

BARING-GOULD SABINE

ARMINELL, VOL. 1

Sabine Baring-Gould

Arminell, Vol. 1

«Public Domain»

Baring-Gould S.

Arminell, Vol. 1 / S. Baring-Gould — «Public Domain»,

© Baring-Gould S.

© Public Domain

Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	10
CHAPTER III	15
CHAPTER IV	20
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	25

S. Baring-Gould

Arminell, Vol. 1 / A Social Romance

CHAPTER I

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday-school on the ground floor of the keeper's cottage that stood against the church-yard, in a piece nibbled out of holy ground. Some old folks said this cottage had been the church-house where in ancient days the people who came to divine service stayed between morning prayer and evensong, ate their mid-day meal and gave out and received their hebdomadal quotient of gossip. But such days were long over, the house had been used as a keeper's lodge for at least a hundred years. The basement consisted of one low hall exactly six feet one inch from floor to rafters. There was no ceiling between it and the upper house – only a flooring laid on the rafters. In pre-traditional days the men had sat and eaten and drunk in the room above, and the women in that below, between services, and their horses had been stabled where now the keeper had his kennel.

The basement chamber was paved with slabs of slate. Rats infested the lodge, they came after the bones and biscuits left by the dogs. The pheasants' food was kept there, the keeper's wife dropped her dripping, and the children were not scrupulous about finishing their crusts. The rats undermined the slates, making runs beneath the pavement to get at the box of dog biscuits, and the sacks of buckwheat, and the parcels of peppercorns; consequently the slates were not firm to walk on. Moreover, in the floor was a sunless secret cellar, of but eighteen inches in depth, for the reception of liquor, or laces or silks that had not paid the excise. The slates over this place, long disused, were infirm and inclined to let whoever stepped on them down.

During the week the keeper's wife washed in the basement and slopped soapy water about, that ran between the slates and formed puddles, lurking under corners, and when, on Sunday, the incautious foot rested on an angle of slate, the slab tilted and squirted forth the stale unsavoury water.

The room, as already said, was unceiled. The rafters were of solid oak; the boards above were of deal, and had shrunk in places, and in places dropped out the core of their knots. The keeper's children found a pleasure in poking sticks and fingers through, and in lying flat on the floor with an eye on the knot-hole, surveying through it the proceedings in the Sunday-school below.

About the floor in unsystematic arrangement spraddled forms of deal, rubbed by boys' trousers to a polish. Some of these forms were high in the leg, others short. No two were on a level, and no two were of the same length. They were rudely set about the floor in rhomboidal shapes, or rather in trapeziums, which according to Euclid have no defined shapes at all.

There was a large open fireplace at one end of the room, in which in winter a fire of wood burned. When it burned the door had to be left wide open, because of the smoke, consequently Sunday-school was held in winter in a draught. At the extremity of the room, opposite the fireplace stood Moses and Aaron – not in the flesh, nor even in spirit, but in “counterfeit presentment” as large as life, rudely painted on board. They had originally adorned the east end of the chancel; when, however, the fashion of restoring churches set in, Orleigh Church had been done up, and Moses and Aaron had been supplanted to make room for a horrible reredos of glazed tiles. One of the Sunday-school scholars, a wag, had scribbled mottoes from their mouths, on scrolls, and had made Aaron observe to Moses, “Let us cut off our noses;” to which the meekest of men was made to re-join, “It is the fashion to wear 'em.” But through orthographical weakness, fashion had been spelled *fashum*, and wear 'em had been rendered *warum*.

But why was the Sunday-school held in the basement of the keeper's cottage? For the best of good reasons. There was no other room conveniently near the church in which it could be held.

Lady Lamerton could not live in peace without a Sunday-school. To her, the obligation to keep the ten commandments was second to the obligation to keep Sunday-school. How could the ten commandments be taught, unless there were a Sunday-school in which to teach them? About a century ago Mr. Raikes invented and introduced this institution; it spread like measles, schools multiplied like maggots. It became an incubus on consciences. It was supposed to be the panacea for all moral evil. There are still to be found persons with childlike faith in Sunday-schools, as there are to be found persons who believe in spontaneous combustion and calomel.

The national school was two miles distant, near the village. The church stood in the grounds of Orleigh Park, and its satellite, the Sunday-school, necessarily near it.

In Yorkshire it is customary among the lower classes at dinner, when there is meat, to introduce first a huge and heavy slab of pudding, and the young people are expected to devour a pound's weight of this before meat is put on their plates. It is thought, and justly, that a grounding of leaden dough will make their appetites less keen for roast beef. On the same principle the disciples of Mr. Raikes serve out Sunday-school, slabby and heavy, to young church-folk, before Church worship, to abate in some degree their relish for it.

There had been some difficulty about a habitat for the Sunday-school. Lady Lamerton had tried to hold it in the laundry of the great house, but the children in muddy weather had brought in so much dirt that no laundry-work could be done in the room on Monday till it had been scoured out. Besides – a fearful discovery had been made, better left to the imagination than particularized. Suffice it to say that after this discovery the children were banished the laundry. It must have come from them. From whom else could it have been derived? The laundry-maids were Aphrodites, foam, or rather soapsud-born, and it could not proceed from such as they. Some said – but nonsense – there is no such a thing as spontaneous generation. Pasteur has exploded that. So all the pupils, with their prayer-books and Ancient-and-Moderns under their arms, made an exodus, and went for a while into an outhouse in the stable-yard. There they did not remain long, for the boys hid behind doors instead of coming in to lessons, and then dived into stables to see the horses. One of them nearly died from drinking embrocation for spavin, thinking it was cherry-brandy, and another scratched his ignoble name on the panel of one of my lord's carriages, with a pin.

So, on the complaint of the coachman, my lord spoke out, and the Sunday scholars again tucked their prayer-books and hymnals under their arms, and, under the guidance of Lady Lamerton, migrated to a settled habitation in the basement of the keeper's cottage. The place was hardly commodious, but it had its advantages-it was near the church.

Lady Lamerton, who presided over the Sunday-school and collected the Sunday scholars' club-pence, and distributed that dreary brown-paper-covered literature that constituted the Sunday-school lending library, was a middle-aged lady with a thin face and very transparent skin, through which every vein showed. There was not much character in her face, but it possessed a certain delicacy and purity that redeemed it from being uninteresting. She was – it could be read in every feature – a scrupulously conscientious woman, a woman strong in doing her duty, and in that only; one whose head might be and generally was in a profound muddle as to what she believed, but who never for a moment doubted as to what she should do. She would be torn by wild horses rather than not keep Sunday-school, and yet did not know what to teach the children in the school she mustered.

Lady Lamerton, seated on a green garden chair from which the paint was much rubbed away, had about her on three sides of an irregular square the eldest girls of the school. The next class to hers was taken by the Honourable Arminell Inglett, her step-daughter, only child of Lord Lamerton by his first wife.

Miss Inglett was very different in type from her step-mother; a tall, handsome girl, with dark hair cut short, like a boy's, and eyes of violet blue. She had a skin of the purest olive, no rose whatever

in her cheeks, as transparent as Lady Lamerton's, but of a warmer tone, like the mellow of an old painting, whereas that of her step-mother had the freshness and crudeness of a picture from the easel sent to the Royal Academy on the first of May.

Arminell differed from Lady Lamerton in expression as completely as in type of feature and colour. She had an unusual breadth of brow, whereas Lady Lamerton's forehead was narrow. Her eyes had not that patient gentleness that filled the dark blue orbs of her ladyship, they were quick and sparkling. Her lips, somewhat prominent, were full, warm and contemptuous. She held her head erect, with a curl of the mouth, and a contraction of the brows, that expressed impatience at the task on which she was engaged.

On the left side of Miss Inglett sat Captain Tubb, engaged on the illumination of the souls of the senior boys. Captain Tubb held no commission in the army or navy, not even in the volunteers. He was, in fact, only the manager of a lime-quarry in the parish, on the estate of Lord Lamerton, but such heads over gangs of quarry and mining men bear among the people the courtesy-title of captain.

Mr. Tubb was a short, pale man with shiny face much polished, and with sandy moustache and beard. When he was in perplexity, he put his hand to his mouth, and stroked his moustache, or his beard under the chin, turned it up, and nibbled at the ends.

Some folk said that the captain taught in school so as to stand well with her ladyship, who would speak a word for him to my lord; but the rector thought, more charitably, he did it for his soul's and conscience sake. Captain Tubb was a simple man, except in his business, and in that he was sharp enough. Perhaps he taught a class from mixed motives, and thought it would help him on a bit in both worlds.

"Yes," said Lady Lamerton, "yes, Fanny White, go on. As the list of the canonical books is known to you all, I require you to learn the names of these books which, as the sixth article says, are read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet are not applied to establish any doctrine. After that we will proceed to learn by heart the names of the Homilies, twenty-one in all, given in the thirty-fifth article, which are the more important, because they are not even read and hardly any one has a copy of them. Go on with the uncanonical books. Third Book of Esdras, Fourth Book of Esdras."

"Tobit," whispered the timid Fanny White, and curtsied.

"Quite right, Tobit – go on. It is most important for your soul's health that you should know what books are not canonical, and in their sequence. What comes after Tobit?"

"Judith," faltered Fanny.

"Then a portion of Esther, not found in Hebrew. What next?"

"Wisdom," shouted the next girl, Polly Woodley.

"True, but do not be so forward, Polly; I am asking Fanny White."

"Ecclesiasticks," in a timid, doubtful sigh from Fanny, who raised her eyes to the boards above, detected an eye inspecting her through a knot-hole, laughed, and then turned crimson.

"Not sticks," said Lady Lamerton, sweetly, "you must say – cus."

A dead silence and great doubt fell on the class.

"Yes, go on – cus."

Then faintly from Fanny, "Please, my lady, mother says I b'aint to swear."

"I don't mind," exclaimed the irrepressible Polly Woodley, starting up, and thrusting her hand forward into Lady Lamerton's face, "Darn it."

Her ladyship fell back in her chair; the eye was withdrawn from the hole in the floor, and a laugh exploded upstairs.

"I – I didn't mean that," explained the lady, "I meant, not Ecclesiasticks, nor Ecclesiastes, which is canonical, but Ecclesiasti – cus, which is not."

Just then a loud, rolling, grinding sound made itself heard through the school-room, drowning the voices of the teachers and covering the asides of the taught.

“Dear me,” said Lady Lamerton, “there is the keeper’s wife rocking the cradle again. One of you run upstairs and ask her very kindly to desist. It is impossible for any one to hear what is going on below with that thunder rolling above.”

“Please, my lady,” said Polly, peeping up through the nearest knot in the superjacent plank, “it b’aint Mrs. Crooks, it be Bessie as is rocking of the baby. Wicked creetur not to be at school.”

“It does not matter who rocks the cradle,” said her ladyship, “nor are we justified in judging others. One of you – not all at once – you, Polly Woodley, ask Bessie to leave the cradle alone till later.”

The whole school listened breathlessly as the girl went out, tramped up the outside slate steps to the floor occupied by the keeper’s family above, and heard her say: —

“Now then, Bessie! What be you a-making that racket for? My lady says she’ll pull your nose unless you stop at once. My lady’s doing her best to teach us to cuss downstairs, and her can’t hear her own voice wi’out screeching like a magpie.”

Then up rose Lady Lamerton in great agitation.

“That girl is intolerable. She shall not have a ticket for good conduct to-day. I will go – no, you run, Joan Ball, and make her return. I will have a proper school-room built. This shall not occur again.”

Then Captain Tubb rose to his full height, stood on a stool, put his mouth to the orifice in the plank, placed his hands about his mouth and roared through the hole: “Her ladyship saith Come down.”

Presently with unabashed self-satisfaction Polly Woodley reappeared.

“When I send you on an errand,” said Lady Lamerton severely, “deliver it as given. I am much displeased.”

“Yes, my lady, thank you,” answered Polly with cheerful face, and resumed her seat in class.

“Now boys,” said Captain Tubb to his class, which was composed of the senior male scholars, including Tom Metters, the rascal who had put the inscriptions in the mouths of Moses and Aaron. “Now boys, attention. The cradle and Polly Woodley are nothing to you. We will proceed with what we were about.”

“Please, sir,” said Tom Metters, thrusting forth his hand as a semaphore, “what do Quinquagesima, Septuagesima and the lot of they rummy names mean?”

“Rummy,” reprov’d Captain Tubb, “is an improper term to employ. Say, remarkable. Quinquagesima” – he stroked his moustache, then brightened – “it is the name of a Sunday.”

“I know, sir, but why is it so called?”

“Why are *you* called Tom Metters?” asked the captain as a feeble effort to turn the tables.

“I be called Tom after my uncle, and Metters is my father’s name – but Quinquagesima?”

“Quin-qua-gess-im-a!” mused the Captain, and looked furtively towards my lady for help, but she was engrossed in teaching her class what books were not to be employed for the establishment of doctrine, and did not notice the appeal.

“Yes, sir,” persisted Metters, holding him as a ferret holds the throat of a rabbit, “Quinquagesima.”

“I think,” said Tubb eagerly, “we were engaged on David’s mighty men. Go on with the mighty men.”

“But, please sir, I *do* want to know about Quinquagesima, cruel bad.”

“Quin-qua-gess-ima,” sighed Capt. Tubb, nibbling the ends of his beard; then again in a lower sigh, “Quin-qua-gess-ima?” He looked at Arminell for enlightenment, but in vain. She was listening amused and scornful.

“Gessima – gessima!” said Mr Tubb; then falteringly: “It’s a sort of creeper, over veranders.”

He saw a flash in Arminell’s eye, and took it as encouragement. Then, with confidence he advanced.

“Yes, Metters, it means that this is the Sunday or week whereabouts the yaller jessamine – or in Latin, gessima – do begin to bloom.”

“Thank you, sir – and Septuagesima?”

“That,” answered the captain with great promptitude, “that is when the white ’un flowers.”

“But, sir, there’s another Sunday collick, Sexagesima. There’s no red or blue jessamine, be there?”

“Red, or blue!” The teacher looked hopelessly at Arminell, who with compressed lips observed him and shook her head.

“Sex – sex – sex,” repeated Mr. Tubb, with his mouth full of beard, “always means females. That means the female jessamine.”

“Be there any, sir? There’s a petticoat narcissus, and a lady’s smock, and a marygold, but I never heard of a she-jessamine.”

“There are none here,” answered Tubb, “but in the Holy Land – lots.”

“Really, Arminell,” said Lady Lamerton, “your class is doing nothing but play and disturb mine.”

“I am on the stool of the learner,” sneered the girl.

At that moment, through the ceiling, or rather boards above, dropped a black-handled kitchen fork within a hair’s breadth of Arminell’s head. She drew back, startled.

“What is it? What is the matter?” exclaimed Lady Lamerton. “Run up, Polly Woodley! – no, not you this time; you, Fanny White, and see what they are about upstairs.”

“Please, my lady,” said Polly, peering into the higher regions through the hole, “Bessie have given the baby the knives and forks to play with, ’cause you wont let her rock the cradle, and to keep ’un from crying. He’s a shoving ’em through the floor.”

Then, down through the knot-hole descended a shower of comfits. The child had been given a cornet by its mother, and had eagerly opened it, over the hole where it had poked the fork.

The school floor was overspread with a pink and white hail-shower. In a moment, all order was over. The classes broke up into individual units, all on the floor, kicking, scratching, elbowing, grabbing after the scattered comfits, thrusting fingers into eyes, into soapy water; getting them trodden on, nipped between slates, a wriggling, contending, greedy, noisy tangle of small humanity, and above it stood my lady protesting, and Captain Tubb nibbling the ends of his sandy beard, and looking dazed; and Arminell Inglett, half angry, half amused, altogether contemptuous.

“There!” exclaimed Lady Lamerton, “the bells are going for divine service. In places at once – Let us pray!”

CHAPTER II

A FOLLOWER

The church bells were ringing, the Sunday-school had at last been reduced to order, arranged in line, and wriggled, sinuous, worm-like, along the road and up the avenue to the church porch. Lady Lamerton, brandishing her sunshade as a field-marshal's baton, kept the children in place, and directed the head of the procession.

But with what heart-burnings, what envies, what excited passions did that train sweep on its way. Some of the children had got more comfits than others, and despised those less favoured by luck, and others comfitless envied the more successful. Polly Woodley had secured more comfits than the rest, and had them screwed in the corner of her pocket-handkerchief, and she thrust it exultantly under the eyes of Fanny White, who had come off with one only.

Some sobbed because they had crumpled their gowns, one boy howled because in stooping he had ruptured his nether garments, Joan Ball had broken the feather in her hat, and revenged herself on her neighbour by a stab of pin. One child strewed its tongue with comfits, and when Lady Lamerton did not observe, exposed its tongue to the rest of the children to excite their envy. Another was engaged in wiping out of its eyes the soapy water that in the scuffle had been squirted into them.

Captain Tubb dropped away at the church gates to shake hands with, and talk to, some of the villagers, the inn-keeper to the Lamerton Arms, the churchwarden, the guardian of the poor, and the miller, men who constituted the middle crumb of the parochial loaf.

Lady Lamerton likewise deserted her charges at the porch, and having consigned them to the clerk, returned on her course, entered the drive, and proceeded to meet his lordship, that they might make their solemn entrance into church together. Arminell had disappeared.

"Where is the girl?" asked her ladyship when she took my lord's arm.

"Haven't seen her, my dear."

"Really, Lamerton," said my lady, "she frightens me. She is so impulsive and self-willed. She flares up when opposed, and has no more taste for Sunday-school than I have for oysters. I do my best to influence her for good, but I might as well try to influence a cocoa-nut. By the way, Lamerton, you really must build us a Sunday-school, the inconveniences to which we are subjected are intolerable."

"Have you seen Legassick, my dear?"

"I believe he is standing by the steps."

"I must speak to him about the road, it has been stoned recently. Monstrous! It should have been metalled in the winter, then the stones would have worked in, now they will be loose all the summer to throw down the horses."

"And you will build us a Sunday-school?"

"I will see about it. Won't the keeper's lodge do? The woman does not wash downstairs on a Sunday."

"I wish you kept school there one Sabbath day. You would discover how great are the discomforts. Now we are at the church gates and must compose our minds."

"Certainly, my dear. The lord-lieutenant is going to make Gammon sheriff."

"Why Gammon?"

"Because he can afford to pay for the honour. The old squirearchy can't bear the expense."

"Hush, we are close to the church, and must withdraw our minds from the world."

"So I will, dear. Eggin's pigs have been in the garden again."

"There'll be the exhortation to-day, Lamerton, and you must stand up for it. Next Sunday is Sacrament Sunday."

"To be sure. I'll have a lower line of wire round the fences. Those pigs go where a hare will run."

“Have you brought your hymnal with you?”

Lord Lamerton fumbled in his pocket, and produced his yellow silk kerchief and a book together.

“That,” said his wife, “is no good; it is the old edition.”

“It doesn’t matter. I will open the book, and no one will be the wiser.”

“But you will be thinking during the hymn of Eggin’s pigs and Gammon’s sheriffalty.”

“I’ll do better next Sunday. The gardener tells me they have turned up your single dahlias.”

“Hush! we are in the church. Arminell is not in the pew. Where can she be?”

Arminell was not in church. She was, in fact, walking away from it, and by the time her father had entered his pew and looked into his hat, had put a distance of half a mile between herself and the sacred building. A sudden fit of disgust at the routine of Sunday duties had come over her, and she resolved to absent herself that morning from church, and pay a visit to a deserted lime quarry, where she could spend an hour alone, and her moral and religious sense, as she put it, could recover tone after the ordeal of Sunday-school.

“What can induce my lady to take a class every Sunday?” questioned Arminell in her thought. “It does no good to the children, and it maddens the teachers. But, oh! what a woman mamma is! Providence must have been hard up for ideas when it produced my lady. How tiresome!”

These last words were addressed to a bramble that had caught in her skirt. She shook her gown impatiently and walked on. The bramble still adhered and dragged.

“What a nuisance,” said Arminell, and she whisked her skirt round and endeavoured to pick off the brier, but ineffectually.

“Let me assist you,” said a voice; and in a moment a young man leaped the park wall, stepped on the end of the bramble, and said, “Now, if you please, walk on, Miss Inglett.”

Arminell took a few steps and was free. She turned, and with a slight bow said, “I thank you, Mr. Saltren.” Then, with a smile, “I wish I could get rid of all tribulations as easily.”

“And find them whilst they cling as light. You are perhaps not aware that ‘tribulation’ derives from the Latin *tribulus*, a bramble.”

“So well aware was I that I perpetrated the joke which you have spoiled by threshing it. Why are you not at church, Mr. Saltren, listening for the rector’s pronounciation of the Greek names of St. Paul’s acquaintances, in the hopes of detecting a false quantity among them?”

“Because Giles has a cold, and I stay at my lady’s desire to read the psalms and lessons to him.”

“I wonder whether schooling Giles is as intolerable as taking Sunday class; if it be, you have my grateful sympathy.”

“Your sympathy, Miss Inglett, will relieve me of many a tribulus which adheres to my robe.”

“Is Giles a stupid boy and troublesome pupil?”

“Not at all. My troubles are not connected with my little pupil.”

“Class-taking in that Sunday-school is a sort of mental garrotting,” said Arminell. “I wonder whether a teacher always feels as if his brains were being measured for a hat when he is giving instruction.”

“Only when there is non-receptivity in the minds of those he teaches, or tries to teach. May I ask if you are not going to church, Miss Inglett?”

“I have done the civil by attending the Sunday-school, and the articles disapprove of works of supererogation. I am going to worship under the fresh green leaves, and to listen to the choir of the birds – blackbird, thrush, and ouzel. I am too ruffled in temper to sit still in church and listen to the same common-places in the same see-saw voice from the pulpit. Do you know what it is to be restless, Mr. Saltren, and not know what makes you ill at ease? To desire greatly something, and not know what you long after?”

The young man was walking beside her, a little in the rear, respectfully, not full abreast. He was a pale man with an oval face, dark eyes and long dark lashes, and a slight downy moustache.

“I can in no way conceive that anything can be lacking to Miss Inglett,” he said. “She has everything to make life happy, an ideally perfect lot, absolutely deficient in every element that can jar with and disturb tranquillity and happiness.”

“You judge only by exterior circumstances. You might say the same of the bird in the egg – it fits it as a glove, it is walled round by a shell against danger, it is warmed by the breast of the parent, why should it be impatient of its coiled up, comatose condition? Simply because that condition is coiled up and comatose. Why should the young sponge ever detach itself from the rock on which it first developed by the side of the great absorbent old sponge? It gets enough to eat, it is securely attached by its foot to the rock; it is in the oceanic level that suits its existence. Why should it let go all at once and float away, rise to the surface and cling elsewhere? Because of the monotony of its life of absorption and contraction, and of its sedentary habits. But, there, – enough about myself; I did not intend to speak of myself. You have brambles clinging to you. Show me them, that I may put my foot on them and free you.”

“You know, Miss Inglett, who I am – the son of the captain of the manganese mine, and that his wife is an old lady’s maid from the park. You know that I was a clever boy, and that his lordship most generously interested himself in me, and when it was thought I was consumptive, sent me for a couple of winters to Mentone. You know that he provided for my schooling, and sent me to the University, and then most kindly took me into Orleigh as tutor to your half-brother Giles, till I can resolve to enter the Church, when, no doubt, he will some day give me a living. All that you know. Do not suppose I am insensible to his lordship’s kindness, when I say that all this goodness shown me has sown my soul full of brambles, and made me the most miserable of men.”

“But how so?” Miss Inglett looked at him with unfeigned surprise. “As you said to me, so say I to you, and excuse the freedom. Mr. Saltren has everything to make life happy, education, comfortable quarters, kind friends, an assured future, an ideally perfect lot, absolutely deficient in disturbing elements.”

“Now you judge by the outside. I admit to the full that Lord Lamerton has done everything he could think of to do me good, but can one man calculate what will suit another? Will a bog plant thrive in loam, or a heath in clay?”

“You do not think that what has been done for you is well done?”

“I am not inclined for the Church, I have a positive distaste for the ministry, and yet Lord Lamerton is bent on my being a parson. If I do not become one, what am I to be? I cannot go back to the life whence I have been taken; I cannot endure to be with those who hold their knives by the middle when eating, and drink their tea out of their saucers, and take their meals in their shirt sleeves. Remember I have been translated from the society to which by birth I belong, to another as different from it as is that of Brahmans from Esquimaux; I cannot accommodate myself again to what was once my native element. Baron Munchausen, in one of his voyages, landed on an island made of cream cheese, and only discovered it by the fainting of a sailor who had a natural antipathy to cream cheese. I have come ashore on an island the substance of which is altogether different from the soil where I was born. I cannot say I have an ineradicable distaste for it, but that at first I found a difficulty in walking on it. The specific gravity of cream cheese is other than that of clay. Now that I have acquired the light and trippant tread that suits, if I return to my native land, my paces will be criticised, and regarded as affected, and myself as supercilious, for not at once plodding from my shoulders like a ploughboy in marl. How was it with poor Persephone who spent half her time in the realm of darkness and half in that of light? She carried to the world of light her groping tentative walk, and was laughed at, and when in Hades, she trod boldly as if in day and got bruises and bloody noses. Even now I am in a state of oscillation between the two spheres, and am at home in neither, miserable in both. When I am in the cream-cheese island I never feel that I can walk with the buoyancy of one born on cream-cheese. I can never quite overcome the sense of inhaling an atmosphere of cheese, never quite find the buttermilk squeezed out of it taste like aniseed water.”

Arminell could not refrain from a laugh. “Really, Mr. Saltren, you are not complimentary to our island.”

“Call it the Isle of Rahat la Koum, Turkish Delight, or Guava Jelly – anything luscious. One who has eaten salt pork and supped vinegar cannot at once tutor his palate to everything saccharine to a syrup.”

“But what really troubles you in the Isle of Guava?”

“I am not a native but a stranger. Your tongue is by me acquired. There are even tones and inflexions of voice in you I cannot attain because my vocal organs got set in another world. A man like myself taken up and carried into a different sphere by another hand is inevitably so self-conscious that his self-consciousness is a perpetual torment to him. According to the apocryphal tale, an angel caught Habakkuk by the hair and carried him with a mess of pottage in his hands through the air, and deposited him in Daniel’s den of lions. Your father has been my angel, who has taken me up and transported me, and now I am in a den of lordly beasts who stalk round me and wonder how I came among them, and turn up their noses at the bowl I carry in my shaking hands.”

“And you want to escape from us lions?”

“Pardon me – I am equally ill at ease elsewhere, I have associated with lions till I can only growl.”

“And lash yourself raw,” laughed Arminell; “you know a lion has a nail at the end of his tail, wherewith he goads himself.”

“I can torture myself – that is true,” said Saltren, in a disquieted tone. “My lord will give me a living and provide for me if I will enter the Church, but that is precisely an atmosphere I do not relish – and what am I to do? I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed.”

“Mr. Saltren, you are not at ease in the lions’ den, but suppose you were to crawl out and get into the fields?”

“I should lose my way, having been carried by the angel out of my own country. You see the wretchedness of my position, I am uncomfortable wherever I am. In my present situation I imagine slights. Anecdotes told at table make me wince, jokes fret me. Conversation on certain subjects halts because I am present. Yet I cannot revert to my native condition; that would be deterioration, now I have acquired polish, and have progressed.”

“I should not have supposed, Mr. Saltren, that you were so full of trouble.”

“No – looking on a rose-pip, all smoothness, you do not reckon on its being full of choke within. And now – Miss Inglett, you see at once an instance of my lack of tact and knowledge. I am in doubt whether I have done well to pour out my pottle of troubles in your ear, or whether I have behaved like a booby.”

“I invited you to it.”

“Precisely, but in the language of the Isle of Guava, words do not mean what they are supposed to mean in the Land of Bacon. I may have transgressed those invisible bounds which you recognise by an instinct of which I am deficient. There are societies which have laws and signs of fellowship known only to the initiated. You belong to one, the great Freemasonry of Aristocratic Culture. You all know one another in it, how – is inconceivable to me, though I watch and puzzle to find the symbol; and your laws, unwritten, I can only guess at, but you all know them, suck them in with mother’s milk. I have been brought up among you, but I have only an idea of your laws, and as for your shibboleth – it escapes me altogether. And now – I do not know whether I have acted rightly or wrongly in telling you how I am situated. I am in terror lest in taking you at your word I may not have grossly offended you, and lest you be now saying in your heart, What an unlicked cub this is! how ignorant of tact, how lacking in good breeding! He should have passed off my invitation with a joke about brambles. He bores me, he is insufferable.”

“I assure you – Mr. Saltren – ”

“Excuse my interrupting you. It may, or may not be so. I dare say I am hypersensitive, over-suspicious.”

“And now, Mr. Saltren, I think Giles is waiting for his psalms and lessons.”

“You mean – I have offended you.”

“Not at all. I am sorry for you, but I think you are – excuse the word – morbidly sensitive.”

“You cannot understand me because you have never been in my land. Baron Munchausen says that in the moon the aristocrats when they want to know about the people send their heads among them, but their trunks and hearts remain at home. The heads go everywhere and return with a report of the wants, thoughts and doings of the common people. You are the same. You send your heads to visit us, to enquire about us, to peep at our ways, and search out our goings, but you do not understand us, because you have not been heart and body down to finger-ends and toes among us, and of us – you cannot enter into our necessities and prejudices and gropings. But I see, I bore you. In the tongue of the Isle of Guava you say to me, Giles wants his psalms and lessons. Which being interpreted means, This man is a bramble sticking to my skirts, following, impeding my movements, a drag, a nuisance. I must get rid of him. I wish you a good morning, Miss Inglett; and holy thoughts under the greenwood tree!”

CHAPTER III IN THE OWL'S NEST

Arminell Inglett made the best of her was to the old quarry. She was impatient to be alone, to enjoy the beautiful weather, the spring sights and sound, to recover the elasticity of spirit of which she had been robbed by Sunday-school.

But would she recover that elasticity after her conversation with the young tutor? What he had said was true. He was a village lad of humble antecedents who had been taken up by her father because he was intelligent and pleasing, and commended by the schoolmaster, and delicate. Lord and Lady Lamerton were ever ready to do a kindness to a tenant or inhabitant of Orleigh. When any of the latter were sick, they received jellies and soups and the best port wine from the park; and a deserving child in school received recognition, and a steady youth was sure of a helping hand into a good situation.

More than ordinary favor had been shown to this young man, son of Stephen Saltren, captain of the manganese mine. He had been lifted out of the station in which he had been born, and was promoted to be the instructor of Giles. Arminell had always thought her father's conduct towards him extraordinarily kind, and now her eyes were open to see that it had been a cruel kindness, filling the young man's heart with a bitterness that contended with his gratitude.

It would have been more judicious perhaps had Lord Lamerton sent young Jingles elsewhere.

Jingles, it must be explained, was not the tutor's Christian name. He had been baptised out of compliment to his lordship, Giles Inglett, and Giles Inglett Saltren was his complete name. But in the national school his double Christian name had been condensed, not without a flavour of spite, into Jingles, and at Orleigh he would never be known by any other.

The old lime-quarry lay a mile from the park. It was a picturesque spot, and would have been perfectly beautiful but for the heaps of rubbish thrown out of it which took years to decay, and which till decayed were unsightly. The process had, however, begun. Indeed, as the quarry had been worked for a century prior to its abandonment, a good deal of the "ramp," as such rubbish heaps are locally called, was covered with grass and pines.

Lord Lamerton had done his best to disguise the nakedness by plantations of Scotch, larch and spruce, which took readily to the loose soil, the creeping roots grasped the nodes of stone and crushed them as in a vice, then sucked out of them the nutriment desired; the wild strawberry rioted over the banks, and the blackberry brambles dropped their trailers over the slopes, laden in autumn with luscious fruit, and later, when flowers are scarce with frost-touched leaves, carmine, primrose, amber and purple.

At the back of the quarry was an old wood, sloping to the south and breaking off sharply at the precipice where the lime rock had been cut away; this was a wood of oaks with an undergrowth of bracken and male fern, and huge hollies. Here and there large venerable Scotch pines rose above the rounded surface of the oak tops, in some places singly, elsewhere in dark clumps.

The rock of the hill was slaty. The strata ran down and made a dip and came to the surface again, and in the lap lay the limestone. When the quarry-men had deserted the old workings, water came in and partly filled it, to the depth of forty feet, with crystalline bottle-green water. Lord Lamerton had put in trout, and the fish grew there to a great size, but were too wary to be caught. The side of the quarry to the south shelved rapidly into the water, and the fisherman standing on the slope with his rod was visible to the trout. They were too cautious to approach, and too well fed with the midges that hovered over the water to care to bite.

The north face of the quarry – that is the face that looked to the sun – was quite precipitous; it rose to the same height above the water that it descended beneath it. Over the edge hung bushes of may that wreathed the gray rocks in spring with snow as of the past winter, and in winter with scarlet

berries, reminiscences of the fire of lost summer. Where the may-bushes did not monopolise the top, there the heath and heather hung their wiry branches and grew to brakes, and the whortleberry – the vaccinium – formed a fringe of glossy leafage in June and July rich with purple berries, and in autumn dotted with fantastic scarlet, where a capricious leaf had caught a touch of frost that had spared its fellows.

Down a rocky cranny fell a dribbling stream, the drainage of the wood above; in summer it was but a distillation, sufficient to moisten the beds of moss and fern that rankly grew on the ledges beneath it, and in winter never attaining sufficient volume to dislodge the vegetation it nourished.

To the ledges thus moistened choice ferns had retreated as to cities of refuge from the rapacity of collectors, who rive away these delicate creatures regardless what damage is done them, indifferent whether they kill in the process, considering only the packing of them off in hampers for sale or barter, and in many places exterminating the rarest and most graceful ferns; but here, with a gulf of deep water between themselves and their pursuers, the parsley and maiden-hair ferns thrive and tossed their fronds in security and insolence.

It was marvellous to see how plants luxuriated in this old abandoned quarry, how they seized on it, as squatters on no-man's land, and multiplied and grew wanton and revelled there; how the harts tongue grew there to enormous size, and remained, unbrowned by frost, throughout the winter; how the crane's bill bloomed to Christmas, and scented the air around, and the strawberry fruited out of season and reason.

By what fatality did the butterflies come there in such numbers? Was it that they delighted in dancing over the placid mirror admiring themselves therein? After a few gyrations they inevitably dipped their wings and were lost; perhaps they mistook their gay reflections for inviting flowers, or perhaps like Narcissus, they fell in love with their own likenesses, and, stooping to kiss, were caught.

In summer butterflies were always to be found hovering over or floating on the surface, but they hovered or floated only for a while, presently a ring was formed in the glassy surface, a ring that widened and multiplied itself – the butterfly was gone, and a trout the better for it.

About six feet of soil, in some places more, in others less, appeared in sections above the quarry-edge, that is to say, above the rock. It was quite possible to trace the primitive surface of the pre-historic earth, much indented; but these indentations had been filled in by accumulations of humus, so that the upper turf was almost of a level.

Where rock ended and soil began, the jackdaws had worked for themselves caves and galleries in which they lived a communal life, and multiplied prodigiously. A pair of hawks bred there as well, spared by express order of Lord Lamerton, but viewed with bitter animosity by the keepers; also a colony of white owls, all on tolerable terms, keeping their distances, avoiding social intercourse, very much like the classes among mankind. These owls also would have perished, nailed to the stable doors or the keeper's wall, had not his lordship extended protection to them likewise. The kingfishers in the Ore were becoming fewer, the keepers waged war on them also, because they interfered with the fish. Lord Lamerton did not know this, or he would have held his protecting hand over their amethystine heads.

The cliff was ribbed horizontally, the harder bands of stratification standing forth as shelves on which lodged the crumbling of the more friable beds, and the leaves that sailed down from the autumn trees above. On these ledges a few bushes and a stunted Scotch pine grew. The latter grappled with the rock, holding to it with its red-brown roots like the legs of a gigantic spider.

At the west end, on a level with the topmost shelf of rock, just beneath where the earth buried the surface of rock, was a cave artificially constructed, at the time when the lime was worked, as a refuge for the miners when blasting.

Formerly a path had existed leading to this cave, but now the path was gone – scarce a trace survived. The owls, calculating on the inaccessibility of the grot to man, had taken possession of it, and bred there.

“I am glad I came here,” said Arminell. “In this lovely, lonely spot one can worship God better than in a stuffy church, pervaded with the smell of yellow-soap, of clean linen, and the bergamot of oiled heads, and the peppermint the clerk sucks. Here one has the air full of the incense of the woods, the pines exuding resin in the sun, the oak-leaves exhaling their aroma, and the ferns, fragrant with a sea-like stimulating odour. I am weary of that hum-drum which constitutes to mamma the law and aim of life. We may be all – as Jingles says – steeped in syrup, but it is the syrup of hum-drum that crystallizes about us, after having extracted from us and dismissed all individual flavour, like the candied fruit in a box, where currants, greengage, apricot, pear – all taste alike. We are so saturated with the same syrup that we all lead the same saccharine existences, have the same sweet thoughts, utter the same sugary words, and have not an individualizing smack and aroma among us. Mamma is the very incarnation of routine. She talks to her guests on what she thinks will interest them, got up for the occasion out of magazines and reviews. These magazines save her and the like of her a world of trouble. The aristocrats of the moon, according to Jingles, sent their heads forth in pursuit of knowledge; we have other peculiar heads sent to us stuffed with the forced meat of knowledge, and wrapped in the covers of magazines. So much for my mother. As for my father, he neither takes in nor gives vent to ideas. He presents prizes at schools, opens institutes, attends committees, sits on boards, presides at banquets; occasionally votes, but never speaks in the House; his whole circle of interests is made up of highways, asylums and county bridges. In olden times, witches drew circles and set about them skulls and daggers, toads, and braziers, and within these circles wrought necromancy. My father’s circle is that of hum-drum, set round with county and parochial institutions, with the sanitary arrangements carefully considered, and without the magic circle he works – nothing.”

She was standing at the west end of the quarry, looking along the edge of the precipice, on her left.

“I wonder,” she mused, “whether it would be feasible to reach the owls.”

Filled with this new ambition, she thought no more of the shortcomings of her father and step-mother.

“It would be possible, by keeping a cool head,” she said.

“I should like to see what an owl’s nest is like, and in that cave I can pay my Sunday devotions.”

The shelf was not broad enough to allow of any one walking on it unsupported, even with a cool head.

In places, indeed, it broadened, and there lay a cushion of grass, but immediately it narrowed to a mere indication. The distance was not great, from whence Arminell stood, to the cave, some twenty-five feet, and a slip would entail a fall into the water beneath.

As the girl stood considering the possibilities and the difficulties, she noticed that streamers of ivy hung over the edge from the surface of the soil. She could not reach these, however, from where she stood. Were she to lay hold of them, she might be able to sustain herself whilst stepping along the ledge, just as if she were supported by a pendent rope.

“I believe it is contrivable,” she said, “I see where the ivy springs at the root of an elder tree. I can find or cut a crooked stick, and thus draw the strands to me. How angry and indignant mamma would be, were she to see what I am about.”

She speedily discovered a suitable stick, and with its assistance drew the pendent branches towards her. Then, laying hold of them, she essayed an advance on the shelf. The ivy-ropes were tough, and tenacious in their rooting into the ground. She dragged at them, jerked them, and they did not yield. She grasped them in her left hand, and cautiously stepped forward.

At first she had a ledge of four inches in width to rest her feet on, but the rock, though narrow, was solid, and by leaning her weight well on the ivy, and advancing on the tips of her feet, she succeeded, not without a flutter of heart, in passing to a broad patch of turf, where she was comparatively safe, and where, still clinging to the ivy, she drew a long breath.

The water, looked down on from above, immediately beneath her was blue; only in the shadows, where it did not reflect the light, was it bottle-green.

There was not a ripple on it. She had not dislodged a stone. She turned her eyes up the bank. She had no fear of the ropes failing her; they would not be sawn through, because they swung over friable earth, not jagged rock.

“Allons, avançons,” said Arminell, with a laugh. She was excited, pleased with herself – she had broken out of the circle of humdrum.

The ledge was wide, where she stood, and she held to the rope to keep her from giddiness, rather than to sustain her weight.

After a few further steps, she paused. The shelf failed altogether for three feet, but beyond the gap was a terrace matted with cistus and ablaze with flower. Arminell’s first impulse was to abandon her enterprise as hazardous beyond reason, but her second was to dare the further danger, and make a spring to the firm ground.

“This is the difference between me and my lady,” said Arminell. “She – and my lord likewise – will not risk a leap – moral, social, or religious.”

Then with a rush of impetuosity and impatience, she swung herself across the gap, and landed safely on the bed of cistus.

“Would Giles ever be permitted the unconventional?” asked Arminell. “What a petit-maître he will turn out.”

The Hon. Giles Inglett, her half-brother, aged ten, was, as already said, the only son of Lord Lamerton and heir-apparent to the barony.

From the cistus patch she crept, still clinging to the ivy, along the ledge that now bore indications of the path once formed on it, and presently, with a sense of defiance of danger, allowed herself to look down into the still water.

“After all, if I did go down, it would not be very dreadful – it is a reversed heaven. I would spoil my gown, but what of that? I have my allowance, and can spoil as many gowns as I choose within my margin. I wonder – would a fall from my social terrace be as easy as one from this – and lead to such trifling and reparable consequences?”

Then she reached the platform of the cave, let go the ivy-streamers, and entered the grotto.

The entrance was just high enough for Arminell to pass in without stooping. The depth of the cave was not great, ten feet. The sun shone in, making the nook cheerful and warm. Again Arminell looked down at the pond.

“How different the water seems according to the position from which we look at it. Seen from one point it blazes with reflected light, and laughs with brilliance; seen from another it is infinitely sombre, light-absorbing, not light-reflecting. It is so perhaps with the world, and poor Jingles contemplates it from an unhappy point.”

She seated herself on the floor at the mouth of the cave, and leaned her back against the side, dangling one foot over the edge of the precipice.

“The best of churches, the most inspiring shrine for holy thoughts – O, how lucky, I have in my pocket Gaboriau’s ‘Gilded Clique!’”

She wore a pretty pink dress with dark crimson velvet trimmings, but the brightest point of colour about Arminell was the blood-coloured cover of the English version of the French romance of rascality and crime.

Arminell had lost her mother at an age at which she could not remember her. The girl had been badly brought up, by governesses unequal to the task of forming the mind and directing the conscience of a self-willed intelligent girl.

She had changed her governesses often, and not invariably for the better. One indulged and flattered her, and set her cap at Lord Lamerton. She had to be dismissed. Then came a methodical creature, eminently conscientious, so completely a piece of animated clockwork, so incapable of

acting or even thinking out of a set routine, that she drove Arminell into sullen revolt. After her departure, a young lady from Girton arrived, who walked with long strides, wore a pince-nez, was primed with slang, and held her nose on high to keep her pince-nez in place. She was dismissed because she whistled, but not before her influence, the most mischievous of all, had left its abiding impress on the character of the pupil.

This governess laughed at conventionalities, such as are the safeguards of social life, and sneered at the pruderies of feminine modesty. Her tone was sarcastic and sceptical.

Then came a young lady of good manners, but of an infinitely feeble mind, who wore a large fringe to conceal a forehead as retreating as that of the Neanderthal man. Arminell found her a person of infinite promise and no achievement. She undertook to teach Greek, algebra, and comparative anatomy, but could not spell “rhododendron.”

When Lord Lamerton had married again, the new wife shrank from exercising authority over the wayward girl, and sought to draw her to her by kindness. But Arminell speedily gauged the abilities of her stepmother, and became not actively hostile, but indifferent to her. Lady Lamerton was not a person to provoke hostility.

Thus the girl had grown up with mind unformed, judgment undisciplined, feelings impetuous and under no constraint, and with very confused notions of right and wrong. She possessed by nature a strong will, and this had been toughened by resistance where it should have been yielded to, and non-resistance where it ought to have been firmly opposed.

She had taken a class that Sunday in the school, as well as on the preceding Sunday, only at Lady Lamerton’s urgent request, because the school-mistress was absent on a holiday.

And now Arminell, who had come to the Owl’s Nest to pay her devotions to heaven, performed them by reading Gaboriau’s “Gilded Clique.”

CHAPTER IV

A PRAYER-RAFT

How long Arminell had been resting in her sunny nook above the water, reading the record of luxury, misery and vice, she did not know, for she became engrossed in the repulsive yet interesting tale, and the time slipped away, unperceived.

She was roused from her reading by the thought that suddenly occurred to her, quite unconnected with the story, that she had let go the strands of ivy when she reached the cave, – and in a moment her interest in the “Gilded Clique” ceased and she became alarmed about her own situation. In her delight at attaining the object of her ambition, she had cast aside the streamers without a thought that she might need them again, and they had reverted to their original position, beyond her reach. She could not venture along the strip of turf without their support, and she had not the crook with her, wherewith to rake them back within reach of her hand.

What was to be done? The charm of the situation was gone. Its novelty had ceased to please. Her elation at her audacity in venturing on the “path perilous” had subsided. To escape unassisted was impossible, and to call for assistance useless in a place so rarely visited.

“It does not much matter,” said Arminell; “I shall not have to spend a night among the owls. My lady when she misses me will send out a search-party, and Jingles will direct them whither to go for me. I will return to my book.”

But Arminell could not recover her interest in the story of the “Gilded Clique.” She was annoyed at her lack of prudence, for it had not only subjected her to imprisonment, but had placed her in a position somewhat ridiculous. She threw down the book impatiently and bit her lips.

“This is a lesson to me,” she said, “not to make rash excursions into unknown regions without retaining a clue which will enable me to retrace my steps to the known. Cæsar may have been a hero when he burnt his ships, but his heroism was next akin to folly.”

She sat with her hands in her lap, with a clouded face, musing on the chance of her speedy release. Then she laughed, “Like Jingles, I am in a wrong position, but unlike him, I am here by my own foolhardiness. He was carried by my lord into the eagle’s nest. Like Sinbad, out of the valley of diamonds. But in the valley of diamonds there were likewise serpents. My lord swooped down on poor Jingles, caught him up, and deposited him in his nest on the heights for the young eagles to pull to pieces.”

As she was amusing herself with this fancy, she observed a man by the waterside at the east or further end of the quarry, engaged in launching a primitive raft which he drew out of a bed of alder. The raft consisted of a couple of hurdles lashed together, on which an old pig-sty or stable door was laid. Upon this platform the man stationed himself when the raft was adrift, and with a long oar sculled himself into the middle of the pond.

What was his object? Had he seen Arminell and was he coming to her assistance, concluding that she could be rescued in no other fashion? On further observation Arminell convinced herself that he had not seen her and knew nothing of her predicament and distress.

What was he about to do? To fish?

No – not to fish.

When the raft floated in the middle of the tarn, the man laid down his oar, knelt on the board and began to pray.

“Why – !” exclaimed the girl; “that is Captain Saltren, Jingles’ father.”

Captain Stephen Saltren, master of the manganese mine, was a tall man, rather gaunt and thin, and loosely compacted at the joints, with dark hair, high cheek-bones and large, deeply-sunken eyes. His features were irregular and ill cut – yet it was impossible to look at his face without being

impressed with the thought that he was no ordinary man. His hands, though roughened and enlarged by work, had long fingers, the indication of a nervous temperament. He had, moreover, one of those flexible voices which go far towards making a man an orator. He was unaware of the value of his organ, he was devoid of skill in using it; but it was an impressive voice when used in times of deep emotion, thrilling those who heard it and sweeping them into sympathy with the speaker. His eyes were those of a mystic, looking into a far-off sphere, esteeming the world of sense as a veil, a painted film, disturbing, impeding distinct vision of the sole realities that existed in the world beyond.

There was velvety softness in his dark eyes, and gentleness in his flexible mouth, and yet the least observant person speaking with him could see that fire was ready to leap out of those soft eyes on provocation, and that the mouth could set with rigid determination when his prejudices were touched.

The forehead of the man was of unusual height. He had become partly bald, had shed some of the hair above the brow, and this had given loftiness to his forehead. There were hollows between his temples and eye-brows; his head was lumpy and narrow. Altogether it was an ill-balanced, but an interesting head.

The mystic, who at one time was a prominent feature in religious life, has almost disappeared from among us, gone utterly out of the cultured classes, gone from among the practical mercantile classes, going little by little from the lower beds of life, not expelled by education but by the materialism that penetrates every realm of human existence. In time the mystic will have become as extinct as the dodo, the great auk, and the Caleb Balderstones. But there are mystics still – especially where there is a strain of Celtic blood, and of this class of beings was Stephen Saltren.

The captain was in trouble, and whenever he was in trouble or unhappy he had recourse to prayer, and he prayed with most disengagement on his raft. He came to the quarry when his mind was disturbed and his heart agitated, thrust himself out from land, and prayed where he believed himself to be unobserved and unlikely to be interrupted.

The cause of his unrest on this occasion was the threat Lord Lamerton had uttered of closing the manganese mine. This mine had its adit, crushing mill and washing floors at but a short distance from the great house. About fifteen years previous, a mine had been worked on the estate that yielded so richly, that with the profits, Lord Lamerton had been able to clear off some mortgages. That lode was worked out. It had been altogether an extraordinary one, bunching, as it is termed, into a great mass of solid manganese, but this bunch, when worked out, ended without a trace of continuance. Then, as Lord Lamerton was assured, another came to the surface in the hill behind the mansion, and as he was in want of money, he reluctantly permitted the mine to be opened within a rifle shot of his house. The workings were out of sight, hidden by a plantation, and manganese mines make no great heaps of unsightly deposit; nevertheless, the mine was inconveniently near the place. It did not yield as it had promised, or as the experts had pretended it promised, and Lord Lamerton had lost all hope of making money by it. The vein was followed, but it never “bunched.” Foreign competition affected the market, English manganese was under-sold, and Wheal Perseverance, as the mine was called, did not pay for the “working.” Lord Lamerton annually lost money on it. Then he was informed that the lode ran under Orleigh gardens, and promised freely to “bunch” under the mansion. That is to say, he was asked to allow his house to be undermined. This decided his lordship, and he announced that the mine must be abandoned. Bunch or no bunch, he was not going to have his old place tunnelled under and brought about his ears, on the chance – the chimerical chance – of a few thousand pounds’ worth of metal being extracted from the rock on which it stood.

To Lord Lamerton his determination seemed right and reasonable. The land was his. The royalties were his; the house was his. Every man may do what he will with his own. If he has a penny in his pocket, he is at liberty to spend or to hoard it as he deems best.

But this decision of his lordship threatened ruin or something like ruin to a good many men who had lived on the mine, to families whereof the father worked underground, and the children above washing ore on the floors. The cessation of the mining would throw all these out of employ. It was

known to the miners that manganese mines were everywhere unprofitable and were being abandoned. Where then should they look for employment?

It was open to bachelors to migrate to America, but what were the married men to do? The captain would feel the stoppage of the mine most of all. He had kept the accounts of the output, had paid the wages, and sold the metal. The miners might, indeed, take temporary work on the new line in course of construction, but that meant a change of life from one that was regular, whilst living in settled homes, to a wandering existence, to makeshift housing, separation from their families, and to association with demoralising and lawless companions. The captain, however, had not this chance within reach. He could not migrate, because he possessed the little house in which he lived, together with an acre of garden ground beside it, which his father had enclosed and reclaimed. Moreover, he was not likely to find work which gave him a situation of authority and superiority. Instead of being a master he must be content – if he found employ – to work as a servant. Hitherto, he had engaged and dismissed the hands, now he must become a hand – and be glad to be one – liable to dismissal.

It was natural that the men, and especially Saltren, should feel keenly and resent the closing of the mine. People see things as they affect themselves, and appreciate them only as they relate to their own affairs. I knew a man named Balhatchet who patented a quack medicine which he called his Heal-all, and this man never could be brought to see that the Fall of Man was a disaster to humanity, for, he argued, if there had been no fall, then no sickness, and therefore no place for Balhatchet's Heal-all.

According to "The Spectator," when the news reached London that the King of France was dead, "Now we shall have fish cheaper," was the greeting the tidings evoked. The miners were angry with the bleachers, because they used German manganese instead of that raised in England, and angry with the shippers for bringing it across the sea. But above all, at this time, they were inclined to resent the action of Lord Lamerton in closing the mine, for by so doing he was, as they put it, snatching the bread out of their hungry mouths, whilst himself eating cake. They did not believe that undermining the great house would disturb its foundations. That was a mere excuse. How could his lordship be sure that undermining would crack his walls till he had tried it? And – supposing they did settle, what of that? They might be rebuilt. The men had been told that his lordship had painted the north wall with impenetrable, anti-damp preparation, because on that side of the house the paper in the rooms became mildewed. If there was damp, what better means of drying the house than undermining it? Why should his lordship send many pounds to London for damp-excluding paint, when by spending the money in Orleigh he might so drain the soil through a level under the foundations that no moisture could possibly rise?

Lord Lamerton had made a great deal of money out of the first mine. He had provided good cottages for his tenants, the workmen, but so much worse if they were to be turned out of them.

The mine had been christened Wheal Perseverance, and what does perseverance mean, but going on with what is begun? If his lordship had not intended to carry on the mine indefinitely, he should not have called it Wheal Perseverance. When he gave it that name he as much as promised to keep it going always, and to stop it now was a breach of faith. Was it endurable that Lord Lamerton should close the mine? Who had put the manganese in the rock? Was it Lord Lamerton? What had the metal been run there for but for the good of mankind, that it might be extracted and utilized? God had carried the lode under Orleigh Park before a Lamerton was thought of. Was it justifiable that one man through his aristocratic selfishness should interfere with the public good, should contravene the arrangements of the Creator? In the gospel the man who hid his talent was held up to condemnation, but here was a nobleman who sat down upon the talent belonging to a score of hard-working and necessitous men, desirous of extracting it, and refused to permit them to do what God had commanded. Was there not a fable about a dog in the manger? Was not his lordship a very dog in a manger, neither using the manganese himself, nor allowing those who desired to dig it out to put a pick into the ground and disturb it? Maybe there was a "bunch" under the state drawing-room large enough to support a score of families for three years, the men in meat and broadcloth,

the women in velvets and jockey-club essence. Lord Lamerton and Lady Lamerton begrudged them these necessities of life. The laws of the land, no doubt, were on the side of the nobleman, but the law of God on that of the labourer. The laws were imposed on the people by a House of Lords and the Queen, and therefore they would agitate for the abolition of an hereditary aristocracy and keep their hats on when next the National Anthem was played.

There were more mixed up in the matter than his lordship. Lord Lamerton did nothing without consulting the agent, Mr. Macduff. The abandonment of the mine was Macduff's doing. The reason was known to every one – Macduff was under the control of his wife. Mrs. Macduff was offended because the school children did not curtsy and touch their caps when she drove through the village in her victoria.

The rector also had a finger in this particular pie. He bore a spite against Captain Saltren, because the captain was not a church-man. Not a word had been said about stopping the lime-quarry. Oh no! of course not, for Captain Tubb taught in the Sunday-school. If Stephen Saltren had taken a class, nothing would have been said about discontinuing the mine. Therefore the miners resolved to join the Liberation Society and make an outcry for the disestablishment of the Church.

So the men argued – we will not say reasoned, and that is no caricature of their arguments, not reasonings, in similar cases. The uneducated man is always a suspicious man. He never believes in the reasons alleged, these are disguises to hide the true springs of action.

When his lordship was told how incensed the miners were, he made light of the matter. Pshaw! fiddlesticks! He was not going to have his dear old Elizabethan home in which he was born, and which had belonged to the Ingletts before they were peers, tumbled about his ears like a pack of cards, just because there was a chance of finding three ha'porth of manganese under it. The mine had been a nuisance for some years. The standing up to their knees in water had been injurious to the health of the girls, many of whom had died of decline. Wheal Perseverance was a bad school of morals, lads and lasses worked together there, and necessarily in a semi-nude condition. The schoolmaster and the Government Inspector had complained that the attendance at school was bad and irregular, for the children could earn money on the washing floors, and did not see the fun of sitting at desks earning nothing.

The miners had been a constant source of annoyance, they were all of them poachers, and had occasional fights with the keepers. The presence of the miners entailed the retention of extra keepers to protect the game, so that in this way also the mine proved expensive. Besides, the manganese dirtied the stream that flowed through the grounds, made it of a hideous tawny red colour, and spoiled the fishing not only in it, but in the river Ore, into which it discharged its turbid waters.

The miners were all radicals and dissenters, and he would be glad to be rid of them.

So every question has its two sides, equally plausible.

Stephen Saltren had been from boyhood shy, silent and self-contained. His only book of study was the Bible, and his imagination was fired by its poetry and its apocalyptic visions. His thoughts were cast in Scriptural forms; his early companions had nick-named him the Methodist Parson. But Saltren had never permanently attached himself to any denomination. The Church was too ceremonious, he turned from her in dislike. He rambled from sect to sect seeking a dwelling-place, and finding only a temporary lodging. For a while he was all enthusiasm, and flowed with grace, then the source of unction ran dry, and he attributed the failure to deficiencies in the community he had joined, left it to recommence the same round of experiences and encounter the same disappointments in another. As a young man he had worked with his father at the original mine, Wheal Eldorado, and on his father's death, had continued to live in the house his father had built on land he had appropriated. He continued to work at Eldorado, became captain in his father's room, and when Eldorado was exhausted, directed the works of Wheal Perseverance. Every one spoke highly of Stephen Saltren, as a steady, conscientious man, truthful and of unimpeachable honesty. But no one quite understood

Saltren, he made no friends, he sought none; and he left on all with whom he came in contact, the impression that he was a man of very abnormal character.

Whilst Adam slept, the help-mate was formed and set by him. When he opened his eyes, it was with a start and with something like terror that he saw Eve at his side. He could not but believe he was still a prey to dreams. Ever since that first meeting love has come as a surprise on the sons of Adam, has come on them when least prepared to resist its advance, and has never been regarded in the first moment as a grave reality.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.