LEVER CHARLES JAMES

SIR BROOK FOSSBROOKE, VOLUME II.

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CHAPTER I. A LEVANTER

The storm raged fearfully during the night, and the sea rose to a height that made many believe some earthquake had occurred in one of the islands near. Old trees that resisted the gales of former hurricanes were uprooted, and the swollen streams tore down amongst the fallen timber, adding to the clamor of the elements and increasing the signs of desolation and ruin that abounded.

It was, as Tom called it, a “regular Levanter,” one of those storms which in a brief twenty-four hours can do the work of years in destruction and change.

Amongst the group of fishermen who crouched under a rock on the shore, sad predictions were uttered as to the fate of such as were at sea that night, and the disasters of bygone years were recalled, and the story of a Russian liner that was lost off Spartivento, and the Spanish admiral who was wrecked on the rocks off Melissa, were told with all the details eyewitnesses could impart to them.

"Those fellows have driven me half distracted, Lucy," said Tom, as he came in wet and dripping, "with their tales of shipwreck; and one of them declares that he saw a large paddle-wheel steamer under English colors drifting to the southward this morning, perfectly helpless and unmanageable. I wish I could get over to Cagliari, and hear tidings of her."

"Of course that is impossible," said she, with a shudder.

"So they tell me. They say there's not a boat in the island would live five minutes in that sea."

"And the gale seems increasing too."

"So it does. They say, just before the storm ends it blows its very hardest at the finish, and then stops as suddenly as it burst forth."

By noon the gale began to decline, the sun burst out, and the sea gradually subsided, and in a few hours the swollen torrents changed to tiny rivulets, clear as crystal. The birds were singing in the trees, and the whole landscape, like a newly washed picture, came out in fresher and brighter color than ever. Nor was it easy to believe that the late hurricane had ever existed, so little trace of it could be seen on that rocky island.

A little before sunset a small "latiner" rounded the point, and stood in towards the little bay. She had barely wind enough to carry her along, and was fully an hour in sight before she anchored. As it was evident she was a Cagliari boat, Tom was all impatient for her news, and went on board of her at once. The skipper handed him a letter from Sir Brook, saying, "I was to

give you this, sir, and say I was at your orders." Tom broke the seal, but before he had read half-a-dozen lines, he cried out: "All right! shove me on shore, and come in to me in an hour. By that time I 'll tell you what I decide on."

"Here's great news, Lucy," cried he. "The 'Cadmus' troop-ship has put into Cagliari disabled, foremast lost, one paddle-wheel carried away, all the boats smashed, but her Majesty's – th safe and sound. Colonel Cave very jolly, and Major Trafford, if you have heard of such a person, wild with joy at the disaster of being shipwrecked."

"Oh, Tom, do be serious. What is it at all?" said she, as, pale with anxiety, she caught his arm to steady herself.

"Here's the despatch, – read it yourself if you won't believe me. This part here is all about the storm and the other wrecks; but here, this is the important part, in your eyes at least.

"'Cave is now with me up here, and Trafford is to join us to-night. The ship cannot possibly be fit for sea before ten days to come; and the question is, Shall we go over and visit you, or will you and Lucy come here? One or other of these courses it must be, and it is for you to decide which suits you best. You know as well as myself what a sorry place this is to ask dear Lucy to come to, but, on the other hand, I know nothing as to the accommodation your cottage offers. For my own part it does not signify; I can sleep on board any craft that takes me over; but have you room for the soldiers? – I mean Cave and Trafford. I have no doubt they will be easily put up; and if they could be

consulted, would rather bivouac under the olives than not come. At all events, let the boat bring yourselves or the invitation for us, – and at once, for the impatience of one here (I am too discreet to particularize) is pushing my own endurance to its limits.'

"Now, Lucy, what's it to be? Decide quickly, for the skipper will be here soon for his answer."

"I declare I don't know, Tom," said she, faltering at every word. "The cottage is very small, the way we live here very simple: I scarcely think it possible we can ask any one to be a guest – "

"So that you opine we ought to go over to Cagliari?" burst he in.

"I think *you* ought, Tom, certainly," said she, still more faintly.

"I see," said he, dryly, "you 'll not be afraid of being left alone here?"

"No, not in the least," said she; and her voice was now a mere whisper, and she swayed slightly back and forward like one about to faint.

"Such being the case," resumed Tom, "what you advise strikes me as admirable. I can make your apologies to old Sir Brook. I can tell him, besides, that you had scruples on the propriety, – there may be Mrs. Grundys at Cagliari, who would be shocked, you know; and then, if you should get on here comfortably, and not feel it too lonely, why, perhaps, I might be able to stay with them till they sail."

She tried to mutter a Yes, but her lips moved without a sound.

"So that is settled, eh?" cried he, looking full at her.

She nodded, and then turned away her head.

"What an arrant little hypocrite it is!" said he, drawing his arm around her waist; "and with all the will in the world to deceive, what a poor actress! My child, I know your heart is breaking this very moment at my cruelty, my utter barbarity, and if you had only the courage, you 'd tell me I was a beast!"

"Oh! Tom, – oh! dear Tom," said she, hiding her face on his shoulder.

"Dear Tom, of course, when there 's no help for it. And this is a specimen of the candor and frankness you promised me!"

"But, Tom," said she, faltering at every word, "it is not – as you think; it is not as you believe."

"What is not as I believe?" said he, quickly.

"I mean," added she, trembling with shame and confusion, "there is no more – that it 's over – all over!" And unable to endure longer, she burst into tears, and buried her face between her hands.

"My own dear, dear sister," said he, pressing her to his side, "why have you not told me of this before?"

"I could not, I could not," sobbed she.

"One word more, Lu, and only one. Who was in fault? I mean, darling, was this *your* doing or *his?*"

"Neither, Tom; at least, I think so. I believe that some deceit was practised, – some treachery; but I don't know what, nor how.

In fact, it is all a mystery to me; and my misery makes it none the clearer."

"Tell me, at least, whatever you know."

"I will bring you the letter," said she, disengaging herself from him.

"And did he write to you?" asked he, fiercely.

"No; *he* did not write, – from *him* I have heard nothing."

She rushed out of the room as she spoke, leaving Tom in a state of wild bewilderment. Few as were the minutes of her absence, the interval to him seemed like an age of torture and doubt. Weak, and broken by illness, his fierce spirit was nothing the less bold and defiant; and over and over as he waited there, he swore to himself to bring Trafford to a severe reckoning if he found that he had wronged his sister.

"How noble of her to hide all this sorrow from me, because she saw my suffering! What a fine nature! And it is with hearts like these fellows trifle and temper, till they end by breaking them! Poor thing! might it not be better to leave her in the delusion of thinking him not a scoundrel, than to denounce and brand him?"

As he thus doubted and debated with himself, she entered the room. Her look was now calm and composed, but her face was lividly pale, and her very lips bloodless. "Tom," said she, gravely, "I don't think I would let you see this letter but for one reason, which is, that it will convince you that you have no cause of quarrel whatever with *him*."

"Give it to me, – let me read it," burst he in, impatiently; "I

have neither taste nor temper for any more riddles, – leave me to find my own road through this labyrinth."

"Shall I leave you alone, Tom?" said she, timidly, as she handed him the letter.

"Yes, do so. I think all the quicker when there's none by me." He turned his back to the light, as he sat down, and began the letter.

"I believe I ought to tell you first," said she, as she stood with her hand on the lock of the door, "the circumstances under which that was written."

"Tell me nothing whatever, – let me grope out my own road;" and now she moved away and left him.

He read the letter from beginning to end, and then re-read it. He saw there were many allusions to which he had no clew; but there was a tone in it which there was no mistaking, and that tone was treachery. The way in which the writer deprecated all possible criticism of her life, at the outset, showed how sensitive she was to such remark, and how conscious of being open to it. Tom knew enough of life to be aware that the people who affect to brave the world are those who are past defying it. So far at least he felt he had read her truly; but he had to confess to himself that beyond this it was not easy to advance.

On the second reading, however, all appeared more clear and simple. It was the perfidious apology of a treacherous woman for a wrong which she had hoped, but had not been able, to inflict. "I see it all," cried Tom; "her jealousy has been stimulated by

discovering Trafford's love for Lucy, and this is her revenge. It is just possible, too, she may have entangled him. There are meshes that men can scarcely keep free of. Trafford may have witnessed the hardship of her daily life – seen the indignities to which she submits – and possibly pitied her; if he has gone no further than this, there is no great mischief. What a clever creature she must be!" thought he again, – "how easy it ought to be for a woman like that to make a husband adore her; and yet these women will not be content with that. Like the cheats at cards, they don't care to win by fair play." He went to the door, and called out "Lucy!"

The tone of his voice sounded cheerily, and she came on the instant.

"How did you meet after this?" asked he, as she entered.

"We have not met since that. I left the Priory, and came abroad three days after I received it."

"So then that was the secret of the zeal to come out and nurse poor brother Tom, eh?" said he, laughing.

"You know well if it was," said she, as her eyes swam in tears.

"No, no, my poor dear Lu, I never thought so; and right glad am I to know that you are not to live in companionship with the woman who wrote that letter."

"You think ill of her?"

"I will not tell you half how badly I think of her; but Trafford is as much wronged here as any one, or else I am but a sorry decipherer of mysterious signs."

"Oh, Tom!" cried she, clasping his hand and looking at him

as though she yearned for one gleam of hope.

"It is so that I read it; but I do not like to rely upon my own sole judgment in such a case. Will you trust me with this letter, and will you let me show it to Sir Brooke? He is wonderfully acute in tracing people's real meaning through all the misty surroundings of expression. I will go over to Cagliari at once, and see him. If all be as I suspect, I will bring them back with me. If Sir Brook's opinion be against mine, I will believe him to be the wiser man, and come back alone."

"I consent to everything, Tom, if you will give me but one pledge, – you must give it seriously, solemnly."

"I guess what you mean, Lucy; your anxious face has told the story without words. You are afraid of my hot temper. You think I will force a quarrel on Trafford, – yes, I knew what was in your thoughts. Well, on my honor I will not. This I promise you faithfully."

She threw herself into his arms and kissed him, muttering, in a low voice, "My own dear brother," in his ear.

"It is just as likely you may see me back again tomorrow, Lucy, and alone too. Mind that, girl! The version I have taken of this letter may turn out to be all wrong. Sir Brook may show me how and where and why I have mistaken it; and if so, Lu, I must have a pledge from you, – you know what I mean."

"You need none, Tom," said she, proudly; "you shall not be ashamed of your Sister."

"That was said like yourself, and I have no fears about you

now. You will be anxious – you can't help being anxious, my poor child – about all this; but your uncertainty shall be as short as I can make it. Look out for me, at all events, with the evening breeze. I'll try and catch the land-wind to take me up. If I fly no ensign, Lucy, I am alone; if you see the 'Jack,' it will mean I have company with me. Do you understand me?"

She nodded, but did not speak.

"Now, Lu, I'll just get my traps together, and be off; that light Tramontana wind will last till daybreak, and by that time the sea-breeze will carry me along pleasantly. How I 'd like to have you with me!"

"It is best as it is, Tom," said she, trying to smile.

"And if all goes wrong, – I mean if all does not go right, – Lucy, I have got a plan, and I am sure Sir Brook won't oppose it. We 'll just pack up, wish the lead and the cobalt and the rest of it a good-bye, and start for the Cape and join father. There's a project after your own heart, girl."

"Oh, Tom dearest, if we could do that!"

"Think over it till we meet again, and it will at least keep away darker thoughts."

CHAPTER II. BY THE MINE AT LA VANNA

The mine of Lavanna, on which Sir Brook had placed all his hopes of future fortune, was distant from the town of Cagliari about eighteen miles. It was an old, a very old shaft; Livy had mentioned it, and Pliny, in one of his letters, compares people of sanguine and hopeful temperament with men who believe in the silver ore of Lavanna. There had therefore been a traditionary character of failure attached to the spot, and not impossibly this very circumstance had given it a greater value in Fossbrooke's estimation; for he loved a tough contest with fortune, and his experiences had given him many such.

Popular opinion certainly set down the mine as a disastrous enterprise, and the list of those who had been ruined by the speculation was a long one. Nothing daunted by all he had heard, and fully convinced in his own mind that his predecessors had earned their failures by their own mistakes, Fossbrooke had purchased the property many years before, and there it had remained, like many of his other acquisitions, uncared for and unthought of, till the sudden idea had struck him that he wanted to be rich, and to be rich instantaneously.

He had coffee-plantations somewhere in Ceylon, and he had purchased largely of land in Canada; but to utilize either of these

would be a work of time, whereas the mine would yield its metal bright and ready for the market. It was so much actual available money at once.

His first care was to restore, so far as to make it habitable, a dreary old ruinous barrack of a house, which a former speculator had built to hold all his officials and dependants. A few rooms that opened on a tumble-down terrace – of which some marble urns yet remained to bear witness of former splendor – were all that Sir Brook could manage to make habitable, and even these would have seemed miserable and uncomfortable to any one less bent on "roughing it" than himself.

Some guns and fishing-gear covered one wall of the room that served as dinner-room; and a few rude shelves on the opposite side contained such specimens of ore as were yet discovered, and the three or four books which formed their library; the space over the chimney displaying a sort of trophy of pipes of every sort and shape, from the well-browned meerschaum to the ignoble "dudeen" of Irish origin.

These were the only attempts at decoration they had made, but it was astonishing with what pleasure the old man regarded them, and with what pride he showed the place to such as accidentally came to see him.

"I'll have a room yet, just arrayed in this fashion, Tom," would he say, "when we have made our fortune, and go back to live in England. I 'll have a sort of snuggery a correct copy of this; all the old beams in the ceiling, and those great massive architraves

round the doors, shall be exactly followed, and the massive stone mantelpiece; and it will remind us, as we sit there of a winter's night, of the jolly evenings we have had here after a hard day's work in the shaft. Won't I have the laugh at you, Tom, too, as I tell you of the wry face you used to make over our prospects, the hang-dog look you 'd give when the water was gaining on us, and our new pump got choked!"

Tom would smile at all this, though secretly nourishing no such thoughts for the future. Indeed, he had for many a day given up all hope of making his fortune as a miner, and merely worked on with the dogged determination not to desert his friend.

On one of the large white walls of their sitting-room Sir Brook had sketched in charcoal a picture of the mine, in all the dreariest aspect of its poverty, and two sad-looking men, Tom and himself, working at the windlass over the shaft; and at the other extremity of the space there stood a picturesque mansion, surrounded with great forest trees, under which deer were grouped, and two men – the same – were riding up the approach on mettlesome horses; the elder of the two, with outstretched arm and hand, evidently directing his companion's attention to the rich scenes through which they passed. These were the "now" and "then" of the old man's vision, and he believed in them, as only those believe who draw belief from their own hearts, unshaken by all without.

It was at the close of a summer day, just in that brief moment when the last flicker of light tinges the earth at first with crimson and then with deep blue, to give way a moment later to

black night, that Sir Brook sat with Colonel Cave after dinner, explaining to his visitor the fresco on the wall, and giving, so far as he might, his reasons to believe it a truthful foreshadowing of the future.

"But you tell me," said Cave, "that the speculation has proved the ruin of a score of fellows."

"So it has. Did you ever hear of the enterprise, at least of one worth the name, that had not its failures? or is success anything more in reality than the power of reasoning out how and why others have succumbed, and how to avoid the errors that have beset them? The men who embarked in this scheme were alike deficient in knowledge and in capital."

"Ah, indeed!" muttered Cave, who did not exactly say what his looks implied. "Are you their superior in these requirements?"

Sir Brook was quick enough to note the expression, and hastily said, "I have not much to boast of myself in these respects, but I possess that which they never had, – that without which men accomplish nothing in life, going through the world mere desultory ramblers, and not like sturdy pilgrims, ever footing onward to the goal of their ambition. I have Faith!"

"And young Lendrick, what says he to it?"

"He scarcely shares my hopes, but he shows no signs of backwardness."

"He is not sanguine, then?"

"Nature did not make him so, and a man can no more alter his temperament than his stature. I began life with such a capital of

confidence that, though I have been an arrant spendthrift, I have still a strong store by me. The cunning fellows laugh at us and call us dupes; but let me tell you, Cave, if accounts were squared, it might turn out that even as a matter of policy incredulity has not much to boast of, and were it not so, this world would be simply intolerable."

"I'd like, however, to hear that your mine was not all outlay," said Cave, bringing back the theme to its starting-point.

"So should I," said Fossbrooke, dryly.

"And I 'd like to learn that some one more conversant – more professional in these matters – "

"Less ignorant than myself, in a word," said Fossbrooke, laughing. "You mean you'd like to hear a more trustworthy prophet predict as favorably; and with all that I agree heartily."

"There's no one would be better pleased to be certain that the fine palace on the wall there was not a castle in Spain. I think you know that."

"I do, Cave, – I know it well; but bear in mind, your best runs in the hunting-field have not always been when you have killed your fox. The pursuit, when it is well sustained, with its fair share of perils met, dared, and overcome, – this is success. Whatever keeps a man's heart up and his courage high to the end, is no mean thing. I own to you I hope to win, and I don't know that there is any such failure possible as would quench this hope."

"Just what Trafford said of you when he came back from that fishing-excursion," cried Cave, as though carried away by a

sudden burst of thought.

"What a good fellow he is! Shall we have him up here to-night?"

"No; some of our men have been getting into scrapes at Cagliari, and I have been obliged to ask him to stay there and keep things in order."

"Is his quarrel with his family final, or is there still an opening to reconciliation?"

"I 'm afraid not. Some old preference of his mother's for the youngest son has helped on the difference; and then certain stories she brought back from Ireland of Lionel's doings there, or at least imputed doings, have, I suspect, steeled his father's heart completely against him."

"I'll stake my life on it there is nothing dishonorable to attach to him. What do they allege?"

"I have but a garbled version of the story, for from Trafford himself I have heard nothing; but I know, for I have seen the bills, he has lost largely at play to a very dangerous creditor, who also accuses him of designs on his wife; and the worst of this is that the latter suspicion originated with Lady Trafford."

"I could have sworn it. It was a woman's quarrel, and she would sacrifice her own son for vengeance. I 'll be able to pay her a very refined compliment when I next see her, Cave, and tell her that she is not in the least altered from the day I first met her. And has Lionel been passed over in the entail?"

"So he believes, and I think with too good reason."

"And all because he loved a girl whose alliance would confer honor on the proudest house in the land. I think I 'll go over and pay Holt a visit. It is upwards of forty years since I saw Sir Hugh, and I have a notion I could bring him to reason."

Cave shook his head doubtingly.

"Ay, to be sure," sighed Fossbrooke, "it does make a precious difference whether one remonstrates at the head of a fine fortune or pleads for justice in a miner's jacket. I was forgetting that, Cave. Indeed, I am always forgetting it. And have they made no sort of settlement on Lionel, – nothing to compensate him for the loss of his just expectations?"

"I suspect not. He has told me nothing beyond the fact that he is to have the purchase-money for the lieutenant-colonelcy, which I was ready and willing to vacate in his favor, but which we are unable to negotiate, because he owes a heavy sum, to the payment of which this must go."

"Can nothing be done with his creditor? – can we not manage to secure the debt and pay the interest?"

"This same creditor is one not easily dealt with," said Cave, slowly.

"A money-lender?"

"No. He 's the man I just told you wanted to involve Trafford with his own wife. As dangerous a fellow as ever lived. I take shame to myself to own that, though acquainted with him for years, I never really knew his character till lately."

"Don't think the worse of yourself for that, Cave. The faculty

to read bad men at sight argues too much familiarity with badness. I like to hear a fellow say, 'I never so much as suspected it.' Is this, man's name a secret?"

"No. Nothing of the kind. I don't suppose you ever met him, but he is well known in the service, – better perhaps in India than at home, – he served on Rolffe's staff in Bengal. His name is Sewell."

"What! Dudley Sewell?"

"Yes; that's his name. Do you know him?"

"Do I know him!" muttered the old man, as he bent down and supported his head upon his hand.

"And do I wrong him in thinking him a dangerous fellow?" asked Cave. But Fossbrooke made no answer; indeed, he never heard the question, so absorbed was he in his own thoughts.

"What do you know of him?" asked Cave, in a louder voice.

"Everything, – everything! I know all that he has done, and scores of things he would have done if he could. By what ill-luck was it that Trafiford came to know this man?"

"They met at the Cape, and Trafford went to visit him when they came over to Ireland. I suspect – I do not know it – but I suspect that there was some flirtation in the case. She is extremely pretty, and a coquette."

"I declare," said Fossbrooke, as he arose and paced the room, totally unattentive to all the other said, – "I declare I begin sometimes to think that the only real activity in life is on the part of the scoundrels. Half the honest people in the world pass their

lives in forming good intentions, while the rogues go straight at their work and do it. Do you think, Cave, that Trafford would tell me frankly what has passed between this man and himself?"

"I 'm not sure. I mean, he might have some reserve on one point, and that is the very point on which his candor would be most important. There have been letters, it would seem, that Sewell has got hold of, and threatens exposure, if some enormous demand be not complied with."

"What! Is the scoundrel so devoid of devices that he has to go back on an old exploded villany? Why, he played that game at Rangoon, and got five thousand pounds out of poor Beresford."

"I have heard something of that."

"Have heard of it! Who that ever served in India is not familiar with the story? What does Trafford mean by not coming up here, and telling me the whole story?"

"I 'll tell you what he means, Fossbrooke: he is heartily ashamed of himself; he is in love with another, and he knows that you know it; but he believes you may have heard stories to his detriment, and, tied as he is, or fancies he is, by a certain delicate reserve, he cannot go into his exculpation. There, in one word, is the reason that he is not here to-night; he asked me to put on him special duty, and save him from all the awkwardness of meeting you with a half-confidence."

"And I, meanwhile, have written off to Tom Lendrick to come over here with his sister, or to let us go and pay them a visit at the island."

"You never told me of this."

"Why should I? I was using the rights I possess over you as my guests, doing for you what I deemed best for your amusement."

"What answer have they given you?"

"None up to this; indeed, there has been scarcely time; and now, from what you tell me, I do not well know what answer I'd like to have from them."

For several minutes neither uttered a word; at last Fossbrooke said: "Trafford was right not to meet me. It has saved him some prevarication, and me some passion. Write and tell him I said so."

"I can scarcely do that, without avowing that I have revealed to you more than I am willing to own."

"When you told me in whose hands he was, you told me more than all the rest. Few men can live in Dudley Sewells intimacy and come unscathed out of the companionship."

"That would tell ill for myself, for I have been of late on terms of much intimacy with him."

"You have n't played with him?"

"Ay, but I have; and, what's more, won of him," said Cave, laughing.

"You profited little by that turn of fortune," said Foss-brooke, sarcastically.

"You imply that he did not pay his debt; but you are wrong: he came to me the morning after we had played, and acquitted the sum lost."

"Why, I am entangling myself in the miracles I hear! That

Sewell should lose is strange enough: that he should pay his losses is simply incredible."

"Your opinion of him would seem to be a very indifferent one."

"Far from it, Cave. It is without any qualification whatever. I deem him the worst fellow I ever knew; nor am I aware of any greater misfortune to a young fellow entering on life than to have become his associate."

"You astonish me! I was prepared to hear things of him that one could not justify, nor would have willingly done themselves, but not to learn that he was beyond the pale of honor."

"It is exactly where he stands, sir, – beyond the pale of honor. I wish we had not spoken of him," said the old man, rising, and pacing the room. "The memory of that fellow is the bitterest draught I ever put to my lips; he has dashed my mind with more unworthy doubts and mean suspicions of other men than all my experience of life has ever taught me. I declare, I believe if I had never known him my heart would have been as hopeful to-day as it was fifty years ago."

"How came it that I never heard you speak of him?"

"Is it my wont, Cave, to talk of my disasters to my friends? You surely have known me long enough to say whether I dwell upon the reverses and disappointments of my life. It is a sorry choice of topics, perhaps, that is left to men old as myself when they must either be croakers or boasters. At all events, I have chosen the latter; and people bear with it the better because they

can smile at it."

"I wish with all my heart I had never played with Sewell, and still more that I had not won of him."

"Was it a heavy sum?"

"For a man like myself, a very heavy sum. I was led on – giving him his revenge, as it is called – till I found myself playing for a stake which, had I lost, would have cost me the selling my commission."

Fossbrooke nodded, as though to say he had known of such, incidents in the course of his life.

"When he appeared at my quarters the next morning to settle the debt, I was so overcome with shame that I pledge you my word of honor, I believe I 'd rather have been the loser and taken all the ruin the loss would have brought down upon me."

"How your friend must have appreciated your difficulty!" said Fossbrooke, sarcastically.

"He was frank enough, at all events, to own that he could not share my sense of embarrassment. He jeered a little at my pretension to be an example to my young officers, as well he might. I had selected an unlucky moment to advance such a claim; and then he handed me over my innings, with all the ease and indifference in life."

"I declare, Cave, I was expecting, to the very last moment, a different ending to your story. I waited to hear that he had handed you a bond of his wife's guardian, which for prudential reasons should not be pressed for prompt payment."

"Good heavens! what do you mean?" cried Cave, leaning over the table in intense eagerness. "Who could have told you this?"

"Beresford told me; he brought me the very document once to my house with my own signature annexed to it, – an admirable forgery as ever was, done. My seal, too, was there. By bad luck, however, the paper was stolen from me that very night, – taken out of a locked portfolio. And when Beresford charged the fellow with the fraud, Sewell called him out and shot him."

Cave sat for several minutes like one stunned and overcome. He looked vacantly before him, but gave no sign of hearing or marking what was said to him. At last he arose, and, walking over to a table, unlocked his writing-desk, and took out a large packet, of which he broke the seal, and without examining the contents, handed it to Fossbrooke, saying, – "Is that like it?"

"It is the very bond itself; there's my signature. I wish I wrote as good a hand now," said he, laughing. "It is as I always said, Cave," cried he, in a louder, fuller voice; "the world persists in calling this swindler a clever fellow, and there never was a greater mistake. The devices of the scoundrel are the very fewest imaginable; and he repeats his three or four tricks, with scarcely a change, throughout a life long."

"And this is a forgery!" muttered Cave, as he bent over the document and scanned it closely.

"You shall see me prove it such. You 'll intrust me with it. I 'll promise to take better care of it this time."

"Of course. What do you mean to do?"

"Nothing by course of law, Cave. So far I promise you, and I know it is of that you are most afraid. No, my good friend. If you never figure in a witness-box till brought there by *me*, you may snap your fingers for many a day at cross-examinations."

"This cannot be made the subject of a personal altercation," said Cave, hesitatingly.

"If you mean a challenge, certainly not; but it may be made the means of extricating Trafford from his difficulties with this man, and I can hardly see where and what these difficulties are."

"You allude to the wife?"

"We will not speak of that, Cave," said Fossbrooke, coloring deeply. "Mrs. Sewell has claims on my regard, that nothing her husband could do, nothing that he might become could efface. She was the daughter of the best and truest friend, and the most noble-hearted fellow I ever knew. I have long ceased to occupy any place in her affections, but I shall never cease to remember whose child she was, – how he loved her, and how, in the last words he ever spoke, he asked me to befriend her. In those days I was a rich man, and had the influence that wealth confers. I had access to great people, too, and, wanting nothing for myself, could easily be of use to others; but, where am I wandering to? I only intended to say that *her* name is not to be involved in any discussion those things may occasion. What are these voices I hear outside in the court? Surely that must be Tom Lendrick I hear." He arose and flung open the window, and at the same instant a merry voice cried out, "Here we are, Sir Brook, –

Trafford and myself. I met him in the Piazza at Cagliari, and carried him off with me."

"Have you brought anything to eat with you?" asked Fossbrooke.

"That I have, – half a sheep and a turkey," said Tom.

"Then you are thrice welcome," said Fossbrooke, laughing; "for Cave and I are reduced to fluids. Come up at once; the fellows will take care of your horses. We 'll make a night of it, Cave," said the old man, as he proceeded to cover the table with bottles. "We'll drink success to the mine! We 'll drink to the day when, as lieutenant-general, you 'll come and pay me a visit in that great house yonder, – and here come the boys to help us."

CHAPTER III. UP AT THE MINE

Though they carried their convivialities into a late hour of the night, Sir Brook was stirring early on the next morning, and was at Tom Lendrick's bedside ere he was awake.

"We had no time for much talk together, Tom, when you came up last night," said he; "nor is there much now, for I am off to England within an hour."

"Off to England! and the mine?"

"The mine must take care of itself, Tom, till you are stronger and able to look after it. My care at present is to know if Trafford be going back with you."

"I meant that he should; in fact, I came over here expressly to ask you what was best to be done. You can guess what I allude to; and I had brought with me a letter which Lucy thought you ought to read; and, indeed, I intended to be as cautious and circumspect as might be, but I was scarcely on shore when Trafford rushed across a street and threw his arm over my shoulder, and almost sobbed out his joy at seeing me. So overcome was I that I forgot all my prudence, – all, indeed, that I came for. I asked him to come up with me, – ay, and to come back, too, with me to the island and stay a week there."

"I scarcely think that can be done," said the old man, gravely. "I like Trafford well, and would be heartily glad I could like him still better; but I must learn more about him ere I consent to his

going over to Maddalena. What is this letter you speak of?"

"You 'll find it in the pocket of my dressing-case there. Yes; that's it."

"It's a longish epistle, but in a hand I well know, – at least, I knew it well long ago." There was an indescribable sadness in the tone in which he said this, and he turned away that his face should not be seen. He seated himself in a recess of the window, and read the letter from end to end. With a heavy sigh he laid it on the table, and muttered below his breath, "What a long, long way to have journeyed from what I first saw her to *that!*"

Tom did not venture to speak, nor show by any sign that he had heard him, and the old man went on in broken sentences: "And to think that these are the fine natures – the graceful – the beautiful – that are thus wrecked! It is hard to believe it. In the very same characters of that letter I have read such things, so beautiful, so touching, so tender, as made the eyes overflow to follow them. You see I was right, Tom," cried he, aloud, in a strong stern voice, "when I said that she should not be your sister's companion. I told Sewell I would not permit it. I was in a position to dictate my own terms to him, and I did so. I must see Trafford about this!" and as he spoke he arose and left the room.

While Tom proceeded to dress himself, he was not altogether pleased with the turn of events. If he had made any mistake in inviting Trafford to return with him, there would be no small awkwardness in recalling the invitation. He saw plainly enough he had been precipitate, but precipitation is one of those errors

which, in their own cases, men are prone to ascribe to warm-heartedness. “Had I been as distrustful or suspicious as that publican yonder,” is the burden of their self-gratulation; and in all that moral surgery where men operate on themselves, they cut very gingerly.

“Of course,” muttered Tom, “I can’t expect Sir Brook will take the same view of these things. Age and suspicion are simply convertible terms, and, thank Heaven, I have not arrived at either.”

“What are you thanking Heaven for?” said Sir Brook, entering. “In nine cases out of ten, men use that formula as a measure of their own vanity. For which of your shortcomings were you professing your gratitude, Tom?”

“Have you seen Trafford, sir?” asked Tom, trying to hide his confusion by the question.

“Yes; we have had some talk together.”

Tom waited to hear further, and showed by his air of expectation how eager he felt; but the old man made no sign of any disclosure, but sat there silent and wrapped in thought. “I asked him this,” said the old man, fiercely, “‘If you had got but one thousand pounds in all the world, would it have occurred to you to go down and stake it on a match of billiards against Jonathan?’ ‘Unquestionably not,’ he replied; ‘I never could have dreamed of such presumption.’

“‘And on what pretext, by what impulse of vanity,’ said I, ‘were you prompted to enter the lists with one every way your superior

in tact, in craft, and in coquetry? If she accepted your clumsy addresses, did you never suspect that there was a deeper game at issue than your pretensions?'

"'You are all mistaken,' said he, growing crimson with shame as he spoke. 'I made no advances whatever. I made her certain confidences, it is true, and I asked her advice; and then, as we grew to be more intimate, we wrote to each other, and Sewell came upon my letters, and affected to think I was trying to steal his wife's affection. She could have dispelled the suspicion at once. She could have given the key to the whole mystery, and why she did not is more than I can say. My unlucky accident just then occurred, and I only issued from my illness to hear that I had lost largely at play, and was so seriously compromised, besides, that it was a question whether he should shoot me, or sue for a divorce.'

"It was clear enough that so long as he represented the heir to the Holt property, Sewell treated him with a certain deference; but when Trafford declared to his family that he would accept no dictation, but go his own road, whatever the cost, from that moment Sewell pressed his claims, and showed little mercy in his exactions.

"'And what's your way out of this mess?' asked I, 'What do you propose to do?'

"I have written to my father, begging he will pay off this debt for me, – the last I shall ever ask him to acquit. I have requested my brother to back my petition; and I have told Sewell the steps

I have taken, and promised him if they should fail that I will sell out, and acquit my debt at the price of my commission.'

"'And at the price of your whole career in life?'

"'Just so. If you 'll not employ me in the mine, I must turn navvy.'

"'And how, under such circumstances as these, can you accept Tom Lendrick's invitation, and go over to Maddalena?'

"'I could not well say no when he asked me, but I determined not to go. I only saw the greater misery I should bring on myself. Cave can send me off in haste to Gibraltar or to Malta. In fact, I pass off the stage, and never turn up again during the rest of the performance. '"

"Poor fellow!" said Tom, with deep feeling.

"He was so manly throughout it all," said Fossbrooke, "so straightforward and so simple. Had there been a grain of coxcomb in his nature, the fellow would have thought the woman in love with him, and made an arrant fool of himself in consequence, but his very humility saved him. I 'm not sure, Master Tom, you 'd have escaped so safely, eh?"

"I don't see why you think so."

"Now for action," said Fossbrooke. "I must get to England at once. I shall go over to Holt, and see if I can do anything with Sir Hugh. I expect little, for when men are under the frown of fortune they plead with small influence. I shall then pass over to Ireland. With Sewell I can promise myself more success. I may be away three or four weeks. Do you think yourself strong

enough to come back here and take my place till I return?"

"Quite so. I 'll write and tell Lucy to join me."

"I'd wait till Saturday," said Fossbrooke, in a low voice. "Cave says they can sail by Saturday morning, and it would be as well Lucy did not arrive till they are gone."

"You are right," said Tom, thoughtfully.

"It's not his poverty I 'm thinking of," cried Fossbrooke. "With health and strength and vigor, a man can fight poverty. I want to learn that he is as clean-handed in this affair with the Sewells as he thinks himself. If I once were sure of that, I 'd care little for his loss of fortune. I 'd associate him with us in the mine, Tom. There will always be more wealth here than we can need. That new shaft promises splendidly. Such fat ore I have not seen for many a day."

Tom's mouth puckered, and his expression caught a strange sort of half-quizzical look, but he did not venture to speak.

"I know well," added the old man, cautiously, "that it 's no good service to a young fellow to plunge him at once into ample means without making him feel the fatigues and trials of honest labor. He must be taught to believe that there is work before him, – hard work too. He must be made to suppose that it is only by persistence and industry, and steady devotion to the pursuit, that it will yield its great results."

"I don't suspect our success will turn his head," said Tom, dryly.

"That 's the very thing I want to guard against, Tom. Don't you

see it is there all my anxiety lies?"

"Let him take a turn of our life here, and I 'll warrant him against the growth of an over-sanguine disposition."

"Just so," said Fossbrooke, too intensely immersed in his own thought either to notice the words or the accents of the other, – "just so: a hard winter up here in the snows, with all the tackle frozen, ice on the cranks, ice on the chains, ice everywhere, a dense steam from the heated air below, and a cutting sleet above, try a man's chest smartly; and then that lead colic, of which you can tell him something. These give a zest and a difficulty that prove what a man's nature is like."

"They have proved mine pretty well," said Tom, with a bitter laugh.

"And there's nothing like it in all the world for forming a man!" cried Fossbrooke, in a voice of triumph. "Your fair-weather fellows go through life with half their natures unexplored. They know no more of the interior country of their hearts than we do of Central Africa. Beyond the fact that there is something there – something – they know nothing. A man must have conflict, struggle, peril, to feel what stuff there 's in him. He must be baffled, thwarted, ay, and even defeated. He must see himself amongst other men as an unlucky dog that fellows will not willingly associate with. He must, on poor rations and tattered clothing, keep up a high heart, – not always an easy thing to do; and, hardest of all, he must train himself never in all his poverty to condescend to a meanness that when his better day

comes he would have to blush for."

"If you weight poverty with all those fine responsibilities, I suspect you'll break its back at once," said Tom, laughing.

"Far from it. It is out of these self-same responsibilities that poverty has a backbone at all;" and the old man stood bolt upright, and threw back his head as though he were emblematizing what he had spoken of.

"Now, Tom, for business. Are you strong enough to come back here and look after the shaft?"

"Yes, I think so. I hope so."

"I shall probably be some weeks away. I 'll have to go over to Holt; and I mean to run adown amongst the Cornwall fellows and show them some of our ore. I 'll make their mouths water when they see it."

Tom bit off the end of his cigar, but did not speak.

"I mean to make Beattie a present of ten shares in that new shaft, too. I declare it's like a renewal of youth to me to feel I can do this sort of thing again. I 'll have to write to your father to come back also. Why should he live in exile while we could all be together again in affluence and comfort?"

Tom's eyes ranged round the bare walls and the shattered windows, and he raised his eyebrows in astonishment at the other's illusions.

"We had a stiff 'heat' before we weathered the point, that's certain, Tom," said the old man. "There were days when the sky looked dark enough, and it needed all our pluck and all our

resolution to push on; but I never lost heart, – I never wavered about our certainty of success, – did I?"

"No; that you did not. And if you had, I certainly should not have wondered at it."

"I 'll ask you to bear this testimony to me one of these days, and to tell how I bore up at times that you yourself were not over hopeful."

"Oh, that you may. I'll be honest enough to own that the sanguine humor was a rare one with me."

"And it's your worst fault. It is better for a young fellow to be disappointed every hour of the twenty-four than to let incredulity gain on him. Believe everything that it would be well to believe, and never grow soured with fortune if the dice don't turn up as you want them. I declare I 'm sorry to leave this spot just now, when all looks so bright and cheery about it. You 're a lucky dog, Tom, to come in when the battle is won, and nothing more to do than announce the victory." And so saying, he hurried off to prepare for the road, leaving Tom Lendrick in a state of doubt whether he should be annoyed or amused at the opinions he had heard from him.

CHAPTER IV.
PARTING COUNSELS

Quick and decided in all his movements, Fossbrooke set out almost immediately after this scene with Tom, and it was only as they gathered together at breakfast that it was discovered he had gone.

"He left Bermuda in the very same fashion," said Cave. "He had bought a coffee-plantation in the morning, and he set out the same night; and I don't believe he ever saw his purchase after. I asked him about it, and he said he thought – he was n't quite sure – he made it a present to Dick Molyneux on his marriage. 'I only know,' said he, 'it's not mine now.'"

As they sat over their breakfast, or smoked after it, they exchanged stories about Fossbrooke, all full of his strange eccentric ways, but all equally abounding in traits of kind-heartedness and generosity. Comparing him with other men of liberal mould, the great and essential difference seemed to be that Fossbrooke never measured his generosity. When he gave, he gave all that he had; he had no notion of aiding or assisting. His idea was to establish a man at once, – easy, affluent, and independent. He abounded in precepts of prudence, maxims of thrift, and such-like; but in practice he was recklessly lavish.

"Why ain't there more like him?" cried Trafford,

enthusiastically.

"I 'm not sure it would be better," said Cave. "The race of idle, cringing, do-nothing fellows is large enough already. I suspect men like Fossbrooke – at least what he was in his days of prosperity – give a large influence to the spread of dependants."

"The fault I find with him," said Tom, "is his credulity. He believes everything, and, what's worse, every one. There are fellows here who persuade him this mine is to make his fortune; and if he had thousands to-morrow, he would embark them all in this speculation, the only result of which is to enrich these people, and ruin ourselves."

"Is that your view of it?" asked Cave, in some alarm.

"Of course it is; and if you doubt it, come down with me into the gallery, as they call it, and judge for yourself."

"But I have already joined the enterprise."

"What! invested money in it?"

"Ay. Two thousand pounds, – a large sum for me, I promise you. It was with immense persuasion, too, I got Fossbrooke to let me have these shares. He offered me scores of other things as a free gift in preference, – salmon-fisheries in St. John's; a saw-mill on Lake Huron; a large tract of land at the Cape; I don't know what else: but I was firm to the copper, and would have nothing but this."

"I went in for lead," said Trafford, laughingly.

"*You*; and are *you* involved in this also?" asked Tom.

"Yes; so far as I have promised to sell out, and devote whatever

remains after paying my debts to the mine."

"Why, this beats all the infatuation I ever heard of! You have not the excuse of men at a distance, who have only read or listened to plausible reports; but you have come here, – you have been on the spot, – you have seen with your own eyes the poverty-stricken air of the whole concern, the broken machinery, the ruined scaffoldings, the mounds of worthless dross that hide the very approach to the shaft; and you have seen us, too, and where and how we live!"

"Very true," broke in Cave; "but I have heard *him* talk, and I could no more resist the force of his words than I could stand in a current and not be carried down by it."

"Exactly so," chimed in Trafford; "he was all the more irresistible that he did not seek to persuade. Nay, he tried his utmost to put me off the project, and, as with the Colonel, he offered me dozens of other ways to push my fortune, without costing me a farthing."

"Might not we," said Cave, "ask how it comes that you, taking this dispiriting view of all here, still continue to embark your fortunes in its success?"

"It is just because they are my fortunes; had it been my fortune, I had been more careful. There is all the difference in life between a man's hopes and his bank-stock. But if you ask me why I hang on here, after I have long ceased to think anything can come of it, my answer is, I do so just as I would refuse to quit the wreck, when he declared he would not leave it. It might

be I should save my life by deserting him; but it would be little worth having afterwards; and I 'd rather live with him in daily companionship, watching his manly courageous temper and his high-hearted way of dealing with difficulties, than I would go down the stream prosperously with many another; and over and over have I said to myself, If that fine nature of his can make defeat so endurable, what splendor of triumph would it not throw over a real success!"

"And this is exactly what we want to share," said Traf-ford, smiling.

"But what do either of you know of the man, beyond the eccentricity, or the general kindliness with which he meets you? You have not seen him as I have, rising to his daily toil with a racking head and a fevered frame, without a word of complaint, or anything beyond a passing syllable of discomfort; never flinching, never yielding; as full of kind thought for others, as full of hopeful counsel, as in his best days; lightening labor with proverb and adage, and stimulating zeal with many a story. You can't picture to yourselves this man, once at the head of a princely fortune, which he dispensed with more than princely liberality, sharing a poor miner's meal of beans and oil with pleasant humor, and drinking a toast, in wine that would set the teeth on edge, to that good time when they would have more generous fare, and as happy hearts to enjoy it.

"Nor have you seen him, as I have, the nurse beside the sick-bed, so gentle, so thoughtful, – a very woman in tenderness; and

all that after a day of labor that would have borne down the strongest and the stoutest. And who is he that takes the world in such good part, and thinks so hopefully of his fellow-men? The man of all his time who has been most betrayed, most cheated, whose trust has been most often abused, whose benefits have been oftenest paid back in ingratitude. It is possible enough he may not be the man to guide one to wealth and fortune; but to whatever condition of life he leads, of one thing I am certain, there will be no better teacher of the spirit and temper to enjoy it; there will be none who will grace any rank – the highest or the humblest – with a more manly dignity."

"It was knowing all this of him," said Cave, "that impelled me to associate myself with any enterprise he belonged to. I felt that if success were to be won by persistent industry and determination, his would do it, and that his noble character gave a guarantee for fair dealing better than all the parchments lawyers could engross."

"From what I have seen of life, I 'd not say that success attends such men as he is," said Tom. "The world would be, perhaps, too good if it were so."

Silence now fell upon the party, and the three men smoked on for some time without a word. At last Tom, rising from the bench where he had been seated, said, "Take my advice; keep to your soldiering, and have nothing to do with this concern here. You sail on Saturday next, and by Sunday evening, if you can forget that there is such an island as Sardinia, and such poor devils on

it as ourselves, it will be all the better for you."

"I am sorry to see you so depressed, Lendrick," said Cave.

"I 'm not so low as you suspect; but I'd be far lower if I thought that others were going to share our ill-fortunes."

Though the speech had no direct reference to Trafford, it chanced that their eyes met as he spoke, and Trafford's face flushed to a deep crimson as he felt the application of the words.

"Come here, Tom," said he, passing his arm within Lendrick's, and leading him off the terrace into a little copse of wild hollies at the foot of it. "Let me have one word with you." They walked on some seconds without a word, and when Trafford spoke his voice trembled with agitation. "I don't know," muttered he, "if Sir Brook has told you of the change in my fortunes, – that I am passed over in the entail by my father, and am, so to say, a beggar."

Lendrick nodded, but said nothing.

"I have got debts, too, which, if not paid by my family, will compel me to sell out, – has he told you this?"

"Yes; I think he said so."

"Like the kind, good fellow he is," continued Trafford, "he thinks he can do something with my people, – talk my father over, and induce my mother to take my side. I 'm afraid I know them better, and that they 're not sorry to be rid of me at last. It is, however, just possible – I will not say more, but just possible – that he may succeed in making some sort of terms for me before they cut me off altogether. I have no claim whatever, for

I have spent already the portion that should have come to me as a younger son. I must be frank with you, Tom. There 's no use in trying to make my case seem better than it is." He paused, and appeared to expect that the other would say something; but Tom smoked on and made no sign whatever.

"And it comes to this," said Trafford, drawing a long breath and making a mighty effort, "I shall either have some small pittance or other, – and small it must be, – or be regularly cleaned out without a shilling."

A slight, very slight, motion of Tom's shoulders showed that he had heard him.

"If the worst is to befall me," said Traflford, with more energy than he had shown before, "I 'll no more be a burden to you than to any other of my friends. You shall hear little more of me; but if fortune is going to give me her last chance, will *you* give me one also?"

"What do you mean?" said Tom, curtly.

"I mean," stammered out Trafford, whose color came and went with agitation as he spoke, – "I mean, shall I have your leave – that is, may I go over to Maddalena? – may I – O Tom," burst he out at last, "you know well what hope my heart clings to."

"If there was nothing but a question of money in the way," broke in Tom, boldly, "I don't see how beggars like ourselves could start very strong objections. That a man's poverty should separate him from us would be a little too absurd; but there 's more than that in it. You have got into some scrape or other. I

don't want to force a confidence – I don't want to hear about it. It's enough for me that you are not a free man."

"If I can satisfy you that this is not the case – "

"It won't do to satisfy *me,*" said Tom, with a strong emphasis on the last word.

"I mean, if I can show that nothing unworthy, nothing dishonorable, attaches to me."

"I don't suspect all that would suffice. It's not a question of your integrity or your honor. It's the simple matter whether when professing to care for one woman you made love to another?"

"If I can disprove that. It 's a long story – "

"Then, for Heaven's sake, don't tell it to me."

"Let me, at least, show that it is not fair to shun me."

There was such a tone of sorrow in his voice as he spoke that Tom turned at once towards him, and said: "If you can make all this affair straight – I mean, if it be clear that there was no more in it than such a passing levity that better men than either of us have now and then fallen into – I don't see why you may not come back with me."

"Oh, Tom, if you really will let me!"

"Remember, however, you come at your own peril. I tell you frankly, if your explanation should fail to satisfy the one who has to hear it, it fails with me too, – do you understand me?"

"I think I do," said Trafford, with dignity.

"It's as well that we should make no mistake; and now you are free to accept my invitation or to refuse it. What do you say?"

"I say, yes. I go back with you."

"I'll go and see, then, if Cave will join us," said Tom, turning hastily away, and very eager to conceal the agitation he was suffering, and of which he was heartily ashamed.

Cave accepted the project with delight, – he wanted to see the island, – but, more still, he wanted to see that Lucy Lendrick of whom Sir Brook had spoken so rapturously. "I suppose," whispered he in Tom's ear, "you know all about Trafford. You 've heard that he has been cut out of the estate, and been left with nothing but his pay?"

Tom nodded assent.

"He's not a fellow to sail under false colors, but he might still have some delicacy in telling about it – "

"He has told me all," said Tom, dryly.

"There was a scrape, too, – not very serious, I hope, – in Ireland."

"He has told me of that also," said Tom. "When shall you be ready? Will four o'clock suit you?"

"Perfectly."

And they parted.

CHAPTER V. ON THE ISLAND

When, shortly after daybreak, the felucca rounded the point of the island, and stood in for the little bay of Maddalena, Lucy was roused from sleep by her maid with the tidings, "Give me the glass, quickly," cried she, as she rushed to the window, and after one rapid glance, which showed her the little craft gayly decked with the flag of England, she threw herself upon her bed, and sobbed in very happiness. In truth, there was in the long previous day's expectancy – in the conflict of her hope and fear – a tension that could only be relieved by tears.

How delightful it was to rally from that momentary gush of emotion, and feel so happy! To think so well of the world as to believe that all goes for the best in it, is a pleasant frame of mind to begin one's day with; to feel that though we have suffered anxiety, and all the tortures of deferred hope, it was good for us to know that everything was happening better for us than we could have planned it for ourselves, and that positively it was not so much by events we had been persecuted as by our own impatient reading of them. Something of all these sensations passed through Lucy's mind as she hurried here and there to prepare for her guests, stopping at intervals to look out towards the sea, and wonder how little way the felucca made, and how persistently she seemed to cling to the selfsame spot.

Nor was she altogether unjust in this. The breeze had died

away at sunrise; and in the interval before the land-wind should spring up there was almost a dead calm.

"Is she moving at all?" cried Lucy, to one of the sailors who lounged on the rocks beneath the window.

The man thought not. They had kept their course too far from shore, and were becalmed in consequence.

How could they have done so? – surely sailors ought to have known better! and Tom, who was always boasting how he knew every current, and every eddy of wind, what was he about? It was a rude shock to that sweet optimism of a few moments back to have to own that here at least was something that might have been better.

"And what ought they to do, what can they do?" asked she, impatiently, of the sailor.

"Wait till towards noon, when the land-breeze freshens up, and beat."

"Beat means, go back and forward, scarcely gaining a mile an hour?"

The sailor smiled, and owned she was not far wrong.

"Which means that they may pass the day there," cried she, fretfully.

"They're not going to do it, anyhow," said the man; "they are lowering a boat, and going to row ashore."

"Oh, how much better! and how long will it take them?"

"Two hours, if they 're good rowers; three, or even four, if they 're not."

"Come in and have a glass of wine," said she; "and you shall look through the telescope, and tell me how they row, and who are in the boat, – I mean how many are in it."

"What a fine glass! I can see them as if they were only a cable's length off. There's the Signorino Maso, your brother, at the bow oar; and then there's a sailor, and another sailor; and there's a signore, a large man, —*per Bacco*, he's the size of three, – at the stroke; and an old man, with white hair, and a cap with gold lace round it, steering; he has bright buttons down his coat."

"Never mind *him*. What of the large man, – is he young?"

"He pulls like a young fellow! There now, he has thrown off his coat, and is going at it in earnest! Ah, he's no signore after all."

"How no signore?" asked she, hastily.

"None but a sailor could row as he does! A man must be bred to it to handle an oar in that fashion."

She took the glass impatiently from him, and tried to see the boat; but whether it was the unsteadiness of her hand, or that some dimness clouded her eyes, she could not catch the object, and turned away and left the room.

The land-wind freshened, and sent a strong sea against the boat, and it was not until late in the afternoon that the party landed, and, led by Tom, ascended the path to the cottage. At his loud shout of "Lucy," she came to the door looking very happy indeed, but more agitated than she well liked. "My sister, Colonel Cave," said Tom, as they came up; "and here's an old acquaintance, Lucy; but he's a major now. Sir Brook is away to

England, and sent you all manner of loving messages."

"I have been watching your progress since early morning," said Lucy, "and, in truth, I scarcely thought you seemed to come nearer. It was a hard pull."

"All Trafford's fault," said Tom, laughing; "he would do more than his share, and kept the boat always dead against her rudder."

"That's not the judgment one of our boatmen here passed on him," said Lucy; "he said it must be a sailor, and no signore, who was at the stroke oar."

"See what it is to have been educated at Eton," said Cave, slyly; "and yet there are people assail our public schools!"

Thus chatting and laughing, they entered the cottage, and were soon seated at table at a most comfortable little dinner.

"I will say," said Tom, in return for some compliment from the Colonel, "she is a capital housekeeper. I never had anything but limpets and sea-urchins to eat till she came, and now I feel like an alderman."

"When men assign us the humble office of providing for them, I remark they are never chary of their compliments," said Lucy, laughingly. "Master Tom is willing to praise my cookery, though he says nothing of my companionship."

"It was such a brotherly speech," chimed in Cave.

"Well, it's jolly, certainly," said Tom, as he leaned back in his chair, "to sit here with that noble sea-view at our feet, and those grand old cliffs over us."

While Cave concurred, and strained his eyes to catch some

object out seaward, Trafford, for almost the first time, found courage to address Lucy. He had asked something about whether she liked the island as well as that sweet cottage where first he saw her, and by this they were led to talk of that meeting, and of the long happy day they had passed at Holy Island.

"How I 'd like to go back to it!" said Lucy, earnestly.

"To the time, or to the place? To which would you wish to go back?"

"To the Nest," said Lucy, blushing slightly; "they were about the happiest days I ever knew, and dear papa was with us then."

"And is it not possible that you may all meet together there one of these days? He'll not remain at the Cape, will he?"

"I was forgetting that you knew him," said she, warmly; "you met papa since I saw you last: he wrote about you, and told how kindly and tenderly you had nursed him on his voyage."

"Oh, did he? Did he indeed speak of me?" cried Trafford, with intense emotion.

"He not only spoke warmly about his affection for you, but he showed pain and jealousy when he thought that some newer friends had robbed him of you – but perhaps you forget the Cape and all about it."

Trafford's face became crimson, and what answer he might have made to this speech there is no knowing, when Tom cried out, "We are going to have our coffee and cigar on the rocks, Lucy, but you will come with us."

"Of course; I have had three long days of my own company,

and am quite wearied of it."

In the little cleft to which they repaired, a small stream divided the space, leaving only room for two people on the rocks at either side; and after some little jesting as to who was to have the coffee-pot, and who the brandy-flask, Tom and Cave nestled in one corner, while Lucy and Trafford, with more caution as to proximity, seated themselves on the rock opposite.

"We were talking about the Cape, Major Trafford, I think," said Lucy, determined to bring him back to the dreaded theme.

"Were we? I think not; I think we were remembering all the pleasant days beside the Shannon."

"If you please, more sugar and no brandy; and now for the Cape."

"I 'll just hand them the coffee," said he, rising and crossing over to the others.

"Won't she let you smoke, Trafford?" said Tom, seeing the unlighted cigar in the other's fingers; "come over here, then, and escape the tyranny."

"I was just saying," cried Cave, "I wish our Government would establish a protectorate, as they call it, over these islands, and send us out here to garrison them; I call this downright paradise."

"You may smoke, Major Trafford," said Lucy, as he returned; "I am very tolerant about tobacco."

"I don't care for it – at least not now."

"You'd rather tell me about the Cape," said she, with a sly laugh. "Well, I 'm all attention."

"There's really nothing to tell," said he, in confusion. "Your father will have told you already what a routine sort of thing life is, – always meeting the same people, – made ever more uniform by their official stations. It's always the Governor, and the Chief-Justice, and the Bishop, and the Attorney-General."

"But they have wives and daughters?"

"Yes; but official people's wives and daughters are always of the same pattern. They are only females of the species."

"So that you were terribly bored?"

"Just so, – terribly bored."

"What a boon from heaven it must have been then to have met the Sewells!" said she, with a well-put-on carelessness.

"Oh, your father mentioned the Sewells, did he?" asked Trafford, eagerly.

"I should think he did mention them! Why, they were the people he was so jealous of. He said that you were constantly with him till they came, – his companion, in fact, – and that he grieved heavily over your desertion of him."

"There was nothing like desertion; besides," added he, after a moment, "I never suspected he attached any value to my society."

"Very modest, certainly; and probably, as the Sewells did attach this value, you gave it where it was fully appreciated."

"I wish I had never met them," muttered Trafford; and though the words were mumbled beneath his breath, she heard them.

"That sounds very ungratefully," said she, with a smile, "if but one half of what we hear be true."

"What is it you have heard?"

"I 'm keeping Major Trafford from his cigar, Tom; he's too punctilious to smoke in my company, and so I shall leave him to you;" and so saying, she arose, and turned towards the cottage.

Trafford followed her on the instant, and overtook her at the porch.

"One word, – only one," cried he, eagerly. "I see how I have been misrepresented to you. I see what you must think of me; but will you only hear me?"

"I have no right to hear you," said she, coldly.

"Oh, do not say so, Lucy," cried he, trying to take her hand, but which she quickly withdrew from him. "Do not say that you withdraw from me the only interest that attaches me to life. If you knew how friendless I am, you would not leave me."

"He upon whom fortune smiles so pleasantly very seldom wants for any blandishments the world has to give; at least, I have always heard that people are invariably courteous to the prosperous."

"And do you talk of me as prosperous?"

"Why, you are my brother's type of all that is luckiest in life. Only hear Tom on the subject! Hear him talk of his friend Trafford, and you will hear of one on whom all the good fairies showered their fairest gifts."

"The fairies have grown capricious, then. Has Tom told you nothing – I mean since he came back?"

"No; nothing."

"Then let me tell it."

In very few words, and with wonderfully little emotion, Trafford told the tale of his altered fortunes. Of course he did not reveal the reasons for which he had been disinherited, but loosely implied that his conduct had displeased his father, and with his mother he had never been a favorite. "Mine," said he, "is the vulgar story that almost every family has its instance of, – the younger son, who goes into the world with the pretensions of a good house, and forgets that he himself is as poor as the neediest man in the regiment. They grew weary of my extravagance, and, indeed, they began to get weary of myself, and I am not surprised at it! and the end has come at last. They have cast me off, and, except my commission, I have now nothing in the world. I told Tom all this, and his generous reply was, 'Your poverty only draws you nearer to us.' Yes, Lucy, these were his words. Do you think that his sister could have spoken them?"

"'Before she could do so, she certainly should be satisfied on other grounds than those that touch your fortune," said Lucy, gravely.

"And it was to give her that same satisfaction I came here," cried he, eagerly. "I accepted Tom's invitation on the sole pledge that I could vindicate myself to you. I know what is laid to my charge, and I know too how hard it will be to clear myself without appearing like a coxcomb." He grew crimson as he said this, and the shame that overwhelmed him was a better advocate than all his words. "But," added he, "you shall think me vain, conceited, –

a puppy, if you will, – but you shall not believe me false. Will you listen to me?"

"On one condition I will," said she, calmly.

"Name your condition. What is it?"

"My condition is this: that when I have heard you out, – heard all that you care to tell me – if it should turn out that I am not satisfied – I mean, if it appear to me a case in which I ought not to be satisfied – you will pledge your word that this conversation will be our last together."

"But, Lucy, in what spirit will you judge me? If you can approach the theme thus coldly, it gives me little hope that you will wish to acquit me."

A deep blush covered her face as she turned away her head, but made no answer.

"Be only fair, however," cried he, eagerly. "I ask for nothing more." He drew her arm within his as he spoke, and they turned towards the beach where a little sweep of the bay lay hemmed in between lofty rocks. "Here goes my last throw for fortune," said Trafford, after they had strolled along some minutes in silence. "And oh, Lucy, if you knew how I would like to prolong these minutes before, as it may be, they are lost to me forever! If you knew how I would like to give this day to happiness and hope!"

She said nothing, but walked along with her head down, her face slightly averted from him.

"I have not told you of my visit to the Priory," said he, suddenly.

"No; how came you to go there?"

"I went to see the place where you had lived, to see the garden you had tended, and the flowers you loved, Lucy. I took away this bit of jasmine from a tree that overhung a little rustic seat. It may be, for aught I know, all that may remain to me of you ere this day closes."

"My dear little garden! I was so fond of it!" she said, concealing her emotion as well as she could.

"I am such a coward," said he, angrily; "I declare I grow ashamed of myself. If any one had told me I would have skulked danger in this wise, I 'd have scouted the idea! Take this, Lucy," said he, giving her the sprig of withered jasmine; "if what I shall tell you exculpate me – if you are satisfied that I am not unworthy of your love, – you will give it back to me; if I fail – " He could not go on, and another silence of some seconds ensued.

"You know the compact now?" asked he, after a moment. She nodded assent.

For full five minutes they walked along without a word, and then Trafford, at first timidly, but by degrees more boldly, began a narrative of his visit to the Sewells' house. It is not – nor need it be – our task to follow him through a long narrative, broken, irregular, and unconnected as it was. Hampered by the difficulties which on each side beset him of disparaging those of whom he desired to say no word of blame, and of still vindicating himself from all charge of dishonor, he was often, it must be owned, entangled, and sometimes scarcely intelligible. He owned

to have been led into high play against his will, and equally against his will induced to form an intimacy with Mrs. Sewell, which, beginning in a confidence, wandered away into Heaven knows what of sentimentality, and the like. Trafford talked of Lucy Lendrick and his love, and Mrs. Sewell talked of her cruel husband and her misery; and they ended by making a little stock-fund of affection, where they came in common to make their deposits and draw their cheques on fortune.

All this intercourse was the more dangerous that he never knew its danger; and though, on looking back, he was astonished to think what intimate relations subsisted between them, yet, at the time, these had not seemed in the least strange to him. To her sad complaints of neglect, ill-usage, and insult, he offered such consolations as occurred to him: nor did it seem to him that there was any peril in his path, till his mother burst forth with that atrocious charge against Mrs. Sewell for having seduced her son, and which, so far from repelling with the indignation it might have evoked, she appeared rather to bend under, and actually seek his protection to shelter her. Weak and broken by his accident at the race, these difficulties almost overcame his reason; never was there, to his thinking, such a web of entanglement. The hospitality of the house he was enjoying outraged and violated by the outbreaks of his mother's temper; Sewell's confidence in him betrayed by the confessions he daily listened to from his wife; her sorrows and griefs all tending to a dependence on his counsels which gave him a partnership in her

conduct. “With all these upon me,” said he, “I don’t think I was actually mad, but very often I felt terribly close to it. A dozen times a day I would willingly have fought Sewell; as willingly would I have given all I ever hoped to possess in the world to enable his wife to fly his tyranny, and live apart from him. I so far resented my mother’s outrageous conduct, that I left her without a good-bye.”

I can no more trace him through this wandering explanation than I dare ask my reader to follow. It was wild, broken, and discursive. Now interrupted by protestations of innocence, now dashed by acknowledgments of sorrow, who knows if his unartistic story did not serve him better than a more connected narrative, – there was such palpable truth in it!

Nor was Lucy less disposed to leniency that he who pleaded before her was no longer the rich heir of a great estate, with a fair future before him, but one poor and portionless as herself. In the reserve with which he shrouded his quarrel with his family, she fancied she could see the original cause, – his love for her; and if this were so, what more had she need of to prove his truth and fidelity? Who knows if her woman’s instinct had not revealed this to her? Who knows if, in that finer intelligence of the female mind, she had not traced out the secret of the reserve that hampered him, of the delicate forbearance with which he avoided the theme of his estrangement from his family? And if so, what a plea was it for him! Poor fellow, thought she, what has he not given up for me!

Rich men make love with great advantages on their side. There is no doubt that he who can confer demesnes and diamonds has much in his favor. The power that abides in wealth adds marvellous force to the suitor's tale; but there is, be it owned, that in poverty which, when allied with a sturdy self-dependence, appeals wonderfully to a woman's mind. She feels all the devotion that is offered her, and she will not be outdone in generosity. It is so fine of him, when others care for nothing but wealth and riches, to be satisfied with humble fortune, and with *me!* There is the summing up, and none need be more conclusive.

How long Trafford might have gone on strengthening his case, and calling up fresh evidence to his credit, – by what force of words he might still have sustained his character for fidelity, – there is no saying; but his eloquence was suddenly arrested by the sight of Cave and Tom coming to meet them.

"Oh, Lucy," cried he, "do not quit my arm till you tell me my fate. For very pity's sake, do not leave me in the misery of this anxiety," said he, as she disengaged herself, affecting to arrange her shawl.

"I have a word to say to my brother," said she, hurriedly; "keep this sprig of jasmine for me. I mean to plant it somewhere;" and without another word she hastened away and made for the house.

"So we shall have to sail at once, Trafford," said Cave. "The Admiral has sent over the 'Gondomar' to fetch us; and here's a lieutenant with a despatch waiting for us at the cottage."

"The service may go – No, I don't mean that; but if you sail

to-morrow you sail without me."

"Have you made it all right?" whispered Tom in his ear.

"I 'm the happiest fellow in Europe," said he, throwing his arm round the other's shoulder. "Come here, Tom, and let me tell you all – all."

CHAPTER VI. HOW CHANGED

We are once more at the Priory; but how changed is it all! Billy Haire himself scarcely recognizes the old spot, and indeed comes now but seldom to visit it; for the Chief has launched out into the gay world, and entertains largely at dinner, and even gives *déjeuners dansants*, – foreign innovations at which he was wont to inveigh with vehemence.

The old elm under whose shade Avonmore and the wits used to sit of an evening, beneath whose leafy canopy Curran had jested and Moore had sung, was cut down, and a large tent of gaudy blue and white spread its vulgar wings over innumerable breakfast-tables, set forth with what the newspapers call every delicacy of the season.

The Horatian garden, and the Roman house – conceits of an old Lord Chancellor in former times, and once objects of almost veneration in Sir William's eyes – have been swept away, with all their attendant details of good or bad taste, and in their place a fountain has been erected, for whose aquatic displays, be it noted in parenthesis, two horses and as many men are kept in full employ. Of the wild old woodland walks – shady and cool, redolent of sweet-brier and honeysuckle – not a trace remains; driving-roads, wide enough for a pony-carriage, have been substituted for these, and ruthless gaps in the dense wood open long vistas to the eye, in a spot where once it was the

sense of enclosure and seclusion that imparted the chief charm. For so it is, coming out of the din and bustle of a great city, there is no attraction which can vie with whatever breathes of tranquillity, and seems to impart peace by an air of unbroken quiet. It was for this very quality the Priory had gained its fame. Within doors the change was as great as without. New, and, be it admitted, more comfortable furniture had replaced the old ponderous objects which, in every form of ugliness, had made the former decorations of the rooms. All was now light, tasteful, elegant. All invited to ease of intercourse, and suggested that pleasant union of social enjoyment with self-indulgence which our age seems to cultivate. But of all the changes and mutations which a short time had effected, none could compete with that in the old Chief himself. Through life he had been studiously attentive to neatness and care in his dress; it was with something of pride that he exhibited little traits of costume that revived bygone memories; and his long white hak, brushed rigidly back, and worn as a queue behind, and his lace ruffles, recalled a time when these were distinctive signs of class and condition.

His sharply cut and handsome features were well served by the well-marked temples and lofty head that surmounted them, and which the drawn-back hair displayed to full advantage; and what a terrible contrast did the expression present when a light-brown wig covered his head, and a lock of childlike innocence graced his forehead! The large massive eyebrows, so impressive in their venerable whiteness, were now dyed of a dark hue;

and to prevent the semblance of ghastliness which this strong color might impart to the rest of the face, a faint tinge of rouge was given to the cheek, thus lending to the whole features an expression of mingled smirk and severity as little like the former look of dignified intelligence as might be.

A tightly fitting frock-coat and a colored cravat, fastened with a massive jewelled pin, completed a travesty which, strange to say, imparted its character to his gait, and made itself evident in his carriage.

His manner, too, – that admirable courtesy of a bygone day, of which, when unprovoked by a personal encounter, he was a master, – was now replaced by an assumed softness, – an ill-put-on submission that seemed to require all his watchfulness never to forget.

If his friends deplored and his enemies exulted over this unbecoming change in one who, whatever his defects, had ever displayed the force and power of a commanding intellect, the secret was known to few. A violent and unseemly attack had been made in the "House" against him by some political partisan, who alleged that his advanced age and failing faculties urgently demanded his retirement from the Bench, and calling loudly on the Government to enforce a step which nothing but the tenacity and obstinacy of age would have refused to accept voluntarily and even gratefully.

In the discussion – it was not debate – that the subject gave rise to, the year of his birth was quoted, the time he had been first

called, and the long period he had served on the Bench; and if his friends were strong in their evidences of his unfailing powers and unclouded faculties, his assailants adduced instances in which he had mistaken the suitors and misstated the case. His temper, too, imperious even to insult, had, it was said, driven many barristers from his court, where few liked to plead except such as were his abject and devoted followers.

When the attack appeared in the morning papers, Beattie drove out in all haste to the Priory to entreat that the newspapers should be withheld from him, and all mention of the offensive subject be carefully avoided. The doctor was shown into the room where the Sewells were at breakfast, and at once eagerly announced the reason for his early visit.

"You are too late, doctor," said Sewell; "he had read every line of it before we came downstairs. He made me listen to it, too, before I could go to breakfast."

"And how did he bear it?"

"On the whole, I think well. He said they were incorrect about the year he was called, and also as to the time he entered Parliament. With regard to the man who made the attack, he said, 'It is my turn to be biographer now; let us see if the honorable member will call the victory his.'"

"He must do nothing of the kind. I will not answer for his life if he gives way to these bursts of temper."

"I declare I think I'd not interfere with him," drawled out Sewell, as he broke an egg. "I suspect it's better to let those high-

pressure people blow off their steam."

"I'm sure Dr. Beattie is right," interposed Mrs. Sewell, who saw in the doctor's face an unmistakable look of disgust at the Colonel's speech.

"I repeat, sir," said Beattie, gravely, "that it is a question of Sir William's life; he cannot survive another attack like his last one."

"It has always been a matter of wonder to me how he has lived so long. To go on existing, and be so sensitive to public opinion, is something quite beyond my comprehension."

"You would not mind such attacks, then?" said Beattie, with a very slight sneer.

"I should think not! A man must be a fool if he does n't know there are scores of fellows who don't like him; and he must be an unlucky dog if there are not others who envy him for something or other, though it only be his horse or his dog, his waistcoat or his wife."

In the look of malevolence he threw across the table as he spoke this, might be read the concentrated hate of one who loved to insult his victim. The doctor saw it, and rose to leave, disgusted and angry. "I suppose Sir William knows I am here?" said he, coldly.

"I suspect not," said Sewell. "If you 'll talk to my wife, or look over the 'Times,' I'll go and tell him."

The Chief Baron was seated at his writing-table when Sewell entered, and angrily cried out, "Who is there?"

"Sewell, my Lord. May I come in?"

"Sir, you have taken that liberty in anticipation of the request. What do you want?"

"I came to say, my Lord, that Dr. Beattie is here."

"Who sent for him, sir?"

"Not I, my Lord, certainly."

"I repeat my question, sir, and expect a direct answer."

"I can only repeat my answer, my Lord. He was not sent for by me or with my knowledge."

"So that I am to understand that his presence here is not the result of any active solicitude of my family for the consequences of this new outrage upon my feelings;" and he clutched the newspaper as he spoke, and shook it with passion.

"I assure you, my Lord, Beattie has come here of his own accord."

"But on account of this!" and the words came from him with a hissing sound that denoted intense anger. Sewell made a gesture to imply that it might be so, but that he himself knew nothing of it. "Tell him, then, sir, that the Chief Baron regrets he cannot see him; that he is at this moment engaged with the reply to a late attack in the House of Commons, which he desires to finish before post hour; and add, sir, that he is in the best of health and in excellent spirits, – facts which will afford him increased enjoyment, if Dr. Beattie will only be kind enough to mention them widely in the course of his visits."

"I 'm delighted, my Lord, to be charged with such a message," said Sewell, with a well-assumed joy.

"I am glad, sir, to have pleased you, at the same time that I have gained your approbation."

There was a haughty tone in the way these words were delivered that for an instant made Sewell doubt whether they meant approval or reprimand; but he thought he saw a look of self-satisfied vanity in the old man's face, and he merely bowed his thanks for the speech.

"What do you think, sir, they have had the hardihood to say in the House of Commons?" cried the Chief, while his cheek grew crimson and his eye flashed fire. "They say that, looking to the perilous condition of Ireland, with a widespread conspiracy through the land, and rebellion in most daring form bearding the authorities of the Crown, it is no time to see one of the chief seats of justice occupied by one whose achievements in Crown prosecutions date from the state trials of '98! In which capacity, sir, am I assailed? Is it as Patriarch or Patriot? Am I held up to obloquy because I came into the world at a certain year, or because I was one of the counsel for Wolfe Tone? From whom, too, come these slanderous assaults? Do these puny slanderers not yet know that it is with men as with plants, and that though the dockweed is rotten within a few weeks, the oak takes centuries to reach maturity?

"There were men in the Administration once, sir, in whom I had that confidence I could have placed my office in their hands with the full conviction it would have been worthily conferred, – men above the passions of party, and who saw in public life other

ambitions than the struggles for place. I see these men no longer. They who now compose the Cabinet inspire no trust; with them I will not treat."

Exhausted by this outburst of passion, he lay back in his chair, breathing heavily, and to all seeming overcome.

"Shall I get you anything, my Lord?" whispered Sewell.

The old man smiled faintly, and whispered, "Nothing."

"I wish, my Lord," said Sewell, as he bent over his chair, – "I wish I could dare to speak what is passing in my mind; and that I had that place in your Lordship's esteem which might give my words any weight."

"Speak – say on," said he, faintly.

"What I would say is this, my Lord," said Sewell, with increased force, "that these attacks on your Lordship are in a great measure provoked by yourself."

"Provoked by me! and how, sir?" cried the Chief, angrily.

"In this wise, my Lord. You have always held your libellers so cheap that you actually encourage their assaults. You, in the full vigor of your faculties, alive to the latest events, interested in all that science discovers or invention develops, persist in maintaining, both in your mode of living and your companionship, a continued reference to the past. With a wit that could keep pace with the brightest, and an imagination more alive than the youngest men can boast, you vote yourself old, and live with the old. Why, my Lord, is it any wonder that they try you on the indictment you have yourself drawn up? I have only to

ask you to look across the Channel and see the men – your own contemporaries, your colleagues too – who escape these slanders, simply because they keep up with the modes and habits of the day. Their equipages their retinues, their dress, are all such as fashion sanctions. Nothing in their appearance reminds the world that they lived with the grandfathers of those around them; and I say, my Lord, if these men can do this, how much easier would it be for you to do it? You, whose quick intellect the youngest in vain try to cope with; you who are readier in repartee, – younger, in fact, in all the freshness of originality and in all the play of fancy, than the smartest wits of the day.

"My Lord, it has not been without a great effort of courage I have dared to speak thus boldly; but I have so often talked the subject over with my wife, and she, with a woman's wit, has so thoroughly entered into the theme, that I felt, even at the hazard of your displeasure, I ought to risk the telling you." After a pause, he added: "It was but yesterday my wife said, 'If papa,' – you know, my Lord, it is so she calls you in secret, – 'if papa will only cease to dress like a church dignitary, he will not look above fifty, – fifty four or five at most.'"

"I own," said the Judge, slowly, "it has often struck me as strange how little animadversion the Press bestowed upon my English colleagues for their advanced years, and how persistently they commented on mine; and yet the history of Ireland does not point to the early decline of intellectual power. They are fond of showing the characteristics that separate us, but they have never

adduced this one."

"I hope I have your Lordship's forgiveness for my boldness," said Sewell, with humility.

"You have more, sir, – you have my gratitude for an affectionate solicitude. I will think over what you have said when I am alone."

"It will make me a very proud man if I find that my words have had weight with you. I am to tell Beattie, my Lord, that you are engaged, and cannot see him?" said he, moving towards the door.

"Yes. Say that I am occupied with my reply to this slander. Tell him if he likes to dine with me at six – "

"I beg pardon, my Lord – but my wife hoped you would dine with us to-day. We have a few young soldiers, and two or three pretty women coming to us – "

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Sewell, and say I am charmed to accept her invitation."

Sewell took his leave with every token of respectful gratitude. But no sooner had he reached the stairs than he burst into a fit of laughter. "Would any one have believed that the old fool would have swallowed the bait? I was so terrified at my own temerity, I 'd have given the world to be out of the scrape! I declare, if my mother could be got rid of, we 'd have him leading something of sixteen to the altar. Well, if this acute attack of youth does n't finish him, he must have the constitution of an elephant."

CHAPTER VII. HOW TO MEET A SCANDAL

When the Government of the day had found that all their efforts to induce the Chief Baron to retire from the Bench were failures, – when they saw him firmly decided to accept nothing less than that price which they would not pay, – with a littleness which, it is but fair to own, took its origin from Mr. Cholmondely Balfour, they determined to pass upon him a slight which he could not but feel most painfully.

It happened in this wise. At the time I speak of Ireland was suffering from one of those spasmodic attacks of rebellion which every now and then occur through the chronic disaffection of the country, just as certain eruptions are thrown out over the body to relieve, as is supposed, some feverish tendencies of the system.

Now, although the native thinks no more of these passing troubles than would an old Indian of an attack of the "prickly heat," to the English mind they always suggest danger, tend to increase the military force of the kingdom, and bring on in Parliament one of those Irish debates – a political sham fight – where, though there is a good deal of smoke, bustle, and confusion, nobody is hurt, nor, if the truth be told, is any one the better when it is over.

Through such a paroxysm was Ireland now passing. It matters

little to our purpose to give it a specific name, for the Whiteboy or the Rockite, the Terry-alt, the Ribbonman, or the Fenian are the same; there being only one character in this dreary drama, however acute Viceroys and energetic secretaries may affect to think they are "assisting" at the representation of a perfectly new piece, with new scenery, dresses, and decorations.

In ordinary disturbances in Ireland, whenever they rose above the dignity of local mischief, the assistance and sympathy of France was always used as a sort of menace to England. It was a threat very certain to irritate, if it did no more. As, however, by course of time, we grew to form closer relations with France, – to believe, or affect to believe, – I am not very sure which, – that we had outlived old grudges, and had become rather ashamed of old rivalries, France could not be employed as the bugbear it had once been. Fortunately for Irish rebellion, America was quite prepared to take the vacant post, and with this immense additional gain, that the use of our own language enabled our disaffected in the States to revile us with a freedom and a vigor which, if there be that benefit which is said to exist in "seeing ourselves as others see us," ought unquestionably to redound to our future good.

The present movement had gone so far as to fill the public mind with terror, and our jails with suspected traitors. To try these men a special commission had been named by the Government, from which, contrary to custom, the Chief Baron had been omitted. Nor was this all. The various newspapers

supposed to be organs, or at least advocates, of the Ministry, kept up a continuous stream of comment on the grave injury to a country, at a crisis like that then present, to have one of its chief judicial seats occupied by one whose age and infirmities totally disabled him from rendering those services which the Crown and the nation alike had a right to expect from him.

Stories, for the most part untrue, of the Chief Baron's mistakes on the Bench appeared daily. Imaginary suitors, angry solicitors, and such-like – the Bar was too dignified to join in the cry – wrote letters averring this, that, or the other cruel wrong inflicted upon them through the "senile incapacity of this obstructive and vain old man."

Never was there a less adroit tactic. Every insult they hurled at him only suggested a fresh resolve to hold his ground. To attack such a man was to evoke every spark of vigorous resistance in his nature, to stimulate energies which nothing short of outrage could awaken, and to call into activity powers which, in the ordinary course of events, would have fallen into decline and decay. As he expressed it, "in trying to extinguish the lamp they have only trimmed the wick." When, through Sewell's pernicious counsels, the old Judge determined to convince the world of his judicial fitness by coming out a young man, dressed in the latest fashion, and affecting in his gait and manner the last fopperies of the day, all the reserve which respect for his great abilities had imposed was thrown aside, and the papers now assailed him with a ridicule that was downright indecent. The print shops, too, took

up the theme, and the windows were filled with caricatures of every imaginable degree of absurdity.

There was one man to whom these offensive attacks gave pain only inferior to what they inflicted on the Chief himself, – this was his friend Haire. To have lived to see the great object of all his homage thus treated by an ungrateful country, seemed to him the direst of all calamities. Over and over did he ponder with himself whether such depravity of public feeling portended the coming decline of the nation, and whether such gross forgetfulness of great services was not to be taken as a sign of approaching dissolution.

It was true that since the Sewells had taken up their residence at the Priory he had seen but little of his distinguished friend. All the habits, the hours, and the associations of the house had been changed. The old butler, who used to receive Haire when he arrived on terms of humble friendship, telling him in confidence, before he went in, the temper in which he should find the Judge, what crosses or worries had recently befallen him, and what themes it might be discreet to avoid, – he was pensioned off, and in his place a smart Englishman, Mr. Cheetor, now figured, – a gentleman whose every accent, not to speak of his dress, would have awed poor Haire into downright subjection. The large back hall, through which you passed into the garden, – a favorite stroll of Haire's in olden times, – was now a billiard room, and generally filled with fine ladies and gentlemen engaged in playing; the very sight of a lady with a billiard cue, and not

impossibly a cigarette, being shocks to the old man's notions only short of seeing the fair delinquent led off to the watchhouse. The drowsy quietude of the place, so grateful after the crush and tumult of a city, was gone; and there was the clang of a pianoforte, the rattle of the billiard balls, the loud talk and loud laughter of morning visitors, in its stead. The quaint old gray liveries were changed for coats of brilliant claret color. Even to the time-honored glass of brandy-and-water which welcomed Haire as he walked out from town there was revolution; and the measure of the old man's discomfiture was complete as the silvery-tongued butler offered him his choice of hock and seltzer or claret-cup!

"Does the Chief like all this? Is it possible that at his age these changes can please him?" muttered Haire, as he sauntered one day homeward, sad and dispirited; and it would not have been easy to resolve the question.

There was so much that flattered the old Judge's vanity, – so much that addressed itself to that consciousness that his years were no barrier to his sentiments, that into all that went on in life, whatever of new that men introduced into their ways or habits, he was just as capable of entering as the youngest amongst them; and this avidity to be behind in nothing showed itself in the way he would read the sporting papers, and make himself up in the odds at Newmarket and the last news of the Cambridge Eleven. It is true, never was there a more ready-money payment than the admiration he reaped from all this; and enthusiastic cornets went

so far as to lament how the genius that might have done great things at Doncaster had been buried in a Court of Exchequer. "I wish he 'd tell us who 'll win the Riggles-worth" – "I 'd give a fifty to know what he thinks of Polly Perkins for the cup," were the dropping utterances of mustachioed youths who would have turned away inattentive on any mention of his triumphs in the Senate or at the Bar.

"I declare, mother," said Sewell, in one of those morning calls at Merrion Square in which he kept her alive to the events of the Priory, – "I declare, mother, if we could get *you* out of the way, I think he 'd marry again. He 's uncommonly tender towards one of those Lascelles girls, nieces of the Viceroy, and I am certain he would propose for her."

"I'm sure I'm very sorry I should be an obstacle to him, especially as it prevents him from crowning the whole folly of his life."

"She's a great horsewoman, and he has given me a commission to get him a saddle-horse to ride with her."

"Which of course you will not."

"Which of course I will, though. I'm going about it now. He has been very intractable about stable matters hitherto; the utmost we could do was to exchange the old long-tailed coach-horses, and get rid of that vile old chariot; but if we get him once launched into riding hacks, we 'll have something to mount us."

"And when his granddaughter returns, will not all go back to the former state?"

"First of all, she's not coming. There's a split in that quarter, and in all likelihood an irremediable one."

"How so? What has she done?"

"She has fallen in love with a young fellow as poor as herself; and her brother Tom has written to the Chief to know if he sees any reason why they should not marry. The very idea of an act of such insubordination as falling in love of course outraged him. He took my wife into his counsels besides, and she, it would appear, gave a most unfavorable character of the suitor, – said he was a gambler, – and we all know what a hopeless thing that is! – that his family had thrown him off; that he had gone through the whole of his patrimony, and was, in short, just as bad 'a lot' as could well be found."

"She was quite right to say so," burst in Lady Lendrick. "I really do not see how she could have done otherwise."

"Perhaps not; the only possible objection was, that there was no truth in it all."

"Not true!"

"Not a word of it, except what relates to his quarrel with his family. As for the rest, he is pretty much like other fellows of his age and time of life. He has done the sort of things they all do, and hitherto has come fairly enough out of them."

"But what motive could she have had for blackening him?"

"Ask her, mother," said he, with a grin of devilish spitefulness, – "just ask her; and even if she won't tell you, your woman's wit will find out the reason without her aid."

"I declare, Dudley, you are too bad, – too bad," said she, coloring with anger as she spoke.

"I should say, Too good, – too good by half, mother; at least, if endurance be any virtue. The world is beautifully generous towards us husbands. We are either monsters of cruelty, or we come into that category the French call 'complaisant.' I can't say I have any fancy for either class; but if I am driven to a choice, I accept the part which meets the natural easiness of my disposition, the general kindliness of my character."

For an instant Lady Lendrick's eyes flashed with a fiery indignation, and she seemed about to reply with anger; but with an effort she controlled her passion, and took a turn or two in the room without speaking. At last, having recovered her calm, she said, "Is the marriage project then broken off?"

"So far as the Chief is concerned, it is. He has written a furious letter to his granddaughter, – dwelt forcibly on the ingratitude of her conduct. There is nothing old people so constantly refer to ingratitude as young folks falling in love. It is strange what a close tie would seem to connect this sin of ingratitude with the tender passion. He has reminded her of all the good precepts and wise examples that were placed before her at the Priory, and how shamefully she would seem to have forgotten them. He asks her, Did she ever see him fall in love? Did she ever see any weakness of this kind in Mrs. Beales the housekeeper, or Joe the gardener?"

"What stuff and nonsense!" said Lady Lendrick, turning

angrily away from him. “Sir William is not an angel, but as certainly he is not a fool.”

“There I differ from you altogether. He may be the craftiest lawyer, the wisest judge, the neatest scholar, and the best talker of his day, – these are all claims I cannot adjudicate on, – they are far and away above me. But I *do* pretend to know something about life and the world we live in, and I tell you that your all-accomplished Chief Baron is, in whatever relates to these, as consummate an ass as ever I met with. It is not that he is sometimes wrong; it is that he is never right.”

“I can imagine he is not very clever at billiards, and it is possible that there may be persons more conversant than *he* with the odds at Tattersall’s,” said she, with a sneer.

“Not bad things to know something about, either of them,” said he, quietly; “but not exactly what I was alluding to. It is, however, somewhat amusing, mother, to see you come out as his defender. I assure you, honestly, when I counselled him on that new wig, and advised him to the choice of that dark velvet paletot, I never contemplated his making a conquest of you.”

“He *has* done some unwise things in life,” said she, with a fierce energy; “but I do not know if he has ever done so foolish a one as inviting you to come to live under his roof.”

“No, mother; the mistake was his not having done it earlier, – done it when he might have fallen in more readily with the wise changes I have introduced into his household, and when – most important element – he had a better balance at his banker’s. You

can't imagine what sums of money he has gone through."

"I know nothing – I do not desire to know anything – of Sir William's money matters."

Not heeding in the slightest degree the tone of reproof she spoke in, he went on, in the train of his own thoughts: "Yes! It would have made a considerable difference to each of us had we met somewhat earlier. It was a sort of backing I always wanted in life."

"There was something else that you needed far more," said she, with a sarcastic sternness.

"I know what you mean, mother, – I know what it is. Your politeness will not permit you to mention it. You would hint that I might not have been the worse of a little honesty, – is n't that it? I was certain of it. Well, do you know, mother, there's nothing in it, – positively nothing. I 've met fellows who have tried it, – clever fellows too, some of them, – and they have universally admitted it was as great a sham as the other thing. As St. John said, Honesty is a sort of balloon jib, that will bowl you along splendidly with fair weather; but when it comes on to blow, you'll soon find it better to shift your canvas and bend a very different sail. Now, men like myself are out in all kinds of weather; we want a handy rig and light tackle."

"Is Lucy coming to luncheon?" said Lady Lendrick, most unmistakably showing how little palatable to her was his discourse.

"Not she. She's performing devoted mother up at the Priory,

teaching Regy his catechism, or Cary her scales, or, what has an infinitely finer effect on the surrounders, dining with the children. Only dine with the children, and you may run a-muck through the Decalogue all the evening after."

And with this profound piece of morality he adjusted his hat before the glass, trimmed his whiskers, gave himself a friendly nod, and walked away.

CHAPTER VIII. TWO MEN WELL MET

Sewell had long coveted the suite of rooms known at the Priory as "Miss Lucy's." They were on the ground-floor; they opened on a small enclosed garden of their own; they had a delicious aspect; and it was a thousand pities they should be consigned to darkness and spiders while he wanted so much a snuggery of his own, – a little territory which could be approached without coming through the great entrance, and where he could receive his familiars, and a variety of other creatures whose externals alone would have denied them admittance to any decent household.

Now, although Sir William's letter to Lucy was the sort of document which, admitting no species of reply, usually closes a correspondence, Sewell had not courage to ask the Chief for the rooms in question. It would be too like peremptory action to be prudent. It might lead the old man to reconsider his judgment. Who knows what tender memories the thought might call up? Indeed, as Sewell himself remembered, he had seen fellows in India show great emotion at the sale of a comrade's kit, though they had read the news of his death with comparative composure. "If the old fellow were to toddle in here, and see her chair and her writing-table and her easel, it might undo everything," said he; so

that he wisely resolved it would be better to occupy the premises without a title than endeavor to obtain them legitimately.

By a slight effort of diplomacy with Mrs. Beales, he obtained possession of the key, and as speedily installed himself in occupancy. Indeed, when the venerable housekeeper came round to see what the Colonel could possibly want to do with the rooms, she scarcely recognized them. A pipe-rack covered one wall, furnished with every imaginable engine for smoke; a stand for rifles and fowling-pieces occupied a corner; some select prints of Derby winners and ballet celebrities were scattered about; while a small African monkey, of that color they call green, sat in a small arm-chair, of his own, near the window, apparently sunk in deep reflection. This creature, whom his master called Dundas – I am unable to say after what other representative of the name – was gifted with an instinctive appreciation of duns, and flew at the man who presented a bill as unerringly as ever a bull rushed at the bearer of a red rag.

How he learned to know tailors, shoemakers, and tobacconists, and distinguish them from the rest of mankind, and how he recognized them as natural enemies, I cannot say. As for Se well, he always spoke of the gift as the very strongest evidence in favor of the Darwinian theory, and declared it was the prospective sense of troubles to come that suggested the instinct. The chalk head, the portrait Lucy had made of Sir Brook, still hung over the fireplace. It would be a curious subject of inquiry to know why Sewell suffered it still to hold its place there. If

there was a man in the world whom he thoroughly hated, it was Fossbrooke. If there was one to injure whom he would have bartered fortune and benefit to himself, it was he. And how came it that he could bear to have this reminder of him so perpetually before his eyes? – that the stern features should be ever bent upon him, – darkly, reproachfully lowering, as he had often seen them in life? If it were simply that his tenure of the place was insecure, what so easy as to replace the picture, and why should he endure the insult of its presence there? No, there was some other reason, – some sentiment stronger than a reason, – some sense of danger in meddling with that man in any shape. Over and over again he vowed to himself he would hang it against a tree, and make a pistol-mark of it. Again and again he swore that he would destroy it; he even drew out his penknife to sever the head from the neck, significant sign of how he would like to treat the original; but yet he had replaced his knife, and repressed his resolve, and sat down again to brood over his anger inoperative.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.