comfortable stupor when some of the faculties are alert and astray in an unusual degree. He stood within the doors, and half unconsciously watched

Fauna

the people as they filtered out, each with a little jet of cold air, into the street.

His eyes were suddenly claimed by the face of a woman advancing towards him through the fragrant gloom.

She was tall and of somewhat full figure, stepping with almost barbaric swing of hip. Basil was aware of her extreme muliebrity. He knew that he would have been conscious of her presence and sex had he been blindfold, and could have predicted the copper tint of her hair.

The woman passed out of church artfully unaware of Basil's captive eyes.

The next Sunday Basil was early in the church. He scanned the faces feverishly as the people went in. She came, as before, unattended. At the conclusion of the service, with which for him she was identified, Basil stationed himself by the door, and as the woman came down the aisle, fixed his eyes on her face with intention. She passed within a foot of him, and at the last moment turned her head slowly, answered his eyes with her own, and was gone.

At their next encounter she sought his face out of its accustomed shadow, and when their eyes met there was recognition in hers and on her mouth the quiver of a half-smile. Basil followed her into the street. She walked a few steps down the hill, then swung round and waited. Basil approached awkwardly, hat in hand.

"I am convinced," said the woman, "that Beethoven should never have written sacred music."

"There is the Chorus of Angels," said Basil, at random. The woman shook her head.

"Chorus of Earth Spirits, rather,—and his Christ is simply Prometheus."

"Surely," said Basil, "the same from another point of view."

The Column

“ Ah—yes ; but it is the point of view that is essential. You are, as I supposed, heretic—not so far, it is true, as Protestant, because creedless.”

“ Catholic, I hope, in the sense——”

“ A plausible fallacy based on the misuse of a name.”

“ At least,” pleaded Basil, “ I do not label myself Agnostic.”

“ Because nature has labelled you enthusiast,” laughed the woman. “ However, that brings you no nearer. It merely indicates that you are infected with the pride of intellect,—the most hopeless state. But,” she said with sudden reserve, “ I should not talk so to you. See,” she pointed to the Parish Church by which they stood, “ the temple of another creed reminds me of allegiance to my own.”

She turned and was lost in the crowd moving westward.

The next Sunday Basil was in his place. He waited until the woman was in the street, then hurried after her.

She turned at his footsteps.

“ This is not right,” she murmured ; “ you set a burden on my conscience.”

“ Your name ?” pleaded Basil. She shook her head.

“ You must not ask, neither must you follow me.”

Then followed stratagems. Basil changed his place to one where, unobserved himself, he might study her minutely.

As before, the woman came slowly down the aisle until her eyes questioned the shadow. The lids drooped in obvious vexation ; there was a moment of hesitation, and the street had her.

The following week Basil stood again by the door. There was an almost imperceptible movement of her hand. He held out his own and received a note.

Fauna

“Do not stay away on my account—that is worse.

“GERTRUDE.”

A charity ball secured him a formal introduction. The husband, a hospitable Irishman, stood alienated from the sympathy of the sentimentalist by his name, Laffey, and by his business, the importation and distribution of pork and bacon. He had made a fortune by taking commercial advantage of his native land, and was now atoning for his avarice by the consumption of its whisky.

Gertrude was much alone, unappreciated; she needed some absorbing occupation,—preferably in the direction of doing good; and her playing was a revelation. What more natural field than the Settlement? After one experimental evening she was clamorously demanded, and her casual visits became an institution.

So these two walked on thin ice covering pitfalls. There had been a time when she only with difficulty evaded the penalties of the game; but that was now over. With growing intimacy Basil discovered her physical imperfections; and his returning sanity piqued her to new efforts, but on the less dangerous plane.

Here she was mistress of the game. So long as she could practise a conscious allurements there was little fear for her losing her head.

She was the artist, Basil the material; to be handled with subtlety, it is true, but objectively. It was for her the emergence from his reach. In the conflict of blood it is always the man who wins; but let a woman once lift herself into discussion, yielding is a matter for her deliberate choice.

She did not spare him. A letter from her wherein the words spelled “I am yours, body and soul,” would bring Basil to her door. She would meet him pale from her oratory, and talk of Saint Catherine.

The Column

She abandoned herself to him with her eyes, and froze him with the touch of her hand. She provoked him with ingenious blasphemies. They talked of the Mass they had attended together.

“Exquisitely symbolical,” she murmured, with a shy droop of lid, “a very consummation.” Basil darted her a glance of passionate gratitude, and she affected misunderstanding

A moment later she whispered,—

“Indeed you enlarge my penances to the point of exhaustion.”

She hinted actual scourging; torturing his imagination with visions of white flesh purple-scarred.

She was aware that a woman able to suggest her person and keep the circle was absolutely in her own hands; and the knowledge pleased her vanity, whilst it soothed her social conscience with a sense of security.

She would play Chopin, break off with a shudder, and sigh, “There should be an Index of music; that Nocturne is a very Judas.”

Basil was not blind to her conscious use of him. He had himself sufficiently in hand to appreciate the exercise; and even before his meeting with Daphne, was content to keep within the rules. Now came the fear lest Gertrude should have played herself over the edge. His imagination pictured scenes worse than tragic, because absurd. To have pawned his freedom for so trivial an advance were to present himself to his acquaintances as a quavering Pantaloon. He had no desire—Daphne apart—to strut as Don Juan, but this was beyond contemplation. Also he shrank from the crudeness of a quarrel. As a relaxation, Gertrude was enchanting; and though it would be preposterous to allow her to stand in his way, there was no reason, but what she might create,

that their acquaintance should be at an end. He thought of Swift and Stella. That the other woman should eat her heart was romantic and flattering; if only she would not make an indecent noise. Surely Gertrude would take the sensible view,—she was generous, she was politic with regard to her reputation.

He would write to her and allow the matter to leak out by degrees. In any case he was thankful there need be no personal meeting.

He required a whole day to arrive at this not very helpful conclusion; and in the evening announced to Hastings, with much circumstance, that beside Daphne Poplar might perish, and that he was decided to accept his condition.

“Then,” said Hastings, “it is for Daphne to choose. I have only one wish, and that you know.”

CHAPTER XII—*Flora*

IN the early morning Hastings knocked at Basil's door.

“Daphne is at the column,” he said. “She knows you are going to speak to her; I think this is an opportunity.”

Basil observed with wonder, whilst he dressed himself, that Hastings' anxiety did not appear offensive. It was a part of the man's simplicity; he had so keen a regard to the essential well-being of both daughter and guest that he would naturally overlook the artificial considerations of etiquette.

Nevertheless, Basil was puzzled that he himself did not resent the direction of his affairs; and this kept his mind from its usual habit, a rehearsal of the part he was about to play. He consequently passed from the empire of sleep to that of the outer air, escaping his accustomed Narcissus toilet by the way.

For once he was unhindered by himself, and something of the pale sincerity of the September dawn illumined his purpose.

There was a hushed throbbing in the air as of the withdrawal of wings. Nature herself seemed repressing her more absolute functions that the idea of solitude might not be impaired. Landward the sky was still purple with the blood of the vanquished night; whilst over the sea a little bank of white cloud hung low, shining with the nicety of an ivory carving. The short grass at his feet, heavy drenched with dew, at every step exhaled a pungent odour, only perceptible, he thought, because of the stillness.

Flora

He felt the absolution of the hour, and with it a sense of the moment of his business. The very spaciousness of things awed him.

How a word would ring to the edge of the universe! His whole life had been such a miserable preparation for this moment,—a tragic vice or so had been better; and that the wheels should be stopped for one so infinitesimal for good or evil made him long for cover of sound or shape. He could not fill the robe of purification that Nature held out for him; and her choir, that should have supported, oppressed him. He felt with shame that he had never learned her liturgy; that until now he had never even been conscious of it in the strident clamour of hired singers.

Under his feet he knew the pulses of his patient mother; she was waiting that he might say what he had learned of her; as a human mother listens for the echo of her voice from the lips of her child. And he?—Oh, he would—and he burned at the thought—affront her with the bawdy accents caught from a hired nurse, some catch-penny diminutive reeking of the pavement.

As he neared the place, Daphne turned slowly round and faced him with level eyelids. He was acutely aware of witnesses,—of sea and sky and column. The world was full of eyes, holy but unfaltering. It was he, not she, who was to be interrogated; he was in a manner suspect, and permitted the doubtful benefit of ordeal. Daphne's answer, he knew on the instant, was already confided to the silence. Sea and sky and column were already informed and critical of him only. Their solicitude was for her; neutral at best towards him, they reserved their approbation or condemnation until he should have shown what manner of lover he was.

Not that it mattered ultimately. Daphne was given or

The Column

reserved ; he was but the instrument of Destiny. Therefore only, the place was curious. He wished fastastically that he might learn his fate from some source other than her lips. Everything knew it but he ; the washed air quivered with her answer, the sky assumed it like a blazon, whilst below, the sea conferred upon it with the beach.

He drew nearer to Daphne with something of the reverence conceded to the newly dead. In her death and birth were united ; she had but now died into life through the doorway of the East. There was nothing between her and the dawn ; she borrowed from the dawn its untempered radiance, its inviolate purity.

Hedged with its intolerable whiteness and mystery, her very blood beat in chime to the measure of its birth-song. It was the first morning, and she the first woman ever made. Properly, she should be awaiting the first man ; Basil was chilled by the sense of his inadequate personality, and it was he, not she, who faltered. He was unaided by any flush or tremor in her, provoking the courage of his blood ; he stood as in a chancel, his purpose hardly less than sacrilege. He looked through her eyes into the East, and was aware of the stainless beginnings of things,—joy as yet unvocal, and sorrow with folded pinions. She shared with the East its incalculable age, its incomparable infancy ; she knew and had forgotten, was at the same moment innocent and omniscient.

She was here waiting for him to speak, yet nothing he might urge could shake her constancy nor quicken her pulses, no more than he could hasten or retard the influx of day.

He took her hand. The white fire of her incurious eyes quenched desire ; her absolute surrender disarmed his passion, checking the soiled endearment that burned

Flora

on his lips. He longed for some unused epithet, some rapturous communication from soul to soul without the soil of utterance. Her whiteness absolved whatever of earth was in him; he also had never existed before. They were two souls together at the gate of day, coincident with the dawn.

Time passed and left them; they had slipped the leash of hours into an enduring present.

At last he found words.

“Your father has spoken.”

She bent her head.

“Call me by my name and I shall know.”

“Basil.”

The name parted from her lips with a bell-mouthed lingering on the vowels. It sounded like a recantation and the Credo of a new faith in one.

He felt, “She is mine, but I am at this moment nearer to her soul than I shall ever be again.”

Speech brought them back into time and flesh. She was admirable now as then unshrinking, unabashed. This was their marriage; whatever might come after was unmeaning formality; nor creed nor law could loosen nor ensure. Her syllabing his name had recorded it indelibly; they might never see each other again, but there were the witnesses.

She had passed irrevocably from state to state; no longer vestal of the temple, her place was forever afterwards by the hearth. She bore herself with the humility of the outcast having relinquished vows she had never consciously embraced. A willing exile, she forfeited her privileges with but one backward glance.

They stood hand in hand until the climbing sun brought round the shadow of the column to her forehead. She shivered. “You are cold,” said Basil, with concern.

The Column

“Let us walk in the sun,” she murmured without answering him.

They turned and moved in the direction of the insurgent day. Basil observed with wonder the change in her. She was become suddenly and endearingly human, though he dared not address her by any more intimate word than her name. He walked beside one who, though of like flesh and blood with himself, was too lately incarnated to be at home in his language. He did not question her love; that she had called him by name was security for her whole being. If he had pursued his analysis of her, he would have felt that she was a little less than herself, being his. It was the depreciation of the crystal hewn from its matrix; of the plucked flower; dear and fragrant as when growing—and yet—and yet?

She could not be restored.

Movement saved him, concentrating his mind upon their proximity. He had won for himself a counsel of perfection, and he was characteristically busy with resolutions. How she would lift him!

He compared her to the poetry of Wordsworth, the cult of austere simplicity. He could more easily have called her wife than dear,—the word was absurdly gaslit, transpontine. He winced from the outworn devices of lovers; the pressure of palms, the traffic of eyes, the feints, the ambuscades—how unspeakably tawdry! He recognised with awe that there was, for her, but one step from her use of his name to the bride-bed,—a return to an epic sanity.

He must needs, he thought, learn some new, unspoiled approach to her. He stood as without the walls of some charmed, capitulate city; the gates were open, the streets undefended, yet some power more dreadful than spear-lined battlements held it impregnable.

Flora

For a moment a quixotic idea flashed into his mind. How noble to live beside this perfect creature, husband in name only! The next his perceptions righted him. Hers was not the wry chastity of an Elizabeth of Hungary; and to conceive her frank mind so infected were as preposterous as to picture the candour of the Parthenon tortured with the gargoyles of a mediæval monastery.

He did not vex himself with the contemplation of his unworthiness; that was beside the question. He saw that she must be learned, and humbly resolved to apply himself to the task. Her subtleties were logical and did not disappear in full daylight; her bloom was no mysterious something depending upon the kindliness of twilight, vanishing on closer intimacy. To know her were, if possible, to love her the more. The recesses of her soul were organic in their relations; there was no fortuitous winding, however charming, to be separately invaded. He would, he thought, in some happy hour hit upon the authentic plan of her nature,—a word, a glance, and he would possess her altogether.

Unaware of the swift shoulder glance, he was yet sensible of her former dedication. To what?—to whom? there was the torturing enigma. As she stepped beside him, he saw her forehead sealed, and strained his mental vision to decipher its meaning. Their coming together was for him an ascent, for her a fall. He rose to a finer air, exquisitely stimulating, though trying, to his unused spiritual lungs. She came down into the valleys, unregretful, alert with a happy curiosity for the homely details of human relations.

They reached the eastern shoulder of the down. Facing them was the church, with its suggestive poise. Between lay the village, a little clamorous hive folded in the arms

The Column

of the two hills. The prettiness appealed to Daphne with a new meaning. Here was life, essentially human life; differing not only in degree but in kind from anything else that belonged to nature. That was for her a discovery; whether true or false, Time alone could determine. The morning bustle rose sweetened to an arcadian murmur. It spoke of friendliness rather than passion; a kindly enduring afterglow — the little neighbourly courtesies, the unexhausting problems, and the miniature triumphs of a village existence. It was not new to her, this picture of a world in little, neither had she in any way held aloof from its interests; but she had accepted it as the grass and flowers, without speculation.

She had been either amongst it, too near for vision, or away when her mind overleaped to the larger wonder, the more poignant meaning of the sky-line. Whenever she walked the down, either the church or the sea—outposts of contending mysteries—had claimed her; and the houses clustering about the tiny wharves in Tregotha creek were overlooked. Now she exclaimed with the naïve wonder of the child aware for the first time of the infusoria peopling a drop of water.

Here was the difference between the two; Love called her to the microcosm, him to the spheres; and it is unquestionable which revelation is for the moment the most comforting.

A wave of emotion more akin to gratitude than anything else, flushed her cheeks and suffused her eyes with happy tears, drawing her closer to the man by her side. Till now she was a child; from this hour she too had her salaried place in the world of action. There would be practical problems for her solution; little hitches in the wheels of life whenever she stopped going. Some character of the multiform activity, some hue in the tapestry,

would be traced to her individually, and the anticipation awakened an unfamiliar appetite for affairs. She had the keenness of the child pinning on its mother's apron for a first lesson in being grown-up.

Basil was rather as one who would sink vision for glamour. He was in the first rapture of a mood he desired to prolong, and wore the conscious reverence of the pilgrim to the shrine; whilst she, more used, counted the worshippers. He was as an unaccustomed writer warily beginning a fresh page, with inheld breath, fearful of the smudge. He bore the silence as it were between careful hands, dreading the intrusion of whatever should cause him to turn his head; almost resenting the sound of her voice.

"Look," cried Daphne, presently, "there is your brother—I am sure it is he; yes, and Miss Williams, too."

Basil's eyes lifted unwillingly to the church. Two figures, a black and a white, detached themselves from the yews, and with antlike slowness descended the pathway. The indubitable figure of his brother flecked Basil's mood like dust on the eyeball. He thought with bitterness that relatives were a nuisance; they implied explanations, possibly criticism. So far as Daphne herself was concerned, he knew Herbert's opinion; but how of Daphne in relation to him? Herbert knew him very well; better, he feared, than he did himself, and it was not likely he would applaud his choice. At a time of discussion, Herbert's enthusiasm for Daphne had given him keen pleasure, as a tribute from an alien camp; he wished now that his brother had pitched the note a little lower,—what he shortly must tell him would seem more possible.

The crawling, cassocked figure became a note of interrogation. Basil's vision was suddenly telescopic;

The Column

he saw the lifted eyebrow, the blank amazement, followed by the dull flush of anger. He heard Herbert's voice shaken in spite of repression, "Basil, is this wise?" and he knew that behind the guarded language were quick cries of reproach. He began already to defend himself, to protest. It is always the best-intentioned people, he said, who condemn a man to the worst that is in him. Here, in Daphne, apart from love was his escape from Egypt. It was hardly fair to the prisoner to bid him avert his eyes, resume his shackles.

It was fortunate he had not discussed his plans with Herbert. He would as likely as not have suggested to Hastings the unwisdom of the match; and Daphne, however swayed by inclination, was, before everything, filial.

He would enlarge himself to the pathetic magnitude of her conception of him; would convince even the sceptical Herbert of his possibilities,—how admirably he could respond to the exactions of Daphne's nature.

As if in answer to his thoughts, the figure of Herbert disappeared in the vicarage gateway. So he banished him from his mind.

Daphne became more touchingly human with each moment. Having given herself, it was her nature to make light of the gift, anxious only to assure him of her content.

She cried out on each newly discovered charm of the village at their feet. "You have given me eyes," she murmured; "now I understand what you mean by the beauty of human toil."

"You are the giver," he answered; "you have shown me better things than work."

Her eyes widened.

"But how?—I'm such an idle selfish creature; it has

always seemed good enough just to exist. Now I want to do something ; to help you to help others."

They walked slowly along the edge of the down.

"Basil," she said, "you will teach me, will you not?"

Quickly jealous for her father, she added,—

"Father left it until now—he wished me first to be strong and happy. It will make it easier for you, will it not? because I shall not soon be tired."

"Ah, no," urged Basil. "It is you must teach me—teach me to forget; blunders—even worse. I have been too busy, my eyes fixed on the ground. I have imagined that I with my feeble powers could set the world straight. We will let it all go, we two;—let us be children. I have never been young," he laughed pathetically; "help me, Daphne, to find my youth."

His humility lifted him in her eyes. "Youth, youth?" she cried, exulting, "where are you hid? But oh, how shall I find youth golden enough to fit you? We must not begin too bright, or I shall be burned like Semele." She spoke with the daring of innocence; laughing shyly, she murmured,—

"I can fancy you as a boy,—grave and studious. You didn't play many games—only games where knights rescue maidens and kill dragons. And your eyes were serious with the dreams of all you were going to do when you grew up. Was it not so?"

Very worship kept arms and lips from her. He chased her fancy. "Yes,—and there was always one girl, a tall white girl; and the dragon was—oh, let me see, what sort of a dragon was it?—"

"But I never had any dragons."

"No, but I surrounded you with dragons for the sheer joy of killing them."

"Did you know me then?"

The Column

“Perfectly; I have known you all my life. I have never quite forgotten you, and sometimes when I was most myself I saw you as clearly as I do now. But there have been the other things.”

“Such as——”

“Oh, the endless things one does; the futile will-o'-the-wisps men call by sounding names—the Happiness of the Many, Art, Knowledge, the pursuit of Truth,—all the things that don't matter.”

“You spoil me; what am I beside these?”

“You are forever beyond them,—a mountain solitude. They are back there in the noise and smoke.”

He swept his arm, indicating the populous inland. “Let us be done with them.”

She mused.

“Don't you think it nobler if we take hands and go back to them together?”

“And lose you?”

For the moment he was become a seer convinced that their safety was in the sleeping centre of things. Out there the world might spin; he dared not trust either himself or her to the centrifugal rim of life.

“But why?—we should surely be drawn closer.”

“So far as we could help,—but there are the jealous Fates. Do you know,” his voice fell, “I fear I hold you in defiance of something—what I do not know. I pray lest I find you a spring, a flower, the whisper of a passing wind.”

She laughed gaily.

“I am less ethereal than you dream. There are days when I am sheer flesh and blood,—with a very large appetite.”

“That is where you touch perfection; I would not have you cloistral—you are sister to the wild things.

Flora

Back there you would pine. With your help I may attain to your freedom—to where you stand; but you must not come down to me. I should know that you looked back and fretted. Your father is wise; I have promised him that we shall not leave this place,—this place eloquent of you.”

“Father!” she cried, “oh that you should remind me!”

She clasped her hands, unreproachful, torn with mingled wonder and sorrow,—wonder that she could forget, sorrow that she had forgotten. She was suddenly chilled and conscious, and hurried him back to the column.

She plucked a spray of laurel and gave it him. “Now you must let me go,” she murmured. “It is I who must tell my father.”

Basil regained the house, bearing light as from Sinai. As the Lawgiver his vision was shattered.

A letter awaited him ominous-edged. He tore it open.

“This is to bid you good-bye. He died last Thursday. Pity me, but do not look for me.

“GERTRUDE.”

CHAPTER XIII—*The Renunciation of Mr. Bargister*

“OF course,” said Caspar Gillies, with elaborate unconcern, “Daphne Hastings has some of the qualities of a good nurse and is not likely to lose her head, supposing he should cut up rough.”

He gazed thoughtfully into his teacup and allowed sufficient time for his statement to germinate in the somewhat unstimulating soils of his listeners' minds.

Emily knitted her brows in a brave attempt to unravel the dark saying; whilst Mrs. Bargister settled herself in her wicker chair with a luxurious folding of the arms, as one who should say, “Now we are going to be informed.”

They were drinking tea in Mrs. Bargister's favourite corner of the lawn under the shadow of a great cedar. What subtle influence the place had over her mind it is impossible to say; unless the battered green door, undeniably Gothic in outline, which here gave on the kitchen garden, was a fetich recalling her dyspeptic browsing on things mediæval. She was emphatic, however, in the unvarying though cryptic statement of her predilection.

“Sweet spot; reminds you of those beautiful Florence flasks, and Boccaccio—you remember Longfellow's lovely poem about Sir Somebody or other, and the Pigeon?”

His conversational seeds of kindness refusing to sprout, Caspar continued,—

“We will give him say six years. That, according to Clouston, is beyond the average. You see it all depends,” he said earnestly, waving his teaspoon,—“it all depends on whether the physical or mental symptoms are most in

Renunciation of Mr. Bargister

evidence. I should predict the latter,—most usual in the educated classes; not that I should call Waring educated—he knows nothing about the Byzantine Greek writers—still, he is a Charterhouse man. As I was saying——”

“I am sure I beg your pardon,” said Mrs. Bargister, abjectly; “but we are so ignorant of—I mean, would you *mind* explaining from the beginning?”

“Don’t you know,” said Caspar, wearily,—“don’t you know that Basil Waring is a G. P.?”

“Of course, how stupid!” murmured Mrs. Bargister, reddening; “but I thought these titles were only given as a sort of compliment, at least, except in the case of doctors and clergymen.”

Caspar groaned.

“My dear Mrs. Bargister,” he said, closing his eyes resignedly, “G. P. means General Paralytic.”

“How perfectly dreadful!” cried Mrs. Bargister. “I thought his leg was quite well again. Now, that just shows”—she turned solemnly to Emily—“that just proves what I say about the reckless way people scramble about nowadays.”

Caspar shook his head long and slowly.

“I see I must explain,” he said briskly, and his face brightened as he prepared for demonstration. Arming himself with a huge piece of cake, he began cheerfully,—

“General Paralysis is a progressive neurosis, terminating in absolute helplessness and death. It has well-marked physical and mental symptoms, which are conveniently grouped together in three stages. In the first you generally get delusions of a grandiose character—Exactly half a drachm too much Sodium Bicarbonate in this cake, Emily, otherwise not bad.—Now, you see this beautifully in Waring. For example, he thinks he can

The Column

teach his boys single-stick. Now every child knows that one needs five and a half hours a day for nine years to learn the simple cuts and guards—Just twelve drops of cream, Mrs. Bargister—one over; never mind, I've got a pepsin tabloid—thanks.—To begin with, Waring has a congenital malformation of the right astragalus, which makes it impossible to get into position, and——”

He was interrupted by the slamming of the Gothic door. Johnnie appeared with his cap full of plums. He took deliberate aim with a Purple Gem at his sister, thought better of it, and flung himself on the grass at his mother's feet.

Caspar gazed coldly at the intruder, who greeted him cheerfully.

“Daphne's down by the bridge talking to the governor.”

“Stupid boy,” cried Emily, “why didn't you make her come up and have some tea?”

“Surely,” said Mrs. Bargister, bridling, “Daphne knows by this time that she need not wait for an invitation; did your father say he was coming, Johnnie?”

“Never seen the governor so cornered in all my life. Daphne is laying down the law to him about something or other—he looks quite scared.”

Mrs. Bargister moved uneasily. “I hope Daphne isn't bothering him. What with one thing and another, your poor father has quite enough to think about.”

Johnnie helped himself to bread and butter with conscious earnestness. Emily, who boiled unexpectedly like milk, flashed out,—

“Indeed, mother, Daphne is not likely to inflict herself on anybody; it is far more probable that father has been giving her gratuitous advice.”

“If her eyebrows,” said Caspar, unemotionally, “were

Renunciation of Mr. Bargister

continued a sixteenth of an inch farther back, she would be quite passable."

"I think she's ripping," said Johnnie, defiantly. Observing Emily's forefinger slide thoughtfully along her forehead, he spluttered in his cup.

"Johnnie!" cried Mrs. Bargister.

"All right, Mater—these beastly gnats."

"Better make sure it isn't lodging in the pharynx," said Caspar, with concern. "I should gargle with a little weak carbolic—one can't be too careful of misplaced organic material. However," observing Johnnie's grin, "it's of no consequence to me."

"Johnnie," cried his mother, in a genuine flutter, "I insist on your doing as Dr. Gillies tells you." She rose. "May I send one of the servants——"

"Sit down, Mater," growled Johnnie, catching hold of her dress. "Gillies is only pulling my leg—I mean rotting."

"I can't imagine," said Mrs. Bargister, plaintively, with a fin-like movement of her hands, "where you pick up your low expressions. It's a great pity you don't take more notice of the books your father gives you. I looked into one the other day—I forget which, but I am sure the conversations were most beautiful."

"Oh, I say, Mater," groaned Johnnie, "don't I get enough from the governor?"

"I don't want to scold you, I'm sure," said Mrs. Bargister, pulling his ear with huge playfulness. "Dr. Gillies will think we are always wrangling in this house."

She looked archly at Gillies. "George is such an admirer of eloquence and things. Personally I prefer poetry; Rogers, you know, and Virgil's Dante, and——"

"Macaulay's Lays," suggested Johnnie, under his breath.

The Column

“Longfellow, I was about to say, and all that, you know.”

“I never read poetry,” said Caspar, gloomily; “I find it narrowing. Of course no one can call himself a physiologist who does not know Dante by heart; but then Dante was really a medical man, and only a poet by accident. I don’t want to talk shop,” he added apologetically, “but the real value of Art is as a record of treatment. There was Mantegna—you remember his picture of the Amputation?—no? It was the only decent thing he ever did; why, they considered it good enough to reproduce in the B. M. J.”

“Dear me,” purred Mrs. Bargister, “how very thoughtful! Emily, my child, you look tired; I thought you were so interested in all this. Now, if there is one thing I really like, it is to talk about pictures with someone who really understands. What do you think of Cimabue, Dr. Gillies?”

Emily’s gospel of Caspar Gillies allowed a fairly wide margin for the eccentricities of genius. It was her darling exercise to hunt in the biographies of great musicians for the vindication of his several peculiarities. For it was as a musician that he appealed to her,—excellence in a lover’s legitimate business being but a poor way to the feminine heart.

One might conceive the cherished margin heavily scored with annotations in a careful hand. She was ready with gloss and commentary for every emergency; and that there was danger of the explanations overshadowing the text did not occur to her, so generously had she enlarged the tables of her heart for their reception. She was prepared for, nay, desirous of being startled. When Caspar, descending to the kitchen, reduced the cook to a condition of stammering imbecility

Renunciation of Mr. Bargister

by skimming lightly over the whole field of organic chemistry as a necessary preliminary to boiling a suet dumpling, Emily's heart warmed with the memory of Beethoven; and she was almost disappointed that Caspar did not pass to the extremities of the composer in a like situation.

What she did not understand she accepted with a simple faith promising well for Caspar's future domestic happiness.

If now and then her judgment refused to accept the matter of his argument, she found comfort in the engaging rudeness of his delivery. Here of course she but showed herself the average woman who responds most readily, if primitive, to the hand, if cultured, to the tongue which lashes her. In the more complex creature there is perhaps the shrewd conviction that *fortiter in modo* is generally *suaviter in re*.

This afternoon, however, Emily was unattentive. She had not seen Daphne for five whole days, and there were fashions in wooing to be compared and appraised.

"My dear, you look tired," said Mrs. Bargister for the second time. She consistently did her best to alarm Caspar by making his way too easy.

"I think," said Emily, "that I will go and find Daphne."

This was flat suicide, and Mrs. Bargister became servile. Caspar, however, secure of one listener sufficiently uninformed, was quite happy. He beamed at the retreating figure of his heart's desire and resumed his parable.

On the far edge of Mr. Bargister's estate and adjoining that of Edward Hastings was a spot such as our forefathers delighted to call sylvan. That is to say, it was far more suggestive of art playing at nature than of

The Column

nature tricked in the furniture of art. It was part of the original scheme of the grounds, and virgin even of the hand of the Scotch gardener who restored the lawns.

The whole was so aggressively rustic that one was incredulous even of the oaks; and the tiny stream sedulously tortured into cascades failed to convince for a moment. One suspected carpentry and looked for traces of the tarpaulin used to cover the place by night, though it extended for more than an acre. The descent to the water was made perilous with rocks which in a half-light looked really quite craggy. Perched on a little platform was a diminutive stucco Ionic temple, now weather-stained to some appearance of reality and recalling the Lantern of Demosthenes. The stream was crossed by a tiny unnecessary bridge, elaborately ruined, leading to a door in the wall of the Penresco grounds. As one neared the place, one instinctively fell into the language of Lydia Languish; one thought of the "conscious moon," of "mutual ardour."

It was here fittingly that Mr. Bargister made his great renunciation. Whenever the urgency of inspiration got the better of his judgment and he was tempted to indulge in his early weakness of declamation, he—I had almost written "repaired"—retired to this place for security from eavesdroppers. The walks and terraces of the garden were admirable for meditation, but for eloquence he must to the wild. Even the Faun seemed unsympathetic. His excursion to the scene of his solitary orgies was marked by a stealthiness that suggested a crime.

On this occasion he had slipped away soon after lunch; his purpose the delivery of a speech on the iniquity of the Franchise,—a favourite subject. His feet planted firmly on the moss-grown floor of the stucco temple, he was well on the neck of his hobby, when, raising his eyes to invoke

Renunciation of Mr. Bargister

the Deity, they fell on the motionless figure of Daphne Hastings standing on the little bridge. His voice broke on a sounding polysyllable, and he stammered in confusion.

Daphne crossed the bridge to where he stood mopping his forehead nervously. The quiet friendliness of her appearance enabled him to recover something of his composure without the need for an explanation.

He took her outstretched hand, and a memory of his wife's mid-day homily served him for a final escape from awkwardness.

'My dear Daphne,' he began, "let me tell you how heartily I wish you happiness; I need not explain, I am sure."

He bent with simple dignity and kissed her slim cool fingers.

An observer might have supposed the undress rehearsal of a comedy of manners, and that the back-cloth happened to be a scene from one of Handel's operas. He would have expected to see inquisitive stage-carpenters peering round the wings.

Daphne saw her chance and took it.

"You are always kind," she said; "will you add to your wishes a gift?"

Mr. Bargister looked into her serious eyes with some uneasiness.

"I—that is to say—anything I can do."

"Johnnie's freedom to do as he pleases. I want you to promise that you will send him to London to be properly trained as an artist."

Mr. Bargister dropped her hand with a groan.

"You too, Daphne, you too—oh, this is unkind!"

"I know," continued Daphne, remorselessly, "that I am hurting you very much; but don't you think it is a terrible thing to fight against Fate?"

The Column

“But, my dear Daphne, I thought you knew—everybody knew—that I am absolutely inflexible.”

“Yes,” said Daphne, calmly, “that is the worst of it. I like Johnnie; I think there are great possibilities in him—that is, if he is allowed to follow his bent. Don’t you see that he is losing his frankness, is learning to deceive you?”

“Let me catch him,” muttered Mr. Bargister under his breath.

“You cannot,” said Daphne, dispassionately, “turn a fir-tree into an oak by stopping its growth.”

It was at this moment that Johnnie, who suspected moorhens, skirted the hollow. He heard nothing, but saw enough to convince him that the pair were better alone, and slipped away wondering.

Mr. Bargister pressed his hands to his forehead.

“Have you considered,” he asked weakly, “what this means to me? Ever since the boy could walk I have been shaping him for this purpose. It is my waking thought, my daily bread,—indeed, it is Johnnie himself. I cannot consider him in any other way.”

Daphne declined to pay any attention to the exposure of his wounds. She had, as Caspar observed, the large healing touch, the contained sympathy of the born nurse, that rare faculty for drawing the patient’s attention from his disorder. She treated Mr. Bargister as a sick man made irresponsible by weakness; she did not argue, she commanded, hushing his fretfulness with smooth, gracious ways. He began to feel absurdly childish. Had she fallen to coaxing, he would have collected himself and waxed eloquent; but this calm, straight girl, with her level voice and untroubled eyes, created an atmosphere in which his arguments somehow lost their edge. She took so much for granted, was witness, it seemed, of all

Renunciation of Mr. Bargister

his mental struggles, and put them on one side as the elaborate but ridiculous scruples of a distempered brain. He pleaded the quality of his Idea.

"Yes, I know," said Daphne, unemotionally, "but that is not the point."

"Pray don't believe," said Mr. Bargister, earnestly, "that I despise the—the other. It is a fine profession—a very noble study."

"Don't you see," said Daphne, with the patient deliberation of one teaching a child the alphabet,— "don't you see that it is precisely the same thing? It is entirely a matter of Form. The sculptor thinks in marble just as you do in words. For him there is no other way. We can't all be alike, and it is quite obvious that Johnnie has inherited your love of Form in a different way; his eloquence is in his fingers."

"Very true in a sense," admitted Mr. Bargister. "I see your idea; but——"

"I am convinced," said Daphne, close on his heels, "that you have not considered it in that way. Tell me, has Johnnie ever shown any spark of talent for"—there was the faintest scorn—"for oratory?"

His face fell.

"I cannot say that he has. Last week I made him write an essay on our Colonies—an inspiring theme—and read it aloud."

"Well?"

"It was shocking bad,—an unspeakable performance. I don't know which was worse,—his composition or his delivery. I should have been flogged for either at his age."

"Very good. Now for the other; have you seen any of his modelling?"

"Heaven forbid!" said Mr. Bargister, pettishly.

"I thought not," replied Daphne, gravely; "that is

The Column

where you have been—forgive me—so stupid. Will you promise me that you won't go away if I leave you for five minutes?"

"Upon my honour."

She turned, and without looking back passed swiftly across the bridge into her father's grounds.

Mr. Bargister sat down, breathing heavily. He tried to think of a word to express Daphne's influence upon him. "Motherly" was the only one that would come.

"Yes," he mused sheepishly, "she has been dandling me in her arms." He giggled insanely. "I wonder, now; has she gone for Coral?"

In a few minutes Daphne reappeared in the doorway, confident, unexcited. She carried something carefully in her arms.

"Shut your eyes," she cried, "and do not open them until I give you leave."

Mr. Bargister obeyed with all his might.

He heard her firm step approaching and the rustling of paper.

"Now," said Daphne.

Mr. Bargister turned, and his eyes fell on the bust of Emily. It appears that Johnnie's experiments in casting were successful, and the result, though crude, startled his father.

"Good gracious!" he stammered, "a very remarkable piece of work. I had no idea——"

"Now," said Daphne, soberly triumphant, "confess; am I not right? Do you think that anything else is possible for a boy—an untaught boy, remember—who can do *that*?"

"As-tonishing I'm sure. No idea the young scamp had gone so far. And you mean to tell me that Johnnie did this all himself?"

Renunciation of Mr. Bargister

Daphne nodded.

"I suppose," said Mr. Bargister, with quick suspicion,—"I suppose that—er—Mr. Waring, or anybody, did not—touch it up? I have heard of such things being done, you know," he added apologetically.

"Mr. Bargister, I am surprised at you."

"Of course, of course; I might have known." He stepped back. "Dear, dear! it is very like."

Daphne watched in silence the gradual awakening of parental pride. Mr. Bargister stumbled short-sightedly round the head, examining it from every point of view.

"The dog!" he murmured delightedly; "Emily's mouth exactly; the nose——"

He held his head critically on one side. "The nose is perhaps—don't you think, a little——"

"That is not fair," said Daphne. "You must remember whose obstinacy is the cause of any weakness. Listen! It is not good; on the contrary, it is horribly bad; but there is that in it which makes it certain that, however you may treat him, whatever foolishness you set him to, Johnnie is an artist by right of birth and instinct."

Mr. Bargister murmured fresh appreciations.

"Now," said Daphne, haling him back to the point, "you have seen your mistake, and you must give me the promise I ask for."

She stooped and picked up the bust. Mr. Bargister's eyes followed her movement hungrily.

"I say—Daphne," he began sheepishly, "you will let me——"

She saw what was in his face and smiled.

"Promise," she said, holding up the bust.

Mr. Bargister shut his eyes. Daphne felt really sorry for him, but began mercilessly to rustle paper.

The Column

“It shall be as you say,” said Mr. Bargister, hoarsely. “Johnnie shall go to London.”

Daphné placed the bust in his trembling hands with a gesture that appeared to recognise the magnitude of his sacrifice.

“This is the beginning,” she said; “you must keep it always, and it will remind you of—of many things. Now I must go; I promised father I would be in by five.”

She turned to go, then stopped with a pretty indecision.

“I want you to know,” she said, “that I shall think of what you have done as a gift to me. It will be one of the things,” her eyes warmed, “belonging to this part of my life.”

So it fell out that Emily, walking to the hollow in quest of Daphné, ran full tilt into her father bearing the counterfeit of herself. She reeled in terror, and a wild thought of treachery on the part of Daphné seared her mind.

“Father!” she gasped.

Mr. Bargister thrust her gently aside. “She positively dandled me in her arms, my dear—like a baby,” he cooed with an idiotic smile.

CHAPTER XIV—*Points of View*

BASIL WARING had never before realised so keenly the disadvantages of his temperament. On reading Gertrude's letter, he made one half-hearted attempt to picture himself as the sport of Destiny ; but his overmastering habit of analysis eroded the heroic contours, exposing the machinery. It was obvious that he could not attribute his situation either to the coercion of passion or the irony of circumstance. The whole episode, though physically innocent, was low-pulsed, almost cold-blooded ; and by the light of his morning exaltation the details were positively sordid.

There is perhaps no more bitter reminder of human limitations than the reaction after some pyrotechnic display of high emotions. The only consolation possible would seem to be in the somewhat inept pastime of recapitulation ; as on the sixth of November one may see boys gathering the spent shells of rocket and squib, and, aided by the lingering aroma, seeking in imagination to reinform them with their heaven-aspiring souls of powder.

Or, to change the metaphor, the human soul that has suffered a crisis is in the condition of a ship's crew emerging from tempest,

“ Thence we came forth to rebehold the stars ;”

and we had to make our course.

So much leeway, so much clear reckoning ; and after all the tedium of observation there remained the question of repairs—worse, of expense.

When, as in Basil's case, there are breakers ahead,

The Column

one is denied even the mediocre joy of reminiscence. For the tempest had undoubtedly its fine moments, but, in view of those cruel teeth, all hands must to the question of ways and means. Gertrude's letter and the possibilities it implied demanded instant consideration.

He envied the simpler slaves of passion; for the emotions left to themselves make fine work if melodramatic. It is true they are not careful of curtains and that they leave situations requiring elucidation; and when critic Time is ready with vindictory footnotes, there is perhaps no place where he may write them but under a "Hic jacet;" but for all that they hold the stage. When, however, a man aspires to be stage manager to his Destiny, he must forswear High Tragedy. This is a tepid business of walking gentlemen; more amenable to the prompter, perhaps, but lacking in fire.

Basil was not brutal; indeed, here lay part of his misfortune. Heroic measures have their advantage in the anæsthesia they produce, but Basil was incapable of the one obvious heroic measure that occurred to him,—a frank statement of his new attachment.

This would mean, for the woman, suffering; but the letter would numb by the very hopelessness of its contents. He turned rather to the delicate manipulation of circumstances. Already he fancied a possibility,—
"Do not look for me."

Gertrude, like many persons of sensuous temperament, appreciated the luxury of asceticism. He remembered how she had spoken with enthusiasm of the life of the cloister, as a final escape from worldly pleasures with their attendant risks and penalties.

Was it possible that she had already taken the step?

"Do not look for me." As usual, Basil tried to read into the hasty letter more meaning than it would bear.

Points of View

From his knowledge of her he believed that the only obstacle between Gertrude and the triple vow was himself. He was not flattered; his vanity was not precisely of that kind. He was the true sentimentalist whose pleasure is not in conquest but in the emotional reward.

He sincerely hoped that Gertrude would do the dramatic thing the situation demanded. Once she showed behind the *grille*, the episode were artistically rounded; a "moment" to be kept fragrant in memory for furtive delectation in future years. He felt without elation that he could make possibility a certainty if he wrote now; but he shrank from the indecency of it.

That she wished him to know her state was obvious; else why had she written? In a sense the accident of her husband's death simplified matters. His silence would be attributed to a natural cause, for death leaves so little to be said. To put the matter frankly, it was impossible to offer condolence, and it was indecently early even to imply congratulation.

No; it would be better not to write. By the time the subject should be sufficiently remote for allusion he would be married—and there again, marriage left so little to be said. There was an advantage, after all, in these Philistine conventions,—what the cry of "time" is to the exhausted pugilist.

Nevertheless, the necessity for soiling the wine of his mood with the dregs of an unworthy episode was humiliating. Surely never was man so shackled to his dead self. He desired the experience of Christian,—to roll up his past, with its mistakes and follies, into a bundle and fling it down the slope. That perhaps implied action, and his indolence would have preferred some trick of fate; some cataclysm walling up the avenues to yesterday as an earthquake might the workings of a mine. Daphne took

The Column

life too keenly to peer with the lantern of suspicion, and he trusted there would be no whimper from within.

His encounter with his brother was more trying even than he had expected. He broke the news of his engagement to Herbert with the humility of a penitent.

Unfortunately Herbert was moved out of his customary reticence, and his first remark was distinctly irritating,—

“So I feared.”

Over and above the words was the conviction that the regret was altogether human, and that Herbert for the moment abandoned the impersonal attitude of the priest. If his remark stung Basil as a man and a lover, the next galled his particular pride,—questioning the delicacy of his perceptions.

“I had hoped, however, that whatever your inclinations might be, your sense of the fitness of things would have saved you from this appalling blunder.”

At this Basil lost his temper. “Look here, Herbert,” he said. “I don’t for a moment question your ability as a pilot through the mazes of theology, but this is outside your province. You do not and cannot understand women,—Daphne least of all.”

Herbert’s only answer was a queer twitching smile.

“Surely,” said Basil, petulantly, “there is no earthly reason why Daphne should not be my wife. I am not a monster; I am not deformed nor a clown, and I think I can claim at least average intellect.”

“I hear,” said Herbert, acidly, “that they are thinking of a railway to the top of Snowdon, and I have seen the steamers on the Venetian canals.”

“There you are—your cursed ecclesiastical prejudices again,” retorted Basil; “you exalt a merely physical condition, and” viciously “explain the exception upon which your preposterous creed is based by a miracle.”

Points of View

Herbert flushed darkly.

“You are unnecessarily coarse,” he said, “and, once for all, I refuse to discuss the details of my Faith with you.”

“Coarse?”—good Lord!” cried Basil. “Now tell me candidly,—not as a priest, but as a man,—could anything be more objectionable than this: that because a woman is above the average in mind and body she should be doomed to an unnatural life?”

Again the queer twitching smile.

“Your use of the word ‘unnatural’ in this instance convinces me that I did not do you an injustice when I spoke of your want of perception. But why quarrel? It is so unnecessary. The whole matter is quite simple; you tell me that you are going to marry, and you lose your temper because I cannot pretend to the enthusiasm you consider I ought to show. I regret that it should be so, but it is not my habit to affect sentiments I don’t feel.”

A wise man would have left it at that; but Basil, though he was not ready to take advice, had the insane hankering to have his opinions confirmed from the lips of others.

Though impervious to reason, he remained sore whilst anyone differed from him; unless he could find some hypothesis, creditable to himself, which would account for the other’s point of view.

“Tell me,” he said with ostentatious amiability, “don’t you consider marriage the thing for me? I admit,”—he spoke with engaging candour,—“I admit that perhaps my habits until now have not been aggressively domestic; but then, you know, there has never been any one I cared for, not in a marrying way. You don’t give a fellow a chance; of course it’s folly to say one knows oneself, but I am convinced that this—to put it

The Column

selfishly—will be the making of me in every way, my *Vita Nuova*.”

Herbert turned impatiently.

‘You put the matter altogether in a false light. So far as marriage in the abstract—I think it an admirable thing that you should marry; but——’

“Then I am to conclude,” said Basil, with a Socratic air, “that it is the question of my choice. I know Daphne is not precisely the woman any one knowing me would have predicted; still——”

“I repeat,” interrupted Herbert, “there is an eternal fitness of things.”

“So you fall back on platitudes. Unless, indeed, there is some reason connected with Daphne herself?”

Herbert winced as under a blow. “Basil, this is unpardonable; you surely forget yourself.”

“Well, confound it all, it’s your fault; you positively goad me into vulgarity. That you consider me ‘not good enough’ for Daphne is only natural; indeed I should resent any other opinion. But you entirely refuse to explain; is it possible you have in your mind some one else you consider more worthy?”

“I am afraid,” said Herbert, “that it is quite useless and hardly delicate to discuss the matter any further. It is difficult for me to explain. Perhaps in a sense you are right; these things are outside my province. Still, I assure you,” he turned solemnly to his brother, “it is to me as if you proposed to take the vessels of the Eucharist and turn them to the common uses of the table.”

Basil looked at him pityingly.

“Herbert, you are the most impossible person. My dear fellow, this is fantastic; a sort of ‘male green sickness,’ as Kingsley has it. Upon my soul, you priests condemn your way of living out of your own mouths.

Points of View

It is, as you say, absolutely useless to argue with you. At least," he continued airily, "you will be good enough to avoid infecting anyone else with your preposterous notions. You have nothing in my life to rake up against me, or I'm hanged if I would put it beyond you. As it happens, I have respected your conventions,—more perhaps from indolence than—still, I have respected them.'

He turned and flung out of the vicarage in better conceit with himself than when he entered. Herbert's objection was clearly due to monomania—there was nothing further to be said. Still he was sore; Herbert, if mad, was no fool. "I suppose he thinks," he grumbled, "that I should bring gifts; that I should have waited until I had 'done something.' As if one's personality could be gauged by such a coarse standard; I bring my possibilities, which are not contemptible. To my mind," he mused, "the idea is infinitely finer that one's untried powers should develop in the sun of her presence. The other is ungenerous, commercial; it suggests that one should give something in return for—— In all the most beautiful stories the lover reserves something of his nature,—veils his brilliancy, so to speak. There was——" He was off on the most congenial of hobbies, fitting himself to the part of prince and hero.

It was arranged that the marriage should take place in the spring. "Not March, I think," said Hastings; "everybody is married in March. Let us choose April, 'sudden April,' the month of tears and laughter, the poets' month."

Then followed what was to Basil the most characteristic revelation of Hastings' nature. They were alone; and the old man, turning to him seriously, said:

"Perhaps what I am going to tell you is not news. If so, you will pardon my wasting your time over so

The Column

trivial a matter. In any case, I should not have mentioned it but that I should like your opinion. I wish Daphne to be married in April for purely æsthetic reasons ; but—I also wish to be alive at the time.”

“Surely,” said Basil, “things are not so serious ; it is impossible.”

Hastings smiled and shook his head.

“Pray, don’t distress yourself. I fear—at least I am convinced that I am suffering from some form of heart disease. I shall go, like that !” He clapped his hands. “I am quite ignorant of medicine, except what one picks up, you know. Now, the question is, Can I make sure of—till April ?”

“Don’t you think,” said Basil, “that you had better have in a medical man ?”

Hastings made a wry face.

“I have a morbid horror of all that belongs to the sick-room,” he laughed. “I am like—who was it ? I had much rather you didn’t mention it.”

“I understand your repugnance ; but one must really be practical. It is quite impossible to say how far your fears are justified without a medical examination.”

Hastings was at last persuaded to submit.

Old Dr. Bosankoe was very deaf, and Basil urged that Gillies should be selected. In grave emergencies Caspar talked sense, and his opinion was to be relied upon.

There was a council of three, though the restive behaviour of Hastings suggested a prisoner at the bar. He was only anxious to get the thing over and out of doors.

“Good Lord,” said Gillies, his stethoscope hanging from his ears, “why on earth didn’t you call me in before ? You have advanced fatty degeneration, and the slamming of a door might kill you.”

Points of View

Hastings nodded.

“So the thumbs are down,” he said, putting on his coat. “Now, as to the question of time—supposing the doors don’t slam?” Caspar stared, and Basil protested. Hastings, however, seemed unable to grasp the idea of treatment.

“But,” said Caspar, persuasively, “surely this is pushing fatalism too far. Frankly, I cannot promise you the certainty of many years, but a great deal may be done. Under treatment attacks which would certainly be fatal may be reduced to an inconvenience. Why anticipate?”

“My dear Gillies,” replied Hastings, “I don’t think you can quite reduce yourself to my primitive way of looking at things. I see the value of treatment, but it is the fact of being treated that appalls me. To count one’s footsteps destroys the pleasure of walking; and to be conscious and careful of living is to spoil for me the attractiveness of life. As for physic, I should regard it as a pawnticket from the destroyer; and for ‘diet’ I have an intellectual contempt. Don’t think,” he pleaded, “that I make light of your opinion; indeed, I accept it as final. Also, I promise you that I won’t go out of my way to hasten things.”

Caspar coughed.

“Last week,” he said dryly, “I was passing the gymnasium. You and Miss Hastings were inside, and you were showing her Knock Jonas,—a thing,” he said, turning solemnly to Basil, “I can’t do myself, and I played Rugby for my Hospital.”

Hastings looked sheepish.

“Well, well,” he said, “I will be more discreet. Please don’t let us waste this beautiful afternoon over this unpleasant matter. Now, may I take it that I shall be alive, say, next June?”

The Column

In spite of the nature of their business Basil could not resist the humorous side of Gillies' hesitation.

That the unfaltering portioner of fractions of minutes should boggle at a month or two seemed irresistibly ironic; though it was also a lesson in tolerance. Caspar showed his metal in refusing to save his reputation for readiness at the expense of his patient. Basil remembered with crestfallen appreciation the doctor's appalling promptness when he himself was on trial; though he was willing to admit Gillies' sense of proportion in declining to dismiss Hastings with a like nonchalance.

"You see," said Gillies, "you make it very hard for me; to speak plainly, you don't give me a chance. If you will put yourself into my hands, I can, in a certain limited sense, postpone the inevitable. However, as you won't——"

"I am very trying, I admit," said Hastings. "Don't vex yourself, however,—just tell me what you think."

"Well, then, providing there are no unfavourable circumstances,—sudden excitement or unusual exertion,—I think, humanly speaking, you will live till at least next summer."

"Then," said Hastings, rising, "let us be human again. Daphne—who knows nothing of this and must not be told—has promised us a new experience; some mysterious juggling with mint and Burgundy. Let us go."

CHAPTER XV—*Vie de Bohême*

MR. BARGISTER'S conversion was apparently absolute. Whether in time he would regret his surrender was of little consequence; for it was to be supposed that the course to which he had assented would then be justified by its results. Not content with a mere removal of opposition, he began to develop an enthusiasm which promised to become embarrassing to his friends. Concerning his own scheme he had always practised a becoming reticence; but in the creed of his adoption he flung modesty aside, and ran perilously near the line dividing the zealot from the bore. Fortifying himself with every available work, critical and historical, on the art of sculpture, he lay in wait for the unsuspecting, whom he entrapped into abstruse discussions. He was eloquent of "methods," and plunged with the light-hearted recklessness of the amateur into those questions of Period in Antique statuary which divide the critical world into rival and bitter factions. He advanced yet another theory of the position of the arms in the Nike, and settled the identity of the Torso in an hour. Nor did the moderns daunt him; he dismissed the claims of Morton by the Canon of Polycletus, and asserted that the famous group by Le Farge "did not compose."

His dining-room began to suggest the Crystal Palace; and the casual visitor collided with groups of grinning workmen bearing in yet another Apollo.

Mrs. Bargister, already nettled by her husband's pliancy where she had failed to persuade him, was driven almost to rebellion by his importations. She declared that as a Churchwoman she would, if this

The Column

continued, be compelled to take her meals in the privacy of her bedroom, secure from shameless deities. The behaviour of Emily rendered her speechless with amazement. Caspar Gillies, seeing opportunities for distinction as the mouthpiece of a cultivated minority, entered the lists with ardour; and Emily took sides with him dutifully. They were for experiment as against a puerile following of tradition. Caspar was of the opinion that the artists of the future would do wisely to concentrate their attention on the improvement of technical processes

“Any fool,” he said, “can carve or model; the action is purely reflex. What we want is to discover a substance which, while retaining its plasticity, will have all the surface qualities of marble.”

With this aim the back kitchen at Morthover was converted into a laboratory; and Caspar neglected his patients whilst he did things with depressing looking lumps of various coloured mud.

Emily became preoccupied, and at meal-times covered the table-cloth in her immediate neighbourhood with wildly impossible chemical formulæ. At the end of a week, during which the house smelt like a glue-factory, the pair announced that they had nearly succeeded in making a “synthetic modelling-wax” with a surface “like alabaster.” Caspar was about to publish his discovery to a grateful world when it occurred to him that the cost of its production was exactly ten-and-sixpence per pound.

He abandoned practical demonstration for destructive criticism; and he and Mr. Bargister nearly quarrelled over the utility of the “cire perdue” method of bronze casting. Staggered by the old gentleman’s formidable armoury of newly acquired technicalities, he sadly turned his attention to Johnnie.

Vie de Bohême

“Of course,” he said, “you will give the first seven years to chemistry and geology. You ought to get a few weeks in a foundry, so that you may understand the tempering of chisels. I have an idea that they might be vastly improved; it wouldn’t be a bad thing to make that your speciality.”

Hardly a living creature in Tregotha escaped measurement; and Herbert Waring asserted that Mr. Bargister spent sermon-time in mentally figuring how many “heads” he stood.

The innocent cause of all this excitement alternately sulked and derided. He chafed under the delay, and at last ventured to hint to his father that it was time something was being done.

For the practical steps Mr. Bargister placed himself unreservedly in the hands of Basil Waring. He approached him in the longest speech he had ever been known to make.

“You, sir,” he said, “though, I trust, no more ardent worshipper of Form than myself, are better acquainted with the professional habits of those whose lives are devoted to its creation—in the plastic arts. In these details I bow to you. I am resolved that my son John shall one day be reckoned with Phidias—that is to say—I should like him to have a good start. There is no time to be lost. Owing, I regret to say, to my infatuation for another of the immortal Nine, I have hitherto opposed his education in the direction Nature has so clearly pointed out for him—have been confoundedly pig-headed, sir. But the noble creature who is about to make you happy—let me congratulate you with all my heart—I say this dear young lady has opened my eyes—has shown me what an ass I have been. I may remark,” he added with dignity, “that I see no reason to blush for

The Column

an elasticity of mind perhaps unusual at my age. Few men, sir, could at my time of life be brought to confess to so gross an error. There's Hepburn—a consummate scoundrel! He knows perfectly well that his Mining Bill is a criminal fallacy, yet he refuses to swerve from his misguided policy. But we shall beat him yet; have you seen the results of the Bye-elections?"

Both Basil and Hastings, with whom he sat in consultation, advised the avoidance of the regular art schools. In this case where, they hinted, economy was not imperative, Johnnie would have greater advantages in a private studio. The idea of Continental training was, of course, left out of discussion for the present; and it was not an easy matter to select an Englishman, of any reputation, who was willing to take a pupil. Mr. Bargister was disconcerted by their apparently flippant handling of the momentous question. He could hardly be persuaded that "the best artistic education in Europe" could be arrived at without more seriousness.

Basil knew his way about the London studios very well, and his habitual anxiety to be on the top of opinion kept him posted in appreciations; so that his estimate of various artists and their work was, for a layman, astonishingly accurate. Hastings, who was but seldom in town, followed the art of the day only on paper; but he had instinct, and a taste that was seldom at fault.

"There's Barrett," suggested Basil.

"Y-es," said Hastings, "but he's found a mission lately, hasn't he—the treatment of trouser legs; and then his 'Swordsman' of last year!"

"Oh, shocking; but he can teach—Ambrose is a pupil of his."

"Yes, I know; but that was ten years ago. I should

say he has made all the money he wants and is getting lazy. How about Squires?"

"*The* man, of course, but no power on earth would persuade him to take a pupil. He's quite mad, you know; he fancies he has 'processes' when it's only genius. You go to his studio,—he lives in a cave at Fulham,—and he talks to you round the door. There isn't a man living who has seen Squire at work. They say he even makes his models join a sort of secret society and swear on a dagger that they won't betray his methods. Of course, there's always Hollister."

Both men laughed, and Basil quoted: "We dream of a day when London shall, indeed, be a city beautiful; when Art and science shall have joined hands and our very railway stations shall rival the Vatican."

"Did he say that?"

"Yes; I was there. He wore his working blouse and stood on a platform between a bishop and a duchess. He talks about putting up for Parliament to represent the constituency of Art."

All this was very bewildering to Mr. Bargister, and tended to confirm his growing suspicion that the artist, after all, was, in Stevenson's words, to be numbered "along with dancing-girls and billiard-markers."

"If Sheldon weren't such a rip," continued Basil, after a pause, "he would do very well. Of course, if Johnnie were older, it wouldn't matter; as it is, one must consider the morals question a bit, and I can't say I like Sheldon's friends."

Hastings tapped thoughtfully on the table for a while, and then said with hesitation,—

"Perhaps you'll think it an odd suggestion, but do you know anything of Cathcart,—I mean, lately? Of his work I have no doubt at all."

The Column

“Do you know,” said Basil, after a minute, “I believe we have got our man. As you say, he’s rather out of the ordinary; but, did you see the ‘Night’?” Hastings smiled and nodded.

“Something to be thankful for,” he said, “but how about teaching?—it doesn’t follow, you know.”

“He turned out Abinger and young Pettigrew, and they would cheerfully black his boots to-day. Of course, the shop won’t have him, and he isn’t popular; but——”

Basil turned to Mr. Bargister and gave him a rapid sketch of Cathcart and his work.

“All those who really know,” he said, “swear by him. So far as the what-you-may-call-it side is concerned——” He looked at Hastings.

“If Johnnie were my son,” said he, “I would trust him with Cathcart,—that is, if he would have him.”

Mr. Bargister was satisfied; and it was arranged that Basil should approach Cathcart on the subject. He explained to Mr. Bargister that although he did not suppose Cathcart would care to undertake the drudgery of grounding Johnnie in the elementary work of his profession, it would be a step gained if he would promise to take the boy into his studio when he should consider him sufficiently advanced. In any case his advice would be invaluable. The answer came in a week. Basil read the letter and silently handed it to Hastings.

“Ah,” said he, with a sudden indrawing of the breath, as at sight of a wound, “I didn’t suppose he would ever forget; but I had no idea he still wore the hair shirt. Better not show it to Bargister,” he laughed sadly; “he might take fright at the handwriting.”

The note was scribbled in pencil on a dirty scrap of paper.

Vie de Bohême

"DEAR WARING,—Bring him up by all means. If he's any good, I'll think about it, but I can't be bothered with young gentlemen. Of course you'll understand that I don't break 'em in; but that could be arranged. There are lots of things I want to show you, some of them decent. By the way, he—the boy—doesn't know anything about Antwerp, does he?"

It was the allusion to Antwerp that had caused Hastings' exclamation. The story cannot be told here; it is one of those stories that a man thinks about when there is only one thing left for him to do, and that to blow out his brains. Perhaps it explains Cathcart's genius; but it is also why his friends never allow him to see white lilac.

Basil would have preferred that he and Johnnie saw Cathcart alone, but Mr. Bargister had so obviously prepared his part that it seemed a sin to deny him.

So they three descended on Cathcart,—in a four-wheeler because of the Bust. Johnnie held on to the cushions in a cold sweat, feeling very dry about the lips and very hollow in the stomach; whilst Mr. Bargister with dreamy eyes murmured fragments from his detached observations on the Art of Sculpture. Basil himself was in a fever of anxiety, half humorous, half serious, as to the reception they would get.

Mr. Bargister expected a grave personage in flowing garments, who would place a fatherly hand on Johnnie's shoulder, and observe his brow the while they exchanged burning thoughts on the privileges and duties of the artist. He pictured vast halls crowded with the shapes "of all Olympus' faded hierarchy," before which the grave personage would relapse into attitudes exemplifying his art.

Cathcart lived in Chelsea, and the approaches to his lair somewhat disturbed the grandeur of Mr. Bargister's conception. He began to be fidgety.

The Column

They were admitted by a neat, middle-aged woman whose face seemed no longer capable of expressing surprise. Her manner suggested that she would have received a Prince of the Blood or a naked Zulu with equal composure. She permitted an austere smile of recognition to disarrange the corners of her mouth when Basil gave her his card, and took them at once up to the studio. Mr. Bargister closed his eyes in preparation for the sublime interior.

He found himself addressed by a dusty man with big, sullen blue eyes. This person called him "Sir," and hoped he was well. Mr. Bargister concluded he was a kind of slave to the Master, and attributed his freedom to the intoxicating effects of frequenting Genius. The spectacle of Basil linking arms with the person and addressing him, with obvious affection and respect, as "Uncle," reduced him to a condition of stuttering imbecility, from which he gradually awoke to the dignity of the head before him.

He presently saw with astonishment that Cathcart and Johnnie, having already discovered the mysterious affinity of creative hands, were over ears in conversation, not upon Art, but fox-terriers, of which breed a disreputable specimen fawned upon the initiate.

"We'll have some rats in," Cathcart was saying, "there's a chap in the Brompton Road supplies me regularly."

Basil noticed with increasing alarm the rapt glances Cathcart stole at Mr. Bargister, and the Homeric laughter gathering behind the sullen blue eyes. Nor was his anxiety decreased when Mr. Bargister cleared his throat to speak.

"I can conceive," he said, dangling his pince-nez from his forefinger,— "I can conceive no finer moment than

Vie de Bohême

that in which the Artist beholds with conscious pride the completed fruits of his laborious days."

"It isn't all beer and skittles, you know," said Cathcart, with heroic calmness.

"Ah, yes; I understand—the artistic temperament and all that 'surgit amari aliquid,' eh, Johnnie?"

"There's always something," echoed Cathcart, in unconscious paraphrase. "Sometimes the beggars won't pay; and then again the nice young gentlemen who write for the papers say things, and perhaps one is fool enough to mind. Of course," he added apologetically, "you forget it all when you've broken the back of the next job."

To Johnnie it was all very new; very different from what he had expected and yet in a sense familiar. He felt unaccountably at home, and, curiously, missed Daphne from his side. He was on the stretch to examine more closely one figure whose contours showed in a tantalising manner through the wet cloths in which it was shrouded.

Cathcart's work, if it can be assigned to any school, belongs to that of which the best known examples are the paintings of J. F. Millet. Both men betray in their work the same acute sympathy with the worn hands, the inarticulate voice of labour; though by the accident of his material the English sculptor is more suggestive while less explicit in detail. He sums up as it were in an allusive gesture what the other faithfully recorded on canvas. That Cathcart chose to live in London is significant of this difference in his relations to those subjects both made their peculiar study. Equally sincere with the Frenchman, he detached himself that he might observe more clearly; though at the cost of an appearance of indifference. Indeed so little does the man reveal himself in his work that many fail to perceive the almost fierce devotion that lies at the roots of it.

The Column

In either case one is led to consider the consequences to society had the man been anything but an artist. Denied its natural outlet, one feels that this sympathy would have found expression, if not in actual dynamite, at best in the explosive pamphlet. That the accident of temperament should have led to the choice of paint or marble is an incalculable advantage; for the expression of a poignant sense of the sorrows of the poor, in literature, is seldom admirable. A man may write it finely dying behind barricades, but more sweetly in paint; best of all, perhaps, in clay. The hand knows what the hand suffers; and who may tell what occult inspiration lurks in the very medium? It would also appear that in the increased physical exercise the bitterness, the overstatement fatal to art, disappears.

As Mr. Bargister walked about the dirty linoleum of Cathcart's studio, he came gradually more and more under the influence of the sculptor's large humanity. It was as if all the figures had in some way the same message.

"I know," they nodded; "I have been through it all; yet I am here, erect, unconquered."

He began to be less conscious of Cathcart's personal peculiarities and felt a strange confidence in him.

"Did you bring anything," said Cathcart, turning suddenly to Johnnie with one of his arresting glances that was like a heavy hand laid on the shoulder.

Johnnie stammered and coloured. Mr. Bargister came up fussily.

"My dear boy!" he exclaimed in panic; "where are the drawings, and where, oh, where is the Bust?"

"Left them in the cab," muttered Johnnie. "I say, dad, don't have them up," he pleaded.

Cathcart patted him kindly.

Vie de Bohême

“Don’t funk it, old man,” he said; “we only want to see where you are.”

Mr. Bargister would have no one fetch the precious works of art but himself. Cathcart discussed the contours of the head with his apprehensive fingers; nodded over the drawings, and muttered encouragingly.

“Of course,” he said, “you’ll have to do some drawing.” He pronounced it “drorin’” with infinitesimal contempt.

“You ought to be ready in about a year if you step into it. Then we’ll see what sort of stuff you’re made of.”

Johnnie, who had hoped wildly for an immediate entrance into this paradise, gulped down his disappointment. He held up bravely, however, Basil squeezing his fingers.

“I understand,” said Mr. Bargister; “the rudiments—the rudiments, Johnnie; Rome wasn’t built in a day, you know.”

“Better send him to the Ice-cream Shop,” continued Cathcart, with his queer moody stare at nothing.

Basil’s eyebrows shot up, but he edged in quickly.

“Ah, yes—the Municipal Schools. You see, Johnnie, it is quite settled that Mr. Cathcart will take you, but he wants you to get over the elementary work first.”

“Have you found a place where he can hang out?” said Cathcart to Mr. Bargister; “if not, I know a woman in Thurloe Place who would make him comfortable and keep an eye on his socks and things. Nice and handy for the Schools too.”

“Thank you, thank you,” said Mr. Bargister; “you relieve me of a very great anxiety; what name did you say?”

“Ellis; Mrs. Ellis, No. 22a.”

“Thank you again. And now, Johnnie, we had better be off, if you want to see the Cartoons.”

The Column

Johnnie would have preferred to stay and peer about the studio. Cathcart observed his reluctance and said, holding his hand: "Look here; I want you to come in and tell me how you get on. You'll generally find me in. In case I should be out I'll tell Mrs. Raynor—she's my housekeeper, you know—to turn you loose in the studio. Perhaps we might manage some walks on Sunday afternoons—and we'll get some rats."

He watched Mr. Bargister into the cab with a huge, childlike joy, as if he were a quaint little performing animal. He took the stairs three at a bound, and, dropping into a chair, bellowed with delight. "Lord!—Waring," he cried, "you're a jewel—he's done me good. Where did you find him?"

Chuckling joyously, he took a piece of charcoal and made a picture of Mr. Bargister which doubled Basil up with laughter, though he protested against the wickedness of it.

"He's a good sort, Cathcart," he said, when he had recovered, "though he has a manner. Well, what do you think?"

"Oh! the young un." Cathcart lit his pipe and scratched his head thoughtfully. "It isn't easy to say," he grunted. "There's a squareness about those bits of things—and he gets the swing of his figures. Had no teaching, you say?"

"None whatever. The old man was dead against it until recently. But I say, Uncle—why did you suggest the Ice-cream Shop?"

Cathcart slowly blew a cloud and looked at him through half-closed eyelids. "Corners, my son. They knock 'em off very nicely at the Ice-cream Shop. That's the use of the place. Generally there's nothing left when they've done with 'em; there never was such a place for

Vie de Bohême

reducing imaginary genius. If there is anything left—well—— In this case I really think there will be something over.”

“I see what you mean,” said Basil, nodding thoughtfully; “you think he won’t hurt for a little tidying up?”

“They makes ’em very nice and genteel,” grinned Cathcart, evasively. “However, I know Dinneford, and I’ll tell him to spare the sandpaper.”

The two men sat talking for some time. Cathcart had a curious affection for Basil, whose irresponsible enthusiasms salted his loneliness. Also Basil had more than once saved him from pillage; for Cathcart, though not a fool in business, was apt to be beaten down through sheer dislike of haggling; and he was not rich enough to refuse commissions recklessly.

Basil on his part found in Cathcart a fibre he lacked himself; and the man was absorbingly interesting. He was an example of the artist drawing his strength from the wreck of the man. His mental safety lay in occupation, and so long as nothing happened to make him look back he was, in his way, happy. It occurred to Basil sometimes that Cathcart was the only creature he had ever honestly and unselfishly helped.

“But I say,” said the sculptor when they parted, “what are you doing out of town—given up the Glory Hole?”

For the first time in his knowledge Basil lied to Cathcart.

“There is some writing I want to get finished,” he said; “I am staying in Tregotha—my brother, the parson, lives there, you know.”

Cathcart whistled.

“Oho,” he said without much curiosity, “a literary gent, is it? Well, I always thought you’d come to it. Good-night.”

CHAPTER XVI—*Rus in Urbe*

HAD Gertrude Laffey lived in the Middle Ages, it is likely she would have kept tame “dwarfs and other doubtful creatures.” Almost from childhood she had that impatience of the usual which entitles its possessor to the interest of all those persons who are by way of being cultured. She had the mental twist which when it embitters the lives of governesses passes for “character,” and when a little later it reacts upon more natural guardians, is described by the family doctor as a neurosis, and treated by him with fussy attention or observant neglect according to his lights. Painstaking Germans have written tediously objectionable books on the subject, and, had it not been for Juvenal, they would be even worth reading.

In her schooldays, Gertrude had been the kind of girl who will refuse cake at the table to steal it afterwards; strangle kittens for the luxury of remorse, and, if she has no brothers to repulse her with cruder methods, subject her dolls, the child’s peculiar tenderness, to private and elaborate tortures. Though it may not appear on the surface, the proper destiny of such a girl is the Zenana, where she would be delicious; and, in the interests of social comfort, it is to be regretted that Western prejudice renders this, for the present, impossible.

It is generally supposed, except by the matrons of prisons, that this kind of woman acts upon impulse. That is because her impulses, like the backwoodsman’s language, are “full and frequent,” though she possesses a responsibility in their exhibition which may well excite envy in the breasts of average wayward humanity.

Rus in Urbe

Chance, rather than wisdom, caused Gertrude's parents to provide a field for the exercise of her obvious talents which would otherwise have been rendered dangerous or impotent by the Western prejudice before alluded to. Before she was out of her teens, she had received a thorough musical training, so that when she came to the inheritance of her proper qualities, she was able to use them without apparent injury either to the well-being of society or her own development.

She married the worst possible husband,—easy, self-indulgent. In the hands of a capable man she might have added another page to the history of musical interpretation; as it was, she spoiled two possible careers for want of encouragement in one.

For three years Morris Laffey was too intent on money-getting to slip beyond the bounds of his marriage vows. With affluence he transferred his allegiance to whisky and the more piquant methods of Lalage.

He lacked or lost by intimacy the artistic appreciation his wife deserved, and, like many better men, injured her less by actual depravity than by want of perception.

Checked in her natural development, Gertrude discovered an interest in her soul which saved her husband from the more social consequences of his neglect; and when Basil Waring happened to incarnate the vague raptures she mistook for religion, she had arrived at an estimate of alternative pleasures which enabled her to indulge her emotions without actual peril.

Consequently, on her widowhood she was able to wait; and when this sort of woman decides to wait, she is indefatigable. Basil, she found, was necessary to her, but the etiquette of bereavement must be observed. Indeed, so many of the things she cared for depended upon social decorum that indiscretion were flat suicide. Still, it was

The Column

tiresome; he did not write or call—and the month was May.

Nowhere is the insurgence of Spring more absolute than in London. Out on the countryside the Epithalamion of sun and earth is more modulate, for even in mid-winter there is a pretty conjugal civility, a kind of breakfast-table dalliance, between them. But when the almond breaks in London squares, it is Olympian wooing or nothing.

He did not write, he did not call. That was the vexatious primness of the man.

Surely eight months—even for suggesting gratitude for salvation from the precipice; as in the books of childhood the boon comrade of the drowned Sabbath-breaker denies himself even a legitimate relaxation. She herself rather fancied the precipice,—in perspective, and now that Death had fenced it with irremovable bars. There was fascination, now it was impossible, in picturing oneself at the bottom.

The room was filled with the heavy scent of hawthorn; even Patsy grew a trifle reckless; less austere appreciative of tone and colour than usual. Gertrude was curious or admirable in the choice of her friends according to one's comprehension of her character. Patricia Hollenden was Art Mistress at the nursery of genius referred to by Cathcart as the Ice-cream Shop. Her explicit purposes in life provided an agreeable foil to the intricate irresponsibility of her friend; whilst her furtive palate for doubtful stories made her acceptable as a listener. Patricia's iron-grey hair was close-cropped; she wore thick boots and spectacles, through which her impassive eyes "blocked out" your contours with due regard to squareness of drawing. She affected an unemotional delivery of violent theories, exploding hoary beliefs with

Rus in Urbe

downcast lids and a falling voice. She would occasionally inform you that you interested her chiefly as a mass of tone—she was the apostle of tone in her department, as opposed to emphasis of relief. She was somewhat ostentatiously free from prudery; and in railway trains and other public places discussed the more intimate anatomy of her friends in a voice that was carefully audible.

Gertrude lounged at the piano, and played Beethoven viciously. The music happened to suit her mood, the defiant opening movement of that Sonata in which Beethoven seems to have first discovered that he was not as other men are. The bravado of the Presto breathed her; she ceased to fling calculated improprieties over her shoulder, and by the end of the movement she was tamed to the mood of the composer. She forgot herself in the wonderful Adagio—the drugged slumber with its uneasy aspirations, sudden cries for light, and fitful gleams of tantalizing revelation. It is so pathetically human,—the wistfulness, the purposes that lead nowhere, and the final acquiescence into the worldliness of the Minuet.

Let us “drink beer and dance with the girls,”—high-born girls these, delicate, high-stepping; and for beer let us say Rhine wine. One hears the rustle of brocade and sways to the leisured grace of the courtesy. It is all a punctilious pacing, a formal gallantry—admirably heartless. There is a sudden intrusion of raw passion. The dancers stop with clasped hands high in air. One sees delicate eyebrows raised in mild expostulation over sloping shoulders. One hears “How loutish,” and the speaker stoops with insolent apathy to settle her shoe. Here and there a hand slips to sword-hilt, and one woman faints. Young passion is removed to kick sullen heels outside; there will be a meeting at dawn—mean-

The Column

while the well-bred melody resumes and subsides in a sentimental cadence.

Gertrude flung petulantly away from the piano.

"I can't play the Allegro to-day. It is too complex, and I am in a primitive mood. My dear Patsy, put down that book which you don't understand, and would be bad for your morals if you did, and tell me something absolutely new. If I were an Eastern Monarch, I would off with your head unless you produced a virgin sensation within the next five minutes."

She lit a cigarette and fell into an easy-chair.

"There are the pictures——"

"Horrors!—enough of pictures. I am sick of pictures and books and drama—the eternal prate. I want blood, my dear, blood. Tell me about a new man, a new woman, a new animal——"

"Oh, by the way——"

"Well?"

"I haven't told you about my boy."

"That is a detestable affectation, Patsy; forty, I suppose?"

"Wrong this time," purred Miss Hollenden, "a little scrubbed boy no higher than your hand."

"Didn't know the thing survived. Where is he?"

"Probably at this moment copying the evergreen features of Michel Agnolo's David in crude outline on cartridge paper."

"Oh, if he's at the Schools, I'm not interested. I know all the types,—the solemn prigs who talk about aims, the intense young things who writhe before Botticelli, and the emancipated bounders who do Posters and cultivate ballet-girls; amusing enough at first, but I'm tired of them."

"Very well, my dear; I don't want to talk. I had

much rather sit and analyse the reflections in the coal-scuttle."

"But about this boy—where did you find him?"

"He happens to live next door to me. I was introduced to him by a policeman who objected to his proceedings with an air-gun in Thurloe Place at six o'clock in the morning.

"I am almost interested; go on."

"Well, the boy appealed to me. I explained to him that London cats come under the game laws, and he was quite satisfied, which proves him to have inherited instincts. There was a little difficulty with the policeman—it appears the boy had offered to wrestle with him, Cornish fashion; but I managed to soothe him. Then we had a chat."

"What's his name?"

"Johnnie; he said I might call him Johnnie if I would spell it with an 'ie.' He is sixteen, and is going to be a great sculptor. When his drawing is 'good enough' he is to be taken in hand by that dreadful man Cathcart, who did 'The Reaper,' you remember. He says Cathcart is 'a treat,' and knows more about dogs than any one in the world except Tom Pew."

"You positively refresh me; by the way, I like Cathcart, he is such a brute. Go on."

"Then he said he was beastly hungry and bolted in to breakfast."

"Patsy, you're a devil. Haven't you seen him since?"

"Every day, my dear. We walk together to the Schools in the morning, and take our lunch in the same milk shop. He's told me all his history. He comes from some outlandish place in Cornwall, where there aren't even any Academicians. He's quite a savage, you know—only he happens to be a little gentleman."

The Column

“You must capture him, and bring him here to tea.”

“Much too shy. He doesn't like women,—‘not as a class,’ he assured me. He was good enough to make an exception in my favour because I am of the same trade. I really don't know how I could manage it; he has a morbid horror of drawing-rooms. You see, he's too old to coax with things to eat, and not old enough to relish assaults on his misogyny.”

“Don't be alarmed, I am no devourer of babes. I'll promise to veil the splendour of my beauty. You must bring him.”

“Besides,” laughed Miss Hollenden, “he is already enslaved to a goddess. She is married, too, if you please.”

“Really, Patsy, this grows more and more; is it serious?”

“Emphatically; it is of the most fatal type, rooted in gratitude. It appears that but for her he would not have been allowed to go in for the image trade, as he elegantly phrases it. His father had other plans for him; but the goddess wheedled or bullied—the latter, I suspect—the poor old man into submission.”

“Of course she's older,—sort of calf love-affair, is it?”

“She is a few years older, but it isn't that sort of thing at all. In fact, his state of mind is rather complicated. Until quite recently they were simply pals. ‘She's a jolly sort of chap; can shy, and run, and all that.’ Her apotheosis seems to have come with her marriage; though I can see quite clearly that it isn't a result of it. I can't quite describe it,—neither can he, for that matter; it seems much as if he had discovered the princess under the rags—that sort of thing, you know.”

“Patsy, you eclipse yourself; you promise me a boy, and you indicate a romance. Does he describe her?”

“No, not at all; not even the colour of her eyes. Of

Rus in Urbe

course, I pictured the ordinary hoyden,—eyes, cheeks, and the exasperating laugh people call ‘frank.’ The funny thing is, the boy insists that she is exactly like the Antinous.”

“My dear!”

“Of course, I laughed when he said so, supposing he had got mixed in his names. I was anxious to make sure what he did mean; so we made a pilgrimage together to the cast gallery, and he showed me. The frankest person you ever saw; ‘a little more here, you know, and perhaps not quite so long in the leg.’”

“Well, really, Patsy, you do manage to pick up the quaintest people. If I had half your opportunities—this girl—I want to hear more about her; what’s her name—you say she’s married?”

“Only last month; dear, dear—what was the name—he did tell me, though he always speaks of her by her Christian name.”

Miss Hollenden stopped dead.

“Well?”

“Will you believe I could be so stupid?” Gertrude looked “quite.” “I’ve quite forgotten that, too; it was something classical,—Ariadne, Psyche—no—quite gone.”

Gertrude looked at her with pity.

“Never mind; tell me some more.”

“Johnnie doesn’t thirst for the husband’s blood, you know. Of course, he isn’t good enough, but our champion says ‘it’s all right, so long as he doesn’t make her unhappy,’ in which case he hints the darkest possibilities.”

“Oh, I’ve got the husband,—dull, good sort. Churchwarden, little estate, fond of boring his friends with the piggeries.”

“You’re hopelessly wrong,” murmured Miss Hollenden, complacently; “he is just the other—a sort of Admirable

The Column

Crichton rather. I quote 'he's all right, you know; lots of gas, and knows a little of everything. What I am afraid of is that he'll bother her wanting to do things, and talking when she wants to be quiet. She—oh, she's just there; like the sea or the sky.' I am afraid poor Johnnie's talents are not in the way of description. He has a wholesome contempt for chatterers, and this girl seems to have understood him."

Gertrude smiled, not altogether kindly. She lit another cigarette, and turned sharply to her friend.

"I say, Patsy," she said, chin on hand. "May I be frank—that is to say—rude?"

"Oh, I like you best that way—what is it?" chuckled Miss Hollenden.

"Well, do you know, you're very stupid."

"Chestnut," sighed Miss Hollenden.

"The boy is interesting, I grant you—but the girl. And you don't even know her name. I have already got a great deal more out of Johnnie than you have. This is not romance; it is a drama—probably a tragedy. She is 'just there;' that means either character or stupidity. From internal evidence I doubt the latter. She is not in the habit of 'doing things;' consequently, when she does something, it will be rather large. He is a busy person. I see."

She nodded abstractedly, fingering the little silver ash-tray that was made like a lotos flower.

"You must get him here. What have I that will attract him—the piano?"

"Heavens! no," said Miss Hollenden, with a precipitancy that suggested a belated repartee, "he has a sister who plays."

"Suppose you get him to bring some drawings—say I'm interested in his work."

"Not a bit of good. He'll ask whether you're in the trade. When he finds you're not, he'll treat you and your interest with sublime indifference."

"You're not encouraging, my dear," complained Gertrude, knitting her brows. She was on edge for more, and Miss Hollenden's objections only piqued her curiosity.

"Couldn't we concoct a little fairy tale—I'm a friend of his father or something; would that bring him?"

"I doubt whether my powers are equal to that—that's your particular talent, you know. I should either let the cat out of the bag or say too much—too much fairy tale, I mean. Of course I can find out the names, and so on, by simply asking. Is that what you want?"

"No, no," said Gertrude, "you can't put it together." She tapped the table impatiently. "I want him here. Isn't suggestion one of your artistic virtues? Just a touch here and there without committing yourself to a definite statement."

"Well, I'll try," said Miss Hollenden, as she rose to go.

Contrary to her expectations, Miss Hollenden's artless ambush was successful. Johnnie reluctantly gave up his next Sunday afternoon with Cathcart, and, in despised raiment, drank tea with fierce affability in Gertrude's drawing-room.

He was a long time thawing; was irritatingly acquiescent, but unproductive of information about himself.

Miss Hollenden charged heavily with leading questions, and would have shipwrecked the affair had not Gertrude kicked her under the table.

Gertrude's methods were more subtle. She introduced photographs with chatty identification. Johnnie remained for a time civilly hostile, "feeling cobwebs all over a fellow's face," as he would have said. Miss Hollenden looked "I told you so."

The Column

Didn't he think Sybil a pretty name? No; he didn't care for Sybil. Made him think of chocolate boxes and pink ribbons.

Well, Leonora then?

That was worse. That was the name of the thing they played at the concert Gillies got up and he, Johnnie, went to sleep. No; Leonora made him think of the man with the big fiddle. He mimicked, "Le-o-naw-rah." Miss Hollenden sighed, implying hopelessness; but Gertrude did not give up.

Were there no girls' names he liked?

"Oh, yes, Ethel wasn't bad and—and Daphne."

"Daphne, Daphne," repeated Gertrude, repressing her triumph,—“yes, Daphne is a beautiful name; but I don't think I know anyone outside a book whose name is Daphne.”

"I know a girl," said the crimson youth, with colossal unconcern, "whose name is Daphne."

Miss Hollenden looked, "Well, you *are*!"

"I hope," said Gertrude, playing with a photograph,—“I hope she is worthy of so wonderful a name.”

"Oh, isn't she just!" fired the champion. "There isn't anyone here," indicating the photographs, "a patch on her." Then, covered with confusion at his plain speaking, he coughed explosively. Gertrude knew the value of keeping a subject warm.

"There are not many pretty girls here," she admitted. "That reminds me; you are going to be an artist, are you not? I want you to draw a face for me—I will fetch the book."

She ignored his deprecatory "Oh, I say," and returned with one of those terrors of society, now almost obsolete, a Keepsake Album. She concealed the fact that the last

contribution "To Cynthia" dated twenty years back, and placed the book before Johnnie.

"Now, please," said Gertrude, in her irresistible velvet coo. "See, here is a pencil—but of course you carry your own—what a slight upon an Art Student! Now, I'm not going to look at you; I know how much artists dislike being watched. I'll play something—perhaps it will inspire you."

Johnnie did not set himself out to admire music, but whatever Gertrude played somehow got into his fingers and lent a certain intensity to the outline he drew.

"I like that," said Gertrude, returning by permission. "It is such a strong face. Is it like anyone you know, or just imaginary?"

"Oh, perhaps it's a bit like——" began Johnnie, indifferently.

"A girl whose name is Daphne," murmured Gertrude.

"It isn't half good enough," growled Johnnie in his sleeve.

"Daphne must be a great friend of yours," said Gertrude, sympathetically. "Does she live in London?"

"Oh no—at home; and she's married now, you know."

"Really; I hope she's married somebody very nice."

"Waring isn't half bad," admitted Johnnie, with regal tolerance.

There is a condition of mind in which one finds a positive pleasure in learning the extreme word of one's sentence. When the flesh is quivering under the lash, the next blow is almost a relief.

"Waring," said Gertrude, colourlessly, "I once knew some one named Waring. What is his other name?"

"Basil."

"Tell me," said Gertrude, fiercely, in spite of herself, "is this—I mean was Daphne a Miss Hastings?"

The Column

“Yes; do you know her?” said Johnnie, his face lighting up.

“I’ve heard of her,” said Gertrude, absently, “oh, ever so long ago.”

Miss Hollenden was not a person of tact, but something led her to choose this moment for rising to go.

When she and Johnnie had left the room, Gertrude cowered in a corner of the sofa. She seemed to shrink physically, and her hand beat the cushions with the regular fatuous movement of one in an epileptic seizure. She lay until the room grew dark, then crawled to her oratory.

CHAPTER XVII—*Autobiography*

ONCE again Daphne sat at the foot of the column and looked out over the sea. This was the first time since her marriage that she had found it possible to come here; though she would have been as unable to put a name to the feeling that had kept her away as to define the impulse that now led her to the place. Of one thing she was keenly aware,—that whereas on her last visit she was Daphne Hastings peculiar to this corner of earth as a statue to its niche, she was now Daphne Waring, and the place knew her not. That she was married was only an accident of the matter; the essential difference was that whilst before she had looked out on life from under the shadow of the column, she now approached the circle of its influence from a foothold in life. There was, as there is always, a certain sadness in the changed condition. One is not easily reconciled to detachment, if it is only from a stool in an office.

The three weeks following their marriage had been spent at Bournemouth; and the holiday character of the place, with its hundred energetic ways of doing nothing, had captivated her by its novelty.

It was a graceful sifting of the manifold occupations of humanity, such as one sees in a market-place on the stage. In that short time Daphne learned that there was not only an earth but a world. That she was more nearly related to humanity than to sea and cliff and twisted laurel was for her in the nature of a discovery, a discovery that for the time pleased her. She had previously regarded men and women—even those that attracted her

The Column

—as emanations from their surroundings, the incarnate meaning of their associations. Nothing goes further than simplicity ; and had Daphne been told of the theory of evolution, she would only have remarked upon its timidity. She ran down the scale from humanity to the pebble without stopping. Some manifestations were dearer to her than others, but not intrinsically different ; and what attracted her in the cadence of a voice, the gesture of a hand, had its parallel in the song of tree tops or the breaking of a long swell. The idea of a humanity detached, complete in itself, took her fancy like a toy. To this fluent life she herself now belonged. Before she had stood in the antechamber, among the unborn things, drawing her nourishment direct from the Earth mother, like a plant. That was over ; she was transplanted into humanity, and from being the articulate among dumb creations she was the last recruit where all were articulate. For a moment the fever of life had worked pleasantly in the veins of her who had only been conscious of the joy of living ; but now came the revulsion.

She suffered because she had not yet forgotten ; on one side she was still conversant with the mysteries. The Earth mother still had her ear ; she knew the pulses of the unvocal, and her attention on the other side was too recent to enable her to lose herself. Thus she was alien on either hand, with a wistfulness towards the country she had left. That she returned to it as a stranger made its appeal all the stronger. Not that she would admit she was unhappy, but she had the sense that the emissaries of the place were critical of her accent ; doubted lest she would forget their very language. Here Nature is implacable.

Daphne, without knowing it, was already making overtures to be taken back. She was happy only by distract-

Autobiography

tion. The crowded pageant of her later days passed before her eyes, leading her back to the night when she tapped at the door. Thus she measured her distance, and the wonder of it held regret in abeyance.

The first intimation she had of her wavering allegiance was on the approach of her husband. She knew suddenly, though she drowned the conviction in her welcome, that here, in this place, she had rather be alone; that Basil, though her husband, was uninitiate. In spite of herself, she addressed him as one who, though intimate in the crowd, is distant in the seclusion of home. He had taken her hand, making her free of humanity; but how far could he return with her on the other side?

As yet she was not critical of him, and he was sufficiently under her influence to conceal the foreigner. An acute observer would have noticed her dubiety, though Basil did not. This the cynical would explain by the fact that they had not yet found leisure to descend to those illuminating commonplaces that sunder soul from soul. It is indeed probable that in the division of lives a difference of opinion on the pattern of a wall-paper is more trenchant than, say, the doctrine of Transubstantiation.

Though neither was aware of his presence, with Basil came the particular Devil who attends the leisure of the newly married. To his influence rather than to human depravity may be traced those blighting tragedies that are the peculiar theme of the modern "comic" writer; and nothing is too small for the beginning of his work. In the present case he made use of the trail of smoke from the funnel of a steamer.

"Look!" said Basil, pointing, "there is the excursion steamer from Porth. Gillies would tell you how much water she has in her boilers and the revolutions of her screw per minute. What a good thing," he continued,

The Column

“that these people are able to get an outing in this way!”

“Yes,” said Daphne, “they go from Porth to Trenarval and back for a shilling. For another sixpence they get tea as well.” She paused. “Fortunately, there is nothing in Tregotha to attract them, or they might land here.”

The notes of the band playing the popular song of the moment came to them faint and silvery over the water.

“A pity,” said Basil, “that they cannot be persuaded to take their pleasure more quietly.”

“But then, that is their pleasure,” said Daphne, at the prompting of the particular Devil.

“I don’t understand, dear.”

“Why, the beer and the noise.”

“Oh, do you really think so?” said Basil, in a pained voice. “Surely if someone took them in hand they would develop a more wholesome interest in what is about them.”

“Father says not,” said Daphne; “he says this is their way, and it is better they should be themselves this way than spoil the association of any other. He would only interfere when they actually cause unpleasantness to quiet people—or shoot the gulls.”

She caught herself up quickly. “But forgive me; you have tried, and you say that—this sort of people really can be made—wiser.”

The word delighted Basil out of his momentary disappointment.

“Wiser!” he cried; “yes, that’s it,—saner, more whole. You are right, dear, and your father is right in deploring any attempt to make them cleverer. They don’t need sharpening,—that is only to increase their power for mischief; but if one could get them to realise how good the world is——”

Autobiography

Daphne gave him his head, and the particular Devil made his way smooth before him.

"Of course," he said, "the difficulty is, not to excite their suspicions. The moment they know they are being elevated they either freeze up or, worse, become prigs. That is our chief trouble in Poplar. They don't run to prigs in Poplar,—they are just below that level, you know; but they are sufficiently acute to see that we are only giving them samples, as it were. Even if you send them to the galleries and museums, they get their culture in parcels ready made up and labelled. It is the difference between showing a man the model of a coal mine and taking him down a shaft. The first is very pretty, very ingenious, but it fails to convince for want of atmosphere. One has always a better chance in the country. There's Austen Caporal—the whole village is free of his house. You go into the library and find the blacksmith reading Florio's 'Montaigne.' The last time I stayed with him I wanted to look up something in the 'Anatomy of Melancholy.' The book couldn't be found; we hunted all over the house,—there are books everywhere, even in the pantries, you know,—and at last Caporal remembered he had lent it to the ostler at the Berkshire Lamb."

Daphne had a vision of an exasperated jarvey, victim to a delusive title which had led him to expect information on the points of a Derby winner, but said nothing.

"The people here should be very amenable,—they are already prepared by the ever-present sea. Narrowness can't flourish at the edge of the ocean, though you may get brutality. There is a great deal might be done. Of course one must avoid being local; nothing is more detestable than the model village,—the sort of thing Whymper does."

Daphne refused to acknowledge to herself that she

The Column

was bored. Were they not going to work shoulder to shoulder,—to cheer and brighten? Still, just now,—in this place? Surely a little while might be allowed to let the old dreaming wear itself out. When the time came she would not be backward—in a little while.

But the particular Devil had Basil by the ear. He was blind to any appearance of fatigue in the girl by his side, and so long as she did not question what he was saying he was quite content.

A human interruption would have saved the situation; none came, and the unfortunate man shot the rapids with a light heart.

“Don’t you think,” said Basil, “that we could hit upon some plan to interest these excursionists so that their trip might have a purpose,—something to take back with them to their work and sweeten their lives? Of course one must find out their tastes,—their real tastes, I mean,—which they will never find out for themselves. Who are they, mostly?”

“Oh, everybody,” said Daphne, absently. “They come down to Porth by train, some even from Bristol. These are the worst; they have to spend a night in Porth, and the place is unbearable with them.”

“You must be charitable, dear,” laughed Basil. “While beer is cheap and they can get amusement of a sort, how are they to know any better? One might do a great deal—can’t you think of anything?”

“Dr. Gillies would suggest a Wagner Theatre—excursionists admitted free. Forgive me—I didn’t mean to make fun; but it is so difficult to know how to begin.”

“Yes; and the theatre idea, if possible, would be wrong. It would be the sample again, not an organic outgrowth of the place. We want to make them see and take an interest in what they have hitherto overlooked.

Autobiography

For example," he cried, "here, in this very spot, the column—what an object-lesson to the artisan immersed in his dreary mechanical problems!—that there was in real fact such a place as ancient Greece, of which this is a tangible survival. This very marble we lean against may have been shaped under the very eyes of Praxiteles; its surface brushed by the garments of Aspasia."

He was too absorbed in his idea to notice the look of blank astonishment, of fear almost, that leaped into Daphne's eyes.

His own kindled, and the particular Devil clapped his hands.

"I wonder how it would appeal to them; it is certainly worth trying, though, as you will say, it is a transplantation. We might contrive that the steamer put in here for an hour. That would be a beginning. Then there is the church—and that wonderful window. Two faiths—don't you see?—pagan simplicity; Christian warmth and colour. Oh, fine!"

He paused to enjoy the picture.

"Then a few of the more intelligent might be encouraged up here—do you think your father would have any objection? He could explain, you know—the Orders, and how they are each the index of a state of development—a brilliant idea!"

For a moment the conception of her father as lecturer to a mob of excursionists aroused Daphne's sense of humour and blotted out her intolerance of the idea. She laughed and took Basil's hand.

"My dear boy," she said, "you are almost as bad as Dr. Gillies."

"Oh, no; not at all," said Basil, hotly. "Gillies would vulgarise the place by ignoring its character; in my plan the column would remain the central fact.

The Column

Everything would lead up to it ; we could have a little museum in the laurels, with drawings and a restored model of the temple from which this came. Indeed there is no end to the development of the idea."

"I don't think father would like it," said Daphne, humbly in spite of, or perhaps because of, her unspeakable aversion from the thought.

"Oh, of course, what I said about the demonstration was only a possibility. Lots of good people do it—these conducted tours to the East, you know."

"But I mean," said Daphne, almost in tears, "the whole thing—the people. He is so careful of privacy. And I don't think," she added, sick with the necessity for saying it, "that it would be well to suggest it to him."

"Oh, not for worlds," said Basil, "if you don't think he would appreciate the suggestion." He sighed. "One has to consider prejudices, of course. He has lived here so long ; one gets into a groove, you know. Still it is a pity ; so powerful an influence for good——"

"Dear Basil," said Daphne, appealingly, "let us talk about something else."

She was shocked, stunned ; and yet the momentary revelation fascinated her horribly. She was too loyal to succumb, and caught feverishly at a new subject. Basil on his part was mortified. He saw that he had made a slip, had betrayed the cloven hoof in some way ; and that he did not exactly know how only vexed him the more. He was not fool enough to argue ; and there began a pitiful making of conversation.

"Let us talk about something else. Have you heard how Johnnie is getting on?"

The calmness with which Basil bore the artless cruelty of this question was to his credit. To have his hobby ruthlessly put aside for the discussion of the affairs of a

Autobiography

stripling gave him some measurement of his disgrace. As it was, he failed quite to conceal his humiliation.

“Not very likely; you see Cathcart is so busy he wouldn’t write unless it was absolutely necessary. As for Johnnie—he only writes to his father when he wants money.”

Then, ashamed of his littleness, he added with cordiality: “I wonder he hasn’t written to you—you were such great chums, weren’t you?”

“Yes,” said Daphne; “Johnnie is such an honest boy—always himself even when he is nasty—I mean, kills the birds and things. When I first spoke to him about it he didn’t pretend to agree with me, but said he wouldn’t shoot any more, because I asked him not to.”

“Which proves,” said Basil, prettily, “that Master Johnnie is not quite so artless as would appear. Do you know,” he jested, “I believe he is jealous of me.”

“He’s much too sensible,” said Daphne, so seriously that Basil burst out laughing.

“Yes,” he said, “I think Johnnie may be absolved from sentiment. He is wonderfully set for a boy so young; he seems to strike out for exactly what will be of use to him and ignores everything else. I have very great hopes for Johnnie.”

“I am very anxious,” said Daphne, thoughtfully; “there was something very beautiful about the way his father devoted himself to the Plan, as Miss Williams calls it. It will be terrible if Johnnie does not turn out as well as we expect.”

“I don’t think you need distress yourself; Cathcart is not the sort to make a mistake, and I could see he was impressed,—though of course it’s early to predict. So far as Johnnie’s industry is concerned, I shall remind him that he owes his career to you.”

The Column

Thus did the infatuate pair seek to smother the Devil with the roses of amenity. They almost descended to compliment, so eager were they to avoid any interval for reflection. With this difference: that while Basil was merely sore, Daphne was afraid and bewildered. For him, it was what he might have expected. He was prepared for effort to walk beside her, but to have tripped so early and, apparently, so grossly, was disconcerting. And, though they continued their Heliogabalus pastime, the ugly black head popped up now and again, and their eyes betrayed their vision of it.

With their lips they endeavoured to deny the involuntary language of their eyes.

“When shall we arrange our trip to town? (I have found something ugly; I want to get away to examine it; do not let me, I beseech you.)”

“We must manage a visit to Cathcart. (Well, if I am not quite perfect is it not better to be frank?)”

“Yes, I’m sure I shall like him. (Leave me my illusions; God knows, I shall need them.)”

“He’s not a lady’s man, you know, but a good sort. (I admit stupidity—but is that unpardonable?)”

“I shall like him the better for that. (Oh, my beloved, don’t add deception. It is monumental—you cannot explain it away.)”

“I should like him to model your head. (Be charitable; I did not pretend to stand beside you; I only reach your feet.)”

“Don’t you think Mr. Bargister would like Johnnie to do that? (I am not bitter—but how of the years to come?)”

CHAPTER XVIII—*Endogenous*

IT is perhaps unquestionable that in the vegetable kingdom the Exogen is the type of higher development. A separable bark, concentric rings of wood, a central pith, and more or less distinguishable medullary rays are characteristics that indicate not only an organisation that has emerged, but one best fitted to stand the pressure of circumstances in the future. Yet for some perhaps morbid minds the rich, swift growth of less clearly defined creatures has a subtler fascination.

If one will for a moment follow the delusive paths of analogy, and continue into humanity the classification of the botanist, it must be conceded that men and women fall admirably into the classes Exogens, Endogens, and Acrogens.

The average Englishman belongs indubitably to the first. It is his boast that he grows outwardly, by conflict with circumstance; and that upon dissection you shall find his character methodically disposed in concentric layers, each the index of something won from elements at best unhelpful. On occasion he brags an outermost layer of even sterner stuff,—*aes triplex*; though then, perhaps, he fails something in growth for gain of his prided unresponsiveness; is perhaps an earnest Protestant.

Nor is he less exultant of his sedulously hidden inward pith of soul. He desires no traitorous intermingling of tissues; he tolerates feeling only in the privacy of home, and is coldly distrustful of any confusion between emotion and duty; nor is it without significance that he should so

The Column

rigorously separate the two. As a prop of empire, a maker of history, he is admirably fitted by this careful division of his qualities; and his supreme content in the arrangement is expressed in his choice of symbols,—his emblem the oak, his favourite flower the rose.

One suspects the Endogen in the whole race of poets and most women; and it is suggestive that those pale flowers which light the abysses of legend are all of this class,—the lily, the hyacinth, the narcissus, and the crocus,—to name a few. The curious inquirer might usefully employ his leisure in pursuing the true inwardness of the lily of Christian, the hyacinth of Pagan story.

Of Acrogens, there is the monk, whether Buddhist or otherwise. Does he not die daily, and all his increase come from above? Moreover, he has no axis but that formed by the bases of his fallen leaf-stems.

Daphne was essentially endogenous; whatever impressions she took from outside needed to be slowly transformed before they became material for growth. There was for her no sharp division between conduct and feeling, thought and dreaming.

The touch of adversity, stimulating to the creature of outward growth, vexed without immediately strengthening her nature. For the practical business of life it is a disadvantage to have one's moral tissues confused; the blow that should rebound from sheer wood here happens upon raw tracts of inconvenient soul.

Not that Daphne cried out; she was of the breed that suffers in silence; but she experienced the need of those tough, quick fibres which in easier natures overgrow the wounded place.

Taking the world as it is, here are not the elements of happiness; and as in story neither the lily, the hyacinth, nor the narcissus has been the standard of victorious

Endogenous

passage from storm to peace, but rather the wistful banner of forlorn endeavour, the frail symbol of exquisite failure, so she, whether radiant or drooping, quivered always as in advance of uncertain tragedy.

Her emergence into the actual had already taught her the inadequacy of her temperament, the hidden sources of her happiness; but she had not yet learned the pitiful lesson of those who make the best of an admitted mistake. She had thought to renounce, and had but come to a clearer perception of her inheritance. Hence, although she set herself faithfully to master the small change of reality, there was always the shoulder glance, the yearning back to her former state.

The knowledge that not only must she, if returning, return alone, but that her husband was incapable of understanding her desire, depressed her.

She was not yet capable of alteration. When she should have suffered a little more, she would come to that compensating faculty; would be able to live, now entirely in her accustomed crowded solitude, now equally wholeheartedly with him in the market-place. This trick of duality the poet has by birth, hence he comes unperturbed through the pit; but the woman has to learn. Consequently Daphne gave to Basil and their little world an unreal personality; a beautiful but cold creature, pliant, acquiescent, but negative of her proper qualities.

Basil was keenly disappointed; he saw that in marrying Daphne he had somehow missed her; that she, virgin of him, had escaped, and from some shadowy middle ground, cut off alike from him and her own, looked out on him with serious, unreproachful eyes. He watched her with increasing uneasiness, setting himself earnestly to waylay her needs,—for if he could in some way become necessary to her, he might yet win her,—and the pathetic

The Column

effort with which she responded, wavered, and relapsed into herself, tortured him. Had she but shown boredom he had been better able to intervene; but this cataleptic obedience to his wishes, this sadness without petulance, left him helpless.

He was reminded irresistibly of Undine, and sometimes wondered, against reason, whether indeed he had not wedded some creature part human, who would, as he had jestingly observed, vanish, and leave but a wind-flower growing on the rock. There was in her bearing a humility, a readiness to anticipate his unuttered reproaches, that distracted him with love and sorrow.

It became a daily habit with Daphne to slip away to the column alone. Her eyes made it unnecessary for her to express a wish that Basil should not accompany her. He ate his heart in silence, covering his chagrin with eloquent reasons for an hour's solitude in the library.

Daphne was, then, furtively resuming herself, with this difference,—that the self to which she would return was for ever different from that to which she had grown up. This abandoned shell of her personality was somewhere by the column; and towards it and the column itself she was drawn by an increasing curiosity.

It was now late September; a heavy, windless evening, with a sky so burnished that the edges of things impinged with an insistence that was almost audible. In such an hour the face of things wears an intense meaning; there is a tension in the air, as if in preparation for some direct revelation of the supernatural.

A sensitive person would expect omens; indeed, in a superstitious age the signs would be forthcoming; and the behaviour of animals leads one to suppose that there actually is some transference of intelligence between the elements and animate nature.

Endogenous

Daphne was conscious that she was come to the edge of a phase ; that the immediate future would shape some crisis for her ; and she was in that state of emotional saturation when a touch suffices to bring about precipitation. There are some poisons which induce a condition in which the whole being quivers on the edge of a convulsion. The person so subject may sit or stand, to all appearance in his usual health ; but if one speaks suddenly, he is in the throes. A little wind, presaging rain, had this exaggerated effect upon Daphne ; its immediate phenomenon, a burst of tears. She flung herself upon the ground in an agony of hysterical weeping. She was unstrung by the impassivity of everything about her ; she had, she thought, lost hold upon the sympathy of Nature, who presented to her only a face of irony. As she lay, the whole creation passed over her with searing feet, and a line from Dante kept ringing in her head,—

“Hateful to God and to the enemies of God.”

She was worse, even ; for instead of hateful, she was merely contemptible. Much as she loved life, she hoped for death ; desiring that Fate should strike suddenly, and end all, rather than rack her with endless riddles ; presenting to her feverish questions a sphinx-like smile.

Her grief exhausted her ; and she lay with her face to the earth in a numbed condition, only half conscious. This is Nature’s opportunity, the moment she chooses to make a stealthy advance. She will not be spied upon nor surprised, and the more one chases her, the more she recedes ; but sometimes, when the mind is stupefied through grief or perplexity, she permits some instant revelation, clearing up the dubiety of years in a single vivid impression.

The wind increased, and with it came to Daphne a

The Column

poignant sense of Spring. She was aware of it by a supersensual apprehension impossible to define; was taken into the confidence of the unapparent season, and shared the tender trouble of awakening seeds. The earth opened arms to her as a mother to a repentant child, assuring her of their relationship. She lay close, comforted though trembling, whilst things awoke mysteriously about her. Above all was her sense of identity with all the vague pushing and stirring in progress. She was of the earth, and the spring was within her as well as about her; she herself was budding. The oppressive sky lifted and softened, the laurels took on a tenderer green, and surely flowers were breaking through the grass. The air, the place, herself, were being made ready for some experience, some passage, as men make ready the streets for the progress of a king.

She raised herself, fearful lest the strange hovering peace should be broken; and her eyes instinctively turned to the column.

Of the imagination, even more truly than of constructive reason, may it be said *Ex pede Herculem*,—witness the trivial apparatus of the hypnotist; and for Daphne the column was the symbol of her relations with the unseen. It marked the frontiers of the invisible; the proscenium behind which were enacted the powerful dramas of Destiny. She looked to see projected upon it the spectra of things none the less real for being themselves out of the reach of her senses. Nothing, after all, is perceptible but by interference; nothing indeed is, but by resistance and one would not care to draw a line between those impressions made familiar by their universality and those finer vibrations imperceptible to the many.

For once Daphne saw a little further on the other side.

Endogenous

In some panoramas, illusion is aided by reality ; a row of palings, for example, is carried out towards the spectator by one or two actually shaped in wood. For Daphne, imagination was the scene-painter ; and the column inevitably set the character of what she saw. The bounds of the place receded, giving way to a tantalizing vista ; the air was impregnated with the scent of flowers, and from every side uprose the carolling of birds. She herself stood on the threshold of a new life, and keener than sound or scent or colour was her sense of affinity with the awakening earth. In her breast, too, the birds were singing, and she panted with the upward aspiration of growing things.

She no longer heard the wind, but a rising murmur of human voices ; and out of the swaying melody was born a miracle of white soaring shaft and level architrave. The column no longer stood alone, but fell into line with others, which, always emotionally, once actually, surrounded it, supporting a temple roof. Her mood set the past beside the present, equally real ; and that reconstruction she had so often attempted was here taking place before her eyes, almost against her will. Whilst she gazed, self-hypnotised, the wavering outline became trustworthy, and she herself was urged forward into the fabric of her illusion. The shapes that, unseen, were always at her elbow became visible, audible, tangible. They moved forward, a chanting procession, their feet crushing out the souls of unfamiliar flowers ; there joined them leaping figures with clashing cymbals, and beasts garlanded for sacrifice. The brazen doors swung wide, admitting them, and they passed up the temple floor.

At the far end upreared a white presence, veiled, inscrutable. Her sister shapes fell away, deserting her with a certain reverence. A vague terror possessed her ;

The Column

she would have turned and fled but for very fear. She knew strangely the part she was playing; the whole weight of her ancestry with their aspirations seemed upon her, summed up in her single body. Somewhere, somehow, she knew the presence of her father, and caught at him as nearest; as a person dreaming is aware of and tries to communicate with one actually in the room.

She had never before escaped so far from her wanted person, though she knew that for the moment she inhabited the extremest type of herself, touched all her boundaries. There is no more alluring, no more terrifying experience than that of being absolutely one's self; and Daphne clutched weakly at the imperfect, more familiar husk that shrouded her usually. Not only was she advanced to her extremest frontiers, but she knew the imminence of powers pushed forward, focussed in the veiled, inscrutable figure overhanging her. She knew that the arc of her life and the dreadful circle of the unseen must impinge. It had so often nearly happened before in the long line of herself stretching backward; how often orbits had neared, flashed, and passed, receding for æons; each approach a fraction closer, till now——

She closed her eyes.

A blinding flash of lightning recalled her to herself; she stood alone in an ecstasy of terror, her bare head beaten upon by the first heavy drops of a thunder-shower. She stood like a statue, heedless of the rain, her eyes fixed upon the spot where the sky had opened. A spectator would have supposed her the victim of the lightning. What had touched her; what had passed; what was the presence? She knew and she did not know; she was possessed by a mingling of joy and terror. This, then, was the meaning of the place for ever sacred.

Endogenous

Her veins ran ichor; she was full of the unknown god, stamped and sealed the desired of heaven.

Her husband was wiped out, a forgotten episode; the temperate ardours of their union paled in the blaze of this consummation. She had suffered that which no mortal might suffer and live, yet her heart had not ceased beating; she possessed her familiar body, holding out her hands for the confirmation of the rain. She lifted her head exulting; here was the answer to her vague aspirations, her perplexities; she laughed aloud at her timorous namesake eluding immortality. She was the same, yet not the same; there had been added something of the divine nature; she was free of the whole universe, equal of the sun and the sea. There would be no more shrinking for her, no more questions; she took her place by natural right, unchallenged. Her mood was dashed by the stunning recoil of memory. What was she to whom this had been vouchsafed? Had she not in this very place renounced the privileges of her dedication? If her namesake had fled the presence, how much more insensate was she, who, having linked herself to a man, had yet waited for the god? Her flesh burned under the name that fitted her; she had been guilty of the vilest sacrilege.

If she had known, if she had only waited,—but it was now too late. She began to perceive that it was all a scheme of punishment; that the apparent honour but increased her condemnation. She wondered helplessly when and how the final blow would fall. In her trouble she turned to her father. Why had he not warned her—prevented her marriage?

She did not blame him,—for what was he in the way of Destiny? But he was wise; perhaps he might find out some way of expiation; such things had been. The

The Column

egoism of her mood ignored her husband ; but had she remembered, she would not have considered him. He, too, must suffer ; but that was natural, indeed, inevitable ; for whoso supplants the god must be destroyed.

She moved to the house, suffering her impurity in every limb. The place was strangely quiet ; she went straight to the library.

For the first time in her memory her father did not turn his head as she entered. She stood by his chair, awed by the aspect of his face.

“ Father ! ” she cried.

There was no response. She took his cold hand, his hand that felt so strangely heavy.

“ Father, ” she whispered.

As she stood it was slowly made clear to her that her father would never speak to her again.

CHAPTER XIX—*Herbert is Unorthodox*

IN spite of the pilloried names of sentimental history, and the prosier, though in a sense not less stimulating, records of the daily press, there still survives a popular and pathetic fallacy that the amateur of hearts abandons his desipience at the altar. By no one is this delusion more shrewdly clasped than by the philanderer himself. For him the mouth-piece of history chuckles vain salacity; and as for the reports of the court, they concern the degenerate only,—lop-brained victims of an exhausted heredity. He is pre-eminently sane,—his divagations but the stronger evidence of his mental and physical health; and the same fire that burns up his random correspondence is wholesome cauterization to those cordial tendernesses hitherto responsive to certain “pale fingers.” For the future there is but one hand knows the trick of the latch.

If thus the average person, how much more the emancipate? Disdaining any Savonarola function, Basil Waring was persuaded that in the clear radiance of wedded love the meretricious fires of an experimental pastime sank to the ashes of a furtive memory, exhaling, perhaps, when stirred, a spicy fragrance to remind him that he, too, had warmed his hands.

In one particular his estimate of himself was lamentably correct. Convinced that he was no common trifler, he failed to see that the very quality which parted him from the mob of those who have sighed lightly condemned him to a repetition of his folly. His encounter with Gertrude, though apparently bloodless in effect, was lethal in intention; and there was but one possible way

The Column

in which they could meet. This, in a measure, lent distinction to their relation,—distinction with its necessary inconvenience. The slave to comparison, Basil found himself sidling up to Tannhäuser with a strenuous avoidance of direct imitation. Allowing for the difference in stage properties, they were really very like; and he preened himself with a quotation from a despised poet about an age that

“spends more passion, more heroic heats
Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-rooms
Than Roland and his knights at Roncesvalles.”

For he battered himself into a belief in the heroic character of his emotions; and in his anxiety to achieve the mood, tricked out Kensington Square in the colours of a Horselberg. At the same time he was shamefacedly thankful for his habit of reservation; there was a loss of the dramatic more than compensated for by the avoidance of a scene. He was sufficiently infatuate to aspire to high tragedy whilst insuring a neat curtain; and he was perturbed because the situation did not appear to be final.

He could answer for himself, but—Gertrude?

If Basil was sure of his mastery of any branch of knowledge, it was of the female heart; but in the matter of feminine correspondence he came early to his limits. How seriously should a letter be taken,—mere composition, or an earnest of inconvenient, even scandalous behaviour? In his anxiety to force the situation—to jog the curtain—he had cautiously alluded to his marriage in terms which, though playful, he strove should not be offensively jocular. The answer to his letter was prompt and sufficiently disturbing.

“Having, as you think, killed Love, why need you spit upon his body? I do not reproach you; yours is

Herbert is Unorthodox

the bitterest part,—to dream of the woman you love in the arms of the woman you have married.”

Basil was not sufficiently acute to see that the woman, ostensibly stricken, yet capable of figures, was in little danger of forgetting the conventions of the drama. He dreaded the aside to the audience. So long as he remained in Cornwall there was little danger of that,—Gertrude would not play to the gallery unless he were by,—and, so far as he knew, she had no confidant. But he already craved after the town, and it was preposterous that fear should exile him. A visit to London would mean the resumption of associations in which he was sure to meet her ; and his imagination anticipated the methods of betrayal.

Between women it was so appallingly easy,—a feather-weight on the syllable of a name, the hesitation of an eyelid, and—

“ Mine is the prior claim ; you have him—after me,” was spoken and understood. Daphne, though unsuspecting, was no fool. In justice to Basil’s intelligence, it must be said that he was perfectly aware that his troubles resulted from his inability to face them. His larger knowledge, both of Daphne and of her father, showed him clearly that candour with them would not have stood in his way. He appreciated the pitiable flimsiness of his chains ; but the knowledge that he was being strangled with cobwebs did not nerve him to break loose. What he feared was, even thus late, but a matter of words,—less than words ; for, supposing Daphne learned of his entanglement, she was incapable of vulgar reproaches. It was the old affair of the picture. He had painted, or supposed he had painted, himself attractively into her mind, and he dreaded any correction of the outline.

Beneath this, half confessed, was a less worthy anxiety.

The Column

He did not wish to burn his boats. To disclose the episode were to seal up an escape from boredom. He was not blind to what was implied,—that he found in Daphne possibilities of tedium. He was, however, frank enough to place the reason in his own inability to follow her ; and he thanked Heaven for his honesty.

He recalled his own phrase, in which he had considered the matter, “soiling the wine of his moods with the dregs of an unworthy episode.”

Well, the bouquet had proved a little too rare, too subtle for his palate. Perhaps there were not many men who could be brought to admit so much.

He reasoned with refinement. He meditated no infidelity ; but there were two women to be handled carefully,—for their good. On the one hand, Daphne must not be alarmed ; on the other, Gertrude must be persuaded to take the sensible view. Why need they deprive each other of the charm of their society ? Daphne’s coldness removed any scruples he might have had in setting his face once more in the direction of his—purely intellectual—Horselberg. It was clearly to her advantage that she should be deceived ; that he should have other resources, would prevent his boredom reacting upon her. He remembered Herbert’s warning attitude, and, without acknowledging its justice, there was an ironical pleasure in saddling him with a Papal responsibility. Should an accident happen, it would be comforting to remind him of his gratuitous condemnation.

The difficulty remained with Gertrude ; he worked round the circle back to her letter. Studying it, he had tried to evoke from its brevity some impression of the writer’s state of mind. Had Gertrude been able to adopt the methods claimed by Theosophists and project with her letter her astral body, the expression of its features

Herbert is Unorthodox

would have surprised and relieved the recipient. She was already out of the mood when a woman does things; and the letter was a conscious compilation,—as such, not discreditable,—with intentions in the direction of survey. Now that the first disappointment was over, Gertrude dissected her emotions in cold blood. Consideration of a certain possibility had been a midsummer madness. If Basil had taken the obvious opportunity of her widowhood, it would have made but an insipid ending; the very spice of their intercourse resided in one being tied,—indeed a change over was not disagreeable. Basil must certainly be retained, but first must be humiliated. It would not do to push this latter too far; very much depended upon how he answered it. It was possible he would not reply at all; though his passion for justification made this a remote contingency. Should it be so, however, a period must be allowed to imply the recovery of sanity, then,—something magnanimous with a shade of invitation.

Basil, ignorant of the elaborate campaign, meditated on ways and means until his head ached. He tore up a dozen beginnings; it was so difficult to hit the exact temperature,—that of a friend solicitous for her mental peace and comfort, without self-accusation.

This intricate business of springe and mine was ruthlessly interrupted by the elementary fact of Hastings' sudden death.

Here again the vice of reservation robbed the accident of its tonic value; and Basil obeyed the instinct of the child, called from its microscopic economies to the crude facts of existence; he did but put his toys on the shelf, where he could lay his hand on them when this vexatious business of bedtime should be over and done with. Sheer humanity brought him nearer to Daphne; but he could not forget

The Column

his absorbing business of unravelling. Still the distraction of arrangements lifted him for the moment out of his perplexities ; and association with his brother in cheerless offices established a somewhat healthier relation at least between them. So far as he was capable of friendship he had been genuinely attached to Hastings, and his everlasting fingering of the emotional strings had not so slackened them but that they could respond to the clear note of sorrow. He was saved from rankness in this by his anxiety for Daphne. She was so identified with her father that all who knew her were acutely distressed for the effect of his death upon her. Indeed, solicitude for her prevented the fact of Hastings' death sinking into people's minds ; for the moment, how she would behave seemed the important question. Her Spartan bearing relieved whilst it surprised everybody. Nor was Basil perturbed by her self-control ; she was as far from a dangerous apathy as from hysterical grief, and it appeared to be a point of honour with her that she should possess herself in that calm her father would have desired had he been present in the flesh.

She was of that rare type upon which death is astringent ; she asked for solitude, and her eyes assured them she could bear it. She did not flinch from the discussion of funeral arrangements, and with her own unfaltering feet paced out that spot in the laurels chosen by her father for his last resting-place. There was a momentary dilemma when it came to the question of actual disposal. All were desirous of following Hastings' preferences with fidelity, but in this matter he had never troubled to speak with clearness. His executors were compelled to rely for guidance on casual expressions of his general taste. Gillies, who saw a unique opportunity for the vindication of science, was disappointed by a reminiscence of Herbert's.

Herbert is Unorthodox

“I happen to know,” he said, “that Hastings would not have desired cremation. If you will wait for a moment I will convince you.”

He went to the library and returned with a volume of the “Urn Burial” of Sir Thomas Browne. Hastings had pencilled a note on the fly-leaf.

“So much depends upon intention ; and the sanitarian has thrown over a beautiful custom of antiquity the vulgar shadow of utility.”

“I confess,” said Gillies, “I fail to see what he means. You’ll understand me when I say it reads contradictory. To my mind, the whole beauty of the thing lies in its sound hygienic principle. Of course the fact of his choosing a place, though at first sight final, goes for nothing. He may have intended an urn ; that, by the way, would have been an opportunity for young Bargister, —of course you know the Greek form was—however,” he turned over the pages of the book with indulgent scorn, “this settles it.”

At the same time all three were perfectly aware that they had glossed over the real question. Basil fidgeted with books ; Gillies stared out of window, whilst Herbert walked nervously about the room. He solved the matter in his own brusque fashion.

“I take it,” he said, “that our difficulty is one of ceremony.”

Even Gillies sighed relief at this rude opening of the subject.

“Did you ever notice,” continued Herbert, “how completely Hastings avoided Wardour Street in his habits of life ?”

The others nodded.

“Then let us be—consistent.”

“As how ?” murmured Gillies, in a non-committal voice.

The Column

“Well, most Englishmen of the present day, whatever they believe or don't believe, are buried with the service given in the prayer-book. However, it depends entirely on Daphne.”

He turned to his brother.

“Would you rather I spoke to her?”

Herbert approached Daphne with a feeling that he was doing a somewhat delicate thing. His characteristic manner of taking things for granted carried him through. The shrewdest of men, he concluded that, in matters of faith, Daphne, like himself, was entirely outside reason. He subtly presented the æsthetic side of the question, without allowing her to think that she was being attracted by externals. With the delicacy of a professor of legerdemain “forcing” a card, he brought the burial service under her notice as a piece of prose. A man less genuinely anxious for her peace of mind would have struck the reef of controversy; but Herbert, without in the least compromising his convictions, so caught her fancy with the manner of the office that the essential fact was avoided.

The very facility with which the girl came under the influence of its beauty and pathos convinced Herbert that Miss Williams' frequently expressed hope rested on very slight foundations.

Some days after, when the two were together in the church, Herbert turned with his sudden trick and said, *à propos* of nothing,—

“I have come to the conclusion that there are minds organically incapable of grasping the elementary truths of Christianity.”

So the anomalous but kindly thing happened, and Edward Hastings was returned to the roots of his laurels with the rites of the Anglican Church. There is, perhaps,

Herbert is Unorthodox

a quaint Gothic humour in this advantage the Church takes of our helplessness; her two most striking offices being applied to us, one before we are able to choose, the other when our choice no longer matters.

Herbert's exhibition of tact threw a vivid light on his management of his people, and Basil began to have a positive respect for him. A sudden fancy, not uncommon in men of his extreme individualism, suggested that he should avail himself of Herbert's impersonal office and ask his advice. But the dread of the obvious was a sworded angel before this gateway of escape, and he allowed the mood to die. The whole episode—Daphne's continent sorrow, his brother's unconventional simplicity—but served to emphasise his radical defects. He fell back on his temperament, solacing himself by contemplating its ornamental qualities.

The only way in which Hastings had anticipated his death was by appointing Basil and Herbert his executors. The matter of actual property had been settled years before, so that it became entirely a matter of manuscripts. The revision and publication of whatever remained unfinished was intrusted to Basil, and he found with some relief that the "Age of Pericles" was practically completed. Hastings had died in the very act of writing, and his last sentence may be worth recording,—

"A man to whom his times were plastic; who, handling men and things with a large, unhasting touch, set his seal upon a fluent period, rendering it for after ages imperishable with the Laocoön."

A further examination of Hastings' papers prepared Basil for unexpected difficulties.

The professed disciple of Hastings, he would be held responsible for the elucidation of whatever appeared obscure in his intellectual remains. Yet a very slight

The Column

investigation showed him that these were of a character he was hardly competent to handle. "Subsoil," though reflecting Hastings' personality, had been the statement of ideas common to many thoughtful men who find themselves outside accepted ethical opinion; and Hastings' reticence had prevented Basil from following his later and peculiar development. This, had he been alone in the matter, would not have caused him serious anxiety; but Herbert, though disclaiming any peculiar sympathy with Hastings' literary work, was an acute critic, and would exact the utmost fidelity of treatment. Hastings, with perhaps amiable indiscretion, had projected and already placed on the stocks another volume of "Subsoil;" and the very nature of the work—a series of detached essays—was rendered more confusing by his unmethodical habits. Accustomed to live much in the air, his time spent in actual writing was very small. It was his habit, on returning to the house, to make rough notes on whatever piece of paper came handiest. These were flung into a drawer for future arrangement. Had the proposed work been a collection after the manner of "Guesses at Truth," the matter had been comparatively simple; for the difficulty was mainly one of sequence. But, the work being a continuation, the form was already fixed; the arrangement, though loose, was definite; and the selection of the chaotic materials required not only a keen sympathy with the writer's ideas, but a familiarity with those tricks of style which age had intensified. As it happened, moreover, the middle part of the book was the least complete; much would have to be actually written, and the rest appeared barely coherent, though Basil was forced to admit that the connection existed. On the whole, he was inclined to regret "Subsoil," and he appreciated the irony of the circumstance that the book over which he

Herbert is Unorthodox

and Hastings had become intimate should become a bugbear to him.

He was galled by the curiosity of paper friends of Hastings. As so often happens, the death of the man had discovered a following more extensive and enthusiastic than discriminating. The principal journals respectfully misquoted him in appreciative columns; and Basil had the doubtful pleasure of seeing his name advertised as that of Hastings' literary executor. Serious monthly reviews made graceful allusion to their relationship, apostrophising him in terms of genial patronage.

"We understand that the unpublished work of this remarkable man is considerable; and we await with impatience the fruits of Mr. Basil Waring's able editing."

Basil evaded immediate unpleasantness by writing a mild eulogy of Hastings for the most important of these publications. He reflected with some bitterness that his acquaintances in London would be set thinking, to find some reason for his reticence with regard to his marriage. He pictured Walpole bleating heavily to Gertrude, and prayed for her discretion.

He wondered whether she still gave her Wednesday evenings to the Settlement, and remembered without cheerfulness her allusion to "Judas-music."

It is one of the compensations of the larger accidents of life that they provide opportunities for the delineation of our authentic selves. It is difficult to be conscious in the face of death; and that our revelations are not more noted is due to the preoccupation of observers. Mrs. Bargister's offer to take charge of Penresco for a week did not proceed from officiousness, but was a temporary triumph of the abstract mother over prejudice. Her disappointment on Daphne's assurance that such relief was unnecessary was entirely free from soreness.

The Column

“There is much we might have done, George, but I am so afraid of pushing. Of course poor dear Mr. Hastings was very clever, and all that, but—and as for Angélique! However——”

She blinked sagaciously; and Mr. Bargister caught the reflection of her features in the glass at which he was shaving. Long training had made him exquisitely responsive; and he read in the unfinished sentence that which the casual observer would never have suspected. He swung sharp round.

“You don’t say so, my dear!”

“Sure of it,” said Mrs. Bargister, with the brevity of one discussing her own particular science.

“Does Waring know, d’you think?”

“Not he,”—this with fine scorn; “for one thing *she* doesn’t—pair of helpless creatures.”

“Perhaps you’re mistaken, m’ dear,” said Mr. Bargister, after a silence broken only by the scrape of the razor.

“George!”

“Dear, dear—’pon my soul, I’m very glad indeed.”

The only light upon this obscure conversation is afforded by the utterances of Caspar Gillies. The commentary is, however, hardly more luminous than the text.

“Of course,” he said to Basil, on the day of the funeral, “you are taking Mrs. Waring to town for five weeks.”

Basil answered absently.

“Well, I had thought about it; sooner or later, you know. However, as—as this has happened she won’t care for it to be just yet.”

“Better now than later,” said Gillies, darkly; “there’s nothing more unhealthy than—this sort of thing.”

Basil failed to extract the essence of his meaning, and brushed the matter aside with:

Herbert is Unorthodox

“I must see what Mrs. Waring thinks. I shall have to run up to town myself to see publishers and people; but whether she will come——”

Gillies shrugged his shoulders as one fated to be misunderstood. As he walked home his mind was busy with a scheme for the education of young people in what he termed the elementary facts of existence.

He stabbed his pipe viciously, murmuring,—
“And Waring calls himself progressive.”

CHAPTER XX—*Cathcart Discourses*

IT would be extremely difficult to fix the exact period when hints of something subtler glimmered in Johnnie Bargister's frank comradeship with Daphne. In their intercourse they had been younger than their years; and the only evidence that he was boy, she girl, was perceptible in a certain clumsy politeness—not the less attractive for its awkwardness—on his part; and a slight straining—in matters of bodily skill—on hers. The immediate impression of her victory over his father was lost in elation over the advantages to himself; and sheer gratitude filled up any space where softer feelings might have germinated. Indeed, it was not until Johnnie was packed away to London that he became aware that an identity of enthusiasms in a matter of foot-racing had become transfigured into something less understood.

In a way he regretted this clouding of the old candour. He felt—though he did not know why—that if they now ran shoulder to shoulder he would instinctively give more than the usual terms of grace; that if they flung at a mark he would find himself practising a contemptible and—from the boy's point of view—uncourteous reservation of ability. Also, that, whereas in their excursions he had borne himself with a certain condescension, he was now scorched with a sense of his temerity, and a half-incredulous, wholly fearful joy that they had shared golden afternoons together. It was as if one had foregathered with an angel unawares, and afterwards remembered with shame certain authoritative utterances on the subject of wing-feathers. This exaltation of Daphne was not in

Cathcart Discourses

any way due to her marriage; no one ignores that particular social convention more absolutely than the boy. For all that, Daphne remained the same; only supposing they met again, there would be a tiresome third person to divert the conversation from the only subjects worth serious consideration. However, he thought of Basil quite in a friendly way, wishing uneasily that he did not talk so much.

The effect on his work was admirable. He had lost Daphne, and found her in a strange new way. She was more intimate than before,—for the partner in games is always half an enemy,—presiding over his ambitions, identified with the perfection he stumbled after. Outwardly Johnnie was almost the same boy; and the jaded sentimentalist desiring a fillip from the spectacle of adolescent love-sickness would have been disappointed for his pains. There were no midnight verses, and Johnnie's breakfast remained the astonishment of his landlady. He had the good luck to grow in one direction; and whatever happened to him was fused in his single enthusiasm.

He was a little more thoughtful perhaps; but he still whistled over his work. He bore himself towards Art as the lover is advised to bear himself towards his mistress, with a certain hardihood; anæmic self-questioning was unknown to him. There are many ways of approaching the arts, and to treat the business as a game is perhaps not the worst. Johnnie worked with gusto or not at all; so he escaped the curse of sullen application, and, when it so happened, idled with his whole heart.

He would sometimes wonder, as he sat on his "donkey" in the Antique room, why the other fellows gabbled so much, and what on earth books had to do with it; for, though so young, and after some months

The Column

of regular training, he remained impervious to art-talk, innocent of theories. Possibly the bitter memory of his father's method rendered him proof against the disease. He happened to be younger than most of his fellow-students, and though he did not paralyse the school with burning proof of divine genius, the cheerful directness with which he attacked things began to attract notice.

"That kid," observed Dolby, "explores the planes of the Discobolus with a pickaxe; but he gets there."

Dolby, who followed Manet, had already exhibited in a dark place off the Haymarket, and his word was law.

Johnnie kicked a little under suggestions in the matter of texture, but Cathcart's good-humoured assurance that it would not hurt him kept him from revolt. His immediate preceptor was one Paterson, who, as the holder of a travelling scholarship, had achieved distinction by shutting his ears to the voice of Rome, and making an earnest pilgrimage to German elementary art-schools.

Paterson, delighted with Johnnie's industry, talked to him of tendencies, and took him to improving lectures, where Johnnie went to sleep. As yet he had no ideals; he just wanted to make shapes. He also desired—but this he fiercely denied to himself—Daphne to see that they were good. He met the antique figures with frank brotherhood; he admired, but without morbid reverence. It must be confessed that he did not always trouble to learn their names; and an estimable old gentleman, greedy of young talent, who found him sketching in the British Museum, was disappointed in his conversation, and went away deploring a singularly dull youth.

When Daphne wrote to him he nearly cried; a year ago he would have scoffed at her "e's;" now he did not notice her "e's," or even the words, but only the lift of Daphne's head as they neared the column.

Cathcart Discourses

Cathcart concealed his satisfaction in the boy's progress, and met the excited appreciation of Paterson with stolid insolence. Having carefully ascertained the point of stress in Johnnie's temperament, he was unsparing of reproaches.

Sunday afternoon became a habit. Cathcart was not a popular man, and had few visitors. On fine days they explored the wilds of West London even to Kew; when it rained, they played with Peaky, surnamed Blinder, in the big dusty studio that always seemed waiting for Daphne. There was always tea, which Cathcart made himself; and it became with Johnnie a symbol of emancipation—to make your own tea.

It happened one wet Sunday that Cathcart grew offensive on the subject of "pluck."

"You can overdo it, you know; and then it gets cheap. There's the kid in the Beautiful Gate. Let's look at the tub-thumper you did in the Park; yes, that's it. Now I know he was pretty vigorous; but—it's a kind of scorching on paper."

He went on absently, turning over the leaves of the sketch-book, thinking for a more explicit condemnation. Presently he turned back and compared.

"Yes," he drawled ironically, "very pretty. Who is she—all out of your own head, eh?"

Johnnie stooped to Peaky, his ears tingling.

"But I say," continued Cathcart, "that's not half bad. Dangerous habit, though,—ends in biscuit boxes and Christmas numbers."

He turned over more pages, and said with asperity,—

"Lord, man, the book reeks of her! Who is she at all?"

"Oh, that," said Johnnie, with the garrulous reticence of his age,— "oh, she's a girl in Tregotha; at least, she's Mrs. Waring now."

The Column

"The parson's wife? But I thought he was a Ritualistic sort of chap, kind of monk."

"But I mean the other, the one you know,—Basil." Cathcart withdrew his pipe from between his teeth and blinked in heavy surprise.

"Funny thing he didn't tell me when he brought you up."

"They weren't married then, you know; not till last April, I think it was," said Johnnie, with masterly uncertainty. Cathcart, least curious of men in social matters, did not press for explanations, but took up the sketch-book and relit his pipe. He settled himself in his chair, and Johnnie waited, torn between shyness and the joy of having Cathcart for confidant.

Cathcart turned back to the drawing which had first attracted his notice. He snored over it with half-closed eyelids, smoking with the exasperating regularity of a pumping engine,—“Piff-paff, piff-paff,”—until Johnnie in his suppressed excitement pulled Peaky's ear until the animal whimpered. Cathcart looked up with an expression of bewilderment.

"But look here,—why have you given her blank eyeballs?"

"Well," said Johnnie in confusion, "that's how she looked, you know."

Cathcart leaned sideways and looked at Johnnie under his brows with comic severity.

"It wasn't just to see how she'd look as an Antique, eh?"

Johnnie was half inclined to say "yes," to save himself from the terror and fog of a verbal explanation. To draw a thing was one matter; to describe it, quite another. However, truth prevailed.

"No, it wasn't that, I'm certain. I can't exactly describe how it was."

Cathcart Discourses

Cathcart threw down the book and considered Johnnie for some five minutes. His manner had changed from bantering to serious interest.

"Tell me about her," he said shortly; and Johnnie felt he could empty his soul, if he only knew how.

"She was a Miss Hastings, you know," he began. Cathcart turned sharply, with a muddy flush.

"Not Edward Hastings' daughter?"

"Yes," said Johnnie, with relief, as at an end of words. "Do you know him?"

Cathcart walked across to the stove and knocked out his pipe. He did not answer immediately, and Johnnie did not care to repeat his question.

"Ever read Hastings' book?" asked Cathcart at length.

"No," confessed the boy, shamefacedly; "I supposed it was dry. But I will."

"Just so," nodded Cathcart, comprehensively; "prophet has no honour, and the rest of it. I don't advise books as a rule, they make you fancy you see things when you don't; but you'd better read 'Subsoil.'"

He sat thoughtfully, and Johnnie concluded with perverse disappointment that Daphne was done with. He was not happy as narrator, but he liked Cathcart to ask him questions—about Daphne.

"Now," said Cathcart, when his pipe was again in easy working, "you've got to tell me all about the Hastings."

"She's a splendid girl," said Johnnie, naïvely, "but——"

"Well, go on,—spitfire? giggler?"

"Oh, no; but it's so difficult to put it in the right way; she dazed, somehow."

"Stupid, perhaps?"

Johnnie fairly shouted.

"She's sharper than anyone I know; though," he corrected doubtfully, "sharp isn't it either. It isn't

The Column

always she's—like that," pointing to the sketch-book, "only when she's at the column."

"Column?" said Cathcart, in guttural interrogation.

"Yes; bit of a temple or something. Mr. Hastings brought it home from Greece, and had it stuck up on top of the cliff over the bathing-place."

"What sort of a column?" said Cathcart, encouragingly.

"Let me see,—Doric, I think. Yes; it must be—fluted, without any base."

Cathcart folded his hands, rubbing his chin with his knuckles. He waited for Johnnie to speak.

"You haven't your father's flow of language, my son," he said, with a flash of malicious humour in his eyes. "Can't you tell me any more about the place?"

"There's nothing to tell you about," pleaded Johnnie, earnestly; "just the column and the laurels."

"Laurels?" repeated Cathcart in the tone of a check-taker.

"Yes, Mr. Hastings had them planted when he came back from abroad. Daphne was quite a little girl then."

Cathcart handed the sketch-book to Johnnie.

"Make a rough sketch of the place," he said,—“the column, the laurels, and ‘any other features of interest,’ as the guide-books say.”

Johnnie had no shyness about drawing before Cathcart; they were of a sex, as it were. Whilst he made incoherent marks on the paper, Cathcart rummaged his bookshelves for "Subsoil." Having found it, he lost himself in its pages where he stood.

"Well," he said at length, turning, his forefinger in the volume, "let's have a look. You're not great in salads,"—"salads" was Cathcart's general title for the

Cathcart Discourses

productions of the landscape-painter,—“but I think I’ve got the hang of it. What’s it used for, this place?”

“Oh, nothing; runs waste, you know. We used to be there a lot, Daphne and I. Daphne is always there.”

“Reading, sewing?” suggested Cathcart.

“No; she just sits there by the column, looking out over the sea. Sometimes she goes to sleep.”

“Romantic, truly,” laughed Cathcart.

“But I say,” said Johnnie, hotly, “it’s the *way* she goes to sleep.”

“Well, how? Didn’t know there were more ways than one.”

“That’s just what bothers me,” said Johnnie, knitting his brows. “She’s wide awake one minute, and then you call ‘Daphne’ and she’s fast asleep. But you know it isn’t like being really asleep; she looks as if she was watching things—inside.”

“‘Sudden dreams that blot the sun; and stay the hand from the mouth, or the lifted foot. Gorgon dreams,’” quoted Cathcart.

“Yes, that’s it,” said Johnnie, excitedly. “I say, is that out of ‘Subsoil’? I think I should like it.”

Cathcart chuckled.

“Does she—Daphne, I mean—ever look ‘like that’ anywhere else, when she’s not near the column?”

“No; that’s the funny part. She isn’t a sleepy sort, you know; she sees and hears more than most people. But somehow she’s most like herself when she’s at the column,” said Johnnie, thoughtfully.

“She seems to be listening,” he continued, struggling with his description, “like a pointer marking game. Sometimes you’d swear somebody was talking to her.”

“She doesn’t talk to herself?” said Cathcart, anxiously.

“No; at least, not out loud. You know, she seems

The Column

to belong there, with the column and the laurels and the sea. Though," he added sagely, "I don't think it's healthy if it makes her go off like that."

"Perhaps she isn't strong," suggested Cathcart.

"Oh, ain't she!" cried Johnnie. "I can lick her in the mile, of course; but she can give me socks in the fifty yards. She can do anything on the bar, and swim like—like a moor-hen."

He swung his legs in a long think, apparently fruitful.

"She's either all there or not at all. She does things just for all she's worth, and yet she's never in a hurry. Like animals, you know. She reminds you of animals, somehow, and I can't help thinking she understands what they say; the gulls are not a bit afraid of her. And then animals always seem to belong to a place. Anybody would think that Daphne had grown up out of the ground, by the column—— She would look all right here, too," added Johnnie, glancing round the studio.

"They came out of the ground too, perhaps," said Cathcart, absently. "Tell me, how did she and Basil Waring come to know each other?"

Johnnie gave a clumsy account of the adventure on the sea-path.

Cathcart was puzzled by Basil's reticence, but did not care to discuss it with the boy.

"I don't think she's very fond of him," concluded Johnnie.

"Shocking thing to say," reproved Cathcart.

"Oh, she likes him, and all that; but he doesn't seem her sort,—talks too much, and wants to explain everything. I think old Hastings was very anxious for them to marry."

"Have you seen them since?"

Cathcart Discourses

“No, but Daph—Mrs. Waring has written to me. Here is the letter ; you may read it.”

Cathcart was too sympathetic to betray his amusement at the ease with which Johnnie’s hand slid to the letter.

He also had the tact to take the boy at his word. He unfolded the letter, which barely held together.

“That’s a strong hand,” he observed encouragingly ; and Johnnie could have hugged him.

“She doesn’t write like a man, though,” he said anxiously.

“No,” admitted Cathcart, and was struck by the oddity of the fact. The letter was a simple budget full of village news, allusions to animals by name, and anxious inquiries about Johnnie’s progress. Such as it was, it seemed to have a curious effect upon Cathcart. He became very thoughtful.

“My boy,” he said, folding up the letter, “this is a very noble woman. She doesn’t write like a man, but there is a something—what in our line we should call breadth. It’s about the best thing that could have happened to you.”

He slipped his arm around Johnnie’s shoulders. “You think a great deal of Mrs. Waring, don’t you ?”

Johnnie nodded. He felt that in the character of art student it was more discreet not to open his teeth.

“But you’re going to be a man,” resumed Cathcart ; “I don’t think you could do anything cheap while you remembered Mrs. Waring—and her eyes,—could you ?”

Johnnie shook his head, and turned over his vows.

“Some of us,” continued Cathcart, “have to stick up a motto to remind us of—things ; but it’s better to have a live goddess. Have you ever read Dante ?”

Johnnie made the unnecessary statement that he had not.

“Well, Dante wasn’t a particularly happy sort of chap, —a bit raw in places, and things hurt. When he was

The Column

quite a youngster, he happened to see a little girl named Beatrice. Nothing came of it, you know; she grew up and married another fellow,—very decent sort, I believe. Now Dante didn't go bleating about or take to drink, or anything. He happened to be a poet; and whatever he wrote he felt he had the eyes of Beatrice on him. His biggest work is all about Heaven and Hell, and it all leads up to Beatrice. It's done in such a way, you know, that the husband couldn't possibly object; in fact, he would feel proud, if he was anything of a sort. She died, you know, before Dante wrote it; but that didn't make any difference."

Cathcart stared at the blank wall, and Johnnie had a shrewd suspicion that there were others to whom death didn't make any difference.

Cathcart came back with a jump.

"Let's have a look at that sketch again. That's how you remember her when she sat by the column. It's the best thing you've done, you know."

"She's very easy to draw," said Johnnie. "I suppose it's because I know her so well."

Cathcart shook his head.

"I don't think you know her very well," he said. "Daphne wasn't really sitting there; she was away back, where she belongs. We all belong somewhere, you know, and keep a sort of dummy to knock about and pretend. I'll show you where Daphne belongs, if you like."

The prospect of Cathcart drawing was even more alluring than Cathcart's unusual conversation. Johnnie eagerly assented. Cathcart fixed up a sheet of brown paper and took the sketch-book in his hand. Johnnie became so absorbed in watching "how he did it" that he took little notice of the actual drawing.

Cathcart held his charcoal loosely,—thumb uppermost,

Cathcart Discourses

like a foil, whipping the paper at thoughtful intervals as one delivering calculated blows, sure of their destination. His manner suggested combat; his dragging feet, which, for all the Paris asphalt and London flags, had never forgotten their furrows, were braced; his steps quick and soft, like a boxer's. He talked in short sentences, as one has heard a master of his hands snapping out a running commentary between his blows.

“Some of us belong up trees, and shy cocoanuts,—or chew bones in a cave; and the dummy spreads himself at a club and talks culture. I've seen dummies mincing it down St. James' Street whose owners were jabbing each other with flint knives in the stone age. Same moment too, mind you. We chaps who paint, or juggle with mud and marble, see past the dummies sometimes. Then people call us brutal; and the nice young gentlemen knock up brand-new adjectives to sling at us.”

He stepped back as at the call of “Time,” and scowled at his drawing. Johnnie was astonished to see how little he had drawn; how much it conveyed. There was Daphne, as he had sketched her, but much more like Daphne. She was sitting on a curious three-legged seat, on a rock.

“Some people, you know, are always trying to get back where they belong. You know the story of Hastings' mother,—yes? Well, she tried to get back. She didn't get far, poor girl, because of the Philistines. Hastings got a little farther,—you'll see when you read ‘Subsoil.’ That's why he stuck up the column and planted the laurels. Finger-posts,—d'you see?—just to get the mood. We all do it. Some use 'baccy, some beer, some worse. Now, your Daphne has got back very near where she belongs; and that's why you've drawn her with blank eyeballs,—just because you're one of the chaps who see

The Column

past the dummy. It won't make you happy, my son, but it's worth it; oh, Lord, yes! it's worth it."

He flung away the charcoal and sat down, screwing up his eyes critically.

"But," he continued, half to himself, "why the devil did she marry Basil Waring?"

"May I look at it?" asked Johnnie, nervously.

"Oh, the picter? Yes; 't isn't bad for that sort of thing. Don't believe in charcoal prophecies myself, however."

Cathcart's manner was disappointing now that the sketch was finished. It was as if "virtue had gone out of him."

Johnnie did not quite grasp the meaning of the drawing, and Cathcart's sudden flippancy did not encourage him to ask questions. Presently, however, Cathcart volunteered a few notes.

"The properties, you know, are only an accident,—because Hastings fancies himself in that particular direction; and then her mother was Greek. These details 'give a particular direction to a general tendency,' as the big books say."

A flicker of his late earnestness made his voice stringent.

"It's the pull of the soil,—the earth calling,—that's what tells; and if you've once heard it, there's no more peace for you. They've called it all sorts of things,—the return to Nature, Pantheism, what not. You'll read a lot about it in 'Subsoil.' It's what we all preach, you know, but——"

He turned almost savagely.

"Don't let London get you—d'you hear?"

There was an uncomfortable silence for a few minutes. Presently Cathcart yawned,—

"Good Lord, what a lot of rot I've talked this blessed afternoon!"

Cathcart Discourses

He got up, shook himself, and lit the gas stove to make tea. He turned with the dead match in his fingers.

“You’d better drop that practice, you know,—fancy heads, and all that. What you’ve got to do is to learn the trade——”

The entrance of a sleek, black-bearded R.A. cut him short. The new-comer whistled flutily through the reddest lips Johnnie had ever seen.

“Hullo, Cathcart ; admirable doctrine ! What’s this —Delphic Sibyl and all ?”

He pointed with his stick at the drawing.

“Didn’t know you went in for painted literature, Cathcart ; we shall have you in the Fold yet. Damned fine study too.”

Cathcart looked annoyed.

“Oh, that,—just an example how not to do it,” he said shortly. He took a cloth and dusted out the drawing.

The other laughed in a clear falsetto.

“Sorry, I’m sure. Didn’t know your objection to B. H. extended to the humble admiration of its pillars.”

He turned his attention to Johnnie, who became acutely shy. He swallowed his tea and escaped.

Three days later he received a letter from his mother, telling him of Hastings’ death.

“He died quite suddenly,” wrote the good lady, “and I hope it will be a lesson to you to go to church and wear flannels. I know artists are curious people and think it fine to be different ; but you see what comes of it.”

CHAPTER XXI—*The Church Militant*

MISS WILLIAMS took the hill like an army storming a position. Like an army, too, she carried music, and the air was inspiring.

“Faith of our fathers, glorious Faith,
We will be true to thee till death——”

was the refrain, pitched in a key distinctly audible, and of a tense quality, indicating some recent outrage to her sense of the fitness of things.

Miss Williams' cheek was flushed, and the dull thump of her goloshes was significant in its way as the tramp of armèd heel; but she was not blinded by internal fires to fresh occasion for indignation. She turned sideways to shake a menacing head at unwashed children, who, squatting in a perfectly irresistible gutter, sucked guilty thumbs on her approach, and afterwards fled, scudding under the lee of her displeasure like small, frail barks. Her action seen from behind confirmed the felicity of Daphne's nickname. The nurse's bonnet touched with white, the emphatic profile, the fluttering gray cloak, and the flat-heeled goloshes spread at a generous angle, suggested nothing so much as an exasperated cockatoo.

She carried the corner of the hill with dash and precision, raking the cottage windows with eyes at once inquisitive and condemnatory. Faces that even in the busiest hour of the domestic day are mysteriously approximate to leaded panes withdrew out of range, chap-fallen.

Long Jim Varcoe, hugging the wall with elaborate thoughtfulness in the direction of the Quiet Woman,

The Church Militant

sheered suddenly, with a lifted forefinger sheepishly crooked. The back of his neck scorched in anticipation of lightning, and he confusedly calculated on the spot whether a skinful were worth it. But Miss Williams, primed beyond scolding, engaged him with the oblique method perhaps even more terrible.

"Jim," she cried, "your wife wants more flannel, and you'll have to get milk from somewhere or the baby won't live."

To be dressed before and after complicated his arithmetic; and Jim sat on his heels under the wall to think it out. He gazed mildly at the diminishing grey cloak, and wondered why Miss Williams had never married; because, supposing she had a mind, he could not picture a man with courage to withstand her.

At the church porch Miss Williams flapped her umbrella to shake off the wet, and, removing her goloshes, sniffed suspiciously. It was a fixed idea with her that masons, engaged on a row of cottages audaciously near, smoked in the porch in wet dinner hours.

She opened the door noisily, and passed up the aisle, looking right and left for occasion to do battle. Ducking under the red rope that crossed the chancel, Miss Williams noticed with disappointment that the music on the organ bench was packed squarely together. When, however, she crossed to the vestry door, she warmed with instinct for an intruder, and, descending the step, fairly reeled at the magnitude of her opportunity. The place, as she instantly murmured, was "like a pigstye." A villainous odour, compounded of paraffin and tallow, rose to her nostrils; the back of the organ case was out, and from the bowels of the instrument came a muffled scraping.

"Well, Mr. Ormandy," began Miss Williams, with

The Column

offensive moderation, "what on earth is the matter with the organ now? Just after I've had the vestry scrubbed; it's really very provoking!"

"Sorry; but it isn't Mr. Ormandy all the same," sounded in a faint drawl from the organ. The voice was followed by the emergence of Herbert Waring, blinking, covered with dust, and bearing the stump of a tallow candle fixed to a bit of board. He greeted Miss Williams with a smile of maddening sweetness.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" she said guardedly, as one saluting an opponent of acknowledged ability. She glanced at the floor with meaning.

"Well," said Herbert, dryly, "tell me the worst; I can bear it—no, I haven't dropped any tallow."

Then followed spectacular details,—the preliminary display, as it were. Miss Williams removed and hung up her cloak with unusual circumstance, and Herbert, blowing out his candle, placed it with ostentatious caution on the broad window-sill, and himself on a rush-bottomed chair. There was a pause for new formations.

"May I ask what's the matter with the organ now?" began Miss Williams, in a tone of airy solicitude.

"What *was* the matter with the organ," corrected Herbert. "G sharp on the Swell Diapason ciphered; bottom D Bourdon wouldn't speak at all; and three stickers on the Great had jumped their bearings," he continued with insulting minuteness.

"Why, good gracious! Mr. Ormandy spent hours here on Friday," said Miss Williams, cunningly deflecting her fire. "Never saw such a mess. He had to unscrew the case all over again because he'd left a candle burning on top of the bellows. The organ's a perfect nuisance."

"Ormandy," observed Herbert, sententiously, "lacks

The Church Militant

staying power. He nerves himself to the encounter, loses courage, and retreats in disorder."

"Well, what have *you* done?"

"I do not claim unnatural genius," said Herbert, modestly, "but I have quenched the ciphering by oiling the downpull; the sulkiness on the part of the Bourdon D yielded to a screwing up of the nut; as for the stickers,"—he dusted the knee of his cassock,—“they are, I regret to say, a matter for glue.”

"More mess," said Miss Williams, tartly; "such a fuss and bother about nothing at all!"

"It was so nice at Matins last Sunday," said Herbert, as one immersed in pleasant recollections. "Litany on G,—G sharp singing like a bee."

This sort of thing was beneath Miss Williams' attention. She reserved her fire, and flounced into the chancel, returning with two vases of wilted chrysanthemums.

"Been over to see Daphne?" said Herbert, encouragingly.

"Yes."

Miss Williams snapped the word and the stem of a bronze dragon at the same moment, viciously.

"Did she say anything about going to town?"

Miss Williams began to sing in the small, stringent voice of the desperate. She made another journey into the chancel and back.

"Don't you think it would be a good plan?"

Miss Williams turned.

"What does it matter what I think, what you think, what anybody thinks? When people have made up their minds to be obstinate, the least said is soonest mended."

She continued arranging her flowers as one settling the souls of his enemies in a particular Hell of more than Dantesque ingenuity.

The Column

Herbert rose and stood beside her. He played nervously with the stem of a flower.

“Miss Williams,” he said gravely, “I want to talk to you about Daphne.”

Miss Williams made an emphatic gesture.

“It’s not one bit of use, Mr. Waring. We’d much better not. I shall only say things I shall be sorry for—forget that you are a priest.”

“But that is precisely what I want you to forget,” said Herbert; and Miss Williams read her advantage and the urgency of his desire in the admission. She would not have been a woman had she not made use of it.

“I warn you,” she said, “that without, I shall not spare you.”

“You do not need to be careful of my sensibilities,” replied Herbert.

Miss Williams swung round with blazing eyes.

“Then why,” she cried passionately, “why in the name of your faith didn’t you speak when it might have been some use?”

Herbert drew geometric patterns with his forefinger in the little pool of water on top of the press. Without pretending to misunderstand, he did not answer for a minute.

“There were difficulties you do not appreciate,” he said. “In the first place, I could not betray Hastings’ confidence.”

Miss Williams stamped her foot.

“Hastings’ confidence!” she cried with scorn; “the trust of an atheist!”

“Pardon me; you fail to discriminate. Hastings was not an atheist.”

“I am not educated in these nice distinctions,” retorted

The Church Militant

Miss Williams, bitterly; "as you will. He believed in a God,—a God of his own imagination."

Herbert passed the inaccuracy.

"Besides," he said, "though my tongue was tied, I was on the watch for any sign of unrest."

"I could have shown you signs—plenty, had you discussed it with me."

"One day," continued Herbert, absently, "I thought such a moment had arrived; but I believed—sincerely believed—that another voice than mine had her ear."

"In any one but you," said Miss Williams, "I should call that cowardice."

"You remember the day after Basil came?"

Miss Williams nodded.

"I had just come from old Mrs. St. Ruth; she died that day, if you remember. I wanted to see you about the funeral, and looked into your cottage on my way home. You were not in, but I found Daphne asleep in your chair—with a crucifix in her lap."

For the moment the intensity of her regret silenced Miss Williams. The angel had troubled the pool—and she had not been there. The occasion was fresh in her mind; the girl's disquietude, her eloquent silence, and her own trite solution. She had, she remembered, left Daphne—to ring Angelus. For the first time in her life she felt the inconvenience of rule.

"You remember," said Herbert, leaning his head on his hand, "that wonderful passage in the 'Confessions' beginning, 'If to any the tumult of flesh were hushed, hushed the images of earth and water and air'?"

"Yes; go on."

"Well, I believed that—'not through any tongue of flesh, nor angel's voice, nor sound of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of a similitude,' Daphne had heard."

The Column

Miss Williams continued to handle her flowers, but gently, as though she dealt with Daphne herself. Herbert watched with admiration the rare tints hidden in the heart of each leap out like flames released by the magic of contrast. Miss Williams spoke almost humbly.

“That is what I can’t understand; surely your mission is to go out and preach the faith, and not wait for—miracles.”

Herbert shook his head.

“There are times,” he said, “when a man preaches most strenuously with closed teeth. Also, if you will consider, one would not approach Daphne in that way. She is not consciously—outside; it was a question of advantage. In any case could I, as Hastings’ friend, follow a course he would have so strongly disapproved?”

Miss Williams became restive.

“Why keep harking back to Hastings? Do you put your friendship for an—a man who denied Christ above your duty as a priest?”

“It is included in my duty as priest,” said Herbert, with a touch of dryness.

“But why,” interrupted Miss Williams, illogically, “why should Daphne’s eternal welfare be sacrificed because her father was wilfully blind?”

“I know,” she added quickly, “that one should not speak so of the dead; but it is impossible not to believe that he remained in darkness of his own free will.”

“Darkness, Miss Williams?” said Herbert, with an odd smile. “Can one say that the man who wrote ‘Subsoil’ was in darkness?”

Miss Williams flinched as before a blow.

“Are you also tainted?” she faltered. “That man and his infidel book were a blight upon the place.”

She turned on him fiercely.

The Church Militant

“Why, oh, why did you read it? Was it not enough to eat his bread, to touch his hand in friendship?—You take the ground from under my feet; how shall I be sure when you are wavering?”

The mother of the parish asserted herself; she spoke sternly, unconscious of presumption.

“We two have watched over this place—you and I—for nearly twenty years. It is but a little we have done,—a few men and women brought to the altar, a few children to the font; a little less vice, a little more cleanliness. We have shared it all,—the bitterness, the disappointment, the little victories,—only we have known, you and I—and now——?”

She bowed and crushed the flowers under her hand.

“Dear God,” she murmured brokenly; “how is it to be in the years to come?”

She caught Herbert by the sleeves and, in her agitation, shook him as one would shake another sleeping in peril of death.

“Tell me,” she cried fiercely, “how shall I face them,—these blind, helpless creatures, knowing—what I know?”

She flung her arm out to the window, and Herbert's eyes mechanically followed her gesture out over the grey valley, lashed athwart with driving rain. To his fancy the village huddled listening, whilst up there they two strove together over its future.

“Can I go down to them and say, ‘He, your priest, says it is all a mistake; you may believe what you like—he has read it—in a book!’”

Herbert was deeply moved.

“On my word as the priest of Christ,” he murmured, “you distress yourself without cause. I am weak,—God knows how pitiably weak,—but not in the way you

The Column

think. 'Subsoil' has left me as loyal to my faith as if I had never read it. It is just this: that I found in it that which told me Hastings was with us—only in a different way. Believe me, you narrow the bounds of our church. It is not given to all to come to Christ in the same way. He has His own purpose. Don't think I belittle the necessity for authority; I face the fact that Hastings did not accept the creed—only I do not, cannot, judge."

"But it is your sacred duty to judge. Who, then, if not you? I do not blame you that you associated with the man—because of charity. But how will you speak to—them, how condemn their sins, when you defend the utterances of a man who denied their Saviour?"

"I repeat, they are the utterances of a man to whom it was not given——"

"Oh, that is the old, old argument," she cried scornfully. "Because his education saved him from the grosser sins you say, 'Look at his life.' I know the fine phrases,—tolerance, breadth—No, it will not do; it is the burning truth or a damnable lie. But he is dead; he is in the hands of the God he insulted. Here is your opportunity for vindication. His daughter, your brother's wife——"

"If I only knew."

"Listen," said Miss Williams, in a fierce whisper. "Get her away from the place—from everything that reminds her of him. It is cruel, I know; but it is the only way. How can you hope for anything while she remains here? Her father's grave, those accursed symbols,—the place reeks of heathenism."

"But that is the difficulty," said Herbert. "I have tried, and failed; Basil has tried, and failed; and you?"

Miss Williams chilled at his question. She had, as Herbert supposed, come straight from luncheon at

The Church Militant

Penresco, and it was the news that the visit to London had been abandoned that had so annoyed her. With feminine crookedness she was not angry with Daphne, but with Basil; most of all with Herbert. She never for a moment made any comparison between the two men. Basil, in spite of his many enthusiasms, she considered a graceful idler, not to be taken seriously. Good enough for a husband, even for Daphne,—husbands being but a trivial detail in one's existence. Moreover, the fact that he was Herbert's brother gave him a fancy value as a spiritual cat's-paw. For she took it that Basil's uncertainties in questions of faith were but the affectations of a spoiled child.

When more important business would permit, he could be well slapped and set right. Basil brought under correction, Hastings no longer alive, now was clearly the time for Herbert to lay siege to the soul of Daphne; but she must first be uprooted from her old associations.

“Can't you persuade her?” repeated Herbert, helplessly, beginning to replace the casing of the organ.

Miss Williams did not answer him; she passed into the chancel with her vases, and through the open door Herbert saw her kneel for a moment on the altar step.

He had expected this attack on him for some time, and though he regretted its necessity, he liked Miss Williams the better for having spoken. Her statement of comradeship touched him more than he would admit; but he was saddened to know that she would never quite trust him again. He accepted the situation with his usual simplicity; not doubting himself, but regretting her feminine limitations.

They walked down the aisle together in silence. Both turned instinctively to look up at the east window.

Outside their eyes, aching from the ruby and azure,

The Column

sought the column. To the one it reared white defiance against a lowering sky; to the other, it continued the mystery. The God-man, the man-god; the flower of the flesh, or its negation.

"We can only wait," said Herbert.

Miss Williams choked queerly. She had already recovered something of her common sense, as she would have said.

"If I said anything, just now, you will understand, won't you?" she jerked out with brisk defiance.

"I shall understand."

"Just like my cheek, you know," repeated Miss Williams, as they parted by the vicarage gate.

CHAPTER XXII—*Sangraal*

IT is probable that every landscape has its proper emotional significance; not the meaning imposed upon it by the mood of the observer, the "pathetic fallacy," but some less disputable expression, the inevitable exponent of its natural features. Could this ultimate essence be captured in a formula, there would be an end of description; and to label a painting "Scene in Norfolk," would be as superfluous as it is now merely annoying. That we have not arrived at so fortunate an escape from the local colourist is due not only to the distortion of temperament, but the wizardry of association. Were but this latter final, one might silence the topographer by reference to a tradition at least approximate; but though some decisive event may for a while set the stage of a district, there is always at one's elbow some fresh impertinence of more recent history. So that the relics of antiquity are noticeable for their unfitness; and the Roman coin unearthed in Sussex startles by its very inappropriateness.

The individuality of our English counties is unquestionable; and he who is susceptible to such influences has little need of map-makers. That is, if he can rid his mind of the tyranny of history and the importunity of alleged development.

For the disturbing power of the latter, one has only to point to the metropolis. Here time has exploded the plausible fallacy of the geometrician and London holds Middlesex in its belly.

Cornwall perhaps alone has succeeded in eluding the graver of history, the polish of progress, retaining with a

The Column

cynical indifference the original character native to her accidents of situation and surface. In other places humanity has gradually enlivened the soil to the rhythm of its movement, as Arion the trees, itself being duped by the land ; but the sea-smitten peninsula owes nothing to its inhabitants. Fields, houses, the scar of mines, the neatness of harbourage, all are epidermal. As much a prey to the utilitarian as any part of the kingdom, she has lost nothing of her mystery ; and to climb Carn Brea, in spite of the clank of locomotives and the plashed yellow of mine-workings, is to walk with the troglodyte at your elbow. Her people are for the most part acquiescent to their times ; legend has faded from their mind ; but the hills have it authentic and indelible, and, heedless of the trivial centuries, hold between sea and sea their secret within them. Other places have antiquities, but they are frankly survivals. Stonehenge is an anachronism ; but the Druidical remains of Cornwall are of to-day, and one would not be surprised to find on her altars the scarce dried blood of yesterday's sacrifice. It is to-day that intrudes.

Cornwall has no recent history ; she emerges unvoiced, enigmatic, out of the grey of legend. Even the Arthurian story sits loosely on her hills, and Tintagel waits for an earlier queen than Guinevere.

There is no desolation like the desolation of a Cornish moor. The Highlands of Scotland are stimulating, and justify their inhospitality by the stubborn virtues they breed. They are further endeared by tradition.

“The air still quivers with the sighs of tragic kings and queens,” but the sullen lift of a Cornish down suggests nothing but a nameless devilry.

Cornwall has no traditions within the scope of time ; she belongs to the twilight. Whatever falls upon her of

Sangraal

history or progress she makes her own, herself unchanging. Dim forgotten faiths, some bloody cult of Baal or Ashtoreth, cling round every boulder; and the adits of abandoned mines are peopled with shapes only half human.

Her influence on her people is unquestionable. Scratch the Cornishman—he may be a grocer and a churchwarden—and you find the cave-dweller. He may be cheapened out of his candid superstitions, but he is potentially responsive to every touch of the weird. He has forgotten his ancient language; he knows so little of his history that he has been known to place the Druids only a century ago; but, if it were possible to revive their worship, he would follow the ritual by sheer instinct. That is why, perhaps, unlike the Welshman, he has never been tempted to a light-hearted, amateur imitation of his dead religious ceremonies.

He is haunted by his physical environment as no other is. You may meet him in Birmingham, but his eyes are lifted to a sea horizon; and above the rumour of the street he listens for the older voice of waves, and the long-drawn melancholy trill of the curlew. He hides within him veins of the unpredictable; strange lusts, unspeakable worships; as his native land holds in her bosom metals which have never been an estimable quality in any other part of the kingdom. It would almost seem, indeed, as if there were some occult sympathy between a soil rich in ores and its people. It is noticeable that in those places where the earth is guiltless of metal the inhabitants are of an innocent, ovine habit. It may be that copper,—*cuprum*,—with its irresistible suggestion of the gleam of Cyprian hair, betrayed the Cornishman into some forlorn quest; some uneasy aspiration, as for the Golden Fleece handed down from

The Column

generation to generation, together with the more material curse of mining.

He is for the most part sober and industrious; and that he should often embrace so colourless a creed as Methodism only adds to his mystery. He is proud, but his very independence is unique; as far removed from the boorish incivility of the East Saxon as from the aggressive disloyalty of the Lancashire "lad."

Superficially he is adaptable; and if you keep clear of his basic prejudices, you may mould him apparently as you will.

Michael Trigg was a typical Cornishman. Outwardly he was an obliging stripling, with some taste for music, amenable to cultivation. Nominally he followed his father's trade, that of boat-builder; and his dependent position placed him at the call of those in want of a person to do "odd jobs." A man in years, he was not earning a man's wage; and paid for escaping the responsibilities of maturity by being considered a kind of boy. He worked casually on Hastings' farm and garden, and was Herbert's right-hand man in the choir. He also served at the altar. He was first thought of in any emergency requiring manual strength and skill, and in the multiplication of his unofficial duties people had ceased to believe that he possessed a trade of his own. He had the ecclesiastical temperament, and in Brittany would probably have been a priest. No one, least of all himself, suspected him of imagination; he was the true mystic, who seldom, if ever, develops into the poet. He confused the waking world with that of dreams; everything appealed to him with a double meaning. When it rained it was undeniably wet; but more important was the suggestion of celestial indignation or sorrow. He freshened with the increase of leaf and bud, and grew

Sangraal

listless with the ebb of autumn. Walking ever with one foot in the supernatural, he domesticated the creatures of fancy, and would have passed the time of day with Balaam's ass, or harnessed Valkyrie horses to draw timber.

It is the penalty of such a temperament that its owner is unable to see the edge ; to know where the enduring mystery of the actual ends and the more obvious wonder of the supernatural begins. Thus he loses the imaginative recompense, and the golden intuitions coveted by common men are by him cheerfully turned to the making of pots and kettles. It was impossible that his association with Hastings should not have impressed him deeply. Without the gift of second sight, anticipating the concrete calamity, he was keenly susceptible to those vague influences that slowly served the ends of tragedy. Ignorant of the history of Penresco, of the origin of the column, he nevertheless suspected a cultus, and, being limited in his ideas on the subject, roundly attributed it to the devil. He was fortified in this solution by the silence of Herbert Waring, whom he revered ; the obvious disapproval of Miss Williams, whom he dreaded ; and the vague disrepute which in a primitive community attaches to the house of the unbeliever. Not that Hastings was disliked in Tregotha ; on the contrary, his unaffected simplicity found a short way to the hearts of the villagers ; but they treated him with something of that respectful reserve the humbly born Scotsman bears to the Sabbath-breaker of undoubted lineage.

Michael was perhaps the only person in Tregotha who saw a second meaning in Daphne's frequenting the column.

Hastings' sudden death was clearly a retribution ; and he looked for the handing down of the curse, unless by some means it could be averted.

The Column

Daphne he served with a dumb devotion ; a worship so profound that he risked apparent neglect in his anxiety to avoid tiring her by the assertion of his existence,—the Oriental rather than the Western idea of servitude. Thus he never put her to the embarrassment of personal thanks by any of those attentions, graceful in purpose, awkward in fulfilment, by which the peasant Englishman indicates his fidelity. Though the natural dignity of his race kept him from exposing himself to the ridicule served out to the impossible admirer, it was accepted in Penresco that Michael Trigg was Daphne's watch-dog. The only man who had ever questioned his title was convinced of his error by force of arms.

It was Michael who had assisted to carry Basil to the house on the night of his accident. He attributed his incidence unquestionably to the hand of Destiny, accepting him with mournful resignation. For, though he had never indulged in romance, it had been a comfort to know that She belonged to no other. For him, from the first, Basil was "Miss Daphne's young man," and so entitled to consideration and service ; for all that, he came short of Michael's private standard of masculine perfection. He tried him by tests of dubious orthodoxy, tramping miles to consult a wise woman of voluble inefficiency.

This woman, spoiled by the knowledge that she was an interesting survival, had abandoned the dark sayings of the adept for the more lucrative methods of the crass fortune-teller, raising her prices on the sound commercial principle of rarity in the market. Michael had some difficulty in persuading her that his needs were diagnostic rather than comminatory. He got little satisfaction, her judgment throwing his own out of tone ; and he parted from her with unconcealed contempt.

Sangraal

But though Michael looked on Basil with but qualified approval, he would permit no criticism of him; and the village humourist, who found material in Basil's unfamiliar pronunciation and Cockney ignorance, was given to understand, in forcible terms, that any public exercise of his talents would be visited with sharp retribution.

Of late, Michael extended his unacknowledged duties by secretly watching Daphne on her walks by the column. He may be at once absolved from any doubtful motive. He was led to his ambush in the laurels neither by curiosity nor the desire to renew her image. For him the former was impossible, the latter superfluous. Exquisitely sensitive to atmosphere, he was aware of the vague unhappiness in the household. He found a cause in Daphne's supposed secret rites,—though his sympathies remained with her.

He wasted no time in speculation as to the manner of her devotions, his sole concern being the discovery of a method by which they might be prevented from rebounding. For, he argued, the Devil is a divinity of uncertain temper, and who could tell at what moment he might rend his worshipper? There was also the imminent risk of some critical manifestation of Divine displeasure; as that which had carried off Hastings. Suppose by some means the Devil could be temporarily deprived of his indubitable power; perhaps even driven from his local altar without offending the susceptibilities of the devotee?

Of no striking intelligence in the ordinary affairs of life, though sufficiently able to escape any suspicion of genius, Michael was in spiritual matters an advanced though unmethodical thinker. He happened to be familiar with the doctrines and ritual of the Anglican Church. It was a mere accident,—he would have

The Column

followed Buddhism with equal intelligence; but, being so, the most sacred, the most powerful thing he knew, were the Elements and vessels of the Eucharist. His personal association with the altar led him instinctively to think of them. He was thus unconsciously a Knight of the Graal, convinced of its power, to be used, if necessary, for miraculous purposes. Two ideas, therefore, had taken strong hold of his imagination. On the one hand was Daphne, in spiritual, perhaps even bodily, peril; on the other, the symbols of that power he had been trained to consider irresistible.

The next thing was to discover how the latter could be used on behalf of the former. The most obvious method was that of antiquity, and Michael wondered why the idea of exorcism had never occurred to Herbert Waring. From the destruction of the walls of Jericho down to mediæval sprinkling, the priest had always been the directing agent. However, he was forced to admit that this plan, beautiful in its simplicity, did not suggest itself to Herbert. No doubt, for the best of reasons; Michael did not presume to criticise, though he regretted his inaction. A procession circling the column seven times appealed to his passion for ritual; though it implied a publicity distasteful, if not injurious, to the object of his solicitude.

He must be content with more colourless methods; and it cannot be denied that he felt a sneaking satisfaction in being left alone in the business. He smoked many pipes under the lee of the lifeboat-house, wrestling with ways and means. His stealthy excursions to the laurels became less frequent; he had made what observations he required, and must now concentrate his attention on a plan of campaign. His preoccupation began to draw down the unpleasant consideration of his

Sangraal

father. Old Trigg, who was a Methodist, let fall sardonic allusions to the enervating effects of "Church Sarvice;" and his impatience with Michael's dawdling ways was only held in check by his secret delight in this conclusive illustration of the failure of papistry to order a man's life and labour to satisfactory ends.

He withheld the tongue and hand of correction, for Michael was not yet beyond manual control, hoping for a crisis in which conviction should shine forth to the edification of his wife, a despicable trimmer between morning church and evening chapel.

Michael's wits were burrowing in the dark ways of theology. He had to face, and if possible solve, two problems.

Firstly, did the elements retain their efficacy in the hands of a layman? On the whole he concluded in the affirmative, since consecration was final.

Secondly, the manner of exhibition. This required longer consideration, involving possibilities of error and failure. For the first, the matter was out of his hands; but, as an instrument, he must be politic.

His first plan was in unconscious imitation, though with an exactly opposite intention, of the practices of a sect of obscene mountebanks who have attracted an unnecessary amount of attention on the Continent. He proposed to carry away from the altar the consecrated wafer and bury it somewhere near the column. But here his courage failed him. He was convinced of the merit of his purpose; but sacrilege was an ugly word. He conceived the possibility of assistance from books, and borrowed craftily from Herbert's library, sandwiching a work on Miracles between innocent treatises on the wonders of Nature, unconscious of irony.

This book was discouraging; the hero of the incident,

The Column

when not a canonised saint, living or dead, was always a priest. A handbook of "Magic" was no better, proving a guileless exposition of the methods of Messrs. Maske-lyne and Cook. He was hampered by not knowing exactly what book he required.

Nor was he more successful in his wary attempts to gather information at first hand. Herbert held by the golden axiom that in the minds of the uneducated doubt is more dangerous than error; and asserted his admiration for those priests, scorned of Carlyle, who advised George Fox to "drink beer and dance with the girls" as a solution of his spiritual difficulties. Unlike his brother, he was strongly averse from arousing in his young men the "malady of self-consciousness." "It is," he once said to Hastings, "with them at best a matter of conduct. Better to nail them to the approximate, by which they may rule their lives, than confuse them by dangling before their eyes an abstract truth."

So, in the matter of miracles, Michael was kindly but straitly confined to narrative rather than expository treatment. Thus thrown back on his own resources, he at last elaborated a plan.

When he visited the wise woman she, in her first misconception of his motives, told him that in the matter of curses it was unnecessary that the subject should be haled before her in person.

A lock of his hair was ample; failing that, she could, at a pinch, manage with a glove or shoe. Her usual price for a curse was a sovereign; with the less personal material to guide her she must claim higher terms, owing to the greater tax on her energies.

It followed that Michael need not subject the whole of the column—the particular throne of Satan—to the charm. Having consulted every available authority

Sangraal

sacred and profane, he lost no time in bringing his plans to a practical issue. He secreted himself in the laurels with a hammer and chisel, and chipped away a fragment of marble from the foot of the column. The fluting made this comparatively easy, though in his nervousness he broke off a larger piece than he had intended. As a further precaution he carried away with him three leaves of laurel. His action, though apparently simple, had all the character of heroism. He believed implicitly in the existence and power of the Devil, and supposed that he carried in his pocket the potential engines of his destruction. Here he misinterpreted Hastings' notorious anxiety to preserve the place from ill-usage.

The morning of the supreme test was thick with difficulties. Miss Williams was not usually in church many minutes before the service. This morning, however, she arrived suspiciously early, as though she had some inkling of irregular proceedings. It was Michael's object to secrete the piece of marble and the laurel leaves under the fair linen cloth; in such a position that the chalice would rest upon them.

This required care; for, though he had scraped the marble thin as talc, Miss Williams had an eagle eye. To his excited fancy she was unusually critical of things. She was dissatisfied with the stability of the frontal, and returned twice to rearrange the flowers in the vases. Michael delayed the lighting of the candles as long as he dared; and at last succeeded in carrying out his intentions unobserved.

When Herbert absently smoothed the altar cloth with his palm, Michael's heart stood still. His hand trembled, so that the ablutions were a matter of chance, and never was Gloria more pregnant with heart-felt gratitude than his.

The Column

Sure though he was of some result, he was not prepared for so instant, so terrible a response to his challenge.

At noon, as he passed the entrance to the drive at Penresco, he was shocked by the sudden figure of Miss Williams. She was quick and peremptory of speech.

“Go to the stable, saddle Hesperus, and take this note to old Dr. Bosankoe. Ride as hard as you can.”

When Michael flung himself from his horse at Dr. Bosankoe’s door, the old man gave half an eye to the note and his attention to the bearer. The message concerned a matter for leisurely consideration ; but the youth aroused his hobby. In response to Michael’s stammering, “Will she die?” he only said,—

“Whenever you see Them again, come and tell me, and I’ll give you a shilling.”

CHAPTER XXIII—*Gemmation*

THERE are some uses of necessity only apparent at rare, uncertain intervals; for example, that of the fireman. To the casual observer he wastes his days in a prosy idleness; affecting a spasmodic occupation in the desultory polishing of brass—already refulgent—or the laying on of superfluous paint; his only serious business in life the advertisement of a clumsy, amphibious uniform and impossible boots.

The bell rings in the night, the breathless messenger plunges in, and there happens—a miracle. The lubber frame is catlike; the impossible boots fairly twinkle. He, the vacuous dawdler, is trenchant, unerring. He puts on authority with his brazen helmet; crowds part before his car as the Red Sea waters before the Israelite; he is there, the rest nowhere. Even the policeman fades before him, acquiescent, subordinate.

So Mrs. Bargister. She justified her existence in the eyes of a helpless audience; she commanded the situation. Herbert risked a mild profanity.

“Now we know why God made Mrs. Bargister.”

There was seen the eternal paradox of all Artistry,—the inversion of temperament.

Mrs. Bargister became reticent, forcible. She forbore to claim a right so patently her own. Miss Williams, it is true, possessed the crude knowledge, the raw axioms of the amateur; but, before the mellow wisdom of Mrs. Bargister, even she was mute. More; she quoted with reverence and conviction, “Mrs. Bargister says.”

The hasty reasoner might suppose in Mrs. Bargister’s

The Column

demeanour a certain arrogance; as of the despised when vindicated. In the more spectacular ways of life this is common enough; witness the officer of volunteers, or the parish Beadle on Sundays. But the consciousness of sober utility confers its own high seriousness; and Mrs. Bargister's face wore the serenity of those above laurels. With days her austerity somewhat relaxed, and she figured to the imagination a tiptoe muse, mincing before a drawn curtain, with an air that half invited, half repelled. She was at once priestess and doorkeeper; guardian of the mysteries and agent in advance. In the connubial chamber she was obscurely communicative.

"Most sensible, my dear. Have either of ours thriven like John? Of course it's a tie; but she isn't a gadabout, and rather than be bothered with those foods——"

The widening of the doors of her discretion was admirably gradual, though here ensued bickering.

There is an order of precedence in these matters more inflexible than that of courts; and as Chamberlain Mrs. Bargister was absolutely incorruptible.

"But, mother, I'm sure Daphne would like to see me; it will disturb her a great deal more wishing I'd come, and of course I wouldn't chatter."

Gillies, smarting under neglect, was on the side of maternal caution.

"If I were your mother," he said, "I wouldn't let you go for a fortnight."

The retort was edged with feminine logic.

"Of course that makes it all the longer for you; I can't think of anyone else until I've seen Daphne."

Gillies, however, was equal to the emergency. He took up his hat with elaborate pantomime expression of relief.

Gemmation

“That gives me,” he said, “ten days in South Wales.” Emily interrogated with her eyebrows.

“Don’t you know?—Eisteddfod at Cardiff. Absolutely the only chance in forty years to hear choral singing.”

It will be observed that the house of the Bargisters was become, as it were, a porch to the temple.

Here were issued bulletins, and permission obtained, or denied, to go up and worship. The house breathed an atmosphere of maternity, daily renewed by the complacent return of Mrs. Bargister, and, she averred, beneficial in its influence on those in sight of matrimony. Under her genial eyes, beaming babies, both Emily and Caspar, grew conscious. They were forced to the ridiculous conclusion that the whole business was got up for their edification. Mr. Bargister in the presence of Caspar descended to sly asides on paternal responsibility and ponderous allusions to education. At such a time a certain facetiousness seems unavoidable; and if those concerned are too genteel for digs in the ribs, there is still a subacid humour, as of the Bench, or dining Cardinals. There is armistice in the universal war, and the soberest grow light-headed. If death makes us all one, birth makes us all some one else; and on the advent of the first-born previous records count for nothing. It is perhaps not an original, but it is a profoundly true, reflection, that we are more admirable in our joys than in our sorrows. Death was ever the occasion for social jealousy; and the grave divides not more surely the quick from the dead than the living from the living. In the presence of the Destroyer if we speak at all it is with effort; to find the fittest thing to say; but birth loosens our tongues in spontaneous kindness.

This gives the new-born a wholly fictitious importance.

The Column

He is the tie in the social pattern without which it falls to pieces; and that it begins with a Babe in a manger gives Christianity its surest hold on the human imagination. This response to the appeal of helplessness is inexplicable; and that Montaigne did not write an essay on Birth is a literary calamity.

If thus the mere spectator, those more intimately concerned are moved out of all knowledge. A child, welcome or unwelcome, is an indubitable fact; and his advent has a stringent effect upon those who live largely in mood. Basil felt how pitiful in an emergency like this is the sum of human culture. He rose to the occasion in his own way. He composed a Wordsworthian sonnet on the Realities, and consorted with village craftsmen, inquiring of their ways. Condemned to hours of feverish lounging in the library, his choice of literature reflected his mood. He dipped into records of pioneer life, where family ties are exalted by bodily risks. He leaned to the solid virtues, and became acquainted with Smiles. Fatherhood leaves no refuge for the dilettante; he must out and play the game seriously or give it up altogether.

There is always perhaps the unexpressed feeling that the person most concerned, the origin of the wonder, is not fully aware of her blessedness. So much is expected of her; humanity agog for an emotion demands that she shall be a signal example of its finer instincts, its kindly warmth.

She is apt to take too much for granted, and when the dryest grows idyllic she alone says nothing. But then, she only preserves her sense of perspective; she knows what the wonder involves; nor was the manger the occasion of the Magnificat.

Daphne, looking into the eyes of her son, found what she sought; and the image of Basil passed for ever out

Gemmation

of her heart. This exodus of the once-loved is not with pain and tears; these come earlier. He is sped rather with a serious high politeness, as when ambassadors are given their congé. Any whimpering is on his part, for he is sometimes so infatuate as to imagine that, while he hangs about the portal, there is yet hope for recall.

“Is there nothing I can do,” he asks, “to bring back the time of roses?”

If she is merciful she answers him with silence.

We have it on the authority of Scripture that when a woman has borne her husband a man-child she has fulfilled her destiny, and is free of the house of Joy. So much, however, depends on what she understands by husband, the word conveying either too much or too little. If it suggests to her so much of him as stops the sun, it is sad; but when the aspirant to the title fails to fit her conception of it, there is the ground-plan of tragedy.

There is the child who is merely the product of an experiment in heredity; there is the child who incarnates some rose-flushed idyl of two; but there is also the child who embodies for her who bears him other than his father ever was or could be.

Basil was neither obtuse nor a whimperer. When he was permitted into the hushed room, he read in Daphne's face that he was now and always superfluous. He did not know—it was unnecessary to know—in what particular way he had been supplanted. He could swear that apart from circumstances no human affection stood in his way. So far as he could understand, here was the veiled answer to infinite questions. It would take him the rest of his life to elucidate the answer, but one thing, his sentence, was very clear. Their eyes engaged in whatever explanation was possible, while their lips murmured

The Column

the pretty commonplace of the occasion. Civilisation has doubled the bitterness of life by insisting on our saying something. In common decency they must "kiss each other thanks for him." Meanwhile Daphne's eyes were eloquent.

"By you I am complete without you. You may claim your part, but it is written elsewhere—outside my book of joy."

"But," he pleaded, "grant me just this,—that you will remember with tenderness."

"That is unnecessary; it is written—I cannot erase it; will not that suffice you?"

"But say you do not regret me in him?"

"That is undeniable."

"But you do not regret?"

"It is immaterial."

Then swiftly hers became supplicant.

"Do you then grudge me my happiness?"

"I grudge you? God forbid; only I would have it so that the memory of me is not a blight upon it."

"You force me to say it; you are already forgotten."

A philosopher might find comfort in analogy, and learn of the bee; though he, less fortunate, is condemned to survive. To be content with a vicarious paternity needs a hero, and Basil was not heroic. He was, for one thing, too acute; he could bear disparagement even from Daphne, but not the implication he saw so clearly. The thing itself had happened before, but the man was always taken at his actual value; generally had some redeeming sober virtue which lifted him above the mere need Destiny had of him. He had pretended to both agent and principal, and had suffered exposure. He found a transitory solace in standing in line with recorded names, until he remembered their unimportance. This fantastic

Gemmation

evasion, shadowed in the legendary Chinese Virgins, took little heed of fathers. It came to this : to love a man for an hour that a child might be born to eternity.

Nor had Basil any hope that Daphne would wear to a more practical outlook. She would never, he was convinced ; neither, strangely, did he desire that she should, lose her grasp on the evanescent identity. For, he guessed, she, a woman, had achieved that which men have chased through a thousand ignoble mediums. Their names, of legend, of history, rose up before him,—Faust, Heine, and Poe ; De Quincey and Turner ; women, wine, opium, and squalid gin. Here was the dream strangely reversed ; the forlorn quest seemingly realised. Those others never arrived ; what they did and suffered by the way lives for us, not for them ; they had only the weariness, the hunger, the satiety. And she, Daphne, found only golden calm ; whilst he, to whom surely she owed something, buzzed on the outer rim of her content like an intrusive fly.

There remained for him the poor comfort that by a supreme effort of self-abnegation he might concentrate her attention ; recall the forgotten, and fix a vague, shifting paternity in himself. That is, if he had heroic courage, untiring patience ; to be never before the moment, but always responsive ; to gauge her preferences, and so conform to them as to identify himself with what to her stood for fatherhood ; discover in the child his spiritual descent by spiritual alchemy ; as one might deduce the summer sublimated in a single rose.

And then the difficulty in choosing the right moment to speak, to say : “ I am of that glowing time and place. You did not know it, but I was there, in the dream. You, like Danaë, knew only the golden shower.”

Meanwhile, locked lips and careful ways. It was only

The Column

human that his mind should thus leap forward, resting only on difficulties foreseen. He did not dwell on the unexpected dangers by the way; the trifling vexations, the little poisoned thorns of circumstance. He was soon to learn.

When Daphne, with quivering eagerness, rapt eyes, and queer stumbling feet went out into the May sunshine by the column, Basil was witless enough to accompany her. Had he remained, perhaps the pitiful occasion would have passed, by the mercy of Nature and the growth of grass. But he was victim to the fatal curiosity, in his case reversed, of Psyche and Elsa.

He watched her closely. He half-expected some revelation by her father's grave. But she passed with a slight hesitation, in which might be read tenderness and the triumph of fulfilment.

"Let us sit by the column and look out over the sea," she said.

In the act of stooping, Daphne hesitated, and her hand went out to the marble. Basil's eyes followed her movement. His face clouded.

"How unfortunate, dear; unpardonable clumsiness, whoever did it."

Daphne did not answer for a moment, and then she spoke with icy deliberateness.

"No, not clumsiness; this was done with a chisel."

"Oh, that is impossible," said Basil, hastily; but while the words were on his lips his hand confirmed the truth of her assertion. The fragment had undoubtedly been chipped away. Even then he did not see the exasperating way in which the act of vandalism involved him personally. "Indeed, dear, I am more sorry than I can say; I shall make it my business to find out who did it."

Still Daphne did not speak. Any other woman he would have called sullen. Even her silence irritated him.

Gemmation

"You don't credit me with such a piece of wanton mischief?"

"This is idle," answered Daphne, with a gesture of intense weariness. "You will drag us into a vulgar quarrel. I don't expect you to understand; but I think, remembering what we said in this very place, you might have considered my wishes, father's wishes."

"I suppose I am stupid, but I confess I don't quite understand."

She turned on him.

"If you will cheapen things in your insane passion for—for elevating people—you can't expect your disciples to share your consideration for what you have sense to respect."

He began to understand. He was at once relieved and confounded that she should so misjudge him.

"I see what you mean," he cried. "You think that while you have been—indoors, I have had a party of tourists up here. Good Lord," he laughed bitterly; "that is all dead enough. Whatever I thought in that way is not likely to trouble me again. You must admit, dear girl," he said after a pause, "that you are horribly unjust."

For answer, she turned to the column.

"That remains. Such a thing never happened before—before you came," she said with unconscious cruelty. "No one in the village would have dared do it. Everybody knew how sacred this place was to father. Oh," she cried with a shake of disgust. "I've no doubt they picnicked on his very grave."

Basil was at a loss. The thing was ludicrous, though he himself was puzzled to find an explanation.

"Some wretched tourist, trespassing." His mind went back at the word. "Yes," he said weakly, "I was trespassing, wasn't I, when I came here?"

The Column

He laughed bitterly.

“I got a broken leg then ; now——” he sighed, implying a broken heart.

Daphne smiled without mirth. “Let us talk about something else. There is no need to be childish. It is done, and there is an end of it.”

It is surmised that the planets have been shaped by centrifugal force ; crude bulks flung off inchoate and sphered by that very power which rent them asunder. So with souls ; individuality is attained at the expense of union, though sentimentalists are eloquent of twin stars.

These two developed a very passion for kindness to cover regret for that which was now impossible. The child achieved for them tenderness, the more poignant for what it supplanted. He was the surviving fragment of that shining sphere which was their love ; round him they circled flashing “ave” across the gulf. “Atque vale” was as yet a heart’s whisper sedulously repressed.

This rounding by repulsion is by some termed emancipation. By and by their strenuous amenities eased to a more natural interchange of playful civilities. The naming of their son was the occasion for a charming altercation. Basil had waited, half hoping, half fearing some hint in her choice.

“He must be Basil,” she urged unilluminative—he shrewdly guessed, uncaring.

“But you would like Edward?”

She hesitated, and he was wrung by the leap of memory into her eyes.

“Why not both?” she asked ; and so it was.

Basil was not misled by her complaisance ; he saw that these were but counters between her and the world. Neither will a wise husband seek to discover by what dear, intimate name his wife knows her first-born.

CHAPTER XXIV—*Downsitting and Uprising*

CASPAR GILLIES and Emily Bargister were at last to demonstrate the perfect way of marriage. Herbert declared that the atmosphere of nativity created by Mrs. Bargister made it positively improper that they should remain disunited any longer.

Caspar as a marrying man was an interesting study. He had caused to be erected on the Porth road a house which flung down a challenge to structural and sanitary science for at least a century. In about a hundred years, he calculated, his opinions would be vindicated, and exhausted architects creep in whither he had led. As might be supposed, the house became a focus of local interest. It gave an object to lovers' Sunday-evening walks, and provided material for rustic wit and speculation. The drains, in particular, occasioned bloody noses; themselves remaining a mystery.

Mr. Bargister, who accepted science on trust, was persuaded that Caspar's house embodied stupendous principles of mechanics. He made pilgrimages to the spot, and watched the uprising walls with simple reverence, as if the mere frequenting should enlarge his mind.

He potted about scaffoldings risking his neck; and by getting in the way of workmen and asking questions gained a reputation for eccentricity wholly undeserved. On one occasion he found Caspar coatless and perspiring over a heap of mortar. Mr. Bargister drew near, with ardent appreciation of his opportunity.

Caspar looked up gloomily.

The Column

“Look at that,” he said, holding out a handful of mortar.

Mr. Bargister examined the mess with earnest minuteness.

“Most remarkable,” he said; “I had no idea there was so much to be learned from mortar. Five—no, six distinct colours in the various particles. How apt we are,” he continued reflectively, “to undervalue common objects. Now I suppose, with the microscope——”

Caspar sighed.

“Don’t you see that you might as well build a wall with tooth-powder? *This* comes of using a sand impregnated with calcium chloride. In seven and a half years,” he added, with the calm of despair, “that gable will fall out.”

“Dear, dear; I hope not.”

“Of course there is always five minutes’ warning before masonry collapses. I am a light sleeper—just time to lower Emily and—say two—children out of the window. The eldest,” he added thoughtfully; “will be able to take care of himself.”

In a cooler moment Mr. Bargister discussed the matter with his wife; suggesting the possibility of exaggeration in Caspar’s prediction.

“For my part,” said the lady, “I don’t profess to understand these things; but I’ve always heard that builders and people are not to be trusted. Look at Romulus; and you know, George, the Bible says you can’t make bricks without straw—though of course this is a stone house; still, it’s just as well, for Emily’s sake, that Dr. Gillies keeps his eyes open.”

Caspar, in a weak moment, made over all questions of internal arrangement and decoration to Emily. Emily, who lived by comparisons, found her privilege a doubtful

Downsitting and Uprising

blessing. She first attempted to graft her ideas on Daphne, but was pulled up by the fact that there was no drawing-room at Penresco.

Daphne spent her evenings in the large stone-paved hall. Emily admitted the beauty of the open fireplace, but mourned the absence of a feminine retreat.

"It is like—oh, it is like a sea without a harbour," she exclaimed, knitting her pretty brows over the simile.

"Yes?" said Daphne, with her indolent smile. "I don't need harbours."

"But, surely, sometimes,—when you are tired, or have a headache——"

"I never have a headache," said Daphne, solemnly, "and when I'm tired I go to bed."

The hall was a place the average person would have seized upon as an opportunity for Morris.

"So—so *mediæval*," breathed Mrs. Bargister, waving her hand. "Tapestry and armour and—and faithful hounds, you know."

"See advertisement pictures in 'Art Journal,'" murmured Herbert, in an aside.

In her attempt to reconcile Daphne with seven domestic weekly journals, Emily became tearful. Fortunately, nature saved her in a way Caspar would not have cared to anticipate.

In the slang of the botanist there is a term applied to the calyx which falls before the full glory of the flower. So, with marriage imminent, those qualities of Emily Bargister which may be summed up under "Shakespeare and the musical glasses" proved to be *caducous*; falling off before the forced development of her truer parts, derived from her mother. As Miss Williams put it,—

"Until on the eve of Mrs. Gillies, she was never Emily Bargister."

The Column

Caspar aspired to a function. He submitted to a certain chastening by Herbert in the ecclesiastical, Basil in the spectacular exuberance of his programme; but in the question of music he was inexorable.

He once and for all refused to abandon the ceremony to the painstaking inefficiency of the village organist. He must have the orchestra,—recruited, if possible, from the pier band-at Porth. He spent fabulous sums in the engagement of trumpets from Exeter, and was shocked and grieved when Emily quietly but firmly refused to fiddle to her own sacrifice.

With the wedding day Caspar dropped from cheerful energy to despondent inaction.

“I’ve done my damndest to make the thing go, and if people won’t back me up——”

In church, only the unaccustomed garment prevented him thrusting his hands deep down in his trousers pockets,—the last expression of critical aloofness.

His groomsman,—Angus Black, from Perth,—an excited Professor of Chemistry, who whispered hoarsely behind his palm in pure Scots, interpreted his duties as those of bear-leader. As they stood in the chancel, Caspar tortured him with audible asides disparaging the approaching bridesmaids.

“Did you ever see such a hat! I’ll go——” Angus wildly clutched his arm.

“Whist, man! ye’ll shame the lassie.”

Caspar groaned submission. At a critical moment his attention was wanting. He was expressing to Basil, in dumb show, his opinion of the last hymn.

Angus made violent gestures to catch his eye. His reeling wits were on the edge of “Fore!” as a last resource, when Caspar turned.

“The Age of Pericles” was now nearing completion.

Downsitting and Uprising

For some weeks Daphne, Basil, and Herbert had fallen into the way of meeting in the library at intervals, when the portion of the book in hand was read aloud and discussed. How mercifully it filled a gap for two of them, they did not care to consider. Each waited for the other to say, "It is finished," only dreading the moment when it should be said. Herbert extricated them with merciful decision. He had, for them, come to be a sort of Fate; kindly, inexorable; and they clung to him as those in prison do to the turnkey.

He flashed relief on a pregnant silence. They sat in the library, Daphne new-flushed from her baby, a benediction in her eyes that maddened her husband.

"As regards Burge," said Herbert, sententiously, "are you going to see him personally?"

Burge was the publisher of "Subsoil." On hearing of Hastings' death, he had expressed a wish to look over any manuscript he had left behind him.

"Do you think it necessary?" said Basil.

"Not absolutely; infinitely better, I should say." He waited.

"If it were the question of his taking it or not, one would advise the other way; I believe that is usually preferred. But here—it is practically certain he will be glad to publish, and the question of terms, of form, binding, and so on can be settled much better at a personal interview."

As a matter of fact, Herbert supposed that a letter would bring Burge to them; but he intended that Basil should go to London, and adopted the method of suggestion. Having spoken, he wisely did not press the matter.

Basil looked at Daphne, who had risen and was standing by the window. Herbert's proposal was so apt, so

The Column

unexpected, that he needed courage to consider it fairly. Since the birth of Daphne's child, he had been in a mood akin to remorse, hardly genuine, rather of that cowardly sort induced by a sense of peril. There had been some actual danger, the door set ajar on possibilities; and, though this was not the direct result of his waywardness, it braced him to good intentions. He was nearing the edge of that now, though he was still ostentatiously scornful of outside considerations. Indeed his ready soberness had pleased him; and he quoted the hero of *Fifine at the Fair*, with sentimental unction,—

“ But if a servant cried
Fire in the gallery——”

That he did not

“ Get the eye, the hand, the heart, the whole
O' the wondrous wife again ”

was clearly the injustice of fortune.

He assured himself that nothing else mattered; dubious letters, even the advent of Gertrude, shrieking her wounds, would not have troubled him. Here again was a door opened,—aptly enough, by whom but Herbert, Papal to the letter.

Daphne was simpler than he dreamed. She candidly wished for solitude; she wanted to realise a new relation. Kindness alone kept her silent.

“That is,” said Herbert, with his queer, crooked smile, “if Daphne can spare you.”

“I think,” said Daphne, turning slowly about, “you had better go.”

Thus they gained a little more time, husbanding their meagre warmth. Such, however, is the inconsistency of human nature that the moment Daphne had spoken the words Basil felt a reluctance to accept his liberty.

Downsitting and Uprising

His contempt for himself did not, however, precipitate him into a refusal.

Then ensued cheerful holiday discussion, all in a burst of relief. Such an excellent arrangement; Miss Williams would be delighted to have Daphne all to herself, to talk baby all the day long. Basil, too, would be able to pay off arrears owing to his friends in London, poor old Walpole, a surprise visit to Cathcart and Johnnie, and so on. Herbert alone was clear-eyed. He had made the suggestion as one proposes heroic remedies. He was the spiritual surgeon, having the imagination that takes in the last consequences of neglected evil; the courage to resort to the known terror of the knife. He was of course ignorant of the exact nature of the emotional lesion, but he saw hope in a temporary separation.

Basil's journey coincided with a progress from mood to mood. For the first hour he sat in his corner of the compartment still under the shadow of Penresco. The inevitable tenderness of good-bye, packed with a heavier weight of sentiment than the occasion warranted, the solemnity of the very words, the uncertainties, the possibilities of absence,—all combined to damp his spirits and chain his thoughts to the place he was leaving. Released from the daily irritation of an artificial atmosphere, his sense of freedom was for the time swallowed up in regret. He saw things in a clearer perspective with each mile of his journey; and the enduring charm of the life appealed to him.

They had made a mistake, he and Daphne, but it was not irremediable. One learns by failure, and his error had clearly been an excess of zeal. He had embraced an ideal of Arcadian simplicity so strenuously that he had forced the note, arousing the suspicion and resentment of the native. He recalled a passage in "Subsoil,"—

The Column

“The soul has her proper territory, within which lies the scope of her exercise. Caught straying beyond these frontiers she is sooner or later challenged by alien powers. Well for her if she at oncé confesses her nativity; for, should she by chance or stratagem have learned their password, she is made welcome, and so led on to confusion.”

Well, either by chance or stratagem he had learned the password, and deluded himself into believing that the rest of the language was but a matter of residence. But he, whose whole life had been a doing, found it not easy to adapt himself to a mere existing. Then, too, he had never had a chance to rectify his blunder. The closeness of their intercourse kept the wound raw; he was hipped, discouraged. A little holiday in town would recruit him spiritually.

At Bristol a party of excursionists paying a first visit to London invaded his carriage. He was at first annoyed, then amused, by their chatter. It was as if the train bearing him had tapped humanity; and after an exile amongst vegetables he appreciated the stimulus of human intercourse. He was drawn into conversation by the delicious ignorance of one of his fellow travellers, a fresh country girl, and, correcting her on some question of topography, betrayed the abstract Londoner. The others plied him eagerly with questions; and he slipped unconsciously into the rostrum. He was happy as demonstrator, and talked well, convinced of his power. His spirits rose; here at least were people who could appreciate him.

It must be admitted, he thought, that he had a grievance. A man robbed of his *métier* can hardly be blamed if he appears unperceptive; and it was an absurd prejudice in Daphne to object to the spread of sweetness

Downsitting and Uprising

and light ; he conceded the felicity of Arnold's phrase in passing. Vicarious authorship was all very well in its way, but it left one's real self unused.

How London called him ! How infatuate to suppose he could be himself in any other place. The city of day by day, of dead selves, of the door shut on yesterday, a new duty born with to-morrow. Every man has his Mecca ; here was his. There are some natures, he told himself, whose powers are called out only by the sense of difficulty ; and London is the true *Mater Severa*, whose warmth must be smitten from her stony bosom. Whom she takes she stifles ; only those who seize her with importunate hands come to know of her austere tenderness, her stanch maternity.

The names of stations shouted by porters became cries of welcome ; and by Reading he already heard the diapason of the Strand. The fever of the town was on him ; he voiced the epic of London arousing his companions—upon whom had fallen the vague fear of the metropolis—as one leading pilgrims to some land of promise. Even the engine seemed infected with his rapture, bounding forward with answering cries.

The depressing environs of the great city, the little futile gardens planned in the first flush of wedded happiness, the rawness of unfinished villas, were seen through a halo of kindliness.

Every place spoke of effort ; wherever one looked were hints of doing ; and on the backs of houses shone the hieroglyphics of labour.

The clangour of the metals was woven into a song of progress ; the perspective opened welcoming arms, and Basil, leaning out of the window, bared his forehead, drawing up into his nostrils the stimulating reek.

They ran into Paddington as into a longed-for haven.

The Column

Basil crossed London in an ecstasy ; so well content was he that he grossly overpaid his cabman. He put up at a small, snug hotel in a backwater of the Strand, and, barely allowing himself time to snatch a hasty dinner, turned out into the street unconscious of fatigue.

He could not get his fill of the music of the pavement. How beautiful it all was, the glory of shop windows, the sliding frieze of the damned. It was all so new, so endearingly familiar. He found himself tolerant of everything, of everybody, laughing with those that laughed, sorrowing with the abject. He had to put actual restraint upon his hands to prevent him loading himself ridiculously with the ingenious jetsam of the gutter,—crocodiles that crawled horribly, and suicidal clowns.

He had no desire to visit any place of amusement ; it was the street, always the street. He went to bed at a late hour, and before turning in leaned out over the purple, throbbing mystery.

He felt the physical well-being of one at home, and was open to kindly influences.

He thought of Daphne and Penresco set in a pale vignette against the violet sky. Sweet and cool. This was the secret of it all ; contrast, alternation. To live strenuous days for half the year, and then to slip away for rest and meditation. To be themselves, each in his and her own way.

He went to sleep contented, as one who had solved a problem.

CHAPTER XXV—*Walpole*

BASIL WARING once described Ernest Walpole as “one of those uncomfortable people who have the courage of their convictions.”

The extent of his courage was apparent only to those who knew that he had renounced his inheritance to carry on his work in Poplar. It seems likely that only silence on Ernest's part as to his occupation prevented reconciliation with his father. How vague were the latter's ideas on the subject may be gathered from the formula in which he always referred to his son,—

“Oh, Ernest? Why, he lives in some dirty hole in the East End, and goes about asking omnibus cads whether they are saved.”

It is difficult to say why he insisted on the precise class of Ernest's solicitude,—unless to his mind its fugitive habit suggested the last condition of futility.

Walpole preceded Basil at the Settlement by some ten months. There had been a loose intercourse at Oxford, during which Ernest had been profoundly impressed by the other's fluent solution of social problems. His slow, logical mind failed to admit the possibility of keen perceptions without a corresponding activity. For him, to see was to engage; and as, he argued, Waring saw so much farther than he, it followed he would be more exemplary in achievement. He quoted Basil to his colleagues in Poplar with dogged persistence, until they, at first resentful, were come to believe in him and attach to his dicta the authority of the specialist.

When at last it was heard that Basil intended to throw

The Column

in his lot with them, exchanging the random excitement of his counsel for the abiding stimulus of his presence, these devoted men marvelled why they, beyond all others, had been selected for this honour. Walpole went about in a buzzing ecstasy, counting the days. When Basil came there was a division. He was politely contemptuous of their methods, which he asserted "smelt of Kingsley." There were protests and a resignation, but the combination of enthusiasm with solid industry began to tell; and in a few months the Settlement fell into line behind these two. Walpole, mistaking effervescence for progress, could never sufficiently admire the extent of the "Waring Revolution," as they termed it. He pinned his faith absolutely to Basil, and his very sobriety was the surest advocate for his leader's innovations. Those who looked askance at the introduction of dancing on Saturday nights were reconciled when Walpole, his mild eyes beseeching Basil's approval, waltzed heavily round the room in the arms of a stalwart boot-seamstress.

The Settlement proved an attractive field for the exercise of Basil's peculiar talents. Disliking argument with his intellectual equals, he delighted in demonstration. To talk about art and books to an audience intelligent enough to keep in sight of him, and yet sufficiently uninformed to take him on trust, was a charming experience. There is need of a word to express this passion for handing down culture. It is probably a stronger incentive to Settling than mere philanthropy.

Basil was occasionally embarrassed by the fidelity of Walpole, preventing his retreat from predicaments into which he was led by his love for astonishing people. Walpole's round-eyed "But I thought you said——" was a thing he came to dread; and he could not quite bring himself to the febleness of "I never meant it."

Walpole

His prolonged absence and the final announcement of his desertion were explained by Walpole with elaborate earnestness. When it leaked out that Basil was married, he, in the fervour of his loyalty, betrayed opinions dubious in the ordinary person, but in the social worker simply appalling.

“Of course, we can’t judge a man of genius like Waring by ordinary rules. Don’t you think,” he urged, after dark allusions to Ferdinand Lassalle, “that a creature so brilliant owes perhaps a first duty to posterity? Besides, you know, she’s Edward Hastings’ daughter.”

He nursed a secret hope that after the first raptures of wedded souls—necessarily abnormal in so gifted a couple—Basil would return to Poplar, perhaps even accompanied by his wife. As time wore, however, he lost heart, faith never; and set himself patiently to continue the traditions imposed upon the place during the meteor-like brilliancy of “the Waring Period.” He had already reached a condition in which he quoted with absolute reverence “when Waring was here,” when he was startled by a visit from Basil in the flesh.

To Basil himself the visit was appalling. It is seldom pleasing to be confronted by one’s dead self, even when the present phase is on the whole less creditable. When Basil stepped into Walpole’s room it was as if he had stumbled into some nightmare chamber, some ghastly museum of forgotten indiscretions. It was not long in point of time since he left Poplar, but he had lived rapidly; and here was Walpole where he left him—worse—where he set him; a placid curator, furbishing with ostentatious devotion the least engaging specimens of his past ineptitude.

There was something peculiarly exasperating in the humble delight with which the solemn-eyed man rose

The Column

stammering to greet him. It was as if one had set a servant to some useless task—simply to mark time—and had, after the lapse of nearly two years, returned to find the patient creature still faithful to the office lightly imposed, lightly forgotten. Basil thought of that irritating picture of the Roman sentinel. There was less of remorse than anger at the other's stolid, unreasoning fidelity.

He glanced at Walpole's writing table and winced.

"Just in time to look over the last chapter," said Walpole, with a cheerful egoism covering vast unselfishness.

Two years before Walpole had, at a light suggestion of Basil's, set himself to the compilation of a work on "London Trade Guilds,"—a task involving endless research in unattractive quarters.

The huge irony of the situation took away Basil's breath. He knew that had he remained in Poplar the idea, broached with enthusiasm, would have been nursed with hope for a few days and evaporated in discussion, before any practical steps had been taken. His sudden severance from the place had left Walpole with his ridiculous trust.

He could not bring himself to the cruelty of putting into words what was in his mind. Better, he thought, leave the man the rags of his illusion. After all, it had not been bad training for him.

"By Jove!" he said, with what cordiality he could, "you must have stuck to it! We'll try to run through it before I go back. I'm up for a week."

"Only a week?" said Walpole, in a disappointed tone. "I thought perhaps you had brought Mrs. Waring."

"Oh, no," said Basil, absently; "she couldn't very well manage it just now."

"I say, you know," said Walpole, after an awkward

Walpole

silence, "we're awfully anxious to see her. I've heard——"

He stopped abruptly, with the sudden confusion of the shy person caught thinking aloud.

"Yes?" laughed Basil, interrogatively.

"You won't be offended, will you?" said Walpole, nervously. "I met an odd kind of boy at the Art Students' *soirée*, and——"

"You talked about us?" said Basil, mischievously.

"Well, yes," admitted Walpole. "This boy—Johnnie Bargister—happened to hear that I was a—that you and I had worked together; and, naturally——"

Basil came to his rescue.

"But you don't congratulate me," he said, with assumed disappointment.

"I—oh, well, of course you know *that*, Waring. We were all very sorry when you left the Settlement, but delighted to hear of your happiness."

"Yes,—but didn't young Bargister tell you that I had a son?"

"Why, no!—'pon my soul, Waring, I am glad."

The simple fellow beamed through his spectacles in a radiant silence; figuring the advantages of him born the heir of Basil's personality.

"So, you see," continued Basil, "it was quite impossible for Daphne to come to town."

Walpole waited, expecting some further allusion to the woman blessed by the companionship of his hero. He had, in the Oxford days, gathered some hazy notion of Hastings from Basil's vociferous appreciation,—he being hot from reading "Subsoil."

He would not, on consideration, have seen any reason why Basil should talk about his wife; still, there was a reticence in the most communicative of men that

The Column

depressed him. There were so many things he had put by to discuss with Waring, and now they did not seem available.

"You know," said Basil at length, settling himself in his chair and lighting his pipe, "I've come up to see Burge about poor Hastings' book, 'The Age of Pericles.' It was still in the rough when he died, and I've been licking it into shape any time this last year."

"'The Age of Pericles,'" repeated Walpole, setting himself with absurd gravity to drink in every word of Basil's conversation. "I suppose Hastings was a great authority on Phidias and Aspasia and all that?"

"Aha!" chuckled Basil, mysteriously,—“you'll see. I think—yes, I *think*—this will make 'em sit up.”

He laughed.

"It's the innocence of the title, you know—stroke of genius that; but there'll be wigs on the green when they read it—Forster and Wolverton, and all that lot."

Walpole glossed the memory that these were whilom gods, and gazed at Waring with blinking admiration. He was duped by the dexterous egoism with which the man—almost unconsciously—usurped the ideas of others. His artless fancy beheld in Basil the clear-visioned man of intellect, who seized and made use of the crude facts collected by a plodding pedant named Hastings.

"When does it come out?" he asked eagerly.

"Oh, that depends; we must see what Burge says. Of course, you'll understand that nobody knows anything about it beyond the title. I want it to come as a surprise."

Walpole simmered in the delicious experience of sharing a secret with Basil. He did not perceive at the time that he also knew nothing beyond the title.

They smoked in silence for some minutes.

Walpole

“Well,” said Basil, turning abruptly, “how are things going on with you? Hawkins still here?”

“Oh, yes, there have been no changes. We’ve tried to work things on the lines you suggested. We’ve really made some way, I think. I say—can’t you come down on Saturday night?”

Basil made elaborate calculations, as one whose programme was nearly full. It was a welcome recreation to talk to Walpole; it gave him a better opinion of himself than he had had for months. His palate was not responsive to coarse adulation, but Walpole’s sincere homage was grateful—very grateful.

Also he wanted Walpole to gossip; he would not, even in his own mind, put too fine a point upon it; but he wanted Walpole to talk about—oh, about everything.

“Y-es,” he said, “I think I can manage it. What do you do?”

“Oh, the usual thing, you know—coffee, dancing and music. Stanton has promised to sing.”

“By the way,” said Basil, carelessly, “do you ever see anything of that woman who played so well? What was her name?—oh, Mrs. Laffey.”

“Oh, yes, she plays for us sometimes. You know her husband’s dead?”

“Really? I thought I saw his advertisement in some paper only lately.”

“Ah I dare say; the business is kept on in his name, —limited liability, you know. I saw Mrs. Laffey only last week. I’m glad you reminded me,—she asked what had become of you, and wished me to tell you to call when you were in town. She’s moved out to Hammersmith—I’ve got her card somewhere.”

He got up impulsively, and rummaged in the pigeon-holes of his desk.

The Column

Basil was surprised out of the niceties of his judgment. He had supposed Gertrude at best sullenly and significantly careful in the avoidance of his name. Yet she had referred to him with casual politeness; he was to call. For a moment he thought in melodrama: some feminine scheme of vengeance; a large kinsman from the wilds of Connemara with a horsewhip; vitriol. His mind recovered its balance immediately, and his self-esteem suffered. How absurd; for weeks he had plagued himself with all the ingenious possibilities only the imaginative person conceives, over a woman who, so far from brooding among the ashes of a fatal passion, had been quietly tending the domestic hearth, had moved house, and—hoped he would call.

It was an anticlimax worthy of the serious clown who had given him the message. Relief and humiliation alternated in his mind; both giving way to an intense curiosity.

“Ah, yes,” cried Walpole, “here it is: ‘27 Alderney Drive, Hammersmith.’”

Basil covered his perplexity with carelessness.

“I am afraid I shan’t have time,” he said. “I’m sorry, too—it is distinctly an experience to hear Mrs. Laffey play Beethoven.”

“Well,” exclaimed Walpole, promptly, “if you like, I’ll get her to come here on Saturday; she’d be only too pleased.”

“Oh, I don’t think I would; I want to watch things—the people and so on. If you ask Mrs. Laffey to come on my account I shall have to talk to her; I shall waste the evening in fact.”

Walpole unloosed his lumbering admiration for Gertrude’s playing.

“It does one good to watch the boys when she’s at the piano. Gets hold of them somehow without any effort.

Walpole

Curious too, she doesn't go in for the things one would suppose they liked—pretty tunes and so on."

"Ah," said Basil sagely, "there you touch on a most interesting question; whether, after all, it is not the shortest way to give them the best at once; just put it before them without explanation. That is the advantage of music you see; it doesn't explain——"

"Of course with other things—but there it's a question whether they have any possibilities. Hastings, you know, denies it all. He says there are no mute, inglorious Miltons, and that all we do is to put a premium on mediocrity whilst we destroy good, healthy brutishness. It's a bit sweeping, perhaps; but I'm beginning to think——"

"However, you'll see when you read the 'Age.'"

Walpole's forehead wrinkled with pained astonishment.

"But I say, Waring," he said blankly, "I don't quite follow you. Do you mean that—well, all this sort of thing is no use; that they can't be improved?"

"Oh, I don't say they can't be improved, if you care to put it so crudely; the question is, supposing they are improved, what then?"

Basil had dropped into the easy tone of one airing recent convictions. He was engaged in the congenial task of puzzling Walpole. It did not proceed from unkindness; the framer of paradox, like the practical joker, is seldom aware of the mischief he causes to serious persons.

"Not very encouraging for the rest of us," said Walpole, grimly, "if it's to end in *cui bono*."

"Everything, my dear fellow, ends in *cui bono*," said Basil, luxuriously.

"But I thought you swore by 'unhasting, unresting,' and all that," retorted Walpole, gloomily.

The Column

“So I do; but you see it’s much more subtle than that. It’s the effort, you know, whether it leads anywhere or not.”

Walpole looked depressed, and scraped out his pipe in silence.

“You can’t balance it up like a ledger,” continued Basil, airily; “so much culture rubbed in, so much progress. You have to think of the unborn generation. Remember Jacob and the peeled rods—you know the latest theory of the leopard’s spots, don’t you? Well, if you keep on putting it before them, the most perfect thing, it’s bound to tell in time.”

By which it may be gathered that Basil already counted himself with the producers of perfect things,—abandoning the showman’s rôle he had claimed in a certain conversation with Edward Hastings.

“But, Waring, how about the generation that is born? Are we to leave them to struggle on?”

“No, not at all. You can do a great deal even in a single generation. Only, it must be unconscious—no preaching, you know.”

Walpole glanced significantly, though unconsciously, at his desk and sighed.

“Oh, that?” said Basil, with unintentional cruelty; “useful enough in its way—as a record of a phase. Something to measure from when the good time comes.”

“Then,” said Walpole, gloomily, “so far as the Settlement is concerned, it’s all been so much time wasted.”

“I wouldn’t say that. Nothing is wasted if you will only consider it for its own sake, irrespective of results. You see it’s quite hopeless to expect to know where anything ends.”

Walpole was silent for a little space. “I’m afraid you’ve grown too subtle for me,” he said. “Of course it doesn’t matter a hang, so far as I am concerned; I

Walpole

might as well do one thing as another. Only—one likes to feel that one's work will at least be useful to some one else."

He turned sharply, with more of regret than reproach in his manner.

"You were so keen about 'The Guilds,' you know."

"I don't deny that I've changed my opinion," said Basil; "one must grow."

Walpole did not retort that one sometimes assumes the prophet's mantle without remembering the difference in physique; that to inherit ideas without first ascertaining one's ability to touch them on all sides sometimes led to the pillory instead of the pedestal. Something of the sort crossed his mind, but he was too disappointed to care for sarcasm. As he said, for himself it "didn't matter;" he was the mere intellectual navy. Sufficient recompense for him to have aided in Basil's development.

Basil, on his part, was anxious to get away from the uncomfortable subject of the book.

"What you said about music just now," he said, with a suggestion of deference,—“of course music can't be considered by ordinary standards. It is so entirely a thing of the emotions—doesn't involve the intellect at all; though it's invaluable in its influence on character. One may always use it, even on animals. Think of all the stories; from the building of Thebes down to the——

"If I were going on here I should give a great deal of attention to music. Of course I'm not a musician myself, but one can always get hold of people to play and sing; and with some one behind them——

"You see, one would use the artist as the hypnotist employs a medium,—play on him that he might interpret."

"Curiously," said Walpole, "I had been thinking of something of the sort. A kind of sequence, you know; arranged with an educational purpose. Beginning with

The Column

the earlier composers and tracing the development of the tone idea—that's the right phrase, isn't it?"

"Happy thought!" cried Basil. "I see your idea—Bach to Berlioz." He nodded with shining eyes. "Yes; distinctly good. Just a little—a very little—explanation, and let the music do the rest. Now for the interpreter."

"Well, I thought of Mrs. Laffey. Of course she hasn't done anything of the sort as yet. So far she's just picked things at random. But I thought this would make a definite course—for the coming winter. Suppose you ask her?"

"Why don't you?" said Basil.

Walpole laughed nervously.

"I think she would take it much more seriously from you, Waring. I'm not a lady's man, you know."

Something of their old enthusiasm inflamed them. The scheme was exactly of a sort to appeal to Basil,—neat, organic, progressive. He almost regretted that he had given up the Settlement. Of course he would do the written analysis of the examples chosen; with Gillies to prompt him in the technical details, he could manage that very well.

When he was gone Walpole sat for a long time in deep thought, an unlighted pipe between his teeth. At last he rose and collecting the manuscript of "The Guilds" stuffed it into the grate and watched it burn. He murmured to himself a certain stanza from "In Memoriam," sighed, yawned, and went to bed.

It happened that at the same time a depressed woman in Bedfordshire turning to her sleepy lord, remarked humbly,—

"I suppose if Ernest gave up his work in Poplar you would not—I mean you wouldn't refuse to see him."

"Not in the least," said Mr. Walpole, drowsily. "Should welcome his return to common-sense."

CHAPTER XXVI—*In Exitu Israel*

MICHAEL TRIGG, dreamer though he was, could hardly attribute the event at Penresco to his incantation. The latter he accepted as a failure, and explained it ruefully as due to his own unworthiness to essay so high an enterprise. Not for some time did he take anyone into his confidence, and then, the need for secrecy past and himself unilluminated, he stupefied Herbert Waring by the naïve discussion of his excursion into the occult.

The complicated nature of the youth's paganism, flashed suddenly upon him, made it difficult for Herbert to deal with him in a workmanlike manner. He caught at the somewhat threadbare argument of period, hinting that the day for miracles was past; that, though doubtless still possible, they were in the nineteenth century neither probable nor convenient.

Among the details of Michael's astonishing confession was one he picked out with considerable satisfaction. Basil, in his anxiety to justify himself, had told him of Daphne's annoyance on finding the injury to the column. Herbert, while sympathising with him over the absurd cause of his domestic uneasiness, was quite unable to hit upon any explanation of the circumstance; though he pointed out that the absence of the fragment made accident unlikely. Now that he could lay his hand upon the culprit, however innocent of purpose, his unyielding code of honour made it imperative that he should at least tell Daphne how the thing had happened. He did not suppose that after Basil's disclaimer she would still

The Column

harbour any suspicion of his complicity, yet, so Herbert argued, while she remained in doubt there were possibilities of vague resentment best cleared away. Averse from discussion, he was the apostle of definite platforms; and, though he preached the unwisdom of allusion to past unpleasantness, his mind once made up on a point of duty, he would go through with it.

It was a thankless business, but it had to be got over, and by himself. What it cost him an observer might have read in the set of his mouth and the fine twitch of his eyebrows as he walked over to Penresco.

He had never before realised so keenly the futility of ordinary expression in talking to Daphne. His intercourse with Hastings, close though it had been, was not troubled by this "polarisation of phrases" to himself alive with meaning; partly, no doubt, because it had never occurred to either to argue, but chiefly because Hastings added to the stability of his own ideas a masculine tolerance of, and cosmopolitan acquaintance with, other ways of thinking. Daphne, however, inherited her father's prejudices unpropped by reasoning, untempered by association with minds radically different. She was sheer instinct, backed by the tradition of one whose intellectual standing he, to her knowledge, recognised. He had to remind her of a disagreeable subject, and he knew that she was unable to discount the terms of his information. For it is not the flowers of our familiar speech that we apprehend, but the earth of association clinging about their roots.

Daphne was as completely cut off from any sympathy with him as a being from another planet. The knowledge that personally she liked, and, as her father's friend and husband's brother, respected him, was little consolation. His exquisite perceptions allowed him no escape

from the conviction that, apart from the essential difference between them, she involuntarily despised his position as that of a man bound by negative vows,—mulcted in a certain sum of the joy of living. Lastly, though this he never allowed to become a conscious thought, she had that triumphant advantage over him any woman has over a man who, confessedly or not, is, or has been, by way of loving her.

He had chosen an hour when he hoped to find Daphne indoors—there was a certain community of ideas in chairs and tables—but to his chagrin Angélique sent him round to the column.

For the first hour, he experienced a mood in which he could appreciate Michael's fantastic reasoning,—his discomfort edged rather than allayed by his more accurate knowledge.

He was but a shade from being sensible of the old beaten gods, he, the emissary of the "pale Galilean."

The clean epithet braced him to a sense of his purpose—the pride of his cloth.

He had not been to Penresco for some days, and the faint, involuntary look of surprise with which Daphne greeted him did not make his business the more attractive. He sorely regretted that he was compelled to speak in this place of all others—the stronghold of her personality, as it were—and he all but succumbed to the temptation to wait until they met on less positive ground.

They exchanged guarded commonplaces over the sleeping child. Daphne herself seemed less frank than usual,—on the alert for some impeachment.

"The Age of Pericles" helped him a little, and Daphne had news to give. Burge offered satisfactory terms; at least, so Basil thought. Did Herbert consider that the binding should be uniform with that of "Subsoil"?

The Column

“Well, no; hardly, I think,” said Herbert. “It seems to me that the ‘Age’ is so unique that it deserves a distinctive treatment.”

Daphne tactfully remembered that book-binding was an old hobby of Herbert’s, abandoned with his orders as a hindrance.

“Curiously,” she said, regretting the word immediately, “you agree with me; that is precisely what I thought.”

Herbert bit his lip and flushed darkly. Why, he thought, need she insist on the gulf between them? It is significant that he took for granted the relative desirability of their positions. Daphne made haste to cover her slip.

“I intended to suggest that Basil’s friend Cathcart might, perhaps, be persuaded to design the titlepage and cover. He would, at least, avoid the prettiness we all, I think, dislike so much.”

The inclusion of himself in the “we” was too obvious to be of any comfort. Besides, he reflected, Daphne could hardly escape the recognition of his collaboration.

“I don’t know Cathcart’s work,” he said, “but from the way Basil speaks of it I should say the thing might safely be left to his judgment.”

He hesitated for a moment, adding with the contemplative manner of the connoisseur,—

“One could, at least, be sure that the outside of the book would have some organic relation to the matter, not mere decoration—the curse of modern book-binding. There was a book I saw the other day,—what was the title?” He frowned nervously. “Oh, ‘Out of the Depths’; and the cover was done all over with little birds, like the pattern you see on nursery wall-papers.”

He rambled on, divided between his attractive hobby and the uncompromising duty he brought with him,

wondering how he should find an opportunity to edge it in.

Angélique brought tea; but, he noted with half-humorous regret, no table. He was fated, he thought, to receive no aid from conventional surroundings. A man, a woman, a child; earth, sea, and sky. The column was an aggravation,—critical without being human.

Daphne's calm, gracious manner, her smooth, deliberate movements as she poured out tea and handed him his cup, so far from assisting him to composure, but served to insist on the hopelessness of reasoning with her, the inevitableness of all she said and did. There was perverse fascination in remarking how freshly she used the commonplaces of the occasion. It was a significant though small fact that they sat on the ground. Herbert admitted the incongruity of a table, and there flashed into his memory Caspar's proposition by his brother's bedside.

Would it not have been better for most of them if the scheme had been carried out? Though this was allowing the place an influence he was determined to make light of.

The reminiscence forced upon his notice the rapid development of the woman by his side; giving him a phase of her for comparison. Then she had been emphatically a girl—never ungainly, but poised, expectant. She was now as one who had tried all the doors of life without any startling emotion. She had apparently touched existence at wider bounds than he ever could; yet, nothing *blasée*, she retained all her young, fresh curiosity. He, less experienced, was already late middle-aged. Above everything she was entirely free from the appalling knowingness of the young matron.

There was something exasperating in the spectacle of her unassertive health. A hint of the muscular, some

The Column

taint of the buxom would have made her naturalness more bearable. It is always comforting to relegate the unusual to a type.

Beside her he felt absurdly artificial. He remembered some criticism of a magazine illustration: "A petticoat talking to a pair of trousers." Well, she was woman enough, quick flesh and blood; but he was emphatically a thing of trousers. That he wore a cassock was but adding a personal flourish to a common, and perhaps unavoidable ineptitude, "putting frills to it," he himself would have said.

His tact deserted him; he peeped over the rim of disaster in a sort of perverse exultation,—the mood of one trailing his coat. The humblest of men, he would permit not even Daphne to compassionate a priest. He began his charge in the dry tone of the spiritual magistrate.

"I wanted to speak to you about something," he said, nervousness giving a raw edge, an ill temper, to words sufficiently difficult.

Daphne looked across her cup with a bland surprise, irritatingly genuine.

There was a dangerous silence. It was so difficult to hit the tone; jocularly would be offensive, severity a farce, complaint an injustice. The average woman would have helped him with—"Well?" but Daphne was more simple, less merciful. Herbert rushed at it.

"You remember," he stammered, "that somebody—that is to say, you found some damage to the column?"

Daphne rested her wide, serious eyes upon him, and coloured slowly over her face and neck. It was the first time Herbert had seen her blush, and he felt as if he had been guilty of an indecency. He assured himself that it was not a time for delicacy.

"I found out—quite by accident—who did it."

In Exitu Israel

“Is that all?” said Daphne, without emotion.

“Well, yes,” replied Herbert testily. “I thought you would be relieved to know the culprit. It was Michael Trigg.”

“I had forgotten all about it,” murmured Daphne. “But I don’t quite understand; why should I care who did it? The thing was done, it was a pity, and there’s an end of it.”

“She is either callous or incredibly artful,” he thought. It struck him oddly that perhaps one should feel sorry for Basil. His annoyance was perceptible when he next spoke.

“You see,” he explained, “Basil was very much distressed about it at the time. You had some idea—had you not?—that he was in some way responsible. I mean that someone had abused his permission to come here.”

Daphne had clasped her hands about her knee, and was looking out seaward; an absent smile parting her lips.

She turned to him with an almost imperceptible lifting of the chin and lowering of the lids; as if she were studying some curious and not over-attractive animal.

“Basil told you?” she said with faint surprise.

“Yes; of course he was very anxious to find out; he thought I might be able to help him,” said Herbert, with peevish distinctness, as one teaching a dull child.

“I trust you won’t be hard upon Michael,” he added, “he is a well-meaning lad, though—eccentric.” The last word was almost vicious.

“I? Oh, I shall not speak of it to him,” replied Daphne, carelessly. “It is of no consequence now.”

The “now” suggested to Herbert a notice-board warning him that he had not, nor was intended to have, leave of her confidence. The imp of the perverse drove him to pounce on the image.

The Column

“Of course,” he said with misguided solicitude, “a police notice would prevent any trespass in the future. Unsightly, I admit; but country people will consider themselves free of a place until they are told otherwise.”

Daphne drew in her breath sharply.

“Please don’t talk about it any more,” she said in a low voice; “I had forgotten—I wish to forget the circumstance.”

“Won’t you smoke?” she asked presently, with a civility that was in itself a rebuke.

She began to play with the boy, who had awakened; and they made haste to smother the unpleasantness in the discussion of his beauties.

Herbert had satisfied his conscience; he had scotched a worm to unearth an adder. He had predicted a certain clashing of temperament between Daphne and Basil, but, with the ignorance of the celibate, trusted to intimacy for the fusion of awkward edges. It was perhaps a natural foible to overestimate the solvent power of a relation he had renounced. Though, at the time, he had regretted the marriage, he had afterwards deluded himself into the belief that his objection was at bottom æsthetic. He would not have been guilty of such a blunder had he possessed himself altogether; he redeemed that part of his soul in pawn by explaining his prejudices on abstract grounds. Therefore beyond his negative reception of Basil’s intimation he had put no obstacle in the way of their union. The least suspicion of any vice, any actual slip in his brother’s past, would have sent him to Hastings a very Jeremiah; but he glossed the more serious question without a misgiving but what he chose to term—æsthetic.

His present anxiety was none the less for being undefined. Had Daphne descended to complaining, even had

In Exitu Israel

she seemed unhappy, he would have been less disturbed. This cheerful acquiescence, at so early a date, impressed him as uncanny.

“Basil comes back to-morrow, does he not?” he asked.

“No,” replied Daphne, balancing the child’s feet on her palm with deliberate caution, “he is staying another week.”

Her action suggested a well-known picture, fusing Herbert’s vague predilections into the type of hallowed union. Not till afterwards did he remember that the signal expression of motherhood was not also that of marriage. He tried to read regret into Daphne’s tone as she absently repeated “another.”

“Won’t take him a week to settle with Burge?”

“Oh, no,” answered Daphne, “some friends of Walpole have asked him; and he wants to see Cathcart.”

There was no soreness in her voice, but it flashed upon Herbert that perhaps his banishment of Basil had been arbitrary, and not altogether to her taste. He threw out a feeler.

“Great pity you couldn’t go up to town with Basil.”

“I was not very anxious,” said Daphne, with evident frankness; “we should have been rather in the way, baby and I. It was so entirely a business journey. And then Basil really had promised to look up ‘poor old Walpole.’ He is rather afraid of women, I believe.”

“Ah, the Settlement. Tell me—supposing at any time Basil should wish to take up his work again in Poplar, would you—I mean have you ever thought about it?”

“Surely,” said Daphne, evasively, “Basil is recovered from that disease?”

She pricked the humanitarian.

“How do you mean?” he flashed at her. “Can one,

The Column

rather should one, wish to outgrow the desire to help the less fortunate? Of course," he added quickly, "we don't all agree as to the best way; but I should say that anything done with that intention was—healthy."

"The evil we do is often the fruit of our noblest endeavour; the good the offspring of some casual vice," quoted Daphne, with a smile.

"Yes, yes, of course, from that point of view—in a work of art; hardly as a rule of conduct, I think."

"There, of course," said Daphne, indifferently, "I can't follow you."

Herbert hesitated; must he further confirm his shackles in her eyes by preaching to her? Unselfish ever, he went on.

"Daphne," he said, "don't think that I want to impose my views upon you; but do you realise the necessity, in all human concerns, for sacrifice?"

"Perfectly—one's very pleasure depends upon it; but I don't see your drift."

"Plainly this. You will forgive me when I say that I know Basil better than you do; and I am convinced that this lotos-eating life does not satisfy him. He was never so happy as when up to his eyes in work at the Settlement. Moreover, I have a suspicion that he feels it himself, and that nothing but the risk of paining you keeps him from saying so."

"But," interrupted Daphne, "why should I prevent his going back to Poplar if he wants to?"

"Would you leave Penresco, then?" cried Herbert, surprised out of discretion.

"I? Ah, no; I could never leave Penresco." She included the column, the sea, her father's grave in a passionate glance, passionate though leisurely.

"That is not to be thought of," she repeated quietly.

In Exitu Israel

The absence of warmth in her assurance prevented Herbert for the moment from appreciating its finality.

"But, Daphne," he said with concern, "would you have Basil remain in Poplar alone?"

"Why not?" said the girl, with innocent wonder. "I suppose he would come down to see me sometimes."

In all simplicity she accepted as a natural and practicable arrangement what Basil had pictured as a poetic possibility. Herbert, the victim of Murillo, was appalled by the prospect. He mastered himself, and used conventional axioms instead of the spontaneous correction that rose to his lips.

"A wife's place," he said, with trite seriousness, "is at her husband's side."

Daphne looked at him consideringly, with a suggestion of Johnnie's drawing in her eyes. She was honestly endeavouring to accommodate her faculties to his point of view.

"Yes, perhaps; but that, I think, implies home and a home life. There could be no home for me away from here. When the lifeboatman goes out to the wreck, you would not have his wife go with him, would you?"

Herbert frowned her illustration aside. His imagination, captive to Holy Families, was intolerant of any more mundane conceptions. He spoke with agitation.

"You miss the core of the matter, sacrifice."

"I cannot see the use of unnecessary sacrifice."

Herbert, aware in spite of himself, in spite of her chosen illustration, that this indolent girl, lounging with slack limbs by his side, was capable of the last renunciation, was of the very stuff of heroines, was convicted of injustice. He attacked her emotions.

"I am very grieved," he said. "Do you know what you are throwing away?" In his agitation he permitted

The Column

the personal cry. "Believe me it is we lonely men who see the full beauty of what you would reject so lightly,—the close communion, the identity of hopes."

Daphne shook her head with a grave smile.

"Do you know," she said, "I believe you think I am—what is the word?—advanced; like those women who ride bicycles in knickerbockers and belong to clubs. On the contrary, I am very old-fashioned, as old as Penelope."

"Yes, yes," cried Herbert, impatiently. "Don't think I hold a brief for Basil; I have no doubt you are a better wife than he deserves. But you don't seem to grasp my idea of wedded life."

"I confess I don't," said Daphne, composedly. "Basil came into my life, I have borne him a son, I am his, wherever he may be. It is not necessary that I should be always in his way, hampering him in—his work."

There was an amused hesitation in the utterance of the last two words that stung Herbert. He was on the edge of a retort, and the mediator had perished in the accuser but for the appearance of Mr. Bargister.

"I say!" he shouted excitedly without waiting to come up to them.

"I want you to come over to Morthover this evening. Where's Waring?"

Herbert, who had risen at the sound of his voice, shot a side glance at Daphne. She spoke without emotion.

"He doesn't come home for another week." Mr. Bargister looked at her in mild perplexity.

"How's that? Johnnie said he was coming home yesterday."

"Is Johnnie here?" cried Daphne, with girlish gladness.

"Yes—drawings," murmured Mr. Bargister, feebly. He had compiled an elaborate advertisement in his

In Exitu Israel

progress to the column, but his surprise at Basil's absence spoiled his periods.

"That is why I want you to come over."

"How splendid," cried Daphne. "You can arrange about church, can't you, Herbert?"

Herbert nodded. He observed notes of interrogation thickening on Mr. Bargister's forehead, and heroically caught up the baby. Mr. Bargister stammered enthusiasm, until Herbert managed to nail him to a parish business.

The two men left together, and before they parted Herbert felt, though he hardly knew why, that he ought to make some explanation.

"Daphne heard from Basil this morning," he said pointedly; "he begs for another week—he has many acquaintances in town. He looked up Johnnie, did he?"

"Yes; he was at Cathcart's the day before yesterday. Cathcart is being turned out of his studio by workmen—that is why Johnnie came down. Cathcart wanted Basil to spend some days with him at a public house in Kent—but Basil said he was due here."

"I see," said Herbert. "Evidently he got the invitation from Walpole's friend yesterday."

Yet as Herbert walked home he felt that something required elucidation.

Surely, the letter to Daphne was written before the visit to Cathcart!

Of those persons who happened to meet in Mrs. Bargister's drawing-room, only one—Johnnie—saw Daphne. The rest were merely conscious of Mrs. Waring.

As Mr. Bargister had said, there were drawings, the greater number studies from Cathcart's work; so that when Johnnie, with high-pulsed calmness, held his first private view, he was less exhibitor than page at the door.

The Column

He was pathetically eager to enlist Daphne among the followers of Cathcart; indeed, it might be seen that his own drawings were merely a pretext.

Cathcart had his little band of expositors, and on the whole had no right to complain, since, understood or misunderstood, he was able to live by his art. He was destined, however, to miss the one intelligence that leaped to his like answering flame; and by the same ironic shuffle, Fate cheated Daphne of the man who could have seen her as she was.

Herbert, sitting narrow-eyed, was struck by the obscure sympathy between Daphne and Cathcart, and applied himself to define it. Had he known, it was settled for them two generations before.

The yeoman poet who shook ecstatic before the revelations of flood and field, who in jewelled midnights had tended the throes of lambing ewes, and bowed before the inwelling of sunrise was one with Cathcart's progenitors by the freemasonry of the earth. One might picture them foregathering in some bucolic Valhalla, strong-sinewed, calm-eyed, overlooking their encumbered posterity.

The isolation of Daphne and Johnnie lent them a certain defiance,—unintended, but so taken by the others. Mr. Bargister exhibited an appreciable soreness and was vaguely reminiscent of Frankenstein. He was staunch to his renunciation, but a little uneasy about the reward. Though not impatient, he thought it time for a little pudding,—some evident laurels encircling Johnnie's brow. Also, though he allowed for madness in the arts, he expected intervals of sanity. Above all, he missed Purpose, Mission. He was, however, strenuously willing to learn and lavished careful praise upon the drawings. He would have preferred that Art had swooped upon his

In Exitu Israel

son in less masterful guise, but he was too much an Englishman to complain.

Mrs. Bargister had a vague sense of orgies, and was alternately disapproving and incoherently jocular.

Herbert's relation to Daphne placed him in a false position. He was tethered to the domestic hearth; he owed it to Basil that Daphne's imagination should not go moonlighting.

Not that her recognition of the drawings was disquieting in itself; on the contrary, it became her, and was what he would have desired in the abstract, and he still swore by his æsthetic objection to her marriage. Still—as Basil's wife—this sort of thing must be discouraged; and he mentally added to the negative programme of the pre-Dante essayist on female education, "Nor look at pictures."

He inwardly thanked Heaven that Johnnie was not ten years older. He was merely acolyte to her mood; but even so must be watched and combated. He assured himself that it was his duty to prevent an æsthetic indiscretion from developing into a social blunder.

Johnnie's own studies were neutral, and the opportunity they afforded for decorative criticism put Mr. Bargister into a good humour. He hung garlands about the bony prominences of the Torso,—indulging his fancy until the others viewed the simple exercises of the student through a meshwork of tropes and figures. He quoted Browning's

"If that acromion had a deeper dint,"

and skilfully covered the exhaustion of his more technical information by a digression on the social duties of the artist. He brought up on the Artist as Educator.

Johnnie was frankly bored, and the suggestion from his mother of a little music came as dew from heaven.

The Column

This ironically shifted the sense of uneasiness on to the shoulders of Daphne. "A little music," albeit Schubert's, had ensnared her feet; had shaken her mind from its empire over herself on the night of Basil's coming. She had since mistrusted music as a drugged wine perverting the senses. Beethoven she loved and dreaded; and the more architectural composers braced her to the authentic outlines of existence; but the stealthy fever which lurks in the creations of modern masters was an intoxication, rising from the lower nature. The very poignancy of their appeal caused her acute distress. She was as one who had erred and suffered; she thought of music as Socrates spoke of love; and the notes of the piano were astringent, causing her an almost ascetic recoil upon herself.

She and Johnnie were linked as in their late enthusiasm. He came over to where she sat, with an odd, expressive movement of his hands.

"I feel," he murmured, dropping into a chair by her side,—*"I feel like the chap—who was it? who was covered with honey and left to the flies!"*

Daphne laughed sympathetically.

"Mustn't be selfish," she said. "You've had it all your own way. The others like it; look at your mother," she added mischievously.

Mrs. Bargister nodded ecstatically, though sleepily, to a love-song of Henselt's.

Johnnie choked a guffaw.

"I say, old chap," he whispered recklessly, "what would you give for a burst on Hesperus?"

Daphne threw up her head.

"Oh, yes! over the down with a sou'wester on your face."

"Just a lick of salt."

In Exitu Israel

“Can't you hear the leather wheezing, and, thump, thump—a little click now and then?”

“Don't, don't, Johnnie. Oh!” she sighed, “it is months since I rode.”

“You have Hesperus yet?”

She chided him with her eyes.

“Of course, of course—I might have known,” he muttered hastily.

“But I can't ride just now,” continued Daphne.

“No, I suppose not; the Ki——little Basil,” corrected Johnnie in confusion.

Daphne leaned to him swiftly, with sudden confidence.

“Help me to make a man of him.”

“May I?” almost shouted Johnnie. He was too fresh to perceive the ignoring of her husband; too simple to read a personal note in the honour; too proud to catch the heart-cry under it.

His head whizzed with an elation clean, impersonal, as that of a trainer of dogs.

“Has he been hurt yet?” he asked vaguely.

“How? Oh, I see what you mean. Yes, he fell off my lap and knocked his head—quite a big bump. Johnnie,” she chuckled with girlish delight, “he is a little Spartan.”

“We'll teach him ‘The Three Lessons,’” said Johnnie.

“Ah,” she cried, “you have read ‘Subsoil’?”

“Every day.”

Her eyes brimmed.

“Did Basil tell you about the ‘Age’?”

“Yes; what is it like?”

“It is man's work, Johnnie.”

The same thought possessed either on the moment. How like in their work were Hastings and Cathcart. Johnnie could not hold it.

The Column

“You will like to know,” he said shyly, “how Cathcart worshipped your father. It was he who lent me ‘Subsoil.’ Do you know Cathcart is awfully anxious to see you.”

“Me? why?”

Johnnie stammered.

“Oh, something I said about you.”

CHAPTER XXVII—*The Development of the Emotional Idea*

BASIL WARING was more picturesque and infinitely more comfortable as casual visitor and disinterested critic than as administrator of the Settlement. Freed from personal responsibility, he felt his interest in the place revive; and Walpole beat his breast that he had ever doubted him. To a man of Basil's temperament, there is no more delightful occupation than to spill-over gratuitous advice; to set wheels in motion, secure in the knowledge that by what time the question should be asked—to what purpose?—he would not be there to answer it. Not that Basil was one to shirk the bill; but, to use his own words, he "disliked hampering the freedom of the chisel by a consideration of chips."

Under the stimulus of his presence, the place took on a fresh activity. Deserters were beaten up with the war-cry of his name, and recruits trapped in the ambush of reminiscence. The club-room was filled every night; jealousies sprang up like mushrooms under the shadow of his favour, and for a week he tasted all the joys of a royal restoration.

It was the way of Basil's enthusiasms to unfit him for the consideration of anything else. The sudden waning of his interest in the production of "The Age" was an occasion for disappointment and perplexity to Burge, his publisher.

Burge's hobby—his secondary hobby, that is; for his first was, oddly, publishing—was the psychology of genius. Depressed by his inability to hold Basil for

The Column

more than ten minutes at a time, he sought for consolation by dissecting him in that work which is one day to astonish the world.

He discussed Basil with his wife. That lady, who, it was said, had married Burge out of gratitude for his publication of her verses, persistently disbelieved in all his swans. Perhaps she argued from her own case that a man so credulous of ability needed protection from the impudence of authors.

"Sam, you're a fool," she observed emphatically. "Mr. Waring is a fribble. If it isn't a woman, write me down a Quakeress."

"But, my dear, he is married—less than two years ago, and to a goddess."

Mrs. Burge threw up her fine eyes.

"The publisher of 'Pulse-tracings,' which, as Monstrance observed, would have corrupted the morals of the Restoration, says, 'He is a married man'!"

Basil, who looked upon himself as one who had been tried by fire, was convinced of his rectification. He confessed the wisdom of Carlyle, and read Chapter Nine, Book Two, of "Sartor Resartus" with the inward affirmative groans of the Methodist. How true that one must suffer to get loose from self; how blessed the state of those who survive the Centre of Indifference. He illumined Walpole's rooms, the Everlasting Yea incarnate; steadfast of eye and lip. There was in his air a reticence, a dignity as of one who shrined a secret sorrow. As he trod the pavement he exhaled an aggressive brotherhood, and was inquisitive into the trials of charwomen and shoeblacks. He meditated a little volume of verse for Burge, "Songs of a Worker," shaping the titlepage with that reserve which reveals.

For the first time in his life, he became an early riser,

Development of the Emotional Idea

and grew almost tearful over London dawns. It was a tender conceit to associate this hour of the day with Daphne and their child. He had already framed the "pale vignette" in passable verse, imitated from Verlaine,—wearing the idea like an amulet between him and the soil of the street.

He regretted her clinging to an ideal that had been proved over and over again inconvenient; seeking for a parallel to himself in *The Blithedale Romance*. Altogether it was not unpleasing to hold himself martyred to Daphne's limitations. Some day, perhaps by the indiscretion of a friend—conveniently undetermined—the world would know what he had renounced. His eyes moistened as he ran over the names of great men stunted by not so much uncongenial as inadequate spouses.

He would never cry out; but somewhere, in the cadence of a sonnet, some rare sensitive ear would hear and understand. Some eye made clear by suffering would pierce his armour of sober cheerfulness and know the hair shirt, the iron girdle. Meanwhile it would serve to keep him sweet and sane in those hours when he was too tired for work.

To continue in the strain of Carlyle, the thing that lay next him was this musical scheme of Walpole's. As the latter had observed, no one could lick it into shape so well as himself. This entailed a meeting with Gertrude. Well, why not? There was wholesome chastening in the idea, besides the satisfaction of knowing finally how they stood. It was also picturesque. There was a risk, he allowed—a risk, that is to say, of cruelty. It was necessary to be quite frank with himself; a relapse was impossible, for was he not disillusioned?

Really, this open clinching of cold palms over the ashes of old fires was very fine. Something of Goethe?

The Column

—providing always that Gertrude acquiesced in the question of ashes. He stopped his walk, considering.

Oh, it was preposterous to suppose otherwise. "She hoped he would call." Unless one indulged in extravaganza, this implied the acceptance of a treaty of friendship. From the unconscious evidence of Walpole, she too had emerged,—cheerful, energetic, averse from the discussion of heart problems.

How admirably her experience fitted her for the office. Who was it said "no woman can play Beethoven until she has had an unfortunate love affair"? There was extraordinary material in the episode; and, if one considered, she was indebted to him for this leaven of tragedy.

He would sit, and she would sit, knowing——

Oh, it was really very fine—very like Goethe, or, perhaps—Richter? Well, Gertrude was hardly Nathalie, nor Daphne Lenette. However, it was a genuine Thorn Piece.

He considered it more delicate to allow the first suggestion to come from Walpole, and he carefully avoided the Settlement on those evenings when Gertrude was expected. Walpole was primed with casual hints, and in this matter Walpole resembled those urns said to have been used impartially by lovers and conspirators. You dropped in your message, actual or implied, and it was found; nothing more. Walpole himself remained insensible as the marble.

The subject, then, was better broached by Walpole than an outsider.

"You'll never be *that*, Waring," said Walpole, blinking affectionately, "and I still hope——"

Basil sighed. Of course a man couldn't explain the sacrifice he was making on his wife's account. Walpole was a good fellow, but obtuse; these delicate shades of

Development of the Emotional Idea

incompatibility were not for his apprehension; and, really, one was not going to put it as domestic failure.

So Walpole would suggest that he was in town, and willing—that was the strongest term he permitted—willing to help in the arrangement of a programme. The result surprised and piqued him not a little. Gertrude would be some days from home. She touchingly expanded to particulars—a visit to her mother, who was in poor health. She would return on Wednesday. If Mr. Waring were still in town, would he arrange an interview?

Walpole's joy on hearing that Basil had decided to bless them yet a little while left no room for curiosity as to the sudden change in his plans. Basil easily persuaded himself that duty required it of him. It was not necessary, however, to explain to Daphne that the lengthening of his stay was due to business connected with the Settlement—so he phrased it. Women are apt to misunderstand—such a pity she was so ruled by prejudice in this matter.

He wrote to Gertrude,—

“DEAR MRS. LAFFEY,—I will call upon you on Thursday afternoon to arrange a progressive series of pianoforte recitals at the University Settlement in Poplar.

“Meanwhile can you find time to select characteristic examples of the more important composers?

“Yours very truly,

“BASIL WARING.”

He hesitated a few minutes over the “Mrs. Laffey.” It was the first time he had found it necessary and the concession to the commonplace vexed him. Besides, he thought it implied what he most wished to avoid,—circumspection. Still again—women are so apt to misunderstand. He complimented himself upon the dry definition of the purpose of their meeting. Without hinting any

The Column

misgiving, it suggested the busy man careful of his time.

Had he been present when Gertrude opened his letter he would have found reason to doubt his cleverness. Her very action as she unfolded the paper was that of one who had already settled the terms upon which they were to meet, without reference to his intentions.

She read the note with comfortable appreciation.

"Ah!" she murmured; "so you can wait a whole week to see me."

She had earlier been made aware by Walpole, in all innocence, that Basil had finished his business and was returning to Tregotha. Her afflicted mother was a pious fabrication.

"A progressive series of pianoforte recitals," she laughed softly, peering over the rim of her coffee cup at Patricia Hollenden.

Patricia was spending her vacation with Gertrude. She alleged that her presence cheered the widow, which was true in another sense than her statement intended.

"You remember Mr. Basil Waring?" said Gertrude.

Patsy, whose eyes rebelled against the repression of her nun's mouth, blinked momentarily, but answered with gravity,—

"Yes; my boy Johnnie's friend."

"Exactly; he is coming to see me on Thursday afternoon to arrange a progressive series of pianoforte recitals at the Settlement."

The dry, explicit statement read from the letter was a trifle overdone. Patsy renounced certain material prospects with a sigh; explaining the latter,—

"Thursday? that is the day I have arranged with the girls for Bushey."

Development of the Emotional Idea

“How provoking!” said Gertrude, “I wanted you to meet him.”

“Perhaps some other time,” replied Patsy, without intention.

Gertrude glanced at her keenly. The nun’s mouth betrayed nothing; and the eyes were balancing the tones of grey on the table-cloth. In any case, while there were cakes and ale Patsy would be judicially ignorant that ginger was hot in the mouth.

Gertrude spoke with a little more animation. It would be rash to assert that she desired Patsy to abandon Bushey; still, she put the case.

“I don’t suppose,” she said, “that you will have an opportunity.” This was—so far she intended to permit—cold fact. “He goes home on Friday;” which was merely a surmise.

Patricia sighed.

“Sorry,” she murmured, abandoning her synopsis with reluctance; “he’s a dear man, I believe; but I can’t disappoint the girls.”

It was satisfactory that Patricia Hollenden was disposed of without the necessity for lying, on the one hand, or inconvenient confidences, on the other. Neither mattered in the result, but they were against her instinct for the game. Gertrude was indefatigable in arrangement; she set her stage with infinite pains, whilst she left the drama to chance. The occasion should decide what emotions to put in the cast; meanwhile there was a careful eye to properties. This habit acquitted her of any charge of coquetry. The flirt resembles the amateur actor, careless at rehearsal, over-emphatic in the eye of the public. Gertrude’s methods were aptly illustrated by an obscure artist in another medium. He was pressed to fix an engagement for a job of masonry.

The Column

“ Well, sir,” doubtfully, “ I intended to have a drop of beer next week.”

Perhaps the epithet one would use in describing Gertrude is “ autumnal.” Not as indicating the lapse of time, but as defining condition,—ripeness, indolence, and the suggestion of musky odours, as of declining woods. Her voice recalled the sombre purple of distant hills seen through wet lashes. Her mouth had that curious lift—checked in a sob, as it were—one associates with the devotee; though the shrine is not determined. Picturing her old, one foresaw that her mouth with its insatiate youth would belie the ruin of her face.

She was emphatically a woman; one did not speculate upon her girlhood. Nor could one figure her the mother of children; she was matronly, never maternal.

A trifle less brain would have left her at the mercy of the casual sensualist; as it was, no other man than her husband had kissed her lips. There is the woman who hesitates, but there is also the woman who postpones; and Gertrude was gifted with ruthless perceptions which made her as fearful of emotional bankruptcy as she was of her purse. For it was a curious trait, in one so luxurious, that she kept rigid account of every penny she spent. Her meeting with Basil would have interested the student of comedy. He, on his part, avoided the precipitate rush to the business of the Settlement that would have betrayed his uneasiness; whilst she pitched her manner so far from reminiscence that he was almost deceived and, for the moment, half believed that she had forgotten. He observed with artistic satisfaction that she was alone. A duenna would have implied the recognition of danger, and were they not met as those new-risen from their dead selves? She was as delicate as she was discreet.

Development of the Emotional Idea

Their eyes held no apology for whatever had gone before, and their hands clasped with the sudden cordiality of comrades in an elevating cause. He admired her courage in inquiring after Daphne and the child. To have omitted doing so would have set him thinking of the reason. Yet she was not inquisitive. She spoke of Tregotha as if she had known it all her life; but there was no hint that her interest was for his sake, the irresistible temptation of the coquette.

"I envy you your life out there," she said, gracefully. "It is the better way. You remember *Candide*, 'que la mort me trouverait plantant mes choux'?"

Yet there was not the faintest touch either of malice or regret; the intimation that he, having failed of the highest, was politic in his exile.

Basil began to feel how ungenerously he had thought of her. So far from embarrassing him by a reminder of past relations, she was content to speak of his wife without even betraying a natural curiosity or the desire to meet her. She spared him everywhere.

They reached by easy and natural stages the question of the Series.

She spoke with admirable judgment.

"Of course," she said, "there are difficulties at the very outset. The development must be organic, never strained; nor the accepted sequence sacrificed to a personal fancy. You agree?"

"Yes, yes," he nodded. "One must not father Beethoven upon Bach, nor indicate Mendelssohn as drawing inspiration from Schubert, for all his sentimentality."

She laughed.

"I see you follow me. Well, then, one must not forget the target?"

The Column

“The target?”

“Your people,” she said gravely. “I think I know them, and I have tried to adapt what I have chosen to their power of taking it in.”

This roused his newer humanity.

“But are you sure that you know them? I thought I did, and made the same mistake. They are so much quicker, so much subtler than one would suppose. Take my word for it, there is no need to water things down.”

Here was the opportunity for one of those graceful differences that enhance the opinion each holds of the other's intelligence. Basil was glad he came. Walpole would never have managed this; he would have hurriedly acquiesced in everything, or jibbed stubbornly over some trivial detail.

His mind leaped from end to end of the Series. He saw it compact, consistent, a thing beautiful.

Though he outwardly defended the perceptions of “his people,” inwardly he confessed that the thing deserved a more cultured audience. It will be observed that his interest was almost entirely literary. Though he had read and thought round a vast quantity of music and was well informed in the histories of composers, his technical knowledge was very limited. But a sequence so neat, so logically progressive, fascinated him; and he had a rare appreciation of the idea,—the woman made exquisitely responsive through suffering, by whom the soul-pangs of the masters of tone should be interpreted. He made mental notes of a little dainty souvenir.

“Of course,” Gertrude broke in on his meditation,—“of course you will do the talking.”

“Oh, yes,” he had almost said, when he remembered his circumstances. In his enthusiasm he had forgotten

Development of the Emotional Idea

that he no longer was of the Settlement. He threw back his head and laughed without embarrassment.

"There is my vice, Herbert would tell you,—the whim of the moment. Of course I shall not be here. I go down West to-morrow."

Gertrude bestowed a silent compliment on her perspicacity.

"It is a great pity," she said frankly, "there is no one else can do it half so well."

"There is Walpole," said Basil, with perfect gravity. They both laughed.

"Seriously," said Basil, "you had better speak to them yourself."

"Who, I?" This without any affectation of incompetence. "Well, I suppose I must. Of course, I shall cut it short; play the piece, and then just a few words of explanation."

"Y-es," observed Basil, "but why after? Don't you think that—being what they are—you should prepare them, tell them what they are to notice?"

"Um—yes; I see your point, but it would hamper me dreadfully. I should be thinking, you know, whilst I played. And then wouldn't there be the very risks I spoke of—of italics? forcing the meaning to fit the argument?"

"I think you would soon get over that, you know—you are too sound an artist. Besides," he added, "don't you think that—for our purpose—a little, a very little underlining is permissible, necessary even?"

She shook her head.

"Artistic heresy."

"Oh, well," he admitted, uncertain of his depth, "that can be discussed afterwards. Now as to your list?"

Gertrude rose and went to her writing-table. How

The Column

admirably mature she was; no eagerness, no affected hesitation.

She half turned, smiling.

“I suppose we begin reasonably late?”

He looked puzzled.

“I mean you don’t propose to go back quite to Jubal and his lyre?”

“Oh, I see,” he laughed. “No; about—whom do you begin with?”

“I have obeyed the conventions; I begin with Bach.” He took the list.

“Yes,” he murmured, in rather a disappointed tone, “this is all right, but don’t you think it rather—well—rather obvious? Couldn’t you have included some less hackneyed names than Haydn and Mozart?”

She looked at him and said with a spice of mockery in her tone,—

“In the temple of music there are no little *recherché* shrines. You must kneel with the crowd at the big altars, or stay outside. Perhaps that is why we musicians are such common-place persons. I notice that the very cultured people don’t affect music to any extent. They can’t make discoveries, you know.”

“Perhaps you’re right as regards the men, but there is a choice in their work surely.”

“Well, I have tried to pick something simple, but typical of each. Will it do?”

“So far as I can judge—and with the reservation I made—this seems the very thing.”

“Of course,” she continued, sinking into a chair and speaking slowly without looking at him, “the sequence implies the development of the emotional idea. Technically, I suppose Bach was the equal of—say Berlioz.”

“Um—well, yes,” he vouchsafed with equal command.

Development of the Emotional Idea

“One is at least certain of the first; the other—the question of technique—is more a difference of kind than of degree. One has to consider the influence of Period. In any case that will be a matter for your little analysis.”

“That will be for my little analysis,” she repeated, with imperceptible irony. “I shall expect you to help me out with what I am to say. Suppose I run through one or two of the things?”

An observer would have detected that the finish of their acting was a little less absolute. There was no actual awkwardness as yet but on his part a trace of unnecessary emphasis, on hers a quickened speech, a warmer colour. In such a moment a prompter would involuntarily raise his voice a quarter-note, a stage manager frown down whisperers in the wings.

“I thought,” said Gertrude, speaking between the arpeggios of her prelude, “that in the case of Bach one should choose something quite impersonal, colourless, sheer music. Even he who transmitted most things achromatic—isn’t that the word?—allowed a hint to creep in here and there. There’s a tiny crack in the lens and the marble is tinted. But this fugue is un-human as a cathedral.”

“Never Gothic—say the Pantheon,” interjected the other.

“Thank you—I see you follow me—yes.”

How finely adaptable she was. For the moment she ceased to be a woman; she was virile. She inwove the intricate strands of the fugue with mastery and ease as one controlling a spirited team of horses.

“You see—pure architecture; the building up is almost visible.”

And indeed Basil could picture her hands laying plinth and beam.

The Column

“Just music—intellectual if you will—but emotional?—never.”

Basil launched the epigram he had been mouthing,—

“He is the Gibbon of music.”

She laughed.

“And Handel?—Johnson, of course.”

She played the first few bars of “Happy, happy pair.”

“’Tis true he romances; but it is all praiseworthy sentiment—fatherly almost. You remember the little Methodist who sat on Sam’s knee till sunrise?”

Perhaps their laugh was a little louder than the jest deserved. Basil this time said nothing; the epigram demands a cool head.

“Then Haydn—dear Papa is very, very sentimental.” The uncertainty of her “r’s” was charming.

“Quite innocent though—conjugal if you like; Milton in his lyrics—without the big bow-wow epic note.”

Her voice was getting a trifle reckless; she did not invite discussion. Basil, with something of the moral hyperæsthesia of the drunkard, felt a challenge, a taunt, in the word “conjugal.” He was prepared to argue—what, he did not exactly know. There began to dawn upon him what a disinterested person would have gathered from her conception of Bach—how narrow were the bounds she set to the emotional idea.

“There’s Mozart—happy and careless—and a bit of a Bayard. But oh, his sense of humour!”

She trifled with snatches out of “Figaro,” with feverish insolence. Basil felt an insane desire to remind her that their business was with pianoforte music. She gave him no opportunity however.

“Beethoven,” she flung over her shoulder. “Now we come to the edge. I cannot talk now.”

Development of the Emotional Idea

She plunged into the overpowering first movement of the Appassionata Sonata.

Basil got up and walked about the room.

"I did not think of this," he muttered, fretfully, half aloud. On the instant of self-reproach he was conscious of mask and buskin. There were two of him in the room; one harangued the other fiercely, hopelessly. It was as the struggle between the drunkard and his keeper. She held the cup of delirium—he pictured her mocking face turned from him. It was infamous, he thought; the devices of Dervishes or those fanatics who whip themselves into fictitious raptures. How he hated the woman!

Her voice filtered through the little stifled cries that precede the heart-heaving melody surging up from the fifty-fifth bar.

"Dash of the Puritan—faithful to his Leonora. Revolts—harangues Fate; never lawless—ah!"

The last word was a moan. She sank forward on the keyboard, covering her face with her hands.

He was at her side.

"You are ill," he murmured; "this has been too much for you."

She turned her face to him, wet with tears.

"Basil," she whispered.

It is written somewhere in "Subsoil,"—

"Let us not burden with our pity the victims of Love; these have their Heaven. Let us rather weep for those who, haggard and with jaded feet, enter upon that dolorous way ensanguined with the plumes Love himself has torn from out his wings."

CHAPTER XXVIII—*The Great Sweet Mother*

THE hoard of memory is filled neither with purple moments nor crowded hours; for memory is an unpractical jade, letting slip the pearl and clutching the pebble. Nor memory alone; and if one were permitted to rummage in Time's coffer, one would learn how trivial are the experiences that coin the metal of life. There would be doubtless some tokens kissed bright by lovers, stained with blood and tears; but the greater number would reveal nothing more momentous than "Bought a new hat."

Perhaps it is natural that when earth quakes we should not be keenly observant of things; but it is curious that we should remember afterwards how many sparrows were sitting on the telegraph wires. These little things push out of the picture like patches of overbitten detail on an etching plate. We sit at the tragedy or the farce of life, and remember the accent of the boy selling programmes or the pattern of the proscenium fringe. It would seem almost as if the atmosphere of the edge of signal events had a higher refracting power, magnifying the infinitesimal.

His walk with Daphne to Penresco marked the end of Johnnie Bargister's apprenticeship in life and in art. Whatever of technical improvement of worldly wisdom he afterwards acquired was gained with the leisured watchfulness of the virtuoso, in living as in sculpture, rather than with the conscious earnestness of the student. Not that their progress was remarkable for anything said

The Great Sweet Mother

or done; indeed, they were unusually silent. Sufficient for Johnnie that he had won Daphne out of the hands of Herbert, under the disapproving eyes of his mother. Not that Mrs. Bargister had any fears for him beyond the vague supposition that Daphne "encouraged him."

He has never quite absolved himself from the feeling that, had he made better use of his opportunity, things, perhaps, had happened some other way. As it was, what few words were spoken came from Daphne, whilst he was intensely occupied in watching so much of her as the night revealed. He felt as if she had been presented to him in a new light; that she belonged less to that time and place than to be the symbol of some large influence leavening the whole of existence. He did not, of course, so phrase it to himself at the time; but afterwards he would say, "I was with Daphne," as one says, "I was with the night."

It came to him as a discovery that she walked, and that the progress of every other woman was, by comparison, a mince, a shuffle, or a stride. Also that her words admitted him into her thoughts, and were neither a graceful screen nor a perplexing dazzle. Under the calm of her presence he forgot to talk, or rather he would as soon have thought of addressing the sea.

She was the abstract woman exalting him by her frankness into opposition as man. She was one half of humanity, whilst he was pushed forward ambassador for the other, and, shrinking under the sense of his incompetence, wished vaguely for Cathcart. Somehow these two, he thought, were a natural pair; and absorbed in watching an imaginary encounter between them, he retired into the background as a spectator. There he has remained. Thus the renunciation of the desire to take part in affairs, generally the last step in the education of

The Column

the artist, came to Johnnie Bargister while he was yet in his teens. This may explain the maturity, the sanity, of even his early work. Whatever his hand has done is touched with the glamour of that night. All women have since been with him the casual phenomena of nature; he has carved and modelled them intensely, it is true, but unhindered by that entanglement with the subject, the curse of plastic art. He achieved detachment before his majority and without the loss of his illusions. Cathcart, less fortunate, reached the same position only by passage through the mire.

It is a matter for congratulation that Johnnie did not part from Daphne at the door of her house, but went up with her to see little Basil asleep in his crib. Else we were without his "Danae Adrift," perhaps the only tolerable treatment of infancy in modern sculpture.

Johnnie already recognised that he was only articulate through his hands, and his appreciation of the child was hopelessly unequal to what Miss Williams and Angélique expected of him. They hung about with obvious anxiety, the dancing eagerness of Mark Twain's Italian guide.

"He's a jolly little chap," said Johnnie, after an oppressive silence.

"Mistaire John—but you—an artist!" exclaimed Angélique, in an excited whisper.

Miss Williams attributed his impassiveness to Article Three in the Code of Boyhood, "Not to take any notice of kids," and rated him with hoarse declamation and violent head-shaking on the importance of the more homely aspect of nature.

"Can't be always doing gods and goddesses; it would be a great deal better for some of you artists if you sculped, or whatever you call it, more children. You should read what Mr. Gandy says, and *he* knows all

The Great Sweet Mother

about it. Well, what brings you here?" she asked, abruptly.

"Turned out," said Johnnie, laconically; adding, with vicious emphasis, "There are woman and people come to do up the studio."

There was a hoarse interchange of question and answer over the head of the unconscious infant. Daphne rescued Johnnie with her usual wisdom.

"That is the way with her—she understands," thought Johnnie, as they descended the stair. "Plain yes and no, without superlatives or apology."

He has never been quite able, even in his most spontaneous work, to break away from the tyranny of her attitude as she watched him out into the night. He is probably unconscious of it himself, but it may be noticed that in most of his standing figures the right foot is advanced and below the level of the other. So that, as Dagleish observed, there is the curious feeling that the figure is about to step down from its pedestal. It is a small point, but a trick as marked as Seaton's elbow or Vernon's instep.

With a regret she would have been unable to explain, Daphne reascended to the region of superlatives.

"Looks rather mully-grubbish," said Miss Williams, cheerfully, *à propos* of the departing Johnnie.

"I daresay he was a little bit excited over his drawings—he had to show them all," said Daphne, feeling that some explanation, though unnecessary, was demanded.

"I expect he sticks indoors too much. All these artist people want stirring up with a stick now and then. Why don't they pay more attention to the beauties of nature instead of painting themselves stupid in a stuffy studio? Oh!"

She ended abruptly with rapturous eyes.

The Column

“Well?” said Daphne, smoothing the child’s bedclothes.

“Don’t I—oh, don’t I wish I were in that studio with a mop and bucket!”

She paused to exhaust the sweetness of the imaginary campaign, then turned sharply to Daphne.

“Well, what did you do at the Bargisters’ besides look at drawings?”

“Oh, we talked—and Emily played a little,” said Daphne, absently.

Miss Williams regarded her with affectionate incredulity. She was convinced something had happened. There was a curious absorption in Daphne’s manner; the look—so Miss Williams translated it—of the child conscious of a private store of forbidden sweets enduring the boredom of adult society with exemplary patience secure of a future orgy. Indoors, Daphne seldom dreamed; she was not dreaming now; Miss Williams had learned her too well to mistake an attention running after something outside for the preoccupations of an inward fancy. Daphne’s face wore an expression so near complacency that Miss Williams grew nervous. She determined to cross-examine Herbert in the morning.

When the two women parted for the night, Miss Williams kissed Daphne on the mouth with a smothered, “God bless you!” instead of proffering the cheek which, so Daphne declared, always tasted of yellow soap.

Four hours later, Caspar Gillies and old Dr. Bosankoe, weary from a united struggle against the Destroyer, were driving along the lower road. Dr. Bosankoe, who held the reins,—it was alleged he never did,—humped a shoulder and muttered, apparently out of slumber,—

“Who’s ill up to Penresco?”

“Nobody, so far as I know,” answered Caspar, between two yawns.

The Great Sweet Mother

Caspar in these occasional consultations suffered exquisite pains from the elder man's exploded ideas and methods. It naturally followed that old Dr. Bosankoe took pleasure in exaggerating the gulf between them, and excited him to frenzy by quoting Galen and even Culpeper. To-night, as usual, the man with the sense of humour carried the soundest skin, and Caspar was nursing an injured dignity and a sore throat, the result of unavailing argument.

"No, I haven't heard anything; why?"

"Only there's a light in Mrs. Waring's bedroom—very unusual."

Caspar straightened himself, touched on the raw of his sense of hygiene.

"Bah!" he croaked savagely, "she's just like the rest."

"Not a little bit like the rest," laughed Bosankoe, "though I don't follow you."

Caspar closed his eyes.

"Don't you know," he began drowsily, "that not one woman in seventeen thousand will allow a kid to sleep, as it ought, in the dark. I thought Mrs. Waring was the sixteen—no, seventeen, I said, didn't I?—thousandth——" he murmured, with the absurd affability of the sleepy man.

"So she is," chuckled Bosankoe, whipping up the mare.

"'F you do that again I shall get out and walk," said Caspar, severely; continuing: "Now, those seven and sixpenny lamps of Heath's consume exactly .0593 cubic feet of oxygen every hour. Let me see, together with Mrs. Waring and the kid—Waring is away, of course—that makes——"

"Waring not back yet?" interrupted the other, sharply.

"No, next week," answered Caspar, hurt by the severance of his calculation. "As I was saying, if

The Column

you——” He fumbled after the end of his argument for a few seconds, gave it up, and relapsed into the collar of his great-coat.

“That woman,” said old Bosankoe presently, *à propos* of nothing, “ought to have married a merchant skipper.”

Caspar sat up with a jerk.

“Oh! she’s just the ordinary type of *stuporose melancholia*. She ought to ride a bicycle.”

“Did you ever read Burton?”

“Lord! how you made me jump—‘Arabian Nights’ man?”

“St—st,” muttered the old man, testily. “No, ‘Anatomy of Melancholy.’”

“That rot!” shrieked Caspar. “I should hardly think so. Why, there’s Lombroso and Clouston, and Bevan Lewis, and—and——”

Again he sank into his collar.

“Aha!” chuckled Bosankoe, “you see you’re better off than we were. We had to rub along with Spurzheim and Lavater.”

“Oh, my aunt!” was Caspar’s comment.

“But you should read old Burton,” continued the other; “you should read Burton. There’s lots of things in Burton you don’t get in what’s his name and thingummy.”

He did not address himself again to Caspar until he shook him up before the gate.

“How many cubic feet did you say?” he asked, pointing ironically to an upper window, where shone Emily’s welcome to her lord.

“What damned waste,” began Caspar, balancing himself with difficulty. “Of course Emily can’t cook a potato, and her ideas about decoration are absolutely hopeless; but I did think——”

The Great Sweet Mother

“Well, well, don't stand there, you'll catch cold. Better have some whisky and go to bed.”

“There's no such thing as catching cold; every child knows that these things are bacterial. And as for alcohol; good Lord!—”

“Oh! all right, please yourself; good night.”

Poor old Bosankoe had imagined a wayside glass, and muttered snappishly as he drove away,—

“Young prig—wait till he gets to my age!”

So in her high lamp-lit chamber Daphne was watched and weighed, she herself emanating a pale flame exploring the recesses of her critics' minds. Befooled, they saw through and past her, calling, “Where is Daphne?” Each defined her his or her own way, whilst she lurked secure within, faunlike, a baffling mischief in her eyes. This perhaps is the measure of us; how we exercise our fellows,—lifting one a hero, setting another at mocking, a third on his knees for us.

Daphne was usually the best of sleepers, but to-night her brain was in master hands. Not that she was feverish; she breathed full and deep, and her thoughts moved in an orderly procession. She was in that mood of occupied contentment that follows the assertion from the lips of another. “I too have been in Arcady.”

These drawings of Cathcart's work had spoken to her like the voice of a compatriot in an alien land. Though her mind did not require an initiative, she, being very much alone, missed the support of sympathetic ideas; and there was that in Cathcart's work which summed up and put an edge to the vague though powerful impulses that moved her. It gave her the confirmation of her steps she craved, as those following a familiar road still find comfort in finger-posts. Lately she had missed the assurance of her father's presence; and it was a great

The Column

help to know that somewhere some one listened to the same voices, following the same quest. She fell to evoking an image of Cathcart from these rough notes of him. He would be broad-shouldered and slow-eyed, she thought. Not a talker, but one who slept sound and ate well ; a strong man of his hands.

One might speculate how it had been for Daphne if, instead of Basil, Cathcart or some other stalwart had come, like the masterful lover of romance, whistling over land and sea and rapt her out of her dreams. Nature respects the rude hand ; and the hesitating touch of Basil, loosening Daphne from her place whilst it failed to detach her, did not make her reconciliation with earth the easier. Though for her that did not now matter. She had projected herself forward, and her way back lay through the child. She rose and leaned over the crib. Sea, sun, and wind and herself in an armful. In him she would work out the better way ; he should listen to no unauthentic voices, follow no doubtful star. Half unconsciously she murmured the words of the carol so often on Miss Williams's lips,—

“ My Son, my Brother, Father dear.”

But that was another cultus, was it not ? She did not know that only a thin wall sundered her from the actual practice of the alien creed. Miss Williams, too, was sleepless, and storming the gate of heaven in a wild appeal for the soul of this quiet girl bending over her child. Seen side by side, the two pictures would have summed up aptly two ideals.

Unconscious of the struggle for her, Daphne brooded over her sleeping son. She was humble, she was proud. She was merely the receptacle in which sea and sun, the endurance of earth and the large patience of trees,

The Great Sweet Mother

were united ; and here incarnate was the symbol of them all. Yet she was proud ; for was she not the chosen vessel of the powers, however lowly ?

That recalled her husband. She would—she never dreamed otherwise—be a good wife to him ; responsive to his moods, careful of his house—how careful but established more firmly his position apart from all she was or desired. More than anything she grudged him his part in the child. It was the intrusion of an unknown quantity ; from what she guessed, nothing desirable. Being a woman she took the short road, and the fact unwelcome she tried to deny it. It must be remembered that what seems logically incontrovertible had little meaning for her except in a way that is not generally considered. Indeed it is open to question whether paternity deserves the importance attached to it. For herself she admitted the clog holding the sacrifice worth its fruit, but she jealously claimed the child as between her and her dream. Nor would one dare decide in the face of eternal mysteries whether she was wrong. In spite of the rose-limbed boy stretched in healthy abandonment under her eyes, the real Daphne was as untouched as when she first syllabled his father's name.

She bowed so far to accepted belief that she peered anxiously into the child's face for some hint of what she dreaded. She searched without bitterness but unflinchingly, as if to arm herself for its eradication as soon as apparent. She would, she felt, in the years to come be stern, cruel even, if only she might preserve the purity of the type. It chilled her to remember how small a part normally the mother had in the upbringing of children. Her own mother, for example, was a memory not to be disentangled from its surroundings. Less a personality than a fragment of the whole, summed up and appreci-

The Column

able only in her father. She reflected how reticent her father had always been on the subject of her mother. Not that he refused to discuss her, or even to answer any questions she cared to ask; but he never took the initiative. She was sufficiently subtle to know that this method implied less consideration than had he forbidden her to mention her mother's name. Was it possible that he too suffered from this parental egoism and would have his daughter the offspring of himself and a shadowy ideal—blotting out the mother?

Turning over these questions led nowhere, and it was more attractive to project her imagination forward in the direction of the boy's future. Daphne flung herself on the bed without undressing, and applied herself to a consideration of ways and means. It was characteristic of her simplicity that she looked for guidance in works of the imagination. She thought, with something of hopeless regret, that if she had known earlier of Cathcart, she would have been better prepared.

Her eyes fell on the case of her viola. She rose thoughtfully and took out the instrument. It was the symbol of her temporary madness, and the melody which had evoked Basil out of the night still, to her fancy, slept in the strings.

An action that might have appeared ridiculous was lifted by her imagination into the significance of a rite. She took a pair of scissors and deliberately cut the strings across, one after the other. They parted with a weird twang, too grotesque to be pathetic. The very character of the sound suggested the passing of an emasculate soul. It was Daphne's formal repudiation of the part Basil had played in her life; she kissed the sound-board with a lingering smile half tender, half mischievous.

She was appreciably soothed. Having put the episode

The Great Sweet Mother

behind her she was able to look at Basil objectively, dispassionately. He was a pleasing person, comparing very favourably with the few men she knew. His intellectual business, his genius for novelty, kept him good-tempered. She searched in her mind for an object of comparison, and so passed into a fitful doze with slightly feverish dreams. Basil ran through them all in a dozen shapes. Now he was a squirrel in a revolving cage treading an endless round, explaining the while how useful were his labours. Again he was a monkey shredding brightly coloured pieces of cloth with the serious assiduity of which only the monkey is capable. He presently threw them aside with all the monkey's sudden boredom, and observed in a voice absurdly Basil's,—

“Ah, yes, but this, you know, is quite obsolete; nothing in it.”

Then he was a gentle-eyed little beast to which Daphne could not give a name; this creature coursed the floor aimlessly, making funny little satisfied noises.

She was awakened by the child's hungry cry. Whilst she fed him, she had it forced upon her how unavailing was the tie between mother and child. In less than a year little Basil would be, for all practical ends, out of her hands, exposed to whatever influences chance or human perversity should apply to him. She had seen children about the cottage doors, and watched with poignant regret their daily coarsening, their gradual subjection to the tyranny of use and wont. For the less obvious though not less hurtful errors of mental training she had only to remember the Scheme from which she had rescued Johnnie Bargister.

She murmured aloud to the child as if by some occult means she could impose upon him thus early a counsel of perfection. Even when quite alone she had that

The Column

reverence for the dignity of childhood which forbids maudlin tenderness.

“Learn to be yourself; don’t run this way and that. There is the whole world for you if you will only keep wide eyes and a close tongue.”

The child hushed and sleeping, she went to the window and leaned out. It was the hour of tension that precedes dawn; already the outline of the laurels was stark against the western sky. The pungent incense of the sea stung her nostrils, rousing her to a quick intolerance of indoors. Little whispering voices had her ear. “Daphne, Daphne,” they called. “Sister, come outside. What have you to do with rooms and lamps?”

She felt with a sudden pang that her days of late were degenerate. She was flaccid in mind and body. If she were to rear little Basil, surely her first duty was to fit herself as far as possible for the task. She would begin at once—take hold of life with both hands.

Even while she watched, a flush crept slowly down from the summit of the column. It was surely a good omen. She felt a keen desire for the touch of bare earth. Basil would sleep now for hours. This was her opportunity for the formal entrance into her new life. Opening the door she listened; the house was quite still; Angélique would not be astir for at least two hours.

Daphne hung for a moment over the child’s crib, her arms outstretched in the mute prayer she used whenever she relinquished him into the bands of sleep. Then she slipped downstairs and out into the air.

The friendliness of things brought tears into her eyes. There was welcome in every stone, every blade; she heard the sea’s welcome and the sleepy twitter of birds. First, she must reaffirm her loyalty to all things. Repressing her yearning to the sea, she went round to

The Great Sweet Mother

the stables. It was noticeable that animals were never startled by her approach, as though some mysterious understanding existed between them by which they were aware of her before their ordinary instincts came into play. She went into the stalls and stroked the cows softly in turn, calling them by name. They turned their patient, loyal eyes to her and breathed sweetly on her face in response.

Hesperus whinnied gently. She went into his stable and stood for a few minutes, resting her head against his neck.

"Hesperus," she murmured in his ear, "oh that you had wings! No, not now," she laughed, as the beast pawed and snorted. "You are not swift enough for me this morning. Besides, you don't like swimming."

So the beasts were reconciled. Outside she took up a handful of earth and smelled it, exulting in the irresistible odour. In spite of her all but sleepless night she was not tired. She could not have her fill of the young morning, and with every new pulse of light her heart quivered in response. She ran lightly through the laurels, singing to herself. By her father's grave she waited for a moment, scattering over it the handful of earth she still retained. How her father would have entered into the spirit of her truancy! She pictured his nodding head and quaint pretence of secrecy.

Reaching the column, she stood for a little while sobered, looking up at its gleaming height.

No; she could not be sure of the column. There was no menace in it, but was not its very whiteness a reproach? Not inimical; inexorable, though. Whatever her fault, whatever its penalty, she did not greatly care. Fate would surely spare the child.

The sea! the sea! Under her feet it lay, a quivering

The Column

floor stretched out into obscurity. She must go nearer to make her peace with the sea.

Her descent of the sea-path was Cathcart's Antigone realised. Unhurried, with level head she reached the firm, wet sand. Under the shadow of the cliff she was out of sight of the column. By advancing until the water kissed her feet, and by craning her neck she could catch the summit, from this side cold and grey.

No; she could not be sure of the column, but the sea was unreserved. There was time yet. Her limbs chafing under the constraint of clothes desired the rough embrace of water. She had heard fishermen mutter of the back-draw, which she personified as the monster for whom Andromeda was destined. But, this morning, she did not fear it; she was too strong, too buoyant.

She slowly undressed and shook her hair loose to the chill air, shivering with delight as it crept to the roots. Wading out, she turned and flung one upturned look, almost of defiance, at the column. Then she leaned her breast to the water and struck out, and out.

.

From the noise of mourning, the clash of explanations, one word may be saved; the last and most fitting,—

“After all,” said Mr. Bargister, “one cannot think of Daphne growing old.”



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 128 066 8

