

LEVER CHARLES JAMES

BARRINGTON. VOLUME 1

Charles Lever

Barrington. Volume 1

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Charles James Lever

Barrington. Volume 1 (of 2)

CHAPTER I. THE FISHERMAN'S HOME

If there should be, at this day we live in, any one bold enough to confess that he fished the river Nore, in Ireland, some forty years ago, he might assist me by calling to mind a small inn, about two miles from the confluence of that river with the Barrow, a spot in great favor with those who followed the "gentle craft."

It was a very unpretending hostel, something wherein cottage and farmhouse were blended, and only recognizable as a place of entertainment by a tin trout suspended over the doorway, with the modest inscription underneath, – "Fisherman's Home." Very seldom is it, indeed, that hotel pledges are as honestly fulfilled as they were in this simple announcement. The house was, in all that quiet comfort and unostentatious excellence can make, a veritable Home! Standing in a fine old orchard of pear and damson trees, it was only approachable by a path which led from the highroad, about two miles off, or by the river, which wound round the little grassy promontory beneath the cottage. On the opposite side of the stream arose cliffs of considerable height, their terraced sides covered with larch and ash, around whose stems the holly, the laurel, and arbutus grew in a wild and rich profusion. A high mountain, rugged with rock and precipice, shut in the picture, and gave to the river all the semblance of a narrow lake.

The Home, as may be imagined, was only resorted to by fishermen, and of these not many; for the chosen few who knew the spot, with the churlishness of true anglers, were strenuously careful to keep the secret to themselves. But another and stronger cause contributed to this seclusion. The landlord was a reduced gentleman, who, only anxious to add a little to his narrow fortune, would not have accepted a greater prosperity at the cost of more publicity, and who probably only consented to his occupation on finding how scrupulously his guests respected his position.

Indeed, it was only on leave-taking, and then far from painfully, you were reminded of being in an inn. There was no noise, no bustle; books, magazines, flowers, lay about; cupboards lay open, with all their cordials free to take. You might dine under the spreading sycamore beside the well, and have your dessert for the plucking. No obsequious waiter shook his napkin as you passed, no ringleted barmaid crossed your musing steps, no jingling of bells, or discordant cries, or high-voiced remonstrances disturbed you. The hum of the summer bee, or the flapping plash of a trout, were about the only sounds in the stillness, and all was as peaceful and as calm and as dreamy as the most world-weary could have wished it.

Of those who frequented the spot, some merely knew that the host had seen better days. Others, however, were aware that Peter Barrington had once been a man of large fortune, and represented his county in the Irish Parliament. Though not eminent as a politician, he was one of the great convivial celebrities of a time that boasted of Curran, and Avonmore, and Parsons, and a score of others, any one of whom, in our day, would have made a society famous. Barrington, too, was the almoner of the monks of the screw, and "Peter's pence" was immortalized in a song by Ned Lysaght, of which I once possessed, but have lost a copy.

One might imagine there could be no difficulty in showing how in that wild period of riotous living and costly rivalry an Irish gentleman ran through all his property and left himself penniless. It was, indeed, a time of utter recklessness, many seeming possessed of that devil-may-care spirit that drives a drowning crew to break open the spirit-room and go down in an orgie. But Barrington's fortune was so large, and his successes on the turf so considerable, that it appeared incredible, when his estates came to the hammer, and all his personal property was sold off; so complete his ruin, that,

as he said himself, the “only shelter he had was an umbrella, and even that he borrowed from Dan Driscoll, the sheriff’s officer.”

Of course there were theories in plenty to account for the disaster, and, as usual, so many knew, many a long day ago, how hard pressed he had been for money, and what ruinous interest he was obliged to pay, till at last rumors filtered all down to one channel, and the world agreed that it was all his son’s doing, and that the scamp George had ruined his father. This son, his only child, had gone out to India in a cavalry regiment, and was celebrated all over the East for a costly splendor that rivalled the great Government officials. From every retired or invalided officer who came back from Bengal were heard stories of mad Barrington’s extravagance: his palace on the Hooghly, his racing stud, his elephants, his army of retainers, – all narratives which, no matter in what spirit retailed, seemed to delight old Peter, who, at every fresh story of his son’s spendthrift magnificence, would be sure to toast his health with a racy enthusiasm whose sincerity was not to be doubted.

Little wonder need there be if in feeding such extravagance a vast estate melted away, and acre followed acre, till all that remained of a property that ranked next to the Ormonds’ was the little cottage over whose door the tin-trout dangled, and the few roods of land around it: sorry remnant of a princely fortune!

But Barrington himself had a passion, which, inordinately indulged, has brought many to their ruin. He was intensely fond of law. It was to him all that gambling is to other men. All that gamblers feel of hope and fear, all the intense excitement they derive from the vacillating fortunes of play, Barrington enjoyed in a lawsuit. Every step of the proceeding had for him an intense interest. The driest legal documents, musty declarations, demurrers, pleadings, replies, affidavits, and counter-affidavits were his choicest reading; and never did a young lady hurry to her room with the last new novel with a stronger anticipation of delight than did Barrington when carrying away to his little snugery a roll of parchments or rough drafts, whose very iterations and jargon would have driven most men half crazy. This same snugery of his was a curiosity, too, the walls being all decorated with portraits of legal celebrities, not selected with reference to their merit or distinction, but solely from their connection with some suit in which he had been engaged; and thus under the likeness of Chief Baron O’Grady might be read, “Barrington versus Brazier, 1802; a juror withdrawn:” Justice Moore’s portrait was inscribed, “Argument in Chambers, 1808,” and so on; even to the portraits of leading counsel, all were marked and dated only as they figured in the great campaign, – the more than thirty years’ war he carried on against Fortune.

Let not my reader suppose for one moment that this litigious taste grew out of a spirit of jarring discontent or distrust. Nothing of the kind. Barrington was merely a gambler; and with whatever dissatisfaction the declaration may be met, I am prepared to show that gambling, however faulty in itself, is not the vice of cold, selfish, and sordid men, but of warm, rash, sometimes over-generous temperaments. Be it well remembered that the professional play-man is, of all others, the one who has least of a gamester in his heart; his superiority lying in the simple fact that his passions are never engaged, his interest never stirred. Oh! beware of yourself in company with the polished antagonist, who only smiles when he loses, whom nothing adverse ever disturbs, but is calmly serene under the most pitiless pelting of luck. To come back: Barrington’s passion for law was an intense thirst for a certain species of excitement; a verdict was to him the odd trick. Let him, however, but win the game, there never was a man so indifferent about the stakes.

For many a year back he had ceased to follow the great events of the world. For the stupendous changes in Europe he cared next to nothing. He scarcely knew who reigned over this empire or that kingdom. Indifferent to art, science, letters, and even society, his interest was intense about all that went on in the law courts, and it was an interest so catholic that it took in everything and everybody, from the great judge upon the bench to the small taxing-officer who nibbled at the bill of costs.

Fortunately for him, his sister, a maiden lady of some eighteen or twenty years his junior, had imbibed nothing of this passion, and, by her prudent opposition to it, stemmed at least the force of that

current which was bearing him to ruin. Miss Dinah Barrington had been the great belle of the Irish court, – I am ashamed to say how long ago, – and though at the period my tale opens there was not much to revive the impression, her high nose, and full blue eyes, and a mass of wonderfully unchanged brown hair, proclaimed her to be – what she was very proud to call herself – a thorough Barrington, a strong type of a frank nature, with a bold, resolute will, and a very womanly heart beneath it.

When their reverses of fortune first befell them, Miss Barrington wished to emigrate. She thought that in Canada, or some other far-away land, their altered condition might be borne less painfully, and that they could more easily bend themselves to humble offices where none but strangers were to look on them; but Barrington clung to his country with the tenacity of an old captain to a wreck. He declared he could not bring himself to the thought of leaving his bones in a strange land, but he never confessed what he felt to be the strongest tie of all, two unfinished lawsuits, the old record of *Barrington v. Brazier*, and a Privy Council case of *Barrington and Lot Rammadah Mohr* against the India Company. To have left his country with these still undecided seemed to him – like the act of a commander taking flight on the morning of a general action – an amount of cowardice he could not contemplate. Not that he confided this opinion to his sister, though he did so in the very fullest manner to his old follower and servant, Darby Cassan. Darby was the last remnant of a once princely retinue, and in his master's choice of him to accompany his fallen fortunes, there was something strangely indicative of the man. Had Darby been an old butler or a body-servant, had he been a favorite groom, or, in some other capacity, one whose daily duties had made his a familiar face, and whose functions could still be available in an humble state, there would have seemed good reason for the selection; but Darby was none of these: he had never served in hall or pantry; he had never brushed the cobweb from a bottle, or led a nag to the door. Of all human professions his were about the last that could address themselves to the cares of a little household; for Darby was reared, bred, and passed fifty-odd years of his life as an earth-stopper!

A very ingenious German writer has attempted to show that the sympathies of the humble classes with pursuits far above their own has always its origin in something of their daily life and habits, just as the sacristan of a cathedral comes to be occasionally a tolerable art critic from his continual reference to Rubens and Vandyck. It is possible that Darby may have illustrated the theory, and that his avocations as earth-stopper may have suggested what he assuredly possessed, a perfect passion for law. If a suit was a great game to Barrington, to Darby it was a hunt! and though his personal experiences never soared beyond Quarter Sessions, he gloried in all he saw there of violence and altercation, of vituperative language and impassioned abuse. Had he been a rich man, free to enjoy his leisure, he would have passed all his days listening to these hot discussions. They were to him a sort of intellectual bull-fight, which never could be too bloody or too cruel. Have I said enough, therefore, to show the secret link which bound the master to the man? I hope so; and that my reader is proud of a confidence with which Miss Barrington herself was never intrusted. She believed that Darby had been taken into favor from some marvellous ability he was supposed to possess, applicable to their new venture as innkeepers. Phrenology would perhaps have pronounced Darby a heaven-born host, for his organ of acquisitiveness was grandly developed. Amidst that great household, where the thriftless habits of the master had descended to the servants, and rendered all reckless and wasteful alike, Darby had thriven and grown almost rich. Was it that the Irish climate used its influence over him; for in his practice to “put by something for a rainy day,” his savings had many promptings? As the reputation of having money soon attached to him, he was often applied to in the hunting-field, or at the kennel, for small loans, by the young bloods who frequented the Hall, and, being always repaid three or four fold, he grew to have a very high conception of what banking must be when done on a large scale. Besides all this, he quickly learned that no character attracts more sympathy, especially amongst the class of young squires and sporting-men, than a certain quaint simplicity, so flattering in its contrast to their own consummate acuteness. Now, he was simple to their hearts' content. He usually spoke of himself as “Poor Darby, God help him!” and, in casting up those wonderful accounts,

which he kept by notches on a tally-stick, nothing was more amusing than to witness his bewilderment and confusion, the inconceivable blunders he would make, even to his own disadvantage, all sure to end at last in the heart-spoken confession that it was “clean beyand him,” and “he ‘d leave it all to your honor; pay just what ye plaze, and long life to ye!”

Is it that women have some shrewd perception of character denied to men? Certainly Darby never imposed on Miss Barrington. She read him like a book, and he felt it. The consequence was a very cordial dislike, which strengthened with every year of their acquaintance.

Though Miss Barrington ever believed that the notion of keeping an inn originated with her brother, it was Darby first conceived the project, and, indeed, by his own skill and crafty intelligence was it carried on; and while the words “Peter Barrington” figured in very small letters, it is true, over the door to comply with a legal necessity, to most of the visitors he was a mere myth. Now, if Peter Barrington was very happy to be represented by deputy, – or, better still, not represented at all, – Miss Dinah regarded the matter in a very different light. Her theory was that, in accepting the humble station to which reverse of fortune brought them, the world ought to see all the heroism and courage of the sacrifice. She insisted on being a foreground figure, just to show them, as she said, “that I take nothing upon me. I am the hostess of a little wayside inn, – no more!” How little did she know of her own heart, and how far was she from even suspecting that it was the *ci-devant* belle making one last throw for the admiration and homage which once were offered her freely.

Such were the three chief personages who dwelt under that secluded roof, half overgrown with honeysuckle and dog-roses, – specimens of that wider world without, where jealousies, and distrusts, and petty rivalries are warring; for as in one tiny globule of water are represented the elements which make oceans and seas, so is it in the moral world; and “the family” is only humanity, as the artists say, “reduced.”

For years back Miss Barrington had been plotting to depose Darby. With an ingenuity quite feminine, she managed to connect him with every chagrin that crossed and every annoyance that befell them. If the pig ploughed up the new peas in the garden, it was Darby had left the gate open; it was *his* hand overwound the clock; and a very significant hint showed that when the thunder soured the beer, Mr. Darby knew more of the matter than he was likely to tell. Against such charges as these, iterated and reiterated to satiety, Barrington would reply by a smile, or a good-natured excuse, or a mere gesture to suggest patience, till his sister, fairly worn out, resolved on another line of action. “As she could not banish the rats,” to use her own words, “she would scuttle the ship.”

To explain her project, I must go back in my story, and state that her nephew, George Barrington, had sent over to England, some fifteen years before, a little girl, whom he, called his daughter. She was consigned to the care of his banker in London, with directions that he should communicate with Mr. Peter Barrington, announce the child’s safe arrival, and consult with him as to her future destination. Now, when the event took place, Barrington was in the very crisis of his disasters. Overwhelmed with debts, pursued by creditors, regularly hunted down, he was driven day by day to sign away most valuable securities for mere passing considerations, and obliged to accept any conditions for daily support. He answered the banker’s letter, briefly stating his great embarrassment, and begging him to give the child his protection for a few weeks or so, till some arrangement of his affairs might enable him to offer her a home.

This time, however, glided over, and the hoped-for amendment never came, – far from it. Writs were out against him, and he was driven to seek a refuge in the Isle of Man, at that time the special sanctuary of insolvent sinners. Mr. Leonard Gower wrote again, and proposed that, if no objection would be made to the plan, the child should be sent to a certain convent near Namur, in the Netherlands, where his own daughter was then placed for her education. Aunt Dinah would have rejected, – ay, or would have resented such a proposal as an insult, had the world but gone on better with them. That her grand-niece should be brought up a Catholic was an outrage on the whole Barrington blood. But calamity had brought her low, – very low, indeed. The child, too, was a

heathen, – a Hindoo or a Buddhist, perhaps, – for the mother was a native woman, reputed, indeed, to be a princess. But who could know this? Who could vouch that George was ever married at all, or if such a ceremony were possible? All these were “attenuating circumstances,” and as such she accepted them; and the measure of her submission was filled up when she received a portrait of the little girl, painted by a native artist. It represented a dark-skinned, heavy-browed child, with wide, full eyes, thick lips, and an expression at once florid and sullen, – not any of the traits one likes to associate with infancy, – and it was with a half shudder Aunt Dinah closed the miniature, and declared that “the sight of the little savage actually frightened her.”

Not so poor Barrington. He professed to see a great resemblance to his son. It was George all over. To be sure, his eyes were deep blue, and his hair a rich brown; but there was something in the nose, or perhaps it was in the mouth, – no, it was the chin, – ay, it was the chin was George’s. It was the Barrington chin, and no mistake about it.

At all events, no opposition was made to the banker’s project, and the little girl was sent off to the convent of the Holy Cross, on the banks of the Meuse. She was inscribed on the roll as the Princess Doondiah, and bore the name till her father’s death, when Mr. Gower suggested that she should be called by her family name. The letter with the proposal, by some accident, was not acknowledged, and the writer, taking silence to mean consent, desired the superior to address her, henceforth, as Miss Barrington; the first startling intimation of the change being a strangely, quaintly written note, addressed to her grand-aunt, and signed “Josephine Barrington.” It was a cold, formal letter, – so very formal, indeed, as to read like the copy of a document, – asking for leave to enter upon a novitiate of two years’ duration, at the expiration of which she would be nineteen years of age, and in a position to decide upon taking the veil for life. The permission, very urgently pressed for by Mr. Gower in another letter, was accorded, and now we have arrived at that period in which but three months only remained of the two years whose closure was to decide her fate forever.

Barrington had long yearned to see her. It was with deep and bitter self-reproach he thought over the cold neglect they had shown her. She was all that remained of poor George, his boy, – for so he called him, and so he thought of him, – long after the bronzed cheek and the prematurely whitened hair had tempered his manhood. To be sure, all the world said, and he knew himself, how it was chiefly through the “boy’s” extravagance he came to ruin. But it was over now. The event that sobers down reproach to sorrow had come. He was dead! All that arose to memory of him were the traits that suggested hopes of his childhood, or gave triumph in his riper years; and oh, is it not better thus? for what hearts would be left us if we were to carry in them the petty rancors and jealousies which once filled them, but which, one day, we buried in the cold clay of the churchyard.

Aunt Dinah, moved by reasons long canvassed over in her own mind, at last began to think of recalling her grand-niece. It was so very bold a project that, at first, she could scarcely entertain it. The Popery was very dreadful! Her imagination conjured up the cottage converted into a little Baal, with false gods and graven images, and holy-water fonts at every turn; but the doubtful legitimacy was worse again. She had a theory that it was by lapses of this kind the “blue blood” of old families grew deteriorated, and that the downfall of many an ancient house was traceable to these corruptions. Far better, she deemed it, that the Barringtons should die out forever than their line be continued by this base and ignoble grafting.

There is a *contre* for every *pour* in this world. It may be a weak and an insufficient one, it is true; but it is a certainty that all our projects must come to a debtor or creditor reckoning, and the very best we can do is to strike an honest balance!

How Miss Dinah essayed to do this we shall learn in the next chapter and what follows it.

CHAPTER II. A WET MORNING AT HOME

If there was anything that possessed more than common terror for Barrington, it was a wet day at the cottage! It was on these dreary visitations that his sister took the opportunity of going into “committee of supply,” – an occasion not merely for the discussion of fiscal matters, but for asking the most vexatious questions and demanding the most unpleasant explanations.

We can all, more or less, appreciate the happiness of that right honorable gentleman on the Treasury bench who has to reply to the crude and unmeaning inquiries of some aspiring Oppositionist, and who wishes to know if her Majesty’s Government have demanded an indemnity from the King of Dahomey for the consul’s family eaten by him at the last court ceremonial? What compensation is to be given to Captain Balrothery for his week’s imprisonment at Leghorn, in consequence of his having thrown the customs officer and a landing waiter into the sea? Or what mark of her Majesty’s favor will the noble lord recommend should be conferred upon Ensign Digges for the admirable imitation he gave of the dancing dervishes at Benares, and the just ridicule he thus threw upon these degrading and heathenish rites?

It was to a torture of this order, far more reasonable and pertinent, however, that Barrington usually saw himself reduced whenever the weather was so decidedly unfavorable that egress was impossible. Poor fellow, what shallow pretexts would he stammer out for absenting himself from home, what despicable subterfuges to put off an audience! He had forgotten to put down the frame on that melon-bed.

There was that awning over the boat not taken in. He ‘d step out to the stable and give Billy, the pony, a touch of the white oils on that swelled hock. He ‘d see if they had got the young lambs under cover. In fact, from his perturbed and agitated manner, you would have imagined that rain was one of the rarest incidents of an Irish climate, and only the very promptest measures could mitigate the calamity.

“May I ask where you are off to in such haste, Peter?” asked Miss Dinah one morning, just as Barrington had completed all his arrangements for a retreat; far readier to brave the elements than the more pitiless pelting that awaited him within doors.

“I just remembered,” said he, mildly, “that I had left two night-lines out at the point, and with this fresh in the river it would be as well if I ‘d step down and see – ”

“And see if the river was where it was yesterday,” broke she in, sneeringly.

“No, Dinah. But you see that there ‘s this to be remarked about night-lines – ”

“That they never catch any fish!” said she, sternly. “It’s no weather for you to go tramping about in the wet grass. You made fuss enough about your lumbago last week, and I suppose you don’t want it back again. Besides,” – and here her tongue grew authoritative, – “I have got up the books.” And with these words she threw on the table a number of little greasy-looking volumes, over which poor Barrington’s sad glances wandered, pretty much as might a victim’s over the thumb-screws and the flesh-nippers of the Holy Inquisition.

“I’ve a slight touch of a headache this morning, Dinah.”

“It won’t be cured by going out in the rain. Sit down there,” said she, peremptorily, “and see with your own eyes how much longer your means will enable you to continue these habits of waste and extravagance.”

“These what?” said he, perfectly astounded.

“These habits of waste and extravagance, Peter Barrington. I repeat my words.”

Had a venerable divine, being asked on the conclusion of an edifying discourse, for how much longer it might be his intention to persist in such ribaldries, his astonishment could scarce have been greater than Barrington’s.

“Why, sister Dinah, are we not keeping an inn? Is not this the ‘Fisherman’s Home’?”

"I should think it is, Peter," said she, with scorn. "I suspect he finds it so. A very excellent name for it it is!"

"Must I own that I don't understand you, Dinah?"

"Of course you don't. You never did all your life. You never knew you were wet till you were half drowned, and that's what the world calls having such an amiable disposition! Ain't your friends nice friends? They are always telling you how generous you are, – how free-handed, – how benevolent. What a heart he has! Ay, but thank Providence there's very little of that charming docility about *me*, is there?"

"None, Dinah, – none," said he, not in the least suspecting to what he was bearing testimony.

She became crimson in a minute, and in a tone of some emotion said, "And if there had been, where should you and where should I be to-day? On the parish, Peter Barrington, – on the parish; for it 's neither *your* head nor *your* hands would have saved us from it."

"You're right, Dinah; you're right there. You never spoke a truer word." And his voice trembled as he said it.

"I did n't mean *that*, Peter," said she, eagerly; "but you are too confiding, too trustful. Perhaps it takes a woman to detect all the little wiles and snares that entangle us in our daily life?"

"Perhaps it does," said he, with a deep sigh.

"At all events, you needn't sigh over it, Peter Barrington. It's not one of those blemishes in human nature that have to be deplored so feelingly. I hope women are as good as men."

"Fifty thousand times better, in every quality of kindness and generosity."

"Humph!" said she, tossing her head impatiently. "We 're not here for a question in ethics; it is to the very lowly task of examining the house accounts I would invite your attention. Matters cannot go on as they do now, if we mean to keep a roof over us."

"But I have always supposed we were doing pretty well, Dinah. You know we never promised ourselves to gain a fortune by this venture; the very utmost we ever hoped for was to help us along, – to aid us to make both ends meet at the end of the year And as Darby tells me –"

"Oh, Darby tells you! What a reliable authority to quote from! Oh, don't groan so heavily! I forgot myself. I would n't for the world impeach such fidelity or honesty as his."

"Be reasonable, sister Dinah, – do be reasonable; and if there is anything to lay to his charge –"

"You 'll hear the case, I suppose," cried she, in a voice high-pitched in passion. "You 'll sit up there, like one of your favorite judges, and call on Dinah Barrington against Cassan; and perhaps when the cause is concluded we shall reverse our places, and *I* become the defendant! But if this is your intention, brother Barrington, give me a little time. I beg I may have a little time."

Now, this was a very favorite request of Miss Barrington's, and she usually made it in the tone of a martyr; but truth obliges us to own that never was a demand less justifiable. Not a three-decker of the Channel fleet was readier for a broadside than herself. She was always at quarters and with a port-fire burning.

Barrington did not answer this appeal; he never moved, – he scarcely appeared to breathe, so guarded was he lest his most unintentional gesture should be the subject of comment.

"When you have recovered from your stupefaction," said she, calmly, "will you look over that line of figures, and then give a glance at this total? After that I will ask you what fortune could stand it."

"This looks formidable, indeed," said he, poring over the page through his spectacles.

"It is worse, Peter. It *is* formidable."

"After all, Dinah, this is expenditure. Now for the incomings!"

"I suspect you 'll have to ask your prime minister for *them*. Perhaps he may vouchsafe to tell you how many twenty-pound notes have gone to America, who it was that consigned a cargo of new potatoes to Liverpool, and what amount he invested in yarn at the last fair of Graigue? and when you have learned these facts, you will know all you are ever likely to know of your *profits*!" I have no means of conveying the intense scorn with which she uttered the last word of this speech.

“And he told me – not a week back – that we were going on famously!”

“Why wouldn’t he? I ‘d like to hear what else he could say. Famously, indeed, for *him* with a strong balance in the savings-bank, and a gold watch – yes, Peter, a gold watch – in his pocket. This is no delusion, nor illusion, or whatever you call it, of mine, but a fact, – a downright fact.”

“He has been toiling hard many a year for it, Dinah, don’t forget that.”

“I believe you want to drive me mad, Peter. You know these are things that I can’t bear, and that’s the reason you say them. Toil, indeed! *I* never saw him do anything except sit on a gate at the Lock Meadows, with a pipe in his mouth; and if you asked him what he was there for, it was a ‘track’ he was watching, a ‘dog-fox that went by every afternoon to the turnip field.’ Very great toil that was!”

“There was n’t an earth-stopper like him in the three next counties; and if I was to have a pack of foxhounds tomorrow – ”

“You ‘d just be as great a foot as ever you were, and the more sorry I am to hear it; but you ‘re not going to be tempted, Peter Barrington. It’s not foxes we have to think of, but where we ‘re to find shelter for ourselves.”

“Do you know of anything we could turn to, more profitable, Dinah?” asked he, mildly.

“There ‘s nothing could be much less so, I know *that!* You are not very observant, Peter, but even to you it must have become apparent that great changes have come over the world in a few years. The persons who formerly indulged their leisure were all men of rank and fortune. Who are the people who come over here now to amuse themselves? Staleybridge and Manchester creatures, with factory morals and bagman manners; treating our house like a commercial inn, and actually disputing the bill and asking for items. Yes, Peter, I overheard a fellow telling Darby last week that the “ouse was dearer than the Halbion!”

“Travellers will do these things, Dinah.”

“And if they do, they shall be shown the door for it, as sure as my name is Dinah Barrington.”

“Let us give up the inn altogether, then,” said he, with a sudden impatience.

“The very thing I was going to propose, Peter,” said she, solemnly.

“What! – how?” cried he, for the acceptance of what only escaped him in a moment of anger overwhelmed and stunned him. “How are we to live, Dinah?”

“Better without than with it, – there’s my answer to that. Let us look the matter fairly in the face, Peter,” said she, with a calm and measured utterance. “This dealing with the world ‘on honor’ must ever be a losing game. To screen ourselves from the vulgar necessities of our condition, we must submit to any terms. So long as our intercourse with life gave us none but gentlemen to deal with, we escaped well and safely. That race would seem to have thinned off of late, however; or, what comes to the same, there is such a deluge of spurious coin one never knows what is real gold.”

“You may be right, Dinah; you may be right.”

“I know I am right; the experience has been the growth of years too. All our efforts to escape the odious contact of these people have multiplied our expenses. Where one man used to suffice, we keep three. You yourself, who felt it no indignity to go out a-fishing formerly with a chance traveller, have to own with what reserve and caution you would accept such companionship now.”

“Nay, nay, Dinah, not exactly so far as that – ”

“And why not? Was it not less than a fortnight ago three Birmingham men crossed the threshold, calling out for old Peter, – was old Peter to the good yet?”

“They were a little elevated with wine, sister, remember that; and, besides, they never knew, never had heard of me in my once condition.”

“And are we so changed that they cannot recognize the class we pertain to?”

“Not *you*, Dinah, certainly not you; but I frankly own I can put up with rudeness and incivility better than a certain showy courtesy some vulgar people practise towards me. In the one case I feel I am not known, and my secret is safe. In the other, I have to stand out as the ruined gentleman, and I am not always sure that I play the part as gracefully as I ought.”

“Let us leave emotions, Peter, and descend to the lowland of arithmetic, by giving up two boatmen, John and Terry – ”

“Poor Terry!” sighed he, with a faint, low accent

“Oh! if it be ‘poor Terry!’ I ‘ve done,” said she, closing the book, and throwing it down with a slap that made him start.

“Nay, dear Dinah; but if we could manage to let him have something, – say five shillings a week, – he ‘d not need it long; and the port wine that was doing his rheumatism such good is nearly finished; he’ll miss it sorely.”

“Were you giving him Henderson’s wine, – the ‘11 vintage?” cried she, pale with indignation.

“Just a bottle or two, Dinah; only as medicine.”

“As a fiddlestick, sir! I declare I have no patience with you; there ‘s no excuse for such folly, not to say the ignorance of giving these creatures what they never were used to. Did not Dr. Dill tell you that tonics, to be effective, must always have some relation to the daily habits of the patient?”

“Very true, Dinah; but the discourse was pronounced when I saw him putting a bottle of old Madeira in his gig that I had left for Anne M’Cafferty, adding, he ‘d send her something far more strengthening.”

“Right or wrong, I don’t care; but this I know, Terry Dogherty is n’t going to finish off Henderson’s port. It is rather too much to stand, that we are to be treating beggars to luxuries, when we can’t say to-morrow where we shall find salt for our potatoes.” This was a somewhat favorite illustration of Miss Barrington, – either implying that the commodity was an essential to human life, or the use of it an emblem of extreme destitution.

“I conclude we may dispense with Tom Divett’s services,” resumed she. “We can assuredly get on without a professional rat-catcher.”

“If we should, Dinah, we’ll feel the loss; the rats make sad havoc of the spawn, and destroy quantities of the young fish, besides.”

“His two ugly terriers eat just as many chickens, and never leave us an egg in the place. And now for Mr. Darby – ”

“You surely don’t think of parting with Darby, sister Dinah?”

“He shall lead the way,” replied she, in a firm and peremptory voice; “the very first of the batch! And it will, doubtless, be a great comfort to you to know that you need not distress yourself about any provision for his declining years. It is a care that he has attended to on his own part. He ‘ll go back to a very well-feathered nest, I promise you.”

Barrington sighed heavily, for he had a secret sorrow on that score. He knew, though his sister did not, that he had from year to year been borrowing every pound of Darby’s savings to pay the cost of law charges, always hoping and looking for the time when a verdict in his favor would enable him to restore the money twice told. With a very dreary sigh, then, did he here allude “to the well-feathered nest” of one he had left bare and destitute. He cleared his throat, and made an effort to avow the whole matter; but his courage failed him, and he sat mournfully shaking his head, partly in sorrow, partly in shame. His sister noticed none of these signs; she was rapidly enumerating all the reductions that could be made, – all the dependencies cut off; there were the boats, which constantly required repairs; the nets, eternally being renewed, – all to be discarded; the island, a very pretty little object in the middle of the river, need no longer be rented. “Indeed,” said she, “I don’t know why we took it, except it was to give those memorable picnics you used to have there.”

“How pleasant they were, Dinah; how delightful!” said he, totally overlooking the spirit of her remark.

“Oh! they were charming, and your own popularity was boundless; but I ‘d have you to bear in mind, brother Peter, that popularity is no more a poor man’s luxury than champagne. It is a very costly indulgence, and can rarely be had on ‘credit.”

Miss Barrington had pared down retrenchment to the very quick. She had shown that they could live not only without boatmen, rat-catchers, gardener, and manservant, but that, as they were to give up their daily newspaper, they could dispense with a full ration of candle-light; and yet, with all these reductions, she declared that there was still another encumbrance to be pruned away, and she proudly asked her brother if he could guess what it was?

Now Barrington felt that he could not live without a certain allowance of food, nor would it be convenient, or even decent, to dispense with raiment; so he began, as a last resource, to conjecture that his sister was darkly hinting at something which might be a substitute for a home, and save house-rent; and he half testily exclaimed, "I suppose we 're to have a roof over us, Dinah!"

"Yes," said she, dryly, "I never proposed we should go and live in the woods. What I meant had a reference, to Josephine – "

Barrington's cheek flushed deeply in an instant, and, with a voice trembling with emotion, he said, —

"If you mean, Dinah, that I'm to cut off that miserable pittance – that forty pounds a year – I give to poor George's girl – " He stopped, for he saw that in his sister's face which might have appalled a bolder heart than his own; for while her eyes flashed fire, her thin lips trembled with passion; and so, in a very faltering humility, he added: "But you never meant *that* sister Dinah. You would be the very last in the world to do it."

"Then why impute it to me; answer me that?" said she, crossing her hands behind her back, and staring haughtily at him.

"Just because I 'm clean at my wits' end, – just because I neither understand one word I hear, or what I say in reply. If you 'll just tell me what it is you propose, I 'll do my best, with God's blessing, to follow you; but don't ask me for advice, Dinah, and don't fly out because I 'm not as quick-witted and as clever as yourself."

There was something almost so abject in his misery that she seemed touched by it, and, in a voice of a very calm and kindly meaning, she said, —

"I have been thinking a good deal over that letter of Josephine's; she says she wants our consent to take the veil as a nun; that, by the rules of the order, when her novitiate is concluded, she must go into the world for at least some months, – a time meant to test her faithfulness to her vows, and the tranquillity with which she can renounce forever all the joys and attractions of life. We, it is true, have no means of surrounding her with such temptations; but we might try and supply their place by some less brilliant but not less attractive ones. We might offer her, what we ought to have offered her years ago, – a home! What do you say to this, Peter?"

"That I love you for it, sister Dinah, with all my heart," said he, kissing her on each cheek; "that it makes me happier than I knew I ever was to be again."

"Of course, to bring Josephine here, this must not be an inn, Peter."

"Certainly not, Dinah, – certainly not. But I can think of nothing but the joy of seeing her, – poor George's child! How I have yearned to know if she was like him, – if she had any of his ways, any traits of that quaint, dry humor he had, and, above all, of that disposition that made him so loved by every one."

"And cheated by every one too, brother Peter; don't forget that!"

"Who wants to think of it now?" said he, sorrowfully.

"I never reject a thought because it has unpleasant associations. It would be but a sorry asylum which only admitted the well-to-do and the happy."

"How are we to get the dear child here, Dinah? Let us consider the matter. It is a long journey off."

"I have thought of that too," said she, sententiously, "but not made up my mind."

"Let us ask M'Cormick about it, Dinah; he's coming up this evening to play his Saturday night's rubber with Dill. He knows the Continent well."

“There will be another saving that I did n’t remember, Peter. The weekly bottle of whiskey, and the candles, not to speak of the four or five shillings your pleasant companions invariably carry away with them, – all may be very advantageously dispensed with.”

“When Josephine ‘s here, I ‘ll not miss it,” said he, good-humoredly. Then suddenly remembering that his sister might not deem the speech a gracious one to herself, he was about to add something; but she was gone.

CHAPTER III. OUR NEXT NEIGHBORS

Should there be amongst my readers any one whose fortune it has been in life only to associate with the amiable, the interesting, and the agreeable, all whose experiences of mankind are rose-tinted, to him I would say, Skip over two people I am now about to introduce, and take up my story at some later stage, for I desire to be truthful, and, as is the misfortune of people in my situation, I may be very disagreeable.

After all, I may have made more excuses than were needful. The persons I would present are in that large category, the commonplace, and only as uninviting and as tiresome as we may any day meet in a second-class on the railroad. Flourish, therefore, penny trumpets, and announce Major M'Cormick. The Major, so confidently referred to by Barrington in our last chapter as a high authority on matters continental, was a very shattered remnant of the unhappy Walcheren expedition. He was a small, mean-looking, narrow-faced man, with a thin, bald head, and red whiskers. He walked very lame from an injury to his hip; "his wound," he called it, though his candor did not explain that it was incurred by being thrown down a hatchway by a brother officer in a drunken brawl. In character he was a saving, penurious creature, without one single sympathy outside his own immediate interests. When some sixteen or eighteen years before the Barringtons had settled in the neighborhood, the Major began to entertain thoughts of matrimony. Old soldiers are rather given to consider marriage as an institution especially intended to solace age and console rheumatism, and so M'Cormick debated with himself whether he had not arrived at the suitable time for this indulgence, and also whether Miss Dinah Barrington was not the individual destined to share his lot and season his gruel.

But a few years back and his ambition would as soon have aspired to an archduchess as to the sister of Barrington, of Barrington Hall, whose realms of social distinction separated them; but now, fallen from their high estate, forgotten by the world, and poor, they had come down – at least, he thought so – to a level in which there would be no presumption in his pretensions. Indeed, I half suspect that he thought there was something very high-minded and generous in his intentions with regard to them. At all events, there was a struggle of some sort in his mind which went on from year to year undecided. Now, there are men – for the most part old bachelors – to whom an unfinished project is a positive luxury, who like to add, day by day, a few threads to the web of fate, but no more. To the Major it was quite enough that "some fine day or other" – so he phrased it – he 'd make his offer, just as he thought how, in the same propitious weather, he 'd put a new roof on his cottage, and fill up that quarry-hole near his gate, into which he had narrowly escaped tumbling some half-dozen times. But thanks to his caution and procrastination, the roof, and the project, and the quarry-hole were exactly, or very nearly, in the same state they had been eighteen years before.

Rumor said – as rumor will always say whatever has a tinge of ill-nature in it – that Miss Barrington would have accepted him; vulgar report declared that she would "jump at the offer." Whether this be, or not, the appropriate way of receiving a matrimonial proposal, the lady was not called upon to display her activity. He never told his love.

It is very hard to forgive that secretary, home or foreign, who in the day of his power and patronage could, but did not, make us easy for life with this mission or that com-missionership. It is not easy to believe that our uncle the bishop could not, without any undue strain upon his conscience, have made us something, albeit a clerical error, in his diocese, but infinitely more difficult is it to pardon him who, having suggested dreams of wedded happiness, still stands hesitating, doubting, and canvassing, – a timid bather, who shivers on the beach, and then puts on his clothes again.

It took a long time – it always does in such cases – ere Miss Barrington came to read this man aright. Indeed, the light of her own hopes had dazzled her, and she never saw him clearly till they were extinguished; but when the knowledge did come, it came trebled with compound interest, and she saw him in all that displayed his miserable selfishness; and although her brother, who found it

hard to believe any one bad who had not been tried for a capital felony, would explain away many a meanness by saying, "It is just his way, – a way, and no more!" she spoke out fearlessly, if not very discreetly, and declared she detested him. Of course she averred it was his manners, his want of breeding, and his familiarity that displeased her. He might be an excellent creature, – perhaps he was; *that* was nothing to her. All his moral qualities might have an interest for his friends; she was a mere acquaintance, and was only concerned for what related to his bearing in society. Then Walcheren was positively odious to her. Some little solace she felt at the thought that the expedition was a failure and inglorious; but when she listened to the fiftieth time-told tale of fever and ague, she would sigh, not for those who suffered, but over the one that escaped. It is a great blessing to men of uneventful lives and scant imagination when there is any one incident to which memory can refer unceasingly. Like some bold headland last seen at sea, it lives in the mind throughout the voyage. Such was this ill-starred expedition to the Major. It dignified his existence to himself, though his memory never soared above the most ordinary details and vulgar incidents. Thus he would maunder on for hours, telling how the ships sailed and parted company, and joined again; how the old "Brennus" mistook a signal and put back to Hull, and how the "Sarah Reeves," his own transport, was sent after her. Then he grew picturesque about Flushing, as first seen through the dull fogs of the Scheldt, with village spires peeping through the heavy vapor, and the strange Dutch language, with its queer names for the vegetables and fruit brought by the boats alongside.

"You won't believe me, Miss Dinah, but, as I sit here, the peaches was like little melons, and the cherries as big as walnuts."

"They made cherry-bounce out of them, I hope, sir," said she, with a scornful smile.

"No, indeed, ma'am," replied he, dull to the sarcasm; "they ate them in a kind of sauce with roast-pig, and mighty good too!"

But enough of the Major; and now a word, and only a word, for his companion, already alluded to by Barrington.

Dr. Dill had been a poor "Dispensary Doctor" for some thirty years, with a small practice, and two or three grand patrons at some miles off, who employed him for the servants, or for the children in "mild cases," and who even extended to him a sort of contemptuous courtesy that serves to make a proud man a bear, and an humble man a sycophant.

Dill was the reverse of proud, and took to the other line with much kindliness. To have watched him in his daily round you would have said that he liked being trampled on, and actually enjoyed being crushed. He smiled so blandly, and looked so sweetly under it all, as though it was a kind of moral shampooing, from which he would come out all the fresher and more vigorous.

The world is certainly generous in its dealings with these temperaments; it indulges them to the top of their hearts, and gives them humiliations to their heart's content. Rumor – the same wicked goddess who libelled Miss Barrington – hinted that the doctor was not, within his own walls and under his own roof, the suffering angel the world saw him, and that he occasionally did a little trampling there on his own account. However, Mrs. Dill never complained; and though the children wore a tremulous terror and submissiveness in their looks, they were only suitable family traits, which all redounded to their credit, and made them "so like the doctor."

Such were the two worthies who slowly floated along on the current of the river of a calm summer's evening, to visit the Barringtons. As usual, the talk was of their host. They discussed his character and his habits and his debts, and the difficulty he had in raising that little loan; and in close juxtaposition with this fact, as though pinned on the back of it, his sister's overweening pride and pretension. It had been the Major's threat for years that he 'd "take her down a peg one of these days." But either he was mercifully unwilling to perform the act, or that the suitable hour for it had not come; but there she remained, and there he left her, not taken down one inch, but loftier and haughtier than ever. As the boat rounded the point from which the cottage was visible through the trees and some of the outhouses could be descried, they reverted to the ruinous state everything was

falling into. "Straw is cheap enough, anyhow," said the Major. "He might put a new thatch on that cow-house, and I 'm sure a brush of paint would n't ruin any one." Oh, my dear reader! have you not often heard – I know that I have – such comments as these, such reflections on the indolence or indifference which only needed so very little to reform, done, too, without trouble or difficulty, habits that could be corrected, evil ways reformed, and ruinous tendencies arrested, all as it were by a "rush of paint," or something just as uncostly?

"There does n't seem to be much doing here, Dill," said M'Cormick, as they landed. "All the boats are drawn up ashore. And faith! I don't wonder, that old woman is enough to frighten the fish out of the river."

"Strangers do not always like that sort of thing," modestly remarked the doctor, – the "always" being peculiarly marked for emphasis. "Some will say, an inn should be an inn."

"That's my view of it. What I say is this: I want my bit of fish, and my beefsteak, and my pint of wine, and I don't want to know that the landlord's grandfather entertained the king, or that his aunt was a lady-in-waiting. 'Be' as high as you like,' says I, 'but don't make the bill so,' – eh, Dill?" And he cackled the harsh ungenial laugh which seems the birthright of all sorry jesters; and the doctor gave a little laugh too, more from habit, however, than enjoyment.

"Do you know, Dill," said the Major, disengaging himself from the arm which his lameness compelled him to lean on, and standing still in the pathway, – "do you know that I never reach thus far without having a sort of struggle with myself whether I won't turn back and go home again. Can you explain that, now?"

"It is the wound, perhaps, pains you, coming up the hill."

"It is not the wound. It's that woman!"

"Miss Barrington?"

"Just so. I have her before me now, sitting up behind the urn there, and saying, 'Have you had tea, Major M'Cormick?' when she knows well she did n't give it to me. Don't you feel that going up to the table for your cup is for all the world like doing homage?"

"Her manners are cold, – certainly cold."

"I wish they were. It's the fire that's in her I 'm afraid of! She has as wicked an eye in her head as ever I saw."

"She was greatly admired once, I 'm told; and she has many remains of beauty."

"Oh! for the matter of looks, there's worse. It's her nature, her temper, – herself, in fact, I can't endure."

"What is it you can't endure, M'Cormick?" cried Barrington, emerging from a side walk where he had just caught the last words. "If it be anything in this poor place of mine, let me hear, that I may have it amended."

"How are ye, – how are ye?" said the Major, with a very confused manner. "I was talking politics with Dill. I was telling him how I hated *them* Tories."

"I believe they are all pretty much alike," said Barrington; "at least, I knew they were in my day. And though we used to abuse him, and drink all kind of misfortunes to him every day of our lives, there was n't a truer gentleman nor a finer fellow in Ireland than Lord Castlereagh."

"I'm sure of it. I've often heard the same remark," chimed in Dill.

"It's a pity you didn't think so at the time of the Union," said M'Cormick, with a sneer.

"Many of us did; but it would not make us sell our country. But what need is there of going back to those times, and things that can't be helped now? Come in and have a cup of tea. I see my sister is waiting for us."

Why was it that Miss Barrington, on that evening, was grander and statelier than ever? Was it some anticipation of the meditated change in their station had impressed her manner with more of pride? I know not; but true it is she received her visitors with a reserve that was actually chilling. To

no end did Barrington exert himself to conceal or counteract this frigidity. In all our moral chemistry we have never yet hit upon an antidote to a chilling reception.

The doctor was used to this freezing process, and did not suffer like his companion. To him, life was a huge ice-pail; but he defied frost-bite, and bore it. The Major, however chafed and fidgeted under the treatment, and muttered to himself very vengeful sentiments about that peg he had determined to take her down from.

"I was hoping to be able to offer you a nosegay, dear lady," said Dill, – this was his customary mode of address to her, an ingenious blending of affection with deference, but in which the stronger accent on the last word showed the deference to predominate, – "but the rain has come so late, there's not a stock in the garden fit to present to you."

"It is just as well, sir. I detest gillyflowers."

The Major's eyes sparkled with a spiteful delight, for he was sorely jealous of the doctor's ease under difficulties.

"We have, indeed, a few moss-roses."

"None to be compared to our own, sir. Do not think of it."

The Major felt that his was not a giving disposition, and consequently it exempted him from rubs and rebuffs of this sort. Meanwhile, unabashed by failure, the doctor essayed once more: "Mrs. Dill is only waiting to have the car mended, to come over and pay her dutiful respects to you, Miss Dinah."

"Pray tell her not to mind it, Dr. Dill," replied she, sharply, "or to wait till the fourth of next month, which will make it exactly a year since her last visit; and her call can be then an annual one, like the tax-gatherer's."

"Bother them for taxes altogether," chimed in Barrington, whose ear only caught the last word. "You haven't done with the county cess when there's a fellow at you for tithes; and they're talking of a poor-rate."

"You may perceive, Dr. Dill, that your medicines have not achieved a great success against my brother's deafness."

"We were all so at Walcheren," broke in M'Cormick; "when we 'd come out of the trenches, we could n't hear for hours."

"My voice may be a shrill one, Major M'Cormick, but I'll have you to believe that it has not destroyed my brother's tympanum."

"It's not the tympanum is engaged, dear lady; it's the Eustachian tube is the cause here. There's a passage leads down from the internal ear –"

"I declare, sir, I have just as little taste for anatomy as for fortification; and though I sincerely wish you could cure my brother, as I also wish these gentlemen could have taken Walcheren, I have not the slightest desire to know how."

"I 'll beg a little more tea in this, ma'am," said the Major, holding out his cup.

"Do you mean water, sir? Did you say it was too strong?"

"With your leave, I 'll take it a trifle stronger," said he, with a malicious twinkle in his eye, for he knew all the offence his speech implied.

"I'm glad to hear you say so, Major M'Cormick. I'm happy to know that your nerves are stronger than at the time of that expedition you quote with such pleasure. Is yours to your liking, sir?"

"I 'll ask for some water, dear lady," broke in Dill, who began to think that the fire was hotter than usual. "As I said to Mrs. Dill, 'Molly,' says I, 'how is it that I never drink such tea anywhere as at the –'" He stopped, for he was going to say, the Harringtons', and he trembled at the liberty; and he dared not say the Fisherman's Home, lest it should be thought he was recalling their occupation; and so, after a pause and a cough, he stammered out – "at the sweet cottage." Nor was his confusion the less at perceiving how she had appreciated his difficulty, and was smiling at it.

“Very few strangers in these parts lately, I believe,” said M’Cormick, who knew that his remark was a dangerous one.

“I fancy none, sir,” said she, calmly. “We, at least, have no customers, if that be the name for them.”

“It’s natural, indeed, dear lady, you shouldn’t know how they are called,” began the doctor, in a fawning tone, “reared and brought up as you were.”

The cold, steady stare of Miss Barrington arrested his speech; and though he made immense efforts to recover himself, there was that in her look which totally overcame him. “Sit down to your rubber, sir,” said she, in a whisper that seemed to thrill through his veins. “You will find yourself far more at home at the odd trick there, than attempting to console me about my lost honors.” And with this fierce admonition, she gave a little nod, half in adieu, half in admonition, and swept haughtily out of the room.

M’Cormick heaved a sigh as the door closed after her, which very plainly bespoke how much he felt the relief.

“My poor sister is a bit out of spirits this evening,” said Barrington, who merely saw a certain show of constraint over his company, and never guessed the cause. “We’ve had some unpleasant letters, and one thing or another to annoy us, and if she does n’t join us at supper, you ‘ll excuse her, I know, M’Cormick.”

“That we will, with – ” He was going to add, “with a heart and a half,” for he felt, what to him was a rare sentiment, “gratitude;” but Dill chimed in, —

“Of course, we couldn’t expect she’d appear. I remarked she was nervous when we came in. I saw an expression in her eye – ”

“So did I, faith,” muttered M’Cormick, “and I’m not a doctor.”

“And here’s our whist-table,” said Barrington, bustling about; “and there ‘s a bit of supper ready there for us in that room, and we ‘ll help ourselves, for I ‘ve sent Darby to bed. And now give me a hand with these cards, for they ‘ve all got mixed together.”

Barrington’s task was the very wearisome one of trying to sort out an available pack from some half-dozen of various sizes and colors.

“Is n’t this for all the world like raising a regiment out of twenty volunteer corps?” said M’Cormick.

“Dill would call it an hospital of incurables,” said Barrington. “Have you got a knave of spades and a seven? Oh dear, dear! the knave, with the head off him! I begin to suspect we must look up a new pack.” There was a tone of misgiving in the way he said this; for it implied a reference to his sister, and all its consequences. Affecting to search for new cards in his own room, therefore, he arose and went out.

“I wouldn’t live in a slavery like that,” muttered the Major, “to be King of France.”

“Something has occurred here. There is some latent source of irritation,” said Dill, cautiously. “Barrington’s own manner is fidgety and uneasy. I have my suspicion matters are going on but poorly with them.”

While this sage diagnosis was being uttered, M’Cormick had taken a short excursion into the adjoining room, from which he returned, eating a pickled onion. “It’s the old story; the cold roast loin and the dish of salad. Listen! Did you hear that shout?”

“I thought I heard one awhile back; but I fancied afterwards it was only the noise of the river over the stones.”

“It is some fellows drawing the river; they poach under his very windows, and he never sees them.”

“I ‘m afraid we ‘re not to have our rubber this evening,” said Dill, mournfully.

“There’s a thing, now, I don’t understand!” said M’Cormick, in a low but bitter voice. “No man is obliged to see company, but when he does do it, he oughtn’t to be running about for a tumbler here and a mustard-pot there. There’s the noise again; it’s fellows robbing the salmon-weir!”

“No rubber to-night, I perceive that,” reiterated the doctor, still intent upon the one theme.

“A thousand pardons I ask from each of you,” cried Barrington, coming hurriedly in, with a somewhat flushed face; “but I ‘ve had such a hunt for these cards. When I put a thing away nowadays, it’s as good as gone to me, for I remember nothing. But here we are, now, all right.”

The party, like men eager to retrieve lost time, were soon deep in their game, very little being uttered, save such remarks as the contest called for. The Major was of that order of players who firmly believe fortune will desert them if they don’t whine and complain of their luck, and so everything from him was a lamentation. The doctor, who regarded whist pathologically, no more gave up a game than he would a patient. He had witnessed marvellous recoveries in the most hopeless cases, and he had been rescued by a “revoke” in the last hour. Unlike each, Barrington was one who liked to chat over his game, as he would over his wine. Not that he took little interest in it, but it had no power to absorb and engross him. If a man derive very great pleasure from a pastime in which, after years and years of practice, he can attain no eminence nor any mastery, you may be almost certain he is one of an amiable temperament. Nothing short of real goodness of nature could go on deriving enjoyment from a pursuit associated with continual defeats. Such a one must be hopeful, he must be submissive, he must have no touch of ungenerous jealousy in his nature, and, withal, a zealous wish to do better. Now he who can be all these, in anything, is no bad fellow.

If Barrington, therefore, was beaten, he bore it well. Cards were often enough against him, his play was always so; and though the doctor had words of bland consolation for disaster, such as the habits of his craft taught him, the Major was a pitiless adversary, who never omitted the opportunity of disinterring all his opponents’ blunders, and singing a song of triumph over them. But so it is, —*tot genera hominum*, – so many kinds of whist-players are there!

Hour after hour went over, and it was late in the night. None felt disposed to sup; at least, none proposed it. The stakes were small, it is true, but small things are great to little men, and Barrington’s guests were always the winners.

“I believe if I was to be a good player, – which I know in my heart I never shall,” said Barrington, – “that my luck would swamp me, after all. Look at that hand now, and say is there a trick in it?” As he said this, he spread out the cards of his “dummy” on the table, with the dis-consolation of one thoroughly beaten.

“Well, it might be worse,” said Dill, consolingly. “There’s a queen of diamonds; and I would n’t say, if you could get an opportunity to trump the club – ”

“Let him try it,” broke in the merciless Major; “let him just try it! My name isn’t Dan M’Cormick if he’ll win one card in that hand. There, now, I lead the ace of clubs. Play!”

“Patience, Major, patience; let me look over my hand. I ‘m bad enough at the best, but I ‘ll be worse if you hurry me. Is that a king or a knave I see there?”

“It’s neither; it ‘s the queen!” barked out the Major.

“Doctor, you ‘ll have to look after my eyes as well as my ears. Indeed, I scarcely know which is the worst. Was not that a voice outside?”

“I should think it was; there have been fellows shouting there the whole evening. I suspect they don’t leave you many fish in this part of the river.”

“I beg your pardon,” interposed Dill, blandly, “but you ‘ve taken up my card by mistake.”

While Barrington was excusing himself, and trying to recover his lost clew to the game, there came a violent knocking at the door, and a loud voice called out, “Holloa! Will some of ye open the door, or must I put my foot through it?”

“There *is* somebody there,” said Barrington, quietly, for he had now caught the words correctly; and taking a candle, he hastened out.

“At last,” cried a stranger, as the door opened, – “at last! Do you know that we’ve been full twenty minutes here, listening to your animated discussion over the odd trick? – I fainting with hunger, and my friend with pain.” And so saying, he assisted another to limp forward, who leaned on his arm and moved with the greatest difficulty.

The mere sight of one in suffering repressed any notion of a rejoinder to his somewhat rude speech, and Barrington led the way into the room.

“Have you met with an accident?” asked he, as he placed the sufferer on a sofa.

“Yes,” interposed the first speaker; “he slipped down one of those rocks into the river, and has sprained, if he has not broken, something.”

“It is our good fortune to have advice here; this gentleman is a doctor.”

“Of the Royal College, and an M.D. of Aberdeen, besides,” said Dill, with a professional smile, while, turning back his cuffs, he proceeded to remove the shoe and stocking of his patient.

“Don’t be afraid of hurting, but just tell me at once what’s the matter,” said the young fellow, down whose cheeks great drops were rolling in his agony.

“There is no pronouncing at once; there is great tumefaction here. It may be a mere sprain, or it may be a fracture of the fibula simple, or a fracture with luxation.”

“Well, if you can’t tell the injury, tell us what’s to be done for it. Get him to bed, I suppose, first?” said the friend.

“By all means, to bed, and cold applications on the affected part.”

“Here’s a room all ready, and at hand,” said Barrington, opening the door into a little chamber replete with comfort and propriety.

“Come,” said the first speaker, “Fred, all this is very snug; one might have fallen upon worse quarters.” And so saying, he assisted his friend forward, and deposited him upon the bed.

While the doctor busied himself with the medical cares for his patient, and arranged with due skill the appliances to relieve his present suffering, the other stranger related how they had lost their way, having first of all taken the wrong bank of the river, and been obliged to retrace their steps upwards of three miles to retrieve their mistake.

“Where were you going to?” asked Barrington.

“We were in search of a little inn they had told us of, called the ‘Fisherman’s Home.’ I conclude we have reached it at last, and you are the host, I take it?”

Barrington bowed assent.

“And these gentlemen are visitors here?” But without waiting for any reply, – difficult at all times, for he spoke with great rapidity and continual change of topic, – he now stooped down to whisper something to the sick man. “My friend thinks he’ll do capitally now, and, if we leave him, that he’ll soon drop asleep; so I vote we give him the chance.” Thus saying, he made a gesture for the others to leave, following them up as they went, almost like one enforcing an order.

“If I am correct in my reading, you are a soldier, sir,” said Barrington, when they reached the outer room, “and this gentleman here is a brother officer, – Major M’Cor-mick.”

“Full pay, eh?”

“No, I am an old Walcheren man.”

“Walcheren – Walcheren – why, that sounds like Malplaquet or Blenheim! Where the deuce was Walcheren? Did n’t believe that there was an old tumbril of that affair to the fore still. You were all licked there, or you died of the ague, or jaundice? Oh, dummy whist, as I live! Who’s the unlucky dog has got the dummy? – bad as Walcheren, by Jove! Is n’t that a supper I see laid out there? Don’t I smell Stilton from that room?”

“If you ‘ll do us the honor to join us – ”

“That I will, and astonish you with an appetite too! We breakfasted at a beastly hole called Graigue, and tasted nothing since, except a few peaches I stole out of an old fellow’s garden on the riverside, – ‘Old Dan the miser,’ a country fellow called him.”

"I have the honor to have afforded you the entertainment you speak of," said M'Cormick, smarting with anger.

"All right! The peaches were excellent, – would have been better if riper. I'm afraid I smashed a window of yours; it was a stone I shied at a confounded dog, – a sort of terrier. Pickled onions and walnuts, by all that 's civilized! And so this is the 'Fisherman's Home,' and you the fisherman, eh? Well, why not show a light or a lantern over the door? Who the deuce is to know that this is a place of entertainment? We only guessed it at last."

"May I help you to some mutton?" said Barrington, more amused than put out by his guest's discursiveness.

"By all means. But don't carve it that way; cut it lengthwise, as if it were the saddle, which it ought to have been. You must tell me where you got this sherry. I have tasted nothing like it for many a day, – real brown sherry. I suppose you know how they brown it? It's not done by sugar, – that's a vulgar error. It's done by boiling; they boil down so many butts and reduce them to about a fourth or a fifth. You haven't got any currant-jelly, have you? it is just as good with cold mutton as hot. And then it is the wine thus reduced they use for coloring matter. I got up all my sherry experiences on the spot."

"The wine you approve of has been in my cellar about five-and-forty years."

"It would not if I 'd have been your neighbor, rely upon that. I'd have secured every bottle of it for our mess; and mind, whatever remains of it is mine."

"Might I make bold to remark," said Dill, interposing, "that we are the guests of my friend here on this occasion?"

"Eh, what, – guests?"

"I am proud enough to believe that you will not refuse me the honor of your company; for though an innkeeper, I write myself gentleman," said Barrington, blandly, though not without emotion.

"I should think you might," broke in the stranger, heartily; "and I'd say the man who had a doubt about your claims had very little of his own. And now a word of apology for the mode of our entrance here, and to introduce myself. I am Colonel Hunter, of the 21st Hussars; my friend is a young subaltern of the regiment."

A moment before, and all the awkwardness of his position was painful to Barrington. He felt that the traveller was there by a right, free to order, condemn, and criticise as he pleased. The few words of explanation, given in all the frankness of a soldier, and with the tact of a gentleman, relieved this embarrassment, and he was himself again. As for M'Cormick and Dill, the mere announcement of the regiment he commanded seemed to move and impress them. It was one of those corps especially known in the service for the rank and fortune of its officers. The Prince himself was their colonel, and they had acquired a wide notoriety for exclusiveness and pride, which, when treated by unfriendly critics, assumed a shape less favorable still.

Colonel Hunter, if he were to be taken as a type of his regiment, might have rebutted a good deal of this floating criticism; he had a fine honest countenance, a rich mellow voice, and a sort of easy jollity in manner, that spoke well both for his spirits and his temper. He did, it is true, occasionally chafe against some susceptible spot or other of those around him, but there was no malice prepense in it, any more than there is intentional offence in the passage of a strong man through a crowd; so he elbowed his way, and pushed on in conversation, never so much as suspecting that he jostled any one in his path.

Both Barrington and Hunter were inveterate sportsmen, and they ranged over hunting-fields and grouse mountains and partridge stubble and trout streams with all the zest of men who feel a sort of mesmeric brotherhood in the interchange of their experiences. Long after the Major and the doctor had taken their leave, they sat there recounting stories of their several adventures, and recalling incidents of flood and field.

In return for a cordial invitation to Hunter to stay and fish the river for some days, Barrington pledged himself to visit the Colonel the first time he should go up to Kilkenny.

“And I’ll mount you. You shall have a horse I never lent in my life. I’ll put you on Trumpeter, – sire Sir Hercules, – no mistake there; would carry sixteen stone with the fastest hounds in England.”

Barrington shook his head, and smiled, as he said, “It’s two-and-twenty years since I sat a fence. I’m afraid I’ll not revive the fame of my horsemanship by appearing again in the saddle.”

“Why, what age do you call yourself?”

“Eighty-three, if I live to August next.”

“I’d not have guessed you within ten years of it. I’ve just passed fifty, and already I begin to look for a horse with more bone beneath the knee, and more substance across the loins.”

“These are only premonitory symptoms, after all,” said Barrington, laughing. “You’ve many a day before you come to a fourteen-hand cob and a kitchen chair to mount him.”

Hunter laughed at the picture, and dashed away, in his own half-reckless way, to other topics. He talked of his regiment proudly, and told Barrington what a splendid set of young fellows were his officers. “I’ll show you such a mess,” said he, “as no corps in the service can match.” While he talked of their high-hearted and generous natures, and with enthusiasm of the life of a soldier, Barrington could scarcely refrain from speaking of his own “boy,” the son from whom he had hoped so much, and whose loss had been the death-blow to all his ambitions. There were, however, circumstances in that story which sealed his lips; and though the father never believed one syllable of the allegations against his son, though he had paid the penalty of a King’s Bench mandamus and imprisonment for horsewhipping the editor who had aspersed his “boy,” the world and the world’s verdict were against him, and he did not dare to revive the memory of a name against which all the severities of the press had been directed, and public opinion had condemned with all its weight and power.

“I see that I am wearying you,” said Hunter, as he remarked the grave and saddened expression that now stole over Barrington’s face. “I ought to have remembered what an hour it was, – more than half-past two.” And without waiting to hear a reply, he shook his host’s hand cordially and hurried off to his room.

While Barrington busied himself in locking up the wine, and putting away half-finished decanters, – cares that his sister’s watchfulness very imperatively exacted, – he heard, or fancied he heard, a voice from the room where the sick man lay. He opened the door very gently and looked in.

“All right,” said the youth. “I’m not asleep, nor did I want to sleep, for I have been listening to you and the Colonel these two hours, and with rare pleasure, I can tell you. The Colonel would have gone a hundred miles to meet a man like yourself, so fond of the field and such a thorough sportsman.”

“Yes, I was so once,” sighed Barrington, for already had come a sort of reaction to the late excitement.

“Isn’t the Colonel a fine fellow?” said the young man, as eager to relieve the awkwardness of a sad theme as to praise one he loved. “Don’t you like him?”

“That I do!” said Barrington, heartily. “His fine genial spirit has put me in better temper with myself than I fancied was in my nature to be. We are to have some trout-fishing together, and I promise you it sha’n’t be my fault if *he* doesn’t like *me*.”

“And may I be of the party? – may I go with you?”

“Only get well of your accident, and you shall do whatever you like. By the way, did not Colonel Hunter serve in India?”

“For fifteen years. He has only left Bengal within a few months.”

“Then he can probably help me to some information. He may be able to tell me – Good-night, good-night,” said he, hurriedly; “to-morrow will be time enough to think of this.”

CHAPTER IV. FRED CONYERS

Very soon after daybreak the Colonel was up and at the bedside of his young friend.

"Sorry to wake you, Fred," said he, gently; "but I have just got an urgent despatch, requiring me to set out at once for Dublin, and I did n't like to go without asking how you get on."

"Oh, much better, sir. I can move the foot a little, and I feel assured it 's only a severe sprain."

"That's all right. Take your own time, and don't attempt to move about too early. You are in capital quarters here, and will be well looked after. There is only one difficulty, and I don't exactly see how to deal with it. Our host is a reduced gentleman, brought down to keep an inn for support, but what benefit he can derive from it is not so very clear; for when I asked the man who fetched me hot water this morning for my bill, he replied that his master told him I was to be his guest here for a week, and not on any account to accept money from me. Ireland is a very strange place, and we are learning something new in it every day; but this is the strangest thing I have met yet."

"In *my* case this would be impossible. I must of necessity give a deal of trouble, – not to say that it would add unspeakably to my annoyance to feel that I could not ask freely for what I wanted."

"I have no reason to suppose, mind you, that you are to be dealt with as I have been, but it would be well to bear in mind who and what these people are."

"And get away from them as soon as possible," added the young fellow, half peevishly.

"Nay, nay, Fred; don't be impatient. You'll be delighted with the old fellow, who is a heart-and-soul sportsman. What station he once occupied I can't guess; but in the remarks he makes about horses and hounds, all his knowing hints on stable management and the treatment of young cattle, one would say that he must have had a large fortune and kept a large establishment."

In the half self-sufficient toss of the head which received this speech, it was plain that the young man thought his Colonel was easily imposed on, and that such pretensions as these would have very little success with *him*.

"I have no doubt some of your brother officers will take a run down to see how you get on, and, if so, I 'll send over a hamper of wine, or something of the kind, that you can manage to make him accept."

"It will not be very difficult, I opine," said the young man, laughingly.

"No, no," rejoined the other, misconstruing the drift of his words. "You have plenty of tact, Fred. You 'll do the thing with all due delicacy. And now, good-bye. Let me hear how you fare here." And with a hearty farewell they parted.

There was none astir in the cottage but Darby as the Colonel set out to gain the high-road, where the post-horses awaited him. From Darby, however, as he went along, he gathered much of his host's former history. It was with astonishment he learned that the splendid house of Barrington Hall, where he had been dining with an earl a few days ago, was the old family seat of that poor innkeeper; that the noble deer-park had once acknowledged him for master. "And will again, plase God!" burst in Darby, who thirsted for an opportunity to launch out into law, and all its bright hopes and prospects.

"We have a record on trial in Trinity Term, and an argument before the twelve Judges, and the case is as plain as the nose on your honor's face; for it was ruled by Chief Baron Medge, in the great cause of 'Peter against Todd, a widow,' that a settlement couldn't be broke by an estreat."

"You are quite a lawyer, I see," said the Colonel.

"I wish I was. I 'd rather be a judge on the bench than a king on his throne."

"And yet I am beginning to suspect law may have cost your master dearly."

"It is not ten, or twenty – no, nor thirty – thousand pounds would see him through it!" said Darby, with a triumph in his tone that seemed to proclaim a very proud declaration. "There 's families would be comfortable for life with just what we spent upon special juries."

"Well, as you tell me he has no family, the injury has been all his own."

“That’s true. We’re the last of the ould stock,” said he, sorrowfully; and little more passed between them, till the Colonel, on parting, put a couple of guineas in his hand, and enjoined him to look after the young friend he had left behind him.

It is now my task to introduce this young gentleman to my readers. Frederick Conyers, a cornet in his Majesty’s Hussars, was the only son of a very distinguished officer, Lieutenant-General Conyers, a man who had not alone served with great reputation in the field, but held offices of high political trust in India, the country where all his life had been passed. Holding a high station as a political resident at a native court, wielding great power, and surrounded by an undeviating homage, General Conyers saw his son growing up to manhood with everything that could foster pride and minister to self-exaltation around him. It was not alone the languor and indolence of an Eastern life that he had to dread for him, but the haughty temper and overbearing spirit so sure to come out of habits of domination in very early life.

Though he had done all that he could to educate his son, by masters brought at immense cost from Europe, the really important element of education, – the self-control and respect for other’s rights, – only to be acquired by daily life and intercourse with equals, this he could not supply; and he saw, at last, that the project he had so long indulged, of keeping his son with him, must be abandoned. Perhaps the rough speech of an old comrade helped to dispel the illusion, as he asked, “Are you bringing up that boy to be a Rajah?” His first thought was to send him to one of the Universities, his great desire being that the young man should feel some ambition for public life and its distinctions. He bethought him, however, that while the youth of Oxford and Cambridge enter upon a college career, trained by all the discipline of our public schools, Fred would approach the ordeal without any such preparation whatever. Without one to exert authority over him, little accustomed to the exercise of self-restraint, the experiment was too perilous.

To place him, therefore, where, from the very nature of his position, some guidance and control would be exercised, and where by the working of that model democracy – a mess – he would be taught to repress self-sufficiency and presumption, he determined on the army, and obtained a cornetcy in a regiment commanded by one who had long served on his own staff. To most young fellows such an opening in life would have seemed all that was delightful and enjoyable. To be just twenty, gazetted to a splendid cavalry corps, with a father rich enough and generous enough to say, “Live like the men about you, and don’t be afraid that your checks will come back to you,” these are great aids to a very pleasant existence. Whether the enervation of that life of Oriental indulgence had now become a nature to him, or whether he had no liking for the service itself, or whether the change from a condition of almost princely state to a position of mere equality with others, chafed and irritated him, but so is it, he did not “take to” the regiment, nor the regiment to him.

Now it is a fact, and not a very agreeable fact either, that a man with a mass of noble qualities may fail to attract the kindness and good feeling towards him which a far less worthy individual, merely by certain traits, or by the semblance of them, of a yielding, passive nature is almost sure to acquire.

Conyers was generous, courageous, and loyal, in the most chivalrous sense of that word, to every obligation of friendship. He was eminently truthful and honorable; but he had two qualities whose baneful influence would disparage the very best of gifts. He was “imperious,” and, in the phrase of his brother officers, “he never gave in.” Some absurd impression had been made on him, as a child, that obstinacy and persistency were the noblest of attributes, and that, having said a thing, no event or circumstance could ever occur to induce a change of opinion.

Such a quality is singularly unfitted to youth, and marvellously out of place in a regiment; hence was it that the “Rajah,” as he was generally called by his comrades, had few intimates, and not one friend amongst them.

If I have dwelt somewhat lengthily on these traits, it is because their possessor is one destined to be much before us in this history. I will but chronicle one other feature. I am sorry it should be a

disqualifying one. Owing in great measure, perhaps altogether, to his having been brought up in the East, where Hindoo craft and subtlety were familiarized to his mind from infancy, he was given to suspect that few things were ever done from the motives ascribed to them, and that under the open game of life was another concealed game, which was the real one. As yet, this dark and pernicious distrust had only gone the length of impressing him with a sense of his own consummate acuteness, an amount of self-satisfaction, which my reader may have seen tingeing the few words he exchanged with his Colonel before separating.

Let us see him now as he sits in a great easy-chair, his sprained ankle resting on another, in a little honeysuckle-covered arbor of the garden, a table covered with books and fresh flowers beside him, while Darby stands ready to serve him from the breakfast-table, where a very tempting meal is already spread out.

“So, then, I can’t see your master, it seems,” said Con-yers, half peevishly.

“Faix you can’t; he’s ten miles off by this. He got a letter by the post, and set out half an hour after for Kilkenny. He went to your honor’s door, but seeing you was asleep he would n’t wake you; ‘but, Darby,’ says he, ‘take care of that young gentleman, and mind,’ says he, ‘that he wants for nothing.’”

“Very thoughtful of *him*, – very considerate indeed,” said the youth; but in what precise spirit it is not easy to say.

“Who lives about here? What gentlemen’s places are there, I mean?”

“There’s Lord Carrackmore, and Sir Arthur Godfrey, and Moore of Ballyduff, and Mrs. Powerscroft of the Grove – ”

“Do any of these great folks come down here?”

Darby would like to have given a ready assent, – he would have been charmed to say that they came daily, that they made the place a continual rendezvous; but as he saw no prospect of being able to give his fiction even twenty-four hours’ currency, he merely changed from one leg to the other, and, in a tone of apology, said, “Betimes they does, when the sayson is fine.”

“Who are the persons who are most frequently here?”

“Those two that you saw last night, – the Major and Dr. Dill. They ‘re up here every second day, fishing, and eating their dinner with the master.”

“Is the fishing good?”

“The best in Ireland.”

“And what shooting is there, – any partridges?”

“Partridges, be gorra! You could n’t see the turnips for them.”

“And woodcocks?”

“Is it woodcocks! The sky is black with the sight of them.”

“Any lions?”

“Well, maybe an odd one now and then,” said Darby, half apologizing for the scarcity.

There was an ineffable expression of self-satisfaction in Conyers’s face at the subtlety with which he had drawn Darby into this admission; and the delight in his own acuteness led him to offer the poor fellow a cigar, which he took with very grateful thanks.

“From what you tell me, then, I shall find this place stupid enough till I am able to be up and about, eh? Is there any one who can play chess hereabout?”

“Sure there’s Miss Dinah; she’s a great hand at it, they tell me.”

“And who is Miss Dinah? Is she young, – is she pretty?”

Darby gave a very cautious look all around him, and then closing one eye, so as to give his face a look of intense cunning, he nodded very significantly twice.

“What do you mean by that?”

“I mane that she’ll never see sixty; and for the matter of beauty – ”

“Oh, you have said quite enough; I ‘m not curious about her looks. Now for another point. If I should want to get away from this, what other inn or hotel is there in the neighborhood?”

“There’s Joe M’Cabe’s, at Inistioge; but you are better where you are. Where will you see fresh butter like that? and look at the cream, the spoon will stand in it. Far and near it’s given up to her that nobody can make coffee like Miss Dinah; and when you taste them trout, you ‘ll tell me if they are not fit for the king.”

“Everything is excellent, – could not be better; but there’s a difficulty. There’s a matter which to me at least makes a stay here most unpleasant. My friend tells me that he could not get his bill, – that he was accepted as a guest. Now I can’t permit this – ”

“There it is, now,” said Darby, approaching the table, and dropping his voice to a confidential whisper. “That’s the master’s way. If he gets a stranger to sit down with him to dinner or supper, he may eat and drink as long as he plases, and sorra sixpence he’ll pay; and it’s that same ruins us, nothing else, for it’s then he ‘ll call for the best sherry, and that ould Maderia that’s worth a guinea a bottle. What’s the use, after all, of me inflaming the bill of the next traveller, and putting down everything maybe double? And worse than all,” continued he, in a tone of horror, “let him only hear any one complain about his bill or saying, ‘What’s this?’ or ‘I didn’t get that,’ out he’ll come, as mighty and as grand as the Lord-Liftinint, and say, ‘I ‘m sorry, sir, that we failed to make this place agreeable to you. Will you do me the favor not to mind the bill at all?’ and with that he’d tear it up in little bits and walk away.”

“To me that would only be additional offence. I ‘d not endure it.”

“What could you do? You’d maybe slip a five-pound note into my hand, and say, ‘Darby my man, settle this little matter for me; you know the ways of the place.’”

“I ‘ll not risk such an annoyance, at all events; that I ‘m determined on.”

Darby began now to perceive that he had misconceived his brief, and must alter his pleadings as quickly as possible; in fact, he saw he was “stopping an earth” he had meant merely to mask. “Just leave it all to me, your honor, – leave it all to me, and I ‘ll have your bill for you every morning on the breakfast-table. And why would n’t you? Why would a gentleman like your honor be behouldin’ to any one for his meat and drink?” burst he in, with an eager rapidity. “Why would n’t you say, ‘Darby, bring me this, get me that, fetch me the other; expinse is no object in life tome?’”

There was a faint twinkle of humor in the eye of Conyers, and Darby stopped short, and with that half-lisping simplicity which a few Irishmen understand to perfection, and can exercise whenever the occasion requires, he said: “But sure is n’t your honor laughing at me, is n’t it just making fun of me you are? All because I’m a poor ignorant crayture that knows no better!”

“Nothing of that kind,” said Conyers, frankly. “I was only smiling at thoughts that went through my head at the moment.”

“Well, faix! there’s one coming up the path now won’t make you laugh,” said Darby, as he whispered, “It’s Dr. Dill.”

The doctor was early with his patient; if the case was not one of urgency, the sufferer was in a more elevated rank than usually fell to the chances of Dispensary practice. Then, it promised to be one of the nice chronic cases, in which tact and personal agreeability – the two great strongholds of Dr. Dill in his own estimation – were of far more importance than the materia medica. Now, if Dill’s world was not a very big one, he knew it thoroughly. He was a chronicle of all the family incidents of the county, and could recount every disaster of every house for thirty miles round.

When the sprain had, therefore, been duly examined, and all the pangs of the patient sufficiently condoled with to establish the physician as a man of feeling, Dill proceeded to his task as a man of the world. Conyers, however, abruptly stopped him, by saying, “Tell me how I’m to get out of this place; some other inn, I mean.”

“You are not comfortable here, then?” asked Dill.

“In one sense, perfectly so. I like the quietness, the delightful tranquillity, the scenery, – everything, in short, but one circumstance. I ‘m afraid these worthy people – whoever they are – want to regard me as a guest. Now I don’t know them, – never saw them, – don’t care to see them. My Colonel has a liking for all this sort of thing. It has to his mind a character of adventure that amuses him. It would n’t in the least amuse me, and so I want to get away.”

“Yes,” repeated Dill, blandly, after him, “wants to get away; desires to change the air.”

“Not at all,” broke in Conyers, peevishly; “no question of air whatever. I don’t want to be on a visit. I want an inn. What is this place they tell me of up the river, – Inis – something?”

“Inistioge. M’Cabe’s house; the ‘Spotted Duck;’ very small, very poor, far from clean, besides.”

“Is there nothing else? Can’t you think of some other place? For I can’t have my servant here, circumstanced as I am now.”

The doctor paused to reply. The medical mind is eminently ready-witted, and Dill at a glance took in all the dangers of removing his patient. Should he transfer him to his own village, the visit which now had to be requited as a journey of three miles and upwards, would then be an affair of next door. Should he send him to Thomastown, it would be worse again, for then he would be within the precincts of a greater than Dill himself, – a practitioner who had a one-horse phaeton, and whose name was written on brass. “Would you dislike a comfortable lodging in a private family, – one of the first respectability, I may make bold to call it?”

“Abhor it! – couldn’t endure it! I’m not essentially troublesome or exacting, but I like to be able to be either, whenever the humor takes me.”

“I was thinking of a house where you might freely take these liberties – ”

“Liberties! I call them rights, doctor, not liberties! Can’t you imagine a man, not very wilful, not very capricious, but who, if the whim took him, would n’t stand being thwarted by any habits of a so-called respectable family? There, don’t throw up your eyes, and misunderstand me. All I mean is, that my hours of eating and sleeping have no rule. I smoke everywhere; I make as much noise as I please; and I never brook any impertinent curiosity about what I do, or what I leave undone.”

“Under all the circumstances, you had, perhaps, better remain where you are,” said Dill, thoughtfully.

“Of course, if these people will permit me to pay for my board and lodging. If they ‘ll condescend to let me be a stranger, I ask for nothing better than this place.”

“Might I offer myself as a negotiator?” said Dill, insinuatingly; “for I opine that the case is not of the difficulty you suppose. Will you confide it to my hands?”

“With all my heart. I don’t exactly see why there should be a negotiation at all; but if there must, pray be the special envoy.”

When Dill arose and set out on his mission, the young fellow looked after him with an expression that seemed to say, “How you all imagine you are humbugging me, while I read every one of you like a book!”

Let us follow the doctor, and see how he acquitted himself in his diplomacy.

CHAPTER V. DILL AS A DIPLOMATIST

Dr. Dill had knocked twice at the door of Miss Barrington's little sitting-room, and no answer was returned to his summons.

"Is the dear lady at home?" asked he, blandly. But, though he waited for some seconds, no reply came.

"Might Dr. Dill be permitted to make his compliments?"

"Yes, come in," said a sharp voice, very much with the expression of one wearied out by importunity. Miss Barrington gave a brief nod in return for the profound obeisance of her visitor, and then turned again to a large map which covered the table before her.

"I took the opportunity of my professional call here this morning – "

"How is that young man, – is anything broken?"

"I incline to say there is no fracture. The flexors, and perhaps, indeed, the annular ligament, are the seat of all the mischief."

"A common sprain, in fact; a thing to rest for one day, and hold under the pump the day after."

"The dear lady is always prompt, always energetic; but these sort of cases are often complicated, and require nice management."

"And frequent visits," said she, with a dry gravity.

"All the world must live, dear lady, – all the world must live."

"Your profession does not always sustain your theory, sir; at least, popular scandal says you kill as many as you cure." "I know the dear lady has little faith in physic."

"Say none, sir, and you will be nearer the mark; but, remember, I seek no converts; I ask nobody to deny himself the luxuries of senna and gamboge because I prefer beef and mutton. You wanted to see my brother, I presume," added she, sharply, "but he started early this morning for Kilkenny. The Solicitor-General wanted to say a few words to him on his way down to Cork."

"That weary law! that weary law!" ejaculated Dill, fervently; for he well knew with what little favor Miss Barrington regarded litigation.

"And why so, sir?" retorted she, sharply. "What greater absurdity is there in being hypochondriac about your property than your person? My brother's taste inclines to depletion by law; others prefer the lancet."

"Always witty, always smart, the dear lady," said Dill, with a sad attempt at a smile. The flattery passed without acknowledgment of any kind, and he resumed: "I dropped in this morning to you, dear lady, on a matter which, perhaps, might not be altogether pleasing to you."

"Then don't do it, sir."

"If the dear lady would let me finish – "

"I was warning you, sir, not even to begin."

"Yes, madam," said he, stung into something like resistance; "but I would have added, had I been permitted, without any due reason for displeasure on your part."

"And are *you* the fitting judge of that, sir? If you know, as you say you know, that you are about to give me pain, by what presumption do you assert that it must be for my benefit? What's it all about?"

"I come on the part of this young gentleman, dear lady, who, having learned – I cannot say where or how – that he is not to consider himself here at an inn, but, as a guest, feels, with all the gratitude that the occasion warrants, that he has no claim to the attention, and that it is one which would render his position here too painful to persist in."

"How did he come by this impression, sir? Be frank and tell me."

"I am really unable to say, Miss Dinah."

“Come, sir, be honest, and own that the delusion arose from yourself, – yes, from yourself. It was in perceiving the courteous delicacy with which you declined a fee that he conceived this flattering notion of us; but go back to him, doctor, and say it is a pure mistake; that his breakfast will cost him one shilling, and his dinner two; the price of a boat to fetch him up to Thomastown is half a crown, and that the earlier he orders one the better. Listen to me, sir,” said she, and her lips trembled with passion, – “listen to me, while I speak of this for the first and last time. Whenever my brother, recurring to what he once was, has been emboldened to treat a passing stranger as his guest, the choice has been so judiciously exercised as to fall upon one who could respect the motive and not resent the liberty; but never till this moment has it befallen us to be told that the possibility – the bare possibility – of such a presumption should be met by a declaration of refusal. Go back, then, to your patient, sir; assure him that he is at an inn, and that he has the right to be all that his purse and his want of manners can insure him.”

“Dear lady, I’m, maybe, a bad negotiator.”

“I trust sincerely, sir, you are a better doctor.”

“Nothing on earth was further from my mind than offence – ”

“Very possibly, sir; but, as you are aware, blisters will occasionally act with all the violence of caustics, so an irritating theme may be pressed at a very inauspicious moment. My cares as a hostess are not in very good favor with me just now. Counsel your young charge to a change of air, and I ‘ll think no more of the matter.”

Had it been a queen who had spoken, the doctor could not more palpably have felt that his audience had terminated, and his only duty was to withdraw.

And so he did retire, with much bowing and graciously smiling, and indicating, by all imaginable contortions, gratitude for the past and humility forever.

I rejoice that I am not obliged to record as history the low but fervent mutterings that fell from his lips as he closed the door after him, and by a gesture of menace showed his feelings towards her he had just quitted. “Insolent old woman!” he burst out as he went along, “how can she presume to forget a station that every incident of her daily life recalls? In the rank she once held, and can never return to, such manners would be an outrage; but I ‘ll not endure it again. It is your last triumph, Miss Dinah; make much of it.” Thus sustained by a very Dutch courage, – for this national gift can come of passion as well as drink, – he made his way to his patient’s presence, smoothing his brow, as he went, and recalling the medico-chimrgical serenity of his features.

“I have not done much, but I have accomplished something,” said he, blandly. “I am at a loss to understand what they mean by introducing all these caprices into their means of life; but, assuredly, it will not attract strangers to the house.”

“What are the caprices you allude to?”

“Well, it is not very easy to say; perhaps I have not expressed my meaning quite correctly; but one thing is clear, a stranger likes to feel that his only obligation in an inn is to discharge the bill.”

“I say, doctor,” broke in Conyers, “I have been thinking the matter over. Why should I not go back to my quarters? There might surely be some means contrived to convey me to the high-road; after that, there will be no difficulty whatever.”

The doctor actually shuddered at the thought. The sportsman who sees the bird he has just winged flutter away to his neighbor’s preserve may understand something, at least, of Dr. Dill’s discomfiture as he saw his wealthy patient threatening a departure. He quickly, therefore, summoned to his aid all those terrors which had so often done good service on like occasions. He gave a little graphic sketch of every evil consequence that might come of an imprudent journey. The catalogue was a bulky one; it ranged over tetanus, mortification, and disease of the bones. It included every sort and description of pain as classified by science, into “dull, weary, and incessant,” or “sharp lancinating agony.” Now Conyers was as brave as a lion, but had, withal, one of those temperaments which are miserably sensitive under suffering, and to which the mere description of pain is itself an

acute pang. When, therefore, the doctor drew the picture of a case very like the present one, where amputation came too late, Conyers burst in with, "For mercy's sake, will you stop! I can't sit here to be cut up piece-meal; there's not a nerve in my body you haven't set ajar." The doctor blandly took out his massive watch, and laid his fingers on the young man's pulse. "Ninety-eight, and slightly intermittent," said he, as though to himself.

"What does that mean?" asked Conyers, eagerly.

"The irregular action of the heart implies abnormal condition of the nervous system, and indicates, imperatively, rest, repose, and tranquillity."

"If lethargy itself be required, this is a capital place for it," sighed Conyers, drearily.

"You have n't turned your thoughts to what I said awhile ago, being domesticated, as one might call it, in a nice quiet family, with all the tender attentions of a home, and a little music in the evening."

Simple as these words were, Dill gave to each of them an almost honeyed utterance.

"No; it would bore me excessively. I detest to be looked after; I abhor what are called attentions."

"Unobtrusively offered, – tendered with a due delicacy and reserve?"

"Which means a sort of simpering civility that one has to smirk for in return. No, no; I was bred up in quite a different school, where we clapped our hands twice when we wanted a servant, and the fellow's head paid for it if he was slow in coming. Don't tell me any more about your pleasant family, for they 'd neither endure me, nor I them. Get me well as fast as you can, and out of this confounded place, and I 'll give you leave to make a vascular preparation of me if you catch me here again!"

The doctor smiled, as doctors know how to smile when patients think they have said a smartness, and now each was somewhat on better terms with the other.

"By the way, doctor," said Conyers, suddenly, "you have n't told me what the old woman said. What arrangement did you come to?"

"Your breakfast will cost one shilling, your dinner two. She made no mention of your rooms, but only hinted that, whenever you took your departure, the charge for the boat was half a crown."

"Come, all this is very business-like, and to the purpose; but where, in Heaven's name, did any man live in this fashion for so little? We have a breakfast-mess, but it's not to be compared with this, – such a variety of bread, such grilled trout, such a profusion of fruit. After all, doctor, it is very like being a guest, the nominal charge being to escape the sense of a favor. But perhaps one can do here as at one of those 'hospices' in the Alps, and make a present at parting to requite the hospitality."

"It is a graceful way to record gratitude," said the doctor, who liked to think that the practice could be extended to other reminiscences.

"I must have my servant and my books, my pipes and my Spitz terrier. I 'll get a target up, besides, on that cherry-tree, and practise pistol-shooting as I sit here. Could you find out some idle fellow who would play chess or *écarté* with me, – a curate or a priest, – I 'm not particular; and when my man Holt comes, I 'll make him string my grass-mat hammock between those two elms, so that I can fish without the bore of standing up for it. Holt is a rare clever fellow, and you 'll see how he'll get things in order here before he's a day in the place."

The doctor smiled again, for he saw that his patient desired to be deemed a marvel of resources and a mine of original thought. The doctor's smile was apportioned to his conversation, just as he added syrups in his prescriptions. It was, as he himself called it, the "vehicle," without special efficacy in itself, but it aided to get down the "active principle." But he did more than smile. He promised all possible assistance to carry out his patient's plans. He was almost certain that a friend of his, an old soldier, too, – a Major McCormick, – could play *écarté*, though, perhaps, it might be cribbage; and then Father Cody, he could answer for it, was wonderful at skittles, though, for the present, that game might not be practicable; and as for books, the library at Woodstay was full of them, if the key could only be come at, for the family was abroad; and, in fact, he displayed a most generous willingness to oblige, although, when brought to the rude test of reality, his pictures were only dissolving views of pleasures to come.

When he took his leave at last, he left Conyers in far better spirits than he found him. The young fellow had begun to castle-build about how he should pass his time, and in such architecture there is no room for ennui. And what a rare organ must constructiveness be, when even in its mockery it can yield such pleasure! We are very prone to envy the rich man, whose wealth sets no limit to his caprices; but is not a rich fancy, that wondrous imaginative power which unweariedly invents new incidents, new personages, new situations, a very covetable possession? And can we not, in the gratification of the very humblest exercise of this quality, rudely approximate to the ecstasy of him who wields it in all its force? Not that Fred Conyers was one of these; he was a mere tyro in the faculty, and could only carry himself into a region where he saw his Spitz terrier jump between the back rails of a chair, and himself sending bullet after bullet through the very centre of the bull's eye.

Be it so. Perhaps you and I, too, my reader, have our Spitz terrier and bull's-eye days, and, if so, let us be grateful for them.

CHAPTER VI. THE DOCTOR'S DAUGHTER

Whether it was that Dr. Dill expended all the benevolence of his disposition in the course of his practice, and came home utterly exhausted, but so it was, that his family never saw him in those moods of blandness which he invariably appeared in to his patients. In fact, however loaded he went forth with these wares of a morning, he disposed of every item of his stock before he got back at night; and when poor Mrs. Dill heard, as she from time to time did hear, of the doctor's gentleness, his kindness in suffering, his beautiful and touching sympathy with sorrow, she listened with the same sort of semi-stupid astonishment she would have felt on hearing some one eulogizing the climate of Ireland, and going rapturous about the blue sky and the glorious sunshine. Unhappy little woman, she only saw him in his dark days of cloud and rain, and she never came into his presence except in a sort of moral mackintosh made for the worst weather.

The doctor's family consisted of seven children, but our concern is only with the two eldest, – a son and a daughter. Tom was two years younger than his sister, who, at this period of our story, was verging on nineteen. He was an awkward, ungainly youth, large-jointed, but weakly, with a sandy red head and much-freckled face, just such a disparaging counterpart of his sister as a coarse American piracy often presents of one of our well-printed, richly papered English editions. "It was all there," but all unseemly, ungraceful, undignified; for Polly Dill was pretty. Her hair was auburn, her eyes a deep hazel, and her skin a marvel of transparent whiteness. You would never have hesitated to call her a very pretty girl if you had not seen her brother, but, having seen him, all the traits of her good looks suffered in the same way that Grisi's "Norma" does from the horrid recollection of Paul Bedford's.

After all, the resemblance went very little further than this "travestie," for while he was a slow, heavy-witted, loutish creature, with low tastes and low ambitions, she was a clever, intelligent girl, very eagerly intent on making something of her advantages. Though the doctor was a general practitioner, and had a shop, which he called "Surgery," in the village, he was received at the great houses in a sort of half-intimate, half-patronizing fashion; as one, in short, with whom it was not necessary to be formal, but it might become very inconvenient to have a coldness. These were very sorry credentials for acceptance, but he made no objection to them.

A few, however, of the "neighbors" – it would be ungenerous to inquire the motive, for in this world of ours it is just as well to regard one's five-pound note as convertible into five gold sovereigns, and not speculate as to the kind of rags it is made of – were pleased to notice Miss Dill, and occasionally invite her to their larger gatherings, so that she not only gained opportunities of cultivating her social gifts, but, what is often a greater spur to ambition, of comparing them with those of others.

Now this same measuring process, if only conducted without any envy or ungenerous rivalry, is not without its advantage. Polly Dill made it really profitable. I will not presume to say that, in her heart of hearts, she did not envy the social accidents that gave others precedence before her, but into her heart of hearts neither you nor I have any claim to enter. Enough that we know nothing in her outward conduct or bearing revealed such a sentiment. As little did she maintain her position by flattery, which many in her ambiguous station would have relied upon as a stronghold. No; Polly followed a very simple policy, which was all the more successful that it never seemed to be a policy at all. She never in any way attracted towards her the attentions of those men who, in the marriageable market, were looked on as the choice lots; squires in possession, elder sons, and favorite nephews, she regarded as so much forbidden fruit. It was a lottery in which she never took a ticket. It is incredible how much kindly notice and favorable recognition accrued to her from this line.

We all know how pleasant it is to be next to the man at a promiscuous dinner who never eats turtle nor cares for "Cliquot;" and in the world at large there are people who represent the calabash and the champagne.

Then Polly played well, but was quite as ready to play as to dance. She sang prettily, too, and had not the slightest objection that one of her simple ballads should be the foil to a grand performance of some young lady, whose artistic agonies rivalled Alboni's. So cleverly did Polly do all this, that even her father could not discover the secret of her success; and though he saw "his little girl" as he called her, more and more sought after and invited, he continued to be persuaded that all this favoritism was only the reflex of his own popularity. How, then, could mere acquaintances ever suspect what to the eye of those nearer and closer was so inscrutable?

Polly Dill rode very well and very fearlessly, and occasionally was assisted to "a mount" by some country gentleman, who combined gallantry with profit, and knew that the horse he lent could never be seen to greater advantage. Yet, even in this, she avoided display, quite satisfied, as it seemed, to enjoy herself thoroughly, and not attract any notice that could be avoided. Indeed, she never tried for "a place," but rather attached herself to some of the older and heavier weights, who grew to believe that they were especially in charge of her, and nothing was more common, at the end of a hard run, than to hear such self-gratulations as, "I think I took great care of you, Miss Dill?" "Eh, Miss Polly! you see I'm not such a bad leader!" and so on.

Such was the doctor's "little girl," whom I am about to present to my readers under another aspect. She is at home, dressed in a neatly fitting but very simple cotton dress, her hair in two plain bands, and she is seated at a table, at the opposite of which lounges her brother Tom with an air of dogged and sleepy indolence, which extends from his ill-trimmed hair to his ill-buttoned waistcoat.

"Never mind it to-day, Polly," said he, with a yawn. "I've been up all night, and have no head for work. There's a good girl, let's have a chat instead."

"Impossible, Tom," said she, calmly, but with decision. "To-day is the third. You have only three weeks now and two days before your examination. We have all the bones and ligaments to go over again, and the whole vascular system. You've forgotten every word of Harrison."

"It does n't signify, Polly. They never take a fellow on anything but two arteries for the navy. Grove told me so."

"Grove is an ass, and got plucked twice. It is a perfect disgrace to quote him."

"Well, I only wish I may do as well. He's assistant-surgeon to the 'Taurus' gun-brig on the African station; and if I was there, it's little I'd care for the whole lot of bones and balderdash."

"Come, don't be silly. Let us go on with the scapula. Describe the glenoid cavity."

"If you were the girl you might be, I'd not be bored with all this stupid trash, Polly."

"What do you mean? I don't understand you."

"It's easy enough to understand me. You are as thick as thieves, you and that old Admiral, – that Sir Charles Cobham. I saw you talking to the old fellow at the meet the other morning. You've only to say, 'There's Tom – my brother Tom – wants a navy appointment; he's not passed yet, but if the fellows at the Board got a hint, just as much as, "Don't be hard on him – "'"

"I'd not do it to make you a post-captain, sir," said she, severely. "You very much overrate my influence, and very much underrate my integrity, when you ask it."

"Hoity-toity! ain't we dignified! So you'd rather see me plucked, eh?"

"Yes, if that should be the only alternative."

"Thank you, Polly, that's all! thank you," said he; and he drew his sleeve across his eyes.

"My dear Tom," said she, laying her white soft hand on his coarse brown fingers, "can you not see that if I even stooped to anything so unworthy, that it would compromise your whole prospects in life? You'd obtain an assistant-surgeoncy, and never rise above it."

"And do I ask to rise above it? Do I ask anything beyond getting out of this house, and earning bread that is not grudged me?"

"Nay, nay; if you talk that way, I've done."

"Well, I do talk that way. He sent me off to Kilkenny last week – you saw it yourself – to bring out that trash for the shop, and he would n't pay the car hire, and made me carry two stone of

carbonate of magnesia and a jar of leeches fourteen miles. You were just taking that post and rail out of Nixon's lawn as I came by. You saw me well enough."

"I am glad to say I did not," said she, sighing.

"I saw you, then, and how that gray carried you! You were waving a handkerchief in your hand; what was that for?"

"It was to show Ambrose Bushe that the ground was good; he was afraid of being staked!"

"That's exactly what I am. I 'm afraid of being 'staked up' at the Hall, and if *you* 'd take as much trouble about your brother as you did for Ambrose Bushe – "

"Tom, Tom, I have taken it for eight weary months. I believe I know Bell on the bones, and Harrison on the arteries, by heart!"

"Who thanks you?" said he, doggedly. "When you read a thing twice, you never forget it; but it's not so with me."

"Try what a little work will do, Tom; be assured there is not half as much disparity between people's brains as there is between their industry."

"I'd rather have luck than either, I know that. It's the only thing, after all."

She gave a very deep sigh, and leaned her head on her hand.

"Work and toil as hard as you may," continued he, with all the fervor of one on a favorite theme, "if you haven't luck you 'll be beaten. Can you deny that, Polly?"

"If you allow me to call merit what you call luck, I'll agree with you. But I 'd much rather go on with our work. What is the insertion of the deltoid? I'm sure you know *that!*"

"The deltoid! the deltoid!" muttered he. "I forget all about the deltoid, but, of course, it's like the rest of them. It's inserted into a ridge or a process, or whatever you call it – "

"Oh, Tom, this is very hopeless. How can you presume to face your examiners with such ignorance as this?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Polly; Grove told me he did it, – if I find my pluck failing me, I 'll have a go of brandy before I go in."

She found it very hard not to laugh at the solemn gravity of this speech, and just as hard not to cry as she looked at him who spoke it. At the same moment Dr. Dill opened the door, calling out sharply, "Where's that fellow, Tom? Who has seen him this morning?"

"He's here, papa," said Polly. "We are brushing up the anatomy for the last time."

"His head must be in capital order for it, after his night's exploit. I heard of you, sir, and your reputable wager. Noonan was up here this morning with the whole story!"

"I 'd have won if they 'd not put snuff in the punch – "

"You are a shameless hound – "

"Oh, papa! If you knew how he was working, – how eager he is to pass his examination, and be a credit to us all, and owe his independence to himself – "

"I know more of him than you do, miss, – far more, too, than he is aware of, – and I know something of myself also; and I tell him now, that if he's rejected at the examination, he need not come back here with the news."

"And where am I to go, then?" asked the young fellow, half insolently.

"You may go – " Where to, the doctor was not suffered to indicate, for already Polly had thrown herself into his arms and arrested the speech.

"Well, I suppose I can 'list; a fellow need not know much about gallipots for that." As he said this, he snatched up his tattered old cap and made for the door.

"Stay, sir! I have business for you to do," cried Dill, sternly. "There's a young gentleman at the 'Fisherman's Home' laid up with a bad sprain. I have prescribed twenty leeches on the part. Go down and apply them."

"That's what old Molly Day used to do," said Tom, angrily.

“Yes, sir, and knew more of the occasion that required it than you will ever do. See that you apply them all to the outer ankle, and attend well to the bleeding; the patient is a young man of rank, with whom you had better take no liberties.”

“If I go at all – ”

“Tom, Tom, none of this!” said Polly, who drew very close to him, and looked up at him with eyes full of tears.

“Am I going as your son this time? or did you tell him – as you told Mr. Nixon – that you ‘d send your young man?”

“There! listen to that!” cried the doctor, turning to Polly. “I hope you are proud of your pupil.”

She made no answer, but whispering some hurried words in her brother’s ear, and pressing at the same time something into his hand, she shuffled him out of the room and closed the door.

The doctor now paced the room, so engrossed by passion that he forgot he was not alone, and uttered threats and mumbled out dark predictions with a fearful energy. Meanwhile Polly put by the books and drawings, and removed everything which might recall the late misadventure.

“What’s your letter about, papa?” said she, pointing to a square-shaped envelope which he still held in his hand.

“Oh, by the way,” said he, quietly, “this is from Cob-ham. They ask us up there to dinner to-day, and to stop the night.” The doctor tried very hard to utter this speech with the unconcern of one alluding to some every-day occurrence. Nay, he did more; he endeavored to throw into it a certain air of fastidious weariness, as though to say, “See how these people will have me; mark how they persecute me with their attentions!”

Polly understood the “situation” perfectly, and it was with actual curiosity in her tone she asked, “Do you mean to go, sir?”

“I suppose we must, dear,” he said, with a deep sigh. “A professional man is no more the arbiter of his social hours than of his business ones. Cooper always said dining at home costs a thousand a year.”

“So much, papa?” asked she, with much semblance of innocence.

“I don’t mean to myself,” said he, reddening, “nor to any physician in country practice; but we all lose by it, more or less.”

Polly, meanwhile, had taken the letter, and was reading it over. It was very brief. It had been originally begun, “Lady Cobham presents,” but a pen was run through the words, and it ran, —

“Dear Dr. Dill, – If a short notice will not inconvenience you, will you and your daughter dine here to-day at seven? There is no moon, and we shall expect you to stay the night.

“Truly yours,

“Georgiana Cobham.

“The Admiral hopes Miss D. will not forget to bring her music.”

“Then we go, sir?” asked she, with eagerness; for it was a house to which she had never yet been invited, though she had long wished for the entrée.

“I shall go, certainly,” said he. “As to you, there will be the old discussion with your mother as to clothes, and the usual declaration that you have really nothing to put on.”

“Oh! but I have, papa. My wonderful-worked muslin, that was to have astonished the world at the race ball, but which arrived too late, is now quite ready to captivate all beholders; and I have just learned that new song, ‘Where’s the slave so lowly?’ which I mean to give with a most rebellious fervor; and, in fact, I am dying to assault this same fortress of Cobham, and see what it is like inside the citadel.”

“Pretty much like Woodstay, and the Grove, and Mount Kelly, and the other places we go to,” said Dill, pompously.

“The same sort of rooms, the same sort of dinner, the same company; nothing different but the liveries.”

“Very true, papa; but there is always an interest in seeing how people behave in their own house, whom you have never seen except in strangers’. I have met Lady Cobham at the Beachers’, where she scarcely noticed me. I am curious to see what sort of reception she will vouchsafe me at home.”

“Well, go and look after your things, for we have eight miles to drive, and Billy has already been at Dangan and over to Mooney’s Mills, and he ‘s not the fresher for it.”

“I suppose I ‘d better take my hat and habit, papa?”

“What for, child?”

“Just as you always carry your lancets, papa, – you don’t know what may turn up.” And she was off before he could answer her.

CHAPTER VII. TOM DILL'S FIRST PATIENT

Before Tom Dill had set out on his errand he had learned all about his father and sister's dinner engagement; nor did the contrast with the way in which his own time was to be passed at all improve his temper. Indeed, he took the opportunity of intimating to his mother how few favors fell to her share or his own, – a piece of information she very philosophically received, all her sympathies being far more interested for the sorrows of "Clarissa Harlowe" than for any incident that occurred around her. Poor old lady! she had read that story over and over again, till it might seem that every word and every comma in it had become her own; but she was blessed with a memory that retained nothing, and she could cry over the sorrowful bits, and pant with eagerness at the critical ones, just as passionately, just as fervently, as she had done for years and years before. Dim, vague perceptions she might have retained of the personages, but these only gave them a stronger truthfulness, and made them more like the people of the real world, whom she had seen, passingly, once, and was now to learn more about. I doubt if Mezzofanti ever derived one tenth of the pleasure from all his marvellous memory that she did from the want of one.

Blessed with that one book, she was proof against all the common accidents of life. It was her sanctuary against duns, and difficulties, and the doctor's temper. As the miser feels a sort of ecstasy in the secret of his hoarded wealth, so had she an intense enjoyment in thinking that all dear Clarissa's trials and sufferings were only known to her. Neither the doctor, nor Polly, nor Tom, so much as suspected them. It was like a confidence between Mr. Richardson and herself, and for nothing on earth would she have betrayed it.

Tom had no such resources, and he set out on his mission with no very remarkable good feeling towards the world at large. Still, Polly had pressed into his hand a gold half-guinea, – some very long-treasured keepsake, the birthday gift of a godmother in times remote, and now to be converted into tobacco and beer, and some articles of fishing-gear which he greatly needed.

Seated in one of those light canoe-shaped skiffs, – "cots," as they are called on these rivers, – he suffered himself to be carried lazily along by the stream, while he tied his flies and adjusted his tackle. There is, sometimes, a stronger sense of unhappiness attached to what is called being "hardly used" by the world, than to a direct palpable misfortune; for though the sufferer may not be able, even to his own heart, to set out, with clearness, one single count in the indictment, yet a general sense of hard treatment, unfairness, and so forth, brings with it great depression, and a feeling of desolation.

Like all young fellows of his stamp, Tom only saw his inflictions, not one of his transgressions. He knew that his father made a common drudge of him, employed him in all that was wearisome and even menial in his craft, admitted him to no confidences, gave him no counsels, and treated him in every way like one who was never destined to rise above the meanest cares and lowest duties. Even those little fleeting glances at a brighter future which Polly would now and then open to his ambition, never came from his father, who would actually ridicule the notion of his obtaining a degree, and make the thought of a commission in the service a subject for mockery.

He was low in heart as he thought over these things. "If it were not for Polly," so he said to himself, "he 'd go and enlist;" or, as his boat slowly floated into a dark angle of the stream where the water was still and the shadow deep, he even felt he could do worse. "Poor Polly!" said he, as he moved his hand to and fro in the cold clear water, "you 'd be very, very sorry for me. You, at least, knew that I was not all bad, and that I wanted to be better. It was no fault of mine to have a head that could n't learn. I 'd be clever if I could, and do everything as well as she does; but when they see that I have no talents, that if they put the task before me I cannot master it, sure they ought to pity me, not blame me." And then he bent over the boat and looked down eagerly into the water, till, by long dint of gazing, he saw, or he thought he saw, the gravelly bed beneath; and again he swept his hand through it, – it was cold, and caused a slight shudder. Then, suddenly, with some fresh impulse, he threw

off his cap, and kicked his shoes from him. His trembling hands buttoned and unbuttoned his coat with some infirm, uncertain purpose. He stopped and listened; he heard a sound; there was some one near, – quite near. He bent down and peered under the branches that hung over the stream, and there he saw a very old and infirm man, so old and infirm that he could barely creep. He had been carrying a little bundle of fagots for firewood, and the cord had given way, and his burden fallen, scattered, to the ground. This was the noise Tom had heard. For a few minutes the old man seemed overwhelmed with his disaster, and stood motionless, contemplating it; then, as it were, taking courage, he laid down his staff, and bending on his knees, set slowly to work to gather up his fagots.

There are minutes in the lives of all of us when some simple incident will speak to our hearts with a force that human words never carried, – when the most trivial event will teach a lesson that all our wisdom never gave us. “Poor old fellow,” said Tom, “he has a stout heart left to him still, and he ‘ll not leave his load behind him!” And then his own craven spirit flashed across him, and he hid his face in his hand and cried bitterly.

Suddenly rousing himself with a sort of convulsive shake, he sent the skiff with a strong shove in shore, and gave the old fellow what remained to him of Polly’s present; and then, with a lighter spirit than he had known for many a day, rowed manfully on his way.

The evening – a soft, mellow, summer evening – was just falling as Tom reached the little boat quay at the “Fisherman’s Home,” – a spot it was seldom his fortune to visit, but one for whose woodland beauty and trim comfort he had a deep admiration. He would have liked to have lingered a little to inspect the boat-house, and the little aviary over it, and the small cottage on the island, and the little terrace made to fish from; but Darby had caught sight of him as he landed, and came hurriedly down to say that the young gentleman was growing very impatient for his coming, and was even hinting at sending for another doctor if he should not soon appear.

If Conyers was as impatient as Darby represented, he had, at least, surrounded himself with every appliance to allay the fervor of that spirit. He had dined under a spreading sycamore-tree, and now sat with a table richly covered before him. Fruit, flowers, and wine abounded, with a profusion that might have satisfied several guests; for, as he understood that he was to consider himself at an inn, he resolved, by ordering the most costly things, to give the house all the advantage of his presence. The most delicious hothouse fruit had been procured from the gardener of an absent proprietor in the neighborhood, and several kinds of wine figured on the table, over which, and half shadowed by the leaves, a lamp had been suspended, throwing a fitful light over all, that imparted a most picturesque effect to the scene.

And yet, amidst all these luxuries and delights, Bal-shazzar was discontented; his ankle pained him; he had been hobbling about on it all day, and increased the inflammation considerably; and, besides this, he was lonely; he had no one but Darby to talk to, and had grown to feel for that sapient functionary a perfect abhorrence, – his everlasting compliance, his eternal coincidence with everything, being a torment infinitely worse than the most dogged and mulish opposition. When, therefore, he heard at last the doctor’s son had come with the leeches, he hailed him as a welcome guest.

“What a time you have kept me waiting!” said he, as the loutish young man came forward, so astounded by the scene before him that he lost all presence of mind. “I have been looking out for you since three o’clock, and pottering down the river and back so often, that I have made the leg twice as thick again.”

“Why didn’t you sit quiet?” said Tom, in a hoarse, husky tone.

“Sit quiet!” replied Conyers, staring half angrily at him; and then as quickly perceiving that no impertinence had been intended, which the other’s changing color and evident confusion attested, he begged him to take a chair and fill his glass. “That next you is some sort of Rhine wine: this is sherry; and here is the very best claret I ever tasted.”

“Well, I ‘ll take that,” said Tom, who, accepting the recommendation amidst luxuries all new and strange to him, proceeded to fill his glass, but so tremblingly that he spilled the wine all about the table, and then hurriedly wiped it up with his handkerchief.

Conyers did his utmost to set his guest at his ease. He passed his cigar-case across the table, and led him on, as well as he might, to talk. But Tom was awestruck, not alone by the splendors around him, but by the condescension of his host; and he could not divest himself of the notion that he must have been mistaken for somebody else, to whom all these blandishments might be rightfully due.

“Are you fond of shooting?” asked Conyers, trying to engage a conversation.

“Yes,” was the curt reply.

“There must be good sport hereabouts, I should say. Is the game well preserved?”

“Too well for such as me. I never get a shot without the risk of a jail, and it would be cheaper for me to kill a cow than a woodcock!” There was a stern gravity in the way he said this that made it irresistibly comic, and Conyers laughed out in spite of himself.

“Have n’t you a game license?” asked he.

“Haven’t I a coach-and-six? Where would I get four pounds seven and ten to pay for it?”

The appeal was awkward, and for a moment Conyers was silent. At last he said, “You fish, I suppose?”

“Yes; I kill a salmon whenever I get a quiet spot that nobody sees me, and I draw the river now and then with a net at night.”

“That’s poaching, I take it.”

“It ‘s not the worse for that!” said Tom, whose pluck was by this time considerably assisted by the claret.

“Well, it’s an unfair way, at all events, and destroys real sport”

“Real sport is filling your basket.”

“No, no; there’s no real sport in doing anything that’s unfair, – anything that’s un – ” He stopped short, and swallowed off a glass of wine to cover his confusion.

“That’s all mighty fine for you, who can not only pay for a license, but you ‘re just as sure to be invited here, there, and everywhere there’s game to be killed. But think of me, that never snaps a cap, never throws a line, but he knows it’s worse than robbing a hen-roost, and often, maybe, just as fond of it as yourself!”

Whether it was that, coming after Darby’s mawkish and servile agreement with everything, this rugged nature seemed more palatable, I cannot say; but so it was, Con-yers felt pleasure in talking to this rough unpolished creature, and hearing his opinions in turn. Had there been in Tom Dill’s manner the slightest shade of any pretence, was there any element of that which, for want of a better word, we call “snobbery,” Conyers would not have endured him for a moment, but Tom was perfectly devoid of this vulgarity. He was often coarse in his remarks, his expressions were rarely measured by any rule of good manners; but it was easy to see that he never intended offence, nor did he so much as suspect that he could give that weight to any opinion which he uttered to make it of moment.

Besides these points in Tom’s favor, there was another, which also led Conyers to converse with him. There is some very subtle self-flattery in the condescension of one well to do in all the gifts of fortune associating, in an assumed equality, with some poor fellow to whom fate has assigned the shady side of the highway. Scarcely a subject can be touched without suggesting something for self-gratulation; every comparison, every contrast is in his favor, and Conyers, without being more of a puppy than the majority of his order, constantly felt how immeasurably above all his guest’s views of his life and the world were his own, – not alone that he was more moderate in language and less prone to attribute evil, but with a finer sense of honor and a wider feeling of liberality.

When Tom at last, with some shame, remembered that he had forgotten all about the real object of his mission, and had never so much as alluded to the leeches, Conyers only laughed and said,

“Never mind them to-night. Come back to-morrow and put them on; and mind, – come to breakfast at ten or eleven o’clock.”

“What am I to say to my father?”

“Say it was a whim of mine, which it is. You are quite ready to do this matter now. I see it; but I say no. Is n’t that enough?”

“I suppose so!” muttered Tom, with a sort of dogged misgiving.

“It strikes me that you have a very respectable fear of your governor. Am I right?”

“Ain’t you afraid of yours?” bluntly asked the other.

“Afraid of mine!” cried Conyers, with a loud laugh; “I should think not. Why, my father and myself are as thick as two thieves. I never was in a scrape that I did n’t tell him. I ‘d sit down this minute and write to him just as I would to any fellow in the regiment.”

“Well, there ‘s only one in all the world I ‘d tell a secret to, and it is n’t My father!”

“Who is it, then?”

“My sister Polly!” It was impossible to have uttered these words with a stronger sense of pride. He dwelt slowly upon each of them, and, when he had finished, looked as though he had said something utterly undeniable.

“Here’s her health, – in a bumper too!” cried Conyers.

“Hurray, hurray!” shouted out Tom, as he tossed off his full glass, and set it on the table with a bang that smashed it. “Oh, I beg pardon! I didn’t mean to break the tumbler.”

“Never mind it, Dill; it’s a trifle. I half hoped you had done it on purpose, so that the glass should never be drained to a less honored toast. Is she like *you*?”

“Like me, – like me?” asked he, coloring deeply. “Polly like me?”

“I mean is there a family resemblance? Could you be easily known as brother and sister?”

“Not a bit of it. Polly is the prettiest girl in this county, and she ‘s better than she ‘s handsome. There’s nothing she can’t do. I taught her to tie flies, and she can put wings on a green-drake now that would take in any salmon that ever swam. Martin Keene sent her a pound-note for a book of ‘brown hackles,’ and, by the way, she gave it to *me*. And if you saw her on the back of a horse! – Ambrose Bushe’s gray mare, the wickedest devil that ever was bridled, one buck jump after another the length of a field, and the mare trying to get her head between her fore-legs, and Polly handling her so quiet, never out of temper, never hot, but always saying, ‘Ain’t you ashamed of yourself, Dido? Don’t you see them all laughing at us?’”

“I am quite curious to see her. Will you present me one of these days?”

Tom mumbled out something perfectly unintelligible.

“I hope that I may be permitted to make her acquaintance,” repeated he, not feeling very certain that his former speech was quite understood.

“Maybe so,” grumbled he out at last, and sank back in his chair with a look of sulky ill-humor; for so it was that poor Tom, in his ignorance of life and its ways, deemed the proposal one of those free-and-easy suggestions which might be made to persons of very inferior station, and to whom the fact of acquaintanceship should be accounted as a great honor.

Conyers was provoked at the little willingness shown to meet his offer, – an offer he felt to be a very courteous piece of condescension on his part, – and now both sat in silence. At last Tom Dill, long struggling with some secret impulse, gave way, and in a tone far more decided and firm than heretofore, said, “Maybe you think, from seeing what sort of a fellow I am, that my sister ought to be like me; and because *I* have neither manners nor education, that she ‘s the same? But listen to me now; she ‘s just as little like me as you are yourself. You ‘re not more of a gentleman than she’s a lady!”

“I never imagined anything else.”

“And what made you talk of bringing her up here to present her to you, as you called it? Was she to be trotted out in a cavasin, like a filly?”

“My dear fellow,” said Conyers, good-humoredly, “you never made a greater mistake. I begged that you would present *me*

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