

**ROLF  
BOLDREWOOD**

WAR TO THE  
KNIFE

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# Rolf Boldrewood

## War to the Knife / or Tangata Maori

### CHAPTER I

Massinger Court in Herefordshire was a grand old Tudor mansion, the brown sandstone walls and tiled roofs of which had been a source of pride to the inhabitants of the county for untold generations. Standing in a fair estate of ten thousand acres, three roods, and twenty-eight perches (to be accurate), with a nominal rental of somewhat over fifteen thousand a year, it might be thought that for the needs of an unmarried man of eight and twenty there was "ample room and verge enough."

Beside the honour and glory of being Massinger of Massinger, and inhabiting "The Court," the erstwhile residence of a royal princess, with its priceless heirlooms and memories!

Many a newly enriched proprietor would have given his eyes to have possessed them by hereditary right.

For, consider, what a place, what a possession, it was!

Thus, many a maid, many a matron of the town and county, had often reflected in appraising the matrimonial value of the eligible suitors of the neighbourhood.

Think of the grand hall, sixty feet in length, twenty-six in width, extending to the roof with its fine old oaken rafters and queer post trusses! Think of the floor of polished oak, the walls with their priceless oak panelling, with carved frieze and moulded cornice; the mullioned windows, with arched openings giving light to King Edward's corridor on the first floor, carried across one corner of the hall by the angle gallery!

Then – glory of glories! – the bay, ten feet wide and nine deep, with windows glazed in lead squares, and extending to the springing of the roof.

Here was a place to sit and dream, while gazing over the park, in the glowing yet tender light of an early summer morn, the while the châtelaine tripped down the broad oaken staircase at the opposite end of the hall, with its carved grotesque-headed newels.

Boudoir and billiard-room, dining and drawing-room, library and morning-room, were they not all there, admirably proportioned, in addition to a score of other needful, not to say luxurious, apartments?

Thus much for the domestic demesne, the suzerainty of which is dear to every woman's heart.

From a man's point of view – at Massinger Moor were the head keeper's lodge and kennels; these last slated, with iron caged runs, stone-paved, iron-doored, complete.

The river Teme is famed for excellent trout-fishing. Salmon also are not unknown in the water. But, in this connection be it known, that for centuries past the lords of the manor have permitted the townspeople to fly-fish (for trout only) in that length of the river below the bridge.

"And then, her heritage, it goes  
Along the banks of Tame;  
In meadows deep the heifer lows,  
The falconer and woodsman knows  
Her thickets for the game."

As much as this might be said for the woods and coverts of "The Court," since that old time when "the forest laws were sharp and stern," and the Conqueror stood no nonsense where "the tall deer that he loved as his own children" were concerned.

The descendants of these well-beloved and interesting animals were by no means scarce in "The Chase," which was still jealously preserved for them as of old.

The North Herefordshire hounds met three days a week, the Milverton hounds two days, the Ledbury were only just across the boundary, while, for fear the squire and his visitors might feel a *souçon* of ennui in the season, the South Boulton harriers are available, and, to fill up any conceivable chink, the Dunster otter-hounds were within easy reach.

Thus, man's every earthly need being provided for, his spiritual welfare was by no means forgotten.

In the parish church, as was befitting in days of old, before the doctrine of equality and the "flat burglary" of democracy were so much as named, was reserved for the lords of Massinger and their assigns, by sale or lease, the whole of the south aisle and chapel. And as the church was within five minutes' walk of the Court, all pedestrian fatigue, as well as the indecency of taking out carriages and horses on the Sabbath, was avoided.

Now, from an earthly paradise like this, why should the lawful owner, young, good-looking, cultured, athletic, think for one moment of fleeing to the desert, socially, and no doubt literally, of a distant, almost unknown British colony?

Was there an angel with a flaming sword? If so, she was typified in the guise of Hypatia Tollemache. Was she mad?

Must be. He, of course, utterly moonstruck, inasmuch as there is well known to be throughout all England a sufficiency of marriageable damsels – even, as some have averred, a redundancy of that desirable national product. If the county had been polled, they would have voted for a *de lunatico inquirendo*.

Was there a hidden reason? There could not be.

He was not rich, but Massinger had stood many an extravagant squire in the old days without losing the estate which had come down from father to son since the Conquest, and would again so continue to descend, with a prudent marriage in aid of rent and relief of mortgages.

But there was a reason besides what lay on the surface, and the old family lawyer, Mr. Nourse, of Nourse and Lympett, knew it well. More than a hundred years ago there had been a sudden-appearing re-incarnation of one of the most reckless spendthrifts – and there had been more than one in the annals of the family – that had ever scandalized the county, frightened the villagers, and wasted like water the revenues which should have kept up the ancient traditions of the house.

Rainauld de Massinger had the misfortune to be a living anachronism. Born out of due time, he was at odds with the age and the circumstances amidst which his lot had been cast. Despising the unlettered squirearchy of his day, and the nearly as uncongenial nobility of the county, he threw himself with ardour into the semi-scientific, wholly visionary studies which, under the name of astrology, amused the leisure of those personages who could not content themselves with the dull round of duties and coarse dissipations which the manners of the age prescribed. He constructed a laboratory in one of the turret-rooms, which only he and his confidential servant, a grave, silent Italian, were suffered to enter. From time to time mysterious strangers of foreign habit and alien language arrived at Massinger, and were entertained with every mark of high respect. The villagers spoke with awe of midnight fires in the turret-room, of the strange sounds, the evil-smelling fumes thence proceeding, with other innovations proper in their untutored fancies to the occupation of a sorcerer. Seldom did he visit the Court, and when at rare intervals his tall figure and dark saturnine face were remarked in the throng of nobles, they inspired dislike or distrust more than kindly sentiment. Not that such feelings were openly displayed. For he had brought back from his travels in the East, and the far countries in which he had spent his early manhood, a reputation for swordsmanship which caused even the reckless gallants of the day to pause ere they lightly aroused the ire of one who was known to hold so cheaply his own life and that of others.

It was known that he had fought as a volunteer in the long Roumanian war with the Turks, in which it was popularly reported that he bore a charmed life; such had been his almost incredible daring, such had been the miraculous escapes from captivity and torture. And yet, all suddenly relinquishing a career which promised unusual brilliancy in court and camp, he had for years shut himself up in the old hall at Massinger, devoting himself to those unblessed studies which had excited the distrust of his neighbours, the displeasure of the Church, the cynical wonder of his peers.

Departing with his usual eccentricity from the course which he had apparently laid down for himself, he for a season quitted his lonely studies, once more mingled in the gaities of the county, even consented to grace the revels of royalty with his presence. His manner at such times was gracious, courtly, and strongly interesting. Like many men of his character and reputation, he exercised an almost resistless fascination over the fairer sex when he chose to enter the lists. It was so in this instance. He succeeded, in despite of a host of rivals and the opposition of her parents, in winning the hand of the beautiful Elinor de Warrenne, the daughter of a neighbouring baronet of lands and honours hardly inferior to his own. For a year or more the gloom which rested on his spirit seemed to have passed away. Happy in the possession of an heir, his conduct after marriage put to shame the ominous predictions of friends and foes. His wife was fondly attached to him. His stately manners had won sympathy for her, and the approval of the *grandes dames* of the county. He conciliated the tenantry; the ordinary duties of his station were not neglected. The happiest results were expected. He was even spoken of for the representation of the county; when, abruptly as he had emerged, he once more retreated into the seclusion of his laboratory, resisting all the efforts of his heart-broken wife and friendly wellwishers to cause his return to the duties of his rank and station.

For more than a year he pursued in gloom and silence his self-appointed task, only taking exercise at night, and from time to time, as before, joining with sorcerers and necromancers (as the neighbourhood fully believed) in unblessed study, if not unholy rites. On one eventful morn, suspicion being aroused, search was made for him, when the turret was found to be vacant, save of broken crucibles, strange scrolls, and other remnants of the so-called "black art." The seasons came and went, Massinger Chase grew fair in early spring and summer prime, the leaves of many autumns faded and fell, the heir grew from a rosy infant to a sturdy schoolboy – a tall stripling. Then the lady pined and withered, after lingering sadly in hope of the return of him who never again crossed the threshold of his ancient hall.

She was laid to rest with the dames of her race. An authentic statement of the death of Sir Rainauld reached England from abroad, and his son, Sir Alured, reigned in his stead.

Meanwhile, it had been discovered after his departure that large sums had been disbursed, and payments made to foreign personages. Warrants and vouchers, legally witnessed, were in the hands of financiers whose demands could not be legally resisted. Sale had to be made, with the concurrence of Sir Alured when he came of age, of portions of the estate, which seriously curtailed its area and importance. Sir Alured, however, an easy-going, unambitious youth, had promised his mother, of whom he was passionately fond, to break the entail. Contented with the field-sports and homely pleasures which there was no present danger of his being forced to relinquish, he cared little for the future. Notwithstanding the sacrifice of the goodly acres which (in addition to his portrait in the costume of a Roumanian heiduck, hanging in King Edward's corridor) gave Sir Rainauld's descendants something to remember him by, it had been found necessary to negotiate another loan upon the security of the estate. This was looked upon as an unimportant, easily released encumbrance at the time; but, like all the tentacles of the dire octopus, Debt, it had a tendency to draw the debtor closer to that gaping maw, down which in all ages have gone the old and worn, the young and fair, the strong and brave, all sorts and conditions of men.

Sir Alured had no desire to pry into the arcana of science, nor did he show curiosity about the transmutation of metals. Indolent, if not self-indulgent, he was wholly averse to the examination of accounts. The interest on the mortgage, with occasional loans, increased the liability notably before

his death; so that when our hero, Sir Roland (an ancestor had fought at Roncesvalles), came into the estate on attaining his majority, he was startled at the portentous amount for which he stood liable to the mortgagee.

Being, however, for his age, a sensible young person, he set himself to live quietly, to reduce expenses, and in a general way to pay off his liabilities by degrees. Just as he had formed these meritorious resolves, rents commenced to fall. Old tenants, who had been punctual and regular of payment, began to decline from their proud position, asking for time, and, what was still worse, for abatement of rent. And with a show of reason. What with the importation of cheap meat, butter, wheat, and oats – all manner of farm produce, indeed, produced in colonies and other countries – the English farmer found himself unable to continue to pay rents calculated on prices which seemed to have fled for ever. It was hoped that farm commodities would regain their value, but they receded for the two years which were to see a recovery. Finally, after consultations with Messrs. Nourse and Lympett, it was decided that, at Sir Roland's present scale of expenditure, there needed to be no compulsory sale in his time. An heiress would set all right. Sir Roland must marry money. It was his duty to his family, his duty to the county, his duty to England.

Then Massinger Court could be restored to its former splendour, and the estate to its legitimate position in the county.

Sir Roland did not assent or otherwise to these propositions. He did not particularly want to marry – just yet, at all events. He was too happy and comfortable as he was. Even with his curtailed revenues, he found the position of a country gentleman pleasant and satisfactory. He was not expected to do much, whereas everybody, old and young, were most anxious to make themselves useful and agreeable to him. Of course a man must marry some day.

So much was clearly the duty of the heir of Massinger. The ancient house must not be suffered to become extinct.

Strangely enough, the succession had always gone in the direct line. But there was no hurry. He had not seen any one so far on whom he was passionately anxious to confer the title of Lady Massinger. So, matters might be worse. In this philosophical frame of mind, he told himself that he was content to remain a bachelor for the next half-dozen years or so, during which period his pecuniary affairs might be expected to improve rather than otherwise.

At eight and twenty a man is young – very young indeed, as occasionally reflects the middle-aged *viveur*, looking regretfully back on the feats and feelings of his lost youth. Sir Roland was fairly well equipped, according to the society needs of the day. An Oxford degree taken creditably guaranteed all reasonable literary attainment; at any rate, the means and method of further development. Fond of field-sports, he shot brilliantly and rode well. Vigorous and active, neither plain nor handsome, but having an air of distinction – that subtle but unmistakable accompaniment of race – he yet presented few points of divergence from the tens of thousands of youthful Britons capable, in time of need, of calm heroism and Spartan endurance, but unaware of any pressing necessity for stepping out of the beaten track.

Though unostentatious by nature and habit, it was not to be supposed that the name of Sir Roland Massinger, of Massinger Court, was unfamiliar to matrons with marriageable daughters, as well in his own county, as in the Mayfair gatherings which he did not disdain during the season.

More than one of his fair partners would not have objected to bear his name and title embellished, as his position could not fail to be, by the handsome settlements which her father's steadfast attention to trade would enable him to make.

But, so far, all appreciative reception of his ordinary courtesies – the sudden glance, the winning smile, the interested attention to his unstudied talk, conservatory lounges, country-house visits – all the harmless catalogue of the boy-god's snares and springes, were wasted on this careless wayfarer, protected by a lofty ideal and an untouched heart.

Though he had listened politely to the prudent counsel of his man of business as to the necessity of repairing his attenuated fortune by marriage, such an arrangement had never been seriously contemplated by him. He felt himself capable of a passionate attachment to the princess of his dreams, could Fate but lead him into her presence. Not as yet had he encountered her. That was beyond doubt. He would await the voice of the oracle. In the meanwhile he was far from being *ennuyé*. There was a mildly pleasurable sensation in merely contemplating "the supreme psychological moment" from afar, and speculating as to situations not yet arisen. He awaited in resigned contentment the goddess-moulded maiden. In the meanwhile he was not minded to worship at the shrines of the lesser divinities.

Was Fate, unsmiling, ironic, even now listening to the too-presumptuous mortal?

It would appear so. For, shortly after making these prudential resolutions, he met at a military ball the beautiful Hypatia Tollemache, who decided the question of elective affinity once and for ever. One look, a brief study of her unrivalled graces, an introduction, an entrancing interchange of ideas after a deliriously thrilling dance – even a second waltz, perilously near the end of the evening – and the solemn chime from the ancient tower, found an echo in his heart, which seemed to ring "forever, ever, ever, forever."

That there are moments like this in men's lives, fateful, irrevocable, who may doubt? Sir Roland did not, at any rate. All the forces of his nature were aroused, electrically stimulated, magnified in power and volume. As they separated conventionally, and he delivered her into the care of her chaperon, the parting smile with which she favoured him seemed the invitation of an angelic visitant. He could have cast himself at her feet, had not the formalism of this too-artificial age forbidden such abasement.

When he returned to the country house where he was staying, he examined himself closely as to his sensations.

How had he, the cool and indifferent Roland Massinger, come to be so affected by this – by *any* girl? He could almost believe in the philtre of the ancients. It wasn't the champagne; he had forgotten all about it, besides being by habit abstemious. Supper he had hardly touched. It could not even be a form of indigestion – here he laughed aloud. Surely his reason wasn't giving way? He had heard of abnormal brain-seizures. But he was not the sort of man. He had never worked hard, though steadily at college. And, when a man's appetite, sleep, and general health were faultless, what could have caused this dire mental disturbance? He went to bed, but sleep was out of the question. Throwing open the window, he gazed over the hushed landscape. The moon, immemorial friend of lovers, came to his aid. Slowly and majestically she rose, silvering over the ruined abbey, the ghostly avenue, the far-seen riverpools, as with calm, luminous, resistless ascent, she floated higher and yet higher through the cloud-world. Gradually his troubled spirit recognized the peaceful influence. His mind became composed, and betaking himself to bed, he sank into a slumber from which he was only aroused by the dressing-bell.

The cheerful converse of a country-house breakfast succeeding a prolonged shower-bath and a satisfactory toilette, restored him to a condition more nearly resembling his usual frame of mind. He was, however, rallied as to his sudden subjugation, which had not escaped the keen critics of a ball-room. In defence, he went so far as to admit that Miss Tollemache was rather a nice girl, and so on, adding to the customary insincerities a doubt whether "she wasn't one of the too-clever division. Scientific, or something in that line, struck me?"

"That's all very well, Sir Roland," said a lively girl opposite to him. "You needn't try to back out of your too-evident admiration of the fair Hypatia – we all saw it. Why, you never took your eyes off her from the moment she came into the room, till you put her into the carriage. You forgot your dance with me. You never *once* asked Jennie Castanette; she used to be your favourite partner. A sudden attack of *whatsyname* at first sight, don't they call it?"

"You ought to know best," he replied; "but Miss Tollemache is certainly handsome, or, rather, distinguished-looking; seems clever too, above the average, though she avoided literary topics."

"Clever!" retorted his fair opponent. "I should think she is, though I defy you to do more than guess at it from her talk; she is so unpretending in her manner, and has a horror of showing off. Do you know what she did last year? There wasn't a girl that came near her in the University examinations."

"So much the worse for her chances of happiness or that of the man that marries her – if she is not too 'cultured' to marry at all."

"How do you make that out?"

"There are three things that tend to spoil a woman's character in the estimation of all sensible men," he answered: "beauty, money, or pre-eminent intellect. The beauty is flattered into outrageous vanity and frivolity. The heiress is besieged by suitors and toadies whose adulation fosters selfishness and arrogance. The third is perhaps the least evil, as after it is demonstrated that its possessor cannot lay down the law in private life, as she is prone to do, she retains a reserve of resources within herself, and mostly makes a rational use of them. Depend upon it, the post of honour is a 'middle station.'"

"Indeed! I am delighted to hear it," replied Miss Branksome. "So we poor mediocrities who have neither poverty nor riches – certainly not the last – and who don't profess beauty, have a fair chance of happiness? I was not quite sure of it before. And now, having unburdened yourself of all this 'philosophy in a country house,' you will dash off in pursuit of Hypatia directly you find out what she is going to do today. What will you give me if I tell you? 'Have you seen my Sylvia pass this way?' and so on."

"Hasn't she gone back to Chesterfield?" he asked.

"So it was erroneously supposed. But Lady Roxburgh will tell you when she comes down that she brought off a picnic to the ruins of St. Wereburgh's Abbey; that she has been invited from the Wensleydales, and all the house-party here are going. Unless, of course, you would prefer to stay behind and have a peaceful day in the library?"

Sir Roland's face betrayed him. No human countenance, after such contending emotions as had almost "rent his heart in twain," could have retained its immobility.

"There now!" said Miss Branksome, scornfully. "'What a piece of work is man!' etc. I have been reading Shakespeare lately – on wet mornings."

"But are you certain as to the programme?"

"Clara Roxburgh is my authority. The arrangement was made at an early hour this morning. You are relied on to drive the drag conveying the ladies of this household, including my insignificant self – not without value, I trust, to *some* people, however we poor ordinary mortals may be overshadowed by 'sweet girl graduates.'"

"Then may I venture to ask you, with Lady Roxburgh's permission, to occupy the box seat?"

"That's very sweet of you; *faute d'autre*, of course. Her ladyship's nerves won't permit of her taking it herself. And now let me give you a little advice – 'honest Injun,' I mean – in all good faith and friendship, though I know you men don't believe in our capacity for that. Don't be too devoted. It's a mistake if you want to be successful; any girl could tell you. We are mostly annoyed if we're run after. There's nothing like indifference; it piques us. Then, if we like a man, we run after *him* – in a quiet ladylike way, of course. Do you follow?"

"Oh yes; a thousand thanks. Pray go on."

"I have only one other bit of warning. You're a lot older than me, and I dare say you think you know best, as I'm not long out. But you don't. Some day you'll see it. In the meantime don't give away *all* your heart before you make sure of a fair return. She may lead you on – unconsciously, of course – which means she wouldn't be rude to you and all the rest of it. But my idea is, she doesn't know what she wants just now. She's the sort of girl that thinks she's got a career before her. She won't be satisfied with the regulation returned affection, matrimony business."

"But surely such a woman has no commonplace thoughts, no vulgar ideals. She is incapable of such paltry bargaining for wealth or position."

"You think so? I don't say she's worse than any other girl who's got such a pull in the way of looks, brains, family, and all the rest of it. But none of us like to go cheap, and the love in a cottage business, or even a man like yourself of good county family, but *not* rich, *not* distinguished – h'm – as yet, *not* a power socially or politically in the land, is scarcely a high bid for a first-class property in the marriage market like Hypatia Tollemache."

"My dear Miss Branksome, don't talk like that. It pains me, I assure you."

"Perhaps it does, but it will do you good in the long run. It's pretty true, as you'll find out in time. And now, as I hear Lady Roxburgh coming downstairs, and I've talked enough nonsense for one morning, I'll go and get ready for the drag party. You'll know soon that I have no personal interest in the matter, though I've liked you always, and don't wish to see your life spoiled by a sentimental mistake."

And so this very frank young woman departed, just in time to meet the hostess, who, coming forward, explained her late arrival at the breakfast table by saying that she had to send off messages about the picnic party and an impromptu dance for the evening. She verified Miss Branksome's information respecting the drag, and the responsible office of coachman which Sir Roland expressed himself most willing to accept. But all the time he was suitably attiring himself; and even during a visit of inspection to the stables for the purpose of interviewing the well-matched team, and having a word or two with the head groom, a feeling of doubt would obtrude itself as he recalled the well-meant, unconventional warning of Miss Bessie Branksome.

"I suppose women know a good deal more about each other's ways than we do," he reflected. "But an average girl like Miss Branksome, good-hearted and well-intentioned, as she no doubt is, can no more enter into the motives of a woman like Miss Tollemache than a milkmaid could gauge the soul of a duchess. In any case, I must take my chance, and I shall have the satisfaction of taking my dismissal from *her* lips alone, for no other earthly authority will detach me from the pursuit. So that's settled."

And when Roland Massinger made use of that expression in soliloquy or otherwise, a certain line of action was definitely followed. Neither obstacles nor dissuasions had the smallest weight with him. In general, he took pains to work out his plans and to form his opinion before committing himself to them. This, however, he admitted, was an exception to his rule of life. Rule of life? It *was* his life – his soul, mind, body – everything. "Whatever stirs this mortal frame" – of course. What did Byron say about love? "'Tis woman's whole existence." Byron didn't know: he had long since squandered the riches of the heart, the boundless wealth of the affections. He could *write* about love. But the real enthralling, all-absorbing, reverential passion of a true man's honest love, he did not know, never could have known, and was incapable of feeling.

After this burst of blasphemy against the acknowledged high priest of "Venus Victrix," the great singer of "love, and love's sharp woe," Sir Roland felt relieved, if not comforted.

Then came the more mundane business of the day. The girls' chatter, always more or less sweet in his ears, like the half-notes of thrushes in spring; the arranging of pairs, and the small difficulties in mounting to the high seats of the drag; the monosyllabic utterances of the swells, civil and military, who helped to compose the party, at length came to an end.

Finally, when, with pretty, lively, amusing Miss Branksome on the box seat beside him, he started the well-matched team, and, rattling down the avenue, swept through the park gates, and turned into the road which led to St. Wereburgh's, he felt once more in comparative harmony with his surroundings.

"Now, Sir Roland, you look more like your old self – like the man we used to know. You take my tip, and back your opinion for all you're worth. If it comes off, well and good; if it's a boil-over, pay and look pleasant. If you knew as much about girls as I do, you'd know there *are* as good fish in the sea, etc., though you men won't believe it. Now, promise me not to do the Knight of the Woeful Countenance any more, won't you?"

"As the day is so fine, for a wonder, and the horses are going well together, not to mention the charming company of Miss Branksome on the box seat, who would be perfect if she would drop the didactic business, I think I may promise."

So, shaking himself together by a strong effort of will, such as he remembered when acting in private theatricals, he defied care and anxiety, enacting the gay worldling with pronounced success. So much so, that between his prowess as a whip and his cheery returns to the airy badinage usual on such occasions, he ran a close second to a cavalry officer on leave from India for the honourable distinction of "the life of the party."

Pleasant enough indeed was their progress through one of the most picturesque counties in England, but when they stopped within full view of the venerable ivy-clad ruin, of which a marvellous gateway and a noble arch still remained perfect, Sir Roland's gaze did not rest on those time-worn relics of ancient grandeur.

"She's not here yet," said Miss Branksome, with a smile, after the descent from the drag and the regulation amount of handshaking, greeting, and "How are you?" and "How is your dear mother?" had been got through. "The Wensleydales have farther to come, and I doubt if their horses are as fast as ours. Oh yes! now I see them – just behind that waggon in the lane, near the bridge. Hypatia is on the box beside young Buckhurst. *He* can't drive a bit; that's a point in your favour, if you can get her to exchange with me going back. I'll suggest it, anyhow."

Sir Roland gave his guide, philosopher, and friend a look of such gratitude that she began to laugh; but, composing her countenance to an expression of the requisite propriety, she advanced to the rival coach, and so timed her movements that he was enabled to help the fair Hypatia to the ground – a slight, but smile-compelling service, which repaid the giver a hundredfold.

Taking a mean advantage of Buckhurst, who was compelled for some reason to overlook the unharnessing of his horses, he thereupon walked away with the entrancing personage towards the assembled party, abandoning Miss Branksome, who discreetly preferred to busy herself in animated conversation with the newcomers.

After this fortunate commencement all went well. Smiling as the morn, pleased (and what woman is not?) with the marked attention of a "personage," Miss Tollemache confessed the exhilaration proper to that pleasantest of informal gatherings – a picnic to a spot of historic interest in an English county, with congenial intimates, and perhaps still more interesting strangers.

Her companion was well up in the provincial records, and thereby in a position of superiority to the rest of the company conversationally.

They had pulled up for lunch in the meadow, deep-swarded and thick with the clovers white and purple, mingled with the tiny fodder plants which nestle around a ruin in green England. The party was full of exclamations.

"What a darling old church! – thousands of years old it must be," said one of the Miss Wensleydales. "Now, can any one tell me whether it is a Norman or a Saxon one?"

"Oh, Norman, surely!" was the verdict of several feminine voices, all at once.

"I am not quite certain," said Lady Roxburgh; "I always intended to look it up. What do you say, Miss Tollemache? You know more about these matters than we do."

"Oh, I don't pretend to any knowledge of architecture. A grand old ruin like this is such a thing of beauty that it seems a pity to pick it to pieces. That south door with its round arches looks rather Saxon. What does Sir Roland think? It's not far from Massinger, is it?"

"I used to know it well in my boyhood," replied that gentleman, who, truth to tell, had been waiting to be referred to. "Miss Tollemache is right; you will find its history in the Domesday Book. The manor was held by the secular canons of St. Wereburgh till the Conqueror gave it to Hugh Lupus, who granted it to the Benedictine monks."

"And was it an abbey church?" asked Miss Branksome, who may or may not have divined Sir Roland's special knowledge of church history.

"Certainly," he replied; "all the authorities are distinct on the point. The manor was held under the abbots by a family of the same name, so it must have belonged to the original Saxon stock."

"And why did they not keep it?" asked Lady Roxburgh. "Really, this is most interesting."

"A lady in the case," answered Sir Roland. "Alice de Sotowiche conveyed it away by her marriage with Robert de Maurepas. What the Normans did not get by the sword they seem to have acquired by matrimony. It did not go out of the family, though, till the time of Edward the First. These De Maurepases battled for their manorial rights, too, which included fishing in the Welland, always providing that sturgeon went to the overlord."

"I always knew it was a dear old place," said Lady Roxburgh, "but now it seems doubly interesting. I must get up this history business for future use, and Miss Branksome shall give a little lecture about it next time we have a picnic."

"Thanks awfully, my dear Lady Roxburgh," said that young lady, "but I never could learn anything by heart in my life. I don't mind writing it down, though, from Sir Roland's notes, so that you can have it printed for private circulation at breakfast-time on picnic days."

"I think we might manage a county historical society," continued her ladyship. "It would be a grand idea for house-parties – only now it must be lunch-time. I see they have been unpacking. We must verify these quatrefoils, chevrons, and things afterwards."

They lunched under the mouldering walls, picturing a long-past day when, issuing forth from the courtyard of the neighbouring castle, had ridden knight and squire and lady fayre, attended by falconers and woodsmen, with hawk on wrist and hound in leash.

"What glorious times they must have had of it!" said Miss Tollemache. "I should like to have lived then. Life was more direct and sincere than in these artificial days."

"If we could only have seen the people as they really were," he replied, "'in their habit as they lived,' mental or otherwise, it would be such splendid opera business, would it not? But they must have been awfully dull between times. Hardly any books, no cigars till later on; war and the chase their only recreations."

"Noble occupations both," said Miss Tollemache, with an air of conviction; "they left little room for the frivolous indolence of these latter days."

"Perhaps so," assented her companion. "You had either to knock people on the head or undergo the operation yourself. Then, mark the opposite side of the shield. In that very castle – while the gay troop was riding out with pennons flying – the feudal enemy or 'misproud' retainer was probably lying in the dungeon (*they had* one there, Orme says) after an imprisonment of years."

The gathering was a pronounced success. The ruin provided subjects for unlimited conversation as well as occasions for heroic daring in the matter of climbing. The lunch was perfect in its way; the ensuing walks and talks all that could be wished.

And when, after, as one of the young people declared, the "truly excellent – really delicious day" came so near to its close that the horses were brought up, Miss Branksome playfully suggested that she and Miss Tollemache should change seats, as she wished to take a lesson from the opposition charioteer in driving, and when, after a moment's playful contest, the fair enslaver was placed on the seat beside him, Sir Roland's cup of happiness was full.

"Let Fate do her worst;  
There are moments of joy,  
Bright dreams of the past,  
Which she cannot destroy" —

must have been written by the poet, he felt assured, with that wondrous instinctive insight into the inmost soul of him, and all true lovers, which stamps the heaven-born singer.

Then the drive back to Roxburgh Hall, where they were to reassemble for the impromptu dance! The horses, home-returning, pulled just sufficiently to enable the box passenger to appreciate the strong arm and steady hand of her companion; and when, after an hour, the lamps were lit and the star-spangled night appeared odorous with the scents of early spring, the girl's low voice and musical laugh seemed the appropriate song-speech for which the star-clustered night formed fitting hour and circumstance.

Roland Massinger in that eve of delicious companionship abandoned himself to hope and fantasy. His fair companion had been so far acted upon by her environment, that she had permitted speculative allusions to the recondite problems of the day; to the deeper aims of life – subjects in which she evinced an interest truly exceptional in a girl of such acknowledged social distinction; while he, drawn on by the thought of possible companionship with so rarely-gifted a being, abandoned his usual practical and chiefly negative outlook upon the world, acknowledging the attraction of self-sacrifice and philanthropic crusade. His mental vision appeared to have received an illuminating expansion, and as those low, earnest, but melodious tones made music in his ear, emanating from the fair lips so closely inclined towards his own, he felt almost moved to devote his future energies, means, lands, and life to the amelioration of the race – to the grand aims of that altruistic federation of which, it must be confessed, that he had been a formal, if not indifferent, professor. If only he might persuade this "one sweet spirit to be his minister"! Then, how cheerfully would he fare forth through whatever lands or seas she might appoint.

But that fatal *if*!

Why should *he* be privileged to appropriate this glorious creature, redolent of all the loveliness of earth's primal vigour, and yet informed with the lore of the ages, heightening her attractions a hundred – yes, a thousand-fold? Almost he despaired when thinking of his superlative presumption.

Fortunately for the safety of the passengers, who little knew what tremendous issues were oscillating in the brain of their pilot, he mechanically handled the reins in his usual skilled and efficient fashion. Nor, indeed, did the fair comrade, or she would scarcely have emphasized the conventional remark, "Oh, Sir Roland, what a delightful drive we have had! I feel so grateful to you!" as he swung his horses round, and, with practised accuracy, almost grazed the steps at the portico of Roxburgh Hall.

## CHAPTER II

Events shaped themselves much after the manner customary since that earliest recorded compromise between soul and sense which mortals throughout all ages have agreed to call Love. Ofttimes such pursuits and contests have been protracted. After the first skirmish of temperaments, war has been declared by Fate, and through wearisome campaigns the rival armies have ravaged cities, so to speak, and assaulted neutral powers before the beleaguered citadel surrendered.

At other times, the maiden fortress has been taken by a *coup de main*, the assailant's resistless ardour carrying all before it. More frequently, perhaps, has the too venturesome knight been repulsed with scorn, and, as in earlier days, been fain to betake himself to Palestine or other distant region blessed with continuous warfare, and exceptional facilities for acquiring fame or getting knocked on the head, as the case might be.

For the patient and scientific conduct of a siege, according to the rules of the Court of Love – and such there be, if the poets and minstrels of all ages deserve credence – Roland Massinger was unfitted by constitution and opinion. His fixed idea was, that every woman knew her mind perfectly well with regard to a declared admirer. If favourable, it was waste of time and emotion to await events. If otherwise, the sooner a man was made aware of his dismissal the better. He could then shape his course in life without distraction or hindrance. In any case he was freed from the hourly torments under which the victim writhes, uncertain of his fate. It was the *coup de grâce* which frees the wretch upon the rack; the knife-thrust which liberates the Indian at the stake. And he trusted to his manhood to be equal to the occasion.

When he did "put his fortune to the touch, to win or lose it all" – as have done so many gallant lovers before this veracious history – he was too deeply grieved and shocked at the unexpected issue to place before the fateful maid any of the pleadings or protests deemed in such cases to be appropriate. He did not falter out statements inclusive of a "wrecked life," an "early grave," a career "for ever closed." Nor did he make the slightest reference to her having, so to speak, allured him to continue pursuit – "led him on," in more familiar terms.

Such commonplaces he disdained, although not without a passing thought that in the familiar play of converse, and her occasional touch upon the keynotes which evoke the deeper sympathies, an impartial judge might have discovered that perilous liking akin to love.

No! beyond one earnest appeal to her heart, into which he implored her to look, lest haply she had mistaken its promptings – a plea for time, for cooler consideration – he had no words with which to plead his cause, as he stood with sad reproachful gaze, assuring her that never would she know truer love, more loyal devotion.

What had she told him? Merely this: "That if she were to marry – a step which she had resolved not to take for some years, if at all – she confessed that there was no man whom she had yet known, with whom she felt more in sympathy, with whom, taking the ordinary phrase, she would have a greater prospect of happiness. But she held strong opinions upon the duties which the individual owed to the appealing hordes of fellow-creatures perishing for lack of care, of food, of instruction, by whom the overindulged so-called upper classes were surrounded. Such manifest duties were sacred in her eyes, though possibly incompatible with what was called 'happiness.' For years – for ever, it might be – such considerations would be paramount with her. They could be neglected only at the awful price of self-condemnation in this world and perdition in the next. She was grieved to the soul to be compelled to refuse his love. She blamed herself that she should have permitted an intimacy which had resulted so unhappily for him – even for herself. But her resolve was fixed; nothing could alter it."

This, or the substance of it, fell upon the unwilling ears of Roland Massinger in unconnected sentences, in answer to his last despairing appeal. Meanwhile his idol stood and gazed at him, as might be imagined some Christian maiden of the days of Diocletian, when called upon to deny her

faith or seal it with martyrdom. Her eyes were occasionally lifted upward, as if she felt the need of inspiration from above.

For one moment the heart of her lover stood still.

He placed his hand on his brow as if to quell the tumult of his thoughts. She moved towards him, deprecating the intensity of his emotion. An intolerable sense of her divine purity, her ethereal loveliness, seemed to pervade his whole being. He felt an almost irresistible desire to clasp her in his arms in one desperate caress, ere they parted for ever. Had he done this, the current of both lives might have been altered. The coldest maids are merely mortal.

But he refrained; in his present state of mind it would have been sacrilege to his ideal goddess, to the saintly idol of his worship.

Raising her hand reverently to his lips, he bowed low and departed.

When he thus passed out of her sight – out of her life – Hypatia herself was far from unmoved. Regrets, questionings, impulses to which she had so far been a stranger, arose and contended with strange and unfamiliar power.

Never before had she met with any one in all respects so attractive to her physically, so sympathetic mentally; above all things manly, cultured, devoted, with the instincts of the best age of chivalry. She liked – yes, nearly, perhaps quite – loved him. Family, position, personal character, all the attributes indispensably necessary, he possessed.

Not rich, indeed; but for riches she cared little – despised them, indeed. Why, then, had she cast away the admittedly best things of life? For an abstraction! For toilsome, weary, perhaps ungrateful tasks among the poor, the disinherited of the earth.

Had not others of whom she had heard, died, after wasting, so to speak, their lives and opportunities, with scarcely veiled regrets for the sacrifice? How many secretly bewailed the deprivation of the fair earth's light, colour, beauty, consented to in youth's overstrained sense of obedience to a divine injunction! Was this wealth of joyous gladness – the free, untrammelled spirit in life's springtime, which bade the bird to carol, the lamb to frisk, the wildfowl to sport o'er the translucent lake – but a snare to lead the undoubting soul to perdition? As these questioning fancies crossed her mind, in the lowered tone resulting in reaction from the previous mood of exaltation, she found her tears flowing fast, and with an effort, raising her head as if in scorn of her weakness, hurried to her room.

A sudden stroke of sorrow, loss, disappointment, or disaster affects men differently, but the general consensus is that the blow, like wounds that prove mortal, is less painful than stunning. Roland Massinger never doubted but that his wound *was* mortal. For days he wondered, in the solitude of his retreat to which he had, like other stricken deer, betaken himself, whether or no he was alive. He returned to the Court. He moved from room to room – he absorbed food. He even opened books in the library and essayed to read, finding himself wholly unable to extract the meaning of the lettered lines. He rode and drove at appointed hours, but always with a strange preoccupied expression. This change of habit and occupation was so evident to his old housekeeper and the other domestics, that the subject of their master's obvious state of mind began to be freely discussed. The groom was of opinion that he did not know the bay horse that carried him so well to hounds, from the black mare that was so fast and free a goer in the dog-cart.

He retired late, sitting in the old-fashioned study which served as a smoking-room, "till all hours," as the maids said.

He rose early, unconscionably so, as the gardener considered who had met him roaming through the shrubberies before sunrise. A most unusual proceeding, indefensible "in a young gentleman as could lie in bed till breakfast-bell rang."

The maids were instinctively of the opinion that "there was a lady in the case;" but, upon broaching their ingenuous theory, were so sternly silenced by Mrs. Lavender, the old housekeeper who had ruled in Massinger long before Sir Roland's parents had died, and remembered the last Lady

Massinger as "a saint on earth if ever there was one," that they hastily deserted it, hoping "as he wouldn't have to be took to the county hospital." This theory proving no more acceptable than the other, they were fain to retire abashed, but clinging with feminine obstinacy to their first opinion.

Suddenly a change came over the moody squire who had thus exercised the intelligences of the household.

On a certain morning he ordered the dog-cart, in which he drove himself to the railway station, noticing the roadside incidents and mentioning the stud generally, in a manner so like old times, that the groom felt convinced that the desired change had taken place; so that hunting, shooting, and all business proper to the season would go on again with perhaps renewed energy.

"When the master jumped down and ordered the porter to label his trunk 'London,' he was a different man," said the groom on his return. "He's runnin' up to town to have a lark, and forgit his woes. That's what I should do, leastways. He ain't agoin' to make a break of it along o' Miss Tollemache, or any other miss just yet."

Though this information was acceptable to the inmates of a liberally considered household, who one and all expressed their satisfaction, the situation was not destined to be lasting. Within a week it was widely known that Massinger Court was for sale, "just as it stood," with furniture, farm-stock, library, stud, everything to be taken at a valuation – owner about to leave England.

What surprise, disapproval – indeed, almost consternation – such an announcement is calculated to create in a quiet county in rural England, those only who have lived and grown up in such "homes of ancient peace" can comprehend. A perfect chorus of wonder, pity, indignation, and disapproval arose.

The squirearchy lamented the removal of a landmark. The heir of an historic family, "a steady, well-conducted young fellow, good shot, straight-goer in the field – knew something about farming, too. Not too deep in debt either? That is, as far as anybody knew. What the deuce could he mean by cutting the county; severing himself from all his old friends – his father's friends, too?"

This was the lament of Sir Giles Weatherly, one of the oldest baronets in the county. "D – n it," he went on to say, "it ought to be prevented by law. Why, the place was entailed!"

"Entail broken years ago; but that wouldn't mend matters," his companion, Squire Tophthorne, replied – a hard-riding, apple-faced old gentleman, credited with a shrewd appreciation of the value of money. "You can't force a man to live on a place, though he mustn't sell it. It wouldn't help the county much to have the Court shut up, with only the old housekeeper, a gardener, and a maid, like Haythorpe. Besides, some decent fellow might buy it – none of us could afford to do so just now. I couldn't, I know."

"Nor I either," returned Sir Giles, "with wheat at thirty shillings a quarter, and farms thrown back on your hands, like half a dozen of mine. But why couldn't Roland have stopped in England; married and settled down, if it comes to that? There are plenty of nice girls in Herefordshire; a good all-round youngster like him, with land at his back, might marry any one he pleased."

"That's the trouble, from what I hear," said Mr. Tophthorne, with a quiet smile. "Young men have a way of asking the very girl that won't have them, while there are dozens that would. Same, the world over. And the girls are just as bad – won't take advice, and end up as old maids, or take to 'slumming' and Zenana work. I hear it's Hypatia Tollemache who's responsible."

"Whew-w!" whistled Sir Giles. "She's a fine girl, and knows her value, I suppose, but she's bitten by this 'New Woman' craze – wants to regenerate society, and the rest of it. In our time girls did what they were told – learned house-keeping, and thought it a fair thing to be the mistress of some good fellow's household; to rear wholesome boys and girls to keep up the honour of old England. I have no patience with these fads."

"Well! it can't be helped. Have you any idea who is likely to make a bid for the place?"

"Not the slightest. We're safe to have a manufacturer, or some infernal colonist – made his money by gold-digging or sheep-farming, drops his aitches, and won't subscribe to the hounds."

"Suppose we do? You're too hard on colonists, who, after all, are our own countrymen, with the pluck to go abroad, instead of loafing at home. Often younger sons, too – men of as good family as you or I. We're too conservative here, I often think. They always spend their money liberally, give employment, and entertain royally if they do the thing at all."

"I suppose there's something in what you say; but all the same, I don't like to see a Massinger go out of the county where his family have lived since the time of Hugh Lupus. Viscount the Sire de Massinger came out of Normandy along with Duke William. He was a marshal commanding a division of archers at Hastings. 'For which service both the Conqueror and Hugh Lupus rewarded him' (says an old chronicle) 'with vast possessions, among which was Benham Massinger in Cheshire; and the said Hamon de Massinger was the first Baron de Massinger.' There's a pedigree for you! Pity they hadn't kept their lands; but they're not the only ones, as we know too well."

These and the like colloquies took place during the period which intervened between the direful announcement of the sale of the Court and its actual disposal by an auction sale, at which the late owner was not present.

It was then made public that the stranger who bought that "historic mansion, Massinger Court, with lands and messuages, household furniture, and farm stock, horses and carriages," was acting as agent only for Mr. Lexington, the great Australian squatter, who had made a colossal fortune in New South Wales and Queensland, numbering his sheep by the half-million and his cattle by the twenties of thousands. He had, moreover, agreed to take the furniture, books, pictures – everything – at a valuation, together with the live stock, farm implements, and – in fact, the whole place, exactly as it stood; Sir Roland, the auctioneer said, having removed his personal belongings previously to London immediately after offering the Court for sale. He only returned to bid farewell to the friends of his youth and the home of his race.

Yes! it *was* hard – very hard, he thought, at the last. There was the garden – old-fashioned, but rich in fruit and flower, with box-borders, clipped yew hedges, alleys of formal shape and pattern; the south wall where the fruit ripened so early, and to which his childish eyes had so often been attracted; the field wherein he had, with the old keeper in strict attendance, been permitted to blaze at a covey of partridges – he remembered now the wild delight with which he marked his first slain bird; the stream in which he had caught his first trout, and whence many a basket had been filled in later days; the village church, under the floor of which so many de Massingers lay buried – the family pew, too large for the church, but against the size and shape of which no innovating incumbent had thought fit to protest.

How well he remembered his mother's loving hand as he walked with her to church —*every* Sunday, unless illness or unusual weather forbade! That mother, too, so gentle, so saintly sweet, so charitable, so beloved, why should she have died when he was so young? And his father, the pattern squire, who shot and hunted, lived much at home, and was respected throughout the county as a model landlord, who did his duty to the land which had done so much for the men of his race? Why should these things be?

He recalled his mother's dear face, which grew pale, and yet more pale, during her long illness – her last words bidding him, to be a good man, to remember what she taught him, and to comfort his poor father when she was gone. And how he kneeled by her bedside, with her wasted hand in his, praying with her that he might live to carry out her last wishes, and do his duty fearlessly in the face of all men. Then the funeral – the long train of carriages, the burial service, where so many people wept, and he wished – how he wished! – that he could be buried with her. His father's set face, almost stern, yet more sorrowful than any tears. And how he went back to school in his black clothes, miserable and lonely beyond all words to describe.

In the holidays, too – how surprised he had been to find that the squire no longer shot, fished, hunted. He, that was so keen as long as he could remember, but now sat all day reading in the library,

where they often used to find him asleep. And how, before the Christmas holidays came round again, he was sent for, to see his father once more before he died.

The squire spoke not – he had for days lost the power of speech – but he placed his hands upon his head and murmured an inarticulate blessing. He did not look pale or wasted like his poor mother, he remembered. The doctors said there was no particular ailment; he had simply lost all interest in life. The old housekeeper summed up the case, which coincided closely with the public feeling.

"It's my opinion," she affirmed, "that if ever a man in this world died of a broken heart, the squire did. He was never the same after the mistress died, God bless her! She's in heaven, if any one is. She was a saint on earth. And the squire, seeing they'd never been parted before – and I never saw two people more bound up in each other – well, he couldn't stay behind."

The new lord of the manor – for Massinger held manorial rights and privileges, which had been tolerably extensive in the days of "merrie England" – lost no time in taking possession.

A week had not elapsed before the Australian gentleman and his family arrived by train at the little railway station, much like any one else, to the manifest disappointment of the residents of the vicinity, who had expected all sorts of foreign appearances and belongings. Certain large trunks —*not* Saratogas – and portmanteaux were handed out of the brake-van and transferred to the waggonette, which they filled, while three ladies with their maid were escorted to the mail phaeton which had made so many previous journeys to the station with the visitors and friends of the Massinger family. A middle-aged, middle-sized, alert personage, fair-haired, clean-shaved, save for a moustache tinged with grey, mounted the dog-cart, followed by a tall young man who looked with an air of scrutiny at the horses and appointments. He took the reins from the groom, who got up behind, and with one of those imperceptible motions with which a practised whip communicates to well-conditioned horses that they are at liberty to go, started the eager animal along the well-kept road which led to the Court.

"Good goer," he remarked, after steadying the black mare to a medium pace. "If she's sound, she's a bargain at the money; horses seem tremendously dear in England."

"Yes, I should say so," replied his father. "And the phaeton pair are good-looking enough for anything: fair steppers also. I thought the price put on the horses and cattle high, but the agent told me they were above the average in quality. I see he was correct so far."

"Well, it's a comfort to deal with people who are straight and above-board," said the younger man. "It saves no end of trouble. I shouldn't wonder if the home-station – I mean the house and estate – followed suit in being true to description. If so, we've made a hit."

"Sir Roland wouldn't have a thing wrong described for the world, sir," here put in the groom, touching his hat. "No auctioneer would take that liberty with him; not in this county, anyhow."

"Glad to hear it. I thought as much, from seeing him once," said the elder man.

A short hour saw the black mare tearing up the neatly raked gravel in front of the façade of the Court, and by the time the dog-cart had departed for the stables, the phaeton came up to the door, with one of the young ladies in the driving seat.

"Well, this *is* a nice pair of horses!" said the damsel, who evidently was not unaccustomed to driving a pair, if not a more imposing team. "Fast, so well matched and well mannered; it's a pleasure to drive them. And oh! what a lovely old hall – and such darling trees! How fortunate we were to pick up such a place! It's not too large: there's not much land, but it's a perfect gem in its way. I suppose we are to have the pictures of the ancestors, too?"

"We shall have that reflected glory," said the matron with a smile. "Sir Roland would not sell them, but hoped we would give them house-room till he wanted them – which might not be for years and years."

"So they will still look down upon us – or frown, as the case may be," said the younger girl. "How savage I should be if I were an ancestor, and new people came to turn out my descendant!"

"We haven't turned him out. We only buy him out," said her mother, "which is quite a different thing. It is the modern way of taking the baron's castle – without bloodshed and unpleasantness."

"It is a great shame, all the same, that he should have to turn out," exclaimed the younger girl, indignantly. "I am sure he is a nice fellow, which makes it all the worse, because – because –"

"Because every one says so," continued her elder sister; "as if that was a reason!"

"No! because he has *such good horses*. When a man keeps them, in such buckle too, there can't be much wrong with him."

"What *is* the reason that he can't live in a place like this, I wonder?" queried Miss Lexington in a musing tone. "A bachelor, too! Men don't seem to know when they are well off. He ought to try a dry year on one of our Paroo runs, if he wants a change. That would take the nonsense out of him. Our vile sex at the bottom of it, I suppose!"

"I *did* catch a whisper in London, before we left," said Miss Violet, cautiously.

"You always do," interrupted her sister. "I hope you don't talk to Pinson confidentially. What was it?"

"Only that a girl that every one seemed to know about wouldn't have him, and that he nearly went out of his mind about it: wouldn't hear of living in England afterwards."

"Poor fellow! he'll know better some day – won't he, mother? He must be a romantic person to go mooning about, wanting to die or emigrate, for a trifle like that."

"I sometimes wonder if you girls of the present day have hearts, from the way you talk," mused the matron. "However, I suppose they're deeper down than ours used to be. But I don't like my girls to sneer at true love. It's a sacred and holy thing, without which we women would have a sad time in this world. But, in our own country, men have done rash things in the agony of disappointment. You have heard of young Anstruther?"

"Oh yes, long ago. He went home and shot himself because of a silly girl. I suppose he's sorry for it now."

"Hearts are much the same, in all countries and ages, depend upon it, my dears; they make people do strange things. But let us hope that there will be no unruly promptings in this family."

"Quite so, mother – same here; but I suppose, as Longfellow tells us, 'as long as the heart has woes,' all sorts of droll things will happen. And now suppose we go and look at the stables before afternoon tea; I want to see the hunters and polo ponies. The garden we can see tomorrow morning."

When Sir Roland, having made final arrangements, concluded to run down to Massinger for farewell purposes, he declined courteously Mr. Lexington's invitation to stay with him, and took up his abode at the Massinger Arms, in the village, where he considered he would be quiet and more independent. He felt himself obliged to say farewell to the people he had known all his life, small and great. But he never had less inclination for conversation and the ordinary society business. A week at the outside would suffice for such leave-taking as he considered obligatory.

As to the emigration matter which had so disturbed his *monde*, another factor of controlling power entered into the calculation. A re-valuation of his property made it apparent that when every liability came to be paid off, the available residue would be much less than he or his men of business reckoned on. Not more, indeed, than the ridiculously small sum of thirty or forty thousand pounds. He was not going to live on the Continent, or any cheap foreign place, on this. Nor to angle for an heiress. So, having been informed that he could live like a millionaire in the colonies, and probably make a fortune out of a grazing estate which half the money would purchase, there was nothing to keep him in England. Such considerations, reinforced by the haunting memories of a "lost Lenore" in the guise of Hypatia, drove him forward on his course *outré mer* with such feverish force that he could scarcely bear to await the day of embarkation.

## CHAPTER III

He could not well refuse an invitation to dinner from his successor, who called upon him, in form, the day after his arrival, and again begged him to make the old hall his home until he left England.

This request he begged to decline, much to Mr. Lexington's disappointment, though he agreed to dine.

"My people were looking forward to having your advice upon all sorts of matters, which, of course, you would know about better than any one else. We are not going to make any great changes that I know of," said Mr. Lexington. "Everything on the estate is in excellent order; your overseer – I mean bailiff – seems sensible and experienced. I shall give him his own way chiefly. He knows the place and the people, which of course I don't. My children, being Australians, are fond of horses; they are so much pleased with your lot, that you may be sure of their being well treated – and pensioned, when their time comes. I never sold an old favourite in my life, and am not going to begin in England, though you can't turn out a horse here all the year round as you can in Australia. And now I'll say good afternoon. Sorry you can't stay with us. We shall see you at dinner – half-past seven; but come any time."

Upon which Mr. Lexington departed, leaving a pleasant impression with the former owner.

"What mistaken prejudices English people have, for the most part!" he thought. "Sir Giles Weatherly, I heard, was raving at my want of loyalty to the landed interest because I had left an opening for some 'rough colonist' to break into our sacred county enclosure. This man is a thorough gentleman, liberal and right-feeling; besides, with pots of money too, he will be able to do far more for the neighbourhood than would ever have been in my power. I shouldn't be surprised if the county considers him an improvement upon an impoverished family like ours before many months are past."

With a half-sigh, involuntary, but not without a distinct feeling of regret, as he thought how soon his place would be filled up, and how different a position would have been his had one woman's answer been otherwise, he addressed himself once more to the momentous question of emigration. He had purchased a quantity of colonial literature, and had made some headway through the handbooks thoughtfully provided for the roving Englishman of the period. The difficulty lay in deciding between the different offshoots of Britain. All apparently possessed limitless areas of fertile land and rich pasturage, in addition to goldfields, coal-mines, opal and diamond deposits, silver and copper mines, the whole vast territory reposing in safety under the world-wide ægis of the British flag.

Before he had found anything like a solution of this pressing problem, the church clock suggested dressing. So, attiring himself suitably, he made his way to the Court. He rang the hall-door bell somewhat impatiently, having only partially got over the feeling of strangeness at being invited to dinner at his own house, so to speak, and being shown into the drawing-room by his own butler. This official's gravity relaxed suddenly, after a vain struggle, and ended in a gasping "Oh, Sir Roland!" as he announced him in due form.

In the drawing-room, where nothing had been added or altered, he found three ladies, the son of the house, and his host. "Mrs. Lexington, Miss Lexington, and my daughter Violet, with my son Frank," comprehended the introductions.

All were in evening attire, the ladies very quietly but becomingly dressed. The dinner was much as usual; his own wines, glass, and table decorations were in the same order as before. Could he have given a dinner-party unawares? His position at the right hand of Mrs. Lexington seemed hardly to decide the question.

No reference was made by any of the company, which included the rector of the parish (a few minutes late), to his reasons for expatriating himself, though expressions of regret occurred that he should be leaving the country.

"My daughters are lost in astonishment that you should voluntarily quit such a paradise, as it appears to us sunburnt Australians," said the lady of the house.

"You wouldn't have got *me* to leave it without a fight," said Miss Lexington; "but I suppose men get tired of comfort in this dear old country, where everything goes on by itself apparently, and even the servants seem 'laid on' like the gas and water. They must want danger and discomfort as a change."

"There would not appear to have been much in the country from which you came," replied Sir Roland, declining the personal question.

"We have had our share," said Mr. Lexington. "Fortunately one is seldom the worse for it; perhaps the more fitted to enjoy life's luxuries, when they come in their turn. Tell Sir Roland something, Frank, about that dry season when you were travelling with the 'Diamond D' cattle."

"Rather early in the evening for Queensland stories, isn't it?" replied the younger man thus invoked, who did not, except in a deeper tint of bronze, present any point of departure from the home-grown product. "Tell him one or two after dinner. I'd rather have his advice about the country sport, if he'll be good enough to enlighten me."

"A better guide than my old friend the rector here the country doesn't hold," said the ex-squire. "He knows to a day when 'cock' may be expected, and though he doesn't hunt now, he used to be in the first flight; as for fishing, he's Izaak Walton's sworn disciple. I leave you in good hands. All the same, I'm ready to be of use in any way."

"The weather feels warm now, even to us. We hardly expected such a day," remarked Mrs. Lexington; "and as we have none of us been home before, we don't quite know what to make of it."

"If it's a trifle warm and close, it never lasts more than a few days, they tell me," said the eldest daughter; "and the nights are always cool. That's one comfort. I always feel like putting a new line in my prayers of thankfulness for there being hardly any flies and no mosquitoes. And such lovely fresh mornings to wake up in! Such trees, such grass! No wonder the hymns speak of 'a happy English child!'"

"All the same, Australia is not a bad country," said Mrs. Lexington, "though we did have seventeen days once at the Macquarie River when it was a hundred in the shade every day and ninety every night. On the other hand, the Riverina winter was superb – such cloudless days and merely bracing mornings and evenings. I dare say we shall miss *them* here in 'chill October.' Sir Roland will give us his impressions when he returns, perhaps," she continued. "It is hard to find a climate which is pleasant all the year round. A cool summer is enjoyed at the expense of a cold winter. And we have extremes even in Australia. I saw in the paper lately some account of pedestrians being thirty hours in snow, and much exhausted when they reached their destination after being out all night."

"I should hardly have thought that possible," said the guest, genuinely astonished.

"English people hear more of the heat of our climate than the cold," said his host, good-humouredly; "but the mails are carried on snow-shoes in the winter season of a town I know, and I have seen the children going to school in them too."

"Oh, come! dad will soon begin to tell stories about snakes," said Miss Violet, "if we don't turn the conversation. Do you have much lawn tennis in the neighbourhood, Sir Roland?"

"A good deal," he replied, "as the rector will tell you. His daughters are great performers, and at the last tournament with West Essex Miss Charlton was the champion."

"Oh, how delightful! We all play except dad and mother, so we shall be able to keep up our form."

"Then it's not too hot in the Australian summer for exercise?"

"It's never too hot for cricket, or dancing, or tennis in our country. We couldn't do without them, so the weather must take its chance. After all, a little heat, more or less, doesn't seem to matter."

"Apparently not," said Sir Roland, noting the girl's well-developed figure, regular features, and animated expression.

In truth, they were both handsome girls, though their complexions showed a clear but healthy pallor, as distinguished from the rose-bloom of their British sisters. If Sir Roland had not been dead to all sympathetic consideration of the great world of woman, it would have occurred to him that a man might "go farther and fare worse" than by choosing either of these frank, unspoiled maidens, rich in the possession of the charm of youth and the crowning glory of the sex – the tender, faithful heart of a true woman.

But to his dulled and disturbed senses, not as yet recovered from the merciless blow dealt him by fate, no such appreciation of their youthful graces was possible.

He was courteous to the utmost point of politeness, scrupulously attentive to their queries about this, to them, unfamiliar land of their forefathers; careful also to requite the consideration with which he felt they had regarded him. But they might have been any one's maiden aunts, or indeed grandmothers, for all the personal interest which he felt in them. Indeed, when Mrs. Lexington caught her eldest daughter's eye and proceeded to the drawing-room, he was distinctly conscious of a feeling of relief.

Then, as he drew up his chair at the suggestion of his host, he began to show increased interest, as the question of a desirable colony to betake himself to was mooted.

"You are not in the same position as many young men whom Frank and I have met. You are accustomed to a country life, and have a practical knowledge of farming. Your cattle and sheep (we went through them this morning) do the management credit, and the bailiff tells me that you directed it in a general way. The crops and the grass lands are A 1. So you won't have so much to learn when you've thought out the climate in Australia. May I consider that you prefer agriculture to a pastoral life?"

"I must say that I do, though I don't limit myself to any particular pursuit or investment. I should feel grateful for your advice in the matter."

"We are all New South Wales people, born there indeed, and probably prejudiced in its favour. It is the mother colony of Australia, and until lately the largest, so that there was always plenty of scope. We have never, like most of the larger pastoralists, had much to do with farming, preferring to buy our hay, corn, flour, and such trifles from the small settlers."

"The squatters, as I suppose they are called," interposed Massinger, who was beginning to be proud of his colonial knowledge.

"Well, not exactly," corrected the colonist. "The smaller holders are called farmers, or 'free-selectors,' having by a late Act of Parliament acquired the right of free choice over the Crown lands leased in vast acres to the squatters. They follow farming exclusively as an occupation, and are chiefly tenants, or men of small capital. The squatter, on the other hand, is the Australian country gentleman – the landlord, where he is a free holder. It is therefore the more fashionable pursuit, so to speak, and as such, has proved attractive to men like yourself, who commence colonial life with a fair amount of capital. Perhaps Frank will give you his views."

"I never could stand farming at any price," said the younger colonist. "I hardly know a turnip from a potato. My fancy has always been for the big outside stations. There's something to stir a man's blood in managing a property fifty miles square, with plain, forest, and river to match. Then twenty thousand head of cattle, or a hundred thousand sheep to organize a commissariat for, and an army of men to command! There's no time to potter about ploughing and harrowing, haymaking or reaping, in country like that. You might as well dig your own garden."

"But surely they are necessary occupations?" queried the intending colonist.

"Not to men with a million of acres or so in hand. They can't worry over details. We buy everything we want in that way, and have it brought to our doors, more cheaply than we could grow it. Our work in life, so far, is to produce cheap beef, mutton, and wool, to feed your people and for them to manufacture. That, I take it, is our present business, and anything that interferes with it is a loss to the empire."

"That seems a short list of products for a great country like yours. Couldn't you supply anything more from the land?"

"All in good time," said the young man, sipping his claret. "By-and-by, when labour becomes more plentiful and the population denser, we shall send you butter and bacon, cheese, honey, fruit, flour, sugar, wine, and oil – even rabbits, confound them! – by the million. These products, when we have time, and have overtaken the local demand, we can export by the shipload. A hundred thousand frozen lambs – that kind of thing – in one steamer."

"But you have said nothing about horses. Surely I have heard that your country is very suitable for rearing them?" asked their guest.

"Suitable!" ejaculated the young Australian, with more animation than he had previously expressed. "I should think so. Yet up to this day, though a fascinating pursuit, horses haven't paid so well as sheep and cattle. But our time is coming. I have always maintained that we could breed cavalry and artillery horses for all Europe – more cheaply, too, than any other country in the world; horses possessing extraordinary courage, stoutness, speed, and constitution. From the way in which they are reared on the natural grasses in the open air, they have the best feet and legs in the world. The Indian buyers find them more suitable for cavalry and artillery than Arabs or their own stud-breds, but as yet they only take a tenth part of what we could rear if the markets were more steady and assured. It will be proved some day that the English horse gains in stoutness in Australia after a generation, and I look forward even to our sending you back pure Australian thoroughbreds, equal in speed to their imported grandsires, but sounder, stronger in constitution, and with more bone."

As the descendant of Kentish squires spoke with heightened feeling upon what was evidently a favourite theme, Massinger could not help admitting that the speaker himself was no bad exemplar of the favourable conditions of a free, adventurous, roving life upon the Anglo-Saxon type. Frank Lexington was, indeed, as fine a man as you could make physically – a description once applied to him by an enthusiastic admirer at an up-country race meeting. Standing somewhat over six feet in height, he was admirably proportioned, and not less for strength than activity. His features were regular, approaching the Greek ideal in outline, while his steady eye and square jaw denoted the courage and decision which, young as he seemed, had been tested full many a time and oft. His hands, though bronzed and sinewy with occasional experiences of real hard work, were delicately formed, while his filbert nails, perhaps as true a test as any other of gentle blood and nurture, had evidently never lacked careful tendance.

Fairly well read, and soundly if not academically educated, he was but one of a class of the present generation of Australians who do no discredit to the imperial race from which they spring.

Before these reflections had come to a conclusion, however, Mr. Lexington rose, saying —

"Now that Frank has got to the horses of his native country, we had better adjourn the debate, if you won't take another glass of port, or his mother and sisters will be scolding us for staying too long over our wine."

Soon after their arrival in the drawing-room the opposition found a speaker.

"We thought you were never coming, daddy dear," said Miss Violet. "What in the world do men find to talk about when *we're* not there? I suppose, though, that you were giving Sir Roland a lecture on colonial experience, and Frank had fallen foul of the shooting and fishing topics, or, worst of all, the great horse question! Ah! I see you look guilty, so I won't say any more about it."

"I'm sure it's very natural, my dear," said Mrs. Lexington. "Of course Sir Roland knows as little of colonial life as your father does about English farming. Either experience would be valuable, you know."

"I am not so sure of that," quoth the merry damsel, who appeared to be of independent mind. "I've rarely known dad take any one's opinion but his own; and as to advising new – er – that is – new arrivals in Australia, you remember what Jack Charteris said when somebody asked him to do so?"

"Something saucy, no doubt."

"Oh no; it was only to this effect – that if the young fellow had any common sense, he would soon find out everything for himself; and if he hadn't, nothing that you could say would do him any good."

"I am afraid that you will give Sir Roland a strange idea of Australian young ladies' manners. For a change, Marion might try this lovely piano. It's almost new; too good for a bachelor's establishment."

Massinger winced a little, but did not explain that, as the adored personage had once been inveigled into joining an afternoon tea at the Court on the way back from a tennis match, of which he had received timely notice, he had ordered a new grand piano to be sent down from London, so that it might be ready for her divinely fair fingers to essay.

"The other one," he replied, carelessly, "was rather old – had, indeed, been sent up to a morning-room; just did for practising on when ladies were in the house."

"I should think it did," said Miss Lexington, indignantly. "Why, it's better now than half the people have in their drawing-rooms. I'm afraid you won't make much of a fortune in Australia if you're so extravagant. Three hundred and fifty pounds' worth of pianos in a house with a family of *one*!"

"I'm like the man in your sister's story, Miss Lexington," said he, smiling at the girl's earnestness. "Advice will be thrown away upon me. But perhaps I may improve after a few months."

"Months!" said the girl; and a sudden look almost of compassion changed the lustre of her dark grey eyes. "How little you know of the *years* and years before you! – the changes and chances, the bad seasons, the dull life; and then perhaps nothing at the end – absolutely nothing! And to come away from this!" And she looked round the noble room, which, if not magnificently furnished, was yet replete with modern comfort, and had, in the priceless pieces of carved oaken furniture, the air of ancient and long-descended possession. "How *could* you?"

He turned and faced her with an air of smiling but irrevocable decision.

"My resolve was not taken without consideration, I assure you; and I have yet to learn that an Englishman is likely to find himself at fault among his countrymen in any of Britain's colonies. But I am anxious to hear my ecstatic instrument for the last time."

Marion Lexington, as are many Australian girls, had been extremely well taught – received, indeed, the instruction of an artist of European reputation. Her ear was faultless, her taste accurate. She therefore, after a prelude of Bach's, broke into one of Schubert's wild, half-mournful "Moments Musicaux," which she played with such feeling and power as rather to surprise her hearer, who, a fair judge, and something of an amateur, was no mean critic. She did not sing, she explained, but after she had concluded with a Scherzo, Miss Violet was prevailed upon to sing a couple of songs, which showed, by the management of a pure soprano, that she had received the tuition which had fitly developed its high quality.

Massinger could hardly refrain from expressing a faint degree of surprise, as he wondered how systematic training was possible in the primitive surroundings of a pastoral life.

"An English judge in a *cause célèbre* once described the squatter's occupation as a 'rude wandering life,'" said Mr. Lexington, smiling; "but for many years my wife and the girls lived in Sydney during the summer, and only went to our principal station, which is near a large inland town in the interior, for the winter – a season lovely beyond description. So my daughters enjoyed educational facilities not inferior, perhaps, to those of country towns in England."

"Like most Englishmen, I must confess to having formed incorrect ideas about our colonial possessions. However, I shall have ample time to amend them, if Miss Violet's prophecy comes true."

"Never mind her, Sir Roland," said her mother, stroking the girl's fair hair. "She is a naughty girl, and always says the first thing that comes into her head. It is just as likely that we shall see you back again with a colossal fortune in five years. Mr. Hazelwood that bought Burrawombie did, you know! You remember him, don't you, Frank? And if a bank-failure epidemic sets in, as was once threatened, we may just then be wanting to sell out and go back to Australia to retrench."

"I give everybody fair warning," said Miss Violet, starting up from her mother's side, "that I am going to settle permanently in England before that takes place. I couldn't endure returning under those circumstances. As a girl with a 'record,' as that American one said who had danced with the Prince, I might be induced to face George Street and Katoomba again; but not otherwise!"

Farewells had been said, old friends and old haunts revisited. The whole able-bodied population of Massinger Court, tower and town, had apparently turned out to do honour to their late landlord and employer, and when Sir Roland deposited himself in an engaged carriage by insistence of the veteran stationmaster, and was, as the phrase runs, "left alone with his thoughts," an involuntary lowering of his animal spirits occurred.

He had, as his friends and acquaintances fully believed, cut loose from all old associations – "turned himself out of house and home," as some familiarly expressed it – quitted for ever the old hall which had been in the possession of his family in unbroken line since the Conquest, and committed his fortunes to the conditions of a rude, quasi-barbarous country.

And for what? For a most insufficient reason, as all the world thought.

What was the abnormal incident which had brought about this dislocation of his whole life, which had made havoc of all previous aims and prospects? Merely the too highly wrought imagination of a girl – of a silly girl, people would doubtless say.

Well, they could hardly so describe Hypatia Tollemache, who had proved the possession of one of the finest intellects of the day, and had taken almost unprecedented academical honours.

At any rate, she might come under the biting regal deliverance, *Toujours femme varie, bien fol qui s'y fie*. But *was* she changeable? He could not say so with any show of sincerity.

She had been true – too true – to her ideal. Would that she had not been so steadfast to a vain imagining, an emotional craze!

A dream, a vision that she was destined by example, precept, self-sacrifice, what not, to elevate her sex in particular, the toiling masses in general, the helpless poor, the forgotten captives, despairing, tortured, chained to the oar of the blood-stained galley, "Civilization," falsely so called! Confessedly a lofty ideal. Yet how needless a devotion of her glorious beauty, her precious, all too fleeting youth, her divine intellect, to the thankless task of helping those to whom Providence had denied the power of helping themselves; of expending these God-given treasures upon feeble or deformed natures, who, when all had been lavished, were less grateful for the abundant bounty than envious of the higher life, grudgingly displeased that more had not been dispensed.

However, the fiat had gone forth. She must be the arbiter of her own fate. He disdained to beg for a final reconsideration of his suit. Only, he could not have borne to remain and continue the daily round of country life, the rides and drives, the tennis and afternoon teas, the fishing, the shooting, when he knew the exact number of pheasants in each spinney, the woodcocks expected in every copse. The hunting was nearly as bad, except for the advantages of a turn more danger.

No; a new land, a new world, for him! Complete change and wild adventure; no ordinary derangement of conditions would medicine the mind diseased which was ever abiding with the form of Roland Massinger. His passage was already secured in one of the staunch seaboats which justify the maritime pride of the Briton; he was pledged to sail for the uttermost inhabited lands of the South in less than a week's time. The matter settled, he continued to devote himself assiduously to acquiring information, and felt partially at ease as to his future.

The most desirable colony still seemed to be a kind of *ignis fatuus*.

He read blue-books, compilations, extracts from letters of correspondents – all and everything which purported to direct in the right path the undecided emigrant – with the general result of confusing his mind, and delaying any advance to a purpose which he might have gained. Finally, he fixed, half by chance, upon Britain's farthest southern possession – New Zealand – the Britain of the South, as it had been somewhat pretentiously styled by a Company, more or less historical, which had essayed to monopolize its fertile lands and "civilize" its tameless inhabitants.

In the frame of mind in which Massinger found himself, an account of the war of 1845, in which a Maori patriot threw down the gage of battle to the "might, majesty, and dominion" of England, obstinately resisting her overwhelming power and disciplined troops, aroused his interest, and came to exercise a species of fascination over him.

The valour of the Maori people, their chivalry, their eloquence, their dignity, their delight in war and skill in fortification, impressed him deeply. The Australian colonies had but an uninteresting aboriginal population, small in number and scarcely raised above the lowest races of mankind. They held few attributes valuable to a student in ethnology – and this was one of his strongest predilections – whereas among the warrior tribes of New Zealand there would be endless types available for a philosophical observer.

The nature of the country also appealed to his British habitudes. Fertile lands, running rivers, snow-clad mountains, picturesque scenery, all these chimed in with his earliest predilections, and finally decided his resolution to adopt New Zealand as his abiding-place – that wonderland of the Pacific; that region of everlasting snow, of glaciers, lakes, hot springs, and fathomless sounds, excelling in grandeur the Norwegian fiords; of terraces, pink and white – nature's delicatest lace fretwork above fairy lakelets of vivid blue!

It was enough. *Facta est alea!* Henceforth with the land of Maui the fortunes of Roland Massinger are inextricably mingled.

Modern arrangements for changing one's hemisphere are much the same in the case of the emigrant Briton whom kind fortune has included in "the classes." For him the sea-change is made delightfully easy. Luxuriously appointed steamers await his choice, distances are apparently shortened. Time is certainly economised. Agreeable society, if not guaranteed, is generally provided. Tradesmen contend for the privilege of loading the traveller with a superfluous, chiefly unsuitable, outfit. Letters of introduction are proffered, often to dwellers in distant colonies, mistaken for adjacent counties.

Advice is volunteered by friends or acquaintances of every imaginable shade of experience, diverse as to conditions and contradictory in tendency.

Firearms of the period, from duck-guns to pocket-pistols, are suggested or presented; while the regretful tone of farewell irresistibly impresses the mind of the wanderer that, unless a miracle is performed in his favour, he will never revisit the home of his fathers.

From many of these drawbacks to departure our hero freed himself by resolutely declining to discuss the subject in any shape. He admitted the fact, gave no reasons, and assented to many of the opinions as to the patent disadvantage of living out of England. He resisted the outfitter successfully, having been warned by Frank Lexington against taking anything more than he would have required for a visit to an English country house.

"Take *all* you would take there, but nothing more."

"What! dress clothes, and so on?"

"Of course! People dress much as they do here in all the colonies. If you're asked to dinner here, you wouldn't go in a shooting-coat; neither do they. In the country, in the bush, of course minor allowances are made."

"But guns and pistols surely?"

"Not unless you wish to practise at the sea-birds on the way out, which few of the captains permit nowadays. You will find that you can buy every kind of firearm there at half the price you would pay here – equally good, mostly unused, the property of young men who have been induced to load themselves with unnecessary accommodation for man and beast. Saddlery, harness, agricultural implements, are all included in my list of unnecessaries."

"Then, what *am* I to take?" inquired Massinger, appalled at this stern dismissal of the accepted emigration formula.

"The clothes on your back, a couple of spare suits, a few books for the voyage, and what other articles may be contained in a Gladstone bag and two trunks; all else is vanity, and most assured vexation of spirit."

"And how about money?"

"There you touch the great essential – leaving it to the last, as we often do. Take, say, fifty sovereigns for the voyage – thirty would be ample, but it is as well to leave a margin. And of course half or a quarter of your available capital in the shape of a bank draft. You will find that it is worth much more, so to speak, than here."

"I mean to invest the greater part of it in land" – with decision.

"All right; as to that, I won't offer an opinion. I know next to nothing about New Zealand. Look out when you *do* buy. Some fellow told me there was trouble with the native titles; and lawsuits about land are no joke, as we have reason to know."

"Good-bye, my dear fellow," said our hero; "I shall always be grateful for your valuable hints. I hate the word 'advice.'" And as this happened in London, the two young men had dined together at the Reform Club, of which Massinger was a member, and gone to the theatre afterwards, wisely reflecting that such an opportunity might not again occur for a considerable period.

Before the day of departure he received, among others, a letter of feminine form and superscription, which read as follows: —

"My Dear Sir Roland,

"As you are betaking yourself to the ends of the earth, after the unreasoning fashion which men affect, you won't be alarmed at my affectionate mode of address. I really *have* a strong friendly interest in your welfare, though the nature of such a feeling on a girl's part is generally suspected. Perhaps, as you cannot get over your temporary grief about Hypatia, you are right to do something desperate. She will respect you all the more for this piece of foolishness. (Excuse me.) Women mostly do, if they have hearts (some haven't, of course), but they themselves generally believe they are not worth any serious sacrifice. A really 'nice' woman is about the best prize going, if a man can get her; only the mistake he makes is in not knowing that there are lots of other women in the world – 'fish in the sea,' etc. – who are certain to appreciate him if they get a chance, so nearly as good, or so alike in essentials, that he would hardly find any difference after a year or two.

"So, for the present, you are right to go away and found more Englands, and chop down trees, and fight with wild beasts – are there any in New Zealand, or only natives? Doing all this with a view of knocking all the nonsense, as we girls say, out of your head. Time will probably cure you, as it has done many another man. With us women – foolish creatures! – more time is generally needed; why, I'm sure I don't know. Perhaps because we can't smoke or drink, in our dark hours, like you men when you are thrown over.

"I wish you luck, anyhow. Some day when you come back – for I refuse to believe you will never see Massinger Court again – you will tell me if I am a true prophet. My tip is this: —

"Within the next five years Hypatia will have got tired of slumming, lecturing, teaching, and generally sacrificing herself for the heathen, and will hear reason; or you will find a *replica* of her in Australia or Kamtschatka, or wherever your wandering steps may lead, who will do nearly or quite as well to ornament your humble home.

"And now, after this infliction of genuine friendly counsel, I will conclude with a little personal item which may explain my protestations of merely platonic interest in your concerns. I have been engaged to Harry Merivale for nearly three

years. It was a dead secret, as he was too poor to marry. In those days you once did him a good turn, he told me. *Now* he has got his step, and his old aunt has come round, so we are to be *married next month*.

"I am sure you will give me joy, and believe me ever,  
"Your sincere friend and elder sister,  
"Bessie Branksome."

## CHAPTER IV

With the exception of certain yachting trips, Mr. Roland Massinger, as he now called himself, having decided to drop the title for the present, had no experience of ocean voyaging. A well-found yacht, presided over by an owner of royal hospitality and fastidious friendships, with carefully selected companions, and the pick of the mercantile marine for a crew, leaves little to be desired. Fêted at every port, and free to stay, or glide onwards as the sea-bird o'er the foam – such a cruise affords, perhaps, the ideal holiday.

But this was a far different experience. A shipload of perfect strangers, many of them not indifferent, like himself, to changing scene and environment, but unwilling exiles, leaving all they held dear, and murmuring secretly, if not openly, against Fate, presented no cheering features. The weather was cold and stormy; while, in crossing the Bay of Biscay, such a wild outcry of wind and wave greeted them, that with battened-down hatches, a deeply laden vessel, frightened passengers and overworked stewards, he had every facility afforded him for speculation as to whether his Antarctic enterprise would not be prematurely accounted for by a telegram in the *Times*, headed "Another shipwreck. All hands supposed to be lost."

This, and other discouraging thoughts, passed through the mind of the voyager during the forty-eight hours of supreme discomfort, not unmingled with danger, while the gale ceased not to menace the labouring vessel. However, being what is called "a good sailor," and his present frame of mind rendering him resigned, if not defiant, he endeared himself to the officers by refraining from useless questions, and awaiting with composure the change which, as they were not fated to go to the bottom on that occasion, took place in due course. How the storm abated, how the weather cleared; how, as the voyage progressed, the passengers became companionable, has often been narrated in similar chronicles.

The mountains of New Zealand were finally sighted, and the good ship *Arrawatta* steamed into the lovely harbour of Auckland one fine morning, presenting to the eager gaze of the wayfarers the charms of a landscape which in many respects equals, and in others surpasses, the world-famed haven of Sydney.

It was early dawn when they floated through the Rangitoto channel between the island so called – the three-coned peak of which, with scoria-shattered flanks, denoted volcanic origin – and the North Head. Passing this guardian headland, "a most living landscape," the more entrancing from contrast to the endless ocean plain which for so many a day had limited his vision, was spread out before the voyager's eager and delighted gaze. Land and water, hill and dale, bold headlands and undulating verdurous slopes, combined to form a panorama of enchanting variety.

The city of Auckland, which he had come so far to see, rose in a succession of graduated eminences from the waters of a sheltered bay. Bold headlands alternated with winding creeks and estuaries; low volcanic hills clothed with dazzling verdure, ferny glens and copses which reminded him of the last day's "cock" shooting at the Court; while trim villas and even more pretentious mansions gave assurance that here the modern Vikings, having wearied of the stormy seas, had made themselves a settled home and abiding-place. Glen and pine-crested headland, yellow beach and frowning cliff, wharves and warehouses, skiffs and coasters, the smoke of steamers, all told of the adjuncts of the Anglo-Saxon – that absorbing race which has rarely been dislodged from suitable foothold.

On the voyage Massinger had noticed a good-looking man, about his own age, in whom, in spite of studiously plain attire, he recognized, by various slight marks and tokens, the English aristocrat. Most probably the stranger had made similar deductions, as he had commenced their first conversation with an unreserved condemnation of the weather, after a passing depreciation of the food, concluding by a query in the guise of a statement.

"Not been this way before?"

Massinger admitted the fact.

"Going to settle – farm – sheep and all that – take up land, eh!"

"I thought of doing so, unless I change my plans on arrival. I suppose it's as good as any of the Australian colonies?"

"Beastly holes, generally speaking, for a man who's lived in the world. Don't know that New Zealand's worse than the rest of the lot. Australia – all black fellows – kangaroos – sandy wastes – droughts and floods. Burnt up first – flood comes and drowns survivors. So they tell me!"

"But New Zealand is fertile and well watered; all the books say so."

"Books d – d rot – lies, end to end; must go yourself to find out. My third trip."

"Then you like it?" pursued the emigrant, stimulated by this wholesale depreciation of a country which all other accounts represented as the Promised Land.

"Have to like it," answered the other; "billet in this infernal New Zealand Company. Wish I'd broke my leg the day I applied. Heard of it, I suppose?"

Mr. Massinger had indeed heard of it. Had read blue-books, correspondence, letters, articles, and reviews, in which the New Zealand Land Company was alternately represented as a providential agency for saving the finest country in the world for British occupation, for finding homes on smiling farms for the crowded population of Great Britain, for Christianizing the natives as well as instructing them in the arts of peace; or, as a syndicate of greedy monopolists, insidiously working for the accumulation of vast estates, and oppressing a noble and interesting race, whose lands they proposed to confiscate under a miserable pretence of sale and barter.

"I *have* heard and read a good deal of the proceedings of the New Zealand Land Company; but accounts differ, so that they are perplexing to a stranger."

"Naturally; all interested people – one myself," said his new acquaintance. "But, as we've got so far, permit me?" and extracting a card from a neat *porte-monnaie*, he handed it to Massinger, who, glancing at it, perceived the name of

**Mr. Dudley Slyde,**

**Secretary to the New Zealand Land Company, Auckland and Christchurch**

"Happy to make your acquaintance," he said. "I am not sure that I have a card. My name is Massinger."

"What! Massinger of the Court, Herefordshire? Heard generally you had sold your place and gone in for colonizing. What the devil – er – excuse me. Reasons, no doubt; but if I had the luck to be the owner of Massinger Court —*born* to it, mind you – I'd have seen all the colonies swallowed up by an earthquake before I'd have left England. No! not for all New Zealand, from the 'Three Kings' to Cape Palliser."

"If all Englishmen felt alike in that respect, we shouldn't have had an empire, should we?" suggested the other. "Somebody must take the chances of war and adventure."

"*Somebody else* it would have been in my case," promptly replied Mr. Slyde. "However, matter of taste. Every man manage his own affairs. Great maxim. And as mine are mixed up in this blessed company, if you'll look me up in Auckland, I'll put you up to a wrinkle or two in the matter of land-purchase – of course you'll want to buy land; otherwise *you* might get sold – you see? Stock Exchange with a 'boom' on nothing to it."

The transfer of Mr. Massinger's trunks in a four-wheeler to a comfortable-appearing hostelry was effected with no more than average delay. An appetizing breakfast, wherein a well-cooked mutton chop was preceded by a grilled flounder, and flanked by eggs and toast, convinced him that the Briton of the South had no occasion to fear degeneration as a consequence of unsuitable living. After which

he felt his spirits distinctly improved in tone, and his desire to explore the surroundings of this distant outpost of the wandering Briton took shape and motion.

The town of Auckland, having a few reasonably good buildings and a large number of cottages, cabins, and other shelters in every gradation, from the incipient terrace to the Maori "whare," was about the average size of English country towns. No great difference in the number of houses. Not much in that of the inhabitants. But there was an unmistakable departure in the air and bearing of these last. The recognized orders and classes of British life, hardly distinguishable from their British types, were all there. Rich and poor, gentle and simple. The farmer, the country gentleman, the tradesman, the loungeur, the doctor, the banker, the merchant, the peasant, and the navy, all were there, with their pursuits and avocations written in large text on form and face, speech and bearing. But he marked, as before stated, a certain departure from the home manner. And it was grave and essential. Whether high or low, each man's features in that heterogeneous crowd were informed, even illumined, with the glow of hope, the light of sanguine expectation.

Once landed on the shores of this magnificent appanage of Britain, so nearly lost to the empire, dull must he be of soul, narrow of vision, who did not feel his heart bound within him and each pulse throb at the thought of the gorgeous possibilities which lay before him. Before the labourer, who received a fourfold wage, and rejoiced in such plenteous provision for his family as he had never dreamed of in the mother-land. Before the farmer, who saw his way to opulence and landed estate, as he surveyed the transplanted food crops growing and burgeoning as in a glorified garden which "drank the rains of heaven at will." Before the professional man, whose high fees and abundant practice would soon absolve him from the necessity of professional toil. Before the capitalist, who saw in the steady rise of land-values, whether in town or country, an illimitable field for judicious investment, ending with an early retirement and at least *one* fortune.

The town sloped upwards from the sea, thus necessitating steep gradients for the streets. The main street, broad and well laid out, was more level at its inception, though Massinger saw by the hill immediately above it that he would not have to go far before his Alpine experiences would stand him in good stead. This was entirely to his mind; so, stepping out with determination, he reached the summit of Mount Eden. Here he paused, and indeed the pace at which he had breasted the ascent, after the inaction of the voyage, rendered it far from inexpedient to admire the view. What a prospect it was! He stood upon an isthmus with an ocean on either hand. Far as eye could range, the boundless South Pacific lay glowing and shimmering under the midday sun; on the hither side, the harbour with flags of all nations and ships from every sea.

The roadstead by which the *Arrawatta* had entered, appeared like a land-locked inlet. The outlines of the Greater and Lesser Barrier were plainly visible, as also the lofty ridge of Cape Colville; other islands and headlands loomed faintly in the shadowy horizon. Westward lay the great harbour of Manukau and the Waitakerei Ranges.

Weary with scanning the gulfs of the Hauraki and Waitemata, as also the far-seen ranges of the Upper Thames, holding stores of precious minerals, he allowed his eye to rest upon the fields and farmhouses, villages and meadows, overspreading the levels and sheltered beneath the volcanic hills. Under his feet what marvellous revelations of fertility met his gaze! The volcanic formation was evidenced by the shape of the conical eminences by which he was surrounded. He counted more than a dozen. In all, the extinct craters were perfect in form, though covered on side and base with richest herbage. In these he detected most of the British fodder plants, growing in unusual luxuriance. Observing the flattened summits and remains of graded terraces, he found on inspection that the hand of man had adapted these works of nature to his needs.

Scarped, terraced, and perfect of circumvallation, the remains of mouldering palisades indicated the abodes of a warlike people, who had in long-past days converted these hilltops into fortresses, affording effective means of defence, as well as a wide outlook, in case of invasion.

Here for generations, perhaps centuries uncounted, had this vigorous, agricultural, warlike people – for such by his course of reading he knew the Maori nation to be – lived and died, fought and feasted, garnered their simple harvest, and lived contentedly on the products of land and sea.

Proud and stubborn, brave to recklessness, they naturally became jealous of the gradually extending occupation of their land by the encroaching white race. But why should such a people not be sensitive, even to the madness of battle, against overwhelming odds? They had won their country from the deep, traversing wide wastes of waters in canoes but ill adapted for storm and tempest. They had discovered this fair region – cultivated, peopled it. Why should they not resist a foreign occupation to the death? And as he looked around on the magnificent prospect spread before, around, he could not help recalling the lines of the immortal bard —

"Where's the coward that would not dare  
To fight for such a land?"

Returning to his hotel, he chanced to meet several groups of this much-exploited people, and was much impressed by the stalwart frames and bold, independent bearing of the men.

Many of the women, too, were handsome, and among the half-caste girls and young men were forms and faces which would have compared favourably with the finest models of ancient Greece. One young man of that colour attracted his attention. He had been reading on board ship that wonderful romance of Michael Scott's, wherein the spacious times of old, and the planter-life of the West Indian Islands, are limned with such prodigality of colour, such wealth of humorous perception, such power of pathos. As this young man came swinging along with a companion down the street, cigar in mouth, he could not help saying to himself, "There's the young pirate captain out of 'Tom Cringle's Log.'" He was taller even than that fascinating Spanish desperado, but there was a strong family likeness.

"What a man he is!" thought Massinger. "Six feet three or four, if an inch, broad-shouldered, deep-chested – a wondrous combination of strength and activity; supple as a panther, with the muscle of a Farnese Hercules. As to his features, the eyes and teeth are splendid, the complexion a clear bronze, hardly darker than that of Southern Europe."

Altogether he doubted if he had ever seen such a remarkable masculine specimen of personal grace and beauty. "This is truly a remarkable country," he soliloquized. "If the climate and soil can raise men like this, what may not be hoped from the introduction of a purely British race, with all the modern advantages of civilization?"

Thus pondering, he managed to discover his hotel, where he set himself resolutely to sketch out a plan of future operation, before completing which, he deemed it advisable to deliver some of the letters of introduction with which he had been plentifully supplied. One of the more immediate effects of this action was the outflow of an inordinate quantity of advice, from the recipients of which, as a newly arrived Englishman, he was deemed to be in urgent need.

These exhortations were compendious and exhaustive, but failed in effect upon him from their very affluence, so much of the suggestive information being in direct contrast to that which immediately preceded it.

Having admitted that he intended to purchase a large block of land for farm and grazing purposes, it was astonishing how much interest he excited among the mercantile or pastoral magnates to whom he had been accredited.

"Have nothing to do with that infernal New Zealand Company," said one grizzled colonist, "or you'll never cease to regret it. They're all in the same boat with certain British members of Parliament and the local political gang, to rob these poor devils of natives of their tribal lands. Title? They haven't a rag. Some artful devil of a Maori – and they are not behindhand in that line – pretends to sell the lands of his tribe, for a few barrels of gunpowder or cases of Yankee axes – of course signs a bogus deed."

"But isn't he their accredited agent?" queried our hero. "They would be bound by his act."

"Agent be hanged!" quoth the pioneer impetuously. "This allotment belongs to me; have I a right therefore to sell the whole town? Though, between you and me, there are men in business here who would have a try at it, if they could delude one of you innocent new arrivals into taking his word and paying over the cash."

"I trust I'm not quite so innocent," replied Massinger, smiling, "as to make purchases without due inquiry."

"Depends upon whom you inquire from," said his experienced friend. "Advice is cheap, or rather dear enough, when the giver has an axe to grind."

"Then how am I to find out, if no one is to be trusted in this Arcadia of yours?"

"Devilish few that I know of," rejoined the senior. "The Government officials and the Land Commissioners are, perhaps, the safest. They have some character to lose, and are fairly impartial."

"After what you have said, may I venture to ask counsel from you?" – instinctively trusting the open countenance and steady eye of the pioneer.

"Oh! certainly; you needn't take it, of course. Don't be in a hurry to invest; that's my first word. The next, *buy from the Government*; they have a title – that is, nearly always – and are bound to support you in it."

"But suppose their title is disputed? What will they do?"

"Take forcible possession, which means *war*. And Maori war – savages, as it's the fashion industry call them – is no joke. And mark my word, if they're not more careful than they have been lately, 'the deil will gae ower Jock Wabster.'" Here the speaker lapsed into his native Doric, showing that though half a century had rolled by since he first anchored in the Bay of Islands, and the Southern tongue had encroached somewhat, he had not forgotten the hills of bonnie Scotland or the expressive vernacular of his youth.

"But surely the tribe, whichever it may happen to be, could not stand against British regulars?"

"So you may think. But I was in the thick of Honi Heke's affair in '45, and I could tell you stories that would surprise you. You must remember that, as a people, the New Zealanders are among the most warlike races upon earth, inured for centuries past to every species of bloodshed and rapine, and bred up in the belief that a man is a warrior or nothing. Fear, they know not the name of. They are wily strategists, as you will observe, when you see their 'pahs,' and the nature of their primeval forests gives them an immense advantage for cover or concealment."

"Then you think there may be another war?" inquired Massinger, with some interest.

"Think! I'm sure of it. Things can't go on as they are. We're in for it sooner or later, and all because the Governor, who means well, lets himself be led by half a dozen politicians, in spite of the advice of the old hands and the friendly chiefs, our allies, who have as much sense and policy as all the ministry put together."

"But will not they always naturally lean to their own countrymen?"

"Far from it – that's the very reason. Most of these chiefs have tribal feuds and hereditary enemies, as bitter and remorseless as ever my Hieland ancestors enjoyed themselves with. Others, like Waka Nene, since they were Christianized by the early missionaries, have cast in their lot with the whites. They fought shoulder to shoulder with us, and will again, even if they disapprove of our policy."

"What an extraordinary people!" said Massinger. "And if war breaks out, as you think likely, what will become of the colonists?"

"They will have to fight for it. Murders and every kind of devilry will result. But we have fought before, and can again, I suppose. These islands are going to be another Britain; and even if there has been some folly and injustice, England always means well, and we are not going to give them up. 'No, sir,' as my American friends say."

"I rather like the prospect," said Massinger. "A good straightforward war is a novelty in these too-peaceful days. If I had any notion of leaving New Zealand, which I have not, this would decide me. Good morning, and many thanks. I will see you again before I decide on anything fresh."

"There's grit in that young yellow," quoth the ex-skipper, as he walked out. "Bar accidents, he's the sort of man to make his mark in a new country."

The man so referred to walked down the street, deeply pondering.

"I have got into the land of romance," thought he, "without any manner of doubt. What a pull for a fellow in these degenerate days! It raises one's spirits awfully. In addition to such a country for grass and roots as I never dreamt of it, to think of there being every probability of a war! A real war! It reminds one of the 'Last of the Mohicans,' and all the joys of youth. We shall have 'Hawkeye,' 'Uncas,' and 'Chingachgook' turning up before we know where we are. Oh! *fortunati nimium*—Halloa! what have we here?"

What he saw at that moment was something which had hardly entered into his calculations as a peaceful colonist. But it was strangely in accord with the warning tone of Captain Macdonald's last deliverance. A section of the Ngatiawa tribe, which had visited Auckland on the matter of a petition to the Governor concerning the violation of a reserve, the same being *tapu* under ceremonies of a particularly awful and sacred nature, were indulging themselves with a war-dance by way of dissipating the tedium necessitated by official delay. A crowd of the townspeople had collected at the corner of Shortland Street, while the tattooed braves were with the utmost gravity going through the evolutions of their horrific performance. Chiefly unclothed, they stamped and roared, grimaced and threatened, as in actual preparation for conflict. Musket in hand, they leaped and yelled like demoniacs; their countenances distorted, the eyes turned inward, their tongues protruded as with wolfish longing. Each man was possessed by a fiend, as it seemed to Massinger, who gazed upon the actors with intense interest. The performance, hardly new to the majority of the spectators, failed to impress one of them with due respect. He remarked upon the pattern tattooed on the thigh of a huge native in front of him to a comrade, ending with a rude jest in the Maori tongue. It was a *mauvaise plaisanterie* in good sooth. Turning like a wild bull upon the astonished offender, and furious at the insult offered to his *moko*—sacred as the totem of an Indian chief—the Ngatiawa dashed the butt-end of his musket against his breast, sending him on to his back with such violence that he had to be assisted to rise, stunned and bewildered. The Maoris wheeled like one man, and formed in line, while the leader shouted *Kapai!* as they marched through the crowd to their camp, chanting a refrain which no doubt might have been freely rendered, "Wha daur meddle wi' me?"

This incident impressed our Englishman more than weeks of description could have done, with the peculiar characteristics of the strange race among whom he had elected to dwell. Pride and sensitiveness, to the point of frenzy, were evidently among the attributes which had to be considered at risk of personal damage.

He was, however, surprised at the cool way in which the crowd had taken their comrade's discomfiture, and said as much to a respectable-looking man who was walking down the street with him.

"We're not afraid of the beggars," returned the townsman, "as we'll show 'em by-and-by. But it's no good starting before you're ready. That fellow was half-drunk, and it served him right. There's a big tribe at the back of these chaps, and they're in a dangerous humour about that cursed Waitara block. That's why the crowd wouldn't back the white man up. He's only a wharf-loafer, when all's said and done."

This explained the affair in great part. Doubtless a *mêlée* would have ensued if any hot-blooded individuals in the street had commenced an attack upon the Maoris. An obstinate and by no means bloodless fight must have arisen. Doubtless, in the end, the whites would have conquered. Then the tribe would have murdered outlying settlers, or attacked the town. The military would have been engaged. The war-torch, once applied, might have lighted up a conflagration over the whole island,

necessitating an expenditure of blood and treasure which years of peace would have been insufficient to repay. All, too, occasioned by the idiotic folly of a worthless member of society.

Revolving such reflections, which, with other ideas and considerations, effectually excluded the image of Hypatia, Roland Massinger betook himself to his hotel, having discovered, as many a gentleman unfortunate in his love affairs has done before him, that this life of ours holds sensational interests, which, if not sufficing to assuage the pangs of unrequited love, yet act as a potent anodyne.

To such an extent did the subject of the diplomacy urgently required at such a juncture excite his interest, that he cast about for some means of visiting the camp of these strange people, and learning more about their embassy, which had so suddenly acquired importance in his eyes. Having fully decided upon making New Zealand his home, and becoming fired with ambition to aid in the development of this wonderland of the South, he had addressed himself on the voyage with commendable diligence to the study of the Maori language and traditions. Thus, though properly diffident as to his colloquial powers, he was in a position to more easily acquire a practical proficiency than if he had been without a preparatory course of study.

He had finished his lunch, and was enjoying his smoke on the balcony, gazing over the harbour, of which the elevated position of the Grand Hotel offered a view which he never ceased to admire, when he recognized the sonorous voice of his marine friend of the morning, Captain Macdonald.

"Yes, indeed! Ticklish situation – you may well say so. Jack Maori sitting on a powder barrel, filling cartridges and smoking his pipe. I've often seen 'em – nothing to it."

"I agree with you, Macdonald; you and I have been long enough here to know how to deal with Maoris. The Government ought to see that the touchy beggars are not needlessly set up. I lost a dozen valuable blocks here in 1840 because a young fool of a pakeha didn't know the difference between *taihai-ing* (stealing) and mere taking away – *tiaki-ing*."

"Why, how was that?"

"Well, he said that Te Hira, the young chief of all the coast about there, was '*taihai-ing* the goahore' – instead of *tiaki-ing*. He felt affronted – sulked, of course, and just as I fully expected to get all Shortland Crescent for – well, decidedly cheap – he shut up his mouth like a vice, and wouldn't sell a yard of his land. It shows what a queer people they are, when a grammatical error has such far-reaching consequences."

"Consequences!" echoed his companion; "I should think so. But I never heard of that adventure of yours."

"Well, it made a difference of about five thousand a year to me, according to the present price of the land. The Government got it afterwards, and cut it up into town lots. What noble buildings are on them now!"

"Look here, Lochiel," said the sea-captain; "suppose we walk over to the camp and have a *Korōero*. I know this chief, and we can both patter Maori. It might do good to explain matters, and none of us want to see Auckland under martial law."

"It's just a grand idea!" said the other colonist, a tall distinguished-looking elderly man, whose spare upright figure suggested military training; once careless enough of danger, but now for some years declined to the more peaceful vocation of a merchant – one of the sea-roving, fearless breed of adventurers peculiar to Britain, whose wide-reaching mercantile transactions have included the mobilizing of armies and the levying of taxes; "in whose lumber-rooms," as in those of the Great Company now merged in Imperial rule, "are the thrones of ancient kings."

Here Massinger advanced, and bringing himself within the ken of the speakers, was at once introduced to "my old friend, Mr. Lochiel," as "Mr. Massinger, a gentleman who had come to settle among them."

"Very pleased to make his acquaintance," said the tall man, whose shrewd, intellectual, kindly face impressed him most favourably. "If he is of my mind, he will have reason to congratulate himself

on his choice of a colony. I have never regretted my decision, and the greater part of my life has been spent here."

"You seem to have a diplomatic difficulty on hand," remarked Massinger, "if I may judge from an experience this morning."

"Oh! you witnessed that affair in Shortland Street, did you? My friend and I were just about to walk over to the Maori camp and get their notion of it. We're both 'Pakeha Maoris' of long standing, and the chief, Te Rangitake, has heard our names before. Would you care to accompany us?"

"There is nothing I should like better. I begin to wish for a more intimate acquaintance with our native friends, and trust to be an authority on their manners and customs by-and-by."

"It's odds but that we may know a lot more about their ways before long," said Captain Macdonald; "more than we shall like, if I don't mistake. In the mean time we had better look them up at the Kiki."

The newly made friends – for such they were fated to be in the after-time – walked on a path parallel to the sea, over several deep ravines crossed by temporary bridges, until they came to a clear space, in front of which a bold bluff looked out upon the harbour. Here a collection of huts, made of the *raupo*, or reed-rush, and the smoke of fires, denoted the presence of the ambassadors of the former lords of the soil.

"*Haere Mai! Haere Mai!*" was the cry with which they were greeted, which Massinger rightly interpreted as a note of welcome. His companions replied with a phrase which appeared to be the correct antiphonal rejoinder. As they reached the camp, in which they noted a number of women and children, it was evident that they were favourably known to the *hapu*, or family section, of the by no means inconsiderable Ngatiawa tribe.

The chief himself, an intelligent and determined-looking man, thus addressed them —

"Welcome! My welcome is to you, captain! You have been a friend to the Ngatiawa as long ago as when Honii Heke cut down the flagstaff; and my welcome is to you – Herekino. When your ship was in Kororarika, your heart was to our tribe."

"My salutation," said Macdonald, "is to you, O Te Rangitake! My friend and I, also this Pakeha Rangatira, have come to you for words in this quarrel of Otakou in Auckland today. It is folly – let it not breed quarrels between us. It was the act of a nobody, a *tutua*.

"The heart of Otakou is sore," replied the chief, gravely. "He was mocked by the pakeha. His *mana* was injured. He wished for *utu*, but I told him there were matters to be considered; that the tribe was in *runanga* concerning the Waitara land – our land, the land of my people. After that he can take his musket in his hand. It is his own affair."

"It was a folly, a child's trick. The pakeha was beaten by him. He fell on the ground. His countrymen would not defend him. He had done wrong. Were they afraid of forty or fifty Maoris? No! They knew that the pakeha had done wrong. They would not lift a finger for him."

"It is well," said the chief; and advancing a few steps, he spoke rapidly to the insulted warrior, who sat moodily alone. "The Rangatira with the white man says the pakeha has done wrong. His people disown him. The matter is ended." Here he broke a wand which he carried in his hand in two pieces, in token that the decision was complete. Upon which the countenance of the insulted Maori cleared visibly; he arose, and walked to the other side of the camp.

And now Mr. Lochiel commenced a conversation in Maori with the chief, which evidently was more important, and, as it proceeded, became deeply interesting. The flashing eye of the chief, his impetuous words, his frowning brow, and ever and anon the deep, resonant tones of his voice, intimated so much.

Captain Macdonald translated from time to time, for the information of Massinger, who became anxious to learn more of the subject of the important conference, for such it evidently was. The colonist spoke calmly, but with weight and effect, as was shown by the quick rejoinders and deeply moved expression of countenance of his interlocutor.

"It is about this Waitara block which the Government has bought lately," said Captain Macdonald. "He disputes the right of Teira to sell it; says that he will *not* acknowledge any sale or transfer. That the land belongs, in named and measured portions, to individuals and families in the tribe. That no single person has the right to dispose of it. That the whole tribe must unite, and through him, their chief and *Ariki*, give formal assent to the sale. That he is anxious to be at peace with the Governor and our people, but that he will shed his blood rather than part with this land."

"But surely there must have been official correspondence about the sale of this important block?" said Massinger. "Land is not handed over anywhere like a ton of potatoes."

"To do the Government justice, there has been correspondence enough and to spare," replied Mr. Lochiel. "The chief says he had a letter from the Colonial Secretary that Teira's land (as alleged) would be bought by the Governor. That his rule was that each man was to have the 'word' about his own land – that the word of a man with no claim would not be listened to."

"But that is the whole business, as I understand the matter. The chief says it is *not* the seller's land, though he may have a separate portion."

"That is what Te Rangitake wrote. 'Friend! Salutation to you! I will not agree to our bedroom being sold (I mean Waitara here), for this bed belongs to the whole of us! And do not you be in haste to give the money. If you give the money in secret, you will get no land. Do not suppose that this is folly on my part. All I have to say to you, O Governor! is that none of this land will be given to you —*akore, akore, akore* (never, never, never) – while I live.'"

As these words rang out until they reached a shout of defiance, the greater part of the assembled warriors started to their feet, and standing round their chief and the three white men, looked as if but a very little additional excitement would suffice to lead them to death or glory, commencing with the slaughtering of any chance pakehas whom they might meet.

"This was not by any means intended for a declaration of war," Mr. Lochiel averred. "The Maoris are very demonstrative in oratory, and have always been in the habit of using much parliamentary discussion; even of giving full and official notice before war is actually declared."

But as the three Europeans wended their way back to the city, the countenances of the older men expressed grave doubt – even expectation of evil.

"As sure as we stand here," said Mr. Lochiel, coming to a halt, and looking over the waters of the harbour, lying calm and peaceful in the rich tints of the setting sun, "and as certainly as that sun will rise tomorrow, there will be trouble – war to the knife, I believe – if the Government persists in paying that fellow Teira the cash and claiming the whole block."

"I agree with you," said his friend. "How the Governor, who has stood firm in so many similar cases, should have allowed himself to be hoodwinked in this, passes my knowledge. These Ngatiawas will refuse to quit their land; and the moment the surveyors go on it, there will be the devil to pay."

"But what can they do?" queried Massinger. "Will they kill the survey party?"

"No! certainly not. They rarely act in a hurry. They will probably use merely passive resistance at first. But resist they will. You may take their oath of that."

"And if that has no effect?"

"Then they will fight in earnest. They are devils incarnate when their blood is up. I have seen many an inter-tribal raid and battle; I don't wish to see another. But there will be murder in cold blood – killing in hot blood, with all the devilry of savage warfare. The blood of the men, women, and children certain to be sacrificed before the campaign is over, will be on the heads of those whose folly and greed provoke the outbreak."

"And is there no means of arresting this mad action?" said the younger man. "Will not leading colonists take the initiative in preventing a flagrant injustice – this removal of landmarks which must be paid for in blood?"

"All depends upon whether the peace party in the House is strong enough to defeat the machinery of the land-jobbers. If not, one thing is certain. We shall see the beginning of a war of

which it will be hard to predict the end – much more what may happen in the meantime. And now, if you and my old friend here will dine with me this evening, I will promise not to sell you any land, or otherwise take advantage of your presumed inexperience as a newly arrived lamb among us wolves of colonists."

Nothing could possibly have been suggested more in accordance with our hero's tastes and inclinations, and he congratulated himself on his prospects of gaining real reliable acquaintance with New Zealand politics. This arrangement was duly carried out, and the three friends walked together to Mr. Lochiel's house. He had begged them to dispense with any change of attire, as the dusk was closing in and Mrs. Lochiel was absent on a visit. When they reached the mansion, beautifully situated on a headland overlooking the harbour, its size and appointments were a surprise to Massinger, doubtful of the class of habitation which they were approaching.

"Yes," said the venerable pioneer, as they stood in the handsomely furnished drawing-room, replete with pictures, casts, curios – a most generous assortment of *objets d'art*, evidently the fruits of a lengthened continental ramble; "things are much changed since Thornton and I bought that island you see out under the line of moon-rays, from the reigning chief, more than thirty years ago. He and I lived there for many a day, chiefly upon pork, fish, potatoes, and oysters. How well I remember the good old chief, to whom we 'belonged' as Pakeha Maoris, and the first night we spent there!"

"And at that time had none of the land here been sold to the Government?" asked Massinger.

"Not one solitary acre, where Auckland now stands – 'nor roof, nor latched door,' to quote the old song. And now, look at it."

Mr. Massinger did look across the suburb which divided the grounds of their host's residence from the city of Auckland, with its thirty thousand inhabitants, its churches, gardens, court-houses, public libraries, vice-regal mansion, and warehouses. The lights of the city showed an area even larger than he had at first supposed it to be. The ships in the well-filled harbour, the steamers with their variously coloured illuminants, completed the picture of a thriving settlement, destined to perform its function notably as a component part of the British Empire.

"This is hardly progress," he exclaimed. "It is *transformation!*"

## CHAPTER V

Fully convinced that it behoved him to walk warily, and to consider well before he committed himself to a purchase involving the investment of his capital and the necessity of residence in a district which might be exposed to the horrors of war, Massinger determined to consult all available friends and acquaintances, as well as to examine for himself. He wished to make sure not only of the validity of title, but of all collateral conditions likely to affect his occupation. Still, an estate of some sort he was determined to acquire.

He had taken daily walks in every direction from his headquarters, and the more he saw of this wonderful country, the more favourably he was disposed to think of its fertility, salubrity, and general adaptation to the needs of an Anglo-Saxon race.

"What an astonishing thing it seems," he told himself, musingly, "that these marvellous islands should have remained unknown, unoccupied wastes, and, but for a few tribes of splendid barbarians, unpeopled, until the early years of the present century! Providence has marked them out for another home of our restless race. Another England, beneath the Cross of the South! An outlet, how gracious and timely, for the 'hardly entreated brother' who so often languishes in older lands for lack of free scope for his energies! Such soil, such rivers, such scenery, such a climate! What should we think at home if tens of thousands of acres of land of this quality were offered to our farmers at peppercorn rents or nominal purchase-money?"

Then, not intending to confine himself entirely to one set of advisers, he decided to look up Mr. Dudley Slyde. He found that gentleman in an upper chamber of a large building, writing letters which looked like despatches, with an industry in strong contrast to his *dolce far niente* attitude during the voyage. However, he promptly relinquished his task, and, taking a chair near a press marked "Native Titles," drew forth a box of cigars, and, lighting one, exhorted his guest to do the same.

"Writing home," he said apologetically; "last day of the mail – have to send all sorts of beastly Reports. Just told my directors country's going to the devil; wrapped it up decently, of course. Bad business, this Waitara block – shockingly managed; don't half like the look of things. Heard of it, I suppose?"

"Yes, indeed. I witnessed a passage of arms also between one of the Maori deputation and a drunken white man. It appeared to me significant of the temper of the native population."

"D – d bad temper generally. Touchy first, and dangerous, not to say bloodthirsty, afterwards. Queer people."

"In some respects, certainly. But is there no way of persuading them to sell their land? It would be better for them and everybody else not to lock up this fertile country."

"Of course there is, if you go the right way about it. But can't be done by main force. Wants brains and straight going. That's what we're short of. Governor right enough, if it comes to that, but been 'had' in this last affair."

"The Waitara block?"

"Precisely. I see you're getting colonized. Remember what Bailey Junior said about Mrs. Todgers' fish?"

"Don't eat none of it?' I remember. But how does that apply?"

"Just this much. Don't you touch an acre of that rich and well-watered area, if you get it for nothing. There'll be bloodshed over it, take my word. And carrying on Master Bailey's warning, any eating done on the premises is more likely than not to be at the expense, literally and *personally*, of the incautious purchaser."

"In my – I was going to say, in my opinion – but I refrain, being unable to form one. But perhaps I may go so far as to quote old colonists – that there is certain to be trouble if this so-called purchase is attempted to be carried out. At this stage could it not be prevented?"

"Most certainly it could; but when a policy has been weak up to a certain point, the responsible head is apt to square the account by being obstinate in the wrong place. That's the matter now."

"And the end?"

"God only knows. If the Government persists in pushing through this bogus sale, against the warnings of Te Rangitake – who, in addition to his being a high chief, and the largest holder in this said block, is a deuced ugly customer – I'll lay twenty to one that there'll be the devil to pay."

"But the Government surely won't call out the troops in the face of the reports of Busby and McLean, and the opinion of Maning, anent native titles?"

"People of ordinary sense would think so, but they're 'running amok' just now, and what between the Company, the Provincial Council, the Ministry, and the Governor, who has been over-persuaded or duped in the matter, I believe that war, and nothing else, will be the outcome. The British Government has acquired much territory in different parts of the world, but this is going to be one of the biggest land-bills in men and money that Old England ever drew cheque for. That's what I'm telling my directors at home, and I hope they'll like the news."

Here Mr. Slyde resumed his pen, and with a brief adieu the chance friends separated.

Discovering from reliable sources that nothing in the way of battle, murder, and sudden death was likely to take place for a few weeks, Mr. Massinger decided that he would pay a visit to those wondrous lakes of which he had heard and read. He had pictured in his mind, how often, the strange aspect of a country where snow-crowned mountains or active volcanoes looked down upon Nature's daring colour-effects dashed off in her most fantastic moods; where the central fires of the globe sent up their steam in jets, and the angry gnome, "the mid-earth's swarthy child," still murmured audibly; where boiling fountains hissed and gurgled, unchilled by the wintry blast; where fairy terraces, lustrous in lace-like tracery, lay shining, translucent, under summer moon or winter dawn; where the unsophisticated inhabitants of this weird and magical region, all ignorant of the clothes philosophy, revelled from morn to eve in the luxurious warmth of medicated baths, curative of all the ills that flesh is heir to.

When he communicated his intentions as to visiting the far-famed land of the geyser and the fumarole to his friends, they all advised him to make the journey without delay.

"It is one of the wonders of the world, and by no means the least," said Mr. Lochiel. "I thank God that I have seen it; and though I have travelled much in other lands, I have never beheld the place that equals that strange and grand landscape, terrible even in its beauty. The delicate loveliness of the pink and white terraces 'beggars all description.' I shall not attempt it. They alone are well worth coming from the other end of the world to see."

"And I wouldn't delay either," said Captain Macdonald. "This Waitara business may bring on war at any time, and then no white man, except a missionary, is safe – hardly he, indeed."

"I will start next week," said Massinger, "if I can get a horse and guide. I should never forgive myself if I lost the chance by delay."

"Horses of any kind you can pick up at the bazaar within an hour," said Mr. Lochiel; "and I will send you a guide who could find his way to Taupo in the dark. It is scarcely a road to travel alone just now, and the forest tracks are neither easy to keep nor to find again when lost. The rivers, too, are of a violent nature, and dangerous unless you know the fords."

Acting upon this information and the advice so freely tendered, Mr. Massinger at once bought himself a horse. The roads being rough – indeed, mostly in a state of nature, as he was informed – and a certain amount of wearing apparel and provisions being absolutely necessary, he looked less to the paces and appearance of the animal than to its strength and substance. A guide, too, was essential, as in a country where the primeval forest was almost impracticable in places, where the ice-cold rivers were without fords often, without bridges always, local knowledge was indispensable. He was fortunate in one respect, as he fell across a stout half-bred grey mare at a moderate price.

Something was said to him about the danger of travelling among the wilder tribes of the north without protection, or even a comrade of his own race; to which he made answer that he had not come all that way to lead a feather-bed life. Whatever risk other men encountered, he felt equal to. So, with the good wishes of all whom he had met since his landing, he prepared to depart.

Mr. Slyde's parting injunction was, "Stand up to these Maori beggars, and talk as if you owned the island. They know a gentleman when they see one, and they hate anything like distrust or double-dealing. Unless war is declared while you are away, you will be as safe as in town here; in some respects perhaps safer. *Au revoir.*"

In New Zealand at that time, and, indeed, long afterwards, people were so accustomed to the sight of the emigrant Briton, with his thick boots, his rough tweeds, Crimean shirt, and brand-new valise or saddlebags, that such an apparition hardly excited more surprise than in the Australian colonies. There, a hundred years of colonization have settled the race in personal habitudes descriptive of every shade of road travel, town dwelling, ordinary wayfaring or desert exploration. One glance there is sufficient to determine, not only the station in life, but the immediate business or occupation of the stranger. And so full and continuous had been the stream of emigration poured into New Zealand of late years, that the ultra-British rig excited no more remark than that of the tweed-clad tourist in the Highlands. Even the "garb of old Gaul," which the clansmen from Aberfoil or Glengarry not infrequently sported, as useful, dignified, and ornamental, only received a passing glance, or gave rise to a transient observation from a native as to the peculiar description of lunacy to which the pakehas were subject.

When, therefore, Roland Massinger left Auckland one fine morning, riding his gallant grey, with the trusty double-barrel on his shoulder, a navy revolver in his belt, and a miscellaneous assortment of useful articles dispersed about himself and his charger, no one seemed disposed to remark unnecessarily, or to make jeering remarks upon his outfit.

A day or two before starting, Massinger received a note in a strange handwriting, which ran as follows: —

*"Auckland, 14, Shortland Street,  
"Wednesday.*

"Dear Sir,

"My old friend Dr. Lochiel has, I believe, recommended me to you as a guide for the trip to Rotorua and Rotomahana.

"I know the country well, and shall be glad to act, if we can arrange. I don't say that it is too safe in the present state of native feeling, but that is for you to judge. I shall have the pleasure of calling upon you tomorrow morning.

*"Yours truly,*

*"Albert Warwick.*

"R. Massinger, Esq."

"Why, I thought Dr. Lochiel told me that the guide was a half-caste," said he to himself. "Very well written and expressed. Some men I know, from English public schools, too, could not have written such a note to save their lives. However, I suppose he got some one to write it for him."

He had finished his breakfast, and was digesting it and the contents of the *New Zealand Herald*, besides trying to reconcile conflicting statements as to the Native Lands Policy, when a visitor was announced.

"Mr. Massinger, I believe," said the stranger, bowing. "My name is Warwick; I presume you received my note yesterday?"

For one moment that gentleman's self-possession almost failed him, but he recovered himself in time to murmur an assent and ask the stranger to take a chair. There was some reason for his surprise.

He saw before him a very good-looking, well-dressed man of about his own age, turned out much as he had often been himself for a day's shooting. A Norfolk jacket, with knickerbockers and worsted stockings, these last exhibiting a volume of muscular calf, above laced-up shooting-boots of great strength and thickness of sole. A wide-brimmed felt hat, and a Crimean shirt, completed attire which was eminently appropriate and serviceable.

"You know the people and the country, as well as the route to these far-famed lakes?" he inquired.

"From my boyhood," answered this perplexing personage, with a perfectly correct, even finished accent, "I have been familiar with both. We have relatives in the Ngapuhi tribe, and I am always glad of an excuse to see some wild life among them. I have occasionally acted as guide to parties of tourists, and not so long ago to His Excellency the Governor and his staff."

"And your remuneration?" queried the tourist, thinking it wise to settle that important question off-hand.

"Oh, say a guinea a day and expenses paid," replied the stranger, in airy, off-hand fashion, as if the trifling amount was hardly worth mentioning. "That is my usual fee. I am fond of these expeditions myself, and in pleasant company; but that one must live, I should be quite willing to go with you for nothing."

"That, of course, is not to be thought of. But it will be an added pleasure to have a companion from whom I can gain information and share a novel experience."

"Thanks very much," said Mr. Warwick, bowing; "and for the baggage, if I might advise, the least possible quantity that you can do with. All beyond will encumber you in the sort of trail before us. I should like to superintend the packing."

"Very grateful, if you will," said Massinger. "Perhaps you would not mind breakfasting with me tomorrow; we could start directly afterwards."

"Most happy. In that case, I shall be here at sunrise, which will give time to arrange the pack, and we need lose none of the best part of the day."

So much being understood, Mr. Warwick bowed himself out, leaving his employer in a state of suppressed astonishment.

"The land of wonders, indeed!" he soliloquized. "The people, as well as the land, seem mysteries and enigmas. Only to look at this man is a revelation. What a handsome fellow he is! – no darker than a Spaniard, with regular features and a splendid figure. He would throw into the shade many of the curled darlings of the old land. One of his descendants, having taken high honours at Christ Church University, is obviously the man Macaulay had in his mind when he created the immortal New Zealander on London Bridge. His accent, his manner, his whole bearing, quiet, dignified, easy. Why, he has quite English club form! And where can he have got it? At any rate, there will be some one to talk to on the way, and as he is a master of Maori as well as English, he will be invaluable as an interpreter."

Preliminaries are hateful things at best, but after the usual hindrances a start was made tolerably early in the day, and ere long our hero was inducted into the peculiarities of forest wayfaring, as at that time practised in New Zealand.

He had scorned the idea of performing any part of it by sea or coach, having heard that all the pioneers, aristocratic or otherwise, had been noted for their pedestrian prowess.

So, with Warwick leading the way with the packhorse, and he himself doughtily surmounting rock or log, or thrusting between brambles and climbers, he realized that he was at length actively engaged in the adventurous experiences he had come so far to seek.

They did not always keep to the rude highways, or accepted tracks of ordinary travellers; Warwick seemed, without bestowing thought or care upon the matter, to journey upon a line of his own. It invariably turned out to be the correct one, as it cut off angles and shortened the distances, always striking points on the main trail which he had previously described. All the available stopping-

places on the road were thoroughly well known to him, and between the more desirable inns and accommodation houses, at all of which Warwick was evidently the *bienvenu*, and the historical localities near which Massinger was prone to linger, no great progress was made. However, time being no object, they wandered along in a leisurely and satisfactory way, Massinger congratulating himself again and again on his good fortune in having secured such a guide and companion.

At Mercer, on their third day out, Mr. Massinger was gladdened with his first sight of the Waikato, that noble river around which so many legends have been woven, on whose banks so much blood has been shed, on whose broad bosom the whale-boat has succeeded the canoe, the steamer the whale-boat. His spirits rose to enthusiasm as they traversed the country between the river and the lakes of Waikare and Rangarui. While at Taupiri, he marked the groves – actual groves, as he exclaimed – of peach and cherry trees planted by the missionaries in past days. Then leaving the river, they entered on the great Waikato plain.

"All this is very pleasant," he said one morning; "though, but for the absence of red-tiled farmhouses and smock-wearing yokels, I might as well be back in Herefordshire. What I am dying to see, is a decent-sized village —*kainga*, don't you call it? – where I may see the noble Maori with his *meremere*, his *pah*, and his *wharepuni*, in all his pristine glory unsullied by pakeha companionship."

"I think I can manage that for you," replied Warwick, with an amused smile, "between here and Oxford."

"What, more England?" said Massinger. "Why not Clapham and Paddington at once?"

"Well, you must bear with Lichfield," continued Warwick. "We can turn off there and make for Taupo. Before we get there, I can promise you one real Maori settlement, as well as another rather more important, at Taupo on the lake."

"And a chief?" queried the wayfarer. "I must have chiefs. A real Rangatira."

"I believe Waka Nene, warrior, high chief, and ally of England, is on a visit at the first one we come to," said the guide, "and he should satisfy your taste for Maori life."

Their pathway was narrow, chiefly bordered by high ferns, various kinds of low-growing bushes, and when the forest was reached, occasionally blocked by fallen timber, which necessitated a considerable detour, not always accomplished without difficulty, and obstacles which seemed to multiply the fatigues of the journey. Still, the wondrous beauty of the primeval forest had fully repaid him for all difficulties which nature placed in their way. Hundreds of feet overhead, almost hiding the rays of the autumnal sun, and causing Massinger to throw back his head to gaze at their lofty coronets of foliage, rose the royal ranks of the Kauri, the Totara, the Rimu, and the Kahikatea. Unlike the less o'er-shadowed forests in Australia described in his premigratory course of reading, there was but little herbage to be seen between the giants of that unconquered woodland. Ferns, trailers, thorn bushes, often breast-high, more or less aggressive, climbers and parasites, filled up all space beneath the columnar trunks which stretched so far and wide.

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