THE OLD DANCE MASTER

WILLIAM ROMAINE PATERSON
(BENJAMIN SWIFT)

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BY

WILLIAM ROMAINE PATERSON
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Mein Gedanke ist wie ein Tänzer

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1911

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Published, May, 1911

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

PREFACE

If the author were asked why he wrote this little story he could only stammer an unsatisfactory reply. For the book simply grew during three years in a mind that was busy with different, very different things. Out of a chaos and phantasmagoria of characters, impressions, suggestions, there gradually began to emerge the face and figure of a pleasant old man, one Habenichts, who had been buffeted but not vanquished by Fortune.

And then, in his train, came limping, sometimes in groups, sometimes singly, a strange, dingy crowd, who, however, began to brighten somewhat at the touch of Habenichts, the old dance master. In vain the writer tried to drive him and them out of his mind. They

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postured before him, became obstinate, importunate, articulate. He began to listen for their footfall and their voices. Lo, they were already dancing in his brain, and whispering all sorts of gossip in his ear, and at last they compelled him to sit down, and he became their stenographer.

William Romaine Paterson.

THE OLD DANCE MASTER

CHAPTER FIRST

It was almost half-past six on a January evening, and, with one exception, the night cabs had left the yard not to return till seven or eight o'clock next morning. A smart hansom with horse yoked and lamps lit stood in the middle of Larkin's cab-yard, while Vardy, the stable-boy, rubbed with a yellow rag the rings and buckles of the harness, the terrets, the bridle ornaments, the breeching, and the shaft straps. He was whistling and hissing in the manner which grooms enjoy and horses approve. The fine gloss of the roof and the sides of the hansom, the shining wheels, the polished glass of the lamps and the windows, the burnished, silver-mounted "butterfly" through which the long reins pass before they reach the driver's hands, and the glittering harness were not only a credit to Vardy, but seemed to suggest that the cab was no ordinary vehicle. It had, indeed, been a private hansom, and whatever clean water and chamois leather could do was daily done for it.

Together with the horse and the harness, it had cost Mr. Samuel Larkin, the proprietor, one hundred and thirty-eight pounds sterling, had been purchased from the estate of a gentleman deceased, and had been considered to be a remarkable bargain. The upholstery was of green morocco leather, and there was a deep pocket under each of the side windows. The rubber foot-mat was intact and spotless, and the cab was furnished with a neat inner lamp fixed at the back, two mirrors, an ivory match-box holder, and a silver-plated ash-tray. In fact, it was the smartest thing on the London cab ranks, and it had been bought in one of Larkin's expansive, expensive moments after he had had two or three double-shotted drinks. By the shape of his hocks, his loins, and his shoulders, the chestnut horse was obviously an old hunter, and his name, which was "Audacity," fitted him as perfectly as his harness. For, as if to give warning that his pride and fire were not yet extinct, he grew skittish in the streets, and sometimes jibbed in indignation over his new work of pulling instead of leaping. Mr. Larkin had never intended either the horse or the hansom to do night work. He was very proud of both, and he called the turn-out his "private consarn." He stood admiring it while he smoked his pipe at his house door, which abutted on the yard, and his burly figure almost filled the doorway. The square incandescent gas lamp fixed on the lintel threw down

abundant light on the white-washed entrance step, and displayed the bulky man dressed in a snuff-coloured suit and a dusty bowler hat. His grey, heavy moustache, full, red, weather-beaten cheeks, and his eyes, that seemed always to be looking towards wide horizons, gave him the appearance of a farmer. There was, besides, sufficient light streaming across the yard to show up the small head, fine ears, silken mane, and well-built legs and fetlocks of old "Audacity."

"Is that you, Joey?" asked Larkin.

"Yes, s'r," said Vardy, who was on the off-side and was polishing the right winker with the rag which was as yellow and as stained as his breeches and his leather leggings.

"What 's this 'ere wehicle goin' out to-night for?"

"Special job, guv'nor," replied Vardy, with a sort of mock solemnity, and in a tone which was about an octave deeper than usual.

"What job, Joey? Never heard on it."

"'Im as drives knows," answered the boy, smiling, and resting his hand on the saddle-tree.

"Swefling?"

"Yes, s'r. Woa, 'oss, woa!" cried Vardy, seizing the bridle, because "Audacity" was growing more audacious, and was threatening to plunge in the direction of the gate. "Steady there, will yer!"

"Where is he, Joey?" asked Mr. Larkin, leaning against the door-post.

"In the 'arness-room," said Vardy, who now came round to the near side where his lean figure became fully visible, while his scarlet braces looked bright under the cab lamp.

For although the night was cold the boy was jacketless and waistcoatless, and the sleeves of his blue shirt were rolled up as far as the elbows.

"That 's funny. I call it funny. He never said nothin' to me," remarked Mr. Larkin, and then crossed his feet as if he had decided to wait for an explanation. "Had supper, Joey?"

"Just goin', Mr. Larkin. Ain't it sharp them nights? I do feel 'clined for a hinside linin'," for such was Vardy's definition of a meal.

"Ain't that a pretty consarn, Joey?" asked Mr. Larkin, pointing to the cab.

"No mistake. A stunner. Riglar flasher. I 'm blarmed if she ain't up to the knocker," replied Vardy, inwardly cursing because while he was kept cooling his heels in the yard his supper of hot eels was cooling in the slap-bang shop across the street.

Swefling, who was putting on his coat and his gloves in the harness-room, was Larkin's best whip, and the fact that the best cab and the two fastest trotters, "Audacity" and "Ready Money," were assigned to him was a matter of jealousy among the other men. Vardy and old Tom, the one-eyed stableman, refused to be spies, but Swefling had enemies in

the yard, and they resented his luck, his smart dressing, and his considerable airs. Moreover, they were suspicious that he was in love with Mr. Larkin's daughter. To Vardy, however, he was nothing less than a hero. Certain of Swefling's horse-breaking feats on Larkin's Essex farm — for Sam was a small breeder — had aroused astonishment in the stable-boy. He believed that every horse-tamer was a great man, and he yearned to have a hand and a leg like Swefling's. Vardy hoped that in a year or two he likewise would be driving a cab, and would be seeing and enjoying London from the dicky. For he despised the new motors which threatened destruction to men like Larkin, and were lowering profits and wages in all the old cab-yards. Was it not true that "Swef" was competing against them with tolerable success? Although the old cabs were being sold for a five-pound note apiece, and although Sam Larkin spoke of giving up the business, and going home to Essex, Swefling came back to the yard every night with money jingling in his pockets. In Piccadilly or Pall Mall, round about clubland, Swefling was picked out by well-dressed fares of both sexes. He and his shining cab drew attention. The silk hat slightly, but ever so slightly, cocked, the dark blue, double-buttoned overcoat surmounted by a clean white collar, the clean white whip and his manner of holding it, the style in which Swefling brought his wheel and the

kerb within a hair's breadth of nearness, the engaging smile with which he welcomed his fares, lifted his reins out of the way of their hats, and then bent forward to receive instructions, all this seemed to show that in number 7006 there were good manners, gaiety, and even a kind of romance not usually discovered among the drivers of hackney carriages. While other men were making shillings he was making half-crowns. While they were cursing the motor-cabs he was thanking Providence and Larkin for his good fortune. Oh the free life in the streets of London and the music of the wheels! Of course it was only because the turn-out was so distinctive that its driver was able to handle more silver than what his rivals could count up at the close of the day.

"Tin," said Vardy to him one day, in envy and admiration, "you 've 'atfuls of it!"

The truth was, however, that the profits fluctuated. But Mr. Richard Swefling was a man of ambition, although he was meanwhile content, and enjoyed his life. In spite of the moustache he had rather the cut of a huntsman or whipper-in, and perhaps it was because he was sitting on such a high perch above his fellow-men that he had acquired a certain air of condescension. Constant exposure to the weather made him look as if he had lately arrived from the country. But although he did make periodical visits to Larkin's farm near Epping, he spent his days and

nights in London. Here, too, he was able in all weathers to live an outdoor life. Except to oblige a pal, however, he seldom was on night duty. And when he could not handle the ribbons himself he never employed a "buck." He called for his cab about 9 a.m., changed horses at 3 p.m., remained in the streets until the theatres "burst" (as cabmen say), which is about 11 p.m., and he came back to the stable about midnight. That was his day, and in his own opinion only a fool would grumble at it. Larkin had always found him to be a steady payer, and on that particular January evening, Swefling handed over eleven shillings for the day's hire of the cab. Since he had asked a night off, however, and would be the loser if the hire for a full day had to be paid, Larkin gave back two shillings. It was because Swefling had said that he would n't be working that night that the proprietor was so surprised to see "Audacity" between the shafts again.

"Swef," cried Vardy, putting his hand at the side of his mouth in order to make the sound travel better, "are yer on the ramble? Guv'nor 's been wytin' abaht 'arf-an-hour."

"Coming," responded a voice from the harness-room.

Vardy stepped on the footboard, and slipped the twenty-feet reins through the "butterfly." Then he gave a last flick with his rag to the "dash" and the

heelboard, and, as he was coming off the cab, he glanced towards the house door where Mr. Larkin was still standing. The reason why he exclaimed "Oh my eye!" was because he saw immediately behind the proprietor the charming figure of Miss Dorothy Larkin in a pink hood and a pink cloak, as if ready for a theatre or a ball. In her right hand she had a fan and a pair of white satin slippers, and with her left she held up the edge of a besilvered muslin skirt. Dorothy was agitated.

There was a commotion and a look of annoyance in her face; then came a frown which was followed by pouting, and she seemed to be at a loss to know whether to advance or retire. Since she wished to avoid notice, she should have gone through the kitchen, where, by means of a door which opened into the old coach-houses, she could have found a roundabout way to the yard. But, to be sure, Mr. Larkin would thus have seen her entering the cab. Besides, she guessed that Mr. Larkin's sisters were in the kitchen, and when the reader becomes acquainted with them he will understand why Dorothy paused. If Mrs. Muzzey had been alone, our remarkable heroine might have ventured to face her, but there was also Mrs. Bleeks, who was as formidable as a she-bear.

That had been an unlucky day. Even as late as a quarter-past five o'clock, it was still supposed that

Mr. Larkin, Mrs. Muzzey, and Mrs. Bleeks were going to spend the evening with friends in Euston Square. But at the last moment Mrs. Bleeks complained of a headache, and whenever Mrs. Bleeks had a headache, Mrs. Muzzey declared she had one too. So that unknown to Dorothy, who was dressing, Vardy was sent with apologies. Now, some days ago Dorothy had asked Swefling to drive her secretly to Jellini's Dancing Academy, in Tottenham Court Road. She had already made frequent and clandestine visits there, and was the star of the rooms. But this was to be a gala night, and the pupils were expected to make a brave display. In vain, and long ago, Dorothy had implored her aunts to allow her to learn dancing. They had steadily refused permission, and her father had agreed with them. Many a time she had shut the great doors of one of the empty coach-houses, and all alone had practised her steps on the brick floor. During stray hours in the forenoon she had stealthily hurried to Jellini's, where she had got herself enrolled, and had been taught the more elaborate movements of intricate dances. And she reddened when Mrs. Bleeks inquired why she took such a long time over her shopping. Prolonged exasperation had made the red-lipped, dark-haired, dark-eyed, white-slippered Dorothy very bold. She determined to present her enemies with the accomplished fact. Yet as the night of the pupils' ball approached she grew nervous,

and she hoped to return safely from her great adventure long after Mrs. Muzzey and Mrs. Bleeks would have their grey heads in their night-caps.

Dorothy was seventeen, and her dark liquid eyes had begun to look out upon the world in expectancy and wonder. She was judged to be singularly attractive, and she had a way with her, a grace and a carriage, which astonished people when they heard of her curious surroundings in the cab-yard. But she was already aware of irrepressible instincts to which she found no response in those surroundings. She loved music, and she read poetry and made steady efforts to complete what had been on the whole a good education. Her love of picture galleries was condemned by her aunts, who said that it boded no good character and proved her to be an idle, pleasure-loving creature. She displayed, too, an uncommon gift for drawing and painting. But although her little Essex landscapes in oils and water-colours were really remarkable, the best of all were the realistic sketches of the cab-yard, the old cabs, the horses, and the different types of London cabmen. Swefling, for instance, was immeasurably puffed up when he heard that she had painted him driving "Audacity" in the smart hansom. But it was to an old farmhouse, not far from Colchester, that the girl's earliest memories and affections clung. In the eyes of her aunts her unpardonable sin consisted in her resemblance to her

mother, for they had never loved their late sister-in-law. What, however, greatly troubled Dorothy that night was not merely her old fear of her aunts. At the worst she might be stripped of her besilvered muslin dress and sent to bed. But she was afraid that Swefling, as her accomplice, might also suffer. Swefling had come to the yard when Dorothy was fourteen, and she had never heard either from Mrs. Muzzey or from Mrs. Bleeks a single good word in his favour. As she grew older she began to speak up and to speak out for him. She used to watch him driving into and out of the yard. If she were at the parlour window he would smile to her from the dicky as he passed, and bring his whip to his hat. To the astonishment of the old women they once found their niece in the parlour, giving Swefling tea in a cup which belonged to the best china service. There was a scene, and Swefling was ordered into the yard, but Dorothy told him to take his tea with him. Unluckily he laid the cup and the saucer in the horse trough in "Audacity's" stall. "Audacity" touched them both with his nose, and having no use for such things he dashed them against the wall where they were broken beyond repair. Dorothy, who never heard the end of that story, was told that *she* should be called "Audacity."

It is true that long indulgence in gin blunts the sense of smell, and yet Mrs. Bleeks was aware of a

new, strange, and delightful perfume which filled the rambling lobby that connected the kitchen with the other rooms and the main door. Asking herself if she was drunk, or if the wallflower in the window-boxes could by a miracle be blooming in January, she came sniffing and shuffling through the passage, tapping with her stick. As she moved along it seemed to her that the fragrance was growing stronger. Mrs. Bleeks had her head bound slantwise with a white handkerchief which formed a band across her right eye, and, like a turban, covered also her right ear. A quarter of her somewhat owl-like countenance was thus concealed. She was a woman of medium stature, with a strong chin, sharp, aquiline nose, and beady black eyes. Her face was generally pale, tending towards sallow. She wore a black woollen headgear, shaped like a night-cap, and fastened by two black silk strings under her prominent chin. The knots of the white handkerchief were fixed tightly on the crown of her head, and the ends stood up like rabbits' ears. As long as headaches lasted, Mrs. Bleeks took refuge in such bandages, and it was only Vardy who could tie them tightly enough to suit her. She generally gave him a penny for the trouble. Patches of grey hair formed curves on her skinny forehead. On the whole, her appearance did not belie her strong character. She was a born fighter. She entertained only a very poor opinion of the present age, and con-

sidered that the whole world began to droop as the clock struck midnight on the last night of the nineteenth century. She described herself as part and parcel of the reign of Queen Victoria, whom she believed she resembled, and whose portrait, hanging above Mrs. Bleeks's bed, was often addressed in loyal and laudatory speeches. The new inventions in science, especially in motor cars, were Mrs. Bleeks's chief abhorrence. Her husband had been the owner of six London omnibuses, and Mrs. Bleeks's maintained that it would be far better for the world to jog on in the old way. She had her own views, too, regarding the proper pronunciation of our mother tongue, and she did not accept *all* the new strange slang which she heard among the younger set in the yard. For instance, she declared that "a slop" was not a correct word for policeman, and that he should be called "a copper," or "a crusher," or "a beak." Again, gin with her was either "white satin" or "a flash o' lightnin'," and *never* "blue ruin" or "bottled earthquake." These later additions to the dictionary of the streets she disdained as she disdained the generation who used them. But perhaps her contempt was chiefly moved by the unheroic manner in which the moderns carry their liquor. To be made easily drunk was to be in danger of her scorn. The last generation had far stronger heads. Those who were, as she declared herself to be, "well

edicated" and blessed with strong wills and strong nerves, behaved when in their cups as gentlefolks behaved when drinking water. They knew how to "shunt" the more skittish liquors at the proper time and in the proper doses. She was a "gin shunter" herself. If she moved about with a stick it was, she said, because of rheumatism, or in order to use it on the backs of impudent street urchins, and not, as uncharitable critics hinted, because she had just come from the tavern.

"A ole fiddle," she said to her niece, "makes the best music. I likes to be jolly myself and see others so. Ain't wot I once was, though. Gettin' on now. But if it was n't for them wrinkles and the skin wot 's parchmenty, I would be jist as bloomin' as when Bleeks fust came arter me. As things is I 'm ev'ry hinch as 'appy as the Lor' May'r."

An honest biographer, however, is compelled to deny that Mrs. Bleeks did much to make her niece jolly. On the contrary, she thoroughly frightened Dorrie, who, whenever she heard the wheezing of the asthma or the tapping of the stick or the various little grunts, sighs, and loud breathings which sometimes indicated Mrs. Bleeks's proximity, felt an overmastering desire to escape and to hide herself in the hayloft. On the present occasion that would have been impossible, and, besides, Dorrie was not aware that Mrs. Bleeks was actually behind her, and was

sniffing the perfume which was being wafted by the air from the open door.

"Wot 's this?" exclaimed Mrs. Bleeks suddenly, whereupon both Mr. Larkin and his daughter turned round with a start.

"Oh, my 'at!" cried Vardy, dropping his "h." He was still watching the cab. And then at the risk of letting "Audacity" bolt he bolted himself into the harness-room to tell Swefling that a family row had begun.

Meantime Mr. Larkin was expressing as much surprise as Mrs. Bleeks, and an animated conversation was taking place on the threshold.

"This," said Mr. Larkin, "is your little bit of a game, my pippin. Well, I never! It 's my ladyship's carriage what 's at the door, ain't it?"

"Don't wait up, father," said Dorrie, suddenly bold; "I 'm going to Jellini's."

"Wot!" exclaimed Mrs. Bleeks, as she seized the pink cloak and lifted its edge in order to see what was beneath. "Who said Jellini's? Sam, you 're not goin' to allow of it."

"Don't spoil my dress," replied Dorothy, snappishly.

"Oh, in coorse not!" retorted her aunt. "Never touch a goldfish with yer 'ands. I s'pose mine 's too dirty washin' sarsepans and hosspails and wot not. My wig! If this ain't a piece of flummery and

never doubt it! If this ain't a piece of perfumed silk stockinged gentry got up for the ball, and the theayter, wot should be lookin' arter her dooties and makin' down the beds! Where 's my sister?"

Mrs. Muzzey, indeed, attracted by the shindy, and thinking that Mrs. Bleeks was fighting one of the yardmen, was coming along the passage at that moment. The sisters were twins, and they resembled each other so closely that a stranger might have mistaken the one for the other. But Mrs. Muzzey, though a quarter of an inch taller, and apparently stronger, was intellectually and morally a weaker edition of Mrs. Bleeks. She wore a white instead of a black cap, and there was a white apron pinned to her skirt.

"Liza," cried Mrs. Bleeks, with a great burst of laughter, "bring yer hopera glass this minute. 'Ere 's the hopera and the pantermine come to Larkin's yard. See our niece! Standin' there like a dressed-up, wicked stattey in pink and silver. It 's a ballet gal we 've been edicating all them years as Sam's darter."

"Where 's she goin'?" demanded Mrs. Muzzey, as she fingered the cloak and the trimming in astonishment. "It 's Cinderella Larkin."

"And glass slippers is poor shoein'," said Mrs. Bleeks, pulling at the slippers in Dorothy's hands, as if to discover whether they were really made of glass.

"They 're white satin," replied Dorrie, quickly, "and *you* should know something about *that* article."

"Imperance!" exclaimed Mrs. Bleeks.

At this Mr. Larkin laughed with great heartiness, lifting his hands and shaking his sides, and then leaning against the door-post for support.

"That 's a settler, Mary Anne," he said. "That is."

"Impident gal," said Mrs. Muzzey.

"It ain't respeckable speakin' to a hant like that," observed Mrs. Bleeks; "and I 've been a good hant, too."

"Not better nor me," interposed Mrs. Muzzey.

"I ain't affronted," continued Mrs. Bleeks, in a manner which betrayed that she was very affronted indeed; "but I ax you, Sam, if gals was allowed to talk in sich ways in the herly days of Queen Wictoria? There ain't no reverence now. As if a ole party like me don't need a dram of white satin to keep me warm, let alone that I 'm her hant. But I won't be her hant any more. I 'm as good a woman as ever walked in two shoes. All abaht a toothful o' gin. If Sam says I 'm to go to-morrer I 'll go. I 'm not afeared to make a livin' on the streets. Bleeks drove a 'bus. I can drive a barrer."

"Go to blazes," said Mr. Larkin.

"I knows wot things belongs," declared Mrs. Bleeks, while, owing to her exertions, the white hand-

kerchief was gradually slipping upwards so that her right eye was now visible. "I ain't been edicated for nuffin'. There 's more ways than one of findin' a bekfust. I 'm no use in the yard, I s'pose. No? Ole folks has got ter go. Well, I 'll face it. I 'll go the whole biling!"

"Woa, Mary Anne," said her brother. "Keep yer turban steady, you 're talkin' like a nincumpoop. Who 's askin' of you to go away?"

"Yer darter, Sam," replied Mrs. Bleeks, with dignity and sarcasm; "'er as I 've edicated and brought up as my own, 'er as is goin' to break yer 'eart with that there wariegated tinsel. She 's been spendin' yer money at the sales and been larnin' like one of them ballet gals to touch 'er nose with 'er knees and scratch 'er 'ead with 'er feet."

But Dorrie had turned her back upon her aunts, and in a coaxing voice was offering an explanation to Mr. Larkin.

Mrs. Bleeks and Mrs. Muzzey counted upon witnessing an angry scene between the two. It was twelve years since the widows had descended upon their brother, after his wife had died, and when Dorrie was only five years old. They established themselves in his house, and decided never to allow him to re-marry. But now when Dorrie was on the threshold of womanhood there were signs of coming trouble. Hitherto, Sam had acquiesced in the policy

of repression, and as he seemed to hesitate to allow his daughter to go to Jellini's the aunts were hopeful of victory again. Mrs. Muzzey looked out at the door and saw the cab and Swefling on the box, and "Audacity" stamping and pawing the ground. Then she nudged Mrs. Bleeks and whispered something.

"I agrees with you, Liza," said Mrs. Bleeks; "she takes arter 'er mother."

Whether it was this thrust at his dead wife which finally caused Larkin to support his daughter, or whether he had grown suddenly rebellious under the tyranny of his sisters, is not certain, but he turned sharply upon them both and told them to mind their own business. Both were astounded, and Mrs. Bleeks's handkerchief at last slipped from her head. As she untied the knots she looked indignantly at her brother, and then addressed her sister.

"Liza," she began, "this is wot they calls hockeylar proof. Time 's up, and they means us both to go."

"I 'll pack to-night," said Mrs. Muzzey, with a show of independence.

"Be reasonable, Liza and Mary Anne," urged Larkin. "You both larned to dance when you were like Dorrie."

"I hope I was never like *them,* father," retorted

Dorrie, in great style, and drawing the pink cloak more closely about her.

"My word, she cuts it fat," exclaimed Mrs. Bleeks, while for the first time Mrs. Muzzey began to fear her niece.

"You should n't put a rope halter on an unbroken colt," observed Larkin, looking timidly at his sisters, but patting his Dorrie. "You should never pull a colt into a stable. That 's what the trainers say, and children 's like colts, that 's what I says."

"I 'm curious to know who hinvited her to Jellini's," inquired Mrs. Bleeks, whose natural inquisitiveness for the moment got the better of her other feelings.

"It was Sir John Marduke," replied Dorrie, addressing her father, however, and turning her back on her aunts. "Sir John Marduke 's the patron of Jellini's. I 've been going for lessons regularly, father, and I meant to tell you, but I was frightened. To-night there 's to be a pupils' ball, and they say Sir John Marduke and his family are perhaps to be there."

"Sir John Marduke?" asked Larkin. "Him that 's giving the free dinners in Marylebone and St. Pancras?"

"Yes," said Dorrie.

"That great gent?" demanded Mrs. Bleeks. "The filthyanthropist?"

"My stars and garters, we 're haristocrats now, Mary Anne," sneered Mrs. Muzzey; "our niece won't look at us."

"She 'll cut us, Liza," replied Mrs. Bleeks. "But says I, I ain't affronted."

"Father," implored Dorrie, moving towards the door, "it 's getting late. By this time they 've started at Jellini's."

"All right," said Larkin, escorting his daughter proudly to the cab. "Enjoy yourself, my pippin."

"Imperance!" cried Mrs. Bleeks again, as she lifted her stick in an angry gesture.

"She wants a sodger," said Mrs. Muzzey.

"It 's a nuss she needs," said Mrs. Bleeks.

"Will we wave?" asked Mrs. Muzzey, while they watched the owner of the pink cloak being bundled into the hansom.

"In coorse not," replied Mrs. Bleeks, vigorously, while she stuffed her handkerchief into her pocket. "Oh, you 're a weak un, Liza, allus givin' in."

"Bring her back," Larkin was saying to Swefling.

Swefling, who was in no particular need of such instructions, but who was eager to start, nodded, loosened the straps that controlled the cab's front windows, and allowed the glass to close down with a snap. Then with a glance at the witch-like figures standing on the lighted threshold, he spoke a word to "Audacity" and the cab cleared the yard.

As Swefling turned into Tottenham Court Road from Euston Road, at the crowded corner where the 'buses halt, the trap door on the roof of the cab was suddenly opened, and there appeared a little white hand which the driver devoutly pressed. Then when it was withdrawn he peered down the opening, and saw Dorothy looking up and laughing very gleefully. The lamp fixed behind was shining full on her face, and her eyes and her teeth were dazzling in the light of it, while a wreath of her dark hair peeped from under the pink hood.

"Swef," she called up, "don't hang about in the cold. It *is* cold to-night. Go back to the yard, and get supper somewhere like a good boy, and come back for me at *eleven*."

"I 'm jiggered," he replied, "if your aunts are n't a pair of old hard mouths. Was Mrs. Bleeks slewed?"

"Never mind *them*," said Dorothy.

Angry cries from a 'bus driver, a van-man, and a policeman were suddenly heard, and a triple collision was with difficulty averted.

Swefling, too intent on the conversation, had been driving to the common danger. He had never yet been summoned, and it was lucky that in the present case the constable and he happened to be old friends. The trap-door was suddenly closed, and a gentle touch on the left rein brought "Audacity" and the cab into

the proper position. Jellini's was now in sight, and a swarm of coated, cloaked, and hooded and hatless dancers of both sexes was observed entering the hall under the glass canopy. Swefling drew up where a tall man in uniform was standing, and Dorothy alighted like a butterfly.

"Eleven," she said with a smile, and then walked towards the entrance.

But here again Swefling incurred the wrath and the frown of a policeman because, in order to watch the pink cloak disappearing, he did not drive away quickly enough. There were about four hours until eleven o'clock, and so he drove to the Apollo Tavern. He engaged the waterman on the rank close by to look after "Audacity" and the cab, and he went in for supper. When he came out it was nearly eight by a clock in Oxford Street, and there was a chance of earning some shillings before it would be time to return to Jellini's. The pavements were aglow with the lamps and alive with walkers. It was a clear, starry January night, and the roadway was glossy with the rolling, rolling of the wheels. As Swefling went along Oxford Street and turned into Regent Street at a gentle trot, the bells of "Audacity's" bridle seemed never to have jingled so merrily.

CHAPTER SECOND

Mr. Monty Marduke had decided to sacrifice an evening to his father's whims. But the truth was that he was going with high curiosity to Jellini's on the chance, and at the risk, of seeing a pretty girl. At least, his sister Minnie, who knew him, considered that it was a risk, and she had never pressed him to show any interest in *that* part of their father's great social schemes. Monty, however, declared that he meant to go, and he dressed himself with his usual care as if he had been going to the Dowager Duchess of Berkshire's box at the opera. It was freely whispered that the dowager had an infatuation for him, and a paragraph announcing their approaching marriage had appeared in one of the newspapers. Monty telegraphed an emphatic contradiction, and lately he had not been so often seen in her company. She was an original and very vivacious old woman, and he liked her, but as for marrying her — The dowager, bent on annoying her heirs, continued to send invitations to him, but he hated ridicule, and decided not to go to the opera that night. In the course of a conversation carried on by means of the telephone she told him that she

refused to accept his refusal, that she expected to see him in her box if not at dinner, and that being a *man* he should not, could not, would not care a straw for the childish, the disgusting tittle-tattle. When he expressed his regret he heard her ironical incredulous sexagenarian laugh running along the wire to him.

"They 're playing 'Aida' to-night; you must come, Monty," urged the voice.

"My dear Duchess, my father has asked me to show some interest in one of his latest fads. He says that he 's going to take me to see the little boys and girls of Marylebone and St. Pancras dance, dance, dance!"

"Ridiculous! Tell Sir John that he has spent quite enough."

"Oh, I 'm always telling him that."

"*He 's* being led the dance," said the dowager.

"Yes, indeed. But he won't listen. Pray, forgive me, then, if I don't come to-night," replied Monty.

"Where is this place?"

"Jellini's, Tottenham Court Road!"

"Really, you know! It sounds like a *mauvaise plaisanterie*. Good-bye, then, Monty."

He placed the receiver on the pedestal, and sat down on one of the spacious chairs in his father's smoke-room. But he was scarcely seated when the telephone bell was ringing furiously.

"I 'll expect you at nine," said the dowager, while her faint laugh reverberated along the wire again.

"I 'm very sorry, but it is n't possible, Duchess," he replied, and she heard the words quite clearly.

"What? Are you there? I say I shall expect you at nine."

"I very greatly regret —" he began, but was interrupted by the sounds in the receiver. "What? Are you there?"

"Is this the truth, Monty?" she was asking.

"Duchess, the way to mislead people nowadays is to speak the truth," he replied.

"Then you wish to mislead *me?*" she asked.

"Not in the least, not in the least!" he said, laughing. "It 's this —"

But he found himself suddenly switched off. Perhaps, he thought, the Duchess had gone away in a temper. He held the line for a minute, but heard only the vague echo, far-off hum and buzz of messages hurrying up and down the myriad wires. Then he readjusted the instrument, swore mildly, and was in his chair again.

He was a young man of twenty-four, with the air of a soldier, tall, dark, clean-shaven, well-formed, and, therefore, accounted handsome. Frequent admiration was expressed for his eyes, which were very intelligent, and had no guile in them at all. Now and again, however, they had a roguish look

as if to warn friends, and perhaps fools, that the tricks and pranks of boyhood were not so very long ago laid aside. He and his sister Minnie had been curiously educated, and they knew early that not all of their father's immense wealth was being reserved for them. Sir John Marduke used to arrange his entertainments to the poor in such a way and at such dates that they would clash with some party at a great house to which his son and daughter had been invited, and he frequently compelled them to choose the humbler ceremony. He declared himself pleased when on one occasion Monty and Minnie seemed voluntarily to prefer a tea-party in Soho to a dance in Portman Square. The truth was that with the unconscious diplomacy of childhood and with its naïve hypocrisy they were only attempting to appease irresistible power because they knew that willy-nilly they would be marched to Soho. Nevertheless, it became a habit with them to feel at home in both worlds, and to find amusement in scenes from which persons of their own class turned instinctively away. They inherited charitable instincts, and there was nothing of condescension, nothing whatever of priggishness, in their sympathy for less fortunate people. But the baronet was warned of the dangers of his experiment. If Monty were taught, and if he accepted as true, the erroneous doctrine that all human beings are equal, there might be trouble ahead,

when he came to choose a wife. At what precise limit did Sir John's fellowship with the lower orders stop? It was wrong to remove the proper barrier which separated the social classes. Or rather there was no use attempting to remove it. Democracy cannot walk in pumps, nor aristocracy in hob-nail boots — except when shooting. To tell the truth, Monty was heartily bored by the whole discussion. What is authentic of his early youth is, that once in Oxford Street on a windy day, when he saw a greasy, bespattered dustman vainly struggling to thrust an arm into the filthiest of imaginable coats, Monty stopped to hold the coat for him. This trivial act, done in the full glare of publicity in daylight, was judged to be a pose. It was suggested that Mr. Marduke was going to stand for Parliament, and was hunting for votes even among the dustbins. But this explanation only moved him to laughter and contempt. Likewise, when during an Oxford vacation he marched twenty sandwich men into a certain restaurant, and afterwards compelled each of them to make a speech, he did it for a joke, and was only caricaturing his father's philanthropy. He really liked working men, however, and had many friends among them. He was a generous youth, and in the midst of great crowds, at great moments, he felt the electric chords and cords which bind us all together. Apparently in one respect at least Sir John's

experiment had succeeded. His son's sympathies were quickly ignited, his emotions soon ablaze. Hence those liberal opinions for which he was rebuked when he was a lieutenant in the Twenty —— Lancers.

But if the son was gay the father was grave, indeed. It was certainly odd that Sir John Marduke seemed always to be apologising for his existence, because in the eye of the world he was not only a very good, but a very fortunate man. Like his son, he was tall, and if he had so chosen he might have assumed a very haughty air, because his features were of the imperious, don't-look-at-me sort. But there was something unostentatious even in his white moustache, which drooped and had nothing of that upturned defiant attitude characteristic of the moustaches of military and ex-military officers. He had fought gloriously in India, but that was long ago. His medals were hidden away and forgotten, and he appeared to be the perfect type of a perfect London citizen. His butler, his footman, his chauffeur, the captain of his fine steam yacht, his coachman, his carriage groom, had each great airs and looked important, but Sir John's desire was to slip through the world observant, but unobserved. The servants in the great house in Portland Place, from Riggs the butler and Mrs. Batsby the housekeeper down to the humblest of the kitchen-maids, worshipped Sir

John. His name, too, was a kind of evangel in many of the gloomier streets. He had a pale, mild, grey eye, which seemed to look for sympathy, and in which, and out of which, human sympathy certainly shone. He was never seen with a florid countenance, and this habitual pallor increased the general refinement and distinction of his person. But great wealth, a title tolerably ancient, if the multitude of recent honours be considered, the very fine mansion in Portland Place, the love and respect of his son and of his daughter, the soothing recollection that he had been the devoted husband of a devoted wife, a reputation for almost reckless charity — thousands upon thousands having been given away — all this appeared to bring no genuine contentment to his heart. He steadily refused to stand for Parliament, although invitations had been numerous, and although safe seats had been assured him. A peerage had been offered as a fitting reward of so much well-doing, but he declined the distinction with sincere repugnance and disdain. It was difficult to believe that *he* could have worries. It is true that Monty had been sent down from Oxford as a result of some youthful follies. It is also true that Monty's restless disposition made him abandon the Army as well as Oxford. But these things did not worry Sir John. Monty's little indiscretions had hitherto been of the rollicking, innocent sort, and had been judged to be

the mere overflow of high spirits. In fact, Sir John was secretly pleased to be the father of so great a favourite, an open-hearted, open-handed youth, who accepted in a sober way the great gifts of fortune.

Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, was at the telephone again.

"Well," she was saying, "you have thought it over? Of course you are coming."

"Really, Duchess, I don't like to disappoint you, but I promised the governor. He says I take no interest in his tremendous schemes, you know. He specially asked me to reserve to-night for these wretched infants of Marylebone and St. Pancras. We are even dining earlier in order to go there."

"What? I don't hear. Are you there?" came the voice.

"Why, yes. I'm saying that I'm very sorry not to be able to come to-night," he replied.

"Then I'll come to Jellini's. Is that the name?" asked the Duchess.

"You don't mean to say—" Monty began, but found himself suddenly disconnected.

After a few fruitless "Are you theres?" he replaced the receiver, and went in to dinner.

About an hour and a quarter later Monty and his father were in the library, which was a very large and lofty room stored with books. In the two great fireplaces great fires were burning, one at one end

of the room and the other at the other; the rich red flames were singing a chorus up the chimneys. The heavy Eastern carpet, which had been specially woven, the dark red curtains which draped the six windows, the comfortable reading-chairs and desks, the electric lamps which shed a subdued and mellow light throughout the apartment, the famous old French clock, Louis Quatorze, one or two admirable busts in bronze and marble — these and the splendid editions of the books, combined to produce a sense of modern elegance and leisure and ease. Sir John Marduke and his son were standing opposite the fireplace which was farther from the door, and they were snipping their cigars, and preparing to light them.

"There 's something I want to speak to you about, Monty," said Sir John.

"Is it about Jellini's?" asked Monty.

"No," said Sir John, as he turned to look at the French porcelain clock, "we 'll arrive there in good time. I promised old Habenichts. I 'm glad that you 're coming, you have n't been once yet, and it 's really pleasant to watch them enjoying themselves."

He sat down on one of the big chairs, and his son sat in another.

"About the dowager?" asked Monty, smiling.

"No," said his father, gravely, as he looked at him, "I trust to your own common sense. I think

that she is a very original, kind-hearted, and interesting old woman, but rather eccentric. You contradicted that foolish report about her and you?"

"Yes, I telegraphed," said Monty.

At this moment Riggs followed by a footman entered with the coffee.

"No, thank you, Riggs," said Sir John.

"I don't want it either," said Monty, crossing his legs.

After the men had gone away Sir John Marduke drew his chair nearer.

"Well, it's this," he began. "You'll perhaps be surprised! I'm going to destroy our coat of arms."

He waited to see the effect on his son, who, however, merely contracted his brows slightly, as if to indicate that he expected to be bored by the conversation.

"Yes. I have decided on it. I once mentioned it to your poor mother," continued Sir John.

"And *she* approved?" asked Monty.

"She understood and sympathised as you might expect. She had too fine a taste not to. I hope that you and Minnie will also see the necessity, but I speak to you first since the title descends to you. I only reproach myself for having delayed so long."

"That's what I was just going to say," observed Monty; "your friends will think that the discovery has taken you a long time."

"Yes. I agree. We should have dropped it long ago. I have always winced when I have had to use that seal, and I have used it as seldom as possible. I would n't allow them to put our crest on the carriage or the motor, and none of the silver on which it is stamped and which it defaces so horribly will ever appear again on my table. Just think of it!" exclaimed Sir John, rising and walking up and down. "Two chained negroes, and a slave ship below. These are our armorial bearings in the twentieth century. Of course they don't lie. They make no pretence to brave deeds. They announce in plain terms to the whole world the origin of my wealth. It was my great-great-grandfather, the builder of the slave ships, when this country possessed slave colonies, who chose this hideous piece of heraldry, when the title was conferred upon him. I have traced every farthing of our capital to its source, and I find that, except for some four thousand pounds, every farthing was wrung out of our family's slave plantations in Jamaica and Demerara, and from the fleet of slave ships."

"What about Lady Holland?" asked Monty. "She had seven or eight thousand a year which came to her from slave plantations. And the Gladstones? Mr. Gladstone's father owned slaves. If Gladstone was sent to Eton and Oxford, and set up in public life, it was because his father could afford it, and he could

afford it because he had large interests in the slave plantations in the West Indies and in Demerara. Governor, if you asked about the origin of half of the modern wealth, and about the ownership of land, you would find the sources just as tainted as I suppose they were in our own case."

"It makes the problem all the more disquieting," observed Sir John. "Our family were making about £100,000 a year towards the end of the eighteenth century. We even gained enormously by the abolition. By the Bill of 1833 we received on an average nineteen pounds per head for each slave. Well, we had in all 50,000 slaves scattered over the West Indies, and thereby we got nearly a million sterling. Then there were vast profits on the sugar and on the land when it came into the market."

Sir John stopped. His eyes were glittering with excitement. It was evident that his idea had full possession of him, and gave him no rest.

"Well?" asked his son.

"Well, when I look round on all we possess, on all this," said Sir John, pointing to the room, "when I think of our comfort, our luxury, when I give a diamond necklace to Minnie, or a motor car to you, or an expensive present to a young married couple, when I think about all these things and our social position, our title even, our great privileges in society, which have been made possible because two or three genera-

tions ago thousands of slaves were captured for our service and perished in it, I have a most uncomfortable, a ghastly sort of feeling, Monty."

The young man looked earnestly and anxiously at his father. Was it that the conscience of the family which had been slumbering during three generations was at last awake in Sir John?

"It 's not your fault that the money was made in that way," said Monty.

"While we are rolling in plenty, and when I see your name and Minnie's in the society news, and when I watch the parasites who have grown round you, I can't help thinking of those countless men, women, and children of Africa, without whom there would have been no Marduke money, and no Marduke baronetcy. For it is perfectly plain that it was for political services which his wealth made possible that my great-great-grandfather received the title."

"It 's the Congo business, the recent outrages by the Belgians, that have put all this in your head again," suggested Monty.

"Perhaps," replied his father, "but it 's been in my head a long time; ever since, as a soldier, I began to think about might and right."

"The negroes whom, you say, slaved to make you rich were n't always badly treated," said Monty. "They were taught industry and regular habits, and no doubt many of them were happy."

Sir John Marduke took a bunch of keys from his pocket, and went to open an old-fashioned brass-mounted mahogany coffer out of which he brought some curious rusty iron implements. He laid them one by one upon a table. First there was a pair of handcuffs, which had been used in shackling the wrists of African slaves on the plantations in such a way that the right hand of one man was fastened to the left hand of his fellow. A bolt and padlock were attached. Next came a pair of fetters for the ankles, and they were so heavy that Sir John required to use his two hands to lift them. Then he brought out a thumb-screw with a key to turn the bars and regulate the amount of punishment and pain to be inflicted on the victim. Next there was a very formidable-looking instrument for forcing open the mouths of those slaves who had decided to starve themselves to death. Blood-stains almost a hundred years old were visible on parts of this machine. Then came an ugly iron hoop with a curious twist which had been fitted to the necks of fugitive slaves. Lastly, Sir John showed a portfolio containing engravings of the slave ships with sections in which the slaves were seen lying packed together like herrings. Monty asked the meaning of it all.

"These," said his father, "were the means by which long ago the fortune which founded our family was made. I have never shown them to you or

to any one. Some night I intend to fling them into the river. They often keep me from sleeping."

"Father," urged Monty, "all this is getting on your brain. Nothing that you can do now can alter the past."

"We can expiate it, Monty. That is the real reason why I have given so much money away. I am called a philanthropist. I detest the name. In my own case it is a sham. I am giving money which has accumulated in our family, but which was infamously got. You knew in a vague way that your immediate ancestors possessed plantations, but you never realised the infamy which lies behind our family's history. Monty, I would like you to go into business."

"You did not bring me up to it," replied Monty.

"That is true. That was my error, but it is not too late. In any case you will not be a *very* wealthy man, Monty," said Sir John Marduke, with a strange glance. "I should like you to curtail your expenses. By the way, I sent £20,000 for that dreadful mining disaster in Wales."

Monty looked aghast.

"And I gave £5000 for the Christmas Dinners. I hope you approve?" inquired Sir John.

"Where is all this to end?" demanded Monty. "You 're fast reducing yourself and us to beggary. What 's to become of Minnie? Supposing she wants

to marry? Supposing I want to marry? Do you really imagine that by giving all that money away in charity you are doing any good to the slaves who were dead a hundred years ago?"

"Certainly not. That 's not the question," replied Sir John. "I have simply been giving away our superfluity. For myself, I could live easily on my army pension."

"By the way, what *is* this Jellini's?" asked Monty.

"Well, I 've been laughed at for that, too. This Dancing Academy was dancing on its last leg," said Sir John, with humour unusual in him, "and I was asked to become security. I made inquiries, and found that it gave relaxation and healthy recreation to shop girls and booking clerks, and so on, and that it was admirably conducted. Why should n't that class enjoy themselves of an evening in that way? They love gaiety as much as you do. They are weary of being preached at, and I know nothing more important than to teach them grace and good manners, and the small innocent joys of life. Besides, it 's not quite a charity. A small fee is charged. I did n't want to see it become bankrupt because the boys and girls would in that case be tempted to find amusement in more dangerous places. Ah, here 's Minnie. It 's time to go."

Minnie Marduke entered the room, and her resem-

blance to her brother was obvious at a glance. She was two years older, and although not strikingly beautiful, she was tall, dark, handsome, and like her brother, too, she had charming eyes. Her dress was concealed by an evening cloak trimmed with sable, and she wore a spray of diamonds in her black hair. She had the Marduke pallor, there was a shadow of sadness on her face, and her fine lips were by no means full, but had a tendency to be compressed as if their owner perpetually held herself in control. The truth was that Minnie Marduke was in love with a man whom she suspected of being attracted to her chiefly by her wealth. She was haunted by this suspicion night and day, and her father knew it and sympathised with her. And then she had certain anxieties at home. Her father's eccentricity in spending vast sums in charity — purging the Marduke conscience, he called it — agitated her as it agitated her brother, because they did not know how the Marduke fortune was able to stand the strain and drain. But she took a willing part in his endless projects, although her prudence many a time saved him from the wiles of needy and dangerous adventurers. She felt the pathos of his attempt to revindicate the Marduke name. Yet the world would care very little about the matter, and unless he had spoken of it might never have guessed the origin of the family's wealth. And she looked

with alarm on a form of generosity which was fast developing into a passion, and on a self-sacrifice which had something fanatical and almost demoniacal in it. Of all the manifestations of his singular warm-heartedness, his patronage of Jellini's was the latest and the most *bizarre.* But she looked on with a humorous tolerance, and was annoyed only when she heard that Monty proposed to be present at the pupils' ball.

"Don't come," she said, while Riggs was holding the baronet's coat in the hall. "You 'll be bored to death, Monty."

"After all that he has been saying, I admit I 'm not in much of a mood, old girl," said Monty. "The latest is that the coat of arms is going to be destroyed. I 'm hanged if I care, for it 's hideous enough."

The brother and sister exchanged significant glances.

"Old girl," continued Monty, "you should take off that cloak and these diamonds. Never wear silk stockings any more. Put off all your fine furs, your lovely shoes, your ancient lace and your smart hats. Away with them! They are taboo."

"What do you mean?" asked Minnie.

"Why, he has been raving away on the old subject."

"You don't know how to manage him," she said.

"He has sent £20,000 to the Welsh Mine Disaster Fund! and £5000 for Christmas Dinners!" said Monty.

"I saw it in the *Times*," replied Minnie, shrugging her shoulders.

"It's just this, old girl, something must be done, or you and I shall be beggars," replied Monty.

"You're not coming with us," said Minnie.

"Oh yes, I'll come."

They were in the hall, and the door was open, and Sir John was waiting on the steps. As the three were entering the motor car, the telephone bell began ringing.

"It's her Grace, sir," said Riggs, running down the steps.

"Tell her," said Monty, as the motor was moving, "that I've just gone out."

CHAPTER THIRD

There was no such person as Jellini. That was the name of an Italian dancing master who flourished in London between 1850 and 1860. Mrs. Bleeks remembered him perfectly well. But he had long ago danced his last dance, and his mantle was now worn by a Teutonic philosopher, Herr Habenichts, who, like Socrates, had taken to dancing late in life and in order to forget his own troubles. The name Jellini was, however, so renowned and so potent, and was believed to be of such good omen, that more than one academy had audaciously adopted it. Above the entrance to the rooms in Tottenham Court Road there was fixed a large iron frame, holding these gilded letters of giant size — "The Original Jellini Academy of Dancing." And they reappeared on the lapel of the livery coat and round the gold band of the hat of Ridpath the porter, who opened and closed the swing doors under the glass canopy. Moreover, those words spoke the truth. The well-worn floors of the rooms in Tottenham Court Road had been the actual stage upon which Jellini used to strut.

"Vot are you about?" demanded Herr Habenichts of a young booking clerk of Euston Station, who was creating confusion in a set of the lancers. "I say dat you don't onderstand the elementaries. Dat is not a *Tour de Mains.* You pull de lady about as if you vished to shunt a train and you vere de engine. Oh dear, oh dear! De light touch is de necessity. First lady advance, one two, one two . . . second gentleman advance, one two, one two. . . . Now, gentleman to left, lady to right . . . salute! Now, dere, retire. . . . Double ladies' chain. . . . Oh, you are de veak links of dis chain."

Herr Habenichts sat down exhausted, unbuttoned his frock coat, searched his pockets for his handkerchief, and then wiped his bald head with it. His pupils were toiling through the third figure of the lancers, but their steps had lagged so far behind the music that the piano, violin, cornet, and double bass, playing at the far end of the room were ready to begin the fourth figure long before the dancers had taken up their proper positions at the close of the third. The master looked reproachfully at his bunglers, and scanned their animated perspiring faces. He was devoting an hour to his more troublesome pupils to fortify them for the ordeal of the ball which was to begin exactly at half-past nine o'clock. On a bench covered with red baize sat Miss Dorothy Larkin, surrounded by friends, who, like herself,

had no longer any need of instruction in square dances. She had already received a number of compliments, and she informed some of her admirers that she was looking forward with perfect rapture to the programme. In the space unoccupied by Herr Habenichts' immediate victims a few young men were indulging in a *pas seul* or a *pirouette,* and the girls were laughing at them.

Herr Habenichts clapped his hands to warn the musicians to begin the music for the fourth figure in which the novices found the *glissade en passant* and the *balancé* specially formidable.

"Hey dere, move, slow fellow! More grace, more slide and graciosity. Dis is not a barn dance. My heart is broke vith you. Dat 's de truth," said Herr Habenichts.

While the fourth couple should have been awaiting the visit of the second they had gone to visit the third, but the third were already on the move to visit the first, so that all four met midway in violent collision. With a wave of his hand the master sent the unfortunate dancers back to their original positions.

"Come!" he called. "Ten minutes to nine. Dere 's no time left. Sir Marduke to be here at half-past. Vifth figure, quick. Commence after virst chord. Now! Grand chain. . . . Virst couple promenade . . . tird couple fall in behind virst

. . . vourth behind tird . . . second in place. . . . So. . . . Dat 's better. All glissade . . . softly . . . well, dat goes . . . Ja . . . gut . . . bien . . . mon dieu, dere! Now repeat. . . . So . . . Ah, second couple dere! . . . dat gentleman, attention . . . nein, nein! . . . So . . . Grand chain. . . . Oh, sit down!"

Herr Habenichts then intimated that there would be an interval of half an hour which the pupils might spend, if they chose, in cooling themselves in the vestibule or in the dressing-rooms. And while the piano, violin, cornet, and double bass are returning, it will be expedient to take the occasion to inform the reader in what precise manner Herr Habenichts and his academy came into relation with Sir John Marduke.

Of all the broken-down gentlemen who found their way to Portland Place, old Habenichts was the most interesting. He was a poor and refined scholar from Vienna, but since he was frequently mistaken for a German and a spy, he encountered many obstacles in his career in London. The fact that his language was German formed damning evidence against him, and he had the misfortune to arrive during a scare about the German Navy. "I 'm vrom Vienna," he said indignantly, but often in vain. He spent most of his time, however, in the British Museum, which was his Mecca. During three years he was steadily at

work in the Reading Room. He had come to London in the hope of completing his "History of Dancing in all Ages and among all Peoples," but the book had ruined him, for he could find no person courageous enough to undertake its publication. It comprised forty immense volumes in manuscript. Having engaged a man with a barrow, he hawked the book round the publishing offices. On one occasion he succeeded in penetrating into the private room, the inmost shrine of a well-known publisher, and actually deposited the forty volumes on the floor. The publisher sitting at his desk fixed his eye-glass on his right eye and gazed at this mountain, and positively refused to have anything whatever to do with it. Herr Habenichts ventured to suggest that the risk might be undertaken if only the publisher would have a little faith.

"The best use," replied the publisher, "to which I could put faith at this moment, sir, would be to recall that passage in Scripture which says that if we have faith even as a grain of mustard seed we shall say to this mountain, 'Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea!'"

Herr Habenichts having called up the man who drove the barrow ordered him to remove the books at once, for he had no desire to give offence, and with a cheerful smile he bade the publisher adieu. His invariable maxim was, "De bad veather vill pass,"

or "De big east vind not blow for ever and ever!" and he repeated the words to himself when he was in the street again, even although the rain was pouring, and the wind blew his umbrella inside out. Among his many projects was a book to prove that the destiny of Europe was to form a confederation of allied states which would abolish war. Meantime his own resources were dwindling, and it was necessary to carry on a kind of war in order to live. He could not understand why no one showed any interest in a work in which he told how they danced in Babylon and Nineveh, in Eridu and Ur of the Chaldees, in the ancient cities of India, in Cathay, in Tyre and Sidon, in Thebes, in Memphis, in Ispahan, Seleucia, and Samarcand, in Troy, in Carthage, in Sybaris, Croton, and Tarentum, in Etruria and Thessaly, in Athens, in Rome, in Mexico, and in Peru, in the Sandwich Islands, and in Siberia and Abyssinia, among the Kalmucks and the Scandinavians, in Mediæval England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, in Toledo, in old Vienna, and in lunatic asylums — in short, wherever the rhythmic feet of man and woman trod a measure. The religion, the philosophy, the poetry, and the science and the art of dancing were unfolded with gigantic erudition, and the great work, together with three hundred pounds, constituted the author's entire fortune. Making a desperate last effort to reach the ear of mankind,

he engaged the services of a translator, to whom with apologies he paid the wretched sum of one hundred and fifty pounds. The expenses of publication swamped the remainder, and Herr Habenichts found himself in debt to the printer and binder, and facing the world with nothing except five hundred copies of his book, each copy comprising twelve stout volumes bound in paper covers. Sold: one copy to Monsieur Dumaresq, whose acquaintance the reader will not make until the nineteenth chapter. Another was sent gratis to the British Museum. The result was that Herr Habenichts had in his hands, after having deducted fifty copies sent for review, five thousand three hundred and seventy-six volumes, and they became a nightmare to him. For his landlady, Mrs. Wix, refused to give house-room to more than a thousand, and the remainder lay rotting in the book-binder's cellar in Covent Garden. We do not propose, however, to narrate all the vicissitudes into which Herr Habenichts was plunged. Mrs. Wix became one of his chief persecutors, and treated with ridicule and opprobrium the suggestion that in the thousand volumes now in her possession she held ample security for the board and lodging with which she furnished him. Suffice it to say that in order to find bread, at last Herr Habenichts was forced to sell music on the streets. He used to be seen presiding at a huckster's stall in Farringdon Road,

and during slack hours he sat on a stool reading Epictetus in the original Greek. And I firmly believe that if it had not been for the comfort which he obtained from the maxims of that wonderful man he never could have survived this experience. What with taunts at his nationality, threats to overturn his music stall and make him dance to very lively tunes, fierce allegations that he was a German, and probably a spy sent to watch the progress of the British Navy, numerous epithets hurled at him of which the least offensive was "German Sausage," Herr Habenichts endured what is called a very hot time. But he was the best-tempered of men. And once when he stopped a runaway horse which had already dodged two policemen, an entire revolution of opinion in the district took place in his favour, and the costers in their humorous, generous way, carried him shoulder high the entire length of the street.

Surprising and delightful was the news which reached him one day from Vienna. A retired professor, who had been a companion of his youth, had left him by his will and testament nothing less than seven hundred pounds. Herr Habenichts was on his feet again, in fact he was dancing with delight; he paid the printer and the bookbinder, voluntarily and cheerfully paid another hundred pounds to the translator, distributed fifty among his coster friends,

settled the bill with Mrs. Wix, and once more took up his old quarters in Wix's Residential Hotel.

Too shrewd and too thrifty to live upon capital, he decided to invest it. One day while he was walking leisurely down Tottenham Court Road he saw that Jellini's was to let, and the thought struck him that here was his chance. He never despised the little gifts of life. He had studied modern dancing in its relations with the earlier forms out of which it had been evolved. Here at last was an occasion for proving that he was a genuine disciple of Epictetus, who said that the things of life were indifferent but not our use of them. And the famous illustration of life as a game at ball immediately occurred to Herr Habenichts. It matters little, said the sage, of what material the ball is made, but it matters greatly that we should skilfully catch it. "Remember, when anything comes to thee to ask thyself what faculty thou hast for making use of it." Herr Habenichts' decision was forthwith made. Providence in the name of Jellini was calling to him. He sought out the agents; he inspected the hall; he paid a half-year's rent in advance; he ordered that the statue of Terpsichore, which stood in the largest of the rooms, was to be painted white, and that the gilt letters of the name of the Academy fixed above the entrance were to be regilded; he engaged an expert assistant, and a porter, for he liked to do things

handsomely; and he advertised for pupils. A wonderful idea came into his head, he would deliver his book in lectures to enthusiastic young audiences.

The pupils came in troops, and during the first six months it seemed as if the ancient Jellini prestige had been recovered. It was freely admitted that Herr Habenichts was a conscientious and laborious teacher. Apparently his knowledge of the science of dancing was, although bookish, profound. It was his joy to trace the modern *pas glissé, pas sauté, grande ronde,* and heel-and-toe polka back to the mystic rites of savages or to the dim ages of religious song when Miriam and her maidens danced before the Lord. His own efforts, it is true, in illustration of various steps and poses were scarcely so fortunate. Corpulent, short in stature, far from agile, and suffering from poor man's gout, he was not altogether a typical ball-room figure, and his theory of dancing was considered to be more graceful than his practice. But it must never be forgotten that he was an Austrian, and therefore possessed that artistic instinct, gaiety, and quickness of perception characteristic of the Viennese. He loved beautiful rhythm, and because dancing expressed the joy of motion and brought as no other art can bring the entire body and mind into rhythmic union, he was not ashamed to be its exponent. The old religions, he said, knew its emotional value. So far as the teaching of technique

was concerned, he provided his pupils with an expert from Vienna, and he used to sit watching their movements while he was lost in pleasing thoughts regarding the poetry and music of existence. The real cause of the catastrophe which threatened him at the end of the first half-year was his insistence on his pupils' attendance once a month at his lectures. When he was expounding the history of the art they were eager to be dancing. In truth, this lecturing was simply an attempt to revenge himself on the world's neglect of his book, and he read whole passages of it to his yawning audience. On one occasion half of the assembly was discovered fast asleep, while Herr Habenichts was drawing brilliant pictures of dancing in ancient Jericho.

"Go there," said a sleepy voice.

Absorbed in his theme the lecturer was unconscious of interruptions unless they became too loud. It pleased him to have the chance of slipping into his lectures little precepts of his own. But when he informed his pupils that he, a Teuton, was proud to belong to the great race from which the English and the Germans likewise came, there was an uproar.

"Vot?" he demanded. "De ignorance! Dey don't believe dat de English, too, come from de tribes of de Rhineland? It 's not my fault. It is history!"

Cries of "Rot!" "No lies." "Draw it mild,"

assailed the speaker, and the song "See me dance the Polka" was begun by an improvised choir of male voices.

When silence had been restored Herr Habenichts continued his panegyric on the Teutonic race, of which the English and the Austrians, he pointed out, formed two of the most vital branches, the race that Tacitus praised, the race that has done the great constructive work of modern Europe, and he appealed in a passionate peroration for peace and good-will between all its families. Asked what this had to do with dancing, he said that he was coming to that, and then gave the history of the waltz. His statement, however, that the waltz was a German invention was received with hooting.

"Herr Gott!" he exclaimed. "Geduld! Dey don't know dat either! Vy, de waltz is de German national dance. Der Walzer ist der echt deutsche National-tanz. I am not a German. I am vrom Vienna. But vy be so angry vith de German? Dey are a great nation, too."

Something resembling a riot ensued and the entire audience was on its feet. Unable to obtain silence, Herr Habenichts dismissed his unruly class, and from that evening his good fortune forsook him. Old pupils dropped away, and new ones were not enrolled. Like the clown, who, although he had a sad heart, was compelled to continue his grimaces, Herr Habe-

nichts kept a smiling countenance, but the brave show was really over.

The bad weather was upon him again. The expenses were not met by the fees, and his own savings were insignificant. The landlords became clamorous for arrears of rent, and threatened to close the Academy. It was in this predicament that the poor dancing philosopher, who had frequently heard the name of Sir John Marduke, boldly determined to appeal in person to that lover of his kind.

When Riggs saw the combination of soft felt hat, somewhat frayed frock coat, and unfurled old-womanish umbrella at the door, and when he heard their owner, who had a broad, pale face and grey moustache, ask if "Sir Marduke" was at home, he at once recognised that here was a new recruit to the unending procession of beggars to whom that door was far too frequently opened. And so he escorted Herr Habenichts to the library, where Sir John Marduke was to be seen almost daily between eleven and one o'clock.

"I not beg!" began Herr Habenichts, with a profound bow. "No, Sir Marduke. But sometimes everyting depends upon de pocket. Ven de pocket is full, den we are pleased, but ven it is empty, oh dear!"

"I did n't catch your name," said Sir John Marduke, looking narrowly at the stranger.

"Habenichts," said the proprietor of that name; "I am vrom Vienna. I am not a German spy. Vot an idea! I love dis country, de greatness, de freedom. I am a poor dance master."

Somewhat astonished — although, indeed, in his daily encounter with human misfortune there was little left of London sorrow to cause astonishment to Sir John — he looked again at Herr Habenichts, and could not refrain from a smile. But he noticed that his visitor returned the glance full in the face, and that was what Sir John liked.

"Bitter is de vinegar of life, sir," observed Herr Habenichts, in a moment of dejection.

"And vinegar should never be anything else," replied Sir John, smiling again.

"I am Viennese," continued Herr Habenichts; "as if a poor old man like me could be a spy. Vot haf I to do vith it? I vould never do such wrong ting to people dat has been so kind to me. Der is no gammon about it. Ah, de vind blow strong, and I go against it!"

"Well, Mr. Habenichts," said the baronet, "tell me what has brought you to me?"

Herr Habenichts thereupon gave a long explanation of his past life and his present circumstances, repeated his statement that he had never begged from any man, but finally made the somewhat daring proposal that if Sir John Marduke would help him to

meet the arrears in rent he would reimburse him by monthly instalments out of the fees, and would pay whatever rate of interest was demanded.

"I am so vrightened for de money-lenders," he explained. "I vould pay you all de fees except vot vas required for vages and my poor lodge at Mrs. Vix."

In spite of the spontaneous stream of his charity, Sir John Marduke always made careful inquiries when any appeal for money was made to him, and he subjected Herr Habenichts to a searching cross-examination. Having ascertained the general position of affairs he said that he would make further investigations in other quarters. But there was something so naïve and unworldly in Herr Habenichts, his story was so odd, and yet, judging from the appearance of the man, so probable, that Sir John already began to feel a certain sympathy for him. He told him that he would take the advice of the district visitors and of some of the clergymen of the parish, and if their report was favourable he would be very glad to be able to save Herr Habenichts from ruin. Herr Habenichts as a mark of esteem offered a copy of his book in twelve volumes, dedicated to Terpsichore, but Sir John declined, saying that he would buy it. We had intended to conceal what took place immediately after that last declaration of Sir John. But when we remembered

that Homer was not ashamed to give a picture of Achilles in tears, we no longer hesitated to inform the reader that Herr Habenichts suddenly found himself in great stress of emotion. He unbuttoned his frock coat and fumbled for his handkerchief with which he covered his eyes during a few moments. The kind tones of the baronet's voice, the sudden transition from the fear of a catastrophe to the hope of success had been too much for the old Herr's impressionable nature. Finally, however, after some encouraging words from Sir John, he found himself in the street, and was muttering "De bad veather passes again." In fact, the zephyrs were blowing in winter, and the sun was shining brightly on the Marylebone Road, while Herr Habenichts went gaily to Jellini's, stopping on the way to give twopence to a beggar. Sir John Marduke did not disappoint him. The district visitors, the clergymen, and a member of the borough council of St. Pancras testified to the respectable character of Herr Habenichts and his academy, and even stated their opinion that the rooms were a centre of innocent gaiety and recreation, and deserved to be encouraged. That was enough for Sir John. He declared himself a patron, met the arrears of rent, and arranged with his new *protégé* to be paid in easy instalments. And on Herr Habenichts' side the covenant was faithfully kept. Whether owing to the prestige of Sir John

Marduke's name, or to the renewed energy with which Herr Habenichts threw himself into the battle, the fact remains that Jellini's began to give promise of fresh life. And when at length permission was granted to announce on the card of invitation that the patron among other distinguished persons would be present at the pupils' ball, Herr Habenichts saw, more clearly than ever, the bright side of things.

CHAPTER FOURTH

The band had been ordered to play "For he 's a jolly good fellow" as soon as Sir John Marduke and his party entered the hall, which was now filled by the pupils, their parents, and their friends. The space reserved for the dancers was divided off by the red baize benches behind which seats were provided for the spectators. The flowers, shrubs, and coloured lamps made a pretty spectacle; the floor, which was smooth and highly polished, seemed to invite the dancers' feet, and from her pedestal, Terpsichore, goddess of the dance, with a laurel wreath on her brow, looked down benignantly on her young devotees. At one end of the hall there was a platform upon which seats were arranged for the distinguished guests. At the top of the steps stood Herr Habenichts in evening dress and white gloves, and he welcomed those who honoured him by their presence with a bow which would not have disgraced a seventeenth-century Marquis. When Sir John, Monty, and Minnie appeared all the pupils stood up, sang the ditty of greeting to the accompaniment of the band, and when the last bar had been played,

they cheered with prolonged fervour. Herr Habenichts with many smiles conducted his patron and his patron's son and daughter to the most conspicuous seats, presented each of them with the programme, and then descended from the platform in order to fulfil the function of master of the ceremonies. On the platform there were already gathered the following notabilities. There was the Member of Parliament for the district, who, in having accepted Herr Habenichts' invitation, was no doubt anxious to win the suffrage of the rising generation. He was accompanied by his wife. Moreover, seated next him was his prospective opponent at the next election, and *his* wife. And when the two political enemies shook hands, and their wives shook hands, a murmur of approval was heard throughout the hall. Then came the Mayor and Mayoress of St. Pancras, the Mayor and Mayoress of Hampstead, a minor official of the Austrian Embassy, two members of the Board of Guardians, a vicar, and a curate, while the back seats on the platform were occupied by the wealthier warehousemen and shop-keepers of the neighbouring streets, whose sons and daughters were among the dancers. Monty Marduke, opera glass in hand, looked round in terror to discover whether the Dowager Duchess of Berkshire had carried out her threat, but she was nowhere to be seen. His father was likewise scanning the audience, and

was much pleased by the decorum of the pupils, upon whose general bearing he had already congratulated Herr Habenichts, and by the look of pride and satisfaction of the parents whose countenances indicated that they belonged to the lower middle class.

The opening dance, which was a quadrille, had already begun, and the master of ceremonies had wisely ordained that his best dancers should dance immediately in front of the platform. It was therefore wholly unnecessary for Monty Marduke to keep his opera glass fixed on Miss Dorothy Larkin. He saw her perfectly well, and indeed she was so near that when he used the glass to bring her nearer, she seemed so close that he could have touched her. He laid down the opera glass to make use of his ordinary powers of vision in order to discover whether *they* magnified her beauty, and he followed her intently through the various movements of the quadrille. Her face, her figure, her waist — Heaven help him! — everything about her was nothing less than perfect. He heard his sister say to the baronet, "Look at that handsome girl. Is n't she wonderful?" Sir John began to use his opera glass, and after he had gazed at Dorrie he said, "Yes. But that 's what I 've always said. Take them all in all, there 's more physical beauty in the so-called lower orders than in the so-called higher." Monty agreed with every word, but remained silent. But although

silent he was slightly restless. Somehow or other he found himself looking askance at Dorrie's partner, a slim, innocent-looking man who happened to be a bank clerk. Monty felt that this person was injuring him. And when Dorrie, who, of course, was in the leading couples, gave her partner her hand, Mr. Monty Marduke not only felt offended and displeased with the partner, but desired to hit him. The five figures of the quadrille corresponded to five stages of undeniable excitement in Mr. Marduke's heart and brain, and when the "Flirtation Figure" was reached, he was in a state of desperation. The opera glass was raised and lowered many times, and at last its owner was nearly hurling it at the insolent gentleman who continued audaciously to galopade with the loveliest girl in London. Forward and back again, curtsey here, curtsey there, visits to the right, visits to the left — the entire kaleidoscope of the dance was making Mr. Monty Marduke giddy, but he was specially bewildered by that one bright particular star who seemed to draw all the feebler lights within her orbit. The shimmering muslin dress in its maddening simplicity was a veil for the most exquisite creature to whom Nature had ever given the shape of woman. And Monty had never yet been really in love. He was aware that his sister was observing him. "Damn her cleverness," he thought. And then suddenly he remembered the case of that

statesman who, when in a ball-room he saw a certain woman for the first time, nudged a friend, and said, "That woman shall be my wife!" The quadrille was nearing its finish, and at a moment when the configuration of the dance compelled Dorrie to face the platform, her admirer quickly picked up his glass again, and looked straight into her dark, mysterious eyes. She seemed so near to him that he almost heard her breathing.

But the quadrille was at an end and the dancers were walking to their seats. Only Dorrie stood waiting alone, and as Herr Habenichts came forward to conduct her down the room, all eyes were upon her, for the programme said, "A Dance with Castanets — Miss Dorothy Larkin." A delightful melody stole forth from the instruments — it was part of the Hof Ball Musik of Vienna — and presently there was a click of castanets and Dorrie was dancing. Her slight embarrassment soon vanished as she responded in a variety of ravishing motions to the throb of the music. The castanets sounded bewitchingly as they marked the advancing stages of the dance. Now the dancer was moving in slow languorous curves, now she was translating into the rhythm of action the joy and passion which the music suggested, but left to her fully to express. The harmony of her gesture, the rapid twinkling of her feet in the white satin slippers, her beautiful and intelligent face, blushing

because of her modesty, her dark dazzling hair — all these, and her English girlhood abandoning itself to the joy and triumph of the moment, made an unforgettable impression on at least one of the spectators. It was as if Terpsichore herself had descended from her pedestal to tread a measure among mankind. After the last click click of the castanets the dancer received an ovation. But accurate observers maintained that the applause was led with special vehemence from the platform, and that from the same direction there came "Bravas!" uttered by a male voice. After Herr Habenichts had come forward and had conducted his pupil to her seat, he was called to the platform by Sir John Marduke, who asked who she was.

"She is vondervoll," said Herr Habenichts, beaming on his patron and buttoning and unbuttoning his own white gloves in excitement. "She is a porn tancer. It is Nature, Sir Marduke. We have taught her leetle, leetle. Her fader is a large cab proprietor and farmer. Most respectable people."

"Indeed, indeed," said Sir John. "She is a charming girl."

"Vould you believe it!" he whispered to his daughter after Herr Habenichts had gone down among his pupils again. "A cab proprietor! I never heard of such an unromantic origin for such a romantic young creature."

It would be puerile to deny that Mr. Monty Marduke had received a slight shock. He repeated the words "cab proprietor," and could find no natural link whatever between the sort of individual whom such words denoted and the wonderful girl whom he saw before him. Nevertheless, feelings of a more serious kind quickly took possession of him. To begin with, he was excessively angry with his sister, although she had scarcely crossed words with him since the dancing had begun. In the second place, he was grievously annoyed at his father for having mentioned the cab proprietor. In the third place, nothing would have pleased him better at that moment than the departure of his father and sister. He wished them miles away. For, in the fourth place — but, really, some courage is required to confess it — he had decided to ask Miss Dorothy Larkin to dance with him. Two things were already certain, (1) that if Sir John and Minnie had not been present, the smitten youth would have gone immediately to Herr Habenichts to demand an introduction; and (2) that even although Sir John and Minnie did remain until the end of the programme, the said youth would find it impossible to resist any longer the impulse which was driving him down to the dancing floor and into Miss Dorothy Larkin's arms. It was not for nothing that he had been brought up to understand fellowship with those who were in a hum-

ble station. His heart was in the dance, in the music, and for the moment class distinctions were obliterated. Class distinctions? Dorothy had more vitality, more grace than all the insipid beauties whom he had seen in London drawing-rooms and among whom he had been taught to look for a wife.

"Is the motor waiting?" he asked his sister.

"Yes," she replied.

"How long is the governor going to remain?"

"Probably till the very end," said Minnie, maliciously.

"Really? Did he say so?"

"Why are you asking?" And Minnie looked at her brother through and through.

"Would n't it be a joke if I went down there and had a dance?" suggested Monty.

"I should think it would," replied Minnie, dreading the continuance of the conversation.

It was exactly the sort of answer to provoke the spirit of mischief and unconventionality in Monty Marduke, and he flatly told his sister what he thought of her.

"Governor," he said boldly, "would you object if I got down among the fun?"

"What do you mean?" asked Sir John.

"I mean if I went and had a dance," replied Monty, adding in a voice that quivered in spite of

all his attempt to conceal it, "with . . . with that girl."

"Why do you ask such a question?" demanded the baronet.

"Why," replied the youth, "you said she was charming."

"That 's no reason why you should dance, . . . mix with . . ." But the words seemed strange to Sir John himself, and he stopped suddenly while an oppressive sensation came over him.

"Why not?" continued Monty, with the terrible irresistible logic of youth. "If people are charming, why not get to know them? It would show that we 're not shams. What 's the good of sitting up here? At what precise distance are you going to keep yourself away from those sort of people? This is charity at the end of a ten-foot pole."

The baronet was angry and confused, for his son's proposal had revealed in a flash the secret contradiction which lay in the heart of his philanthropy. Was it to arrive at this dilemma that Sir John Marduke, baronet and millionaire, had been preaching the doctrine of human fellowship and the necessity of causing all the social ranks to intermingle at some point for the good of the world?

"Where 's the harm?" demanded Monty, judging his father out of that father's mouth.

"If you dance," said Sir John, sternly, "I will leave the place at once."

"Don't be a fool, Monty," said Minnie.

"You would shake hands with these people, governor?" asked Monty, ironically.

"Most certainly," replied the baronet.

"And why should n't I dance with them?" asked Monty.

Sir John Marduke exchanged pained glances with his daughter.

"How often have you said," continued Monty, "that the caste system is a curse, that it stops the growth of a nation, and so on? A minute ago you were talking about 'the so-called higher and the so-called lower.' Does your theory break down so easily after all?"

"I refuse to discuss the subject at present," retorted Sir John.

"So do I," said Monty, and he left the platform, and went straight to Herr Habenichts, and demanded an introduction to Miss Dorothy Larkin.

"But dat is too great honour vor her," said Herr Habenichts, surprised and looking towards the platform for guidance. "Vot does your fader say? He is not pleased, I see."

"Come on, Herr Habenichts," said Monty, leading the way, while Herr Habenichts followed reluctantly to the spot where Dorothy sat, still ani-

mated by her recent achievement in the dance with castanets. And, indeed, Herr Habenichts need scarcely have followed at all because Monty practically introduced himself. The dancers were rising for the waltz, and to the horror of two spectators on the platform, their kinsman was seen putting his arm round Miss Dorothy Larkin's waist. There was a sudden buzz in the audience as it became known that Sir John Marduke's son had come from the platform to take part in the dancing. And it soon became evident that the youth deserved the reputation which he enjoyed among his own class of being the finest waltzer in London. The band was playing Johann Strauss's Frühlings Stimmen, a piece of dance music sufficient to stimulate the feet of every waltzer to take the floor. Instinctively, however, the other couples fell back spell-bound, to watch this straight-legged specimen of an English athlete, dressed in the most faultless evening clothes which Savile Row could produce, actually leading the waltz with Herr Habenichts' favoured pupil. Unconscious of the storm which was gathering on the platform, Herr Habenichts in an ecstasy contemplated the pair, and followed them with his eyes round and round and up and down the room. Suddenly, however, his attention was diverted by a movement on the platform. Sir John and Minnie had risen, and were preparing to walk out. Herr Habenichts

hurried towards them and met them at the foot of the platform steps. It was obvious that the baronet was very angry, and when Herr Habenichts ventured to speak he was rather frigidly received. He grasped the situation at once, however, and expected with his usual optimism to be able to soothe his patron and alter his decision. His own passionate delight in observing rhythmic movement and his sense of beauty made it impossible for him to suppose that any one could leave the hall as long as that waltz lasted. In fact, he pretended to believe that Sir John and his daughter were wishing to secure a better view.

"Your son do it out of de kindness, Sir Marduke!" said Herr Habenichts. "He is so like his fader. You go? No, no, look, he is like de beautiful Dionysus; see de grace of dat limb. Dat is gala, dat is festa. It is like a young Greek god in svallow tails!"

While he was delivering himself of these words Herr Habenichts was compelled to follow Sir John and Minnie Marduke into the vestibule, and his attempts to persuade them to return were utterly futile. Sir John called for his motor, and we are grieved to say that he entered the car without even having shaken hands with Herr Habenichts. Such is the hidden force of pride, and such is the sudden revelation of its power even in the heart of a gentle,

true, and good man like Sir John Marduke. His daughter, however, having noticed Herr Habenichts' discomfiture, attempted to mitigate the impression, and shook hands, saying, "We did not mean to see the programme to a finish." Accepting this comfort for what it was worth, Herr Habenichts returned to the hall where the piquancy of the scene which had just been enacted had been thoroughly enjoyed by every one. And the patron's son was still dancing. Even although the Dowager Duchess of Berkshire had carried out her threat and been present, Monty would not have desisted. For in his heart — which was a good honest one — he knew that no vulgar passion was impelling him, but an instinct that was great, and destined, and even elemental. In plain truth the elements of his being had been suddenly and singularly stirred, and he could not help himself. Here was something new and unforeseen in his life. No doubt to a cynical observer, whose head is lined with ice, there was a comic side in the spectacle. But Monty was conscious of nothing except delight in the girl and in the dance. And when in the full bovine gaze of the audience they had waltzed themselves weary and now sat on one of the red baize benches, Monty was no whit embarrassed. It was Dorrie who was trembling and blushing, and it was Herr Habenichts who was looking a little scared. Monty was talking about Essex, every nook

of which she knew, and in which he said he had hunted; about her father's old farm near Colchester; then about her love of pictures, of which she knew far more than he; and then about her love of modern poetry, of which she had a full store in her memory. Where had she got it all? It must be admitted that it was with some anxiety that he had looked forward to her manner of speech and pronunciation, for his own ear was fastidious and refined. But to his surprise her English was pure and well chosen. They danced no more that night, and yet the hours flew. When the programme was not far from its close, Monty proposed that they should go to the corridor, where they began to walk up and down. They were gazed at by the rabble of dancers, who behaved somewhat as common birds behave when birds of bright and strange plumage come among them. The platform in the hall was almost empty, and already some of the dancers were departing. And in truth Herr Habenichts believed that Mr. Marduke's sudden act had ruined the programme because interest had been transferred to him and Dorrie. The Herr had gone for a few moments to his own private room, and in an access of despair had begun wringing his hands. At length, assuring himself that all would be well, he emerged again, and beheld Monty and Dorrie walking up and down. She had put on her pink hood and cloak and — oh,

reader! — the patron's son was carrying the fan and the satin slippers. Herr Habenichts attempted to look reproachfully, but the truth was that a frown was never able to settle on his face. Monty congratulated him on the evening's success.

"But," exclaimed the old Tanzmeister, "de patron has gone!"

It was almost on the stroke of eleven, and Monty proposed that they should sup somewhere, and invited Herr Habenichts to accompany them. But Herr Habenichts held up his hands and said no. Dorrie likewise declined. The pupils and friends were jostling in the vestibule. Curious glances were cast at the pair, and some very malicious tongues were busy. The credit of Herr Habenichts' Academy was at stake, and, to his dismay, he heard Monty Marduke offer to see Miss Dorothy Larkin home. Dorothy thanked him, blushing, but very graciously refused. He insisted, and she refused. He still insisted, and she seemed less resolute. It was evident that the crowd were waiting to see what was going to happen, or, in their own way of expressing it, what he was going to do with her.

"One of my father's cabs is coming for me, Mr. Marduke," said Dorothy.

And sure enough, there at the door were Swefling and Audacity punctual to the minute.

"Nothing could be better," said Monty.

Therefore a lane was made for Cinderella and the Prince, and Herr Habenichts with the gravest misgivings, and many mysterious exclamations in his own language, saw his pupil and his patron's son walk out together. Dorrie was flushed and nervous. She felt the fascination of Marduke. His eyes attracted her. From the moment that he had touched her in the dance her feelings had been in a whirl of joy and wonder. Herr Habenichts' tall porter looked on cynically, while he prepared to assist them into the cab.

"Yes," Monty was saying to her, "you will allow me to come? You must n't go about alone."

And he spoke with a concern that was personal and unmistakable.

"That cab brought me," she said, without venturing to look at the driver.

For it will be admitted that it was for Swefling that the main surprise of the entire evening had been reserved. He gazed down in bewilderment, as he saw Miss Dorothy Larkin being escorted by an elegant young man in fine dark overcoat, pumps, and a crush hat. And when the possessor of these things nodded up towards the dicky and said "Home, cabby," Mr. Richard Swefling, obeying some blind instinct, seized his whip. Before he started to drive he opened the trap-door, and looked down in a state of alarm and indignation, and discovered that an

animated conversation was taking place. Then, using his whip on Audacity, he made that highly strung animal dart forward in such a manner as to cause Mr. Monty Marduke to observe that the horse had been, and still was, a well-bred, spirited beast.

"And what a jolly cab!" he added.

"It 's father's best," said Dorothy.

"Let 's tell your cabby to drive around a little?" suggested Mr. Monty Marduke.

"Oh no, please no. They 're waiting for me," said Dorothy. "I 'll be late as it is."

As Mr. Richard Swefling turned into Euston Road, he could not refrain from opening the trap-door again, and he would have liked to use the butt end of his whip on Mr. Marduke's hat. For his instinct seemed to tell him that he was driving an enemy. Monty, however, was chatting gaily, and was making his companion promise to send him some of her pictures and sketches.

"I 'll get them into the Academy in spring," he said grandly.

"Some horrible stuff is to be seen in the Academy," observed Dorrie.

He turned to look at her, and his wonder grew.

Presently he found his right arm making tentative movements, in the direction of the pink cloak, and all in a sudden, unable to master himself, he pressed Dorrie towards him, and gave her a kiss.

Providence had kindly seen to it that at that moment the trap-door on the roof remained closed. But Dorrie was in tears. She knew not why. They were strange and sudden tears, not of sorrow. But she was amazed and perturbed.

"Forgive me," he said, "I could n't help it. You are a dear girl."

And here they are in Larkin's yard. The moment that Audacity's hoofs clattered on the cobble stones, the house door was opened, as if those who opened it were impatient. The incandescent gas lamp was still burning above the doorstep, and a dim light was visible in one of the stables at the far end of the yard. Sam Larkin, Mrs. Bleeks, and Mrs. Muzzey were standing on the threshold. Dorothy trembled, and whispered, "That 's my father, and these are my aunts," and she did not wish Marduke to hear the women talk. But Mrs. Bleeks was already talking volubly.

"Nice and late," she was saying.

"Who 's that with her?" demanded Mrs. Muzzey.

There was consternation when Marduke descended from the cab, lifted his hat, and then assisted Dorrie to descend.

"Mr. Marduke," Dorrie explained, "has very kindly seen me home, father."

Larkin, somewhat bewildered, lifted his hat in turn, and then there was an awkward pause while

Swefling looked down on the group, and was more bewildered than any of them.

"Cabby," said Monty, "you 'll drive me home?"

Swefling, who had no desire to do anything of the sort, was, however, gifted with the shrewdness typical of the London cabman, and thought that it would be wise to know where this stranger lived. Meantime Mrs. Bleeks was unable to repress her feelings, and Sam Larkin's evident displeasure and suspicion gave her encouragement.

"I says," said she, "only wagabones goes abaht at sich an hour, keepin' ole parties like us out of their beds."

Whereupon Mr. Monty Marduke burst out laughing.

"Oh," she continued, looking at him, "I s'pose a young gent like you thinks we keeps fancy men in this 'ere yard," which was a very insulting remark, although, happily, Marduke did not understand its real significance.

"It 's too herly for 'er to begin like that," said Mrs. Bleeks, sternly. "Things is gettin' wuss and wuss, ain't they, Liza? As if sich goin's on was allowed in the reign of Queen Wictoria! It 's not respeckable for a young gent wot should know better."

Marduke, who was more amused than annoyed, cut Mrs. Bleeks short by saying good-night to Dorrie,

lifting his hat to the entire group, entering the hansom, and giving his address to Swefling. As the cab passed out of the yard, Sam Larkin seized Dorrie by the shoulders, and pushed her into the house.

Meantime Swefling seemed to have communicated his indignation down the reins to Audacity, for the horse went along the Marylebone Road as if that thoroughfare had been the hunting-field. And it was at a highly dangerous angle that Swefling turned into Park Crescent. In less than a minute he drew up at the house in Portland Place. Monty stood smiling on the foot-board, and laid half a sovereign on the roof of the cab, within reach of Swefling's hand.

"Well, cabby," said he, "your governor 's got a damned pretty daughter."

Swefling's blue eyes were glaring at his enemy.

"Get out!" said Swefling, as he picked up the half-sovereign, and flung it in Mr. Monty Marduke's face. The coin fell on the street, and went jingling into the gutter, and dropped down a grating. Marduke was scarcely aware of what had happened when he saw Swefling seizing the whip, and making it whizz as if he meant to strike him. And, indeed, Swefling had no other intention. But the sound of the lash made Audacity plunge, and then the cab lurched in such a way that Marduke was thrown

violently to one side, and it was only thanks to his agility that he landed on his feet on the pavement. Two footmen were standing at the open door, and before Marduke could collect his thoughts the hansom was being driven rapidly away.

CHAPTER FIFTH

Herr Habenichts always crossed to that side of the street on which the sun was shining, and in the contemplation of his own fortunes he adopted the same policy. He pointed out to all whom it might concern — and it concerns the whole world — that clouds are by their nature shifting things, and that the wind, like a London policeman, compels them to move on. Therefore he met adversities fearlessly, looked into their domineering, impudent faces, and said —

"I 'm not vrightened vor you. I 'll dance upon you!"

He professed to enjoy the storm winds of life. Of course he was too well and deeply educated not to know that there is a good deal of devilry in the scheme of things. He admitted that the smoke of battle was always rising, and he doubted whether, even on the hottest, darkest, reddest battlefield, Nature provided her own ambulance. But it was long ago that the bright forces of life had won his adoration, and in his own character there were great re-

serves of sunshine. He considered "Carpe diem" wise advice. But he added slyly and with just a hint of extraordinary knowledge of the world, that youth — if it knows life and Latin — prefers to whisper to itself, "Carpe noctem." That, within limits, was what Monty Marduke had done. Because of mere joy, he had gone down from the proud, exclusive platform, and danced. It was beautiful, and he loved the youth for it. Class prejudices, class conventions, and all the things that sever the human ranks had been defied by a spontaneous instinct and act. It would be wrong to deny that Herr Habenichts was slightly perturbed when he thought of the wrath of Sir John, and for some time he even remained in a state of frenzy, when he recalled the disappearance of Monty and Dorrie in the cab. It looked like an elopement. But in spite of some twinges of anxiety he passed the Sunday immediately following the ball at Jellini's in his usual serenity.

Being a man of much benevolence he invariably made the first advances in friendship, and he was eager to welcome any stranger in Wix's Residential Hotel. He had suffered too much martyrdom at the hands of Mrs. Wix not to feel sympathy for her fresh victims. But his efforts were often rewarded by a cold stare, and he found it difficult to thaw the ice and snow of British taciturnity. He was loquacious, and was once asked why a damned

foreigner should presume to patronise Englishmen in their own country. Unweariedly he pleaded original racial relationship, and he quoted Tacitus and Cæsar. Even when the second parlour was filled with men, it was filled also with silence, and Herr Habenichts looked mournfully at the row of mouths from which nothing escaped except tobacco smoke. His remarks in broken English on the state of London weather, or on the state of Mrs. Wix's temper, or on the attractions of Miss Polly Wix, her daughter, or on the most recent exhibitions of Wixian soup, Wixian mutton, Wixian coffee, and Wixian tea, were received either in monosyllabic grunts of acquiescence, or in profound silence. The latest arrival was Mr. Richard Swefling, whose prosperity had so greatly increased that he could now afford the bed and breakfast which Mrs. Wix allotted to her second-class customers. But the chief motive of his change of residence was a desire to prove that he was rising in the world, and thereby to impress Mr. Sam Larkin. For Swefling had actually been hoping that the day was not distant when he might venture not only to make love and a declaration to Miss Dorothy Larkin, but to propose himself as a son-in-law to her father. His youth and smart appearance pleased Herr Habenichts, who greeted him in a very friendly way, and wondered to what profession he belonged. But Swefling was in an unfortunate mood. Not

twenty-four hours had elapsed since he had thrown the half-sovereign in Marduke's face, and he had sat all day brooding over the events of the previous night. In spite of many efforts Herr Habenichts was unable to tap the sources — if any existed — of Mr. Swefling's conversational powers. In fact Swefling's appearance said plainly, "Either you or I, sir, will have to leave this room." Herr Habenichts accepted the hint, and after having said to a tall man who was sitting opposite Swefling by the fire that he would see him later, he did leave the room. He marched up the long stair, breathing heavily all the way, to the top flat, went to his bedroom, and, since it was Sunday afternoon, he lay down in despair on his bed, went to sleep, and had a dream about the Danube.

Meanwhile Swefling did not stir from the horsehair easy-chair by the fire, and gloomily smoked his pipe. Occasionally he glanced at the long-legged person opposite, and once their eyes met.

"Orful ole tattle box, that Austrian," remarked the stranger, who had a sleek pale face and the thin, white, fine hands of a tailor, or an expert pocket thief. "Orful prattle basket. Talks no end, but 'e 's a good sort, too. Best ole feller you ever saw."

"Is he?" said Swefling, and the conversation seemed to be at an end.

"Would you b'lieve it?" continued the stranger,

"that ole swag belly axually learns people dancin' and dances hisself!"

"Does he?" said Swefling, with a slight, eager start, when he heard the word "dancin'."

But his tone and manner were still those of a man who did not want to be drawn into a conversation. The stranger was discouraged, and took refuge in a Sunday paper, while Swefling continued to smoke his pipe in silence.

The "second parlour" was so named because those boarders who had the use of it paid cheaper terms, and did not mix, except once a week at the Sunday supper, with Mrs. Wix's more distinguished clients. Wix had been chief steward on a great Atlantic liner and his wife had been head stewardess. Having grown weary of their sea life, and having gathered a substantial harvest in salaries and tips, they retired and conceived the plan of carrying on a hotel as if it had been a ship divided into first and second class accommodation. Two old houses in Fashion Row suited their design, and they broke through the partition wall. On one side was the first class (in the Wixian sense) and on the other the second, and a common kitchen supplied the two different kinds of fare. The hotel was within earshot of the traffic of Euston Road, of which a glimpse could be caught through the narrow street which led out of Fashion Row. For Fashion Row formed a sort of loop of

which the aforesaid street was the loose end. Or it might be described as shaped like a broad flat bottle with the street for a neck. Shabby gardens with a few dim, starved trees, dusty bushes, and tatterdemalion flower-beds filled the central space, and here Herr Habenichts used to dose on one of the benches on sunny summer afternoons. But alas, Fashion had long ago deserted Fashion Row, which was erected in the days when Russell Square was being built. The proximity of the three great northern termini had ruined the residential district, and Fashion Row was in the direct radius of their blight. Often the inmates at Wix's were roused in the night by the whistles of trains arriving and departing from King's Cross. Yet it was precisely the nearness of the railways which had caused Mr. Wix to cast his net in such a place. Shabby gentlemen could carry their bags to and from the house to the stations without requiring to hire a cab, and it was from the class of genteel paupers that the Wixian inmates were largely recruited. Struggling clerks, elderly spinsters, with purses as lean as their own bodies, the poorer sort of commercial travellers, and a collection of stray visitors from the provinces eager to do London on the cheap, these and their like formed the prey upon which Wix thrived. Contrary to the benevolent hopes of his friends, and the malevolent hopes of his enemies, his venture became a

success, which his death in no wise interrupted. For Mrs. Wix, assisted by her daughter, was thoroughly capable of carrying on the Wixian policy and tradition. Mrs. Wix speculated in decayed gentlefolks. Their misfortunes had made them docile. They ate less, and, with a few exceptions, grumbled less than the common upstarts who had a few guineas in their pockets. She found that they hated a scene, and rather than create one, would silently endure the eccentricities of a cuisine which in the days of their splendour they would have been ashamed to offer to their servants. She watched them — singular ancient spider that she was — swallowing with apparent equanimity soup which was skilly, tea which appeared to be an infusion of straw, coffee which had an intimate relationship with the sand of the sea-shore, bull beef which was — well, bull beef; and mutton, the juices of which had long ago been frozen out of it during the passage over-sea. If they approached their flock beds with a sigh she never heard it, and she could only guess what torment they suffered in her cotton sheets. They remained under her roof not only because they were afraid lest they might find elsewhere worse fare for more money, but because the chronic arrears of their payments delivered them into her hands. She had invented a unique and most effective discipline, which consisted in the removal to the second-class quarters of those guests

of the first class who were guilty of too obstinate insolvency. This method caused genuine dread to the more sensitive of her clients, for their disappearance from table number one, and their appearance at table number two, declared their condition to the world. According as their fortunes ebbed they were transported from the more expensive to the less expensive wing of the Wix hotel, and if their insolvency became incurable they were transported into the street. Herr Habenichts knew all about it, for he had gone through every stage of the apprenticeship. Mrs. Wix seldom made mistakes. She had reasons for being patient with certain of her strange guests, because she knew exactly when the pittances on which they lived came dribbling in, and she never lost a moment in asserting her prior rights as landlady to immediate payment. Like the second-class passengers in a ship the inmates of number two were confined to their own quarters, whereas those of number one roamed over the entire establishment. But they seldom availed themselves of the privilege. Herr Habenichts, who was diligently paying his debts to Mrs. Wix and to other creditors, was content to remain in the humbler apartments. The taproom was at hand, for after many efforts the Wixes had obtained a licence to sell liquor, and Herr Habenichts frequently ordered a glass of beer in the smoking-room. We have already said that once a week

the superior and the inferior guests came together at table-d'hôte under the presidency of Mrs. Wix. The reason was that on Sunday afternoons and evenings some of the members of the Wixian staff were permitted to enjoy a half-holiday. Although Wurm, the greasy and thoroughly amiable Austrian waiter, was able to work miracles of service, he could hardly be expected to be in two places at the same moment. Hence Mrs. Wix's battered notabilities, together with her commoner rout, assembled every Sunday evening, precisely at half-past seven o'clock, to consume whatever Providence and Mrs. Wix had placed on the table. Some of her more fastidious clients were observed to look in a condescending way towards the lower part of this festive board, where the humbler guests employed knife and fork with that energy which tough beef and stale bread demand. There had even been a proposal that the supper, if it had to be served in the same room, should at least be spread on two separate tables. Mrs. Wix peremptorily refused this concession. She was interested in politics, and she declared that it was good for the House of Lords, by which she meant her more pretentious clients, to become acquainted with the members of the lower house, her true and faithful Commons. And so there she sat with her enormous head of hair, which was flaxen when it should have been and would have been grey, if only its owner

had left it to Nature to tinge. Her eyes were large and brilliant, her complexion was suspiciously healthy, and she had a strong chin and a look of determination which would not have disgraced Mrs. Bleeks. She decided to outshine as long as possible her daughter, Polly, who presided at the other end of the table among the humbler folk. The incandescent lamp which hung from the ceiling immediately above the centre of the long narrow table, even although it was shrouded in violent yellow silk, emitted a dreadful glare, which lit up every face, and allowed Herr Habenichts to read strange matters in each of them, as in a book of life. Once Lady Epworth in her silk dress, which was thirty-three years old last spring, was seen weeping over a plate of hot eels which she positively refused to touch.

"Then she can leave it, and go to the Ritz as soon as she pays her bill," said Mrs. Wix to Wurm, and warned him not to give Lady Epworth much pudding.

As a matter of fact Lady Epworth and Sir Samuel were in debt to Mrs. Wix to the amount of nineteen pounds, two shillings and threepence, and Mrs. Wix declared that she would probably have to wait a century for it. And as Lady Holland spoke to Allen, so Mrs. Wix to Herr Habenichts, whose appetite she feared.

"The potatoes are finished, Herr Habenichts," she said one evening; "instead of a third helping of *them* you will require to be content with rice."

Like a school-boy Herr Habenichts looked eagerly for the next course, and moreover, he had faith in Wurm, who, either out of patriotism and racial feeling, or else out of ordinary human sympathy and a desire to humble Mrs. Wix, laid upon Herr Habenichts' plate an enormous slice of roly-poly. There are compensations in the world.

Mr. Richard Swefling had only been ten days in the house, and yet Miss Polly Wix had conceived a very great admiration for him. Although he paid second-class rates, this generous creature with flaxen hair, which really grew out of her own scalp, full blue eyes, and full red lips, longed to give him first-class fare. But she stood in awe of her mother. It was not Polly's, it was Mrs. Wix's fault that Swefling was given the shabbiest attic bedroom in the hotel, blankets whose wool had long been washed away, sheets with holes in them, and a chaff pillow. Indeed, when after a shrewd look at him Mrs. Wix had inquired what his profession was, and he had replied with much pride and satisfaction that he was a hansom cabman, she declared that it was necessary to draw the line somewhere. It was part of her policy to subject new and doubtful persons to a kind of quarantine, and she placed them in purga-

tory before she admitted them to paradise. Swefling stated that he wanted only bed and breakfast and the Sunday supper, because on every other night of the week he was on the streets till very late, and, of course, he took his meals in taverns during the day. When Mrs. Wix asked him what his weekly profits amounted to, he demanded what business it was of hers.

"Fluff it!" says she, "we 've got to be careful, for all sort of fop doodles comes here, as if it was a beggars' hotel."

Then she looked him up and down again, and became less churlish, when he seemed indignant at such treatment, and was on the point of going away. So that after he had tabled a week's payment in advance, Mrs. Wix permitted his modest trunk to be carried up the interminable stairs by Wurm, who with many a "Mein Gott!" deposited it on the floor. Very cautiously, very cunningly, very timidly, Polly suggested that Mr. Swefling should be granted a room on the floor immediately beneath, and gave as the reason that since he came in so late at night, he disturbed the other boarders, for he usually rushed up the stairs three at a time. She met her mother's eyes, and quailed.

"You rag bag!" said Mrs. Wix, "what do you know 'bout the time 'e comes in? You worthless wretch, disgracin' yourself by makin' eyes at a cab-

man. I 'll turn 'im out, and 'e can sleep with his cab horse."

Polly, as pale as a muffin, fell into one of those weeping fits in which she usually discharged the energy of agitated nerves.

" 'E can go and eat horse steaks," continued Mrs. Wix.

What imp of boldness suggested to Polly the withering retort —

"He 's come to the right place, then. Wy, last Friday, if that was n't — "

" Scissors ! " exclaimed Mrs. Wix, cutting her short. " You moonsick wretch, you 'll not put pepper in my eyes. Say another word, and out 'e 'll go. I can pick and choose, and don't have no need of cabmen and gutterbloods."

"Ye 'd skin a razor," said Polly, contemptuously, and took no part in the service during three days.

For that was the only mode of revenge in which she was able to indulge, and it gave her genuine comfort when she knew that she was upsetting the house. It was really her interest in Swefling that was the means of restoring her to life and duty. Twice she had seen him come in at midnight in his smart silk hat, and she had served him in the parlour with a glass of bitter. If cotton sheets of a somewhat better quality were slipped on to his bed, if a

tattered but not uncomfortable easy-chair was placed in his room, and if a faded toilet cover was made to conceal the nakedness of a ramshackle table, and if the stain on the carpet was covered by a mat, he had to thank Polly. Mrs. Wix seldom climbed that stair except when she had something disagreeable to say to Herr Habenichts, whose room was next Swefling's. So that Polly was able to bestow her generous attentions in comparative safety. Nay, one night when Mrs. Wix was in profound slumbers, Wurm was sent toiling up with a plate of hot mutton and greens, and a bottle of ale, which he presented to Mr. Richard Swefling, with Miss Polly Wix's compliments.

It is a pleasure to be able to announce that Mr. Swefling returned thanks for these amenities with a sincere heart and in the best style. But his affections were wholly elsewhere. Polly noticed a sudden change in his entire demeanour on that Sunday morning. He had given her a friendly wink, and a smile every time he had met her on the stair or in a passage, but now his face was not only smileless but fierce. She wondered what had happened to him, and desired to ask if he were ill. On various and idle pretexts she had entered the second parlour, but she had found him hour after hour sitting glum on the horse-hair chair, apparently indifferent to her presence, and dead to the world. For the fifth time she entered to ask if Herr Habenichts was in

the room, although she had just seen him go upstairs. In spite of the long-legged stranger who still sat opposite Swefling, and whose presence Polly resented, she took courage, and actually addressed a personal question point-blank to the man whom she believed to be the smartest, horsiest, most cavalier-like gentleman in London.

"Lor' love you," she said, "whatever is the matter?"

Swefling looked up, liked the tone of her voice, felt its sympathy, nodded and smiled, and replied—

"Don't worry, Miss Polly. *I'm* all right!"

Whereupon Polly felt her bosom heave, and she retreated in confusion.

"That foxy-'aired gal," said the six-foot stranger, "is a nice bit o' muslin."

"She is," said Swefling, still in his trance and his monosyllables.

He had been seeing scarlet throughout the afternoon. But the man opposite was so persistent in questions and observations that Swefling at last began to survey him in detail. He had a lean look, hungry cheeks, and now, since the incandescent gas bracket had been lit, his face was seen to be amazingly pale. When his eyeballs moved, there was a flash in them which seemed to illuminate a care-haunted countenance. The moustache was black, but not abundant, the jaw was powerful, the lips were thin, and al-

though the forehead sloped slightly, there were signs of a certain concentration and resoluteness of purpose above the eyebrows, signs, indeed, of a struggle for self-mastery which had failed. Since the month was January the stranger was unseasonably clothed. In fact, he wore a dark blue striped suit of Saxon flannel which had been bought second hand, and had been worn during two months of the preceding summer by the best-dressed man in Mayfair, who invariably disposed of his cast-off garments for cash. The necktie and the linen were not those of a really prosperous person, and the watch chain was made of nickel. But there was an air of pseudo-refinement, the look of a man who tried hard to varnish himself up as a gentleman. He wore, moreover, patent leather boots with kid uppers, which, although they had been bought as a misfit, were regarded admiringly by their present owner.

"Strike me blind!" exclaimed Swefling, "if I 'ave n't seen you before."

The stranger reddened and winced, and then looked straight at Swefling, and began to smile.

"You were drivin' a growler then," said the stranger.

"Yes," admitted Swefling, not wholly pleased, because he considered a four-wheeler a poor thing.

"That was two years ago, and only for a month to oblige old Larkin, but I 've got a 'ansom now, tip top."

"It 's a bit odd that we should strike up against each other 'ere."

"I never heard tell of your name, though," said Swefling.

"Ridpath. I s'pose it 's been often enough in the papers," observed the celebrity. "And so you 're the chap wot drove me and the two beaks to 'Olloway. Well! Well!"

"Yes," said Swefling. "'Ow long did they give you?"

"Got six months 'ard that time, but I broke down at Wormwood Scrubbs," said Ridpath. "O Lor'!"

Swefling had no desire to make Ridpath uncomfortable, and intended to ask no more questions. But Ridpath seemed to be communicative, and began to talk with great freedom.

"Want my story? Don't mind tellin'. No chance for us fellers that gets their lights put clean out. The ticket of leave 's as good 's a leg of mutton to a dead 'oss. In fact wuss. Wy, you see I 've not been out three months, and the splits 'll be round to find out if I 'm at the same address. And that means the whole show 'll be given awy. That 's 'appened before. Direckly the landshark, wot as you know 's the landlady, gits findin' out that you 've been in quod she gives you the key o' the street. Out you goes, and that means a hempty belly. Wy, I 've been

showed out of three doss 'ouses all along of splits comin' arter me."

Here Ridpath stopped to sigh, and a look came into his face which seemed to indicate that he saw his whole life spread before him as in a map with "Move on!" written up at every cross road.

"Where do you doss?" asked Swefling. "You 're not stoppin' here?"

"No," said Ridpath, "I dosses above a grubbery in Soho. Came 'ere jist for the day to speak to that ole swag belly Habenichts. Orful decent ole sort, though. I 'm 'is servant."

"Will you irrigate?" asked Swefling.

"'Ere 's 'ow," replied Ridpath, readily, and Swefling rang the bell which Wurm answered with his usual promptitude. He certainly did not deserve the translated soubriquet of "Worm," which all Wixians, except Herr Habenichts, bestowed upon him.

"What poison will you have?" asked Swefling.

"Scotch," said Ridpath, and Wurm was ordered to bring two Scotches and a split soda.

"Put that down in the bill, Worm," said Swefling, grandly, meantime jingling the contents of his right trouser pocket, as if to defy mankind to say that he could not pay on demand.

"Another of them blessed furreigners," remarked Ridpath. "Wot 's to become of us I 'd jist like to

know? Wy can't they stay in their own countries? And wot do they want 'ere?"

"Grub," answered Swefling.

"Yes, an we wants it, too. It's jist because life's sich a sweatin' job that the likes o' me gets tripped up and lagged."

The two men touched their glasses, and when Ridpath, raising his, said, "'Ere's into your face!" Swefling topped the good wish by replying, "I'm thar." The exchange of these salutations seemed to accelerate sympathy, and Ridpath continued his story.

"You wants to know wy you 'ad to drive me to 'Olloway?" he began. "I 'ad a gal. I was in the fruit trade, packin' and unpackin' thousands o' boxes at a big place jist outside Covent Garden. Eleven shillin's a week. Starwation. Lovely gal, though. Got engaged. Found my 'ands in the till one day. Guv'nor a coiny cove. Well, I wanted to give the gal a treat. Said she would like to see the pantermine. And so, as I said, I found my 'ands in the till. Fished out three quid, meanin' — I swear it — meanin' to pay back. Orful silly, for in course it was sure to be found out. Well, we goes off that night and 'ad a riglar smashin' time, and a good feed in a restaurant. Pantermine stunnin'. Felt a big paw on me jist as we was leavin' the theayter. Turns round, sees a crusher. Gal in 'ysterics. Orful scene. Got six months that time, pickin' the darned

fibre, makin' mail bags wot the postmen carries the letters in, and knittin' stockins!"

At this point Ridpath laughed so loudly and brought his hand down on the table with such a bang that the glasses clattered and jumped, and the soda-water bottle began to sway from side to side, leaning gracefully like the tower of Pisa until finally it toppled over.

"Knittin' stockins!" repeated Ridpath. "I almost died larfin', and jist missed losin' my marks for it when they brought me the wool and the sticks wot you knits with. You see, I was in 'ospital, and 'ad gone orful seedy. Well, I comes out at last, expectin' to see the gal at the prison door. In course, she was n't there, for she was married to a sodger. That 's wot the sex has done for me."

"You 've never been in again?" said Swefling.

"My eye! Been in 'eaps of times. No chance for a feller. As for beggin' I despise it. Beggars 'ave the 'earts of chickens. Down on their knees to every one, weepin' and 'owlin'. They 've no keracter, can't fight, all sneaks, and would kiss the boots of the 'tecs. You see when you 're off yer 'inges, right down in the slush, you must fight for yer grub. But I 've never taken a cent from a man wot could n't afford to lose it. Well, a hook 's got a queer life, *I 'm* too tall, too easily seen. The small chaps does better."

"What 's your line now?" asked Swefling.

"That 's wot I 've been waitin' for," said Ridpath. "Man alive! You don't use yer eyes. You saw me last night."

"I 'm on a cab," said Swefling; "and it 's not likely I can remember all the people I see on the streets."

"Wy," retorted Ridpath, "last night you drove up to Jellini's, and I was standin' in that bally uniform at the door. Purty gal that!"

"You 're at Jellini's?" demanded Swefling, starting and sitting up in his chair.

"I thought that would make you sit up," observed Ridpath. "In course, I 'm at Jellini's, 'ead porter and bottlewasher; but you were lookin' too much arter that gal in the pink cloak to see me. That gal 's a duchess."

Swefling reddened, and kicked the fender as he crossed his legs.

"You know," continued Ridpath, "ole Habenichts took me on as porter. I went complete stoney, and 'ad n't a feather to fly with. Was turned awy from door to door, and wanted to blow my brains out. I was right down in the mud honey. Sleepin' in the parks and on the hembankment. Lor, the cold! I hates cold. Well, one day I was passin' down the Totten'am Court Road, and I sees a ticket at Jellini's, 'Wanted a Porter!' In I goes, jist desperate,

straight into a room where I sees old what de ye call 'im, teachin' a polka and dancin' hisself. I nearly died larfin'. He told me to wait, and when he came out I thought it would be better to open the whole kit to 'im. And so I said I was jist out of prison, and told 'im everythink. 'I vould like to help you,' says he. 'I like dis frankness, and I know de temptations and de struggles. Kom here, vill you, and speak to me, and look me straight in de face as to a broder.'

"By Jove, the ole feller 'ad me there and talked to me no end jist as if he 'ad been my mother. And so I made no bones, and told him straight out I was a hook. Then he said, 'I haf been holped by de Engleesh, and I vill help oders. You promise never to do such ting again? Give me your hand, my boy. I don't tink dat you haf a vicked face.' So we shook a paw, and he took me on and put me in the uniform. I 've got more winks in that livery from gals than I 've ever 'ad all my life. Oh, it 's a great place, Jellini's, mind you, I talks again' furreigners, but I 'd carry ole Habenichts shoulder 'igh."

"You 'd have something to carry," observed Swefling, smiling for the first time that day, and attempting to shake off his sullenness.

"You bet! " said Ridpath; "but it 's ole Habenichts, a furreigner, wot 's kept me alive. Wot 's

that gal's name, by the way? I 've seen 'er often. She comes on the Tuesdays with the best pupils; but I 've seen 'er, arter the class, runnin' 'ome as fast 's a rabbit. And oo 's the great toff that went off with 'er? Where did you drive them to?"

Ridpath winked and laughed, but not long, because he saw a dark scowl on Swefling's face.

CHAPTER SIXTH

"CARRY me out! Wot the blazes are you cuttin' up rough for?" inquired Ridpath, half rising from his seat, because Swefling, too, had risen and was looking angry.

When no answer came, and when Swefling seemed to be about to quit the room in dignity and dudgeon, Ridpath called him back.

"I 'm sorry. Did n't know, reely. But a guinea to a gooseberry, you love that gal," said Ridpath, in a tone of unmistakable friendliness. "All tight, mate. Steady! We 're feller pilgrims. Ain't I been tellin' you I was in quod all along of a gal. And ever since, helm 's a lee. There, shake a paw."

With a very good grace Swefling took Ridpath's hand, and they sat down again opposite each other, not, however, before Ridpath had put fresh coals on the fire.

"And so that 's the time of day," continued Ridpath, but halted again because he was uncertain whether Swefling might be offended by any further reference to the subject.

Swefling, however, seemed to be thinking deeply

on the same matter, and after a few moments of silence began to speak.

"I 'll horsewhip him," he said. "I know who he is, wot he is, and where the toad lives. And as for Dorrie, if she dares! I 'll not say the things I 'll do. What would *you* think if a gal you was drivin' in a 'ansom shook 'ands with you through the trap. Wy, ain't that a sign? Well, I 've allus loved 'er and been wytin' for that there sign. On the 'ead of it, wot does I go and do, but buys a ruby ring just to be prepared, and to give it 'er as I was drivin' 'er 'ome. But that toad and wiper Marduke — for I 'eard Dorrie say the name to Mr. Larkin in the yard — went 'ome with 'er in the cab, me drivin' 'em both. If I 'ad 'ad a pistol I would 'ave shot 'im through the trap! But I gave it 'im, though, before 'is own door. I flung the fare in 's face, the whole shoot, and began on 'im with my whip, but that 's not arf what 'e 'll get yet, not arf!"

"Let 's see the ring," said Ridpath, moved perhaps by a sudden recurrent instinct in other people's property, especially jewellery.

Swefling took his precious bijou out of his waistcoat pocket, and handed it to his new singular acquaintance.

"Not rubies," said Ridpath, after a critical examination. "They 're garnets."

"Shoot that!" exclaimed Swefling, offended. "What d' you know about it? What are you talkin' about?"

"Any'ow," replied Ridpath, pitying the cabman's ignorance, but unwilling to contradict him, "it 's too good for 'er."

"What right have *you* to say so?" demanded Swefling, taking back the ring.

"None," said Ridpath, meekly; "but tell a feller this. Did she ever make love to you?"

"What would she shove her darned pretty little fingers through the cab-roof for?" asked Swefling, in triumph.

"That 's not what they call hevidence," Ridpath explained. "If ev'ry cabby s'posed ev'ry lydy wot shoved 'er darned purty little fingers through his cab-roof was in love with 'im, wy, cabs would be riglar matrimony boxes."

Swefling looked dejected.

"Look 'ere," continued Ridpath, "I 've got the trick. I 'm at Jellini's, and sees wot 's a goin' on. Man alive, I 'll do the 'tec for you. I 'll let you know as 'ow the wind 's blowin', and if that 'ere toff ever comes again —"

"Right!" said Swefling. "Roast him brown. Follow him like a split. If I gets him I 'll knock him into horse nails. I 'd like to yoke him to the cab and make him go hell for leather till he dropped."

And then Swefling smacked his knee with such force that he made his skin tingle.

"Where did you drive them to last night? Wot perticler corner of the flesh market does that sweet bit o' muslin of yourn, that little article of virtue, belong to?" asked Ridpath, with a leer and a wink.

But Swefling rose suddenly, as if he had been stung by a dragon-fly, and he seized the poker and brandished it.

"Wy, do you actually insiniwate?" he cried.

But at this moment Herr Habenichts re-entered. When he saw Swefling advancing with uplifted poker towards the middle of the room, as if to attack him, he ejaculated, "Murder! Was für ein kerl!" and retreated a few paces. Ridpath, however, rose and ran to the door and brought Herr Habenichts back, assuring him that there was no danger and that Mr. Swefling was only practicing fencing. Whereupon Herr Habenichts, all smiles and with rosy face, apologised, took up the tongs, and said that he would be highly pleased to go through some of the main movements. And so before Swefling could properly realise the situation he saw the tongs descending upon his head, and was compelled to attempt to parry the blow. When Herr Habenichts was a student at Vienna, and later a lieutenant in the Army, he acquired a great reputation as a swordsman, and Swefling soon discovered that he was face to face with a formidable opponent,

whose quick thrusts were actually dangerous. Herr Habenichts' method of longeing and recovering, and his parades, quarte, tierce, circle, octave, prime, and quinte brought upon his adversary the fear of imminent mutilation. At last Swefling called for quarter, and confessed that he had never fenced in his life.

"Den I vill teach you," said Herr Habenichts.

Without more ado he gave his new pupil a lesson in the first positions, and, after he had showed him how to defend his head, his breast, his shoulders, and the right side and the left side of his body, he explained, tongs in hand, the principles of making the assault or playing loose, quarte, and tierce. When a little out of breath Herr Habenichts paused to state his opinion that he had always found fencing to be not only an excellent physical but also a very valuable mental and moral discipline, teaching alertness, patience, and good temper. In fact, he was already launched upon a lecture while the two men listened to his description of life as a great fencing match in which, no matter what the issue, the combatants should always shake hands at the close. True to his own precept he at once shook hands with Swefling, and said that he felt as if he had made a new friend. And so in good humour all three sat down beside the fire.

"Suck some corn juice?" asked Swefling, while Herr Habenichts stared wide-eyed and said that he did n't understand.

"'E's askin' you to go and see the baby, sir," said Ridpath.

"De baby? Vat baby?"

"That's the lingo for hinvitin' you to 'ave a drink," Ridpath explained.

"Vith pleasure," replied Herr Habenichts, and bowed towards the cabman, while Ridpath rang the bell.

When Wurm returned with the drinks, he looked hard at Herr Habenichts as if astonished to find a fellow countryman indulging in "visky." Swefling, again in a lordly way, ordered the drinks to be put in his bill. The three men then settled down as if determined to enjoy each other's company. For, except at Jellini's, Herr Habenichts did not treat Ridpath as a servant. It was one of his maxims that in order really to get to know people you must treat them as equals.

"Laugh vile it is day," said Herr Habenichts, raising his glass and clinking it first against Swefling's and then against the porter's, "vor de night cometh ven no man can laugh."

"Mr. Swefling," observed Ridpath, while Swefling signalled to him to desist, "'as n't been in much of a larfin' mood. All square, mate. Let me flow. It 's this, Mr. Habenichts. That young gal wot was dancin' last night with the toff — "

"Vith Mr. Marduke?" interposed Herr Habe-

nichts, while the clouds gathered again on the cabman's face.

"Yes. Well, don't yer know, that gal 's Mr. Swefling's gal, and there 's goin' to be a row. Won't yer kick 'im out the next time he turns up at Jellini's?" suggested Ridpath.

"Kick him out?" repeated Herr Habenichts, raising his stout little hands. "Um Gottes Willen! Kick avay de son of my patron. Anyting possible but dat."

Swefling's eyes were fixed and glaring on Herr Habenichts, who, when he turned and saw them, gave a start.

"Oh, but I don't mean to say, Mr. Svevling, dat I approve altogeder. Sir Marduke is in de most tropical of de tempers. But dat young Marduke vould never marry Miss Larkin."

"It would be sich a lark," interposed Ridpath.

"Vat?" said Herr Habenichts. "I don't onderstand. De young man mean noting at all. Just de generous impulse of de moment to show dat he had no pride, and dat he admired de sveet Engleesh girl."

Again Swefling's eyes were fixed on the philosopher.

"I see dat you suffer. Oh, damn! But it vill come to noting. De lady is your lady and vill be true to you. Not? But yes. I trink to you both," said Herr Habenichts, beaming and raising his glass.

Swefling now smiled sadly, thanked Herr Habenichts, and once more took the hand which was outstretched to him.

"Yes, yes. I alvays say dat de best vay to treat vith people is vith de kindness, nations and individuals, just de same."

"Mr. Swefling is goin' to roast Marduke alive," said Ridpath, to the believer in arbitration. "Don't you see 'e 's afraid that that young ape 's goin' to mismarry the gal — make 'asty puddin's?"

"I not onderstand," replied Herr Habenichts. "Vot haf puddin's to do vith it? But I know dat de Marduke vamily is de most honourable in London. Vere vould I be vithout Sir Marduke? He save me vrom de abyss!"

"Any'ow," remarked Ridpath, "we 're goin' to keep our weather eye lifted."

He gave a friendly nod to Swefling, who appeared to be struggling with his own gloomy thoughts. But there was something so genial in Herr Habenichts that Swefling felt drawn towards the mild-eyed elderly man with the paternal air. And, moreover, Herr Habenichts' position as Dorrie's teacher seemed to promise that his advice would prove to be valuable in the present crisis of Mr. Swefling's affections. Ridpath suggested that two letters should be written immediately, one to Marduke to threaten his life, and the other to Miss Dorothy Larkin to demand a

clear statement of her exact feelings and intentions. Herr Habenichts shook his head, and told Swefling to leave the matter to him because he felt certain that he would succeed in preventing any possible catastrophe. Meanwhile Ridpath, having seized a sheet of Mrs. Wix's note-paper and an old rusty pen which was lying across a rustier inkpot, began with apparently great labour to write a letter.

"Are you married, Herr Habenichts?" asked Swefling.

"No," said Herr Habenichts, gravely; "but I haf written a book about love."

"Love-letters, Herr Habenichts?"

"Ah, dat too!" replied the philosopher in a way which showed that ancient memories were being stirred. "I vill tell you ven ve know each oder better. But you haf not got my name right. It is Habieneechts, and de *ch* is like de *ch* in Scotch *loch*. Try again."

"Habieneechts," said Swefling.

"Dat 's better. You are smart. Vell, my name means dat 'I haf got noting.' I am proud of it; noting but my good temper! Oh, dat makes you so rich! Ah, I began by tinking I vould be a great man and fill Europe vith my name. And now, I 'm just a poor dance master! It matters noting. Vat says Epictetus?"

"Who?" asked Swefling.

"An old Greek dat I love. He says dat de power and de greatness and de serenities and de beauties and de holinesses are all inside of us, and dat de vorld outside is noting. Now, den, be a man, Mr. Svevling. Corage! I vill tell her your great love vor her. I vill speak to Dorrie. I vill tell her dat she, my best and dear dancer, must never make a *mauvais pas!*"

Swefling, although bewildered, felt inclined to rise and embrace Herr Habenichts.

"You will go to the yard?" he asked in excitement.

"Most certainly I go," replied Herr Habenichts.

"I fetch my cab at eight o'clock in the morning," said the cabman. "I'll hang about for you."

"I vill be there noon," said Herr Habenichts; "but I vill not haf you there. Vetch your cab, do your day's vork, and say noting. I vill see you here in de evening. I vill sit up in dis room vor you."

"Herr Habenichts," said Swefling, "I'll drive you round Hyde Park in a carriage and pair."

"Tank you, mein Kind," responded the philosopher. "Aber — no need. Let me not deceive you. It is not only becose of you dat I do dis. I am avraid of Sir Marduke! Oh, he is in a tempest!"

At this point Ridpath announced that he had written a letter, and asked permission to read it.

"Go on," said Swefling; and Ridpath read the following: —

"*To Montague Marduke, Esq.*

"Blue-faced Ape,

"I don't b'lieve you 're worth shakin' a stick at, but any 'ow this is to tell yer to go to blazes. I takes my affidavy that of all the bad heggs you 're the rottenest. Shut up! Hands off! or I 'll take the change out of yer and ampertate yer chump. The next time you comes to Jellini's or Larkin's yard there 'll be sich a lark and a chucker-out wot 'll chuck yer to a ploice wot ain't so werry cold. Now, take that, and no gammon. Don't go large any more, but sing small.

"Your Henemy."

While those sentiments and sentences were vigorously applauded by Mr. Richard Swefling, they were denounced by Herr Hebenichts, who rose excitedly and declared that he washed his hands of the whole business. He pointed out with much vigour that such inhuman thoughts were wholly alien to his principles of universal benignity, and that although God forbid that he would ever shrink to meet an enemy, yet God also forbid that he would fail to meet that enemy with proper courtesy.

"Blue-faced ape! Dat handsome young man!" he exclaimed, looking very angrily at Ridpath. "I von't haf it! It is verboten! I vorbid it. Tear it

up and put it in de flames dis minute, Ridpath, or I discharge you."

Crestfallen, Ridpath tore his masterpiece into morsels which he dropped into the fire. Nevertheless he rewrote his letter from memory, and, unknown to Herr Habenichts, it was duly delivered by the postman at Portland Place on Monday morning, placed on a silver tray, and presented by Riggs to Mr. Monty Marduke. Herr Habenichts, not dreaming of such treachery, turned to Swefling and told him that he would still keep his promise and go on an embassy to Larkin's yard. Then a dreadful noise was heard in the hotel like the beating of tomtoms. But it was only Wurms going along the passages with his gong to announce the Sunday supper. Ridpath took his leave after he had received some instructions regarding the proper heating of the rooms at Jellini's for the next evening's classes.

"Kom," said Herr Habenichts, turning to Swefling, "let us go in to supper. I am hongry."

CHAPTER SEVENTH

Early rising was the rule in Larkin's yard, and long before the eight-o'clock postman arrived, Vardy, the stable-boy, and old Tom Ruffin, the one-eyed stableman, had rubbed down four horses that had been doing night work. Besides, Swefling's cab and the other day cabs had to be wheeled out from the coach-houses to be cleaned, much harness had to be rubbed and polished, bedding had to be cleared, hay and straw had to be brought down from the loft, and oats had to be measured from the bins. For Sam Larkin was difficult to please, and he believed that only by keeping his horses and his cabs in good order could he compete against the motors. He had never lost the characteristics of a farmer. His cab-yard, although in the heart of London, had rather the appearance of a farm-yard, and he had the farmer's pride in a neat gig. As Dorrie peered through the curtains of her bedroom window she observed Vardy coming out of one of the stables carrying Audacity's nose-bag, which he strapped below the driver's seat. She could also see across the neighbouring roofs the tower of St. Pancras' Church, and the hands of the

clock were pointing five minutes to eight. As the hour struck Swefling walked into the yard. Audacity was already yoked and waiting for him, and was pawing the ground and sniffing the keen air of that January Monday, and snorting and remembering just such a hunting morning on the downlands long ago. Swefling gave him a kiss on the soft, silky nose, and then a pat on the neck, and after he had nodded to Vardy he glanced up at the window, but he saw nothing except the muslin curtains. Dorrie, however, was able to detect a worried and anxious expression on his face. He was taking the tall whip from Vardy, who seemed to be chaffing him, for Vardy had already suspected that his swaggering hero was in love with the governor's daughter. And his quick eyes had not missed the furtive upward glance at the window.

"I s'pose," he said, with a malicious twinkling of his eyes, "you 've got 'er photigraph under yer shirt, next yer buzzum?"

He gave a loud foolish laugh, and then Swefling, who was sitting on the dicky, made a cut at him with the long whip which sent him running to the stable door. After another glance at the curtained window, our sad Romeo, while the words "Next yer buzzum!" were again shouted after him, drove through the gate at a trot.

Dorrie had been aware during some months that

Swefling was attempting to win her favour. But lest any one blame her, it should be announced at once that although she had a friendly regard for him she had never entertained any other feeling. That episode of the hands in the cab was perhaps injudicious, and it was certainly unfortunate, but it was meant only as an act of sympathy and gratitude, and nothing more. Swefling's coming troubles were all of his own creation. Nevertheless, Dorrie was sorry for him, and felt that perhaps she had made a mistake. It was usual for her to come down into the yard every morning about a quarter before eight to scatter Indian corn among the hens. And then she always patted Audacity while she had a talk with Swefling. Her absence on the present occasion pained her admirer and increased his suspicions, and had it not been for Vardy he would have lingered in the yard. The fact was, however, that, even although Dorrie had been so disposed, she could not have come down into the yard, because she was locked in her room, and Mr. Larkin had the key in his pocket. The hens, accompanied by a handsome old white cock, with a very crimson comb, grouped themselves about the entrance door in expectation of seeing Dorrie and her plate of corn. The old cock crowed diligently, as if to call her down, and the hens "tuked-tuked" their hardest, but at last they went off one by one to pick up on their own account any grains

which had dropped from Audacity's nose-bag. The milk-cans were standing on the step, and the postman had come in with two letters, which he dropped into the letter-box, and the morning newspaper was lying flapping against the door. But the household seemed to have overslept themselves, and now and again Vardy, in the midst of scrubbing, and hosing, and hissing, looked at the windows, the blinds of which were still drawn down.

The winter morning fog had already disappeared, and in the clear January sunlight the white-washed walls of the old low-built house which formed a right angle with the stables were glinting like snow. It was the cleanest cab-yard in London, for Sam Larkin had brought to its management habits which he had formed in the country. The place still retained an old-fashioned look amid its modern surroundings. Till about the middle of the nineteenth century it had been a well-known inn which had formed a convenient pull-up for carriers and carters between London and the northern villages. But the day was long past when from the roof windows nothing but fields could be seen stretching between Bloomsbury and Hampstead. That was years and years before a railway whistle had been heard in Euston and St. Pancras. Somewhere in the lumber-room there was a sign-board with *Ye Olde Inn* painted upon it in faded blue letters on a white ground, and in the

parlour immediately above the mahogany sideboard on which Mrs. Bleeks's bowl of goldfish stood there was an oil painting of the inn sign — a bunch of purple grapes with a foaming goblet. For "The Tankard" had been the inn's name. Through its low doorway there had passed many a gay postilion, many a post-boy, many a gentleman in ruffles and breeches and full-bottomed wig, and many a lady in furbelow. And many a coach-and-six had put up in the yard. The old tap-room which was now Sam Larkin's kitchen had heard the carousal which greeted the news of Blenheim, Malplaquet, and Waterloo, while the horses were munching oats and hay at war prices in the stables. In the house the passages were long and narrow, and the ceilings were low, and much of the furniture, together with one or two old eight-day clocks which Sam Larkin had taken over with his long lease, dated from the middle of the eighteenth century. Once inside the yard gate it was difficult to believe that the place was ringed round by dingy streets. But the hum of wheels from the Euston Road, and the noise of engines and trains being shunted on the lines of one of the great railway termini betrayed the traffic of London. A high wall, however, shut the yard off from the street, and the roar of the city was heard far away like the sound of eddies in the ocean. Some of the old bushes were still growing out of the flower-beds, and leaning

against the house wall, and every June a climbing rose with a somewhat dusty, careworn face peeped into Dorrie's window. The loads of hay and straw and the sacks of corn — for cab horses are always hungry, and can eat eighteen or twenty pounds of oats every day — which arrived punctually every month; the horses drinking at the trough, or rattling their halters in the stalls; the flock of pigeons fluttering on the roofs; and the fowls stalking about the yard, strengthened the illusion of any visitor that he had suddenly found himself in a farm in the core of London.

Hitherto only one thing had been necessary to make Dorothy happy, and that was the removal of her aunts, whose presence she loathed. She had for Sam Larkin a strong affection, although it must be admitted that her surroundings were daily becoming more repellent. The common ideals and coarse ways with which she was too familiar were making restless a girl in whom the artistic sense was inborn. For nature makes strange mistakes, and sometimes places a coronet on a head that should wear a coster's cap, and a coster's cap on a head that might be worthy of a coronet. Vague longings for a larger world had begun to disturb Dorothy, whose present horizon seemed pitiably foreshortened and dull. To be told when she was reading books or studying pictures that she was only giving herself airs as well as wasting

time, increased her thirst and hunger for a new life. And yet she was deeply wounded by the manner in which Mrs. Bleeks and Mrs. Muzzey talked about her mother, of whom she had a miniature portrait fixed in a gold locket which she always wore. She gazed at the sad gentle face, and wondered how it was possible for any one to speak unkindly of it. But even Sam's brow sometimes became clouded at the mention of his wife's name, and he never encouraged Dorothy when she asked questions about the dead Louise. Gradually the truth broke upon the girl that the marriage had been unhappy, while the insinuations of Mrs. Bleeks and Mrs. Muzzey deepened the impression. Dorothy knew that she resembled her mother, and that this hereditary beauty was resented by the fierce old women. When, in order to protect her hands from the effects of coarse housework, she wore gloves, she was compelled to endure the titterings of her aunts. Yet she was growing independent of them. Twice a year Sam Larkin handed her fifty pounds, part of which sum she spent on education, and part too, it must be confessed, on pretty dresses and a little jewellery, a fact which increased the envy of Mrs. Bleeks. More than once when Larkin was grumbling about bad times, and was threatening to leave the cab-yard for ever, Dorothy refused to accept the half-yearly payment. Larkin, however, hinted that it was not his to withhold, and that it had been

bequeathed by Mrs. Larkin to her daughter. When Dorothy questioned him further, he merely said that she would touch the capital when she was of age and would then know everything. That would be in four years. Meantime it was only her affection for Sam Larkin which caused her to remain in a house whose other inmates she feared.

Since Saturday night the Larkin *ménage* had been in a state of great commotion owing to the sudden appearance of Mr. Montague Marduke as an escort from Jellini's. The insolent suggestions of Mrs. Muzzey and Mrs. Bleeks might have been heard with contempt. It was not until Sam Larkin began to upbraid his daughter and to threaten to send her packing into the country, that Dorrie wept. At breakfast on Monday morning the three set upon her again, and the little parlour became an animated theatre. Sam Larkin sat scowling, and Dorothy scarcely ventured to meet his angry eyes. In a loud voice Mrs. Bleeks was declaring that because of the wickedness and bad habits of her so-called niece she had lost half her sleep, and had had dreadful dreams. She had donned her head-bandage as a signal of what she had suffered, but this time it was the left eye which was covered, while the knots of the handkerchief stood upright again like rabbits' ears. Mrs. Muzzey likewise complained of pains in the head and the feet, and when Dorrie ventured to suggest that it was rheumatism,

Mrs. Muzzey turned upon her and exclaimed, "Oh no, but it 's *you,* you nasty wretch!" Dorothy was pouring out the tea, when suddenly in a fit of nervousness she allowed the heavy stone teapot to fall among the cups and saucers which were forthwith shattered, and the sugar bowl was filled with a brown fluid. Sam Larkin, with an oath, pushed himself away from the table, and said in a roaring and overwhelming voice, "You 'll pay for it," while Mrs. Muzzey seized the teapot and began to nurse its broken nose. Dorothy tremblingly gathered up the fragments of crockery, attempted to dry the tablecloth and drain the sugar bowl, and then brought out fresh cups from the sideboard. Meantime Mrs. Bleeks pursed her lips with satisfaction, and then opened them to deliver her opinion on the situation.

"Oh, it 's stunnin' flash to dress 'erself up like a painted canary in 'aypenny feathers," she said, "and be driv about by a young gent wot 's agoin' to be a bar'net, but some folks goes so large that they does n't know the wy to 'andle a teapot."

"You 're right," remarked Sam Larkin, while Dorothy gave him one imploring, reproachful glance.

"Me and Mary Anne 's been tellin' it to you all the time, Sam," said Mrs. Muzzey, allowing the tea to gush and dribble from the broken teapot.

"I could n't refuse the gentleman," pleaded Dor-

rie, attempting to defend herself, but breaking into sobs.

"And why could n't you?" demanded Larkin, in a menacing voice. "I'd trust you now just as far as I could fling a bull by the tail."

"That 's it, Sam," observed Mrs. Bleeks, approvingly. "As if we all ain't 'ad our temptations. I'm a respeckable woman, and I does n't like sittin' at the same table. It 's dreadful nasty behavin' in sich a wy. The yardmen are larfin' at 'er and askin' if Swefling 's a fancy man wot brings bad keracters to Sam's 'ouse. 'Ow 's we to know where they was before they comes in 'ere?"

"Ask Swefling," exclaimed Dorrie, wild with indignation, while her eyes flamed behind her tears, "and he 'll say we came straight from Jellini's."

"Oh, 'e 'll say it," jeered Mrs. Bleeks, "in course 'e will. Wot a himage you 're makin' of yourself! It 's the daringest thing I 've ever heered on. Sartinly, I agrees with wot you was sayin' last night, Liza. She should be made to yarn 'er grub. She 's a disgrace to 'er sex, a-worritin' poor Sam in sich a wy. Reel crull. I would n't give a toss of sprats or a shant of gatter for 'er. Lor' love you, Sam dear, don't be a-worritin' of yerself. Wot 's she to you? It 's exterornary wot some pirsons thinks of theirselves. Sich an idear! She thinks that a piece of square-rigged gentry is goin' to marry 'er. Oh my

daylights! I likes that! For if 'e 's not goin' to marry 'er, wot 's he goin' to do? Oh, the lime twigs for the bird! Make a dress lodger of 'er, eh? Jist able to pay doss money and go abaht like a painted canary? You 'll be good game for the C. I. D. Was n't I right, Sam? It 's in the blood, and it 's arter 'er mother she takes."

During this speech Mrs. Bleeks kept her eye fixed upon Dorothy, and now and again she raised her skinny forefinger and shook it at her niece. Sam Larkin, however, had become irritated, and he rose hastily from the table, and ordered Dorothy to follow him upstairs. Glad to escape from the two women, she walked quickly out of the room, determined to explain everything to her father. But when Larkin had reached the top of the stairs, he merely opened the door of Dorrie's bedroom, pushed her inside and said —

"It 's not like my Dorrie at all, at all," and then locked the door on the outside.

He and Mrs. Muzzey were going to Essex that day, so that it was Mrs. Bleeks who was left in charge of the key and the prisoner. Dorrie spent the forenoon sitting at her window and looking down on the yard through the muslin curtains. Her eyes were wet and bloodshot, and yet she was not wholly miserable. She began to think of Marduke, and the spell of his fascination came over her again. She

thought that he looked like a soldier, and she repeated two lines which had pleased her, and haunted her and which she had found in a poem —

> "Thy voice is heard thro' rolling drums,
> That beat to battle where he stands."

She wondered if she would ever see him again. She looked across the black roofs of London, and saw that it was exactly one o'clock by St. Pancras' Church. Then she rose with a start, for, to her surprise, she observed Herr Habenichts walking into the yard. According to his promise to Swefling, he was to be there at the stroke of noon, but the reason of his delay will be explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHTH

It is nearly certain that if Monty Marduke had gone to the opera with Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, he would not have met Dorothy Larkin, and that consequently the fortunes and the misfortunes of many persons in this history would have been very different. But the events which await narration are too numerous, and arrive in too fast pell-mell to allow time to pause in order to moralise concerning chance and change. Therefore the telephone bell at Portland Place will continue to ring and the Dowager will continue to rage at the other end of the wire, but we shall listen to neither of them. Besides, the consternation of certain London hostesses, who had invited Mr. Monty Marduke to divers luncheons, dinners, and balls, at which marriageable daughters were to be paraded, must be simply ignored as *he* ignored it. For we are compelled to follow his quick steps into the far humbler quarters in which his interest and his excitement were now centred.

"Who is consistent, you or I?" he asked his father, in a somewhat abrupt and unfilial tone and

with a frown which was unusual on so pleasant a face.

Twenty-four hours of silence had raged between them, and matters had reached such a disagreeable pass that even Minnie Marduke now passed her brother on the staircase without a word or a look of recognition. When he entered a room she left it as if to inform him that his company contaminated her, and, if he happened to ask for an explanation, she refused to answer him. The Marduke pride or vanity had been thoroughly roused, and no such crisis had ever occurred in the family history. Sir John secretly trusted, however, that the unfortunate incident at Jellini's would be forgotten, and that his son would speedily regain common sense. Meantime, it was necessary to display the paternal disapproval of the misdemeanour by an attitude of coldness and even contempt. It was hoped that the youth would thus be compelled to see that he had made a fool of himself. There was a terrible unrest in the household, and Sir John and Minnie had passed a sleepless night, whereas, in the case of Monty, there had been the sound of castanets in his dreams. It was now Sunday evening, but the experience at breakfast and luncheon had been so intolerable, that the youth decided to dine at his club, where, if he spoke to a friend, he could at least count on a response. But before he went out of the house he was suddenly

tempted to demand an apology from his father. Sir John stared at him icily for a few moments, and then Monty laughed in a bitter way.

"Where," he asked, "is your splendid levelling doctrine now?"

"I level up," retorted Sir John.

"Your hope that the day will come when the barricades between the classes will be thrown down? Your belief in the essential brotherhood of rich and poor? Your pity for the slaves of industry? As a matter of fact is not Mr. Larkin, who belongs to the old yeoman class — he 's an Essex farmer, a land-owner, if that pleases you better, for he owns a free-hold — well, I say, is he not a better man than that great-great-grandfather of yours who owned slaves and slave ships, as you were telling me last night, and who made the fortune of which you are ashamed?"

"Until you calm yourself, I will not argue with you. I will not even *speak* to you," replied Sir John stiffly, and contemptuously, although his heart was wrung.

It so happened that last week's newspapers had been full of reports of a divorce case from which, according to the judge's summing up, the chief lesson to be learned was the folly of marriage between persons belonging to different social levels. Sir John had drawn a thick blue pencil down the two sides

of a leading article in the *Times,* in which the judge's comments were approved.

"Read that," he said, handing the newspaper to his son.

But Monty was in no mood to be instructed and dragooned, and, after a glance at a few sentences opposite which the blue marks were specially violent, he threw the newspaper aside.

"At the first encounter with a real opportunity of proving the sincerity of your great theories," he said, "they break down."

Sir John winced, for the words stung him, and he sat perturbed under the uneasy suspicion that they were true, and that the protestations of a lifetime had suddenly been made to appear in a grotesque light.

"How often have you told us that almost all the great men, the leaders in everything, came originally out of the people. Just the other day you were saying that Turner's father was a barber, and that Beethoven's grandfather on his mother's side was a cook, and that the Emperor Basil, was it, was a groom," continued Monty, as if attempting to parry by anticipation the sneers that awaited him.

"Be reasonable," said Sir John. "There is no relevancy in what you are saying, none at all. We are talking about a marriage between a man of education and a certain social position, and a girl of a

very humble rank. And I say that, sooner or later, only unhappiness can result from such a union. It is the commonplace, threadbare theme of novelists."

"Lady Hamilton was a kitchen-maid," said Monty.

"You have chosen a very unfortunate instance," quickly replied his father. "She made havoc of the lives, she brought trouble into the lives of at least two men, and she died in squalor."

"Miss Larkin is a girl — "

"What do *you* know about her?" demanded the baronet, turning fiercely upon his son. "You are a fool! Don't dare mention her name!"

"Miss Larkin," repeated Monty, defiantly yet quietly, "is a girl of great accomplishments. She is an artist. She is, I should think, infinitely more cultured than half the girls with whom I have danced in London drawing-rooms. She does n't play bridge, perhaps, but she reads books and studies pictures."

"I warn you, before it is too late!" said Sir John, in the sternest voice which Monty had ever heard him use. "Don't make a fool of yourself, and your sister, and of *me*."

"Supposing you gave away all your money, we would be a great deal poorer than Mr. Larkin," continued Monty. "Why, you could hardly afford to drive about in one of his cabs. It is money that makes leisure and culture, and all the rest of it possible."

"Do I deny it?" broke in Sir John.

"If you gave all the money away as you said you should, since it was ill-gotten, you and Minnie and I would probably sink down near the poverty line. Well, give it away. I am going to marry that girl, and we 'll start life together."

Sir John rose, as if about to quit the room, but his son preceded him, and quitted not only the room, but the house, and went to dine at his Military Club in Piccadilly.

Now, on Monday morning, exactly at a quarter past nine o'clock, while Herr Habenichts, who was dressed in a faded purple dressing-gown, fastened by a cincture of tasselled cords round his ample waist, was drinking in his own room a cup of Mrs. Wix's coffee, and reading "Les Heures Claires," a thump came to the door. After permission was granted Wurm entered with a telegram. A reply was paid.

"Vat can it be?" exclaimed Herr Habenichts, tearing open the brick-coloured envelope, and finding that the telegram contained a request that he would present himself at Portland Place at noon.

It was signed "Marduke," and since the recipient guessed that it was from the baronet, he wrote with some trepidation an affirmative reply, and handed the form to Wurm.

"Ja!" he said, softly to himself, as he buttered a piece of toast. "Das Shicksal!"

After he had breakfasted, he took his stick and tapped against the wall which separated his bedroom

from Swefling's. But he was scarcely surprised at no response, because he knew that Swefling usually left Wix's before eight o'clock. It would now be impossible to keep the promise made to the cabman the previous evening, because between ten and noon, Herr Habenichts gave lessons at Jellini's. While he was dressing he decided, therefore, to go to Portland Place immediately after the lessons were over, and to make the promised visit to Larkin's yard on the way home.

Punctually at noon he was ringing the bell at Portland Place, and during the interval of waiting, he kept protesting to himself that since he was innocent he had nothing to fear. To Riggs, who stood in the hall, he made some wholly irrelevant remarks regarding the weather and the time of day, and it was in a very haughty manner that Riggs told a footman to take charge of the visitor's rather outlandish overcoat. Presently Herr Habenichts found himself in the library. But it was not Sir John Marduke who met him. It was Monty, who, with smiling face and outstretched hand, made him very welcome, and asked him where he would sit.

"Here," said Herr Habenichts, thanking him, and sitting down on a roomy easy-chair near the fire. "I had a vire dis morning. Dat vas vrom you, Mr. Marduke?"

"Yes," said Monty, "and I got your reply."

Herr Habenichts unbuttoned his frock coat, and dropped back into the chair with a slight sigh of relief.

"My father," continued the youth, "has gone to Kensington to open a bazaar."

"And Miss Marduke?"

"She has gone with him. That's why I asked you to come here, Herr Habenichts," replied Monty, smiling again. "I knew that we could have a chat undisturbed. Have a cigar?"

Herr Habenichts accepted an Upmann with great pleasure, and began to smoke peacefully. Now and again, however, he fixed his gaze in a rapt manner on the rows of books, and apologised for not answering Mr. Marduke's questions immediately. Once he rose in order to read the lettering on some volumes, and said that until he knew the names of the books in a room he could not sit still.

"Well, I wish you *would* sit still, Herr Habenichts, because I have a good deal to speak about," said Monty, taking a greasy sheet of notepaper out of his pocket. "Do you happen to know anything about this letter?"

It was Ridpath's, which began with the words "Blue-faced Ape," and while Monty read every word of it aloud, Herr Habenichts blushed and moved uneasily in his seat, and then at last swore in German.

"Dat is de porter, Unerhört. I vill sack him to-

day for disobedience," he said, apologising for his servant's insolence.

"You knew about it?" inquired Monty.

"Yes," explained Herr Habenichts. "You see, it 's all about dat blessed Doroty. They are avraid of you!"

"Who are 'they'? And what business is it of theirs?" demanded Monty, in a tone which made Herr Habenichts very uncomfortable.

"Vell, Svevling, dat cabman, lives at Mrs. Vix, you know. He say dat he loves Dorrie. De cabman dat drove you vrom Jellini's Saturday night. My porter, Ridpath, is his vriend and wrote de letter. De cabman, oh, he is vild!" said Herr Habenichts, opening his eyes wider, and displaying in them an unusual fire.

"I see," said Monty, while a feeling of oppression and disgust came over him. But he did not inform Herr Habenichts of Swefling's insulting conduct.

"Yes, dat cabman, but goot vellow, and I told him dat you could never be his rival in such an affair. You! Nimmer! Gott bewahre! I said dat it vas only your kindness vich is hereditary in you, being a Marduke, vich make you mix vith my pupils and dance vith Miss Dorrie."

"You are mistaken, Herr Habenichts. I love her," replied the youth, "and I have reason to think that she loves me."

"Gerechter Himmel!" exclaimed Herr Habenichts.

"I am so much in love, Herr Habenichts, that I refuse to believe that *any* one could be my rival. As for one of Mr. Larkin's men — Really, the idea is absurd. That girl was born for other things. She was born for me."

"Du liever Gott!" moaned Herr Habenichts.

"I 'm satisfied with your explanation about this filthy epistle," continued Monty, flinging it into the fire, where it was immediately consumed. "That was one of the reasons why I asked you to come. I don't care a damn for any one, Herr Habenichts. I 'm going to marry that girl. Nothing shall alter my determination. If I were in your own country, or in Germany, or in France, or Italy, I would fight a duel for her."

Herr Habenichts, with his fatal gift of sympathy, looked admiringly at him.

"Bravo!" he said. "I like it. But I vill persuade you it is wrong. It is impossible!"

"I wish you to give her this little parcel," said Monty, holding up a neat package tied with pink ribbon. "Is she to be at Jellini's to-day?"

Herr Habenichts shook his head.

"Really?" asked Monty, as if doubting whether Dorothy's master had spoken the truth.

"It 's the troot," said Herr Habenichts, emphati-

cally. "She comes Tuesdays. Oh, Mr. Marduke, dis vill never do!"

"She loves me, or will love me, I know it by her voice — by my own instincts — by everything," said the youth, pacing about the room. "You will give her this? If I sent it to her father's address, she would never receive it."

It occurred to Herr Habenichts that he would not be abusing Marduke's confidence if for the moment he kept silent regarding his visit to Larkin's yard that afternoon. He expected to have a great influence upon his pupil, and he intended to persuade her not to consider Mr. Marduke's attentions in any serious light. In the end Marduke himself would be grateful for being delivered from an indiscretion. Herr Habenichts therefore agreed all the more gladly to act as a go-between, since thereby he would be likewise serving the interests of his patron, the baronet. This kind of double dealing was foreign to his nature, but he believed that he was a diplomatist, born to bring peace among men.

"You are a topping good sort, Herr Habenichts," said Monty. "Have a whisky and soda?"

"No. I tank you," replied Herr Habenichts, taking the dainty parcel. "Vat does Sir Marduke say?" he asked.

"Time will tell him what to say," observed Monty, with a sapient air. "*I* have always obeyed my

instincts, and they have never played me false. That girl! By Jove! have you ever seen such lovely eyes?"

"Vondervoll, vondervoll," acquiesced Herr Habenichts. "Like Minerva!"

"Diana!" suggested the delighted Monty.

"Ach, ja!" exclaimed Herr Habenichts, feeling the contagion of youth. "Love prings de great hour, and makes you to hear de ringing of de silver bell of your destiny."

Monty looked at him admiringly.

"You are a topper, Herr Habenichts," he repeated.

"Sein armes Herz ist Liebekrank," said Herr Habenichts, thinking aloud, and then beginning to quote a poem, for he had an encyclopædic knowledge of European literature —

> "'Wine of youth, life, and the sweet deaths of love,
> Wine of immortal mixture!'

An Englishman said dat. But haf you read Goethe?"

"No," said Monty.

"Ah! Read 'The Bride of Corinth.' Vondervoll, vondervoll!"

Herr Habenichts paused. He had gone too far, and suddenly recollecting himself, he said —

"But I do not encourage you. Oh, no! I say, vorget her."

"I could as soon forget that there is a sun in the heavens," replied the youth, drunk with delight.

"Or a star in de morning," said Herr Habenichts, relapsing involuntarily into sympathy, and sharing for the moment the boy's vivid ardour.

For it was Herr Habenichts' way to subject these situations to a benevolent analysis. He sat smiling.

"You are a poet, Herr Habenichts."

"I haf always said dat de poets are de great people. Even in der tragedies all is vibrant and varm and alive. Dey haf no dead knowledge! Oh, but come back to de business, Mr. Marduke. Remember vat François I. wrote on the window at Chambord —

'Souvent femme varie
Bien fol est qui s'y fie.'

You onderstand?"

"Say it again," asked Monty. "More slowly."

"'Souvent femme varie
Bien fol est qui s'y fie.'"

"Yes," said Monty. "But I don't believe it in this case."

"Ah! You are too young," exclaimed Herr Habenichts, rising to go.

"Now," said Monty, touching an electric bell, "you 're not going to walk back. I 've rung for a cab."

Herr Habenichts protested that it was unnecessary, but, before five minutes had gone, he found himself sitting in a hansom of which the fare had been paid. At first he had given Wix's hotel as the address to which he wished to be driven, but he changed it to Larkin's yard. He decided, however, to alight a few paces from the gate, and so he entered the yard, walking and looking about him.

CHAPTER NINTH

Of course, Sam Larkin and Mrs. Muzzey, who had gone into Essex for the day, had not yet returned. During their absence Mrs. Bleeks was proving herself to be a formidable gaoler to Dorothy, but at the moment when Herr Habenichts entered the yard she was giving herself and her victim a respite, and was standing at the door of Sam's house, meaning to keep her eye on the stablemen. She was leaning upon the long stick of a broom, with which she had been alternately sweeping the step and driving away the hens. Herr Habenichts lifted his silk hat in a manner worthy of a master of deportment, and then advanced towards Mrs. Bleeks with a low bow. Having observed his method of approach, Mrs. Bleeks felt certain that he was a foreigner, and her suspicions were immediately aroused.

"Wot d' you want?" she demanded, drawing herself up with some difficulty to the height of the broom-stick.

"I vish to speak vith—"

"Talk like a Christian!" said Mrs. Bleeks, sharply. "Wot a wy to pronounce the langwidge! Yer a foreigner?"

"Ja wohl!" replied Herr Habenichts, in an unguarded moment, while he lifted his hat again, and also resumed his elaborate bowing.

"Wot are you performin' for like a dancin' bear?" asked Mrs. Bleeks. "Sich manners! I 'll kill myself larfin'."

"Vith your permission, my lady," began Herr Habenichts again, "can I see Miss Doroty?"

"No, you can't," retorted Mrs. Bleeks, more suspicious than ever.

"Can't?"

"I says so. Are you deaf?"

"I must speak, meine Dame."

"And wy, and wot, and who are you?" asked Mrs. Bleeks, impatiently.

"Herr Habenichts."

"Never heerd on you. Wy don't you stay in your own country? You 're a German, come to spy our Navy!" said Mrs. Bleeks.

"I 'm vrom Vienna."

"I says you 're from Germany, and I know it by the cut of your jib. Wot 's the good of tellin' lies? It 's exterornary the imperance of some folks, thinkin' they can chase Rule Britannia off the sea. My wig! Try it!" exclaimed Mrs. Bleeks, brandishing her broom as Van Tromp might have brandished it. "But wot d' ye want?"

"Pardon," said Herr Habenichts. "I 'm only the

Dance Master at Jellini's, and I vould like to speak vith my pupil."

Now the name "Jellini" acted upon Mrs. Bleeks like an electric current from a battery.

"Wot!" she interjected, "you ole wagabone! She 's never to be hallowed to go to yer 'op, step, and jump again. You 've ruined 'er morals!"

"Madame —"

"It 's no use," continued Mrs. Bleeks, "lookin' for pearls in whelks. Wy, I 'd sooner be a cat's-meat man if I was you, as go abaht ruinin' young gals like that, and givin' 'er up late at night to a gent wot brings 'er 'ere dazed like, and sets me dreamin' abaht perambulators."

Herr Habenichts was thoroughly confused, but he caught the reference to Monty Marduke, and was anxious to set himself right immediately with Mrs. Bleeks.

"Ah, goot!" he exclaimed. "I onderstand. It was voolish of him. I haf told him it was very voolish, and he must vorget 'er. And now I come to persuade Miss Doroty to vorget him! You see dis parcel. Vell, it is a present vrom Mr. Marduke; but I vill persvade Miss Doroty to send it back, and so bring de whole ting to an end."

"I 'll take it, and 'bring de whole ting to an hend,'" said Mrs. Bleeks, mockingly.

And she was as good as her word, for, before Herr

Habenichts could say "Donner Wetter!" the parcel was safe in the clutch of Mrs. Bleeks.

"Give me back de bonbons!" cried Herr Habenichts. "Dey are not my property, nor yours. You spoil my game. Ah, you not onderstand diplomacy. Dis is not de vay. Vot vill Mr. Marduke say?"

If these words were intended to pacify or intimidate Mrs. Bleeks, they had precisely the opposite effect. For her voice now rose in denunciation of Herr Habenichts, whom she overwhelmed with her invective until he stood stupefied before her. With the parcel tightly held in one hand and the uplifted broom, from which water was dripping, in the other, she began to give him her opinion of his conduct.

"This is wot's in the pie, is it?" she said. "I thinks whenever I sees you wot a 'oary ole swine and wagabone you was. Wot's a dog if 'is nose 'as fallen off? And I'm not so dotty as not to smell at a shot wot sort of a speciment you was. Sich an indiviguall! Comin' 'ere in good daylight with passels from a gent. I'll show it to Mr. Larkin, that's my brother, and the boss in this 'ere yard — and 'e'll give it yer 'ot, s-m-o-k-i-n-g 'ot!"

"I not onderstand," said Herr Habenichts, looking round in despair, and observing Vardy and some stablemen standing laughing at the open stable doors.

"I'll set the dog arter you!" continued Mrs.

Bleeks, "and then the p'lice. You ought ter get five stretch and be put in chokee and made to yarn yer grub gallows 'ard. It 's the daringest — thing—"

"I don't know wat you say!" exclaimed Herr Habenichts, excitedly. "Vot haf I done?"

But even Mrs. Bleeks seemed to be satisfied that she had said enough. And so, having raised the broom so high that it struck the incandescent gas lamp and broke one of the glass sides, she threw the blame on Herr Habenichts, and then threw the broom at him. Herr Habenichts retired a few paces, and politely requested the return of Mr. Marduke's box of bonbons. But Mrs. Bleeks beckoned the men, and ordered them to put the foreigner out of the yard. Vardy with a cab whip, the one-eyed stableman with a shaft-strap, and another man with a horse collar were soon in pursuit, and caught up so quickly upon Herr Habenichts that, just as he had got outside the gate, he felt upon the crown of his hat the flick of Vardy's whip. He did not turn round to hear the words which were shouted after him, but when he had walked a few paces towards Euston Road, he stood musing in the middle of the pavement, wondering whether he should go to Monty Marduke and confess the ignominious failure of the embassy. While he was thus standing leaning against his walking-stick with one hand and stroking his shaven chin with the other, he heard some one calling "Herr Habe-

nichts!" The voice seemed familiar, and when he looked up, he saw a smart hansom standing before him with Swefling in the driver's seat, and Audacity between the shafts. Now, Swefling and the promise made to him had gone wholly out of Herr Habenichts' mind.

"I've been 'angin' abaht for two blessed hours, and 'ave lost three jobs," said Swefling, "wytin' on you. Were you in the yard all the time? Get in and tell me."

He then turned the handles, and the cab door, which they controlled, flew open to admit Herr Habenichts, who, however, stood hesitating on the kerbstone.

"Get in!" urged Swefling, with great eagerness. "Did you see my Dorrie?"

"Oh," said Herr Habenichts, turning his broad face upwards, "vat a time of it I've had! I'll see you at night. I'm going to Mrs. Vix."

These words, however, only increased Swefling's excitement.

"I'll drive you there. Get in at once."

Herr Habenichts put his foot on the step, and so went for his second cab ride that day. Whether it was due to absent-mindedness or what not, Swefling, instead of driving up the street which led off Euston Road into Fashion Row, put Audacity's head eastwards, and made for Islington. He slackened off

when Audacity began to mount the steep hill on Pentonville Road, and then he opened the trap-door, and looked down.

"Well?" he asked.

"Where am I?" demanded Herr Habenichts, as if awakening from a swoon.

"Where are you?" repeated Swefling. "In my cab, of course. What the devil do you mean? Are you drunk?"

"Oh," exclaimed Herr Habenichts, fixing his eyes on the metal mounting of Audacity's collar, "vat is wrong vith all de people to-day?"

Swefling saw only the top of a hat, and he observed that it moved from side to side. Herr Habenichts, in fact, was shaking his head, and was muttering, "Dat box!"

Audacity was a fast walker, and the cab was now descending the hill which goes down to Islington. Towards City Road the traffic became thicker, and, since it was necessary to keep a sharp eye on the electric cars, Swefling could carry on only an intermittent conversation. He reined in Audacity, however, and looked down the trap again. The occupant seemed to be asleep, and so, with the butt end of the whip Swefling gently tapped the crown of Herr Habenichts' hat.

"Let me out," said Herr Habenichts, "I'll valk."

"Did you see Dorrie?" demanded Swefling.

"No," replied Herr Habenichts; "but I saw a vemale vich I never vish again to see."

"Explain yerself," said Swefling impatiently.

"De virst ting was I go to Mr. Marduke," said Herr Habenichts, looking up at Swefling, whose face filled the entire space of the open trap-door, "and told him dat de Dorrie is yours. But he gave me a box of bonbons vor her."

"And, of course, you gave 'im a box on the ear," remarked Swefling, indignant.

"Nein," replied Herr Habenichts.

"You threw it at 'im?"

"Nein," repeated Herr Habenichts. "I took it to Larkin's yard, and dat vemale —"

The cab was suddenly stopped, and Herr Habenichts heard very violent language uttered immediately above his head.

"Take that!" said Swefling, using the stick end of his whip again, in such a way that Herr Habenichts' hat rolled first on to the foot-board, and then on to a crowded pavement of the City Road. "Damn you for a bilker!"

Herr Habenichts was standing bareheaded on the foot-board and attempting to explain what his real intentions had been and the reasons of his failure, while the passers-by supposed that he was having an altercation about the fare.

"Get out! Or there 'll be a tremenjous row!"

Swefling was saying, "I 'll not be stuck on the deal by a swiney foreigner!"

There was nothing for Herr Habenichts to do but to descend and accept his muddy hat from a man who had been kind enough to keep it for him. Then he stood wide-eyed to watch Swefling driving rapidly away towards Euston again.

CHAPTER TENTH

While Dorothy was still locked in her room, Mrs. Bleeks sat down at the parlour table and began in excitement to open the parcel which Herr Habenichts had been forced to leave in her hands. Her large black woollen shawl was tightly pinned across her chest by an old-fashioned gold brooch, in the centre of which shone a large yellow stone. She sat bolt upright; her black eyes, owing to her present condition of inquisitiveness, were even more piercing than usual, and the withered face had become more eagle-like than owl-like. After she had untied the pink ribbons and broken the two red seals with "M" stamped upon the wax, she discovered an envelope lying on the top of a square, deep, white satin box. In wonder she opened the box, and saw that it was filled by delicious French sweets, set in rows. With a humph she replaced the lid, put her spectacles across her nose, and began to read the letter.

"Portland Place,
"Monday morning.

"Dear Miss Dorothy,

"In case this falls into the hands of that awful old woman, I have asked Herr Habenichts to

give it to you in the dancing school. I hope you will like the sweets, and I am going to ask you in return to send me your photograph. Please do not forget I am *in earnest* when I say that I think you should send your pictures to the Academy. Therefore I do wish to see them. My mother left me six valuable pictures, two Corots, a Rembrandt, two Reynolds, and a Hals, and I should very much like to show them to you.

"By the way, it has occurred to me that Mr. Larkin could give me advice about my bay mare. I think there is something wrong with her, and I should like to put her out to grass at his farm. Perhaps I may come this week to speak about it, and if I do, I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you. It seems ages since Saturday night!

"Your sincere friend,

"MONTAGUE MARDUKE."

Mrs. Bleeks was, of course, instantly aware that she was "the awful old woman," but, even although the letter had not contained this reference to herself, its entire conception, its suggestions, and its ill-concealed purpose would have been sufficient to enrage her. In a word, she knew perfectly well that it was a love-letter, and she re-read it in a state of fury. She waited impatiently for Sam's arrival, but meantime she was unable to remain downstairs, and so she

went up to Dorothy's door to give vent to the feelings which had already accumulated in her. She listened at the door, and heard Dorothy sobbing. Sam's orders were that the culprit, who had been provided with food for the day, was not to be allowed out of prison until he and Mrs. Muzzey had returned. He was, in fact, afraid lest Dorothy might run away. The door was locked from the outside, and the key was in the keyhole. Mrs. Bleeks, however, did not venture to open the door, because she too was afraid that her niece might escape.

"You 're workin' the tear pump, and no wonder," cried Mrs. Bleeks. "I would n't like to be in yer skin when my brother comes back. For it 's oh sich a jacketin' you 'll get! I sartify that of all the scaly gals you 're the wust. I would n't give an aypenny for you. Oh, it 's stunnin' flash to get a passel from a gent, and you 're quite sillified with conceit. In coorse you is! You hempty cocoanut! I 'm the 'orful ole woman,' ain't I? Well, we 'll wait and see wot Sam says. You scurf! Oh, pump up the bilge water, but Sam 'll bring more out of you. Won't 'e jist?"

Dorothy trembled, and her terror was magnified when she began to think that this renewed attack by her aunt had something to do with Herr Habenichts' visit. For she had seen her dancing master sent dancing out of the yard, and had heard the

guffaws of Vardy and the other men when they went in pursuit. What could it all mean? She was growing desperate. Yet she neither dared to reply to Mrs. Bleeks's harangue, nor to demand to be let out, and it was with relief that she heard the feet shuffling along the passage and then descending the stair. Mrs. Bleeks was again in the parlour, and it was half-past two by the grandfather's clock. What with sips of gin, stitching an apron, poking the fire, talking to her goldfish and dropping crumbs and ants' eggs into their bowl, re-reading Monty Marduke's letter and appropriating some of the contents of the box of sweets, and scolding the servant girl for not bringing the tea, Mrs. Bleeks successfully killed the afternoon and delivered herself from its boredom. It was just as she was dropping three lumps of sugar into her teacup that she heard horse's hoofs in the yard. She looked through the parlour window, and saw a very smart young gentleman sitting as straight as a dragoon on a fine black horse. He wore a black bowler hat, an admirably-cut riding coat, tanned leather breeches, and polished riding-boots with spurs. From behind her muslin curtains, Dorothy, in tremor and consternation, likewise beheld this fascinating and disturbing apparition.

"That 's that same toff!" exclaimed Mrs. Bleeks, who, in order to make certain of the matter, added

a second pair of spectacles to the pair already on her nose.

And in truth the mounted visitor was none other than Monty Marduke, who, ignorant that Herr Habenichts had been before him, and unable to control his desire to see Dorothy, had come to the yard on the pretext of consulting Mr. Larkin about the bay mare. Vardy, who was astonished to see arriving in the cab-yard such a gentleman on such a horse, came forward and took hold of the bridle while Monty dismounted.

"Can I see Mr. Larkin?"

"'E's hout, my lord," replied Vardy; "gone to the country and won't be back till 'arf-past four."

"Oh," said Monty, thinking that nothing could be better; "hold the horse for a minute or two. I'll leave a message. That's the door, isn't it?"

"Yes, my lord," said Vardy, dividing his admiration between the horse and its owner.

Monty then went towards the door where Mrs. Bleeks was already on guard looking more like the châtelaine of a mediæval castle than Mr. Samuel Larkin's sister. Monty recognised her, and touched his hat with his riding-whip.

"Take my word," began Mrs. Bleeks, "it'll be a bad arternoon if you henters this 'ere prorperty."

In order to conceal his annoyance, Monty smiled, and, indeed, his determination to see Dorothy at all

hazards had prepared him for some disagreeable experiences. Even already his *amour propre* was ruffled, and he felt ill at ease. Mrs. Bleeks's unfriendly eyes were fixed upon him, and he was rather abashed. Her look plainly told him that in her opinion he was a bad character. But his passion was headlong, like a torrent, and it would lead him (mislead him?) anywhere. When he said in a low, almost apologetic tone that he would like to consult Mr. Larkin about the condition of the bay mare, Mrs. Bleeks's loud derision made him quail. He felt like a novice before her hoary wisdom, and he knew that she despised him for his ignorance of the world.

"You think that Mr. Larkin's goin' to swallow that like one o'clock?" she asked, in a brisk manner, and with the most inhuman laugh imaginable. "You're wery silly if you does. Wy, 'e's not a weter'nary any'ow, and you've come to the wrong shop. Lor' love you, you looks a hinnocent young gent, too, it's sich a pity to see the likes o' you goin' to the bad. I advise you not to stop 'ere wery much longer, but to scoot, for I would n't like to see Mr. Larkin 'orsewhippin' of you. Now that I claps my heyes on you I can even forgive yer blastit imperance abaht 'that orful old woman.' Yes, I s'pose I'm ole, but wy I'm orful jist becose I'm wantin' to save Sam's darter from ruin, I dunnow."

Monty Marduke immediately felt confused, indig-

nant, and ashamed. Although he remembered his uncomplimentary reference to Mrs. Bleeks in the letter which he had sent with the box of sweets he was at a loss to know how the words could have already reached her ears. Wondering whether Herr Habenichts had already delivered it, he boldly informed Mrs. Bleeks that he wished to speak with Miss Larkin.

"Is she at home?" he asked.

"No," replied Mrs. Bleeks, peremptorily. "She 's at sea. And it 's not wery purty of a young gent wot should know better to turn the 'ead of a silly gal quite giddy by dancin' with 'er at Jellini's, where 'e 'ad no right to be."

"May I not speak to you indoors?" asked Monty, considerably irritated because Vardy, who was holding the horse, was unfortunately hearing every word of the conversation.

Mrs. Bleeks eyed her niece's admirer very attentively for a few moments. His manner was so irresistible that even *she* thought that if she invited him into the parlour and listened to him more quietly she might actually succeed in turning him from his design upon Dorothy, of whom she was furiously jealous. She therefore consented to his proposal, led him along the narrow passage to the parlour, and shut the door. Seated at the table upon which Mrs. Bleeks's teacup still stood, Marduke was unable to see

his box of bonbons and his opened letter which lay near the bowl of goldfish on the little mahogany sideboard immediately behind him. And, indeed, Mrs. Bleeks held his attention so fixedly that he had no eyes for anything in the room besides herself.

"You says you 've come for Mr. Larkin's advice, young man?" she asked. "I 'll give it for 'im, in coorse I knows wot it is. Don't make a fool of yerself."

"I hope I never shall," said Monty.

"I 'm Mr. Larkin's sister, I 'm the 'orful ole woman.' I 'm Mrs. Bleeks," she continued; "and take my gospel word, which is it 'll be shockin' ockerd if Mr. Larkin finds you 'ere. If you goes quietly awy, and takes yer passel with you, I 'll promise to say nuffin'. That 's the card, and if I was you I 'd play it. That ole rake of a furreigner as you sent 'ere with yer passel and love-letter should be shot."

"Sent here?" demanded Monty, momentarily bewildered.

"Don't try and look hinnocent," said Mrs. Bleeks; "as if you did n't send that ole dancin' loon at Jellini's 'ere this wery day. 'Ow could 'e 'ave come if you 'ad n't sent 'im?"

Mrs. Bleeks pointed with her thumb to the sideboard, and when Monty turned round and saw his

box of sweets and his letter lying spread out beside it, he immediately rose, greatly confused. Then he seized both and demanded if Mrs. Bleeks had tampered with them.

"Yes," said she; "and now jist you go 'ome and sit in sackcloth and hashes and forget it all. I wants to put you hup to the time o 'day. We knows you. Yer father 's the great filthyanthropist."

Monty burst out laughing.

"You 're larfin'. Larf as you likes," said Mrs. Bleeks, sternly; "but it 's a shameful game as you 've been tryin' to play. In the days of the blessed Wictoria, wot, they says, was like me, sich doin's was never heerd on, but now gents thinks nuffin' of runnin' arter hactresses and ballet gals. As if a ole woman like me can't guess wot the likes o' you 's hup to, sendin' sweets to a gal like that."

Had the fascination of Dorothy for Monty Marduke been less great, it is certain that he would have long ago brought his interview with Mrs. Bleeks to an end, and that he would have quitted Larkin's yard, never to return. But the thought of his Dulcinea was so tender that it made him forget the humiliation into which he had been suddenly plunged, and he set himself to conquer the feeling of sickness which came over him during his contact with Mrs. Bleeks. That his Dorothy belonged to such people at all was a matter for bitter amazement.

"Mrs. Bleeks," he said, "my intentions are perfectly honourable. I am in love with your niece. I wish to marry her, and I shall be only too delighted to make Mr. Larkin's further acquaintance in order to receive his consent."

"I likes that!" exclaimed Mrs. Bleeks, ironically.

"I'm in dead earnest," said the youth, and he looked it.

"You're clean cracked," said she. "Go awy. My brother and sister 'll be 'ere in a flick."

But when Monty repeated that he was in earnest, and insisted on waiting in order to speak to Mr. Larkin, Mrs. Bleeks looked at him excitedly, and her sneers of incredulity ceased.

Her manner became suddenly mysterious, her eyes began to blink, and she asked Monty if he knew anything about rats.

"Rats?" he asked surprised.

"Wy," she replied, "if you knows anythink abaht rats you never puts a barn rat and a sewer rat in the same cage, does you?"

"Why not?" asked Monty, who knew nothing whatever about rats.

"Becose in coorse they'll fight till they're both lyin' dead. Don't yer see they does n't mate?"

"Then which am I?" asked Monty in great merriment.

"Wy," she informed him, "since you 're the gent, you 're the barn rat, and my niece 's the sewer."

Monty's laugh did not please Mrs. Bleeks, who meant her fable to have an educative influence upon him. But she had apparently a reserve of arguments and advice, and she proceeded with a bitter grin on her hard old lips to give him the benefit of listening to her.

"I dessay you 're a niceish young man, and this is jist a silly fust love, and you 'll be ashamed of yerself in a week. Well, I wants to perwent you puttin' the saddle on the wrong 'oss, don't yer know. Arter all, we 're a good ole family," she said, sitting bolt upright in the attitude in which she supposed she resembled Queen Victoria. "And Mr. Larkin's father wot was mine and Mrs. Muzzey's 'ad the farm from 'is father, and so back and back for three or four generations. It 's more than wot some silk-stockinged gentry can say. Larkin 's a name in Essex and in Middlesex, too. Well, you would n't be makin' sich a bad splash arter all by marryin' Sam's darter if she *was* 'is darter."

"What do you mean?" asked Monty, astonished. "Not his daughter? Who is she, then?"

"Keep quiet," said Mrs. Bleeks, letting her voice drop almost to a whisper, "it 's a long song, and if I

says anythink it 's jist to give you a tip wot 'll keep you from makin' a hass of yerself. No. She 's not Sam's darter. She ain't got a drop of Larkin blood in 'er. Ain't that wy Mrs. Muzzey and me 's been so hindignant 'aving to call ourselves 'er hants and we 're not 'er hants."

"Then who is *she?*" asked Monty, again in great excitement.

"I says keep quiet, does n't I? and listen," Mrs. Bleeks admonished him while she began to purr with delight. "I 'll tell you wot she is. She 's a 'asty puddin'. Oh, in coorse, you does n't understand 'ow the likes of us talks. Well, she 's a hillegitimate creature as it 's a disgrace to 'ave in the 'ouse!" said Mrs. Bleeks, with her eyes blazing; "'er name ain't Larkin at all. It 's Darsham, if she calls 'erself arter 'er father, and it 's Sherwin if she calls 'erself arter 'er mother. I says she should be called Darsham to fix the ticket on the father."

Now Mrs. Bleeks shall not be permitted to irritate the reader as she irritated Monty Marduke by the intolerable and roundabout method in which she chose to unfold the true history of Dorothy Darsham, sometime known as Dorothy Larkin. Monty, indeed, was reduced to desperation by her frequent pauses, her endless comments and warnings, and by her attacks on the moral character of her dead sister-in-law, Dorothy's mother. And so we will leave him urging

her to move faster and crying, "Go on! What? Good Heavens!" and in as brief a manner as possible and with only a few borrowings from Mrs. Bleeks we shall in the following chapter make a clean breast of it.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH

Among the officers of the South-Eastern Command none was so handsome or so popular as Colonel the Earl of Swaffham. But all the Darshams were handsome, and the Earl's aunt, Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, was still counted the best preserved old woman in London. When Lord Swaffham, dressed in his regimentals, walked from his hotel in Colchester to the barracks, or rode at the head of his men, he was generally an object of attention, and, moreover, it was supposed that owing to his qualities as a soldier, a great military career might lie before him. But he was not rich, in truth, he was poor, for, during three successive generations, the Darsham estates in Suffolk had been wretchedly administered, and the Earl had received the family inheritance overwhelmingly mortgaged. Unhappily, too, there was a shadow over his wedded life, and his wife by her extravagance and her exploits at a famous gaming table had already caused him deep mortification. He was in the prime of life, forty-six years old, but he had no heir. He might as well have been a widower, for his wife was dead to him, and he to her. It was probably in

order to forget the disillusions which had accompanied his marriage that he threw himself with such ardour into his military duties. The news that the Countess of Swaffham had begun to indulge in the morphia habit hardly came as a surprise. But her husband endeavoured to keep it secret and to the inquiries of friends and enemies regarding her whereabouts he replied, "Travelling." Shortly afterwards he provided medical treatment for her in a nursing home, although she had squandered most of the little fortune which remained to him. His relatives, and especially the Dowager Duchess of Berkshire, Monty Marduke's friend, advised him to take divorce proceedings. But Lord Swaffham was a Darsham, and the Darsham pride is well known. His feelings were too fine, his horror of exposure too great, and, besides, he pitied his wife. Therefore, he quietly resumed his bachelor habits, and he found that his regiment absorbed all his energies. It was at this moment that, wholly unknown to himself, he excited an admiration and an ardent affection in the mind and heart of Miss Louise Sherwin, the daughter of a gentleman farmer of Manningtree, near Colchester. Miss Sherwin had many opportunities of observing him, and she did all she could to increase them. The tramp, tramp of his regiment as it set out from the barracks or returned to them brought the blood to her cheek, but many a time all that she was able to procure was an exas-

perating glimpse of her colonel as he disappeared on horseback round the bend of an Essex road. She used to drive to Colchester on Sundays on the pretext of attending the services in a particular church, but it was the church to which the Colonel marched his men.

"Them red coats!" exclaimed Mrs. Bleeks, "when a gal loves a sodger we says she 's got scarlet fever."

"Go on, go on!" urged Monty.

Well, it was by a singular fortune or misfortune that the fascinating officer met his suffering and despairing admirer face to face. One clear October morning the hunt was streaming across the fields of Essex towards Manningtree, and, as usual, Lord Swaffham was riding with the greatest dash and brilliancy. If he looked well in uniform he looked still better in pink and tops. Mr. Sherwin was a friend of the hunt, and they were always welcome on his land. Whenever he heard horn or hound he used to run across his lawn to watch the boldest riders taking a particularly stiff fence which he had set up between two of his fields for the express purpose, it was said, of admiring British pluck. There was a ditch on the near side. Suddenly Lord Swaffham's horse refused, but its rider had too secure a seat, and he was not thrown. Once more he put his mount to the fence, but the animal failed to clear it, and with its rider it fell very heavily.

"In coorse," said Mrs. Bleeks, "'e was carried to the farm. *She* was his nuss, and 'e stopped too long."

"Was she pretty?" asked Monty, bending forward.

"If 'er as Sam calls 'is darter 's purty, and I says she ain't," replied Mrs. Bleeks, looking at him archly, "then I s'pose the mother was, for they 're as like as two peas."

The truth was, of course, that Louise Sherwin was very beautiful. But there were now rumours and whispers in Colchester and Manningtree, and suddenly, after an interview with the General commanding the district, and under compulsion from the War Office, the Earl of Swaffham resigned his commission. Sherwin had decided upon his ruin, and so the unfortunate affair became public. Louise was turned out of her father's house, and Swaffham purchased the lease of a cottage for her about five miles from Colchester. It was there that Dorothy was born. A certain sympathy was felt for Swaffham, who declared truly that he had intended to make Louise his wife after he had divorced the Countess of Swaffham, for reasons already well known, and for others of a painful kind which it is not necessary to narrate. But he had made the gravest error in tactics, and one moment of imprudence and tenderness had shattered his career. Even his aunt, the Dowager Duchess of Berkshire, failed to support him in face of the dis-

approval which he now encountered. But he was too proud to seek help from any quarter, and although he was placed on half pay, he refused to accept it. Unfortunately the bitter experience of obloquy began to alienate the affection of Louise. Some believed that her mind became temporarily troubled, and at any rate she refused to see the man whose ambitions and reputation she had broken in pieces. A settlement was made for her, and Swaffham, having discarded his title, went, it is supposed, to Paris. Louise continued to live in the cottage, and she had the Larkins as neighbours. For the cottage with its small garden formed part of Larkin's farm, and it was from Sam Larkin that Lord Swaffham had obtained the lease.

"It 'appened eighteen years ago," said Mrs. Bleeks, taking breath; "and now I comes to Sam's mistake. In coorse we saw a good deal of 'er, and wot does Sam do but like a hidiot, falls in love with 'er a year arter she had quarrelled with Swaffham, and says 'e 'll take 'er, darter and all! Was n't we hindignant? Sich a marriage for Sam! Ain't that wy 'e 'ad to leave Essex and start this 'ere business? For 'e took it into 'is 'ead that the people was larfin' at 'im, and so they was. Well, she did n't live long arter they was married, and then Mrs. Muzzey and me 'ad all the trouble of bringin' up the darter wot Sam makes us call our niece. Sam 's poured out affection on 'er like water, and in coorse we was wild. The Swaff-

ham blood 's beginnin' to show in 'er. That 's wy she gives 'erself sich airs, jist like the mother who said that when she married Sam she married beneath 'er."

Mrs. Bleeks declared that she was now at the end of the story, and she looked at Monty expecting to hear him express profuse thanks for having been delivered from a trap. But she was mistaken. His face was all lit up by a smile because he was congratulating himself on his own powers of perception. He had seen at a glance that there was something uncommon about Dorothy. And at Jellini's had not even Sir John Marduke expressed surprise at her beauty and her manners?

"This is extraordinary, Mrs. Bleeks," said Monty. "I once heard Lord Swaffham being discussed in my own regiment. My old colonel was his friend, and he used to deplore the immense loss which the army sustained when Lord Swaffham was forced to retire. Little did I think that I would ever meet Miss — Darsham. Where is she?"

"She 's locked up," replied Mrs. Bleeks. "When Sam sees you bringin' 'er from Jellini's Sat'day night it brought the story back to 'im, and 'e began thinkin' the gal 's goin' to be like 'er mother. And so she 's bein' punished, and she 's been locked upstairs in 'er room ever since. Now, if I was you, Mr. Marduke, I 'd go awy. Sam 'll be 'ere direckly."

Mr. Marduke, however, had other intentions, and

he asked Mrs. Bleeks to be good enough to permit him to have an interview with Dorothy that instant. And he added that he would wait till Mr. Larkin returned.

"Wot for?" demanded Mrs. Bleeks.

"To tell him," replied Monty, calmly, "that he has no legal control over his step-daughter. She does n't know anything about her real origin, I suppose?"

"In coorse not!" exclaimed Mrs. Bleeks, alarmed. "If you says a word of it to my brother 'e 'll murder you!"

"What right has *he* to lock her up?" demanded Monty, as he rose and looked at Mrs. Bleeks in a very threatening manner.

"Jist you get on the trot at once and out of this," said Mrs. Bleeks, who had turned pale because she was agitated.

Monty, however, with his bonbons and his letter, left the room, heedless of Mrs. Bleeks's warnings and cries of "Murder!" and "Thief!" He found his way along the dark passage to the foot of the stair. Presently he reached the top and was walking along another lobby on each side of which there were doors. He looked carefully at every door until he came to one in which he saw a key, and he guessed that Dorothy was within. He listened for a moment, but heard only Mrs. Bleeks's voice in the yard. He

listened again, and he heard a drawer being closed. Then as he turned the key he called "Miss Dorothy!" But it was a different Dorothy whom he saw. She had been weeping and the traces of her tears were on her face. Moreover, she looked afraid and even displeased; and she shrank back from him. With a rapid gesture she refused to allow him to approach nearer.

"Mr. Marduke, you ought not to have come here! I cannot see you. Please go away, and shut that door. I never wish to see you again," she said.

Monty was thunderstruck.

"I meant Herr Habenichts to give you these," he said, crestfallen, yet thrusting the white satin box and the letter into her hands; "but I have more important — "

His sentence was cut short. A cab was arriving in the yard; then came a babel of voices, and the sound of a heavy foot on the stair, and the words, "What the devil! Who?"

Monty quickly closed the door, but he did not relock it. Then he walked back towards the head of the stairs where he met Sam Larkin, who first glared at him in silence. Then a very disagreeable altercation took place between them. Sam, unable and also unwilling to believe that a youth in Monty Marduke's position actually comtemplated marriage with Dorothy, ignorant, also, that Mrs. Blecks had betrayed

the secret in which his pride and jealousy had been so long entrenched, lost not a moment in acting the part of an injured parent. He was a very powerful man, and might have easily flung the slim youth down the stairs. That, indeed, was what he threatened to do.

"I quite understand, Mr. Larkin," said Monty, whose voice was vibrating, "that you are surprised to see me here. I will be very glad to speak with you."

"Get out!" retorted Sam in the most menacing tone.

"I am very sorry," replied Monty. "I know that I require to give an explanation."

"What right have you to follow my daughter about?" demanded Larkin, while Monty stood clutching his riding-whip.

"Your *daughter?*" asked Monty.

"Yes, my daughter."

"She 's not your daughter," said Monty, observing that Larkin staggered slightly, and was unable to make an immediate reply.

"Mrs. Bleeks has just told me that during all those years you have acted like an affectionate father —"

But it was impossible to complete the sentence, for Larkin was giving expression to his complete loss of self-control in a whirl of loud and angry words.

"By what right," demanded Monty, "do *you*

deprive of her liberty a girl who is not your daughter at all? I know Lord Swaffham's aunt."

"Get out! And mind your own business," said Larkin, stung by the mention of Swaffham's name.

"You shall hear about this!" replied Monty, excitedly, as he descended the stair.

Mrs. Bleeks with Mrs. Muzzey had taken refuge in the parlour, and the former was preparing to meet her brother. In the yard Vardy was still holding the horse, which had become restive. As Marduke mounted he gave the lad two half-crowns, and asked his name. Then he rode away.

CHAPTER TWELFTH

Monty Marduke was now in a condition of electrical heat. Or, if we might borrow another illustration from contemporary science, he was in an advanced stage of radio-activity. In fact, he had begun to behave exactly like the particle of radium which, no matter what obstacle it encounters, pursues through the densest objects a rectilinear path, and does not permit itself even for a moment to be deflected. For love, too, is radiant matter, and has the power of lending luminescence to the beings surrounding it. Monty felt himself all aglow. By a romantic accident he found himself in the saddle, looking, for all his modern costume, like a very perfect knight ready to tilt for his lady, who lay in that unromantic prison of a London cab-yard. In sober truth, the youth was very excited. This singular emotion which was now stirring him did not appear to have come to him as a mere matter of course. When they arrive at a certain age many men take their love affairs as part of the inevitable routine of existence. They are to fall in love and they are to get married. That is what the world expects of them. But owing to the steady re-

duction of the romantic elements of modern life, owing to the stripping of its romantic garniture, those important events too often take place in a very mechanical and even prosaic way. The old method of capture of a wife involving the risk of the capturer's life and limb has really something to say for itself; and at least Monty Marduke would not have been afraid to fight. His own character was highly ardent, and then the manner in which he had fallen in love was very surprising. Dorothy's undoubted loveliness, the discovery which he had just made regarding her birth, the dangers of her surroundings, and the anxieties which lay immediately ahead, helped him to see and feel that he had suddenly become engaged in an adventure. That unlooked-for and very painful repulse which he had a few moments ago suffered at her hands made him touch his horse with the spur, because time pressed, and he was eager to be home in order to begin to act at once. He rode quickly back to his father's stables, and he was no sooner arrived at Portland Place than he divested himself of his riding suit and dressed himself in correct method for an afternoon visit. Then he ordered Riggs to call a cab. He heard that Sir John and Minnie Marduke were in the house, and for a moment he hesitated as to whether he should let them know that the girl whom they had seen dancing at Jellini's was the natural daughter of the Earl of Swaffham. But he

guessed that the news was not in the least likely to recommend her; that, on the contrary, his father's pride and his sister's bigotry would be still more deeply outraged. Besides, the most urgent need of the present was not to attempt to conciliate *them*, but to do something to save Dorothy from mishap. Every moment that she remained unprotected in such surroundings increased Monty's fear and indignation. When he allowed his mind to rove on possibilities, on the danger, for instance, of her removal and concealment by Sam Larkin, who doubtless was her legal guardian, he became very miserable. He asked in a rather irritated manner if the hansom was not yet at the door. But the second footman was still whistling for one. Then two thoughts suggested themselves. What if by chance it is Swefling's cab that drives up? What if it is Larkin's design to make Dorothy marry Swefling! Monty walked to the telephone and rang up the Dowager Duchess of Berkshire. He got the connection at once, and asked her butler if the Dowager was at home. The butler begged him to hold the line for a moment, and then returned with the answer that her Grace would be very pleased to receive Mr. Monty Marduke. And now a hansom was at the door, and since it was not Swefling's, Monty entered it, and was driven to Grosvenor Square.

She was known as the eccentric Dowager, and

Monty counted upon her originality and breadth of view. She used to say that an hereditary curse rested upon the Darshams, and she almost suspected that she had brought their ill luck to the Duke who was accidentally shot on the third day after she had married him. It had taken her half a lifetime to recover from that shock, and it was only late that her natural alertness of spirit returned. It was a severe ordeal to be made a dowager while still in the flower of youth, and to be compelled to see the dukedom passing to her husband's cousin, whom she disliked. When she looked back on her life it seemed extraordinarily long. But she had grown old gracefully. Her eyes were still bright without the aid of lotions, and she was rather proud of her abundant grey curls which, whenever she became very animated, she shook vigorously as if to prove that since it was Nature that had fastened them on her head they were in no immediate danger of dropping off. The provision for her maintenance was not considered handsome, and although it was sufficient for her needs it was not sufficient for her ambitions. Nevertheless her middle life and old age were happy. She was interested in everything. Many friendships, a little travelling, a good deal of bridge, music, and the play — these things filled her life. She gave, too, her Duchess's mite to charity. What pleased her best was to be surrounded by young people of both sexes,

for whom she designed frequent parties. Monty Marduke had long been her favourite, and she loved to think of making a match for him. She hoped that it was in her house that he would meet his future wife. There were to choose from, for instance, Lady Westcott's daughters, all beautiful, there was Miss Forbes Alperton, or Diana Melmore, or one of the Tilburys, or the pretty daughter of Sir Philip Marston. All these and many others were to be seen during the season in her Yellow Drawing-Room, and any of them was a most desirable *parti* for a young man like Marduke. But even by him the old woman was rather feared than esteemed, and he was greatly embarrassed by her admiration. Her friends noticed that her vivacity always increased whenever he entered her crowded rooms, for by his mere presence he seemed to bring to her the elixir of life. She never understood why some insolent person had dubbed her eccentric. Was it because she still loved the society of young people? Was it because when she too was young she had proposed to ride astride? The suggestion had shocked her contemporaries, and it was in vain that she informed ignorant people that Velazquez painted (or rather repainted, as she should have said) two Queens of Spain riding astride. She was the declared enemy of solemn airs, pretension, and humbug, and frequently her haughty temper frightened some of her guests. But they

still buzzed delightedly around her. Although she was very angry with her nephew, the unfortunate Earl of Swaffham, she was even more furious against his detractors. When he was attacked she attempted to defend him by laying emphasis on the provocation which he had suffered. For she had always disliked the Countess of Swaffham. As yet, however, she had done nothing for her nephew, and it was only for the sake of the family name that she made efforts to muzzle up the scandal. She had never been able to forgive his foolish blunder in strategy. If he *was* fated to fall in love with a Louise Sherwin, he should have either divorced his wife or waited patiently or impatiently for her death, which the doctors predicted. And their prediction came true. Louise Sherwin as Countess of Swaffham, and therefore niece to Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, was perhaps a perplexing vision. But, after all, she was the daughter of a gentleman. The proper wages of that kind of sin is, said the Dowager, marriage; but that particular marriage could never have been half so distressing in its effects as the painful collapse of the Earl's brilliant career. When a question about the affair was actually put to the Minister for War, and was answered by him in the House of Commons, the Duchess blushed so deeply that she declared that for many days she could not regain her proper colour. But that was eighteen years ago, and the matter was

forgotten. It was not even known to the new generation. If anyone revived the memory of it the Duchess would be mortally offended. She was hardly conscious that she still possessed her nephew's portrait which used to hang in the Yellow Drawing-Room, but had been removed many years ago into the greater privacy of the boudoir. The Swaffham line might now be considered at an end. "We are an extinct volcano," remarked the Duchess, a statement which was denied by all those who had experienced the heat and hot ashes of her temper. With the exception, however, of a hundred Suffolk acres which she had bought back, the Darsham estate was now the property of the mortgagees. Only one thing in her nephew's behaviour greatly pleased her. She admired the pride which had made him efface himself and disappear utterly from the society which had known him. Was he in Paris, in America, or perhaps Japan? There had been whispers, but nothing was confirmed. It was even rumoured that he was dead, and she hoped it was true. As for his child, the Duchess knew that there was, or had been, such a person, but she had made no investigations. Why should she have made them?

Monty entered the room in a manner which betrayed that he was full of news. But Arabella, who was drinking tea, cut his "Oh, Duchess!" short, for she had no intention of allowing him to speak until

she had expressed her extreme dissatisfaction. He refused tea; he seemed nervous, and the Duchess felt sure that he had come to apologise. He shook hands almost timidly, and asked if she expected anyone, because he wished to be with her " absolutely alone."

" Well, sit beside me," she said, and made room for him on the yellow damask sofa.

He sat down intending to begin forthwith, but her finger raised in the usual mocking manner told him that *she* had something to say, and that he must listen.

" Ah, Monty, Monty! " she exclaimed, looking and laughing at him and shaking her head so that the curls went round in a whirl. " Monty, Monty, Monty! "

A rich dim winter twilight filled the beautiful room. Arabella hated a glare, and the lights were always harmonised. A shaded electric lamp stood on the tea-table and made the silver and the porcelain twinkle. Here and there throughout the room a few candles on old-fashioned silver candlesticks burned tranquilly, and together with the glow of a steady, not a roaring fire, illuminated the room in a soft and pleasing way.

" Duchess — " he began.

" Monty," she said, " I could hardly have supposed that you could be such a coward. That paragraph! Now, there, you *look* perfectly guilty. You stayed

away because of that paragraph in a halfpenny newspaper. You are not chivalrous even to an old woman."

"Duchess — I really — "

"Yes, you really did. You were afraid to be seen in my box because the silly paragraph said that we were going to be married!" said the Duchess, shaking her curls as she laughed again.

"Not at all," urged Monty, joining in the laugh since it was impossible not to be amused at the thought of such a hoary bride. "But I have something far more extraordinary — "

"Oh yes, you did. You know. Now tell me what Sir John said. I am really very eager to hear what he and Minnie said, especially Minnie."

"They laughed, too," said Monty; "but I've come — "

"It's more than you did, then," continued the Dowager. "I think I can see you in a great state of nerves rushing to get the telegram sent off denying the whole thing. D' you know I've had a great many telegrams and telephone messages congratulating me? It's so amusing. D' you see that little tortoise-shell clock? That's a marriage present to me from Lady Wimperton. She says that she always likes to be first, and that whenever she hears the announcement of a wedding off goes the present. Oh, Monty! I like to think of all the horrid things they

are saying about me. I suppose the clock was meant to remind me that my time is up! Why, I am getting *on* to sixty." (She was sixty-three.) "Well, Sir John and Minnie were amused, were they not? Ah, I do like people with merry hearts. Only solemn young men like you can't take a joke. Still, it's brave of you to come here in daylight. I am surprised that you had the courage. For how do you know that people are not watching from all sides of the Square? Why, there will very likely be another paragraph in that halfpenny paper to-morrow morning. It will say — 'In spite of Mr. Monty Marduke's denial of his engagement, which, at his request, we gladly printed, we are able to inform our readers that our representative stationed in Grosvenor Square, observed Mr. Marduke last night about five o'clock, entering the residence of Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire.' Oh you will be in such a flurry and fever about it. What *will* you do, Monty?"

"Duchess, I've something very important — "

"Don't rattle," she said; "think of this. *If* I leave you all my property, how many heads will be set wagging? They'll say, 'Now, was there not something in it?' You are looking quite cross. That's just the expression you have when you play badly at bridge. You know I call it the asses' bridge!"

"Duchess, do let me — "

"I'm delighted to have you as a bogey. You know, you're the bogey man to the people who think that they should be my heirs. I've been hearing such strange things about your poor father. *Is* it true that his mind . . . you know . . . that this giving away of money so recklessly is a sign of softening of the brain. . . . That's what they say. At least, it's softening of the heart. But, you know, it should be stopped! I am very sorry for you and Minnie. Don't you think he should be examined? How much money has he given away within the last month?"

"Twenty-five thousand," said Monty.

"Good gracious! It's a mania. . . . I am very concerned about it. If that goes on you will need every penny *I* can leave you, Monty. What does poor Minnie say? It's not fair to her or to you. Every one is talking about it. I had the Duke of Berkshire here yesterday and his daughter Angela. By the way, that would be a match for you. Tall, good complexion, pretty mouth, a nice girl, soft eyelashes. If you were to marry her I might give her my pearls. Do you know how many mothers come sighing to me, and inquiring about you? Lady Westcott has just been here, and was asking what you are doing, and was *very* inquisitive about how much money your father may still be supposed to have. 'Well,' I said to her, 'he can't give away the baron-

etcy in charity. That 's one good thing.' What do you think of Lady Angela Darsham? Or do you think Miss Marston prettier?"

"I never think of her at all," replied Monty. "I 've come here with the most extraordinary news —"

"I 'm glad to hear it," said Arabella. "What is it? I was just saying to Lady Westcott that if the days go as slowly as they have been doing these last weeks I 'll go to Cap Martin."

"Duchess," began Monty at last, and in a manner which indicated that he meant to be listened to, "it was you who did n't keep your promise to come to Jellini's. I wish you *had* come!"

"Of course, I was only joking. Tell me about this new mad fad of Sir John. Is he going to teach the *canaillocratie* to dance? Oh, really, he ought to be examined by some doctor. I 'm very vexed about him. Who or what can 'Jellini' be?"

"It 's the best thing he has done," Monty replied with increasing animation. "Oh, if you had only been there, Duchess! You would have seen someone to interest you."

"Is it possible?" asked Arabella, waiting for an explanation.

She sat at one corner of the sofa and Monty at the other, and while the latter spoke, the Dowager raised her lorgnette and looked at him attentively.

"The loveliest creature you ever saw, Duchess. *You* would n't have objected to me dancing with her. You would have taken her home with you, if you had known who she was, and she could have been sitting here at this moment, and I believe it is to her that you will give your pearls," said Monty. "There 's Providence in it. Supposing I *had* gone to the opera with you, I never could have seen her. What a thought! But I picked her out of the rabble for you, Duchess, and for myself."

"Who? who?" asked the Duchess, slightly perturbed. "I never knew that I had any friends in the rabble — "

"Your grand-niece."

"But I have none."

"Lord Swaffham's daughter," said Monty, with his exciting and excited eyes fixed upon the old woman. "I 've come to ask you if you will recognise her at once, if you will allow her to come here at once. Think of it. She 's in a London cab-yard at this moment!"

"Here 's lightning out of the clouds," said the Dowager. "But you 're mistaken. Never *my* niece. How could that be? She 's only my niece in a sort of a way, a very disagreeable sort of a way. Oh no! I could not recognise her. I had forgotten all about that unfortunate. . . . Well. . . . I never expected that it would be you who would revive it. I have nothing whatever to do with her."

Monty seemed crushed. In a moment the spirit of badinage had vanished from the conversation. A shrewd and contemptuous look appeared in the eyes of the haughty old woman who drew herself up and sat erect.

"Well, have you seen any of the new plays?" she asked with the most absolute indifference.

"Duchess," he replied a little coldly and severely, "for the present I am much more interested in this piece of living drama which I have stumbled upon. Is it fair that this beautiful and accomplished girl should be left unprotected in such surroundings? By Heaven, no!"

The raising of his voice and his look of earnestness and scorn irritated the Dowager, who told him not to be silly.

"She 's your grand-niece. Is it her fault if her father —"

"What is her name?"

"They call her Dorothy Larkin."

"Humph," she said. "To be sure, I remember."

"Of course her real name should be Darsham. Can you tell me anything about her father?"

"Nothing whatever. Now, that is enough, Monty. What have *I* to do with it? What claim has she on *me?*" asked the Dowager, with momentary indignation.

"I am very disappointed," said the youth. "I counted upon different sentiments from you. Why,

a minute or two ago you said you liked people who have warm hearts."

"What is she like?"

"They say," replied Monty, with a gleam of hope, "that she's like her mother. At first I thought her eyes were dove grey, but I saw violet, too, in them —"

"Then she's a Darsham," said Arabella, involuntarily, and then checked herself.

Monty was encouraged, however, and he began to describe the scene with his father.

"Sir John was utterly right. I should have done the same."

"I don't believe it. If you had seen her you could n't have behaved so cruelly."

"Her hair?" asked the Dowager. "The way she carries herself? Her general appearance? And her talk? A cab-yard, you said! Oh, I remember the odious. . . . Impossible. . . . Don't say anything more."

"Masses of burnished black hair. My father had remarked her. So had Minnie. They both said she was lovely. . . . There is nothing wrong with her talk, but she is shy," said Monty.

"Is she tall?"

"Yes, and very graceful — and a face —"

"Fiddlesticks!" retorted the Duchess. "I will not see her, Monty," (pausing here to observe his

look of disgust); "I cannot be worried with it. At my age, impossible. How could I be asked to have her with me? And do you mean to tell me that you have fallen in love with her? You will ruin yourself. Who could receive her?"

"*You* should receive her," replied Monty, angrily. "Is it her fault that she's a natural daughter?"

"A natural daughter makes a somewhat unnatural niece," retorted the Duchess. "She would be a terror to me. What could I do with her? How could I explain her existence? Bring back all that horrid affair again! Think of the talk!"

"Yes," he said furiously. "Think of everything except what is right and kind."

"I will not have any more of this," said the Duchess, imperiously. "You are raking open an old wound. It is inconsiderate of you, Monty. I say, who will receive her? She's not like the children of a left-hand marriage of royalty, and even *they,* you know, find difficulties and are looked at askance. The girl is probably very contented as she is. I should be surprised if she even knows who her father was. If I remember rightly — But oh, I refuse to remember at all —"

"You will do nothing for her?" asked Monty.

"Nothing," she replied.

"Then," he said, rising abruptly, "I suppose there is little use in my remaining."

"I think that you have been rude, Marduke," said the Dowager, while a flush overspread her face. "You ought not to have come here to tell me what I should or should not do. You have pained me" (with a great shake of her curls). "I am agitated!"

"I am sorry," said Monty, stiffly. "Very sorry indeed."

"This is not like you," continued Arabella, reproachfully. "You have been most unfeeling and unreasonable. Give me my smelling-bottle. . . . Thank you. . . . I am rather surprised. . . . What have *I* to do with Lord Swaffham's disagreeable. . . . Oh no. . . . I won't even talk about it. . . . Just think of the years it would take to educate this — this person you seem to know — to teach her even elementary manners, not to speak of grace and charm."

"*Years* don't seem to help very much in these matters," replied Monty, while his eyes fixed themselves disdainfully upon her.

In an instant he had repented and was vexed at his error; but at that moment he was too proud, too enraged to ask to be forgiven. One look from Arabella, and he knew that their friendship had been suddenly killed. With a shaking hand the old woman touched the bell which was fixed on the wall next her. There was a brief silence which was then broken by the Duchess Dowager, who said quietly —

"As for my pearls, I never cast them before swine."

Even if Monty had had a reply ready there would not have been time to make it because the door was opened, and a footman entered.

"Show Mr. Marduke downstairs," said the Dowager.

Monty made a very formal bow, and left the room. As he crossed Grosvenor Square and felt the fresh wind of the sparkling winter night upon his face, he muttered —

"The selfish old wretch!"

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH

"Ach, ja!" exclaimed Herr Habenichts, clinking wine-glasses with Mr. Botolph. "De ancients had a veeping philosopher, and a laughing philosopher, and vy should not ve haf a dancing one? Your health, Mr. Botolph!"

"Thank you. Yours," replied Mr. Botolph, raising his glass and addressing his friend in that gentle and very courteous voice which made him a great favourite at Mrs. Wix's. "And how is the dancing going on?"

"Vamously," said Herr Habenichts, sipping his sherry and then unbuttoning his frock coat, and rubbing his hands with glee. "Ja, vat do it matter vat ve do so long as ve keep ourselves gay? I vish to write another book on de real gay science, de science of de rhythms of life, vor we can make music even out of our cries and sorrows, as Heine says. Tance vile it is day, Mr. Botolph."

"You seem to be in a very cheerful mood, Herr Habenichts. It is most inspiring," observed Mr. Botolph, while a faint smile lit up his refined features, and a host of memories glimmered for a mo-

ment in his tired grey eyes. "You are a fortunate man, sir, if your past life is not like a dragging, ever-lengthening chain, the clanking chain which St. Augustine speaks of, the chain which becomes heavier and heavier until it coils back on you and perhaps strangles you at last!"

"Ah!" said Herr Habenichts, looking gravely at Mr. Botolph. "St. Augustine, did you say. Vot a mind! But he does n't say quite dat. He gives more hope."

"Hope?" repeated Mr. Botolph, with the slight sigh which was characteristic of him. "Do you know the most terrible line in English poetry?"

"No," replied Herr Habenichts, bringing out his pencil and note-book, and preparing to write down the line.

"'T is hope is the most hopeless thing of all.'"

"No. I von't write it," said Herr Habenichts, closing his note-book. "Vat a cynic he vas. Oh, Mr. Botolph!"

Mr. Botolph seemed vexed that he had betrayed any emotion. Usually, indeed, he was the most reticent of men, but there was something in Herr Habenichts which invited intimacy and disclosure. Mr. Botolph had visited Vienna, and that fact was the first link in their friendship. They gradually discovered a similarity in matters of taste and in

their views of human experience. Both of them had been bludgeoned and battered by the forces of life, and as yet neither of them had succumbed. But it was obvious that Herr Habenichts had the greater chance of survival. Mr. Botolph looked upon him with a kind of awe, and sometimes wondered if he was only wearing a mask. Was he wrapping himself in his philosophic cloak only as in a kind of fancy costume and domino for the tragic dance of existence? Frequently, long after almost every Wixian was in bed, Mr. Botolph and Herr Habenichts sat in the smoking-room in deep conversation which was disturbed only about midnight by the arrival of Swefling, who, tired out by the day's exposure, and confessing himself at a loss to understand what the two gentlemen were talking about — privately suspecting, in fact, that they were both drunk — yawned for a few minutes in their company, and then said good-night. Mr. Botolph had apparently no occupation. He spent his day in reading the newspapers or writing in a large manuscript book on which a padlock was fixed, or in poring over certain large volumes on "The History of Dancing," by Hans Habenichts. Very often, too, Mr. Botolph took his daily walk up and down the platforms of one or other of the three great railway stations in the vicinity as if he expected the arrival of a friend. But the friend did not come. Mr. Botolph's shabby clothes and frayed linen

were incapable of concealing the fact that their owner was a gentleman. His general appearance and his manner of address caused all those who encountered him to wonder what financial trouble, what speculation gone wrong, had driven him to seek shelter under the roof of Mrs. Wix. But, of course, his apparent impecuniosity did not differentiate him from the other boarders of whom the majority belonged to the class of decayed gentlefolks. His height and his manner of carrying himself, his well-shaped head, slightly bent, his smooth silver-grey hair, the whiteness of his hands and his thin fingers, and the subdued pride of his face marked him off, however, from other men. And at least Herr Habenichts found pleasure in the company of one who, when he chose to talk, generally talked well.

"Pray," said Mr. Botolph, attempting, but without success, to efface any impression of personal trouble which he might have made, "allow me to offer my congratulations if something pleasant has happened to you. What a delightful world this would be, if health were as infectious as disease, and if good fortune happened to be a contagious thing! In that case, Herr Habenichts, I believe that *you* would be in great request."

"Oh," cried Herr Habenichts, beginning to laugh, "it 's only a leettle ting dat has made me happy. Do you know Mr. Svevling?"

"Swefling?" repeated Mr. Botolph.

"De young man who alvays comes to de Sunday supper and sometimes looks in here at night ven you and I are talking togeder."

"Yes," replied Mr. Botolph. "I think you said that he is a cabman."

"A nice young vellow. Only a cabman, but vat of dat if he drives vell and is kind to his horse? He and I had a misonderstanding. Oh, fery bad! But now he onderstands, and we shook hands last night!" said Herr Habenichts, while his face beamed on Mr. Botolph.

Mr. Botolph had too delicate a sense of what was proper to ask any questions about the quarrel, and Herr Habenichts was too honourable to divulge to a stranger or to anyone the private affairs of Swefling or of Marduke or of his pupil Dorothy. And so, after Mr. Botolph had said simply "That 's good," the conversation was shunted on to other lines, until it travelled back to the question of gay and gloomy temperaments.

"Perhaps," suggested Mr. Botolph, with a smile, "you have an excellent digestion, Herr Habenichts?"

"But," replied Herr Habenichts, "dat must be true of us both, since ve stop so long here and are not avraid of de cuisine of Mrs. Vix!"

It was one of Mr. Botolph's peculiarities that he always carried a railway time-table, and, in fact,

Bradshaw was at that moment lying upon his knee. He excused himself to Herr Habenichts, and said that he desired to consult it. After he had turned over the pages dealing with steamship sailings and the railway connections therewith, he closed the book, clasped it in his hands, and then lay back in his chair. Meanwhile Herr Habenichts was reading *Les Trophées,* and had become oblivious to his surroundings. Suddenly Mr. Botolph was heard muttering to himself, but Herr Habenichts, who was familiar with this singular habit of his friend and sometimes indulged in it himself, paid no attention.

"The good ship," Mr. Botolph was muttering, "did not go down with *all* on board. Great God, not *all! Some* were, perhaps, saved — and among them — why should I not hope?"

Then he rose as if in haste, and a look of great expectancy and a smile of anticipation of something delightful shone about his face.

"Herr Habenichts, I am just going across to Euston to meet the 6.10. I think that my son will be in that train, from Liverpool, you know, where he very likely landed this morning," said Mr. Botolph, and hurried out of the room to run over to Euston as he had run many a time during the last two and a half years.

"Ach, ja, poor Mr. Botolph!" exclaimed Herr Habenichts. "Vat can be done? It is impossible

to persvade him dat his son vas drowned, and dere he goes again, expecting to see de dear boy running into his arms. Mein Gott! Mein Gott!"

Thus in spite of himself Herr Habenichts was drawn back to the contemplation of graver matters. But the truth is that his high spirits were more apparent than real, and that on that particular day he had premonitions of trouble. To begin with, he had had a trying scene with his porter Ridpath. In order to placate his own outraged sense of authority and in fulfilment of his promise to Monty Marduke, he had decided to dismiss Ridpath on account of disobedience. During the interview between master and servant, however, the magnanimity of Herr Habenichts threatened to betray him into weakness. He was a man who found it difficult to inflict pain or even to pronounce harsh words. If, for example, he had, in a moment of impatience, spoken a rough word to a backward pupil, he was certain to have a sleepless night. And although next day he did not formally apologise, since that course would be bad for discipline, he gave special encouragement to the pupil whom, as he feared, he might have discouraged at the previous lesson. His theory of education was based on the principle of the cultivation of plants. Rough treatment of any plant, if prolonged, will ultimately ruin it. And he pointed out that as gardeners are usually mild and patient men, so the ex-

pert in this more subtle spiritual horticulture, the gardener of the soul, should have a benign mind and merciful hands. His own treatment of Ridpath had been typical of his belief in the regenerative power of character. The fact that Ridpath had been a thief did, it must be admitted, cause much searching of heart to Herr Habenichts when he thought of the cloakrooms and umbrella-stands at Jellini's. And he often wondered with vexation if, in employing such a man, he was rightly considering his pupils' interests. But, happily, Ridpath appeared to be reformed and transformed. Not an article had been stolen. The rooms were kept in the most perfect order, and, indeed, Herr Habenichts considered his porter to be a shining vindication of his trust in human nature. Therefore, he was the more displeased and shocked when he discovered that Ridpath had been guilty of gross disobedience, and, besides, of gross insolence towards the son of the patron of Jellini's. A mere reproof would be an insufficient punishment for such a betrayal. Assuming, therefore, as stern a look as possible, Herr Habenichts paid a surprise visit to the Academy, and found Ridpath in shirt-sleeves, diligently sweeping the floor of the smaller dancing-room.

"Sich a dust them young misses and gents kicks up!" said Ridpath, greeting his employer. "Wy, I'm blowed, if this ain't the Sahara."

Herr Habenichts said "Good morning" demurely, and went to the corner where the piano stood. Here he picked up a fiddle-bow which one of the musicians had left behind. Then he walked up and down the room, beating time with the fiddle-bow amid the clouds of dust, and endeavoring to induce a severe and hectoring mood. Suddenly he stopped, turned round, and without warning informed Ridpath that his services were no longer required at Jellini's.

"I'll be shot!" exclaimed Ridpath, letting his brush fall flat before him. "If this ain't a piece of news, I'm jiggered. Wot for?"

"You disobeyed me!" said Herr Habenichts, turning red in the face and actually looking fierce. "I vill not haf it! You wrote dat letter to de patron's son, and you are a villain. Dat's vot you are, a scoundrel. Here are your vages, and go avay."

"I'm blowed if this ain't reel crull," replied Ridpath, excitedly, as he stared down at his master, who held out two sovereigns. "All along of that screwy cove Swefling. Wot's 'e or 'is darned sweetheartin' to me, I'd jist like to know? Let every one look sharp arter hisself, that's wot I hollars out."

"Put on your jacket and go quietly avay," suggested Herr Habenichts, still extending his hand with the wages between his thumb and his forefinger. "Take your vages."

"Ain't I been a good sarvint?"

"And haf I not been a goot master?" demanded Herr Habenichts.

"You 'ave, sir. The wery best. O my daylights, you 've put me out o' curl by this suddent goin' on of yourn. I says you 're the wery best master a feller like me, wot was born without a shirt on 'is back, could find. You 're a respeckabel ole gent wot took me off the streets wen I was out on the nick and 'ad n't a keracter. And now all along of that blastit cabby I 've got the sack, 'ave I? Wy, I was jist sayin' to a pal yest'day that you 're the decentest ole gent I 've knowed, even though you *is* a German."

"I 'm vrom Vienna," said Herr Habenichts, angrily.

"I knows," said Ridpath, "and as I says to my pal, ''E 's a good sort is 'Err 'Abenicks, and 'e 's treated me jist as if he was my nunky, for 'e 's been my salwation.' It 's true, and yet it 's sich an idear! I could die larfin'. For though yer a dancin' master yev been my salwation jist every bit as good 's the Salwation Army, 'Err 'Abenicks. It was yer kindness that did the trick, for yer treats me like a gen'leman."

Herr Habenichts was discomfited, and he turned round, and stared at the opposite wall.

"It is fery painful," he exclaimed helplessly; "but go avay!"

"Before I knowed you," continued Ridpath, addressing his master's back, "I allus liked a rovin' life, and longed to shake a loose leg. I was fly to the dodge, and was out on the pinch all day, a riglar bad hook, and then I meets you, 'Err 'Abenicks, and got the straight tip."

"I haf given you ten shillings extra," said Herr Habenichts, turning half round and holding out the wages again.

"I take my affidavy it 's juiced 'ard on a feller, and all along of that scaly Swefling. I won't take them quids, 'Err 'Abenicks, and so jist drop yer harm, or you 'll tire it no end. I ax yer pardin. I 'll knuckle down fair and no funkin'."

"I vish no one to knuckle down to me. I only vish justice. Dere is a fool porn every minute, and you are one," said Herr Habenichts, flourishing the fiddle-bow in an authoritative manner.

"It 's hup with yer humbereller wen the rain comes down," exclaimed Ridpath, lifting the fallen brush. "And so it 's no gammon? I 've got to go? Well, I never knowed who was my father or mother either. I was jist chucked on the streets as you chuck waste-paper in the gutter. I remembers wen I used to sleep on the hembankment chitterin' the whole blessed night, and dreamin' I was dyin' of starwation. You knows, 'Err 'Abenicks, that 's wot the wery poor often dreams. But I 've larned wot short grub means, and

I can larn it again. I 'm weak in the back, and so I 'd sooner sweep than shovel. I s'pose I can sweep the streets again jist the same as this dancin' floor. O Lor'! It 's come so suddent. It makes a feller see stars. I thinks I 've got the trick, though. I knowed a man wot done fairly decent in the rag-and-bottle line. It 's nuffin' to me who 's king. It don't take my attention. There 'll be no change for me in this world. I 'll start a rag-and-bottle store. I 'm no scholard, and so I thanks you quite short for wot you done for me. Good-bye, 'Err 'Abenicks, and s'pose you needs any rags or bottles — "

"Are you *fery* sorry?" asked Herr Habenichts, appalled at Ridpath's distressed appearance.

"In course, I 'm sorry," replied Ridpath. "Ain't that wot I 've been sayin'?"

With the intention either of making a display of his authority and avenging it, or of relieving his own confused feelings, Herr Habenichts approached his servant in a very threatening attitude. Then he raised the fiddle-bow like a rod of correction, and broke it across Ridpath's back.

"Dere now," he exclaimed, "I haf punished you. It is vinished!"

"That 's Persimmon; that 's real jam. And now we 're quits," said Ridpath, and continued sweeping, while Herr Habenichts, thoroughly satisfied with the

result of the court-martial, went to a violin seller and bought a new fiddle-bow.

Thus, during Mr. Botolph's absence at Euston Station, Herr Habenichts, as he sat in the sombre twilight of Mrs. Wix's parlour, was able to reflect upon the surprising events of the last few days. Although he was pleased that he had not parted with Ridpath, and that he had cleared up the misunderstanding with Swefling, he felt slightly uneasy. He was surprised, for instance, that Dorothy had not visited Jellini's for her Tuesday lesson, and his recent encounter with Mrs. Bleeks made him fear that there was trouble in Larkin's yard. Then, since that trouble was doubtless caused by Monty Marduke, what, thought Herr Habenichts, can that headstrong young man be doing? It was time to inform him of what had happened to the box of sweets, and since forty-eight hours and more had passed since Herr Habenichts had undertaken the commission, it was strange that Marduke had made no inquiries. Herr Habenichts decided to write to him at once, and to take the opportunity of warning him not to persist in his pursuit of a pupil whom her master still regarded as the future Mrs. Richard Swefling. He had risen for the purpose of going to the writing-table when he heard the knocker on the front door being loudly sounded. He knew the postman's characteristic rat-tat, and he was not deceived, because pres-

ently Wurm entered with two letters. On one of the envelopes the address was typewritten. It looked business, and Herr Habenichts put on his spectacles, and placed himself immediately under the incandescent gas bracket which Wurm had lit. But he was very shocked to find that the letter came from Sir John Marduke's solicitors, who announced that "for reasons which Mr. Habenichts no doubt perfectly understood," their client had withdrawn his patronage from "The Original Jellini Academy of Dancing," and now forbade the use of his name in any connection whatever therewith. Moreover, acting upon the instructions of Sir John Marduke, they now called up the loan which their client had been pleased to grant to Mr. Habenichts. The concluding paragraph contained two statements: *item* that Sir John Marduke waived his claim for interest on the said loan, and *item* that in case the debtor might, owing to this sudden demand, find himself in difficulty, a delay of three months would be granted for the repayment of the loan. Herr Habenichts felt as if he were being throttled. He had received a severe shock, and in the violent glare of the incandescent gas he looked livid. Having readjusted his spectacles, he re-read the letter, groaning. Then he sank down on a chair and collapsed.

"Ach ja!" he murmured, "I velt it vos to come. All becose of dat blessed Dorrie and de boy!"

After a few moments, however, his decision was made. He would not accept the slight alleviation promised in the last paragraph of the letter. His pride compelled him to repay the loan immediately and with interest, even although no interest was demanded. But, then, what would be left in the bank? Ever since that loan had been obtained he had paid interest to Sir John Marduke with the most admirable punctuality. And, it ought to be said, that if Monty's unfortunate indiscretion at the pupils' ball had not taken place, the baronet would have waived the loan altogether. But a great revulsion of feeling had occurred, and Herr Habenichts would require to suffer for the folly of his patron's son. It was thanks to Sir John Marduke that he had been able to liquidate the debt which had threatened Jellini's with extinction. But he had paid his creditors far sooner than was stipulated by the arrangement which he had made with them. Eager to be free and too honourable to hoard money which properly belonged to other people, he had left nothing for himself. The fees had been spent. Now, the quarterly rent of the rooms would be shortly due, and if Sir John Marduke were to be reimbursed Herr Habenichts would find himself face to face with a lamentable deficit. In great excitement he calculated that after repayment of the loan he would be left with little more than twenty pounds in the world. He picked

up the other letter, which contained news not fitted to assuage this wound which he had received. It was from Sam Larkin, who, in vigorous if somewhat inelegant English, stated that Dorothy would never put her foot within Jellini's again, that this was her own decision, and that she deeply regretted ever to have come under Herr Habenichts' influence.

"Vat haf I done?" exclaimed Herr Habenichts in despair, as he stared round the room. "I haf done noting wrong to anyone. I vished de fery best vor dem all!"

At that moment Mr. Botolph re-entered the room. He was looking ill and exhausted, and he gave Herr Habenichts a strange glance as he sat down opposite him. This periodical return from a fruitless quest was always a sad spectacle, and Herr Habenichts was at a loss to know how to comfort Mr. Botolph. He had been almost ashamed of his own high spirits and the merry mood of half an hour ago. For a few moments Mr. Botolph remained silent, and his eyes had a trance-like appearance. Then he began his soft whispers again.

"The good ship did not go down with *all* on board! It was the South Atlantic, wreckage was seen and the name *Morning Star* on a piece of white painted wood. . . . The sea is a very rough nurse of ships! . . . You know," (addressing Herr Habenichts,) "at Euston I saw fathers and mothers embracing their sons

who had come from long voyages . . . a beautiful sight. . . . *My* boy was not there."

"Oh, Mr. Botolph," cried Herr Habenichts, rising and taking his friend's hand, "vat can I do vor you?"

Mr. Botolph smiled faintly and thanked him.

"I think he means to give me a great surprise," he said. "He will not announce himself. He will come suddenly, and wishes to make my joy perfectly delirious!"

"We are broders in trouble," said Herr Habenichts.

"Ah," replied Mr. Botolph, "I should think with *your* temperament trouble does not trouble you much."

Herr Habenichts then explained with many gestures what had happened to him, but he concluded with the cheerful declaration that he would face poverty again with all the courage at his command.

"And I think that you can command a great deal," said Mr. Botolph, who had listened with anxious sympathy. "Count upon me for some little help. Of course, it must be very little, because I also am shockingly poor."

"Ich danke bestens!" replied Herr Habenichts; "but I von't be beaten. Nein, nein! I 'll vind a new vay of life. I am sorry to close Jellini's becos it gave me a living and leisure to read books, and I loved all de pupils. So poor Ridpath too vill lose de place

after all. De storm comes on again. De vind blows! I know all de four vinds of dis vorld, I haf velt dem all. Ah, Mr. Botolph, if de vorst comes and de bailiff seize all my tings at Jellini's, I vill ask you to buy back de statue of Terpsichore. She look down so mild-eyed and happy. I cannot give her avay! She is de symbol of de rythym of life and de beautiful tances."

Mr. Botolph promised to rescue Terpsichore from the bailiff.

"And now," added Herr Habenichts, "vat can do us harm in dis vorld? Noting. De light affliction is but vor a moment. Even in de shackles de spirit keeps dancing. But I am avraid of one ting. Say noting about my troubles to Mrs. Vix! She turn me out. I haf got used to dis house. It is my home. Ah, say noting to Mrs. Vix! I am never avraid of males, but only of vemales, and Mrs. Vix is a vixen!"

Mr. Botolph smiled, and promised to say nothing to Mrs. Wix.

"We are both bankrupt men," he said. "I have never told you *my* history, Herr Habenichts."

"No," replied Herr Habenichts; "and I vould like to hear it."

"I had eighty thousand pounds," said Mr. Botolph.

But in the same moment Wurm began to strike the

terrible dinner gong. Mr. Botolph ceased speaking, and stopped his ears. When the noise had passed he promised to unfold on another occasion as much of his history as might interest Herr Habenichts. And so they both went to join Mrs. Wix at dinner.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH

Mrs. Wix was a woman of many inconsistencies, but she rather seemed to rejoice in the contradictions which she discovered in her own character. It was possible for her to provide a Christmas dinner which might be truthfully described as a scandal, and nevertheless to surprise her boarders with a very creditable repast in the second week of January. This alternate starvation and repletion was named by Herr Habenichts "Ramazan" and "Bairam"; but no one understood him except Mr. Botolph who had travelled in the lands of Islam. And, on the whole, Mr. Botolph preferred the Wixian fast to the Wixian feast. Not so his vivacious friend, who, like Dr. Johnson, was not ashamed to confess that he enjoyed the pleasures of good eating. Herr Habenichts consulted Mrs. Wix's menu as if it had been a weather chart, and waited anxiously for the moment when it promised to be very fair.

"Sossiges? Did you say sossiges, sir?" she once asked him sharply.

"Dat 's so. I said sossiges, Madame," he replied, looking straight at her, and allowing a smile to eddy about his broad, bland face.

"There 's no sossiges. We *never* keeps them mystery-bags. I once gave 'em, and two of the boarders died of typhus, and we had the inspector twice a week for three months. No, thank ye," said Mrs. Wix, tossing her head and rolling her eyes, "no more mystery-bags. So you 'll have to go without or take cold ham."

She feared his hearty appetite, and that was why she always made him sit at her right hand. She likewise forbade him to speak German in case the sound of that language might offend his fellow boarders. In fact, Mr. Snape, the dentist, who sat at her left, and Mr. Coon, the journalist, who was Mr. Snape's neighbour, both intimated that unless English were spoken at table they would seek board and lodging elsewhere. Now there was nothing which vexed Herr Habenichts so much as to be compelled to eat a meal in silence. And, therefore, he cheerfully chatted in such English as he could command, and was not afraid to cross swords in that tongue even with Mr. Coon. Whether, as he declared, there was something Dionysian, Rabelaisian in Mrs. Wix, or whether she feared that the frequent penury of her bill of fare might drive away those of her clients who did not require to eat and sleep on credit, the fact remains that

she displayed now and again the strangest outbursts of liberality, and that on such occasions her menu always became more interesting. Herr Habenichts preferred to believe that behind her formidable exterior she nursed and nourished a desire for periodic expansion, good cheer, and revelry. His surmise was correct. Mrs. Wix might shed tears of rage over her butcher's book and her baker's bill, and might refer contemptuously to those whom Providence sent her from the four winds as "caterpillars" and "locusts," but she declared that it was not in her nature to starve them, and the occasional eruptions of her generosity were admitted to compensate for the lean days of her catering.

"You made an observation about roast turkey?" whispered Mr. Botolph to Herr Habenichts, as they walked towards the dining-room.

"I smell de stuffing," said Herr Habenichts, sniffing and sifting the vapours of rich and unexpected savour which met his nose in the lobby near the pantry door. "Look! By de statue of Terpsichore, I see tree great turkeys in dere! She 's got dem cheap, Christmas remnants!"

There was an unusual stir in the passages, the staff of servants seemed to have been augmented, and a great clatter of dishes and the noise of cutlery, together with the scurrying hither and thither of Wurm and his subordinates, indicated some extraordinary

event, and Herr Habenichts was impatient to reach the dining-room.

"Bless the man!" murmured Mr. Botolph, limping after him, "the thought of a full meal makes him forget that he is ruined."

Polly Wix in a new pink frock was descending the stair.

"Vat is on to-night, Miss Polly?" asked Herr Habenichts eagerly, as he waited to let her pass.

But Polly only smiled and hurried on before them.

"It 's Bairam," said Herr Habenichts, nudging Mr. Botolph. "Call me a liar, but dis is de perfum of ox-tail soup!"

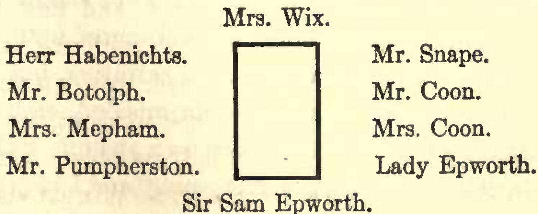
There were three tables that night, and they were all full. At the head of the first sat Mrs. Wix in a loud green dress with a low bodice, and she had green ribbons in her blond hair, and a paste star. Her rotund shoulders moved slowly up and down like massive machinery as her bosom heaved. There must have been at least two drops of the tincture of belladonna in each eye, because the pupils were extraordinarily enlarged, and were very blue. Years ago her silver bangles had been sent to be gilded, and now they shone like good yellow gold. What with the anxieties of the preparation for this dinner, her determination to keep it a secret till the last moment, her joy in surprising her detractors and grumblers with a sudden view of her magnificence, Mrs. Wix sat visibly

excited, although triumphant. Her glance at the impoverished Lady Epworth was as penetrating as the glance of Saint Simon at any of the courtiers of Louis le Grand. She beckoned Herr Habenichts, who, followed by Mr. Botolph, advanced in astonishment to fill the vacant places on her right.

"Vy, dis is a gala night, Mrs. Vix!" exclaimed Herr Habenichts, and then he looked across for enlightenment towards the bald Mr. Snape, who grinned pensively. "Dem tree tables, de vlowers, de lights, pretty candle-shades and crackers! Vat is it?"

"It 's my birthday," said Mrs. Wix: "I 'm fifty to-day" (she was fifty-five). "I 'm a jubilee."

Herr Habenichts offered his congratulations, and as the news that it was Mrs. Wix's birthday spread to the other two tables, at one of which Polly presided, all heads except Lady Epworth's and a Mrs. Mepham's were dutifully turned, as in a hive, towards the queen bee. Mrs. Wix bowed. We are hardly concerned, however, with her other boarders, and it is sufficient to give the plan of her own table, which was as follows:—



Mrs. Wix declared that she had only one regret, which was that the ladies and gentlemen were not placed alternately, but she hoped that they would nevertheless enjoy themselves, and then she called for wine.

Now it was wine which had ruined Sir Samuel Epworth and had brought him to poverty and Mrs. Wix. There he sat with his eyes staring like empty wine-glasses, from which the liquid life and glow had long departed. The twitching of his lips, the swaying of his head, which moved mechanically from side to side like the movable heads of porcelain figures when they are shaken, and the tremor in his hands all betrayed the reason why he had become prematurely frail, and Lady Epworth prematurely faded. Owing to his neglect of his fortune it had been lost long ago, and they were living on the remnants and scraps of it. The one power which now regulated Sir Samuel's life was his wife's frown or else her forefinger when it was raised in admonition. She seldom allowed him to remain long out of her sight, and she used to trudge miles through the London streets in all kinds of weather in order to save him from the old temptation. He had taken the pledge, and she had caused him publicly to avow that it had been his salvation, but she never trusted him. He had often rebelled, and had refused to be led about like a dog on a string. But he now depended upon her for everything, and had grown

quiescent, for she was the lever that controlled his volition. His mind was generally vacant, except when filled by a panorama of reproachful memories. But he had still a strange longing, hot and persistent, for something which would kill and satiate his devouring thirst. His wife, who was as thin as a shadow, and seemed more like a disembodied being than a creature of blood and flesh, was glad that Providence had supplied them with two helpful fellow boarders in the persons of Mr. Pumpherston and his widowed sister, Mrs. Mepham. Wine had also ruined *them,* but for a wholly different reason. Mr. Pumpherston had been a temperance candidate for Parliament. Seven times he had attempted to enter the House of Commons, intent on the abolition of the manufacture and sale of drinks, and seven times he had failed. That he had not made an eighth assault was due to the fact that his resources and those of Mrs. Mepham had been already consumed in the holy war. Their poverty justified them in regarding themselves as genuine martyrs. If there was any wavering in the combat, it was not on the part of Mrs. Mepham, who was a furious zealot, but on the part of her brother, whose throat had become dry by much speaking. Moreover, Mr. Pumpherston's doctor, alarmed at his patient's exhausted condition, advised the moderate use of whisky as a medicine. At first Mr. Pumpherston, who was a long,

gaunt man, repudiated the suggestion with such energy as was left him. Gradually, however, the low tide of his animal powers made him wonder whether it would be wise to resist, and whether Mrs. Mepham was not a bigot. He timidly hinted that the doctor had recommended a little alcohol "just as a medicine, a stimulant for weakened nerves." But Mrs. Mepham declared that she could not believe her ears, and looked with pained surprise upon her brother. Was *he,* the champion of such a cause, actually going to dally and dawdle with the enemy, and bring his own career to ridicule?

"No, no, Mary," he replied, with slight irritation, "it 's the doctor's idea. *I* never thought of it first. Never believe *that!*"

A continued loss of vitality, however, ultimately weakened his resolve, and in desperation for a renewal of his old fury and energy, he was compelled secretly to obey his doctor's injunction. He was conscious that that injunction brought him pleasure. He was surprised to find that judicious sips of the forbidden liquor in which he indulged even more frequently than had been prescribed, had the happy knack of restoring his animation. This lapse, however, resulted in severely shaking the crusader's faith in all his past propaganda. For he asked himself if, after all, greater wisdom and self-control were not displayed in the moderate use of the gifts of Nature.

He attended fewer meetings. A furtive and hunted look began to appear in his countenance. Like Mr. Snape, Mr. Pumpherston was bald, but his head was longer and narrower, and instead of being clean shaven he had a drooping and sorrowful brownish moustache, which had somehow the appearance of receiving daily castigation. Between him and Sir Samuel Epworth there was a secret bond of sympathy. Each divined the other's thoughts. It must have been some lingering roguishness in Sir Samuel which made him desire to seduce Mr. Pumpherston, and to cause him to apostatise. Mr. Pumpherston's case interested him, for Sir Samuel suspected that it was now the case of a hypocrite. Mr. Pumpherston had admitted that he had suffered all the pains of abstinence.

"And they *are* pains, Sir Samuel," he added; "but I endure them for the sake of my fellow-men, such as you."

"Ah," said Sir Samuel, desiring to kick him, but not openly resenting the insult, "if it were n't for our women, your sister and my wife, you and I might have some happy hours together. I don't like your lonely, secret drinkers. Give me a company of good fellows like old Habenichts. Why, if I only dared I would join him and Mr. Botolph at their beer every night. These fellows can sleep, whereas I can't get a wink. What 's the best nightcap?"

"I can't deny it, it is toddy," whispered Mr. Pumpherston, and blushed.

With his large eyes, in which the light of fanaticism, if it had ever really dawned there, was steadily dying, Mr. Pumpherston looked significantly at his friend, and proposed a walk. Sir Samuel rose to his feet in an instant, and clutched his hat, and then accompanied Mr. Pumpherston out of Fashion Row in the direction of Euston. Where they went will probably never be known, but it was ascertained that when they returned they were both smelling of peppermint.

But Sir Samuel and Mr. Pumpherston had one other better opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with each other A series of great temperance meetings had been arranged in Yorkshire, and Mr. Pumpherston was to be the principal speaker. His doctor, however, absolutely refused to allow him to go, and the disappointment was, perhaps, not as great as Mrs. Mepham supposed it to be. She offered to represent her brother, and she begged Lady Epworth, who was also deeply interested in abolition, to accompany her. Mr. Pumpherston thought that the proposal was admirable, and urged Lady Epworth to go. But she hesitated. Sir Samuel would not agree to exhibit himself any more upon the platform as a reformed drunkard, and Lady Epworth was afraid to leave him behind. Mr. Pumpherston promised to look after him and Lady Ep-

worth was at length convinced that her husband could not be in safer hands. She therefore consented to set out for Yorkshire with Mrs. Mcpham, and it was understood that they would be absent for three nights. On one of those nights Mr. Pumpherston invited Sir Samuel into his bedroom for a smoke and chat.

"Hullo, Pumpherston," said Sir Samuel. "How are you feeling? I wish *I* were a bachelor."

"Well, of course, I am still suffering from overwork. Those speeches, you know! The last election almost killed me," replied Pumpherston, inviting his guest to take a seat.

"You are pale," said Sir Samuel. "Who but a fool can deny that there is some justification in using liquor very cautiously as a medicine?"

"I hope you remember," remarked Mr. Pumpherston, "that it was only for that reason that I consented to touch it the other day?"

"Of course," said Sir Samuel. "Mum 's the word. You 're safe with me. *I 'll* not tell anyone."

Two bottles and two glasses were standing on the table, and Sir Samuel looked at them.

"I defy anyone," exclaimed Mr. Pumpherston, in an attitude of self-justification, "to go on working as I have done without *some* kind of stimulant."

"What 's this?" asked Sir Samuel, taking up one of the bottles.

"Raspberry vinegar," said Mr. Pumpherston.

"What can that do for us?" asked Sir Samuel.

"It makes me sick," replied Mr. Pumpherston. "But what choice is there? There 's apple drink, gooseberry water, lemon milk — they 're all pretty much alike. Do you know the 'Book of 100 Aqueous Beverages'?"

"It 's my wife's Bible," replied Sir Samuel.

"It 's Mrs. Mepham's Catechism," said Mr. Pumpherston.

"I m afraid," continued Sir Samuel, "that the temperance drinks spoil one here, you know" (tapping his stomach). "I 'm saturated with them. My wife's great favourite is cherry water. As for me, I would as soon drink rain-water. Well, Pumpherston, we 've made a good many speeches together, but I 'm sick of being shown off as a reformed or deformed drunkard."

"We have drunk a good deal of lemonade together, Sir Samuel," observed Mr. Pumpherston.

"Fathoms!" said Sir Samuel, taking up the second bottle. "What 's this?"

"That 's whisky," replied Mr. Pumpherston.

Sir Samuel started back, and then burst out laughing.

"I am feeling very unwell," said Mr. Pumpherston. "I have my doctor's certificate. It is he who is urging me, imploring me. I almost fainted before

you came in, Sir Samuel. Don't smile. It is sober truth."

"Oh, Pumpherston," cried Sir Samuel, "this is good! Sober truth 's all very well, but tipsy truth is even more amusing! And so you 're at it again?"

"It is a medicine," said Mr. Pumpherston, fingering the whisky bottle. "I hope you understand."

"Certainly, certainly," replied Sir Samuel, with his sides shaking and his head and hands and everything about him in motion. "Look at me, Pumpherston."

"Yes, Sir Samuel," said Mr. Pumpherston, looking at him.

"Why," he began, "I confess I loved the bottle. I was besotted. Rabelais and Omar, these were my gods. I never want to drink so deeply again. My poor wife, you know! But she 's in the wrong, too. To make me stop all in a sudden is more than a man can stand. I 've had my lapses. I don't deny it. But as for fig and apple drink, or currant water, or apricot syrup, or syrup of lemons all day and every day, why, these dreadful compounds are killing me! That 's why my head moves about like a pendulum, and I 'm more like a jumping jack than a human being. It 's pure weakness. What can I do with orange barley water, or whatever they call it? Well, what 's in a name? Whisky by any other name

tastes as well. Call it a medicine. We are both thoroughly overworked. That 's the truth."

"Well, will you open it?" asked Pumpherston, pushing the bottle towards Sir Samuel.

"*You* open it," said Sir Samuel, pushing it back.

"Is it not the case," demanded Pumpherston, "that we are both suffering from exhaustion?"

"I 've just said so. I entirely agree with you. At least, I know how I feel," said Sir Samuel, with a gleam beginning to arrive in his eyes. "Where did you get this?"

"I walked to Bayswater and brought it home in my umbrella," said Mr. Pumpherston. "I have already said that I took the precaution of getting a doctor's certificate."

"Ha, ha, ha! Excellent idea!" exclaimed Sir Samuel, pushing the bottle nearer Mr. Pumpherston, "Home in an umbrella! You 're a genius. Well?"

"Is the door locked?" asked Mr. Pumpherston.

"Yes, yes," said Sir Samuel. "Begin."

"All right. But, remember, only a drop each," said Mr. Pumpherston, putting in the corkscrew and drawing. "Even although my committee came in this moment, I could look them straight in the face."

"So could I," said Sir Samuel, impatiently.

"Supposing your wife and my sister arrived, I could prove that I am justified. My doctor says it," repeated Mr. Pumpherston.

"But they won't come," said Sir Samuel, drinking. "At the present moment they are addressing the temperance meeting in Leeds, and delivering your message, and your name is being cheered. And so, tell me about the last election you fought at Old Grange" — helping himself from the bottle again. "I hear you fell in love with the mayor's daughter, but that she jilted you and went over to Drury and the Liquor Party. Is it true? Now, what happened?"

"She threw back at me the bracelet I gave her," said Mr. Pumpherston. "It hit me in the eye."

"I made a rule of never giving to women any solid objects, anything bulky which they can throw back at you when the quarrel begins, but only such things as flowers, and sweets, gloves and ribbons, which perish in the using. And so your opponent flirted with the mayor's daughter? Ha, ha. . . . This is good stuff" — refilling Mr. Pumpherston's glass and his own.

"Sir Samuel!" exclaimed Mr. Pumpherston, drinking.

"He was seen sitting in a garden with his arm round the jade's waist? Oh, Pumpherston, what did you say? How did you feel?" asked Sir Samuel, laughing heartily, and beginning to shows signs of undue hilarity. "Such an experience, Pumpherston,

was enough to drive you to drink! Now that we 've been drinking together, I may as well tell you something."

"I 've not been drinking," said Mr. Pumpherston, corking the bottle. "I 've been taking a stimulant. Tea would do as well."

"Why did n't you take it, then?" asked Sir Samuel, jeering. "Anyway, I may as well tell you that the old craving came on me to-day. Half an hour ago I was in that pub round the corner. Did n't you notice me reeling a bit. But nobody saw me go in — a side street, you know. What a comfort a side street is, Pumpherston!"

"Half an hour ago! I wish you had told me," said Pumpherston.

"Wanted to come, eh? That 's good," exclaimed Sir Samuel, rolling from side to side.

"No," said Pumpherston, putting the cork more firmly into the bottle. "You misunderstand me — If I had known you had been drinking — "

"Oh, Tartuffe, hypocrite, Tartuffe Pumpherston!" said Sir Samuel. "Now, if any man says I 'm drunk, I 'll call him a liar! Take out that cork!"

"I will do nothing of the kind," said Mr. Pumpherston. "I see the mistake I have made. You are becoming hilarious, Sir Samuel Epworth."

"Now, don't be foolish, Tartuffe! Don't call me names! You 're a hypocrite, sir, a filthy hypocrite,

and you 're frightened for your sister," said Sir Samuel, in great excitement. "I despise you!"

"You 're frightened for your wife," retorted Mr. Pumpherston, very alarmed.

"Am I? Who said it? I 'll brain you with this bottle, sir!" said Sir Samuel, beginning to move in Mr. Pumpherston's direction.

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Mr. Pumpherston. "Does it go to your head as quickly as all that? Really, if you go on like this, I 'll have to remove you."

"What do you mean, sir? Remove *me?*"

"Supposing anyone came in?" urged Mr. Pumpherston.

"Well, supposing they did; what of that, I say?"

"Well, we should be seriously compromised. My reputation! Oh, come, come, Sir Samuel!"

"Oh, go, go, Mr. Pumpherston! Are you insulting me, sir?"

"Not in the least."

"You propose to eject me from this meeting?"

"He thinks he 's at a meeting!" exclaimed Mr. Pumpherston, in an aside. "Pardon me."

"That 's the last thing I will do," said Sir Samuel. "Who drew the cork first?"

"We have been imprudent, Sir Samuel. I feel slightly giddy myself," said Mr. Pumpherston.

"Who drew the bottle?" demanded Sir Samuel.

"I suppose I did."

"You suppose. Have you forgotten? Sir, you are drunk," said Sir Samuel, glaring at him.

"Dear Sir Samuel, calm yourself. I am not complaining," said Mr. Pumpherston.

"I believe that you have a mind to be impertinent, sir!"

"I beseech you, my venerable friend, do not let us drift into a quarrel. If I have said anything to offend you, I retract it instantly. I think we should both go quietly to bed. I will see you to your room. That 's all I meant."

Anxious to get rid of him at any cost, Mr. Pumpherston humbled himself sufficiently, and begged to be forgiven. After some display of sullenness, and many minutes of silence, Sir Samuel seemed to be appeased, and then, with a return of good humour, he bade his host good night, and arrived at his own quarters without mishap. Next day he appeared to have forgotten the incident, or to be ashamed of it, so that when Lady Epworth and Mrs. Mepham came back from Yorkshire, all traces of the quarrel had disappeared. Both women were full of news regarding the victorious meetings which they had held in the enemy's strongholds, and Sir Samuel and Mr. Pumpherston listened attentively, and with downcast eyes, to the account of numerous conversions. It happened to be the evening on which Mrs. Wix was giving the dinner in honour of her own birthday,

and she was perfectly aware that when she called for wine she would offend Mrs. Mepham.

Mrs. Mepham, who was a demure, pale-faced widow, with an angry mouth and black, glossy hair, which was brushed tightly and flatly on her head, and was divided by a parting in the middle, glanced contemptuously at the flimsy green gown in which Mrs. Wix was arrayed, and pronounced the words "gaudy frump," which caused Lady Epworth to titter. The sole reason why Mrs. Mepham and her brother remained at Wix's Residential Hotel was because in no other boarding establishment of the same class were they able to find a telephone. Now, Mrs. Mepham was in frequent communication with her emissaries in the Metropolis, and the telephone had become a necessity for her and her brother in the work of propaganda. By making use of the instrument belonging to Mrs. Wix she could save a penny each time, because at the public telephone the charge was twopence. Moreover, all things considered, the disadvantages of residence with Mrs. Wix were outweighed by the advantages. Of course, a woman like Mrs. Mepham, hard, intolerant, and fanatical, could feel nothing but contempt for a person like Mrs. Wix, but it was mixed with some fear. When reproached for living in a licensed house, Mrs. Mepham pointed out that she and Mr. Pumpherston desired to convert the unconverted, and that, therefore, their

post of duty, like an advanced guard, lay where drinkers assembled. The truth was, however, that spirituous liquor was only rarely seen at Mrs. Wix's table, because few Wixians could afford it. Mrs. Mepham was thus all the more surprised to discover on this evening of her return from a victory over the enemy, that Mrs. Wix, at her own expense and for the pitiful purpose of self-glorification, was actually providing temptation in the form of champagne! At the popping of the corks, Mrs. Mepham started from her chair, while Sir Samuel Epworth and Mr. Pumpherston furtively eyed each other.

"Ralph," exclaimed Mrs. Mepham, addressing her brother, "this is a designed insult to *us*. Let us rise."

Ralph, however, was hungry, and stuffed veal and peas pudding and potatoes were being handed round. He hurriedly whispered to his sister that she must not make a scene, and asked if she and Lady Epworth were not very famished after their long journey? Sir Samuel Epworth appeared likewise determined not to miss his dinner. He clutched his knife and fork.

"Fizz or no fizz," he said bluntly, with a revival of his ancient courage, "I won't budge!"

"They are both hungry," said Lady Epworth to Mrs. Mepham. "We had better remain."

Mrs. Mepham, who had half risen from her chair,

sat down again, amid the smiles of Mr. Snape and Mr. Coon, and reluctantly agreed to see the meal to a finish. As for Mrs. Wix, she was in a high-spirited, reckless mood, and felt independent of the patronage of Mrs. Mepham. For Sir Samuel she had a distinct regard, and perhaps it was out of sympathy for him that she sent Wurm with the champagne bottle among the gloomy group of abstainers.

"No!" said Lady Epworth, flattening her palm over her wine glass as soon as Wurm had placed the bottle in position. "Sir Samuel and I will have cherry water."

Sir Samuel sighed, and looked savagely at Mr. Pumpherston. Mrs. Mepham had already turned her own glass and her brother's head downwards, and Wurm passed without offering a drop.

"Mr. Pumpherston and I," said Mrs. Mepham, in a loud and commanding tone, "will have filtered water. And see that it *is* filtered."

"That's a treat for you!" whispered Sir Samuel to Mr. Pumpherston, who sat silent.

Meanwhile Herr Habenichts was in a very genial mood. Mr. Botolph looked at him with admiration, and marvelled at his quick recovery of spirits. But Herr Habenichts was a man who gave himself up to the enjoyment of the moment, and said that care should take care of itself. If he were to be led to

execution and a good cigar had been given to him a quarter of an hour before the fatal moment, he would smoke it tranquilly to the end. He agreed with Mrs. Wix that Mrs. Mepham was a kill-joy, and abhorred her frigidity, and he had never been able to accustom himself to the forlornness of Lady Epworth, the strange silence of Mrs. Coon, who sat at table without ever saying a word, and the something repellent in Mr. Pumpherston. But he liked Sir Samuel, who, with all his oddities, possessed the remains of a gay countenance, and he boldly looked down to where he was sitting, and, having raised his glass, he drank with a twinkling eye to the health of the old dilapidated knight. Sir Samuel, with a pathetic nod, returned the compliment in cherry water. Herr Habenichts then nudged Mr. Botolph, who sat with a pleased smile on his face, and he whispered —

"Oh, Mr. Botolph, I drink to the safety of your boy!"

Mr. Botolph thanked him, and looked radiant, and said he was certain that his son would return in the spring. Herr Habenichts now began to feel ashamed for what he had said about Mrs. Wix, who was providing such excellent fare, and he asked Mr. Botolph to forget it. Mrs. Wix, in fact, was paying great attention to Herr Habenichts, for she had begun to think that he was making money and

was becoming a person of importance. The fact that Sir John Marduke was the patron of the Original Jellini Academy of Dancing very greatly impressed her, and she had heard of the distinguished persons, including two mayors, who had witnessed the pupils' ball. On the actual evening which had brought the disastrous news of the withdrawal of Sir John Marduke's patronage, Herr Habenichts was pained to receive Mrs. Wix's congratulations on the enjoyment of the friendship and protection of such an important gentleman.

"It 's just a piece of out and out luck," she said. "You 're a rich man already. To be sure you are."

"Nein, Mrs. Vix," replied Herr Habenichts. "I not rich! De life is hard, and vollish. At my age see me dance de polka, very vollish! I lose time. I vish to read and study. But I teach de dance to get bread. Dat 's all."

Mrs. Wix would not hear a word of it. She had begun to suspect that, owing to the supposed improvement in his circumstances, Herr Habenichts might forsake her hotel, and move to more luxurious quarters. She said that "good fortin' 's a fine thing," asked him if he was comfortable, and offered him a better room.

"Jellini's is quite a name," she continued, "and I hope as you 'll teach Polly to dance. Sir John Marduke 's a millionaire, and you 're in his will.

There 's no doubt about it. He has taken a fancy to you."

A momentary cloud or cloudlet seemed to pass across Herr Habenichts' face, and Mr. Botolph thought he heard a faint sigh. Herr Habenichts shook his head, and said that Mrs. Wix was imagining things. But she shook her head, too, put her hand on his shoulder, and asked him if he would be ashamed to ask Sir John to such a dinner. While he was saying that he would not, Mr. Botolph took the opportunity of whispering to him —

"The wine is mounting in her!"

Mrs. Wix, however, seemed determined to overload Herr Habenichts with her attentions.

"Now, have a plummier bit of that there beef," she said. "These baked taters? Some gravy and a little of the fat? Oh, here 's a dollop of Yorkshire puddin', and don't forget to empty your glass."

"I empty it to you," said Herr Habenichts, raising his glass, and overwhelming Mrs. Wix with his courtly airs.

"Wix and me used to say," continued Mrs. Wix, "that after we had made our pile we 'd do the thing swell. As it is, we don't weave cotton and call it silk. We don't grind rice in the coffee and save up old tea leaves to use over again. It ain't here you 'll feed on tripe and cow heel and pigs' trotters. You men knows nothin' about housekeepin'

and the valer of money. Now that roast beef you 're eatin' and evidently enjoyin'. Ain't it prime? I got that in Camden Town, and don't say to me that it was a block ornament, or one of them remnants and rags of beef they sticks in the winder for Sat'r-day nights. I bought it myself on Tuesday, and bargained no end. Keepin' a hotel is just house-keepin' on a biggish scale. That 's what I tells Polly. I give valer for money. That 's judge and justice. Fightin' the cook and the servants and them boarders as says they 'll pay you like a bank and does n't, and then facin' the taxes and the bills and the broken crockery. Why, it 's a life! P'r'aps 'casion-ally I talks up a bit loud and lusty like. But it 's just like Big Ben. He 's got to talk out if he 's goin' to be heard a mile away, and so they gives him a loud tongue."

Hereupon Mrs. Wix observed that Lady Epworth and Mrs. Mepham ware tittering at her, but she transfixed them with one of her sharp glances, and then called for more wine.

"Wine bibbers!" remarked Mrs. Mepham, some-what uncourageously, in a whisper.

"They drink like fish," said Lady Epworth.

"Fish, poor things, drink only water," replied Sir Samuel, winking at Mr. Pumpherston.

"Then I wish people *would* drink like fish," re-torted Mrs. Mepham, raising her nose and looking

defiant. "Ralph, why don't you say something? Keep the flag flying even in the enemy's camp."

"Why, ma'am," said Mrs. Wix, addressing Mrs. Mepham, "I 've never seen you smile, and you 're as mournful as the muffin-bell."

"These wet goods," said Mr. Pumpherston, coming to his sister's rescue, "could be dispensed with, Mrs. Wix."

"Tartuffe! hypocrite!" exclaimed Sir Samuel Epworth, kicking Pumpherston in the ankle. "I 'll expose you!"

"You don't take this house for a wobble shop?" inquired Mrs. Wix, indignantly, amid the growing excitement.

"Wobble shop," repeated Mr. Coon. "That yanks the bun."

"Don't offend anyone," whispered Mrs. Coon to her husband. "Take no part in the discussion, and don't drink."

"I would n't say," remarked Mr. Snape, the dentist, "that a man should float his teeth, but I do believe that it 's good now and again to wash the ivories with wine."

"Vat did Mr. Pumpherston mean by vet goods?" asked Herr Habenichts.

"Slang for liquor," replied Mr. Coon.

"Den," said Herr Habenichts, "de vet goods improve some people's dry conversation."

The drinkers now laughed at the abstainers, while Mrs. Mepham urged her brother to attempt to reply.

"You will admit," began Pumpherston, "that even professional thieves are generally sober men. To do their work they require to keep their wits clear."

"Vat a reason for being a teetotaller!" exclaimed Herr Habenichts; and they all began laughing again.

Mr. Pumpherston lost countenance, and kept his eyes on the table-cloth, while his sister told him that he had made a fool of himself, and that if he could n't defend the cause in any better manner, he should henceforth hold his tongue.

Herr Habenichts then began to explain to all present the myth of Dionysus, and when he spoke of the origin of the vine worship, he quoted five lines from Euripides in the original Greek.

"Don't talk German," said Mrs. Wix.

Mr. Coon and Mr. Snape, who likewise thought that Herr Habenichts was talking German, said almost simultaneously, "Quite right, ma'am;" but when they found their mistake, they both looked foolish. For Herr Habenichts and Mr. Botolph were busy laughing.

Mr. Coon closed his eyes. He was a little man with a narrow forehead and black, close-cropped hair. His face was deeply pitted by small-pox, and he wore pince-nez. His speciality in journalism con-

sisted of the obituary notices of eminent persons, but during the last year he had been heard to complain of the scarcity of deaths among the great. He possessed a series of biographies in manuscript, which he was continually bringing up to date in case any of his victims might suddenly die. Since his style was often caustic he called himself the grave-digger of reputations.

"And vat," asked Herr Habenichts, "is your next obituary notice to be about?"

"Free Trade," said Sir Samuel Epworth in a loud voice at the other end of the table.

Hereupon there took place a most violent discussion on the subject of Free Trade and Protection, in the course of which Mr. Pumpherston declared himself an unrepentant Free Trader, and was again kicked in the ankle by Sir Samuel Epworth. The debate was becoming very animated, while Mrs. Coon kept whispering to her husband, "Take no part. Don't quarrel with anyone." Lady Epworth informed Mrs. Mepham, who was also a Free Trader, that she did not know what she was taking about, and that on *this* subject they must part company. Sir Samuel was delighted, and kept repeating, as he shook in his chair, "The fat 's in the fire!" The battle, indeed, had spread to the other two tables, and soon the room was in an uproar. Mrs Wix, who was too confused to be able to contribute anything

coherent to the debate, called out from her place —

"I like animals as is civil!"

"And *I*," cried Mrs. Mepham, as she lifted a banana and smelt it, "prefer free traders to foul ones."

"Take my word, it's a good banana. What are you smelling it for?" demanded Mrs. Wix. "Some folks are like horses. They must touch everythin' with their noses. And most folks seem to think a bill of fare's a bill of ladin'."

There was a sudden silence, and Sir Samuel Epworth was stopped in the development of an important argument. He had had high words with Mr. Pumpherston who stated with some indignation that so far at least as his ankle was concerned, he was already convinced of the need of Protection. But Mrs. Wix's last jibe created an awkward pause, and her reference to bills of lading was resented by the entire company. At this juncture Wurm entered to inform Herr Habenichts that a young gentleman of the name of Marduke was in the parlour. Herr Habenichts promptly rose, and we will follow him. He excused himself to the heated debaters while Mrs. Wix beamed upon him, and exclaimed —

"Mr. Marduke! Oh, I say! That's the baronet's son. Offer him anything he wishes, and I *would* like to see him."

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH

Herr Habenichts entered the room in a haughty fashion. He advanced, bowing disdainfully and buttoning his frock-coat, and his demeanour bewildered Monty Marduke, who was standing with his back to the fire. But Marduke was likewise in a strange mood. His eyes had an expression of trouble and unrest, his face was pale, and his brows were contracted as if in sign of some great catastrophe of love and youth. He was startled by the peculiar behaviour of Herr Habenichts, who stood stock still under the incandescent gas bracket, where his bald head began to shine. The old dance master was apparently trying to control some excitement. His lips were tight, he breathed heavily, and he eyed the youth suspiciously, almost savagely.

"Why, what 's wrong with you, Herr Habenichts?" asked Monty, going forward and holding ont his hand.

"Oh, I vill pay it *all,*" replied Herr Habenichts, scornfully — "everyting, and glad every penny to pay, even although it leave me vith noting. I suppose you tink I run avay?"

Hereupon, having unbuttoned his frock-coat he pulled out first the letter which he had received from Messrs. Jedder and Jedder, the baronet's solicitors, and second, the letter which he had received from Mr. Samuel Larkin, and he shook them violently in Mr. Monty Marduke's face.

"To-morrow," he continued in an excited voice, "I go to the pank, proud to go and pay every penny. Empty pocket again! Mein Gott! I begin to say I come to de wrong countree. Dat Dorrie and you haf both done it to me."

Herr Habenichts' face was now very red and his eyes were enlarged and fiery.

"I don't understand a word of what you are saying," Monty replied. "What is it all about? I 've just come from Jellini's, where I expected to see you, since I thought this was one of your evenings. I have something to tell you, Herr Habenichts. Most important!"

"Vat!" exclaimed Herr Habenichts. "You not know? Is dat de troot? It is nonsense to say so. You not know dat your fader, de patron, haf forsook me, and ask back de loan, de money, all becose of de goings on of you and Dorrie?"

"I know nothing about it," said Marduke, "nothing whatever."

"How?"

"I say I don't know what you are talking about," repeated Marduke.

"And de cab gentleman, Mr. Larkin. . . . Oh, wat impudence to speak about me as he do in his letter!" said Herr Habenichts, suddenly taking refuge in his own language and beginning to pour forth a torrent of words which Marduke did not understand. "I vill demand an apology. Yes, I vill!" he continued, and then after he had shaken both letters as dogs shake rats, he handed them over in a crumpled condition to Mr. Monty Marduke.

While Monty was studying them Herr Habenichts walked round the room humming a martial and defiant air, and now and again throwing back his shoulders and keping his head erect as if he were marching to battle. As he turned he was surprised to see Mrs. Wix's face looking in at the door. Although Mrs. Wix had ordered everyone in the house not to disturb Herr Habenichts and his distinguished guest, and to consider that parlour as a private room for the evening, she found it impossible to restrain her own curiosity.

"Oh, I beg pardon," she said, while her face was still crimson with the champagne. "Just looked in to see if anything was wanted. That 's my way. I like gentlemen to get attention. Enough lights? Oh, my goodness, the curtains ain't drawn" (and in a flick the curtain rings were rattling along the poles). "The fire good? *I* never grudge coals to gentlemen on a Jan'ary night. Well, now, perhaps Mr. Marduke would like something?"

"Nothing, thank you," said Marduke; while Herr Habenichts smiled to Mrs. Wix, who then reluctantly disappeared.

During the very important conversation which now began between Monty and Herr Habenichts they were frequently disturbed by one head after another bobbing in and begging pardon. Mrs. Mepham entered to say, "Oh, I thought Mr. Pumpherston was here," although she had left him in the lobby. Then came Mrs. Coon with "Where *is* Mr. Coon?" although she knew perfectly well that he was still lingering at table and cracking bad jokes and walnuts. Mr. Snape arrived on the pretence of looking for matches, although he had a box full in his pocket, and he took ten minutes to prepare his pipe and to light it. Even Sir Samuel Epworth was incapable of resisting the temptation when it became known that Sir John Marduke's son was in the house. For Sir John had been at school with Sir Samuel, who, however, as soon as he had caught a glimpse of Monty, retreated with apologies. Polly Wix likewise paid a visit ostensibly to poke the fire, which needed no poking at all. As she swept the hearth, however, she had an excellent view of Mr. Marduke's boots, which she afterwards declared to be the loveliest boots she had ever seen on a gentleman's feet. Only Mr. Botolph respected Herr Habenichts' privacy, and spent a formidable evening in listening

to Mrs. Mepham's and Lady Epworth's opinions on temperance.

Monty expressed astonishment at the contents of the letters, then sympathy with Herr Habenichts, and then great disgust with the action of his father, who, he declared, was becoming more and more incomprehensible to him. Herr Habenichts replied that he did not desire sympathy and that Sir John Marduke had doubtless a perfect right to do what he liked in the matter. He repeated that he had determined to restore the money immediately and to close for ever the Original Jellini Academy of Dancing. But he was much surprised when he heard Monty state in tones of obvious sincerity that if it were not that he, too, at that moment happened to be short of cash, he would be delighted to come to Herr Habenichts' assistance. At first the old dance master listened incredulously and derisively.

"Very leetle money!" he exclaimed. "Ja, I believe you!"

"Yes, Herr Habenichts," continued Monty. "You laugh, but it is true. I am in debt. Three or four years ago I was an ass, kept a racing stud, and lost heavily. The allowance which my father gives me pays the interest on loans, and leaves me just something to get along with. And now my father threatens to stop the allowance. Our family affairs are in a very unsatisfactory state. My father has

given so much away that we are becoming alarmed, not only about our own position in the world, but about his sanity. If it were possible I would sell the six valuable pictures which my mother left me, and lend you some of the proceeds, because I can never forget that it was through you that I met that lovely girl — "

"Don't mention her name," interrupted Herr Habenichts, sternly.

"I say, I would like to help you — "

"I don't vish it," said Herr Habenichts.

"But my father has the use of those pictures during his life," continued Monty, as he plumped into a seat. "Well, there's my bay mare — "

Herr Habenichts took a chair, drew it near to Monty's, and looked earnestly at the young man.

"Mein Gott!" he exclaimed, "is it possible?"

"Yes, but tell me first, where's Dorrie?" asked Monty, eagerly. "I'll help *you* as soon as I can."

"Nein," said Herr Habenichts. "De tance is over, and I out in de vorld again."

"I've got the most extraordinary thing to tell you, Herr Habenichts," Monty began again as he took a cigarette from his gold cigarette case; "and this letter of Larkin has considerably added to my fears for that lovely girl. I've got news for you!"

"Vat?" asked Herr Habenichts. "Ja, news of

pretty face. Dat 's all de news a young man care for. She ruin us both!"

"I went to Jellini's to-night expecting to find her and you, Herr Habenichts," said Monty, in great excitement. "I 'm going to elope with her. It 's the only way. You must help us. She 's in the greatest danger! This letter proves it. Larkin, you know, is not her father. He has no rights over her whatever."

"I not onderstand," murmured Herr Habenichts.

"She 's the niece of the Duchess Dowager of Berkshire," said Monty. "Larkin 's only her stepfather. Her mother died long ago."

Herr Habenichts gave expression to his amazement by seizing the poker and splitting a block of coal. Then with many appropriate exclamations in his own language he drew his chair still nearer to Monty, and told him to go on without delay.

Monty could only repeat what he had already said, but he now seemed to be working himself into a fury at the thought that Dorothy might be suddenly removed from London.

"I want you to spy on that yard, Herr Habenichts," he continued. "I 'll consult a lawyer. Larkin has no power over that lovely girl. As for writing letters to her, she would never get them. No, I 'll act. I 'll act."

He rose.

"Sit down," implored Herr Habenichts, pushing him into the chair again. "Was für eine Geschichte! Tell me *all.*"

Herr Habenichts was so eager to hear every detail that he soon forgot his own distresses, and he sat listening as a child listens to a fairy tale. When Monty described his interview, first with Mrs. Bleeks and then with Larkin and the revelations made concerning Dorothy's parentage, the listener's excitement increased. For Herr Habenichts buttoned and unbuttoned his frock-coat twenty times, smiled and frowned by turns, slapped his knee and flung his half-smoked cigar into the blazing fire. Monty was scarcely able to proceed owing to the frequent interruptions and interjections in German, and at last Herr Habenichts seized him by the arm, shook it, and said, "Ach, die Liebe!" The old man's interest was still more quickened when Monty described Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, and her inhuman coldness and her refusal to befriend the hapless girl. Herr Habenichts shook his head, leaned back in his chair, gesticulated with his two hands, and exclaimed, "A vicked ancient lady: eine böse Frau!" He asked for a minute description of her, where she lived, how rich she was, how old she was, and he put fifty other questions. Once more Monty was required to recapitulate the story, and when he told of Larkin's discomfiture, Mrs. Bleeks's rage

and the dowager's fury, Herr Habenichts clapped his hands. The electric batteries of his own memories were being stirred.

"Ja," he began, "it all remind me of my Viennese tancer ven I vos a gay hussar. Ah, long ago, long ago. And she made me soffer! A tancer, Tänzerin, like Dorrie. She change my life. She vould not haf me! I vollowed her over de Semmering into Tyrol, into Germany, avay into Vrance, and Italy, Algiers and Athens, avay, avay, tancing, tancing. All over de vorld did I vatch her in de theatres, ah, long ago! She vould not haf me. I almost shot myself: I vept, I vept. And ven I lost her I thought to write my book on de Tance, for I saw her as Terpsichore tancing through the ages! Dat vos my consolation. To write de book, I rose in de mornings and saw her tancing, tancing in de dawn! Ja, my thought became like a tancer. Star of love, morning and evening star! Ach, how vondervoll and glorious life is!"

Herr Habenichts stopped, and his eyes seemed to be searching far horizons while Monty sat wondering at his rapture. Then they talked and talked, and Monty said a hundred times that he would marry *his* dancer, and he again demanded Herr Habenichts help.

"Vell? Vat can *I* do?" asked Herr Habenichts, with his old benignity. "It is a vondervoll love. Elope? Ah, mein Gott, look! listen!"

He pointed suddenly to the clock, which marked half-past twelve, and simultaneously a key was heard being turned in the front door. All good Wixians save one had gone to bed and were asleep and dreaming, little knowing that young Romance was in the house.

"Here comes Svevling," whispered Herr Habenichts in terror. "I vorget him! I put out de gas. He think no one here."

Before Marduke could prevent him Herr Habenichts turned out the gas so that the room was lit only by the fire glow. Now it was Swefling's habit to enter the parlour every night in expectation of seeing Herr Habenichts and Mr. Botolph. When he opened the door he found the room in darkness except for the red warm shimmer of the dying fire. There was light enough, however, to enable him to distinguish figures in the room, and he saw two heads and two pairs of legs.

"Hullo!" he cried, "who's here?"

Monty was about to strike a light because he had no intention of hiding.

Swefling saw the gleam of a small gold box, and presently, by the flame of the wax match, he recognised Marduke's features. As the incandescent bracket became relighted Herr Habenichts said —

"Good evening, Mr. Svevling, I am here, too!"

Swefling, however, made no response, but looked

in a sullen and suspicious manner from the one to the other, while Marduke smoked a cigarette.

"Mr. Svevling," exclaimed Herr Habenichts, "you look like a morderer!"

Swefling only grinned in silence, and outstared Marduke. The fellow looked so menacing, so truculent that Herr Habenichts expected a fight to begin immediately, and he glanced in an anxious manner at Marduke, who, however, remained perfectly calm. Meantime Swefling continued his insolent survey of Marduke, as if he were taking his measure of him. Then, without a word, but with a loud laugh which went rolling and echoing up the staircase, and made some of the inmates turn in their sleep, he left the room. He had reasons for his self-control. Something had happened in Larkin's yard.

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH

When Larkin had made a resolution he seldom failed to carry it out. Therefore it was in consternation and in terror that Dorothy heard from his own lips that she was to marry Swefling. Sam suspected that Swefling was in love with her, and, indeed, his sisters had warned him long ago. And, after all, was Swefling to be despised? He was a very steady young fellow, and he would carry on the business, or perhaps manage the farm. In his utter disbelief in Marduke's honourable intentions Larkin decided to save his step-daughter from ruin without delay. He had an affection for Dorothy, to whom he meant to leave his small fortune, but he still dreaded the day when she would discover that she was unrelated to him. The sudden apparition of Marduke caused Larkin to decide to make use at once of any authority which might remain to him. On the same night, therefore, on which Marduke went to visit Herr Habenichts at Mrs. Wix's, Larkin ordered Swefling to come back to the yard about half-past ten. When Audacity

trotted into the stables Larkin was standing impatiently on his doorstep.

"You just come in," he said; "Vardy 'll see all tight. I 've somethin' to say to you."

Herr Habenichts, when he saw that look of anger and hate in Swefling's face, had said that it was the glance of a murderer. It was a strong statement, and perhaps overstrong, but there can be no doubt that during the last ten days or so a deep and extraordinary change had taken place in Swefling. Ever since that night when he had driven Dorothy and Marduke in his cab from the Original Jellini Academy of Dancing, Swefling had suffered from alternations of despondency and rage. In his sleep and in his sleeplessness he was troubled by strange and terrible suggestions. What is this phantom that whispers and whispers, *Kill Marduke!* Swefling rose in horror, took charge of his cab in the morning, and drove through London, oblivious of the beckonings from the pavement, full only of one thought and trying hard to get rid of it. Primitive instinct, the instinct that makes us in a crisis seize and clutch and crush, which makes us use our bodily powers as the tiger and the jackal use theirs, the instinct to capture the beloved object by force and fight, was furiously astir in this obscure London Jehu. He had been diligently saving money for years for *her*. It was in order to impress mankind in general, and Dorothy

and Larkin in particular, that he had taken a lodging at Wix's Residential Hotel, thus to prove that he was in the way of prosperity. Moreover, he had been bequeathed four hundred pounds by an uncle, and therefore he had supposed that if he presented himself as a suitor he could not be, should not be, treated with disdain. The truth was, that if Larkin had not spoken that night, Swefling would have been unable any longer to restrain his impatience. He, tingling and burning, would have informed old Sam of his passion for Dorothy and his horrible fear of Marduke. If his long years of secret devotion were about to end in this disaster, he might become dangerous. Dorothy was in disgrace. He never saw her at the window now. He heard that she had been weeping, that Sam and Mrs. Bleeks and Mrs. Muzzey were very angry with her. Perhaps this was the favourable moment to be bold, the chance of a lifetime and a lovetime. Love, to be sure, is not only romantic but necromantic, and plays strange tricks with cabmen as well as with kings.

The old eight-day clock in Larkin's parlour was slowly striking eleven, stuttering and stammering out the hour, grumbling and wheezing as if, like a miser, grudging every golden minute of the night. On the table there was laid a supper of bread and cheese and beer, and places were set for two. The room had an air of old-fashioned comfort, in spite

of chairs with perpendicular mahogany backs and a stiff sofa which looked like a couch of penitence. Two tall brass candlesticks glittered on the sideboard, and between them stood an ancient brass urn. A block of tan turf was burning among the coals in the fireplace, and emitted an odour pleasantly pungent. On the wall there were some old hunting prints, and as Swefling cast his eyes around the room he thought that Mr. Larkin was a very prosperous man.

"Dick," said Sam, looking keenly at him, "you 're wery smart to-night. But you 're always smart. That 'at of yourn! I can see my face in it. It 's the smartest and glossiest silk 'at on the 'ead of any cabby in London. You 're a town toff. But wot d' you say to goin' back to the farm at Colchester? Perhaps too far out o' the world? Not gay enough, eh?"

"Wy," began Swefling, as he looked somewhat shyly and slyly at Larkin, "I would like it no end. But —"

"But wot?" asked Larkin.

"Well," replied Swefling, "in course I would miss things 'ere."

"Just sit down there and 'ave a bit of supper," said Larkin, as he sat opposite, "and tell me who you 'd miss most. D' ye see any green in my eye? 'Ave some cheese and there 's beer. Plenty more if it 's wanted."

Swefling sat blushing before his host, and felt very awkward. The sharp night air had given his clear eyes a wonderfully fresh look. It was a round bullet head with dark, closely cropped hair. Larkin had always liked the face, which was frank and engaging.

"Who would you miss most?" repeated Larkin, grinning.

"If I says all I feels," replied Swefling, faltering, "I might get the sack."

"Just you sing out all you feels," said Larkin, encouragingly. "That 's the best dodge when dealin' with a man like me."

"Guv'nor —" he began, but stopped in confusion.

"Go on, I says."

"Well, it 's like this — Splice me! I 'm spavined! I dunnow the way to go on a'ead."

"Splice you?" laughed Larkin. "That sounds like love and sweetheartin'. Wot 's up with the feller?"

"Guv'nor," continued Swefling, "I jist feel like a 'oss meetin' a steam-ingine."

"S'ppose the steam-ingine stops to let the 'oss go past," suggested Larkin.

"I 'm blowed if I can 'elp sayin' it, then, Mr. Larkin. I 'm very fond on 'er," said Swefling.

"In course you are. And you thinks, maybe, that 's a piece of news. Wy, I 've knowed it long ago."

"I thought you did," replied Swefling, in perplexity, and looking now at Larkin and now at the fire. "It ain't as if I was a pauper, Mr. Larkin. I don't wear weskits and boots that 's 'alfway to the rag shop. If a feller throws it at me, meanin' to be hinsultin', that I 'm a cabby, I wipes that off my face as I wipes a London smut."

"And quite right, too. I was a cabby myself," said Larkin, proudly.

"And my mother's brother 's gone and died and left me four hundred pounds," continued Swefling, with much greater assurance while a very bright look suddenly appeared in his eyes. "And, as you know, I 'm sleepin' now at Mrs. Wix's."

"S'pposin' I says straight off that I gives you Dorrie?" asked Larkin.

Swefling's excitement made him rise.

"If this ain't out and out luck," he exclaimed. "No? You means it, Mr. Larkin? This goes immense. Wy, sir, I can't 'ardly b'lieve it."

"In course I means it," said Larkin, anthoritatively; and then he began to unfold his plans.

"But s'pposin' Cupid won't shoot?" asked Swefling, in doubt.

"You means as Dorrie won't 'ave you?"

Swefling nodded and waited, while Larkin remained silent for a few moments.

"I 'll soothe the filly," replied Larkin at length.

"I never fights a colt unless I thinks I 'll be wictorious. You listen to me."

He pointed mysteriously towards the east.

"That 's heast, ain't it?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Swefling.

"Well, she 's goin' out heast," continued Larkin. "To-morrow night you 're goin' to drive 'er to Liverpool Street to catch the 8.45. She 's goin' to the farm to think things over a bit. She 's quite glad to go — wants to be out of this. You just drive 'er to Liverpool Street, and say nothin' at all. She 'll come round to you all the sooner. Mind, say nothin' at all. Jenkins" (the man who managed Larkin's farm) "'ll be meetin' 'er when you pull up at the station, and all you 've got to do is to see 'er into his 'ands. I 'm too old in the tooth not to know wot things women are. Oh yes, your eyes are blazin'! But don't be sich a fool as to think that Dorrie's 'ead went dizzy all along of that damned rascal Marduke. She 's not that kind. But any'ow we 're goin' to put 'er out of danger. Jenkins don't you know, 'as got a crib in Canada, and so 'e 's goin' away. I 'll put you in his place at the farm, and so you and your wife 'll 'ave it all to yourselves when I 'm dead and gone."

It would be difficult, it would be impossible, to give any accurate inventory of the sensations and the emotions of Mr. Richard Swefling while this

panorama of his future was unrolled before him. A series of strange ejaculations, frequent handshakings with Mr. Larkin, some moisture in the eyes and certain trembling in his voice — these were the visible symptoms of his fever.

"If it ain't stilton, if it ain't fit to put a feller in a good skin, and if I don't love 'er as 'ard as a 'ammer, I 'll be shot!" he exclaimed, grasping Mr. Larkin's hand once more.

Sam advised him to "go steady, to handle the ribbons like a man who knows the job," and offered more advice in language peculiar to his own horsey experience. Thus he counselled him "to leap on the snaffle," and told him that he might take his dying oath that "when a horse is skittish, four wheels are better than two," and that "when a colt bears heavily on the bit, raw lip is the result, and when raw lip heals it becomes callous."

Swefling nodded assent; but when he began to mention Marduke, Mr. Larkin seemed not to wish to hear the name again.

"I knows in the Lor's Prayer," said Swefling, "it says 'forgive us our sins as we forgive 'em as sins against us.' It 's a wery good thing, no doubt; but if Marduke comes around 'ere any more, ten to one the Lor's Prayer 'll go clean out of my 'ead. And it 's not to a loryer I 'll go. I 'll take the paint off the chaney with my own 'ands — "

Mr. Larkin, however, shook his head, stopped him, and said, "That 's not in my street." And so they wished each other good night, and a proud man walked out of Larkin's yard, muttering, "She 's a strapper, she 's a spanker," and looked up to a darkened window; for Dorrie was asleep, unconscious that her life was being arranged for her.

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH

Dorothy was in love with Marduke, and when Mr. Larkin, with some signs of excitement and apology, laid before her his plans for her marriage with Swefling, she looked at him, incredulous and aghast.

"It can just be as soon as you likes," he said. "'E 'll make a good manager for my business."

"Never, father, never!" she replied, white and trembling, and watching the scowl which gathered on Larkin's red, rough face.

Larkin, who sincerely believed that he was doing the best for Lord Swaffham's bastard, tried hard to be patient for a quarter of an hour, but when she became hysterical he became angry. Then he began to abuse her, and to taunt her with Marduke, and to threaten to put her out of the house. She denied that she was hankering after Marduke, and wept and blushed. Even in her terror and confusion and submission, however, there was something in Dorothy which made Larkin conscious of his own inferiority. She was hardly more than a child, but her dignity irritated him.

"Good God!" he suddenly exclaimed, "don't look like that! I thought it was your mother standin' there!"

Dorothy glanced at him, and he seemed to be getting into a rage. But she boldly shook her head to warn him that she would never consent to marry Swefling.

"You won't, won't you?" he said; "but I'm thinkin' you shall. Look at me straight."

Dorothy turned her dark liquid eyes upon him again, and then a strange feeling of repulsion seized her. She shrank back with a little cry.

"Why, father, what is wrong?" she asked.

"I says look at me straight, and you're not doin' it," Larkin replied.

"Yes, I am," she said, mustering all her courage and facing Larkin, although she winced and quailed when their eyes met.

"Tell me this," demanded Larkin, in a brow-beating, challenging way: "you're hankerin' after that damned scoundrel Marduke? You're goin' to give yourself up to him? Tell me that."

"No," said Dorrie, quivering like a frightened bird.

"So much the better," replied Larkin, a little more gently; but he immediately spoiled the effect by adding, "Yet, 'ow am I to b'lieve you? Wot sort of objection can you 'ave to Dick Swefling?"

"I don't love him. . . . I say nothing against him," replied Dorrie.

"Wy, if you get 'im it would be a slice of luck for such as you," retorted Larkin. But then he suddenly changed his tone. "Look 'ee 'ere, this is wot 's goin' to 'appen. You just pack up and be ready to go to the farm to-night, by the 8.45 for Colchester. I 've told 'em at the farm to be ready for you. Jenkins 'll be meetin' you at Liverpool Street."

Dorothy was delighted at this turn of events, for nothing could have pleased her better.

"All right," continued Larkin, "that 's a good gal, and p'r'aps you 'll larn to see wot 's in Dick in good time. You just clear out o' this. You 've been lookin' sicklified any'ow them past weeks, and the farm 'll just suit you. Wot d' you say to Aunt Muzzey goin' with you?"

"I 'd rather go alone," said Dorrie. "Oh yes. Let me go alone. I 'm so glad! Let me spend all the spring and summer out there."

"All right, you little wagabone," said Larkin. "We 'll come out in summer, too. But you 're just a filly wot 's allus wantin' to 'ave 'er' ead. Just the fliest little bit of a filly that ever was. Well, go and pack: 8.45 to-night."

It was in Larkin's character to settle things in this brief, sudden way, and he liked all long stories to be made short. As for Dorrie, she was only too

glad when the interview was over, too glad to pack, too glad to escape to the country where she might be able to dream of Marduke unmolested. The truth was that she had been meditating escape, for there was now something repulsive to her in the life at Larkin's yard. Dim longings, a desire for a wider world, strange ungovernable impulses towards freedom and towards love had taken possession of her. She was, of course, ignorant of the real source of those feelings, but every month that passed seemed to make her more and more conscious that there was something amiss between her and her surroundings. It was doubtless the advent of Marduke which had awakened these new thoughts and discontents and ambitions. She had proof that she was admired, and admired by a gentleman in a great position. A sudden idea gladdened her and made her cheeks burn. Did Marduke ever hunt in Essex? Perhaps she might have a chance of seeing him before the hunting season came to an end? As she packed her box of paints and paint brushes, her easel, some canvasses and her little artist's stool, great schemes took hold of her imagination. She would paint a wonderful landscape on the borders of the forest, and perhaps a British Rider would be in it. For although she had seen Marduke only twice, she knew his face thoroughly, and with that extraordinary accuracy of vision which love brings, she had already drawn it

in pencil several times. She counted the names of great women artists, and asked herself why should not she become a Le Brun, or a Kauffmann, or a Bonheur? And so she packed and packed, while all the time her brain was packing itself with busy thoughts. Ah, that intoxicating dance! What an age it seemed since the gala night at Jellini's. And this set her thinking of Herr Habenichts, whom she would be sorry to leave. But she would write to him from the farm; perhaps on the sly she would invite the old man to have tea with her, and a stroll in the forest some sunny afternoon. He would love that! and she would dance in the forest! Her little Hessian box was now almost full, and she stopped packing, and looked at herself in her mirror. Yes, she was ambitious, and she knew it. Her lips were red, her eyes, with their deep, steady look, seemed like still wells, and her hair had that sheen and richness which Marduke had described with so much enthusiasm to the angry old dowager. The day was passing, but not quickly enough, and Dorothy longed to start for Liverpool Street Station. She went downstairs and attempted to be pleasant to Mrs. Muzzey, but Mrs. Muzzey was in a very subdued and silent mood. And something had happened to Mrs. Bleeks, who was nowhere to be seen. When Dorothy asked Larkin that afternoon where Mrs. Bleeks was, he replied mysteriously that she had gone away.

"To the Farm?" asked Dorothy, in dismay.

"No," said Larkin; "don't worry me. I'm glad you're packed up. Dick Swefling'll drive you to the station."

Although Dorothy was not pleased at the news, she said nothing, and waited impatiently for the evening. About four o'clock she had looked out of her window, and had noticed that a fog was coming down. For the month was still January, and during the last few days the atmosphere had been growing denser. It was now half-past four, but the street lamps had already been lit at two o'clock. First a light mist appeared, woven as of thin muslin, but gradually it became thicker and darker in its texture. Swefling was not due in Larkin's yard till about half-past seven, but he was already turning homewards as a precaution against delays. He had again been wandering rather aimlessly up and down the streets, for his thoughts were fixed on the wonderful promise which Mr. Larkin had made. Of course, he was tormented by the fear that Mr. Larkin's friendliness would avail nothing if Dorothy remained proud. Meantime, he resolved to follow the old man's advice, to make no immediate advances, merely to say "Good evening," and lift his hat, and drive the little lady in silence to Liverpool Street Station. And because of the fog and the night he need hardly have troubled to smarten himself. New gloves, new

collar, hat that had been specially ironed would remain alike invisible; for the fog was taking the gloss off everything. In Larkin's yard it had crept into every cranny and recess, and the gas jets were burning in the stables. At half-past five Mr. Larkin said that Dorothy should wait till the following day.

"Give me another cab and I 'll start immediately," she suggested, rather pleased thus to disoense with Swefling's services.

"Oh, it 's not that. Sweff 'll come all right, don't you worry — 'e 'll come. In course he will," said Larkin, laughing. "Besides, it 'll 'urt 'is feelin's if you took another man. 'E 's allus drove the fam'ly. Just you stop a-worryin'."

"All right," said Dorothy, vexed, and waited for two hours.

She was in the plain dark blue costume trimmed with black braid which, together with a neat beaver hat with black feathers, made her look so pretty and so far above her class that Mrs. Bleeks and Mrs. Muzzey were offended and could find nothing disagreeable enough to say about the milliner and the dressmaker. On that afternoon, however, neither of the aunts was to be seen, and Dorothy wondered whether Mr. Larkin had ordered them to keep out of the way. She stood impatiently again at the open door where the fog was blowing in. Her luggage was on the doorstep.

"Shut the door and come in," said Larkin; "no use standin' chitterin' there, and fillin' the rooms with fog. Wy, there 's a fog! It 's a nigger for blackness, and I 'ave n't seen the like for ten years. You can't go. That 'll last till to-morrow."

"If you had only given me a cab two hours ago," pouted Dorothy.

"It 's so thick you could shake 'ands with it," continued Larkin. "And it 's one o' them clingin' sticky ones wot wraps itself round you, and won't leave go. Well, there 's seven cabs out in it, and I jest 'ope there 'll be no smash. Wot 's that?"

He had heard a noise in the yard, and presently blurred lights appeared coming towards the door.

"That 's Audacity, I know 'is step," exclaimed Larkin.

When the cab drew up, and Swefling's figure became recognisable, Larkin cried —

"Well, lad, if this ain't a stunner. You can cut it like a loaf."

"No mistake," replied Swefling, "she 's a thumper."

"Feel like bein' up a tree?"

"Just a bit. But it ain't gettin' no worse. Big smash in the Strand, though, and it 's wery darkish in Oxford Street. Good evening, Miss Dorrie."

"Good evening," said Dorrie; "we should start at once."

"Wot d' you say, Dick?" asked Larkin, as he patted Audacity's nose. "Talk abaht lookin' for a pin in a 'aystack! It 's one o' them damp ones, too, the 'oss is drippin'."

"I 'll 'ave a try," said Swefling; "if we starts now we could do it. Funny thing, the electric lights don't get through it at all, and the old gas lamps does better. I 'll 'ave a go at the side streets till Finsbury Square, and p'r'aps that 'll do the trick."

Larkin whistled, and Vardy and another stableman came running to put the luggage on the top. Dorothy was conscious of a strange excitement as she bade good-bye and as her "father" said "Mind and take care of yerself." He shouted it a second time while the cab disappeared.

What a night for thieves! The street lights were asphyxiated, and the great electric lamps in the roadways were reduced to the value of a few candles. Every light in London was labouring against this vast extinguisher. Bleared and dim, they might have been farthing dips attempting to dissipate the black, insidious, all-covering, and bewildering mist. From Highgate to Streatham, from Greenwich to Brentford and from Richmond to Hackney, London and her suburbs were blotted out. Fine mist which is sunshot and diaphanous, woven as of aerial lace, might be the handiwork of fays; but this dead black thing full of detritus, a kind of floating atmospheric desert,

sand-like, and withering and eclipsing all life and light and motion, might be the work of demons. Foot passengers clutched at railings or stood on the kerb-stones listening for the sound of wheels, and peering for a clear space to dart across and vanish again in the darkness. There was a sinister silence in the side streets, which seemed like lanes leading into infinite Saharas. But in the broader thoroughfares, where the traffic was coming to a deadlock, there was a sensation, a murmur as of mighty machinery slowing down; and the air was filled with the snorting of horses, the vibration of motor vehicles standing stock still, the warning cries of drivers or the crash of collision, the policeman's whistle, the order to stop or to go on, and the detonation of railway signals, and here comes a flaming fire engine attempting to push its impatient way to the ringing of a loud, insistent alarum bell. Not a public clock visible, not a tower, for round every tower and on every London roof the fog lay heavy like a Dead Sea.

The cab stopped. Swefling had chosen the side streets, but they were the side streets of an unlit labyrinth. Dorothy began to feel afraid. The cab lamps were so powerless that she could not even see Audacity's ears, and not even a buckle of the harness was glimmering. The window was closed, and the fog was right up against it. Suddenly the vehicle gave a lurch, and then the trap door was opened.

"I 'm blowed if I ain't on the pavement," said Swefling, "'angin' on to a railin'. The light 's gone clean out of that street lamp. That 's wot we banged against. Blowed if I knows where we are. Woa, woa, woa!"

There was a sudden crash as the lamp fell and the iron post and the glass cage rang and jingled on the pavement. The horse gave a spring as if about to bolt.

"Woa! woa!" cried Swefling, reining him in. "That 's the bally old street lamp down! Woa, hoss, there 's a daisy. If this ain't as dark 's a wolf's mouth, I 'll be shot."

"What are you going to do?" asked Dorothy, agitated and peering from side to side. "Can't you go on?"

"I don't know whether I 'm north or south, heast or west," said Swefling; "we don't carry compasses on this job, and s'pposin' I 'ad one, much good I 'd get from it on a night like this. Woa, woa!"

There was something in his voice which disturbed Dorothy. He did not seem to be very eager to find the way, and when he began to chuckle as if it were all a good joke and a laughing matter, Dorothy became actually nervous, and she wished that she had not set out.

"I 've lost the train," she said, almost angrily.

"For all I knows, we 're on the road to Kensington

or Lambeth," muttered Swefling. "Fact is, if I once got near the river I 'd be pleased."

"The river?" asked Dorothy. "Why?"

"In course," he explained, "it would be a long way round, but once I got to London Bridge I would go straight for Liverpool Street."

"Well, what 's to be done?" asked Dorothy, irritated and very unhappy.

Now Richard Swefling had been a straight lad, and in a moment of perfect self-control he never would have taken advantage of any girl, least of all of Dorothy. But at that moment he did not possess complete self-mastery. The darkness tempted him, and he forgot Larkin's advice to make no advances. He suddenly drew up the cab's front window, and said in a curious tone, "Want some fresh air?" and then burst out laughing again. Apparently they were in a street lined on both sides with warehouses which, of course, were at that hour closed. Not a light was visible except on the opposite pavement, where a gas lamp was struggling to shine, but was creating only a pale and useless shimmer. Not a footstep in the street, but far off there was a dull intermittent thud, as of traffic started, and then suddenly stopped, and from below the roadway came the vibration caused by an underground train. Dorothy clasped her hands while a horrible sense of helplessness bewildered and sickened her. Before she was aware of the event Swefling had

descended from the cab, but when she became conscious of a dark something moving near the step, and as she felt the vehicle sink under the weight of someone entering it, and then heard a noise on the footboard, then a voice, and felt a hand upon her, she shrieked.

"You coward, you coward!" she cried, anticipating roughness and evil.

"Wy, wot 's wrong?" he asked while she was writhing like a bird in a cage. "Don't be frightened. Mr. Larkin spoke to me. Wy, stop the 'owlin', Miss Dorrie. I 'm just wantin' to 'ave a little talk with you."

He sat on the footboard while with one hand he drew down the reins from the "butterfly," so as to hold Audacity in check. With his other hand he took one of Dorothy's feet, and then he bent, and kissed it.

"I 'm wantin' to kiss your mouth just like that," he said. "Don't you move!"

Terror had taken speech from her, but she was struggling to get out of the cab.

"Wot 's the row?" demanded Swefling. "Keep quiet, will you? Mr. Larkin knows all about it, and says, says 'e, 'e 's pleased. Dorrie, jest say you love me. Wy, talk abaht fogs! I 'm in a fog plenty, if you says you does n't love me. Jest say you 'll 'ave me, as the gal said in the pantermine at Derury Lane. I can't 'elp lovin' you. It 's jest like splittin' a cokernut — out comes the milk."

Apparently he was now fastening the reins to the

"butterfly," for he was standing on the footboard, and was reaching upwards. When, a moment later, she felt him attempting to take hold of her, she made a shield of her arms to protect her face. A feeling of loathing and dread, and a sensation as of coming paralysis overwhelmed her. He protested that he meant no harm, but he took an oath and declared that although he were to be hanged for it he would kiss her. And so having thrust her arms asunder he made her submit to the kiss. Then she struck him.

"It 's true Mr. Larkin said I was to ride myself in the curb," said Swefling, baffled and retreating. "But I simply could n't. Well, s'pposin' we try for Liverpool Street? Will that please you? I 'll do my best."

She remained silent as if in a swoon, whereas she was terribly awake and enraged. While Swefling was remounting to his perch, Dorothy, in obedience to a sudden impulse, quietly left the cab, unseen, and disappeared within the fog. She heard Swefling drive cautiously down the street, while she groped her way to an iron railing, part of which moved inwards at her touch. It was a gate. She found herself on a stairway which led down to the store cellars of a warehouse, and she sank on the stairs, and began to weep hysterically.

It was not even the hazard of the streets which made her afraid, but the suspicion, now become a certainty, that there was a conspiracy to make her marry

Swefling. The idea filled her with disgust and revolt. Larkin's insistence and Swefling's conduct made her resolve at that moment never to return to the yard. She felt a curious sensation in her left hand, and she discovered that during her struggle with Swefling he had thrust a ring over her gloved finger. It was the ring which he had supposed was set with rubies, whereas it was set only with garnets. She took it off, and flung it into the street. Her decision was fixed. To go to the farm might be even more dangerous than to return to the yard, because Swefling, with Larkin's consent, would probably follow her. And as regards the man whom she still supposed to be her father, she confessed to herself that her feeling towards him had been changing during the last two years. He was somestimes mysterious; he was occasionally tender, but he was often harsh and forbidding. And when she remembered what she had endured at the hands of Mrs. Bleeks and Mrs. Muzzey, all the repulsive features of what had been her home caused her to decide to strike out for herself and be free. Her artistic instincts, which were genuine and even deep, had been long suppressed. Why not, like many another girl, face the world? But as she stared into the fog-filled street she asked herself in perplexity what her first move was to be? Where to go? How to subsist? Her luggage was in the cab, and she had nothing but the clothes she was wearing, and about

sixty shillings in her purse. Everything which she possessed was either in Larkin's yard or at the farm in Essex. Then she thought of the payments of money which Larkin now and again made to her, the source of which was to be made clear when she came of age. She would lose *that* too? She sat shivering and weeping for more than an hour. At last two possibilities presented themselves. She might earn her living by painting or by dancing? Suddenly she thought of Herr Habenichts, who was the only friend she had. She rose, and began walking cautiously up the street. She grew more frightened as she advanced, and she began to wonder whether Swefling had already discovered her escape. As she groped her way along the railings she turned once or twice because she had the illusion of the sound of footsteps behind. Then she began to run, but soon stopped, since she might only be running into danger. She decided to walk all night until the fog lifted, and then go to Herr Habenichts at Mrs. Wix's Hotel. She slackened her pace still further. Hours would pass before the fog cleared, and therefore it scarcely mattered where she walked as long as she wasted time. Meantime the dreadful night seemed to grow blacker and blacker, and the place where she was walking was lit only at intervals by street lamps which had the appearance of ghostly tapers round which the fog was circling. Although it was a cold winter's night, the walking and the ex-

citement were making Dorothy warm, and she removed the little fur boa which she wore round her neck. She was still dazed by her encounter with Swefling, when she felt a hand on her waist. A man in a soft felt hat was pushing his face close to hers. "You just come along," he said. "What are you wandering —" But as she gave a cry he dropped her, and then disappeared. This experience made her waver in her resolution and she was tempted to try to find the way back to Larkin's yard. The street led towards a wider thoroughfare in which she discovered a dim phantasmagoria of lights and traffic. She took courage. She had been walking for more than an hour, and now she heard a clock strike ten. Presently she found herself in Farringdon Road and recognised it. She turned southward towards the Embankment. Figures like dark ghosts flitted past her, and a sense of fear and of loneliness and of an unknown future began to trouble her again. The fog, however, was less dense in the Strand, and she could see the lights on Ludgate Hill. Suddenly she began to run down Bridge Road to Blackfriars, for a hansom was passing a lamp post, and she saw her own box on the top of the cab. She turned into a dark doorway, and stood with her back to the street. She waited breathlessly during a few moments. But Swefling had apparently not noticed her, and she came out of her hiding-place. Next door there was a public telephone call office,

and as she peered in, and saw a light, a new idea suggested itself. She opened the glass door, and walked into the little compartment, and opened the Directory. Herr Habenichts had frequently made her telephone from Jellini's to Mrs. Wix's Hotel, but she had forgotten Mrs. Wix's number. When she had found it, she lifted the receiver to her ear, dropped her twopence into the slot, and waited. In a few moments Wurm was talking to her, and in an excited voice she was asking for Herr Habenichts. But since at least half an hour passed before she succeded in getting into communication with him, we may take the opportunity of discovering what was happening at the other end of the wire.

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH

"It 's no use sayin' ye does n't want it, for ye does! I never will listen to sich words as 'nothin' more to-day.' I ax yer parding, and says it ain't true. Never mind the fog. It don't take the beauty off them dolls. Jist look at the little hinnocents. I gives valer for money. It 's not yer charity I ax. I 'd as soon go to the work'us. I ain't ashamed to yarn my grub on the streets sellin' dolls. I 'm as honest a woman as ever walked in two shoes. And if Mr. Larkin, wot 's my brother, says another word I 'll join a buryin' club."

Mrs. Bleeks, who was wrapped in an immense brown woollen shawl with draggled fringe, was sitting on a three-legged street stool next a little table on which a coster's gas lantern glimmered in the fog. On the table there was standing a deep basket out of which peeped the flaxen heads and rosy countenances of a crowd of wooden and waxen dolls, some naked and some clothed. Gin and bitters, together with frequent draughts of shandy gaff, in which she had indulged throughout the afternoon, had made her fall asleep before the fog had become densest, and when she awoke in the dark she was terrified.

"All gone 'ome?" she asked as she became aware that she lacked an audience. "I might 'ave been robbed or murdered. Oh, wot 's goin' to 'appen to me? Ain't this fog a stunner! As thick 's a blanket, but not quite as warm and comfy."

She then uttered a wild hysterical laugh which shot down the street with the velocity of a bullet while its echoes ricochetted from side to side. She tried to peer across, and saw on the opposite side the blurred illumination of the window of the public house where she had been supplied with drink. As she rose from the kerb-stone to collect her merchandise, there was visible in the flare of the lamp a placard strapped to her breast and bearing the inscription — "Mr. Larkin's sister, turned on the street by Mr. Larkin. Who will buy dolls?" Thus arrayed she had sat during one full day on the pavement fronting Larkin's yard, like a she Lear out in the tempest. And she had passed two uncomfortable nights in a very inferior lodging-house, to whose owner, Mrs. Mudd, she had revealed the wickedness of Mr. Larkin and the meanness of Mrs. Muzzey.

"It 's becos I 'm that proud," she said. "I 'm not like Mrs. Muzzey wot 'll take anythink from Sam. I was allus the proudest of the fem'ly, Mrs. Mudd. But sich cruelty was never heerd on. Turnin' a ole party on the winter streets becos I tells the truth abaht

Sam's darter wot ain't 'is darter arter all. Oh, Samuel Larkin, if you says another word I 'll join a buryin' club."

Her adventure had been brief and disastrous, and the fog finished it. In desperation and like Niobe destroying her children, she seized one of the rosiest of the waxen puppets, wrung its neck as if it had been a chicken, and threw it into the gutter. The truth was, however, that Mrs. Bleeks had not been turned out of the house by Mr. Larkin. He certainly made use of very violent language to her when he heard that she had been guilty of betraying to Monty Marduke the secret of Dorothy's birth and parentage. At first Mrs. Bleeks moped and wept, but suddenly resentment and pride seized her, and she resolved to be no longer beholden to her brother. Penniless although she would become, she decided to shift for herself, and she left the place in indignation. It afforded her a malicious satisfaction to disgrace her brother. And therefore with the few shillings which she possessed she purchased a street table, a coster's lantern, a deep basket, and the dolls, and took up her position near the entrance to Larkin's yard. During an hour or two she sat chained to the railing, and she threatened the bystanders that she would throw away the key of the padlock. But these demonstrations did not seem to disturb Mr. Larkin, whose business went on in the usual way. The house door

remained closed while Mrs. Bleeks continued to send challenges from the other side of the railings.

"Samuel Larkin," she said, while a crowd of small boys made a semicircle about her, "I 'm hindependent. I 'opes to 'ave a barrer of my own some day and per'aps a hass. Can I manage a hass? In coorse I can, and 'e don't need no groomin' like them 'osses of yourn. And, Liza" (addressing Mrs. Muzzey), "I allus know'd you was a cad. I allus know'd you 'ad n't spirit. I would n't sit at the same table. I 'd sooner join a buryin' club and get buried. That 's wot I says."

A policeman, however, had observed the gathering crowd, and had ordered Mrs. Bleeks to unchain herself and to move on; so that she was compelled to take up a position in a side street about three or four hundred yards away, and it was here that the fog had descended upon her.

"Oh," says she, "it makes me cough. Wot 's the bally use of them fogs? Wot good does they do? And 'ow am I to get them dolls 'ome? And where 's 'ome? Oh, it 's a blastit shame! Where am I to doss? Sich things never did 'appen in the reign of the blessed Wictoria. I ain't got the browns to pay for a bed at Mrs. Mudd's. She won't look at me. Says I 'm a wagabone. Not a tanner for a shake down. And beer is a dewty you owes yoursilf in sich a fog. Oh, it makes me cough!"

She heard the sound of wheels passing down the street, and presently the lamps of a four-wheeled vehicle became visible. Perhaps it was one of Mr. Larkin's cabs returning to the stable. At intervals foot passengers passed along the pavement, and some of them stopped to glance at Mrs. Bleeks and the basket with its rosy freight. In the light of the coster's lantern the curve of her bonnet, and the sharp-featured, audacious old face beneath it attracted the attention of the more inquisitive, and caused them to stop longer than pleased her.

"Wot I ax," she muttered, addressing herself to a young loiterer of the male sex, "is this, wot 's the good of lookin' and lookin' if yer ain't goin' to buy the dolls? It 's nothin' but imperence, that 's wot I says."

"Oh, my eye, Mrs. Bleeks!" exclaimed Vardy, who was on his way home after his day's work in Larkin's yard, "I says it was you directly I sees yer ole bonnet and the dolls. Wot sort of a hexistence is this of yourn?"

Mrs. Bleeks turned, and looked at him, and began to weep.

"I 'm starvin', Vardy," says she, "and it 's the last coach wen an ole lydy like I am takes to sellin' dolls on the street."

"Yes 'm," replied Vardy, stepping nearer, and with his greasy hand seizing a doll by the head. "Oh, blazes, 'ere 's a stunner, 'ere 's a smasher!"

He began to stroke the doll, and pull its hair, and then he burst into a guffaw.

"Stop 'andlin' the doll like that," cried Mrs. Bleeks; "yer not groomin' a cab 'oss."

"I 'll buy the blarmed thing," said Vardy, "for my sister's kid. Wot 's the price, Mrs. Bleeks?"

"Oh," she replied, weeping again, "I 'll give it for nuffin'. I remember as you used to tie my 'ead wen I 'ad the 'eadaches dreadful bad."

"Thankee, Mrs. Bleeks. But wot are yer doin' sellin' dolls in this fog? Mr. Larkin 's wery downright mad at yer disgracin' the yard," said Vardy, as if conscious of the wounded dignity of the family and the firm. "We did n't hexpect it of yer."

"I 'm very nervoused, Vardy," whispered Mrs. Bleeks; "I dunnow 'ow as I 'm to sleep to-night. I was thinkin', Vardy — " and she paused.

"Wot was yer thinkin', Mrs. Bleeks?"

"I was thinkin' as you might get me in quiet, and put me in one of the kebs in the coach'ouse, a four-wheeler for preference. I 'd jist sit in it all night."

"Wy not, Mrs. Bleeks?"

"Or, per'aps," she continued, "you could put me in a loose box, Vardy?"

"Right you are, Mrs. Bleeks," said he, "I 'll do it, and it 'll be a stunnin' good doss."

"Plenty of straw, Vardy?"

"No hend," said he, "warm and dry."

"And the coast clear?" asked Mrs. Bleeks, anxiously. "Sam must n't know, nor Mrs. Muzzey. I ain't got a 'aypenny for a bed."

"It 's all gay," said Vardy, encouraging her; "I 'll put yer in wivout anyone seein' yer."

"If you 'll carry the dolls and the table, and the light, Vardy, I 'll manage to carry the stool," said Mrs. Bleeks.

"Yes," he said, and then burst into a laugh again. "Wy, Mrs. Bleeks, yer jist like a sandwich feller wiv that there placard."

"Vardy," exclaimed Mrs. Bleeks, hobbling after him, "I 'm starvin'!"

In one hand Vardy carried the coster's light which threw its rays into the surrounding darkness, and illuminated fitfully the black, greasy pavement, and in the other he held the little street table, while the basket of dolls was slung on his arm.

"Not so fast, Vardy," cried Mrs. Bleeks. "Oh, it 's wery cold."

"Yes 'm," said Vardy, still leading, but he stopped because Mrs. Bleeks was calling to him that she was tired. She had sat down on the three-legged stool, and she seemed about to faint, or she was feigning fainting.

It was at this moment that a gentleman came along, and when he saw Vardy holding the light aloft,

and bending over the figure on the stool, he inquired if the lady was taken ill.

"Vat is wrong vith de lady?" he asked, in a sympathetic tone.

For the gentleman was Herr Habenichts, who had been attending a lecture on Goethe at the Goethe Society, and was returning to Wix's Residential Hotel. The exalted thoughts of which his mind was full did not prevent him, however, fulfilling the promise which he had made to Monty Marduke to keep an eye on Larkin's Yard. And he was making his way thither with the intention of questioning some of the ostlers as to whether Dorothy was still in London. It happened to be the actual night of escapade in which Dorothy had started for Liverpool Street Station in Swefling's cab. At the moment when Herr Habenichts met Mrs. Bleeks, Dorothy was attempting to get into telephonic communication with him. But for *him* the fog had no terrors, and he came along repeating to himself the verse that had formed the text of the lecture which had given him such delight —

> "Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
> Sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt."

"Genius develops in isolation, Character in the struggle of the world."

"Ach, ja!" he was muttering, as he perceived the flare of the coster's lantern, "one great thought shines like dat light in de fog."

And yet in spite of the light he suddenly stumbled against the stool on which Mrs. Bleeks was sitting.

"Wot are yer kickin' at?" demanded Vardy. "Can't yer look where yer goin'? Don't yer see the lydy is dyin'?"

Herr Habenichts raised his hat, expressed the most profound apology, and asked if he could be of any service. He took Mrs. Bleeks's right hand, and felt her pulse while she groaned. In an authoritative voice he then ordered Vardy instantly to run for a doctor and for brandy.

"Oh, I'll be shot!" cried Vardy, "if it ain't that same ole fureigner, 'Err 'Abenicks, wot teached Miss Dorrie dancin'."

Herr Habenichts, by means of an interjection in his own language, expressed his surprise at the encounter, and when he understood that it was Mrs. Bleeks whom he was addressing, he was tempted to walk away as quickly as possible. But she appeared to be really ill, and Vardy declared that she was about to expire in their hands.

"Madam," inquired Herr Habenichts, "vat can I do vor you?"

"It makes me cough," said Mrs. Bleeks, "and it's a dewty you owes yourself to drink a glass of gin and bitters."

"Vat do you say?" asked Herr Habenichts.

"My mouth's like an oven," murmured Mrs. Bleeks.

"It 's gin she wants," Vardy explained. "'Er pulse is stoppin'. There 's a pub hup the street."

And then he broke into a silly laugh again. Herr Habenichts reproved him, drew out a shilling, and ordered him to bring brandy instantly. Vardy, having deposited the table and the doll basket, darted across the street, and disappeared, while Herr Habenichts held the coster's lantern. When Mrs. Bleeks understood who was standing beside her she said she was "dreadful sorry" for the manner in which she had received Herr Habenichts during his recent visit to Larkin's yard. And then she opened a diatribe on Dorrie, Sam Larkin, and Mrs. Muzzey, and explained how it was that she was hawking dolls.

"It 's like this," she said, "I 'm proud. I speaks back to Sam. Some people is like whelks wot takes the bilin' quiet, but crabs and lobsters kicks as they biles. Now there 's Mrs. Muzzey, my sister, she 's a whelk. She 's no spirit. I allus said she was a cad. She 'll take anythink from Sam. But I 'm a crab and lobster. I kicks as I biles. I 'm the proudest of the fem'ly. And that 's wy I goes on the streets sooner as eat Sam's bread. Is 'e comin' ?"

"Vat ?" asked Herr Habenichts, who understood little of what she said, but was willing to open for her all the valves of his sympathy.

"Is the boy not comin' ?" demanded Mrs. Bleeks, impatiently. "'E 's drinkin' it hisself."

"He come soon," said Herr Habenichts, attempting to soothe her.

"I feels," continued Mrs. Bleeks, "like I've been playin' the bagpipes, with nuffin' to quench the spark in my throat."

"He come!" exclaimed Herr Habenichts. "Ah, de smart leetle boy." For Vardy had arrived.

Herr Habenichts took the glass of brandy from him, and handed it to Mrs. Bleeks, who swallowed the contents in one draught. Vardy said that he would take the glass to the public house when he passed up the street on his way home, and that he was now ready to start for the yard, and to carry the things again. Herr Habenichts, who considered the opportunity excellent for obtaining news about Dorothy, offered to accompany them, and he gave his arm to Mrs. Bleeks, and took charge of the three-legged stool. Vardy went forward with the light, and Herr Habenichts thought that the scene was very picturesque. Mrs. Bleeks seemed to have recovered, and she became talkative.

"In coorse," she said, "it ain't your fault — you're a German."

"I'm vrom Vienna," replied Herr Habenichts.

"I does n't blame you for bein' a fureigner. You can't no ways 'elp it," she continued, unperturbed. "You seems a niceish sort of gent, arter all. Are you married?"

"Nein," he said.

For some unaccountable reason Mrs. Bleeks began to talk about widows.

"In gin'ral," she said, "a thing never lives to be second 'and if it ain't a real good thing at fust. And that 's the truth about widders."

Herr Habenichts, however, was more interested in the courage which had driven her on the streets, and as they walked along he questioned her about her experience. Mrs. Bleeks was holding her head high, and seemed to be very pleased to be on Herr Habenichts' arm.

"I 've been sellin' dolls," she replied, "for two days and a 'arf. When you sells downright down, in coorse the profit is wery small. And then it 's like a strange dog passin' through a village. All the other dogs wot 's jealous sets upon it. And so the costers sets upon me, savage like, she-dragons jewin' awy as 'ard as ever they can, pricin' hup their own trash, and downcryin' yourn. Lor' love us, sich a life! I puts my table next a party wot was as close as wax and sold sponges. Now I knows a good sponge when I sees it. And so says I to 'er, 'Them sponges,' says I, 'ain't fit to groom a hass with.' Oh, she got dreadful shirtey, and calls me an ole wagabone wot drinks gin. Says I, wantin' to be wery civil and changin' the subject not to give offence, says I, quite soft and kindly, 'Wot exterornary things sponges is! Is it a

hanimal or a wegetable?' 'Oh,' says she, 'yer a hanimal.' 'Well,' says I, 'if I'm a hanimal, you're a wegetable, and a poor cabbage at that!' It was dreadful nasty. Lor' love you, it needs the hexercise of the hintellect to make any 'eadway."

They had now reached the gate of Larkin's yard, and Mrs. Bleeks began to tremble. She said that if her brother came out she would die on the spot. She leaned heavily on Herr Habenichts' arm, and declared that she would not proceed one step until she had been assured that the house door was shut, that the window blinds were drawn, and that neither Mr. Larkin nor Mrs. Muzzey was hovering about the yard. As a matter of fact, the yard was fog filled, and at the far end only one dim light in the night stable was burning. Vardy, however, went forward to explore, and he soon returned, able to guarantee that all was quiet. He then led the way across the yard, and all three moved on tiptoe, while Herr Habenichts promised Mrs. Bleeks to protect her against her unbrotherly brother. They arrived safely at the door of one of the old coach-houses, which Vardy rolled back silently on its castors. Herr Habenichts awaited the order to advance, and when it came he escorted Mrs. Bleeks towards a roomy loose box, which contained ample bedding for the most fastidious horse. Vardy had laid down the table, and the doll basket, but he still held the lantern. A rattle of halter chains

and a snorting of cab-horses greeted the intruders as Mrs. Bleeks bade Herr Habenichts and Vardy "Good night," and moved into the loose box. Vardy was giggling.

"Vould you like a hot-water bottle?" asked Herr Habenichts, solemnly; but Mrs. Bleeks declined, and the door of the loose box was shut upon her.

"I never thought I 'd go to bed like a cab-'oss," she was heard to say before she sank thankfully in the straw, and then into a profound slumber.

When Herr Habenichts was crossing the yard again, he asked Vardy if Dorothy was at home. Larkin's house was dark except for the lighted threshold, and Vardy said that Dorothy had been driven that same evening to Liverpool Street Station.

"Vat!" exclaimed Herr Habenichts.

"I says she was driv by Swef to Liverpool Street," repeated Vardy. "She 's gone to Mr. Larkin's farm."

"Vat! vat do you say?"

"I says wot I says. Wot 's hup wiv yer?" demanded Vardy, as he watched Herr Habenichts hurrying out by the gate.

He walked towards Wix's Residential Hotel as fast as the fog allowed him. He was not certain whether he should at once communicate with Monty Marduke, or first ask the advice of Mr. Botolph. But his hesitation ceased when he met Wurm, the waiter, on the steps. In voluble German, Wurm told him to hurry

in, because a woman or a girl had been impatiently telephoning at intervals during the last three-quarters of an hour. The telephone bell, in fact, rang again.

"Mein Gott, a vemale?" asked Herr Habenichts, out of breath, and putting his ear to the instrument.

"Speak slow!" he implored. "Are you dere? Vat? I not onderstand. Hold de line! Dorrie? You are Dorrie? Vat is wrong? You are trembling. You veep? Mein Gott, I haf just been at de Larkin yard, and was told you go to Essex. Someone run avay vith you? Vat?"

Dorothy was explaining where she was, and why she was there, and then she began to tell, all palpitatingly, of her terror of Swefling, her fear of Larkin, for fear of Marduke, her determination to escape like a hunted thing, her desire of Herr Habenichts' protection, her belief in his goodness, and her hope that he would come instantly to her aid.

"Ach so," replied Herr Habenichts, having ordered Wurm out of the room. "Poor girl, I hear you veeping; de telephone tells you veep. Nein, do not veep. I kom. Dis minute I start, and kom as qvick as de fog allows. You say you are vrightened for Marduke, too?"

"Yes," whispered Dorrie down the wire. "I don't know what to do, Herr Habenichts. I am frightened for them all. I almost jumped into the river."

" Say again where you are," said Herr Habenichts; and she described the exact spot in Blackfriars.

" Vait den ! " he cried. " I kom qvick. Good-bye. Ah, you veep still, de leetle tancer, meine kleine Tänzerin, I kom, I kom."

He told Wurm to whistle for a taxicab, and then he ran upstairs, looked into Swefling's room, which was next his own, and found it empty. With deliberation, mixed with hurry, he dressed himself in the evening suit which his recent prosperity had enabled him to purchase, and which he had worn on the gala night at Jellini's. And he took from a morocco leather case the one precious thing from which, through all his misfortunes, he had refused to part. It was a cross set in brilliants, which he had received for a brave act in Herzegovina, when he was a lieutenant of hussars in the Austrian Army. He fixed it in his evening coat, put on his overcoat, and blessed Providence that he had also, in a moment of folly and re-awakened vanity, bought a crush hat. Then he descended the stair, and knew that Wurm was looking with astonishment on his magnificence.

" Ja, Wurm," he said, " I vill be late. Give me de key. Do not vait up, poor boy, you are tired."

Wurm, who adored him, saw him into the taxicab. The fog seemed to be less dense.

" Go qvick," ordered Herr Habenichts — " at least as qvick as the fog allows. I vill pay you vell."

Then he took his seat in a very majestic fashion, and kept staring into the fog.

"Wen all my debt is paid," he said to himself, while the taxicab went somewhat recklessly ahead, "I haf twenty-seven pounds in dis world. Ach ja! but de future is de great pank vor us all. De past should be de savings pank. But I have saved noting!"

It seemed that an hour had passed before the taxicab, after numerous twistings and stoppings, slowed down before a dim doorway in Blackfriars. On the threshold stood a timorous girl peering into the dark, fantastic street, and then she came running across the pavement. Herr Habenichts was soon patting her on the back, and telling her "not to veep" because she was safe. In sudden terror at the thought of his imminent poverty he had dismissed the taxicab after having paid a liberal fare. But now he regretted that he had dismissed it. He led Dorothy back to the doorway.

"I haf a plan, vondervoll," he said, and stood deep in thought.

When she asked him where he was going to take her, he smiled and said —

"Kom vith me. We vill valk till we vind anoder cab. De fog lifts. I see a star."

But he stopped under the light of a great electric street lamp. He looked into her girlish frightened

face, saw the violet eyes fill with tears again, and watched the twitching of the fine mouth, and the expression of fear contracting all the features.

"Mein Gott!" he exclaimed, "you are taller dan I am. I alvays saw de vine blood in you. Never vear any more. All koms right. Ach ja! de heart of de leetle tancer beat so fast! But never vear any more. Vat a bright dawn breaks vor you! Der Aufgang der Sonne der Liebe! Now tell me vat you mean. You say you are avraid of Marduke. Vat does it mean? You must tell me before I go one step more."

Dorothy turned her head from the light, and began to weep bitterly.

"Oh, nein, nein," said Herr Habenichts, patting her little hand, "you are wrong. He search vor you. He love you. He marry you. Such a Liebe. I haf never seen de like. Young Marduke search and search vor you. Avraid of him? Ja, sometimes great love and great fear are very close togeder. And Love and Death are very close togeder. All life and all love is very great mystery. But *you*, my leetle tancer, are going to be vat Beethoven called *die unsterbliche Geliebte*, de immortal loved one!"

Bewildered and strangely agitated, Dorothy looked into his grey kind eyes, and he smiled reassuringly. He was a man in whom all passion had become compassion.

"Kom," he said, "it is a fairy's tale. Der is more. Be bold and trust me."

The lights were burning brighter in the Strand, and it was ten minutes past eleven o'clock when Herr Habenichts hailed another taxicab, and ordered the chauffeur to drive to the residence of Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, in Grosvenor Square. For it will be remembered that in Mrs. Wix's parlour he had questioned Monty Marduke as to where the dowager lived. When Dorothy asked him where they were going, he said, "Vait. It is difficult," and then he fell into a sort of reverie out of which she dared not attempt to rouse him.

CHAPTER NINETEENTH

The dowager was giving a dance, small and early, which was preceded by a dinner at which two ambassadors were expected to set the table in a titter by displays of ambassadorial wit. Arabella abhorred a babel of unconnected talk, and therefore her dinner guests were few. She sought to revive the methods of the French *salon*, where good talkers made contributions to a single theme. Therefore she used her seven or nine or eleven guests as shuttles and spindles for weaving from one side to the other the glittering fabric of conversation. Mere gossip, mere personal details were never encouraged unless some piquant view of character and circumstance could be got out of them. She loved to surround herself by a few *illuminati* and her intimate wits of both sexes. Monsieur Dumaresq, for instance, found an admirable foil in Lady Lormington, and the beautiful Diana Melmore shed soft glances and subtle words on men like Sir Philip Delancey and Count Stein. In defiance of tepid conventions, Arabella used to initiate unconventional talk. She was even not afraid of the clash of temperaments and the heat generated by dis-

cussions which threatened, but only threatened, now and again to pass beyond the limits of the urbane.

"There are two things I dislike," said Monsieur Dumaresq, "the suburban and the suburbane."

Nevertheless, he was once guilty of too great a rise of mental temperature in a prolonged duel with a brilliant opponent whom at last he tossed with a snarl.

The dowager gently chided him in the privacy of her boudoir, and said that he was an intellectual picador. "But," she added, with a reproving shake of her grey curls, "it looked more like a bullfight, and, *mon cher,* conversation is *not* a bullfight."

But her guests generally came away happy with the feeling that their reputations had been enhanced, and with the hope that some of their *mots* might become current coin of the realm of wit, and that the author's name would be stamped upon it. Thus it was at the Berkshire dinners that most of Monsieur Dumaresq's best things were first heard. It was he who divided mankind into latitudinarians and platitudinarians, and he claimed priority for the remark that philosophers are either utilitarians or futilitarians. He took himself seriously as a humorist. Someone having said that a certain statesman, who was rather coarse than cultured, was "original," "Yes," retorted Monsieur Dumaresq, "so original that he is aboriginal."

Lady Lormington and the Marquis de la Boverie, Lady Desney and Count Stein were once more in-

dulging in well-bred laughter over this witticism, and Lady Lormington reminded the dowager of it. Monsieur Dumaresq had been honoured as usual by a seat on his hostess's left.

"Ah," said Arabella, "so original as to be aboriginal. It is worthy of La Rochefoucauld. I hope that you did not mean me?"

Monsieur Dumaresq bowed his negative to the imperious curls which made some people think that their owner was the most bewitching old woman in London. She rather enjoyed her reputation for originality. She could risk much with impunity. Her vivacity and sexagenarian energy were such that her friends forgot to look for those wrinkles which, as Monsieur Dumaresq said, are the italics of Time. She had carried on the Berkshire and the Swaffham traditions, and had been able to outshine the other representatives of both families who played no *rôle* on the more intellectual levels of London society.

"A title, without anything interesting behind it, my dear Lady Lormington," she said, "is only a title."

Therefore any man of learning or of wit, if also of breeding, hereditary or acquired, was welcomed at her house, because new friendships interested, almost excited her. Monsieur Dumaresq had the privilege, of which he frequently availed himself, of introducing his friends. For Arabella, like an astronomer,

gazed at the starry heavens of society, in the hope of discovering a new planet for her galaxy.

"I will not be *bored,*" she said. "When I meet two bores, I make them entertain each other."

"I notice," said Monsieur Dumaresq, "that you like to change your sphere and your atmosphere."

"He is an epigrammatist in five languages," said the dowager, turning to the Marquis de la Boverie.

"Yes," replied the Marquis, "Monsieur Dumaresq's mind is a great argosy of ideas."

"Very respectable persons," observed Monsieur Dumaresq, "are all ballast and no cargo, and that, too, is the explanation of dull books."

He then began to speak of the "litter of modern literature," said that the *soi-disant* realism is "the fullest and also the foulest account of life," and that much of its composition might be called decomposition. "Ah!" he ended, "we are waiting for the actinic rays of genius."

While the listeners were spellbound, Monsieur Dumaresq removed his eyeglass, and his shaven face was seen to be lean and pale as if with the fever of thought. It was this moment which Diana Melmore chose for making a most unfortunate *faux pas.* She asked the hostess if Monty Marduke was in town, and it is said that immediately a faint blush became visible on her face. It had been long suspected that

she was one of the numerous girls in despair about Monty. "Waiting women," the dowager called them.

"Monty Marduke? I do not know," replied the dowager, and turned again to the Marquis de la Boverie.

Lord Percy Boscoigne's recent suicide was mentioned, and Monsieur Dumaresq was glad because he had a phrase on suicide.

"Some of us," he said, as if the thought had just struck him, "commit suicide by living on."

"Poor Percy," said the Marquis de la Boverie, "was badly brought up. He dressed shockingly. It was astonishing, but he never seemed to see that a polished boot is as important as a polished wit."

Like Whistler and Disraeli, and all cunning and expert professional conversationalists, Monsieur Dumaresq possessed the skill of diverting any conversation to the lines which he desired, and he became impatient with M. de la Boverie. On that evening he particularly desired that the word "asparagus" should be mentioned, and also that someone should say something about the supposed decline of Great Britain and the weakness of her Army. For he had a *mot* both on asparagus and on Great Britain. He glanced at the menu, and to his double satisfaction, gastric as well as mental, he discovered that asparagus was to be served. And so, when everyone was eating it, he turned to the dowager, and said —

"It is with men as with asparagus. The most important thing is the head."

A flattering titter followed the remark, and Monsieur Dumaresq was very happy, but he was already longing to hear the German peril mentioned. And lo, at last it came from Sir Philip Delancey and Count Stein.

"Well," said Monsieur Dumaresq, seizing the occasion of an advantageous pause, "we who are the friends of England hope that Britannia's sword is not made of Britannia metal."

The dowager, amid a chorus of soft laughter, tapped him approvingly with her closed fan, and said—

"C'est superbe."

It was admitted by everyone that Monsieur Dumaresq had surpassed his own record, and as a compliment to him Count Stein remarked that he would rather meet a millionaire in ideas than a millionaire. But when the scene changed to the drawing-room and the dancing, Monsieur Dumaresq had scarcely as favourable an opportunity for display. *He* danced no more. He contented himself with gazing critically through his highly polished eyeglass at the handsome younger generation, or in chatting with the few elder guests, who, like himself, had grown stiff with the years.

"Mon Dieu," he whispered to Lady Lormington,

"all these young people are lovers. Love is carnivorous. In my book of maxims, I wrote down a phrase the other day. It is this — 'Passion is the unexpurgated edition of love, and expurgated editions are not bought.'"

Lady Lormington congratulated him, and said that it was good to hold frozen hands before the warm fire of youth.

Now it was in this glowing and flippant scene that Herr Habenichts made his apparition at half-past eleven o'clock. Mr. Botolph used to say that Herr Habenichts was a man of common sense and uncommon taste, and that he could be trusted to do the right thing in whatever situation he found himself. He was perfectly aware of the audacity of the plan whereby he hoped to bring the little orphan under the protection of a very high dame. But he had confidence in his own tact and tactics. He had dressed himself carefully because he expected that in so great a house a reception probably took place almost every evening. That, too, was the reason why, in obedience to the one little pardonable vanity which still lurked in him, he had donned his precious order in brilliants with the clasp. He thought, in his foreign way, that it would be a kind of credential, and although he laughed quietly at the world's showmen and their shows, he knew how to make use on occasion of the impressionableness of mankind. Moreover, in any

case his act was going to be wholly disinterested, and he was that rare man who has a positive delight in the happiness of other people. In his early youth in Vienna he had moved in the same society which claimed property in Monsieur Dumaresq, and the strange disasters of later life had not effaced his good breeding and his sense of the fitness of things. There was something in his look of assurance and ease which caused all doors to be opened to him, and therefore the dowager's footman saw nothing amiss when he ascended the baize-covered steps, and entered the house. But it was with a shock of surprise that they looked at the companion on his arm, and remarked her blue serge dress, fur boa, and beaver hat. In a moment Herr Habenichts knew that a dance reception was being held, and it was with delight that he heard dance music being played by a superb band in the upper corridor. The sumptuous house was aglow with lights and liveried footmen, and the air was delicately and subtly laden with the aroma of many a perfumed skirt that had passed in. A tall, distinguished youth was accompanying up the great stairway a lovely creature in a flowing dress of yellow brocade. Dorothy stood stupefied. But Herr Habenichts, undaunted, addressed a servant, and told him to conduct the forlorn little lady to a room, which he guessed was unused, at the far end of the hall. In fact, it was the breakfast-room the door of which was

half open. The footman obeyed, and when other servants had relieved Herr Habenichts of his hat and overcoat he ascended the stair, and when he arrived on the upper landing he gave his name. Being ashamed of his English, which he had never been able to make perfect, he decided to speak French, of which he was a master, so that we shall translate all that he said throughout that amazing evening.

In a dress of black velvet and old point lace the dowager was receiving her guests at the east door of the first drawing-room. A graceful diamond tiara surmounted the famous grey curls, and seemed to lend them even more than their usual animation. Herr Habenichts stopped for a moment to adjust his order in brilliants, and then he heard the strains of the Italian waltz *Tesoro Mio* and through a door he caught a glimpse of the dance. By this time he had assumed an air of considerable majesty, and some guests, sitting among the flowers in the vestibule, asked each other who the distinguished man might be. He approached the dowager, who recognised neither his face nor his name. And it was lucky that Monsieur Dumaresq was standing beside her, with eyeglass duly mounted under his right eyebrow.

"Ah, c'est vous, Habenichts!" exclaimed Monsieur Dumaresq, as Arabella shook hands with the stranger, who, she supposed, was another of the friends whom Monsieur Dumaresq was privileged to bring.

Herr Habenichts acquitted himself admirably, and after he had, in Austrian fashion, kissed the dowager's hand, and had moved forwards to make room for new arrivals, he was seized upon by Monsieur Dumaresq, who asked him how many centuries had passed since they had been together in Vienna. Much surprised, and more delighted, Herr Habenichts made skilful use of the lucky encounter, and retained his ease and happy humour as Monsieur Dumaresq took him among the Lormington group.

"Ah, I remember this," said Monsieur Dumaresq, fingering the military cross. "You know, Lady Lormington, he got it for a brave something or other he did during the war in Herzegovina. The papers were full of him for weeks. He is an *édition de luxe* of humanity. Have n't you read his 'History of Dancing'? It will be known in every capital of Europe."

"Mais non, Dumaresq!" said Herr Habenichts.

"Mais oui, cher Habenichts," replied Monsieur Dumaresq. "The most learned thing ever written. Ah, of course, Habenichts, that 's why you have come here. That pretty picture should please you."

Monsieur Dumaresq pointed to the dancers, and then moved back to his position near the dowager, to whom he said —

"Habenichts is an *édition de luxe* of humanity."

"They are rare," said the dowager; "I am delighted to have him."

Herr Habenichts had dropped into fairyland, for nothing made him happier than a dancing scene. He seemed to himself to be transported to the Court Ball of Vienna, where, as a hussar in glittering uniform, he had danced his youth away. And this light and laughter and movement around him brought back the memory of his own humiliation, of patrimony lost for ever, of the dark scowl of fate and fortune which had followed him till now, and it momentarily saddened him. But he astonished Lady Lormington and Lady Desney and Sir Philip Delancey by his expert criticism of the dancers. During three-quarters of an hour he engaged in pleasant talk and persiflage in French, and was so delighted with the dancing and the music that Dorothy was in danger of being forgotten. For he was expounding his theory of rhythmic movement to Lady Lormington, who at a convenient moment whispered to the dowager as she passed —

"Who is this most interesting old grand seigneur!"

"Monsieur Dumaresq," replied the dowager, "says that he is an *edition de luxe* of humanity."

"I wonder if that is Monsieur Dumaresq's own phrase?" said Lady Lormington.

"In any case it appears to be true," said the dowager, smiling back pleasantly to Herr Habe-

nichts, and then moving on to speak to Count Stein.

Meanwhile, however, there was creeping over the intruder an uncomfortable feeling, and he began to be amazed at his own audacity. Every moment he expected to see Dorothy in serge dress, fur boa, and beaver hat present herself among the dancers. He was glad that the dowager had as yet said little to him, and that Monsieur Dumaresq was apparently ignorant of the strange experiences of his friend since last they had met in Vienna. And Herr Habenichts was afraid that if it became suddenly revealed to that gay company that he was the proprietor of The Original Jellini Academy of Dancing, he would be riddled with ridicule, and turned out as an impostor. The only plan was to seek an interview with the Duchess Dowager. But she looked so magnificent, and such a haughty glance was burning in her eyes, that he began to shrink from the encounter. He guessed her scorn when she had heard of his mission and had discovered who he was. Besides, it would in any case be a breach of etiquette for a guest who had been introduced only on that evening to be the last to leave the house. Luckily, dancing was to stop at twelve, because Arabella was no longer able or willing to sustain the fatigue of late hours. Some of the dancers were already on their way to join other hostesses. The rooms were

emptying. Monsieur Dumaresq had gone, and on the staircase there was a subdued hubbub of departing guests whose carriages and motor cars had not yet been called. The music had ceased, and it was in a condition of increasing anxiety that Herr Habenichts found himself solitary in the west drawing-room. Arabella was standing at the east door, chatting with some of the lingerers, but at length she said good-night to the last of them. Herr Habenichts would have liked to run down to inquire about the hapless girl. Perhaps she had fled? He entered the east drawing-room, and saw Arabella, tall and stately, with the jewelled train of her dress flowing behind her, advancing to meet him.

"Ah, Duchesse," said Herr Habenichts, "I could not help looking at those pictures. This is a Greuze? Ah, this charming Meissonier! And the Ingres, too!"

"Yes," she said. "I am sorry I have seen so little of you. There were too many people here. I am sorry, too, that Monsieur Dumaresq has gone."

Arabella was eager to examine an *édition de luxe* of humanity, and she invited Herr Habenichts to supper. With her sexagenarian laugh she said that music and the play and watching dancing made her hungry.

"Ah, there is Mr. Loxley not yet gone!" she exclaimed in French, as a young man with dreamy

eyes came into the room. "Mr. Loxley, Herr Habenichts and I are going to have supper. Now, won't you give me the pleasure —"

Mr. Loxley, who was somewhat shy, and whose French was rickety, asked to be forgiven, said good night, and disappeared. Herr Habenichts felt his equanimity returning, and offered his arm to his hostess as they descended to the supper-room. They were soon sitting at a little table on which candles with pink shades were burning. It was this sort of sudden improvisation of friendships which gave Arabella the name of the unconventional duchess. Like Madame du Deffand, she was eager to seize upon anyone who could afford her a new intellectual thrill, and for the moment Herr Habenichts became her Horace Walpole. The butler was serving Château Lafite, vintage 1858, and his subordinates moved noiselessly at their tasks. The dowager was talking about Monsieur Dumaresq.

"He is a cynic," she said.

"Cynicism," said Herr Habenichts, in idiomatic French, "is frozen truth. But, Duchess, the great books have the temperature of this wine, I mean its inner, latent temperature. Ha, ha, on dit, good wine has a body, but it has also, like a good book, a soul."

He was so fond of abandoning himself to the impressions of the moment, so eager to become absorbed

in whatever the present brought him, that Dorothy was again in danger of being forgotten. Herr Habenichts began to feel as if he could talk till cock-crow. He spoke about the vineyards of France with apparently profound knowledge, and then of the life of the vine, the wonderful plant which accepts even the poorest soil which common weeds disdain. The dowager was enthralled as he described the origin and spread of the vine myth and the vine worship out of Asia. From the vintage of France he passed to the more wonderful vintage of her genius as expressed in her literature, and all at once he found himself discussing Villon and Verlaine, whom he called the two great poets of poverty.

"And Richepin," added the dowager.

"Yes, he is great, and also the German Rilke," said Herr Habenichts. "These men have seen that poverty has a kind of grandeur, Duchess. And you, too, know it. I have seen you mentioned in the newspapers as the Democratic Duchess."

Now, if there was one thing of which she was proud, it was the absurd title of Democratic Duchess, the origin of which was as follows: —

During a march of the unemployed through the streets of London, a halt was made before the door of the house in which Herr Habenichts was actually sitting. When the Duchess looked down from the window of her boudoir, she saw a crowd of ragged

and angry men with menacing banners. Nothing daunted, she stepped on the balcony, and made a little speech in which she expressed her sympathy for them, and especially for their wives and children. Then she ordered the collecting-box to be sent up to her, and with her own hand she dropped into it a cheque for four hundred pounds. When the fact became known, the air was rent by loud cheers and cries for "Good ole Arabella! Well done, ole gal!" And henceforward she was called the Democratic Duchess. Herr Habenichts rather suspected that the veneer and varnish of democracy were very thin. Nevertheless, he reminded her of the incident, and she was pleased. In her strange, vivid old eyes he seemed to see a latent kindness, as well as the gleam of the vanity and of the wisdom of this world.

"Well, I am an old woman," she said, "and I have seen behind the façade. I have never been *quite* content with remaining in my own set. Oh, it is like sitting still in your own parish all your life. Not long ago I said a wrong and untrue thing to a young fellow called Marduke" (Herr Habenichts made a sudden movement) "about having no friends among the rabble. It is nonsense. I *love* the poor and the outcast. Ah, if I were a statesman, I would mobilise the mob, and teach it citizenship, Herr Habenichts. I once had a long conver-

sation with Tolstoi. It was at Yasnaya Polyana, and he was digging a trench in a field to carry away the water. He leaned on his spade as he spoke to me. Oh, it was wonderful! He made me angry with the stupid glitter of the rich. And yet, and yet, I *can't* give up art and music and books and good talk, Herr Habenichts. And so will you dine here next Thursday? I expect Monsieur Dumaresq and some interesting people."

"I vorget!" exclaimed Herr Habenichts, suddenly, dropping into English, as if more suitable to express his embarrassment. "I must tell it now. You say you love de poor? *I* am poor. I am only a *vieux maître de danse!*"

"You are a dancing master?" said the dowager, incredulously and derisively.

"Yes," he replied; and then turned to the pompous old butler, "Bring in de lady. Oh, vat haf I been tinking about all dis time!"

The hostess betrayed the slightest symptom of annoyance, because she had a sudden suspicion that her strange guest had drunk too much of the old subtle wine of France. She bent forward in an attitude which indicated that she had not understood him, and she began to fumble for her lorgnette. Herr Habenichts seemed perplexed, and his ease had forsaken him again. And presently Dorothy was standing in the room, pale and forlorn, and

looking like a tattered thing in the midst of all this splendour, while the dowager fixed upon her an astonished stare.

"Ach ja, Duchesse," said Herr Habenichts, rising and patting Dorothy on the shoulder, "dis is de poor leetle girl. Most extraordinary story. You vill be kind to her, Duchesse? You love de poor and de outcast?"

"What is it? What does it mean?" asked Arabella. "Who is this?"

"Dis," explained Herr Habenichts, with his old smile again, "is de leetle tancer at Jellini's, and young Mr. Marduke fall in love vith her."

The truth had flashed upon Arabella, and she rose agitated and angry, almost fainting with rage, and believing that Monty Marduke had played the trick upon her. To have supped with a dancing master! To have been made ridiculous by a dancing master! To have had to face this odious anticlimax to a brilliant evening! At first her presence of mind forsook her, and she stood ignorant how to act, until an uncontrollable impulse made her order the servants to bring a detective. But no sooner was the order given than she recalled it, and then she commanded the servants to leave the room. Herr Habenichts was speaking again, and attempting to apologise for his intrusion. In fluent French and laboured English he justified his action.

"I haf been vaiting de opportunity all night," he said. "Ach ja, Democratic Duchesse, vill you not listen? Vat is it to me? I gain noting. But dis leetle girl gain much. It is de Swaffham blood calling to you, de leetle castavay, de vriend of de Monty, de Earl's love child!"

He then informed her that Monty Marduke had nothing whatever to do with their presence in her house that night, and he told the story of Dorothy's flight, and his own discovery of her and his belief that a Democratic Duchess would take under her protection an orphan who, after all, was something of a kinswoman.

"De Duchesse is your aunt," he said to Dorothy, who stood as if in a troubled dream, wondering whether Herr Habenichts had suddenly gone mad.

It was the first time that Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, had found herself at bay. Her dominant feeling was resentment, and as she gave way to it, she ordered Herr Habenichts to leave the house. But he shook his head.

"No, Duchesse," he said, in a quiet persuasive way, "not until you promise to protect her. Oderwise I must take her avay. Vat could I do but bring her here?"

The discovery that she had been at supper *tête-à-tête* with a dancing master was not the only irritating fact in the situation. To endure the presence of this

extraordinary stranger while he told her how she should act, and to perceive his pity for the hollowness of her pretended patronage of the poor and outcast, made her nerves rage and ache. She had waved the servants from the room in order to avoid a scene, and still Herr Habenichts lingered while the haughty woman cast glance after sharp glance at the terrified child. Dorothy's height and appearance, the Swaffham pride lurking undeveloped in all her features, her silence, her obvious innocence, her magnificent eyes and her helplessness were nevertheless making a singular impression. The truth was that her resemblance to her father, the Earl of Swaffham, the dowager's favourite nephew, had stunned the dowager, who was eager to get rid of Herr Habenichts in order to compare the Earl's portrait with the face of his child. Her decision was made, but she was still too proud to announce it. After a few moments of studied pause and hesitation, and after another keen inspection of the girl of the bright dark pedigree who was standing bewildered before her, she again requested Herr Habenichts to leave the house. Dorothy sprang forward and seized his hand, indicating that she meant to go with him. It was then that the dowager was heard to mutter "Poor Gascoigne!" which was one of the Earl's names. She had promised him before he had left England that she would be kind to the

child of his wild love. But she had ignored Dorrie's existence.

"Ach ja!" said Herr Habenichts, coming to her aid. "I see you vish to change. De leetle child has no claim upon you. Dat is why you vill help her. Vill you?"

"She shall remain here," replied the dowager, still with an aspect of sternness which she compelled herself to maintain.

"I accept de word of a Duchesse," said Herr Habenichts, bowing himself out, and restraining Dorothy from following. "Nein, good-bye, Dorrie. All koms right. I haf seen de end and de end is fair."

CHAPTER TWENTIETH

MEANWHILE a family council was being held at Portland Place. That much learning may make a man mad has been frequently proved, but that he should be judged mad because of much generosity is a catastrophe of rarer occurrence. Nevertheless, this was about to happen to Sir John Marduke, whose strange shame concerning the origin of his great inheritance was exhibited in an earlier chapter. A crisis was at hand, and two famous specialists, Dr. Puddifant and Dr. Paradarakovsky, were puzzling over the case. They pronounced it unique. A man, they said, who had created a great fortune by dishonest means, who had trampled on his fellow men and had risen on their ruin, might conceivably in the midst of his ill-gotten luxury be hunted and haunted by disturbing memories. But that a man like Sir John Marduke should worry himself to the point of insanity four generations after the event merely at the thought that every penny of his wealth had come to him from the sweat and labour of slaves who had perished by hundreds, and perhaps by thousands, at the hands of his ancestors, was one of the most singu-

lar facts in the history of hallucination. And his method of expiating this supposed crime of those old Mardukes was itself a crime, because he was thereby robbing his son and successor in the baronetcy and also his daughter of the patrimony which was their due. Jedder and Jedder, the family solicitors, said that it was philanthropy, it was charity, it was morality gone mad. The elder Jedder could not sleep for thinking of it. He saw an estate wasting away before his eyes, and he insisted on immediate interference for the purpose of saving the poor remainder and *débris* which he calculated amounted to four hundred and sixty-eight thousand pounds seven shillings and threepence. It was with a lawyer's delight and sense of business and justice that this elder Jedder had adjusted his spectacles in order to fix his eyes upon his clerk to whom he dictated that letter addressed to Herr Habenichts, which announced the withdrawal of Sir John Marduke's patronage from The Original Jellini Academy of Dancing, and the calling in of the loan. Herr Habenichts had already refunded the loan with interest, although interest was not demanded, and he had received a curt letter of acknowledgment. The elder Jedder hoped that this solitary instance of sternness and grip on the part of the baronet meant the cessation of a mad form of magnanimity. Not so. Only the other day Jedder and Jedder had been ordered

to despatch (1) a cheque for £50,000 in aid of the abolition of the so-called slavery in the Congo, and (2) a cheque for £10,000 to a London hospital. In order to provide these sums much valuable property, many valuable shares, would require to be realised. And it was before entering upon the transactions necessary for the completion of this business that the elder Jedder wrote a very startling letter to Mr. Monty Marduke, who communicated with the family physician, Dr. Minting, who in turn communicated with Dr. Puddifant and Dr. Paradarakovsky, the distinguished alienists.

Sir John was examined, and then the elder Jedder proposed a family council. Monty and Minnie agreed. The physicians agreed. Whether it was owing to the baronet's displeasure with his son's conduct at The Original Jellini Academy of Dancing, or whether it was simply owing to the natural evolution of his mania, his destructive activities directed against the family property were once more in eruption, and threatened to have no end until the property itself came to an end. Even his daughter, who now led a secluded and somewhat embittered life in the great mansion, had ceased to sympathise with these colossal charities, and, although disgusted with her brother, she decided to co-operate with him for the sake of their joint interests. Therefore the family council assembled. Present: Mr. Marduke, Miss

Marduke, the elder Jedder, Dr. Puddifant, the eminent English brain specialist, Dr. Paradarakovsky, his eminent foreign rival, and Herr Habenichts.

The presence of Herr Habenichts requires some explanation. Monty Marduke, while perfectly willing and even anxious to see some restriction placed upon his father, was opposed for pathetic and filial reasons to any declaration of mental failure. Now, the fact that Sir John had recalled the loan which had been granted to the proprietor of The Original Jellini Academy of Dancing was a proof, according to Monty, that his mental capacity was unimpaired. Herr Habenichts was, therefore, invited to bear personal testimony before the two doctors. He responded at once to the call, and declared that it was another sign of the excellent character of his charming young friend. But when the elder Jedder saw Herr Habenichts in the room, he gazed at him through his eyeglass, and was incapable of concealing his astonishment and his contempt for a dancer who philosophised or a philosopher who danced. Having coughed, he proceeded to business, not, however, without having expressed regret at the unavoidable absence of Dr. Minting, the family physician who had been suddenly called to an urgent case in the country. Mr. Jedder then made startling revelations regarding the present condition of the Marduke property, and from a schedule he read out a list of the baronet's

charities — he had almost said delinquencies — during the last four years. The total cost to the family of his generous madness or mad generosity had been four hundred and seventy-eight thousand pounds ten shillings and sixpence. If the two donations of £50,000 for the Congo slaves and £10,000 for the London hospital were withheld, Mr. Jedder said that the value of the estate would be only four hundred and sixty-eight thousand pounds seven shillings and threepence. Sir John had thus parted with more than half of his property.

"When is it to end?" asked Mr. Jedder, as he looked at the specialists.

Dr. Puddifant, a big, authoritative person, had the appearance of a man who, if doubtful about the sanity of other people, was perfectly convinced of his own. He was sixty years of age, with a red face, a sharp, interrogating eye, and a mouth as hard and inexpressive as if it had been made of double-twisted wire. He secretly — sometimes openly — despised his learned colleague, Dr. Paradarakovsky, who was steeped in philosophy, and had published a book on the theme whether Nature herself might not go mad. He claimed to have found a vein of insanity running through all her operations, and he proved that some stars are mad, and that madness is exhibited in earthquakes, in violent storms, and in the fury of other beasts of prey besides man. Dr. Puddifant, who was

thoroughly practical, laughed at Dr. Paradarakovsky, and said that the book ought to be held as evidence that its author was insane. That was precisely Dr. Paradarakovsky's opinion of Dr. Puddifant, and when Monty, who liked that sort of joke, whispered the fact to Herr Habenichts, the latter burst out laughing at the moment when the elder Jedder was reading an inventory. Mr. Jedder paused, and looked defiantly in the direction of Herr Habenichts.

"That was my fault," said Monty, smiling; and Mr. Jedder was able to proceed.

After he had amassed damning proof of the baronet's incapacity for managing his own affairs, Mr. Jedder delivered himself of another cough, and then addressed the doctors again. He knew, of course, that a declaration signed by only one of them and by the family physician would be sufficient; but he agreed with Dr. Minting that it would be satisfactory to have the advice of the two distinguished men. They had quarrelled already, however, over the case, and Mr. Jedder had besought them in the interest of the heirs to come to an agreement.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it is a very melancholy, a very extraordinary case. But the facts constitute evidence which is overwhelming. For the good of the baronet himself, not to mention the interests of the future baronet and of Miss Marduke, we should make it impossible for Sir John to spend, or, I should

rather say, to misspend another shilling. Why, sirs, the provisions of the original will are already rendered nugatory, because there is not sufficient money to go round. What this gentleman" (pointing to Herr Habenichts) "is able to tell you about Sir John's recall of the loan which was granted to The Original Jellini Academy of Dancing is, no doubt, perfectly true. Sir John, on his own initiative, did recall the loan. But that fact does not alter the case. A large fortune has been squandered and is still being squandered, so that, at this rate of subtraction, zero will soon be reached. Now, property is sacred. How will the future baronet be able to maintain his due position? I say that property is sacred. You may suggest that there is method in Sir John's madness. I reply that there is madness in his method, and there are present all the symptoms of a singular hallucination. It is really an alarming form of megalomania."

"Ach ja!" said Herr Habenichts, "men are either megalomaniacs or micromaniacs — dat is, maniacs in great tings or in small. I prefer de big maniacs. I admire Sir John. He burn red at de thought of de poor slaves long ago making his vortune. He not mad!"

"A mere dreamer," whispered Dr. Puddifant to the elder Jedder.

"Far worse! A mere dancing master, the pro-

prietor of Jellini's!" whispered the elder Jedder in turn, and then coughed again.

Minnie Marduke appeared to be very sad, and she sat silent. But Monty spoke, and he said that he agreed with Herr Habenichts. He hotly maintained that his father was not mad. The elder Jedder replied by restating the dilemma. If Sir John were not declared incapable of managing his own affairs, then, no power on earth could prevent him from reducing his family to beggary. On the other hand, only by such a declaration would it be legally possible to take the estate out of his hands and administer it in his own and his family's interest. At this point a dramatic incident occurred. Sir John Marduke, with flushed face, bright eye and hurried step, entered the room, and he held half a dozen cheques in his hand. His manner was certainly somewhat strange, but he did not seem to be surprised to see the elder Jedder or even Herr Habenichts. It was on the doctors that he fixed an angry look.

"These gentlemen here yet?" he exclaimed. "Ha, ha! *I* am not mad, Monty. Now, Mr. Jedder, I am glad to see *you*. Take these" — handing the six cheques. "They are for orphans and poor women."

"All right, Sir John," said Mr. Jedder, humouring him, "I will attend to them."

There could have been no more convincing demon-

stration to all present of the need of immediate action. Sir John was lost. He went up to Herr Habenichts, shook hands, and began to apologise for having taken back the money.

"Nein," said Herr Habenichts. "Vat nonsense! You did right. I vas and I am fery much obligated to you, Sir John Marduke."

"Jedder," said Sir John, "if my son promises to have nothing more to do with that — that beautiful dancing girl — lovely creature, I admit — but, if he promises, I will give Mr. Habenichts three times the sum as a gift. Monty?"

"Father," said Monty, "I would rather not discuss that matter."

"Ho, ho! the dancing girl. My son marries the dancing girl! Did you mention a cab-yard?" asked Sir John, with a vacant stare. "I thought I heard the name 'Jellini'? An Academy of the Dance of Death, gentlemen! My family is, of course, cursed! We deserve it. That hellish fortune! The blood of the slaves crying out over the sea against us. This house, the carpet I am walking on, the furniture, my horses, my daughter's jewels, my silver, my motor-car, the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the wines we drink, everything — everything came to us because hundreds, thousands of slaves worked under the lash. I can't sleep, doctors. I see the slave ships crossing the horizon while the sun goes down

red on Africa. The slave ships, every one of them named 'Marduke,' every one of them full of tormented men and women and children who are to make the fortune which the Mardukes are going to spend in the twentieth century — on dancing girls! The slave ship heaving to, in the red dawn, gentlemen, rigged with curses! Now I say that our fortune does not belong to us. Not robbery only, but murder was its foundation!"

All became very excited, and in vain Mr. Jedder attempted to quiet Sir John. Herr Habenichts slipped out of the room, because he felt that no stranger should witness the scene.

"I have a pain here," continued Sir John, touching his head and his heart; and then he took his daughter's hand.

"Come, father," said Minnie, and led him away.

There was little left for the elder Jedder to do, but he informed the specialists of one last fact of great significance, and then asked them if they could any longer hesitate. Sir John Marduke had refused to accept a higher title.

"And it was an earldom, too," added Mr. Jedder.

"Do you mean to tell us," asked Dr. Puddifant, who was hoping to be at last knighted on a change of Government, "that he refused an earldom?"

"He would refuse even a dukedom," replied Mr. Jedder.

"Then he is mad," said Dr. Paradarakovsky and Dr. Puddifant, simultaneously.

And the declaration was immediately signed by the two eminent men.

Herr Habenichts had informed one of the servants that he wished to speak with Mr. Marduke, for this was the morning which followed his supper with the Duchess Dowager of Berkshire. He waited, therefore, in the library, and took down a French book, "Mes Paradis," and soon became lost in it. What had pleased him in Monty's conduct was the fact that the young man had done nothing to accelerate, had, indeed, done everything to retard his entrance on the control of what was still a great estate. A son of unfilial feeling would rather have been tempted to hasten the displacement of a father who, however praiseworthy the motive, had already played havoc with the family fortune. But now Monty, against his own desire, would be master of a much larger revenue than he had ever enjoyed. These thoughts interfered with Herr Habenichts' reading, and he leaned back on the easy chair on which he was sitting and looked round the large room. The rows and rows of books fascinated him, and he admired the pictures and the admirable taste everywhere displayed. And he thought of the delightful future which lay before Dorothy when she became mistress of such a house.

"Mistress?" he whispered to himself. "Ach ja, I don't believe dat he means de word in de oder sense. Supposing? Nein, nein, I judge by de face. De boy is in dreadful earnest. He marry her. I judge by de boy's face."

At this moment Monty entered hurriedly. After Herr Habenichts had expressed sympathy with him, he asked what was to happen to the baronet; and Monty said that his father would continue to live at Portland Place, that special servants and a male nurse would watch over him, and that perhaps in time his mental convalescence might be complete.

"But, Herr Habenichts," he added, "I wish to assure you that *you* need have no fear of the future. I have told Jedder that he must return the money to you, and that I will be responsible for that and a good deal more. You are to consider that loan as a gift. I owe so much to you."

"Vot!" exclaimed Herr Habenichts. "You owe me noting."

Then a pleasant duel took place between them, Monty insisting on acceptance, Herr Habenichts gently refusing, until at last he was compelled to declare himself vanquished by the generous youth. Then a very eager expression appeared in Monty's boyish face. Herr Habenichts thought that he had never seemed so handsome, so tall, so manly, so sincere.

"Ach ja!" said Herr Habenichts, smiling, "I know wat you wish to speak about. It is about de pretty face. I haf news of pretty face vor you. Vondervoll, vondervoll! She is safe!"

And it was to an excited listener that he narrated the story of Dorothy lost in the fog, of the finding of her, and of her present refuge in the house of Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire. At first Monty was stunned by the news, and saw it in the light of a disaster. He began to upbraid Herr Habenichts for having done a foolish thing.

"Vot? Voolish?"

"Why, of course," said Monty, with some heat. "Did not I tell you that I have quarrelled with that old woman?"

"All in de fog it happened, but now de fog is gone."

He laid a quieting hand on the flushed youth.

"I'm going — I'm going there this moment," cried Monty, who had risen.

"Nein," replied Herr Habenichts, almost in a tone of command. "If you go you spoil all. I called her a vicked ancient lady. She is ancient, but not altogeder vicked, only fery proud. But I see behind de pride and high looks de light of kindness. Ach, Du lieber Gott! I laugh. De curls! How dey shake! Dose curls live! Dey dance!"

And then he shook his sides with genuine laughter,

and put his hand on Monty's shoulder. He then recounted his experience at the dowager's on that romantic night, his meeting with Monsieur Dumaresq, the amazing supper with the dowager, and, finally, the presentation of Dorothy. Such was the vividness and gaiety of his narrative, that he communicated his high spirits to Monty, who stood devouring every detail.

"But," repeated Herr Habenichts, laying a warning hand upon him again, "you must not go to Grosvenor Square. You spoil all. *I* go. I go dis minute to negotiate a treaty of peace between her and you. Ach ja, de conditions vill be hard vor you. Dis morning a footman came to me at Mrs. Vix vith a note demanding my appearance at de house today at twelve o'clock. I go. De dowager fery excited about someting, and vish to speak. But you must vait. I telephone de result."

"The motor is at the door, you will take it," said Monty.

"Ja, I take it."

"Herr Habenichts, I can't believe it 's true!" exclaimed Monty, seizing the old man's hand.

"Ja, it is true," said Herr Habenichts. "De Duchesse is terrible. I am avraid of her, too! But how I laughed ven I got out of de great house and thought of my impudence — de old Tanzmeister supping vith de great Duchesse. It is like Calderon's

play, I said, *La Vida es sueño — Life is a dream.* Ach, dose curls! Dey glitter like silver! How dey shake! But I go, I go. She vait vor me. Someting important, I hope good. Call your car."

Monty hurried him out of the house, and bundled him into the car, and ordered the chauffeur to drive to Grosvenor Square, and to await there Herr Habenichts' instructions.

"You will come straight back here to lunch," said Monty.

"Ja, I know," replied Herr Habenichts, and the car started.

"Stop!" cried Herr Habenichts. "I vorget."

The car was stopped, and Monty came running down to the pavement again.

"What is it?" he asked.

Vill you lend me 'Mes Paradis'?" asked Herr Habenichts. "De book I vas reading."

Monty told a footman to find the book, and when it was brought, he handed it to Herr Habenichts.

"Keep it," said Monty.

Herr Habenichts thanked him, lifted his hat, and then began to re-read the book as the car started again in the direction of Grosvenor Square.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST

VIRONAL could not give her sleep. And at twenty minutes past two o'clock in the morning she sat up, removed from her head a night-cap of fine lace and pink ribbons, and then shook her grey curls. Her insomnia was not caused, however, by any fear lest Dorothy might escape. For Dorothy had been given in charge of the housekeeper, a very vigilant person, and after the excitement of that eventful evening, she was lying in profound slumber. Arabella was awake because the fear of ridicule had robbed her of the power to sleep. That a dance master had attended one of her receptions as a guest, had been introduced to her friends Lady Lormington and Count Stein, and had actually taken supper with her, made her somehow think of *Les Précieuses Ridicules* and of the newspapers. For, if the fact became known, she would be made ridiculous for ever. Twice she had lifted the telephone which stood at her bedside. The cord which carried the wire was of sufficient length to allow her to hold the instrument in her hands while she was in the horizontal posture. Therefore she resumed that posture, and wondered if Mon-

sieur Dumaresq would be very angry to be rung out of sleep at half-past two in the morning. They had frequently exchanged telephonic good mornings, because Monsieur Dumaresq was provided with a similar apparatus at his pillow, but they had never had a semi-nocturnal, semi-matutinal conversation.

"Oh," said Arabella, "since it is *his* fault he should suffer, and, in any case, I must have an explanation at once."

And so she rang him up.

"Who is it?" asked a very weak voice.

"Monsieur Dumaresq, are you there?" replied the dowager.

"What? Who is it?"

"Monsieur Dumaresq, I hope you were not asleep?" asked the dowager, sitting up in bed.

"It would always be a pleasure to wake up to hear *your* voice, Duchess," said Monsieur Dumaresq, as he turned on his side. "But, really, my watch says — just one moment — why, it is only half-past two!"

"I am having a dreadful night," replied Arabella; "*I* can't sleep, although I took vironal."

"*I* could not sleep at first for thinking of your charming dance. But what is wrong?"

"Oh, it 's that man you brought — the man Habenichts."

"*I* did n't bring him," replied Monsieur Dumaresq, sitting up in bed. "But what 's wrong with *him?*"

"*You* did n't bring him?"

"No, I did n't."

"But you know him?"

"Why, of course. But we had n't met since we last saw each other in Vienna."

"And was he a dancing master then?"

"I beg your pardon, Duchess, I don't quite understand you. I think there is something wrong with the instrument, or perhaps it 's our sleepy voices."

"Did he teach dancing?" asked the dowager, with a touch of fury.

"Good Heavens, no!" exclaimed Monsieur Dumaresq.

"Well, he had supper with me — it is perfectly appalling to think of — I say he had supper, and he told me that he is the proprietor of The Original Jellini Academy of Dancing in the Tottenham Court Road!" said the Duchess, almost collapsing, and falling back with the telephone in her hands. "I 'll never get over it!"

"Oh, ho!" laughed Dumaresq, regretting that he was already so far awake as to be able to laugh at all, "that must be a joke. He meant that he wrote a 'History of Dancing,' a very fascinating book, you

know, which is in the libraries of all the Universities of Europe. I will get you a copy."

"No, thank you. I am *not* mistaken. The man teaches dancing. I have another reason for knowing *that* too well," replied Arabella, with a wild shake of her curls.

"Baron von Habenichts?" asked Monsieur Dumaresq.

"Baron?"

"What, Duchess?"

"I say, did you say 'Baron'?"

"Of course. He is Baron von Habenichts. *Mon Dieu!* What is the meaning of this? How did he get there if you did not invite him? *I* did n't bring him. You know, when he was a young officer in Vienna, an Archduchess fell in love with him. There was a tremendous talk. He was wonderfully handsome, you know. . . . Oh, my pillow!"

"What?" asked the Duchess.

"My pillow fell out, that 's all!" laughed Monsieur Dumaresq. "I 've got it again."

"You know, I don't believe in having pillows that are *too* soft, do you?" asked the dowager. "They heat the head and prevent one from sleeping."

"Ah, *that* is why you have not slept, Duchess. Do get harder pillows. I sometimes think we are becoming too luxurious," said Monsieur Dumaresq. "Now, take this telephone we are both using —"

"Do please say more about your friend," urged the dowager, pulling a shawl from the bed rail, and throwing it over her shoulders.

At this point the operator interfered, and asked if the conversation was to continue much longer.

"I am the Dowager Duchess of Berkshire," said Arabella.

"Are you there?" asked Monsieur Dumaresq.

"Oh," replied the dowager, "it was only those tiresome people at the exchange. Well, do tell me about him."

"I know that he lost all his money," continued Monsieur Dumaresq. "His family had lands for centuries in Tyrol, at Innsbruck, and they had also a lovely place at Toblach, for I visited it when Von Habenichts and I were young fellows. But he became heavily involved in the failure of a great Austrian bank —"

Monsieur Dumaresq paused to yawn.

"Poor Monsieur Dumaresq, you are tired. It is wicked of me," said the dowager, more and more interested, and determined to keep him awake.

"Not at all. I was saying that Von Habenichts" (yawning again) — "Von Habenichts was ruined. He went to England. I lost sight of him, and then he published his great history. Your reception was so crowded I had really little time to speak to him. But be assured, Duchess, it is the same man. Of

course, all sorts of adventures may have befallen him. He was always a man who would stick at nothing."

"This is most interesting!" exclaimed Arabella. "It changes everything. Oh, I admire it! And people say that our class is played out!"

"Pshaw!" said Monsieur Dumaresq, and sank back wearily on his pillow, clasping the telephone like a missal.

"It reminds me of that French marquis Heine talks of," continued Arabella.

"Dear Heine!" murmured Monsieur Dumaresq.

"Yes; I love him, too. Well, you know, he tells of a French marquis who fled during the Revolution and went to a German town and became a shoemaker. The only difference is that Baron von Habenichts taught dancing."

"Yes," muttered Monsieur Dumaresq, almost dozing.

"I hope you will sleep, Monsieur Dumaresq," said the dowager. "Good night. Why, it's almost *three.* Good morning. I *hope* you will sleep."

"I hope *you* will, Duchess. Good-bye," cried Monsieur Dumaresq, tucked the telephone under his pillow, and fell on his side.

Arabella also slept, but not so soundly, and she broke the habit of a lifetime by rising as early as nine o'clock. A message was despatched to Baron von Habenichts, whose address was given to the house-

keeper by Dorothy. This, then, is the moment to take the mask of incognito from the face of him whom we have known as the old dance master. He was surprised to find that the reason for the dowager's desire for an immediate interview was not on Dorothy's or Marduke's account but on his own.

"Oh, Baron," she exclaimed, advancing to meet him with outstretched hands and shaking curls, "have you forgiven me? Baron von Habenichts, what a rogue you are! I have had a sleepless night — and then poor Monsieur Dumaresq — "

"Ach ja," said Baron von Habenichts, blushing, "it is Dumaresq. I vas avraid of it."

"I woke him up long before daylight, and we had a conversation on the telephone all about you," continued the dowager, talking rapidly and with the vivacity of a woman of half her years.

Baron von Habenichts, who had come unscathed through so many humiliations, was at last blushing, and was unhappy. His serenity momentarily forsook him. For there still lingered some *débris* of family pride, and he would have liked to conceal his record of misfortune from one of his own class. He would have liked to retain his *incognito* till the end, because, moneyless, he felt his ancient rank to be a mockery. On the other hand, Arabella had suddenly conceived a very great admiration for him, and felt that there must be something heroic in his history. She was

impatient to hear its romance. And this must be said for her that she invariably treated with special courtesy any member of any *noblesse* who had fallen into poverty. She was quick, also, to feel ashamed because she had mistrusted her own instincts, which had told her, as they had told her other guests, that the stranger who had suddenly appeared at her reception was a man of their own world.

"Ach ja," said Baron von Habenichts, as he sat beside her in her boudoir and began to be at his ease again, "eine wunderbare Geschichte!"

"Now will you lunch with me to-day?" asked the dowager.

"I lunch vith Mr. Marduke," said the baron; "his motor-car is at de door."

"Does *he* know?" asked Arabella.

"Nein. I do not vish him or anyone to know. Vat haf you done vith Dorrie, Duchesse? Dat is de question."

"It is because I have so much to say on that matter," said the dowager, with a slight frown, "that I should like you to remain."

"Vith your permission, Duchesse, I vill write a note and send it back in de car to Mr. Marduke?" asked the baron as he rose and walked to a writing-table.

The note was soon written and despatched, and it was evident that Arabella had taken full possession

of her new acquaintance. There was some quality in him which made him at home everywhere and attracted to him all classes of people. When he sat on a spring day in the tattered garden opposite Wix's Residential Hotel, in Fashion Row, children used to run towards him because he told them stories. And he would lay aside the book of poetry or philosophy which he was reading in order to caress some stray cat of evil aspect which came up to him, and learned how to purr again. Perhaps, however, the most remarkable fact of his career was the influence which he was about to have upon Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire.

"Ach ja, Duchesse," he said, as she listened to the tale of his adventures, "I vould not change my experience for all de vorld. Like Chateaubriand, I vished to haf de full programme of life. I vas Freiherr, baron, but I dropped de frei to become more frei!"

"You are just like one of those *émigrés* whom Madame de Boigne mentions," said the dowager; "people like the Duchess of Fitz-James who had to leave everything behind them at the Revolution, and were so poor that they used to go to evening parties on the tops of London omnibuses. When they dined with each other they were expected to leave three shillings under a cup on the mantelpiece. I wish I had been one of these people."

"I haf dined vith cabmen and vith kings, Duchesse," continued Baron von Habenichts, "and haf been happy vith both. I haf worn de goloshes of Fortune and de goloshes of Misfortune, and dey both fit. You say vat is happiness? How could I haf been happy vith all de money and de land gone? Ach ja, read Epictetus. You mention Heine? Heine said he was not large enough to bear humiliation. But I say, Duchesse, dat I am too big for de leetle mousetraps of misfortune. Dey don't admit me!"

And then he began to shake with gentle laughter, and his eyes brightened as he recalled some of his escapades.

"You ask how I velt ven I sold dance music, and taught de dance?"

"Yes," she said; "you, a man of birth and culture."

"I velt like Baron von Habenichts," he replied. "Noting ever vanquished my pride. Noting ever destroyed *me*. Ach ja, I haf seen men blasted like trees by de lightning of life, but it plays about my head all de time, and I laugh. Listen, Duchesse, ve cannot onderstand de vorld, de universe, vat is called de cosmic; but let us haf de comic! Oh, but enough of dis. Vat are you going to do vith Dorrie? I vould like to see her."

"Impossible, Baron," said Arabella; "the corset-

maker is with her at this moment, and the hair-dresser is waiting."

"Ach ja," said Baron von Habenichts, laughing, "it all koms right."

"Let us go in to luncheon," said Arabella, rising, "and you will tell me all about your book."

"Haf you heard vat has happened to Sir John Marduke?" he asked as he offered his arm.

"No; do tell me," she said as they walked to the dining-room.

And during luncheon he gave her not only a rapid sketch of the history of dancing in all ages and in all countries, but told her of the event which had placed Monty Marduke in control of the Marduke fortune.

"And the amount? Do you remember the amount?" she asked. "How much has been saved?"

"Ach Gott, I tink it is over four hundred tousand pounds," he replied.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND

Now there is a biography of Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, in which the author attempts to belittle the part which Baron von Habenichts played in the final occurrences of this history. We beg very respectfully to differ from that author. *He* is evidently bent on the glorification of Arabella. *We*, on the contrary, desire only to ascertain the truth. And we hope that we have proved the truth to be this, that without the Baron von Habenichts there would have been no history to relate.

We have no desire to be unfair to Arabella. She did play an important part. But she played it at first grudgingly, and without the help of Baron von Habenichts she never would have played it at all. Dorothy was very reticent, and her reticence on so delicate a matter did her infinite credit. But eye-witnesses have told us that at first she suffered severely, and that Arabella subjected her to a terrible discipline. Arabella, indeed, became far more interested in Baron von Habenichts than in the poor foundling, the girl of the bright dark pedigree. That other author, busy with his deification of Arabella, scouts

the rumour. But we have had access to private papers which he has never seen, and we maintain that there is not only ground for suspicion, but for proof, that Arabella at last fell violently in love with Baron von Habenichts. She wrote him at least five hundred letters, she telephoned at least one thousand times, and everybody knows that he became a regular *habitué* of the house in Grosvenor Square.

This singular man seems to have been born in order to prove the truth of that saying of Burke, that the world is governed by go-betweens. Owing to the generosity and the persuasion of his new friends, he at last with reluctance shut the shutters of The Original Jellini Academy of Dancing, but he continued to dance in and out of the lives of some of the leading personages of our poor chronicle. The statue of Terpsichore was conveyed to Wix's Residential Hotel, where Mrs. Wix, who went into a rapture on its arrival, assigned to it a prominent position in the entrance lobby. It was only Mrs. Mepham who expressed astonishment and shock at the fact that the goddess wore so few clothes. On the other hand, many of the inmates gathered round the statue to listen to a lecture on ancient sculpture by Mr. Botolph. In the audience were Sir Samuel and Lady Epworth, Mr. Pumpherston, Mr. and Mrs. Coon, Mr. Snape, Mrs. Wix and Polly, while Wurm sat at a respectful distance on the stair. Mrs. Wix led

the cheering, and she was especially vociferous when Mr. Botolph quoted Greek. When at the end of the lecture Mr. Pumpherston ventured to criticise some of the lecturer's remarks, Sir Samuel Epworth rose and said that Mr. Pumpherston did not know what he was talking about. A scene was avoided only by the lucky arrival of Baron von Habenichts, who came smiling among his friends and apologised for having been delayed by important business with the elder Jedder, senior partner of the firm of Jedder and Jedder. There was considerable stir in the house when it became known that the friendly old gentleman, the owner and exponent of Terpsichore, was actually a Baron of the Austrian Empire. Mr. Botolph and Sir Samuel Epworth declared that they were not surprised, because they had long ago remarked his gentleness and good breeding. Mrs. Wix claimed the same perception, and offered the Baron a better room. She suspected that he was on the eve of some great good fortune, because the footman of Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, frequently delivered notes, and awaited replies. And it must be admitted that it was no longer in Wix's Residential Hotel, but in the house in Grosvenor Square, that the Baron's interests and anxieties now centred.

She who had been called the Democratic Duchess decided to solve in her own aristocratic way the difficult problem which had been presented to her. And

it was well for Monty Marduke and the girl he loved that they had Von Habenichts as the negotiator of the treaty of peace. The Baron had warned Monty that the conditions would be severe, and they were even severer than was expected. When in a moment of impatience the young man presented himself at Grosvenor Square he was refused an audience not only by Arabella, but by Miss Dorothy Darsham. The message which Von Habenichts had brought back was this, that the amount and the duration of the protection with which Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, *might* favour the foundling would partly depend on Mr. Marduke's behaviour. Moreover, the foundling in a statement in her own handwriting declared that during a period of six months, to be extended if necessary to a period of twelve, or even twenty-four, she would refuse to see Mr. Monty Marduke on any pretext whatever. Monty showed the document to the elder Jedder, who detected in it the craft of Arabella. But Baron von Habenichts advised Monty to accept the conditions and to be patient. Arabella made it perfectly clear to all whom it might concern that her ultimate decision regarding the interesting orphan would depend upon whether that orphan displayed certain signs of promise and achievement during the drastic process of education to which she was going to be subjected.

"How ridiculous you men are!" said Arabella to

Baron von Habenichts. "Do you really suppose that it would be possible to present this . . . this young person to Monsieur Dumaresq or Lady Lormington within six months or even twelve? I promise nothing. It is an experiment, a very dangerous one, and it is foolish of me to undertake it. But I will do it for the sake of Gascoigne (poor Gascoigne; you know, he *is* dead). She may turn out an absolute failure, and in that case I will be charitable, that is all. It would be uncharitable to launch her on a life for which she is unfit, and if Monty Marduke marries her he will be a fool. She will have nothing from me. I *think* there may be the right material in her. She will have great, very great beauty. But many a common woman has great beauty, my dear Baron. Well, we shall see. I am hoping, too, to be able to prove that the Earl, her father, did marry Louise Sherwin, the mother who, after all, was the daughter of a landed gentleman of Essex."

"You vill never prove it, and vat does it matter?" asked the baron, imperturbably. "Ah, do not break dat poor boy's heart. Two years! It is an eternity for lovers, Duchesse."

The dowager, however, refused to change one item of the plan which she had formed and which she set out with such energy to realise. Baron von Habenichts was told that he need not expect to see the orphan for a long time.

"Ach ja," he said, trying to comfort Monty, "de Duchesse has taken de Dorrie avay, and kidnapped de leetle girl. But vait. Haf patience. De Duchesse is great!"

How many scoldings and humiliations fell to the lot of the fortunate child before the great day when she was to be inspected and judged by Lady Lormington and Monsieur Dumaresq would require another book and a better author. Throughout that exasperating time Baron von Habenichts attempted in vain to mitigate the rigorous discipline upon which the mind of Arabella was set. She declared to him with a touch of playful venom that the young stranger was perfect in nothing, hopelessly imperfect in everything except in dancing.

"Now, child, stop weeping. You are making a fool of yourself. Hold yourself better. That is *not* the way to enter a room. Let me see your hands. Hem! Let me see you cut that peach. Hem! Well, it will do. Now rise again. Let me see you walk. Oh, *not* so fast! Let me see you bow. You are very *gauche*. That is *not* the way to bow to a gentleman, *not* the way to rise from table, *not* the way to leave a room. Are you utterly stupid?"

"Yes, aunt," said Dorothy, near the edge of tears.

"I did not give you permission to call *me* 'aunt'!" said the dowager, shaking her locks as

Banquo's ghost shook his and so terrified Macbeth. "Now go to your rooms."

Dorothy moved sorrowfully towards the door and attempted to stifle her sobs.

"Stop!" said the dowager. "What perfume are you using?"

"*Cœur de Jeannette*, Duchess," replied Dorothy.

"That is right. Now you may go."

A battalion of educationalists of all sorts and of both sexes had been enrolled. English masters, and masters of French, of German and of Italian, music and singing masters, dressmakers, milliners, boot and slipper makers, and makers of corsets, jewellers, manicurists, hair-dressers and parfumeurs — for these also are educationalists — were busy with the girl of the stained pedigree and were transforming her until she lost her identity and became a new creature. Two governesses and a lady's maid watched over her movements when walking or driving in the Park, when shopping, at matinées, at concerts, and in the riding school. No correspondence was permitted, but she was required to write a letter once a week to the dowager as a test of progress. She breakfasted, lunched, and dined with the governesses, and was never visible to any of Arabella's callers, who, however, had heard whispers that the dowager was engaged in an extraordinary experiment; but they dared not ask any questions.

"Don't be afraid of me, you foolish child," said Arabella one morning, as she held a sheet of paper in her hand; "who is responsible for your hair? Tell Frew that I do not admire that style. Well, pronounce these words — *Montagne, lointain, Princesse Lointaine, mille, menu, au revoir, garçon, fille, splendide, plaisir, nuit, plat, mystère, Talleyrand, Corneille, Villon, Regnier, Le Roi Soleil.*"

Dorothy repeated the words one by one, and her accent was better than Arabella's.

"What are you reading with Monsieur Bacourt?"

"'Le Rouge et le Noir,'" answered Dorothy.

"Really!" exclaimed the dowager. "I am surprised it is not 'Les Liaisons Dangereuses.' I must see Monsieur Bacourt about this. Stendhal I certainly admire. I believe it was Nietzsche who said that he was one of the great psychologists of the nineteenth century. But you are too young to read him. What is psychology? And tell me what you know of Nietzsche?"

To these last questions Dorothy gave very unsatisfactory answers, and was dismissed. The dowager was secretly pleased with her, but was too astute to display premature satisfaction. "She will grow into an extraordinarily lovely woman. There is no doubt about it. And I *think* she has brains. But the battle will not be won for a long time, Baron. Tell that foolish youth that if he makes any further

attempts to come here I will cut her adrift. She will certainly be lovely."

"Ach ja, Duchesse, and de vorld vorgives lovely vomen and brave men much," replied the baron. "Ve vorgive you, and ve vill vait."

CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD

And while we too are waiting we may glance again at the list of our minor mortals. For Dorothy's education was so prolonged that during the course of it many changes occurred in their lives and fortunes. To begin with, the negotiations with Sam Larkin were tedious as well as stormy, but they were in the cautious hands of the elder Jedder, and they were brought to a successful end. Dorothy was hardly surprised when the truth regarding her real parentage was at last revealed to her. She seemed to have awakened from a troubled dream, and all her past life became alien and unreal. Mr. Larkin's harsh treatment of her and her experiences with the two dreadful women made it impossible for her to indulge in any false sentiment of regret that she would probably never see any of the three again. Nevertheless, she was kind to Sam in his old age. On the advice of Jedder and with entire approval of it she assigned to Sam her right to the small inheritance which had come to her through her mother, the unfortunate Louise Sherwin, sometime mistress of the Earl of Swaffham. Sam had need of it be-

cause his affairs had lately been far from prosperous. He was eager to quit London for his Essex farm, and Mr. Jedder took admirable advantage of the opportunity. Mr. Jedder, in fact, purchased the cab-yard freehold, pulled down the old coach-houses and stables, erected a large property on the site, and ultimately reaped a profit of twenty-five thousand pounds. We cannot wander indefinitely through the labyrinth of causes, else we might pause to consider that once more even in the case of Mr. Jedder's good fortune, the hand of Baron von Habenichts is visible. For Mr. Jedder never would have been brought into relation with Larkin unless Baron von Habenichts had discovered Dorothy. Sam went gladly back to Essex and he took his sisters with him. After prolonged negotiations Mrs. Bleeks consented to be reconciled to her brother, and she declared that she had forgiven him. When she heard who "Herr Habenichts" was she received a shock, and proposed to write a letter of apology.

"Wot 's 'e thinkin' of the things I said to 'im, and 'im a Baron?" she exclaimed. "It 's enough to make a *cat* larf!"

But she passed her days tranquilly on the borders of Epping Forest, at peace with all the world with the exception of Mrs. Muzzey. She used to recall life in the cab-yard, and wondered where all the old cabs and cab horses and cabmen had gone. The cabs

had been sold for a song; the cab horses had gone the way of all flesh, and the cabmen were fast going. Swefling, with deep rage in his heart, and suffering in an obscure inarticulate way, went to Canada, and became a fierce horseman in the far West. That is all that is authentically known about him. Vardy found employment as groom in the stables of Mr. Monty Marduke, and began to learn better English and better manners. In Wix's Residential Hotel there was less change. Mrs. Mepham, Mr. Pumpherston, the Epworths, Mr. and Mrs. Coon, Mr. Snape, and Mr. Botolph still sat at the same table, and discussed with the same warmth the same topics. The absence of Baron von Habenichts, for reasons presently to be explained, was deplored by none so sincerely as by Mrs. Wix. Polly moped and drooped at the departure of Swefling, and was called "a rag bag" by her mother again, but she secretly cherished the hope of one day making her escape to Canada.

It was at Portland Place that the greatest change occurred. For Sir John Marduke, wearied out by his strange struggle with his own ideals, died at last, and was succeeded in the baronetcy by his son. An unfortunate estrangement had taken place between brother and sister. Minnie refused to contemplate her brother's proposed marriage, no matter what Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, might do for the bastard orphan, who, it was said, was to be the bride. Her

share in the Marduke estate brought her an ample maintenance, and she finally settled in Paris. And now Sir Monty was master of the house in Portland Place, exactly eleven months after Dorothy had been received by the dowager duchess. His astonishment when he heard of the real status of the old friend without whom he never could have met the girl whom he hoped to make his wife was very great, and his action was very characteristic. For he immediately invited Baron von Habenichts to be his guest in Portland Place. The baron accepted the invitation, but he left the statue of Terpsichore as a hostage with Mrs. Wix, and said that one day he might return. Sir Monty would not hear of it.

"I can never repay you," he said, "for all that you have done for Dorothy, never, never."

"Ach, I do not like de vord 'pay,'" replied the baron; "among vriends dere is no need of pay except vith de coin of kindness. Ve both vait vor dat terrible duchesse!"

Nevertheless, the baron discovered that his bank balance, which on the previous day had stood exactly at seventeen pounds three shillings and threepence, suddenly mounted to the sum of five thousand and seventeen pounds three shillings and threepence. With characteristic independence and pride he refused to accept so large a sum without offering security, and with great earnestness he proposed to transfer to the

young baronet the copyright of "The History of Dancing, in all Ages, and among all Peoples." Sir Monty, to please him, took over the rights, and the business was settled. It is true that the book had apparently no market value whatever, but its author maintained that its time was coming. Arabella had likewise made delicate inquiries as to the Baron's financial position, and eagerly desired to assist him. His serenity in the midst of poverty and no hope astonished her. But all that she got from him was —

"Ach ja, I vait. De future is de great pank for us all."

"Oh," she said to him one day, with a great shake of her curls, "I have had good news from Monsieur Dumaresq. *He* says that that horrible speculative banking company in which your capital was invested has been slowly recovering, and will yet liquidate all its debts."

"Ach ja," replied the baron, laughing, "I vill be dead by dat time. I haf danced my life avay. Vat are you doing vith Dorrie? Dat is de question. I vill be dead before I see her. And you break de boy's heart, too."

But Arabella shook her curls at him again, and remained obstinate. Her tyranny compelled him to become a conspirator, and with the help of a governess he succeeded in passing letters between the lovers. At the end of the first year Sir Monty expected that

the great moment of meeting had arrived, but Baron von Habenichts was told to inform him that Miss Dorothy Darsham, in the company of two governesses and a lady's maid, had gone to Paris to complete her education. Thereafter she was to start for Italy and the Levant, and she was to spend two months in Cairo, one in Athens, and one in Algiers. It was with the greatest difficulty that Baron von Habenichts prevented Sir Monty from following like a sleuthhound.

"Nein, vait," he said, "it all koms right, and I haf a plan."

His plan was as follows. It occurred to him that during this exasperating delay they should attempt to bring distinction to Dorothy, apart from anything which the dowager might be able to achieve for her. Now Mr. Jedder, during his negotiations with Sam Larkin, had discovered a dozen of her pictures in a coach-house. He was informed that they were the work and property of Miss Dorothy Darsham, and he sent them to Baron von Habenichts, who stored them in his room in Wix's Residential Hotel. He now decided to send some of them to the Spring Exhibition at the Academy, and others to an Exhibition in the Grafton Galleries. Sir Monty entered enthusiastically into the scheme, so that, unknown to Dorothy, her pictures were already hanging on the line. Laudatory notices began to appear in the newspapers

and the art journals and critics asked, "Who is Miss Dorothy Darsham?" Her name was mentioned along with the names of Angelica Kaufmann, Madame le Brun, and Rosa Bonheur. One picture entitled, "A London Cab Yard," was described as a masterpiece of characterisation, and was said to be "full of atmosphere." But the forest pieces attracted most attention. Thus it was at the private view of the Academy that Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, found herself standing before a charming little landscape called, "Morning in Epping Forest." She remarked upon it, and stood looking at it through her lorgnette.

"Ach ja, Duchesse," said Baron von Habenichts, who, in faultless frock coat and with his silk hat in his hand, was standing beside her. "De *Times* says it has de quality of Corot, and de *Morning Post* dat it has de quality of Vatteau."

"I cannot see how it can have both!" exclaimed Monsieur Dumaresq, "but it is perfectly charming, so cool, so full of the colour of the morning. Why, it has the dew in it!"

"I would like to have it," said Arabella. "I will buy it."

"I vould not be surprised if it is bought already, Duchesse," said von Habenichts, on the verge of laughter, smiling and exchanging knowing glances with Monsieur Dumaresq.

"Perhaps a dealer has bought it," said Arabella.

"Would you inquire? I will buy it from him."

Baron von Habenichts walked into another room while Arabella continued to study the picture and to express her admiration.

"A dealer, Duchesse?" exclaimed the baron, who had returned. "De dealer is Sir Monty Marduke."

"Then he is a double dealer," said Monsieur Dumaresq, who was in the secret.

"Monty! Oh?" said the dowager. "He has inherited his mother's love of pictures, then. I am glad. Who painted this? Will you look up the catalogue, Baron?"

Baron von Habenichts solemnly opened the catalogue at the right number, and read out the following — "'Morning in Epping Forest.' By Dorothy Darsham.'"

Arabella turned, and gave him a hurried look. "Ach ja," he said, laughing while Monsieur Dumaresq joined in, "she is vamous already. All de town talks about her."

"But *I* did n't know that she painted at all!" exclaimed Arabella. "Did you, Monsieur Dumaresq?"

"Yes," he said, "and I am only waiting impatiently to see her."

"This is a revelation," said Arabella, as she received the congratulations of her friends, and examined the picture once more.

"Where is she, Duchess?" asked Monsieur Dumaresq. "When are we to be privileged to see this extraordinary young creature?"

"I had a telegram from Budapest this morning," said Arabella, adding nothing.

But flushed and pleased she drove back to Grosvenor Square. There had been various rumours that a most romantic marriage was to take place in June, and Sir Monty Marduke's name was coupled with the name of a daughter of the Earl of Swaffham. She had come from nowhere, and the mystery thickened. The dowager looked forward with some anxiety to the *début* because she feared the tongues of the cacklers and of the scandal merchants of both sexes. At some moment she lost heart, and became angry with herself for having attempted the experiment. But she trusted friends like Lady Lormington, Monsieur Dumaresq, and Count Stein. The audacity, the generosity of the experiment would silence and baffle those who jibed and joked. Moreover, the dowager was conscious of the beginnings of old age, and she was looking out for an heir. She, too, had now become impatient for Dorothy's success. That success was assured the moment that Monsieur Dumaresq, with eye-glass duly mounted, uttered a subdued exclamation of delight and surprise when he saw the long-expected vision of beauty enter the room. She wore a mauve gown.

All eyes were upon her, and her triumph was instantaneous.

"She is perfectly lovely," whispered Lady Lormington to Arabella as they walked in to luncheon. It was a round table, and besides the hostess, Lady Lormington, and Dorothy, there were present Monsieur Dumaresq, Count Stein and Baron von Habenichts. The last was strangely silent. He had hardly recognised Dorothy, who had now the air of a *dame du monde.* He was almost too pleased to speak, and seemed to be transported to earlier scenes and to be busy with the fantasies of his phantasmagoria. Dorothy was not surprised to find him at her aunt's house, for she had already been told the true tale of his career. She sat between him and Monsieur Dumaresq.

"Ach ja," said the baron to her, "you miss some one? He koms, he koms."

Dorothy blushed. She acquitted herself admirably in conversation, and when she began to speak of Italy, Baron von Habenichts recovered his usual animation. He delighted Arabella by his quotation from the poetry of Lorenzo dei Medici, and it was with a smile and a glance at Dorothy that he repeated a verse of the song to a dancer —

> "Ella è direttamente ballerina
> Ch'ella si lancia come una capretta
> E gira più che ruota di mulina
> E dassi delle man nella scarpetta."

"When is the wedding to be?" asked Lady Lormington.

"Whenever they wish," replied Arabella, "she shall have my pearls, you know."

The guests departed as if by arrangement, and the dowager and Dorothy were left alone in the best drawing-room.

"Will you let me kiss you?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes," said Arabella, offering her old grey cheek, "and you can call me 'aunt' for ever. You are a dear child. I am very pleased with you."

At that moment Sir Monty Marduke was announced. But before the young baronet entered the dowager had risen, and had said to her niece, "Be sensible!" and with a shake of her curls had walked out by the east door in a very stately fashion.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOURTH

The ink bottle grows empty, the pen stumbles to its last paragraph, and our troupe come home one by one from their strolling. It was fitting that he who had been the most prominent in all their antics should play an important *rôle* in the final scene. Therefore, it was Baron von Habenichts who, at the most brilliant marriage of that season in London, gave the bride away. While the house in Portland Place was being prepared for the reception of the new Lady Marduke, he had gone quietly back to Wix's Residential Hotel. Mrs. Wix was deceived, however, if she supposed that he would remain for any length of time. The baron was somewhat annoyed by a recent action of Mr. Coon, who, unable to control his journalistic instincts, had sent long accounts of his career to the newspapers under the title of "The Dancing Baron," and "The Dancing Philosopher." Now we certainly know that he was not a whit ashamed of his adventures. But Mr. Coon had embellished his narrative with imaginative matter some of which was offensive. The Baron was besieged by reporters. He laughed very heartily when

he was invited to appear on the variety stage. The Baron had actually become famous, and the four or five thousand volumes of "The History of Dancing" were brought from the cellar in which they were mouldering, and were placed upon the book market. A new edition was announced, whereupon Sir Monty Marduke gallantly retransferred the copyright to the author. Articles and paragraphs began to appear in the Press concerning the foreign nobleman who had doffed his *noblesse* and had fought and defied poverty in London, and had taught polkas and quadrilles, minuets and the two-step in The Original Jellini Academy of Dancing. Mrs. Wix was much pleased when she saw her parlour crowded by interviewers. There was a great demand for bedrooms, and the house began to fill. She offered the baron a suite for nothing, and was offended at his refusal.

"Ach ja," said he, turning to Mr. Botolph with a laugh, "it 's like the innkeeper who kept Dumas père as a show, and gave him food and drink for noting. Only I am not Dumas!"

Mrs. Wix's attentions and those of Mr. Coon and even of Mr. Pumpherston began to weary him. Mr. Snape the dentist had likewise developed into a bore. He had written a long book on the "Physiology of Sneezing," insisted on reading immense passages to the baron, and asked him as a successful author and as a great gentleman to use his influence to have the

book published. The baron, however, genially expressed his regret, and then sneezed. Life at Wix's was becoming burdensome in spite of the entertainment which was still provided by Sir Samuel Epworth's hilarity, and in spite of the friendship of Mr. Botolph, who implored Baron von Habenichts to remain.

But on a certain evening in June there was consternation in the hotel. A large van was at the door, and the statue of Terpsichore was being carried down the steps on the shoulders of four stalwart men. A trunk and a travelling bag each with the name Habenichts followed Terpsichore into the van. Moreover, other luggage labelled "Henry Botolph, Esq.," was placed on the roof of a four-wheeled cab which was in waiting. Mrs. Wix was casting recriminations on the baron and accusing him of conspiracy. For Wurm had decided to follow him and die in his service, and a chambermaid had made the same declaration.

"They did n't give notice," said Mrs. Wix, angrily. "*I* won't pay wages to 'em."

"I told them not to kom, Mrs. Vix. But they kom! Good-bye! I vill pay de vages," said the baron, leading the procession down the steps.

Wurm and the chambermaid went off, walking, and Mr. Botolph and the baron entered the cab after they had waved farewell to the Wixians assembled at the door.

That morning a conversation had taken place between Mr. Botolph and the baron in Mrs. Wix's parlour while they were drinking Madeira together. The baron said that he had an extraordinary communication to make. On the previous day Sir Monty Marduke had driven up in a smart dog-cart, attended by a smart groom of the name of Vardy, who stood at the horse's head while the young baronet entered Wix's Residential Hotel, and asked to see Baron von Habenichts. The interview had been a most affecting one, and much that passed between the two men cannot be revealed. It may be said, however, that after Sir Monty's departure the baron was hardly master of his own emotion. His eyes were suffused, and he was not altogether capable of giving expression to his feeling. But he was glad that Mr. Botolph came into the room because he desired to speak to him. Mr. Botolph sat in an armchair, and, as usual, he had Bradshaw in his hand.

"I am," he said, "just going over to Euston to meet the train from Liverpool. My son is sure to be there. This is the great surprise."

"Oh, Mr. Botolph," said Baron von Habenichts, "virst listen to me. *I* haf a great surprise. Ja, extraordinary! Sir Monty has just told me incredible news. Oh, vat do you suppose? He says that he has bought a fine house in Russell Square, vurnished it, dat it is mine for life vith one tousand five hundred

a year. Dey haf been preparing it during de last two months, and de duchesse help them."

"I am delighted," said Mr. Botolph. "He is a splendid young fellow, and he shows his gratitude for all that you have done for his future wife. The marriage takes place this week."

"Yes," replied the baron, "my leetle tancer is de vonder of de season. All rave about her, and de duchesse is praised vor de great success. But dat is not all. Anoder great surprise. I ask you to kom and live vith me. Vat could I do alone in de big house? Kom, Mr. Botolph."

Mr. Botolph's refined pale face was illuminated by a faint smile as he rose and shook his friend's hand.

"I will be your guest for a short time with the greatest pleasure," he said; "but I am a poor man, and you are about to enter, you have already re-entered the kind of society to which you really belong. Besides, what about my son? He will wish his father to live with him after such a separation."

"Ach ja," replied Baron von Habenichts, turning away his head, "dere will be room vor him, too."

"Oh, this is my dream!" exclaimed Mr. Botolph. "Thank you, thank you. Just forgive me. I'll run across to Euston to meet him, and I will tell him. Oh, this is my dream!"

Mr. Botolph went, and came back, after twenty

minutes, and sank exhausted in his chair again. Then he said softly, but in a tone of assurance which showed that his mind would never lose hold of its undying illusion —

"Not there! But it is only an adjournment."

Now, to the dark philosophy which teaches that the human soul has lost the way of happiness and can never find it, Baron von Habenichts replied that it can never find it outside of itself. He knew, of course, that Mr. Botolph's son would never return. He knew that his own property was lost for ever, but he said that the soul's real property is in its emotions. His own plunge into poverty had taught him that there is hardly any situation on which character may not react, and react with victory, for a man's character is his Providence. Life may be acid, but the soul need not become the acidimeter.

"Ach ja, Mr. Botolph," he said, when they were both sitting after dinner at their wine in the dining-room at Russell Square, "dere is a law vich is true in morals as also in gymnastics. If you climb and turn giddy, do not look down. De giddiness becomes vorse. Look up, and it goes avay!"

A tall footman of the name of Ridpath, who, since we last met him, has made wonderful progress in his education, opens the door of the house in Russell Square, and he has to open it frequently because Baron von Habenichts has troops of friends. The first

object which meets the eye of the visitor as he enters the house is the statue of Terpsichore from which its owner has decided never to part, because she is the symbol of the dance and rhythm of things. And Terpsichore is at home there, because occasionally the baron gives a dance to which Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, and Lady Marduke bring distinguished and fascinating young guests.

"You are one of those rare men," said Mr. Botolph, "who remain unpoisoned by the poisons of this world."

"I haf had a happy life, Mr. Botolph," replied the baron. "I haf seen de fun everywhere, in Mrs. Vix's as well as vith de duchesse. Ve must take risks. Ven de potter makes a vase he knows it is a risk becose a vase is easily broken. Ach ja, and ven Gott makes a heart, He knows it is a risk becose a heart is easily broken. I like de hearts dat break as de day breaks into sunshine! I like de varm flesh and blood, not de vrozen meat of humanity! I repeat to myself de lines of de Orphic formula —

'To hold a hand uplifted over Hate,
And shall not Loveliness be loved for ever!'"

He was a man who had never done an ungenerous act, who had never given to an ungenerous thought guest-room in his brain. He was everywhere welcome, and hardly a day passed on which he was not visited by Sir Monty and Lady Marduke, of whose happiness

he was the author. Mr. Botolph leads a dreamier and more secluded life. Often his host, standing at the dining-room window and looking out over the Square, observes him furtively escaping in the direction of Euston to meet the son who will never arrive. And then, if it be an afternoon in spring or in summer, the baron walks in the pleasant gardens where, under the great trees, he can hear, like the breaking of waves far off, the roar of London.

Post Scriptum

The author had scarcely completed his task when he made a remarkable discovery. He was aware, as the text shows, of the letters which Arabella, Duchess of Berkshire, wrote to Baron von Habenichts, but he had never seen the baron's replies. These have now been placed in his hands, and the entire correspondence contains the most moving history since Heloise and Abelard. For it not only reveals the patience, long suffering and delicate chivalry of the baron, and the vigour and excitement of Arabella, but it throws a very startling light on the intrigue and jealousy of Monsieur Dumaresq, Count Stein, Lady Lormington, and many others. The two houses in Grosvenor and Russell Square became, indeed, *foci* of wonderful conspiracy, and it was in vain that Sir Monty and Lady Marduke attempted to prevent war between the two camps. The letters are full of Habenichtian wisdom, and, besides, they contain many references to the baron's former associates. Sir Samuel Epworth, even Mr. Pumpher-

ston, even Mrs. Wix, even Mrs. Bleeks reappear in Russell Square, and the baron's later life was not as tranquil as it promised to be. An effort will be made to reduce all this overflowing material to order, and to publish it in due season.

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