

BARING-GOULD SABINE

**THE
PENNYCOMEQUICKS
(VOLUME 3 OF 3)**

Sabine Baring-Gould

The Pennycomequicks (Volume 3 of 3)

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CHAPTER XXXIV. A DESOLATE HOUSE

Philip was restless all that day, after Salome had departed. He had remained at home in the morning to see her off, and he did not return to his work at the factory till after lunch.

At the office, he found it impossible to fix his thoughts on the books and letters before him. He was not an imaginative man, but day-dreams forced themselves before him now; between his eyes and his ledger he saw the pale, tearful face of Salome through her veil. He found his thoughts travelling along the line with her. He saw her in a corner of the railway carriage, with her hands on her lap, looking out of the window, not to see anything, but to hide her wet cheeks from her fellow-passengers. He caught himself wondering whether she had taken sandwiches with her and a little bottle of sherry. When he travelled – and he was called from home occasionally – there was always a neat little package in white paper and a tiny flat flask, pressed on him. Had any of the servants thought of these things for Salome? That she had thought of them for herself was unlikely. When she reached town, what would she do? Would the porters be attentive? Would they take her wraps and little odds and ends and see her into a cab? And would the flyman be civil, or would he seek to take advantage of a lone lady, especially one who looked ill and unhappy? Would not such an one become a prey to his rapacity, and be subject to rudeness?

What sort of weather would Salome have for crossing the Channel? She was going by Dover and Ostend, Brussels and the Grand Luxembourg, to Strasburg; thence by Basle to Lucerne, and so on by boat and diligence to Andermatt.

How would she manage about change of money? Where effect an exchange? She had never travelled abroad before; how would she contrive about her luggage? What sort of French scholar was she? Who would be her companions on the long night journey from Brussels to Strasburg? What if she had to endure association with vulgar, insolent, objectionable travelling comrades?

Philip became hot, then cold.

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said the clerk, coming to his desk. 'Are you aware that you have subscribed that letter twice over, Yours truly, P. Pennycomequick?'

'So I have; I will write it again.'

'And, sir – I beg pardon – you have directed this letter to Messrs. Brook & Co., Cotton Spinners, Andermatt. Is that right?'

'I have made a mistake. I will write the address again.'

At dinner, that evening, Philip was alone. The parlour-maid waited. She stood a little way off, behind his chair, whilst he ate. He was conscious that she watched him at his soup, that she was counting how many spoonfuls went into his mouth, that he was not unobserved when he added salt and pepper. She was down on his plate like a vulture on a dead camel, the moment he had taken his last spoonful. Probably she was finding it as embarrassing standing watching him eat as he found it eating with her watching.

'Mary,' said Philip, 'did Mrs. Pennycomequick have any refreshments with her when she left – sandwiches and sherry?'

'I beg your pardon, sir; I don't know. I will go and ask cook.'

She did know. Philip was sure she did, but made this an excuse to get out of the dining-room and its oppressive restraint to the free air of the kitchen.

Presently she returned.

'Well?' asked Philip.

'Please, sir, no. Cook says she tried to press them on missis, but missis, sir, wouldn't have 'em. She said she'd have no appetite.'

'What is it?' asked Philip, as a dish was offered.

'Curried rabbit, sir.'

'Curried rabbit? No, thank you.'

Philip looked across the table, to the place hitherto occupied by his wife. He had not been gracious, only coldly civil to her of late, but then – now he would have been glad to have had someone opposite him to whom he could have been coldly civil; someone to whom he might have remarked that the weather had been bad, that the barometer was rising, that the political situation was so and so.

Bother that woman! – he meant the parlour-maid. Then aloud, 'What is it? Oh, veal.' He would have some veal. 'Stuffing?' Oh! the stuffing formed that brown wart at the side, did it?

He tried to eat his veal, but felt that the eye of Mary was on the back of his head, that she was looking at the nape of his neck, and the hair there, and the collar-button, and a little dust that lay on the collar of his coat. Philip had a mole on the nape of his neck, and he was convinced that this mole formed an object of the liveliest interest to Mary. She was watching the mole; when he opened his jaw, the mole took a header and went under his collar; when he shut his mouth it rose above the collar; whilst he was chewing, the mole danced on the horizon of his collar, to Mary's infinite amusement.

Philip turned round. His imagination made him fancy that Mary was tittering, overcome by the antics played by his mole.

Philip took wine, and as he felt the glow of the sherry pass down his throat, he wondered whether Mary felt a glow of sympathy down her throat, occasioned by seeing him drink the sherry.

Her presence was unbearable, and yet – if he dismissed her – how was he to be served?

'I'll ask someone to dine with me to-morrow night,' he said to himself. Then he turned to Mary as she removed his plate, and said, 'How is baby this afternoon? Does he fret much at his mother's being away?'

'I beg your pardon, sir; I don't know. I'll run and ask nurse.'

Of course she knew, but she made this an excuse for getting out of the dining-room into the freer air of the nursery.

Never, in all his life, had Philip found himself more impatient of the silence imposed on him, more desirous to hear his own voice. In his lodgings he had eaten his meals alone – a chop and some potatoes – and he had had a book or a paper at his side whilst eating; the landlady or the slavey had not stood in the room watching him, observing the parting in his hair behind his head, making fun of his mole, impatient to dust his collar. In his lodgings he had drunk beer or London cooper – now he drank claret, sherry, port; but he would have drunk even water, if he might have been alone.

'No, thank you; no dessert!' He jumped up – he was eager to leave the room.

'Please, sir, any cheese?'

'No, thank you, no cheese.'

He ran away from his half-finished dinner to his own study, where he could be alone, away from the insufferable Mary. Then he rang the bell.

'You may bring me up the claret and port here – and the preserved ginger,' he ordered. Then thought he had acted absurdly, and would have countermanded the order had he not been ashamed to confess how unhinged he was.

He sat in his own room, with his claret glass in his hand, dreaming, looking into the fire.

'Where was Salome now? Was she thinking of home – of her baby – of – of – him?'

Then he wondered whether she were cold, and hungry, and tired. She had not slept the previous night. She had been busy packing, or going in and out of baby's room, to kiss the little sleeping face, or to pray by the crib, or let the dew of her tears fall over it.

Philip stood up. He left his glass unfinished, and went upstairs to the nursery. He found the door ajar, and the room empty. The nurse had gone down for a talk in the kitchen – no doubt about Master, and Mary was telling her about his mole, and the spots of dust on his collar.

He entered the nursery and stood by the crib, and looked at the sleeping child.

Little Philip was now quite well again, and was very sound asleep. He was undoubtedly a Pennycomequick. He had dark hair, and long dark eyelashes. But surely – surely there was some trace of his mother in the tiny face. It could not be that he did not bear in him something of her. Philip looked intently at the child, and tried to find out in him some feature of his wife.

There, on this side of the crib, had Salome's hands rested that night when little Philip was ill. Philip, the father, knew the exact spot where her hands had rested, and where her forehead had leaned, with the red-gold hair falling down over the side upon the bedding. Where the white left hand had clutched, with the gold ring sparkling on it, there now Philip placed his hand, and there streamed up to him from the crib of his child a magnetic influence that put him *en rapport* with his absent wife, brought to him a soothing sense of oneness with her who was far away, and filled his heart with regret and yearning.

The child began to cry.

Then Philip rang the bell, and when the nurse arrived, red and blowing —

'How is it that you are not at your post?' he asked.

'Please, sir, I only just ran down to warm up Dr. Ridge's Food for the baby,' was the answer.

Philip descended to the study, and resumed his claret glass. At the same time he began to consider his own conduct towards Salome, and, now only, saw that it did not bear the same complexion as he had hitherto attributed to it. In vain did he call up before his mind the dishonour of relationship with such a man as Beaple Yeo, a rogue after whom the police had been in quest more than once. In vain did he poke the fires of his wrath at the trickery of his marriage, he could not convince himself that Salome had been privy to it; and if not privy to it, what right had he to treat her with the severity he had exercised? But not even then did it occur to him that the main element of his wrath was supplied by his own wounded pride.

The discovery of her parentage must have been to Salome a crushing humiliation. What justification was there for his adding to her burden by his reproaches and coldness? She could not undo the past, unmake her relationship. His anger, his resentment, could not improve the situation, could not shake the truth of the hateful fact that he was allied to so great a scoundrel. Though she had been married under a wrong name, that would not invalidate the marriage even if he wished it – even if he wished it! Did he wish it?

He thought about Uncle Jeremiah's will, and how that by it Salome had been left almost sole legatee; how that the mill and everything had been given to her, and how that in a mysterious manner that will had been cancelled. The old haunting suspicion that his aunt had meddled with and defaced the will returned. He thought of her behaviour when he allowed her to see that he entertained a suspicion; of her evasion of her promise; of her laxity of principle; and he could not shake off the thought that it was quite possible that through her Salome had been defrauded of her rights.

If so, had he any right to complain if he had been deceived? How did Mrs. Sidebottom show beside Salome? And he – he, Philip – had he shown in generous colours either?

It was said of that distinguished epicure the Marquis de Cussy, 'L'estomac de M. n'a jamais bronché,' and the same may be said of most consciences – but not of all. As we have seen even Mrs. Sidebottom's conscience once felt a twinge at the time when consciences generally do feel twinges, when too late to redress wrong actions. So now did Philip, as he sat over the fire with his claret glass in his hand, become aware that he had acted with undue severity, and he spilt the claret on the floor.

Next day, Philip went to the old bedroom which he and his wife had occupied till he changed his quarters. He found the housemaid there, who seemed startled at seeing him enter.

'Please, sir, I'm drawing down the blinds, because of the sun.'

'I will trouble you to leave the blinds up,' said Philip. 'I do not choose to have the house – the room – look as though someone in it were dead. Here – by the way, my room downstairs will need a thorough turn out. I will return to this room; at all events for a time.'

'Very well, sir.'

She left the chamber. He stood in it and looked about him. Salome had left everything tidy. Some of her drawers were open, not many were locked. Most of her little private treasures had been removed.

Where was the photograph on a stand of Uncle Jeremiah? It had no doubt been taken away by her. Where the three little owls sitting on a pen-wiper? It was gone – and the Christmas cards that had stood on the chimney-piece, and the ugly glazed yellow flower vase, given her, on her birthday, by the cook.

The clock on the chimney-piece was stopped. Salome had wound that up regularly; her hand was no longer there, and it had been allowed to run down. The room was dead without the tick of the clock. Philip wound it up and set the pendulum swinging. It ticked again, but in a formal, weary manner, unlike the brisk and cheerful tick of old.

The room had a cold unfurnished look without Salome's knickknacks – trifles in themselves, but giving an air of refinement and cheeriness to the apartment. He went over to the dressing-table. No combs and brushes, no hairpins, bottles of hair oil and wash there – simply a table with a looking-glass on it. One little glass was there, but no flowers in it; and hitherto it had never failed to contain some – even in winter. With what ingenuity had Salome kept that little glass on the dressing-table bright – in winter at times with holly only, or ivy leaves – or moss and a scarlet Jew's ear!

It was the same downstairs. There the flowers were ragged and faded in the vases. Salome was away, who had rearranged them every second day.

The room smelt musty, and Philip threw up the window. He stood at it, and looked out dreamily. Where was Salome now? Was she in Switzerland? Had she any heart to look at the mountains? Would the wonderful scenery be any joy to her – alone?

'I can never dine as I did yesterday,' said Philip. 'I will ask Tomkins in.'

That day he did invite Tomkins, his head traveller. But he was irritated with Tomkins and angry with the maid, because Tomkins' seat had been put at the end of the table, in Salome's place; and Tomkins was a different object for his eyes to rest on from Salome. The dinner passed wearily. Philip was not, indeed, concerned about the parlour-maid examining the mole on his neck, but he had to make conversation for Tomkins, and to listen to Tomkins' commercial room tales, and to be civil to Tomkins.

After dinner Tomkins was in no hurry to go – he enjoyed the Pennycomequick port, and on the port grew confidential, and Philip became tired, every minute more tired, of Tomkins, and was vexed with himself for having asked Tomkins in, and vowed he would dine by himself next evening. Then Tomkins, finding it difficult to rouse Philip's interest and excite a laugh, began to tell rather broad stories, and was undeterred by Philip's stony stare, till Philip suddenly stood up, rang for coffee, and said it was time to adjourn to another room, and so cut Tomkins short.

But even after Tomkins had been got into the drawing-room, and had been chilled there by its size and coldness, and the inattention of his host, he showed little inclination to depart, and threw out hints that he could strum an accompaniment to himself on the 'pi-anny,' and sing a song, sentimental or humorous, if Mr. Pennycomequick would like to hear him. But Philip pleaded headache, and became at length so freezing as to force Tomkins to take his leave.

Philip did not feel it necessary to accompany his head commercial into the hall; but Mary was there to assist him into his great-coat, and find him his hat, and give him a light for his cigar.

'Well, Mary,' said Tomkins pleasantly. 'Thank you, Mary; to take a light from you warms the heart, Mary. I'm as blind as a beetle in the dark, and 'pon my word, dear, I don't know my right hand from my left in the dark. You wouldn't object, would you – there's a dear – just to set me on my way

home, with my nose in the right direction, and then my cigar-light will carry me on? Can't go wrong if I follow that. But it is the first step, Mary – the first step is the thing. *Le premier paw*, say the French.'

Then he hooked his arm into hers, and the demure Mary had no objection to take just half a dozen steps along the road with the affable Mr. Tomkins – who was a widower – and to leave the hall door ajar as she escorted him part of his way home.

Philip sat in the drawing-room in bad humour. It was dull dining by himself: it was insufferable dining with Tomkins. He could not invite brother manufacturers to dine with him every evening. What must he do? He would return to plain food and a book at his solitary meal, and dismiss the critical parlour-maid till he required his plate to be changed.

Philip rang the bell. The teacups were left on the table. His bell remained unanswered. He rang again. It was still unnoticed. Then he angrily went down into the hall, and found the door ajar. He called to the servants in the kitchen for Mary. The housemaid appeared. 'Please, sir, she's gone out a moment to post a letter.'

'What! at this time of night?'

'It was most particular; her mother be dreadful porely, sir, and Mary do take on about her orful!'

'Go to bed – lock up,' ordered Philip; and he stood in the hall whilst the frightened domestics filed past.

Then he turned down the gas and returned to the drawing-room. He would hear Mary when she came in by the hall door, and would at once give her her dismissal.

He sat waiting. Here was fresh trouble come on him through his wife's absence. He would have to see that his servants were kept in proper order; that they kept proper hours.

He had hardly resumed his seat before he heard steps in the hall, and then on the stairs. Certainly not the tread of Mary; not light, and not stealthy, but firm and ponderous.

What step could it be? Tomkins returning to tell one of his good stories, or to ask for soda-water? He listened, and hesitated whether to rise or not. It must be the step of Tomkins; no one else would venture to come in at this time. The step was arrested at the drawing-room door; then Philip stood up, and as he did so the door was thrown open, and Uncle Jeremiah stood on the threshold, looking at him. He knew the old man at once, though he was changed, and his hair white.

'Philip,' said Jeremiah, 'where is your wife? Where is Salome?'

Philip was too much astonished to answer.

Then said Jeremiah sternly: 'Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.'

CHAPTER XXXV. OFF

When I was a boy I possessed a pet owl. It was a source of amusement to me to feed that owl with mice. When the trap had caught one of these night disturbers, I took it to the solemn owl, who sat blinking in the daylight, half awake and half asleep. The owl at once gulped down the mouse, and then went fast asleep with the mouse in her inside, but with the end of the tail protruding from her beak. About an hour later I went to the owl, took hold of the end of the mouse's tail and pulled it, whereupon up the throat of the owl came the mouse, backwards, and the bird of wisdom was roused to wild wonder and profound puzzlement to account for the sudden disgorging of her meal. Mrs. Sidebottom had bolted Uncle Jeremiah, and was doing her best to digest him and his fortune, when, unexpectedly, her meal came to life again, and she sat gulping, blinking, bemused in her sitting-room, waiting for the return of Lambert from the billiard-table, to communicate to him the news that had reached her. Anyone who had seen my owl would perceive at once that the case of Mrs. Sidebottom was analogous.

The consternation could hardly have been greater on Quilp reappearing when a posse of wives was sitting discussing him, esteemed dead; and yet Jeremiah was no Quilp. But it is not Quilps alone who would produce dismay were they to return to life. Imagine the emotions produced in a hospital which has received a bequest of ten thousand pounds, and has spent fifteen guineas on the portrait of the benefactor, should the benefactor descend from the frame, declare himself alive, and require the return of his thousands. Think of the junior partner, who has been waiting till a senior shuffled off his mortal coil to make room for him; how would he feel were the dead to return to life? Think of the curate waiting for the living, the next presentation to which is for him, should the old rector, after having laid himself down in his grave, change his mind and get out and resume his benefice for another fifteen years!

Mrs. Sidebottom had but just received news of the reappearance of Uncle Jeremiah, and, like an energetic woman, she wasted as little time as might be in exclamations of dismay. She was not the woman to hover in uncertainty, and ask advice how to get out of a difficulty. Like one who has trodden in mire, she pulled her foot out instantaneously to set it on dry and firm ground.

'I don't know how the law stands, and whether the sentence of the Court of Probate can be reversed,' she said; 'but of one thing I am very sure – that he who has can hold, and tire out those who try to open his hands, if he has any wit.'

Then in came Lambert.

'Oh, Lamb!' exclaimed his mother, 'here is a pretty predicament we are in! My brother Jeremiah has come to life again!'

The captain burst out laughing.

'This is no laughing matter,' said his mother testily. 'How can you be such a hyæna? Jeremiah has reappeared at Mergatroyd, and there is – well, I can't mince matters – the devil to pay. I presume he will want to reclaim what we have distributed between us. The mill, of course, with the business, he will take back under his control, and cut off the supply thence. That is a serious matter – and then there is the money he left –'

'Which I suppose he will require you to return?'

'Which I can't and won't return. Bless me, Lamb, what a state of things! Our income reduced from half the profits of the business to one-sixth, which he cannot touch, as that comes to me under my marriage settlement. We must leave England – we must leave at once. I shall know nothing about Jeremiah's return. I shall keep away till I see in what humour he is, what he intends to do, and in what light he regards me. There are trifles connected with the administration I don't care to meet

him about. As for his savings, his securities, and so on, I will return nothing' – she stamped her foot – 'no, Lamb; for, in fact, I can't!'

'How do you know that he is back, and that this is not a false alarm?'

'Look here – ' She tossed a letter to him. 'It is laconic. He wrote it with a sneer – I know he did. Jeremiah never liked me. He has disappeared, and has come to life again, out of spite.'

Captain Pennycomequick – to be correct, Penycombe-Quick – took the letter and read it with a smile.

It was short.

'DEAR LOUISA,

'I am back, hearty again. I have been to Algiers for my health. I had rheumatic fever, and when I came round I found you had already pronounced me dead, and had divided the spoils – concerning which, a word later.

'Your affectionate brother,

'JEREMIAH P.'

'Is it his handwriting?' asked Lambert.

'Of course it is. Here is a pretty mess for me to be in. I shall have everyone laughing at me, because I swore that the man in the shirt and great-coat was Jeremiah. "Concerning which – the spoils – a word later." What does he mean by that, but that he proposes calling me to account for every penny? I will not remain in England. I cannot. I will not receive this letter.'

'But you have received it.'

'I shall make my landlady return it, with a note to say that she took the liberty to open it, so as to be able to write to the sender, and say that I have gone abroad for my health. Where shall I say I have gone to? – To Algiers, whence Jeremiah has just returned.'

'You cannot do that.'

'But I will. Self-preservation is the first law. As for the money – I lost some by that Beaple Yeo; not much, but some. I was so prompt, and had such presence of mind, that I caught the man and made him refund before he had got rid of most of it. I have money in securities – railway debentures and foreign loans. I have all the papers by me – I trust no one but myself, since my faith has been shaken by Smithies. Lamb, we must be off directly. It would be too much a shock to my nerves to see my brother that was dead and is alive again. What are you laughing at, Lamb? You really are silly.'

'There is some prospect now of my coming to that hundred and fifty, I hope,' said the captain. 'Uncle Jeremiah may now write another will.'

'How selfish you are! You think only of yourself, not how I am afflicted. But, Lamb, I have had you sponging on me all these years, and keeping me in an exhausted financial condition that is intolerable.'

'We shall revert to our former condition, I suppose, now,' said Lambert unconcernedly.

'That is precisely what I cannot do. Return to poverty and middle-class society, the very crown and climax of which is a Lord and Lady Mayoress – when we are on the eve of making the acquaintance of county people! What have you done for yourself? You have been too inert to seize the chances I have put in your way. You must marry money. Jane Mulberry was worth five hundred per annum, and you let her slip through your fingers.'

'She had a moustache.'

'She had money. Five hundred pounds would gild it. Then there was Miss Smithson.'

'She was insipid.'

'What of that? The insipid women make the best wives, they are so non-resistant. In marriage, men should be teetotalers and take weak and washy women. They are far the best to get on with.'

'Don't think I've much fancy for such,' said the captain languidly.

'I tremble to think,' said his mother angrily, 'what the offspring of a weak woman and such an unenergetic man would be!'

'Then why recommend such a marriage?'

'Because we must consider ourselves, not the unborn possibilities. However, to return to the subject that now most occupies me. My condition is desperate. You must marry. I can support you no longer.'

'And so you deport me to Algiers?'

'My dear boy, we are not going to Algiers.'

'Then where to?'

'To Andermatt.'

'Andermatt! – Where is that?'

'On the St. Gothard.'

'And pray why to Andermatt on the St. Gothard?'

'Because Mrs. Baynes is there.'

'Oh, by all means.'

'What makes you say "by all means"?' asked his mother sharply.

'She's a jolly girl, good-looking, and no nonsense about her.'

'Do you think that I would take you to her if that were all? You know she is a widow. She has her hundred and fifty from what was sunk by Jeremiah when she married, but that is not all: she has been left well provided for by her husband, Mr. Albert Baynes. I know all about it. I got everything out of Salome. I told her how anxious I was about her sister, how pained I was concerning her bereavement, and how I hoped that she was not left in bad circumstances. Salome very openly told me that she was very comfortably provided for, and no stipulation made about marrying again. I know what Salome meant when she let me draw that out of her – she meant that you should know; but I then had my eye on Miss Smithson. However, now that we must go abroad we may as well kill two birds with one stone. Besides, as Jeremiah took such a lively interest in Janet, he may be gratified at your marrying her, and not press me with demands which I could not comply with – which I will not, no, I will not comply with.'

'But she is in bad health.'

'Oh, nothing but sentiment at her husband's death; besides, if she is delicate, all the better.'

'I don't see that,' said the captain, feebly disgusted at his mother's heartlessness.

'Fiddle-faddle,' said Mrs. Sidebottom; 'it is all part of the business – it goes with widows' caps. When I lost Sidebottom I was worn to a shadow and got a cough; but I began to recover flesh when I went into half mourning, and lost my cough with my weeds. When you appear on the scene it will be codliver oil to her.'

'It will be very dull at this place you speak of.'

'Of course it will be dull and hateful, but what will you have? I sacrifice myself for you. You must get off my hands and shift for yourself; I have had you as a charge too long. I want to see you well provided for, and as the Smithson and Jane Mulberry failed, you must take the Baynes. I can't tell you exactly what she is worth, but I will ascertain from Salome, who is there, before you commit yourself. Remember, Lamb, we must go. I cannot stay here and face Jeremiah.'

'Why not? It would be the most honourable thing to do, and might answer the best in the end.'

'I cannot do it. Why – how would you feel – how could you feel towards a person who had pronounced you dead, and proceeded to administer? Much as a man might towards the surgeon who proceeded to dissect him before he was dead. No, Lamb, I will not remain. I can always write to Jeremiah, and express my profound astonishment to hear of his return, and assume an air of injury that I should have been left in the dark so long. Indeed, I think that will be the card to play – throw the blame on him, and if the case comes into court, I can lay stress on this. Wilfully he allowed me to remain in ignorance of his existence. Something had to be done. The factory would not go on of itself. The factory could not be carried on without money. The business would go to pieces unless energetically prosecuted. Jeremiah may feel grateful, and ought to feel grateful to me, that I acted

with such readiness in the matter and saved the firm of Pennycomequick from ruin. I can bring in a heavy bill against him for my services. However, I had rather do this from a distance, and by letter. I will take the injured tone, and make him dance to that tune.'

Mrs. Sidebottom was a woman of resource. She never suffered herself to be discouraged by adversity; and adversity now faced her wearing the mask of her brother returned to life. She had much energy of character and fertility of invention, which, if she had been a woman of principle, instead of unscrupulous self-seeking, might have made her a valuable person in society. She was at present frightened – she had invested some of the money she had drawn to herself from Jeremiah's savings in a manner that promised well; some she had lost. She neither desired to be called to account for what she had squandered, nor to be forced to reimburse those happy speculations which were likely to place her in easy circumstances. Until she had had good professional advice, and until she knew what her brother intended, she considered that safety lay in absence.

She went about in York, leaving her card; and when she saw a friend, she told her that she was off to the Continent for a bit of a change. She had not been very well, and the doctors had insisted on variation of scene and air, and she felt herself that life was too short to spend it in one place. The world was large and must be seen, and those dear snowy mountains – they possessed for her a fascination she had struggled against, but had been unable further to resist.

'My dear Mrs. Jacques, you know what anxiety and care I had last year about my poor brother's affairs – winding up, you know. I held up through it all, animated by a sense of duty, but it told on me in the end, and now I am going to relax. I shall spend the summer in the Alps, and unless I am much better I shall go to Algiers for the winter. Have you any friends who will be there next Christmas? Oh, my dear! to think of Christmas in Algiers; a hot sun and no plum-pudding!'

Mrs. Sidebottom had not the faintest desire to spend a winter in Algiers; she thought Mentone, or Florence, or Pau would suit her better, according to where she could get into the best society, and she resolved to leave the determination to the future; if she found during the summer people whom it was worth her while hanging on to, and who were wintering anywhere abroad, she would attach herself to them. But with that curious crookedness which prevails in some natures, she went about asking questions about hotels and *pensions* at Algiers, keeping her ears open at the same time to hear of persons of position who were likely to winter elsewhere. It was possible that, if she made it well known that she would winter in Algiers, acquaintances would tell her of friends of theirs who were wintering elsewhere. Nor was she wrong.

'Oh, I am so sorry you are not going to Mentone; Sir William Pickering is going there because of the health of dear Lady Pickering. Such charming people – you would have liked to know them – but as you are going to Algiers, of course I cannot get you acquainted with each other.' Mrs. Sidebottom knew well enough that if she had said she was going to Mentone this piece of information would not have been vouchsafed her. 'Oh! Mrs. Sidebottom – you are visiting Algiers. There is a nice young lady, a niece, going there. She is in a decline. I shall be eternally obliged to you if you would show her kindness; she is badly off, and it would be goodness itself if you would just look in now and then and ascertain that she is comfortable and not imposed on.'

'My dear Mrs. Tomson, you could not have asked me to do anything that would have pleased me more – but unfortunately it is not certain I am going to Algiers. If I make up my mind to go I will write to you for the address of your niece, and you may rely on me, I will do my utmost for her.' This was accompanied by an internal mem.: Have nothing further to do with Mrs. Tomson. I'm not going abroad to be anybody's nurse. Heaven forbid!

'Oh, Mrs. Sidebottom! So you are off to Switzerland and Algiers. Now there could be nothing more opportune. We are going to have a bazaar to raise money for the relief of the peasants in France, who have suffered from the war. Would you mind sending as your contribution a box of charming Swiss carvings and delightful Algerian and Moorish pottery – the latter will sell rapidly and at high prices – you are so good and charitable, I know you will.'

'I will certainly do so. Rely on me. I intended to have had a stall; I will send two cases instead' – with a mental mem.: Forget all about the bazaar till it is over, and then write a proper apology.

'Oh, Mrs. Sidebottom! I've lost my maid again. As you are going to Switzerland, will you do me the favour of looking out for a really serviceable girl – you know my requirements – and arrange all about trains and so on, so that she may reach me safely? Perhaps you would not mind advancing her journey-money, and I will repay it – if she suits, of which I have no doubt. I am determined to have no more English servants.'

Mrs. Sidebottom found that her acquaintances were eager to make use of her, but then she had sufficient knowledge of the world to expect that.

'Have you secured through tickets, Lamb?'

'Yes, mother.'

'Then we are off to-morrow.'

CHAPTER XXXVI. DEPOSED

Gone as a dream! – that brief period of hope and happiness and comfort. Philip had a disquieting prospect opening before him, as disquieting as that which drove Mrs. Sidebottom from England, but different in kind. Philip was ready enough to account for every penny, and return all the money undiminished which had come to his share. What troubled him was the fearful look-out of a return to furnished lodgings. He saw himself about to be cast forth from the elegancies, the conveniences of life, and cast down to its vulgarities and discomforts. He saw himself about to be transferred from the cushioned carriage on the smooth road, to a buggy on a corderoy way, all jolts and kicks and plunges and breakdowns. He was about to descend from succulent joints and savoury *entremets* to mutton-chops alternating into beef-steaks, from claret to bitter beer, from a place of authority to one of submission, from progress to stagnation, from a house of his own over which to range at pleasure to confinement within two rooms, one opening out of the other. He must go back to streaky forks, and spoons that at dinner recall the egg of breakfast, to knives with adhesive handles and tumblers frosted with finger-marks, to mirror frames encased in fly-proof snipped green paper and beaded flower-mats, a horsehair sofa, a cruet-stand with old crusted mustard and venerable Worcester sauce in it, to wax fruit under a glass shade, as covered with dust as a Peruvian island with guano, to folding-doors into the adjacent bedroom, and to curtains tied back with discarded bonnet-ribbons. But it would have been bad enough for Philip, now accustomed to better things, to have had the prospect before him of descending alone; but he was no longer alone, he had a wife, who, however, was absent, and about whose return he was uncertain. And he had with him the encumbrance of a baby; and the encumbrance of a baby drew with it a train of dissatisfied and departing nurses, one after another, like the procession of kings revealed to Macbeth in Hecate's cave.

A babe in a lodging-house is as out of place as was the ancestral Stanley found in an eagle's nest on the top of a pine, of which the family crest preserves a reminiscence.

Uncle Jeremiah was restored to strength, moral as well as physical. He no longer thought of his heart, he allowed it to manage its pulsations unconsidered. He was heartily glad that he had been saved committing an act of egregious folly, and he was prepared now to meet Salome without a twinge. Common-sense had resumed the place of upper hand; and the temporary disturbance was over for ever. To every man comes at some period after he has begun to decline a great horror of old age, an agonizing clutch at the pleasures and follies of youth, a time of intoxication when he is not responsible for his acts, an intoxication produced by fear lest life with its roses should have passed and left only thorns behind and decay. Men whose lives have been spent in business, subjected to routine, who have not thought of love and amusement, of laughter and idleness, are suddenly roused to find themselves old and standing out of the rush of merriment and the sunshine of happiness. Then they make a frantic effort to seize what hitherto they have despised, to hug to their hearts what they have formerly cast away. It is the St. Luke's summer, a faint reflex of the departed glory and warmth, a last smile before the arrival of the winter gales. No moment in life is so fraught with danger as this – at none is there more risk of shipwreck to reputation.

Now that Jeremiah had passed through this period, he could survey its risks with a smile and a sense of self-pity and a little self-contempt. He who had always esteemed himself strong had discovered that he could be weak, and, perhaps, this lesson had made him more lenient with the infirmities of others.

He returned to his friend John Dale, looking older by some years, but also more hale. He had touched the earth but had risen from it stronger than when he fell.

On reaching Bridlington, he learned from Dale the state of matters at Mergatroyd. Whilst there, a hasty note arrived for Mr. Dale from Salome to say that she was leaving, with her husband's consent, to be with her sister in Switzerland, and both thought they could read between the lines that there had been a fresh difference with Philip.

Thereupon Jeremiah went to Mergatroyd, and came in unexpectedly and unannounced on Philip.

Jeremiah Pennycomequick had not decided what course to pursue with regard to his sister and nephew. He was conscious that he had played them a trick, that he had put them to a test which he was not justified in applying to them.

He was angry with both – with his half-sister for the precipitation with which she had accepted and certified his death, and with Philip for his treatment of Salome. He did not disguise from himself that his interference in such a delicate matter as a quarrel, or an estrangement, between husband and wife, might make the breach worse.

When he arrived at Mergatroyd, he had not resolved what course to take. He sat up half the night with Philip.

'You will find,' said the latter with some pride, 'that I have maintained the business in a healthy condition; it is not in the condition it was during the Continental war which affected linen as well as other things, but that was of its nature ephemeral. It rests on a sound basis. Go through the books and satisfy yourself. My aunt,' there was a tone of bitterness when he added this – 'my aunt watched the conduct of the factory with a jealous eye, and did not trust my accounts without a scrutiny. As for what was in the bank, I can give an account of every penny, and the securities, such as came to me, are untouched.'

'I will look into these matters at my leisure,' said Jeremiah, 'and if I find that matters are as you say, I will let you down lightly; only, I forewarn you, let down you will be. And now a word about Salome.'

'My wife,' said Philip shortly.

'Your wife – exactly – but –'

'With regard to my wife, I brook no interference,' said Philip haughtily. 'The mill is your affair, my domestic relations are my own.'

'You cry out before you are hurt,' retorted Jeremiah; 'I am not about to interfere. I know that you are greatly disconcerted at the discovery as to the parentage of your wife.'

Philip held up his head stiffly and closed his lips tightly. He said nothing.

'I am not intermeddling,' continued Jeremiah, 'but I wish you to understand this: that I have some claim to speak a word for Salome, whom I have always – that is to say – whom I have looked upon with fatherly regard. The two little girls grew up in my house, not a day passed but I saw them; I rode them as infants at my knee, I bought them toys. They ran to meet me – cupboard love, of course – when I came from the mill, because I had oranges or sweet things in my pocket. I took pride in them as they became blooming girls, I saw that they were well taught. After dinner they soothed me with their music, and when I was dull enlivened me with their prattle. Have I, then, no right to speak a word for one or the other? I have been to them more than a father. Their father deserted them as soon as they were born, but I have nurtured and clothed them, and seen to the development of their minds and the disciplining of their characters. It is absurd of you to deny me the right to speak. To interfere is not my purpose.'

'Very well, I will listen.'

'Then let me tell you this – I know who their father was. When Mrs. Cusworth came into this house she very honestly told me the truth about them, and by my advice she kept her counsel. It could do them only harm – cloud their joys – to know that they had a disreputable father. We knew nothing of the man's subsequent history. He had disappeared, and might be – as we hoped – dead. But, even if alive, we did not suppose he would care to come in quest of his twin daughters, and we

trusted, should he do this, that he would not find them. We hoped that he might not conjecture that the children had been adopted by their aunt, and that she had moved into Yorkshire to Mergatroyd. Neither Salome nor Janet knew who their father was, or rather both supposed him to be that worthy man who perished so lamentably in my service. By what means he made the discovery and got on their track I do not know, and I hardly care to know. If I could take into my house the children of such a man, it hardly becomes you –'

Philip interrupted his uncle.

'That fellow Schofield never injured you as he did my father. He not only ruined him, but he also was the cause of his estrangement from you, or rather, yours from him.'

'Bear the man what grudge you will,' said Jeremiah hastily, 'but do not visit his offences on the head of his unoffending child.'

Philip stood up. He was angry, but not to be moved from his stiffness of manner.

'I think,' said he, 'you will be tired. I am, and probably bed is the best place for both. As this is now your house, and I am an intruder in it, I must ask permission to occupy my room for to-night.'

Jeremiah laughed. 'And you – a lawyer! Why, you are in legal possession, and till there is a reversal of the sentence of the Probate Court, I have no more rights than a ghost. No – I am your guest.'

Philip retired to his room. The words of Jeremiah, charging him with visiting the offences of the father on the unoffending child, were but the repetition of his own self-reproach, but for that very reason less endurable. It is the truth of a charge which gives it its sting. A man will endure to say to himself what he will not tolerate to be said to him by another.

He went to his room, but not to bed. He sat at the window, where Salome had sat, in the same chair, thinking with dark brow and set lips. In one thing, his self-esteem was encouraged. His uncle would see and be forced to acknowledge how thoroughly he had mastered the technicalities of the business, and with what order and prudence he had carried it on. He need not shrink from the closest examination into his conduct of the factory. Everything was in order, the books well kept, several contracts in hand. His uncle might dismiss him, but he could not say a word against his integrity and business habits. He had taken to himself nothing but what Mrs. Sidebottom, as administratrix, had passed over to him. And as to his uncle's disappearance, he had done nothing as to the identification of the wrong body; he had held himself neutral, as incapable of forming an opinion from inadequate acquaintance with his uncle. If blame was to be cast, it must fall heavily on Mrs. Sidebottom, but none would rest on him.

But – how about the future? Philip now recalled the discomfiture, the monotonies, the irritations of lodging-house life. Could he go back to that? If his uncle offered to retain him in his house, could he consent? His pride counselled him to go, his love of comfort to remain.

Uncle Jeremiah had not invited him to remain, but Philip thought it likely that he might. His pride was galled in many ways. It would be most painful to him to continue at the factory, in which he had been a master, henceforth in a subordinate position. Should he return to the solicitor's firm at Nottingham, in which he had been before? That his services there were valued he was well aware, that his resignation of a clerkship therein had caused annoyance he was well aware; he knew, however, that his place was filled, and that if he returned to the office, he would be obliged to take a lower desk. He might, and probably would be, advanced, but that would require patience, and he must wait till a vacancy occurred. Besides, it would be a humiliation to have to solicit readmission, after he had left the office on stilts, as one who had come into a fortune.

Then – what was to be done about his wife? He could not maintain her and her child on a junior clerk's wage. Moreover, he had sent her away when he occupied a lofty moral platform, because connection with her sullied the fair name of Pennycomequick, and might injure the firm; and now that he no longer belonged to the firm, but was a poor clerk of no consequence in the world, was he to write to her a letter of humble apology, and ask her to return and share the beggary of a clerk's life in furnished lodgings with him, to unite with him in the long doleful battle against landladies?

He had little doubt that Uncle Jeremiah would propose to make Salome an allowance, and that on this allowance together with his salary they might be able to rub along. But to accept such relief from Uncle Jeremiah, granted through his wife – his wife whom he had snubbed and thrust away – was not pleasant to contemplate.

Whatever way Philip considered the meal set before him, he saw only humble-pie, and humble-pie is the least appetizing of dishes. Philip approached it as a sulky child does a morsel which his nurse requires him to eat, without consuming which he must expect no pudding. He walked round it; he looked at it from near, then he drew back and considered it at long range, then he touched it, then smelt it, then turned his back on it, then – with a grumble – began to pick a few crumbs off it and put them between his lips.

He went to bed at last, unresolved, angry with himself, angry with Salome, angry with his uncle, and angry with the baby who was sobbing in the nursery.

Philip's experiences had all been made in spiral form; they were ever turning about himself, and though each revolution attained a higher level, it was still made about the same centre. There is a family likeness in minds as well as in noses and eyes and hair; and in this Philip resembled his aunt, but with the difference that he was governed by a strong sense of rectitude, and that nothing would induce him to deviate from what he believed to be just, whereas his aunt's principles were flexible, and governed only by her own interests.

In these days in which we live, socialism is in the air, that is to say, it is talked of and professed, but whether by any is practised I am inclined to question. For socialism I take to mean everyone for everyone else, and no one for himself, and this is a condition contrary to the nature of man, for men are all more or less waterspouts, vortices, attracting to themselves whatever comes within their reach, and to be actuated by a centrifugal, not a centripetal force is the negative of individuality.

We stalk our way over the ocean, drawing up through our skirts every drop of water, every seaweed, and crab and fish and mollusc that we can touch, and whirl them round and round ourselves, and only cast them away and distribute them to others when they are of no more use to ourselves.

Every climatic zone through which Philip had passed had served to feed and build up the column of his self-esteem; the rugged weather in furnished lodgings, and the still seas into which he had entered by his uncle's death, and by his marriage. Nothing had broken it down, dissolved its continuity, dissipated its force.

At sea, when a vessel encounters a waterspout, it discharges ordnance, and the vibration of the atmosphere caused by the explosion snaps the column and it goes to pieces. But would the shock caused by the return of Uncle Jeremiah, and the loss of position and wealth that this entailed, suffice to break the pillar of self-esteem that constituted Philip Pennycomequick? Hardly; for though touched in many ways, he could hold up his head conscious of his rectitude; he had managed the mill admirably, kept the accounts accurately, adapted himself to the new requirements perfectly. He could, when called upon, give up his place, but he would march forth with all the honours of war.

CHAPTER XXXVII. ON THE LAKE

Mrs. Sidebottom had reached Lucerne very rumpled and dirty and out of temper, having travelled all night from Brussels, and having had to turn out and have her boxes examined at Thionville and Basle. She had scrambled through a wretched breakfast off cold coffee and a roll at Strasburg, at four o'clock in the morning, and then had been condemned to crawl along by a slow train from Strasburg to Basle, and by another, still slower, from Basle to Lucerne. A night in a comfortable hotel had restored her wonderfully; and when she took her place under the awning in the lake steamer, with a ticket in her glove for Fluelen, which she insisted on calling Flew-ellen, she was in a contented mood, and inclined to patronize the scenery.

The day was lovely, the water blue, Pilatus without his cap, and the distant Oberland peaks seen above the Brunig Pass were silver against a turquoise sky.

'This,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, dipping into 'Murray's Handbook' to ascertain what it was proper to say – 'this is distinguished above every lake in Switzerland, and perhaps in Europe, by the beauty and sublime grandeur of its scenery.'

Then past her drifted a party of English tourists, also with 'Murray' in their hands and on their lips. 'Oh, mamma!' exclaimed a young lady, 'this lake is of very irregular shape, assuming near its west extremity the form of a cross. Do you see? There is one arm, we are approaching another, and there is the leg.'

'My dear,' said her mother, 'don't say leg; it is improper; say stem.'

'And, mamma, how true "Murray" is! – is it not wonderful? He says that at this part the shores of the lake are undulating hills clothed with verdure, and dotted with houses and villas. He really must have seen the place to describe it so accurately.'

'Good gracious!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom; and then, after a pause, 'Gracious goodness!'

Lambert Pennycomequick took no notice of his mother's exclamations, till a third 'gracious goodness,' escaping her like the discharge of a minute-gun at sea, called his attention to her, and he asked, 'Well, what is it?' As he received no answer, he said, 'I don't believe in that honey served up at breakfast. It is not honey at all, but syrup in which stewed pears have soaked.'

'Upon my word!' gasped Mrs. Sidebottom.

'What is the matter, mother? Oh yes, lovely scenery. By George, so it is. I believe it is all a hoax about chamois. I have been told that they knock goats on the head, and so the flesh is black, or rather dark-coloured, and it is served as chamois, and charged accordingly.'

'This is extraordinary!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom.

'Yes – first rate,' said Lambert. 'Our Yorkshire wolds don't quite come up to the Alps, do they?'

But Mrs. Sidebottom was not lost in wonder at the beauty of the landscape, she was watching intently a gentleman in a light suit, of a military cast, wearing a white hat and a puggaree, with moustache and carefully curled whiskers, who was marching the deck alongside of another gentleman, stout, ordinary-looking, and comfortable in appearance, like a plump bullfinch.

'Look at my watch!' said the gentleman in the light suit, and as there were vacant places beside Mrs. Sidebottom, the two gentlemen left pacing the deck and seated themselves on the bench near her.

'Look at my watch! – Turned black, positively black, as if I had kept it against a vulcanized india-rubber stomach-belt. If you want evidence – there it is. I haven't cleaned it. No, I keep it as a memorial to me to be thankful to the beneficent Heaven which carried me through – which carried me through.'

Mrs. Sidebottom saw a silver watch-case extended to be exhibited, the dingy colour that silver acquires when exposed to gas.

'I wish, sir – I beg your pardon, my lord – you will excuse me, but by accident – by the merest accident – I caught sight of your address and name on your luggage – I wish, my lord, I were going with you to Andermatt, and I would take you a promenade round the backs of the hotels, and let you smell – smell, my lord – as rich a bouquet of accumulated deleterious odours as could be gathered into one – odours, my lord, diphtheritical, typhoidiacal. You see my face – I have become mottled through blood-poisoning. I was gangrened at Andermatt by the deadly vapours there. I thank a merciful Heaven, with my strong constitution and by the warning afforded by my watch, I escaped death. I always carry about with me a silver timepiece, not one of gold, for sanitary reasons – the silver warns me of the presence in the atmosphere of sulphuretted hydrogen – of sewage gas – it blackens, as the arm of Lady Thingabob – I forget her name, perhaps she was of your lordship's family – as the arm, the wrist of her ladyship, was blackened by the grip of a spectre. I see you are bound for the Hôtel du Grand Prince. I went there, and there I inhaled the vapours of death, or rather of disease. I moved to the Hôtel Impérial, and was saved. There, and there only, the drainage is after English models, and there, and there only are you safe from the fumes of typhoid, the seeds of typhus, the corpuscles of diphtheria, and the – the – the what-d'ye-call-ems of cholera. You will excuse my speaking to you, perhaps, forcing myself – unworthy – on your distinguished self.'

'Oh, certainly, certainly.'

'But when I saw your name, my lord, and considered what you are, and what the country would lose were you to run the risk unforwarned, that I ran, I ventured to thrust myself upon you.'

'I am really most obliged to you.'

'Well – who is it said "We are all one flesh, and so feel sympathy one with another"? Having suffered, my lord, suffered so recently, and seeing you, my lord, you, you – about – but there – not another word, *Homo sum, nil humanum* – but I forget the rest, it is long since I was at school, and I have not kept up my classics.'

'I really am most indebted to you – and you think that the Hôtel Impérial –'

'I am sure of it. I had my blood tested, I had my breath analyzed. There were diatoms in one, and bacilli in the other, and – I am alive, alive to say it; thanks to the salubrious air and the careful nursing of the Hôtel Impérial.'

The nobleman looked nearly as mottled in countenance as the other; this was caused by the alarm produced by the revelations of his interlocutor.

'Don't you think,' he said, 'that I had better avoid Andermatt?'

'On no account, my lord. You are safe at the Imperial. I cannot say that you will be safe elsewhere. I have been to Berne to the University Professors to have the atmosphere of the several hotels analyzed for my own private satisfaction. It was costly – but what of that? – it satisfied me. These are the results: Hôtel du Cerf – three decimal two of sulphuretted hydrogen, two decimal eight of malarious matter, one, no decimal, of typhoidal germ. Hôtel de la Couronne d'Or – three decimal one of sulphuretted hydrogen, five decimal three of compound fermenting putrifio-bacteritic stuff. Hôtel du Grand Prince – eight decimal one of diphtheritic effluvium, occasional traces of scarlet-fever germs, and a trace – a trace of trichinus spiralis.'

'Good heavens!' – his lordship turned livid – 'allow me, sir, to shake your hand; you have conferred on me a lasting favour. I shall not forget it. I was bound for the Hôtel du Grand Prince. What about the Impérial?'

'Nothing – all salubrious, mountain air charged with ozone, and not a particle of deleterious matter in it.'

'I shall certainly go there – most certainly. I had telegraphed to the Grand Prince; but, never mind, I had rather pay a forfeit and put up at the Imperial.'

'Would you mind, my lord, giving my card to the proprietor? It will ensure you receiving every attention. I was there when ill, and am pleased to recommend the attentive manager. My name is

Yeo – Colonel Yeo – Colonel Beaple Yeo, East India Company Service, late of the Bombay Heavy Dragoons. Heavies we were called – Heavies, my lord.'

'Will you excuse me?' said the stout little nobleman; 'I must run and speak to my lady. 'Pon my word, this is most serious. I must tell her all you have been so good as to communicate to me. What were the statistics relative to the Grand Prince?'

'Eight decimal one – call it eight of diphtheritic effluvium, traces of scarlet-fever germs, and of trichinus spiralis. You know, my lord, how frightful, how deadly, are the ravages of that pest.'

'Bless me!' exclaimed his lordship, 'these foreigners – really they should not attempt to draw English – Englishmen and their families to their health resorts without making proper provisions in a sanitary way. Of course, for themselves, it doesn't matter; they are foreigners, and are impervious to these influences; or, if not, and carried off by them – well, they are foreigners! But to English – it is outrageous! I'll talk to my lady.'

'Lambert,' said Mrs. Sidebottom in a low tone to her son, 'for goodness' sake don't forget; we must go to the Hôtel Impérial.'

But low as she had spoken, her neighbour in the light suit heard her, turned round and saw her. Not the least abashed, he raised his hat, and with a flush of pleasure exclaimed, 'Ah! how do you do, my dear madam – my dear, dear madam? This is a treat – a treat indeed; the unexpected is always doubly grateful.' He looked round to see that his lordship was out of hearing, and then said in a lower tone, 'You misconstrued me – you misinterpreted me. I had guaranteed you fifteen per cent., and fifteen per cent. you should have had. If you have lost it, it is through want of confidence in me – in me – in Colonel Beaple Yeo, of the Bombay Heavies. Had you trusted me – but ah! let bygones be bygones. However, an explanation is due. I writhe under the imputation of not being above-board and straight – straight as an arrow. But what can you do with a man like Mr. Philip Pennycomequick? The land-owners at Bridlington got wind of the plan. They scented Iodinopolis. Their greed was insatiable, they demanded impossible prices. There was nothing for it but for me to beat a retreat, make a strategic move to the rear, feign to abandon the whole thing, throw it up and turn my attention elsewhere. Then, when they were in a state of panic, my design was to reappear and buy the land on my own terms, not any more on theirs. Why, my dear madam, I would have saved the shareholders thousands on thousands of pounds, and raised the interest from perhaps a modest seven to twenty-five per cent., and a decimal or so more. But I was not trusted, the money confined to me was withdrawn, and others will make fortunes instead of us. I schemed, others will carry out my scheme. *Sic vos non vobis mellificatis apes*, and you know the rest, *aratis boves*, and so on.'

Then Beaple Yeo stood up and handed his card to Mrs. Sidebottom, saying, 'You will at least do me this favour; give my card to the proprietor of the Hôtel Impérial, and he will care for you as for a princess of the blood royal.' Then he stalked away.

Mrs. Sidebottom turned dejectedly to her son. 'Lamb, I believe I was premature. After all, there was management in that affair. Of course his was the right way to bring those landowners to their knees. Let us take a turn.'

Beaple Yeo had now attached himself to another party of strangers – tourists, whose acquaintance he had probably made at an hotel in Lucerne; and he walked the deck with them. When they were fore, then Mrs. Sidebottom and her son were in the rear, but when they turned on their heels, then she turned also and walked aft, and heard their conversation during that portion of the walk. The subject was St. Bernard dogs, and apparently Beaple Yeo had some scheme connected with them, which he was propounding.

'My dear sirs – when the St. Gothard tunnel is complete – answer me – what will become of the hospice? To what use can it be put? It will be sold for a song, as not a traveller will cross the mountain when he can pass under it. For a song – literally for a "song of sixpence." Now, can you conceive of a place more calculated by nature as a nursery of Mount St. Bernard dogs – and the necessary buildings given away – given for nothing, to save them from crumbling into ruin? There is a demand, a growing

demand for Mount St. Bernard dogs, that only wants a little coaxing to become a perfect *furore*. We will send one as a present to her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales. We will get in France an idea that the St. Bernard dog is a badge of the Republic, and that all true Republicans are bound to have Mount St. Bernard dogs. We will get some smart writers in America to dash off some sparkling articles in the illustrated magazines, and the demand becomes furious. Say the population of France is thirty-seven millions; actually it is more, and of these, two thirds – say twenty-five millions – are Republicans, and of these, one half are in a position to buy Mount St. Bernard dogs, and we fan the partisan fever to a height, by means of the press, which is easily done by dropping a few pounds into the hands of writers and proprietors. Say that one-third only of those in a position to buy the dogs, actually ask for them – that makes five millions of Mount St. Bernard dogs to be supplied to France alone. Then consider England, if it becomes the fashion there, and it will become the fashion, if the Princess of Wales accepts a dog from us, and walks about with one. Every lady of distinction, and then, in the next year, every servant-girl, will want a St. Bernard dog. And further – I have calculated that we can feed a dog at less than three farthings a day; say the total cost is a guinea. I have made inquiries and I find I shall be able to buy up the broken meat at a very low figure from the great hotels of Switzerland during the season. This will be conveyed to the hospice and there frozen. So it will keep and be doled out to the dogs daily, as required. Let us say that the interest on the outlay in purchasing the hospice and in maintaining the staff of dog-keepers be one guinea per dog; that makes the total outlay two guineas on each pup, and a pup a year old we shall not sell under ten pounds. Now calculate the profit for yourself – eight pounds a dog, and four millions supplied to France alone to enthusiasts for the Republic, and quite two millions to England to those who imitate her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, and seven millions to the United States for Americans who copy French or English fashions, and you have a total of thirteen millions of dogs at eight pounds each, a clear profit of one hundred and twenty-five millions. If we put the matter in decimals –'

The party turned and were before Mrs. Sidebottom. She could not hear what followed.

'My dear Lamb,' whispered she, 'did you hear that? What a chance! What a head the colonel has!'

At the next revolution Mrs. Sidebottom heard something more about the dog scheme.

'You see, gentlemen, the splendid thing is that the dogs suffer from pulmonary complaints when in the plains, and will not breed away from the eternal snows – two great advantages to us. Shares – preference shares at ten pounds – are to be subscribed in full, others as called in at intervals of six months. I myself guarantee fifteen per cent., but as you see for yourselves, gentlemen, the scheme cannot fail to succeed and the profits will be overwhelming.'

'Are you going on to Andermatt?' asked one of the gentlemen walking with Beaple Yeo.

'No, sir, I have had a bad attack; you can see the traces in my face. I will also show you my watch, how it was blackened. I have been ordered by my medical advisers to cruise up and down the lake of the Five Cantons, and inhale the air off the water till I am thoroughly restored. By the way, if you are going to the Hôtel Impérial at Andermatt would you take my card to the proprietor? He is interested about the dogs.'

Beaple Yeo now crossed the deck to a party that was clustered together at the bulwarks with an opera glass that was passed from hand to hand. It consisted of a tall man with a broad-brimmed hat, bushy black whiskers, a white tie and clerical coat, his wife, his sister, and five daughters. A comfortable religiosity surrounded the group as a halo.

Beaple Yeo raised his hat. 'Beg pardon, sir, a clergyman?'

'Yes, I am.'

'And a dean, doubtless. You will excuse my interrupting you, but I have ventured here thinking you might like to know about a very remarkable movement after the Truth in Italy, in the heart and centre of ignorance and superstition. Count Caprili is the leading spirit. It is no use, sir, as no doubt you are aware, pulling at the leaves and nipping the extremities of the Upas, you must strike at the

root, and that is what my dear friend Count Caprili is doing. He is quite an evangelist, inspired with the utmost enthusiasm. I have here a letter from him descriptive of the progress the Truth is making in Rome – in Rome itself. It is in Italian; do you read Italian, sir?

'N – no, but, mother, can you?' to his wife.

'No, but Minny has learned it' – of a daughter, who reddened to the roots of her fair hair and allowed that if it were in print she might make it out.

'Never mind,' said Beaple Yeo, or Colonel Yeo as he now called himself, 'I can give you the contents in a few words. A year ago his little congregation numbered twenty, it now counts one hundred and eighty-five, and at times even a couple of decimals more. At this rate he reckons that the whole of the Eternal City will have embraced the Truth in twenty-five years and two months, unless the eagerness to embrace it grows in geometrical instead of arithmetical progression. In Florence and Turin the increase is even more rapid. Indeed, it may fairly be said that Superstition is undermined, and that the whole fabric will collapse. Between ourselves I know as a fact that the Pope when he heard of the success of Count Caprili attempted to commit suicide, and has to be watched day and night, he is such a prey to despair. You have perhaps seen my letters to the Archbishop of Canterbury on the subject; they appeared in some of the papers. Only one thing is needed to crown the whole movement with success, and that is money. The Count has urged me to act as his intermediary – secretary and treasurer – as regards England and America, and I shall be most happy to forward to him any contributions I may receive.'

'Dear me,' said the dean, 'this is most interesting. Have any of our bishops taken up the matter?'

'In letters that I have they express the deepest interest in it.'

'I shall be most happy to subscribe a sovereign,' said the dean, fumbling in his purse.

'And I also,' said his wife.

'And I as well,' put in his sister.

'I will note all in my book of contributions,' said Yeo, receiving the money, and finding to his disgust that he had been given twenty-franc, instead of twenty-shilling pieces. 'Would you mind, sir, if you go to – as I take it for granted you will – if you go to the Hôtel Impérial –'

'Ah! we were going to the Cerf.'

'That is a very third-rate inn, hardly suitable for a dignitary of the Church. But if you will take my card, Beaple Yeo, of the Bombay Heavies, to the proprietor of the Hôtel Impérial, he will treat you well, and be reasonable in his charges. He is most interested in the movement of Signor Caprili, and is a convert, but secretly; ask him about the movement, and he will open to you; show him my card, and he will confide his religious views to you.'

'I am most obliged. We will certainly go to the Imperial. Ah, mamma! here we are at the landing-place.'

As Mrs. Sidebottom left the boat at the station which she called Flue-ellen, she held out her hand to Colonel Yeo.

'I hope bygones will be bygones,' she said. 'I will take some shares in the St. Bernard dogs – preference shares, please.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII. IN HÔTEL IMPÉRIAL

Salome had found her sister at the Imperial Hotel at Andermatt. Janet was one of those persons whose bodily condition varies with their spirits. When depressed, she looked and indeed felt ill; when happy, she looked and felt as if nothing were the matter with her. Janet had been greatly tried by the double shocks of her husband's death and the discovery of her parentage. She had been taken into the secret because it could not be kept from her, when the man Schofield, *alias* Beaple Yeo, suddenly arrived at Mergatroyd, just after the flood and the disappearance of Jeremiah Pennycomequick, at the time when she was sharing her mother's room instead of Salome.

Mrs. Cusworth at that time was in great distress of mind at the loss of her master and friend; and when her brother-in-law, the father of the two girls whom she had brought up as her own, unexpectedly appeared and asked for money and clothing, she confided her difficulty to Janet, and between them they managed to bribe him to depart and leave them in peace. Mrs. Cusworth had sacrificed a large slice out of her savings to secure his departure, and trusted thereby to get rid of him for ever.

When Janet returned to France, she found everything in confusion; the factory at Elboeuf was stopped, the men who had been employed in it had assumed arms against the Germans, and were either shot, taken captive, or dispersed. Her sister-in-law was almost off her head with excitement and alarm for her children, three girls just out of school. Prussian officers had been quartered in her house, and had carried off some of her valuables, and ransacked the cellar for the best wines.

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