BARR AMELIA E.

THE SQUIRE OF SANDAL-SIDE: A PASTORAL ROMANCE

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I.
SEAT-SANDAL

"This happy breed of men, this little world."

"To know
That which before us lies in daily life
Is the prime wisdom."

"All that are lovers of virtue … be quiet, and go a-angling."

There is a mountain called Seat-Sandal, between the Dunmail Raise and Grisedale Pass; and those who have stood upon its summit know that Grasmere vale and lake lie at their feet, and that Windermere, Esthwaite, and Coniston, with many arms of the sea, and a grand brotherhood of mountains, are all around them. There is also an old gray manor-house of the same name. It is some miles distant from the foot of the mountain, snugly

sheltered in one of the loveliest valleys between Coniston and Torver. No one knows when the first stones of this house were laid. The Sandals were in Sandal-Side when the white-handed, waxen-faced Edward was building Westminster Abbey, and William the Norman was laying plans for the crown of England. Probably they came with those Norsemen who a century earlier made the Isle of Man their headquarters, and from it, landing on the opposite coast of Cumberland, settled themselves among valleys and lakes and mountains of primeval beauty, which must have strongly reminded them of their native land.

For the prevailing names of this district are all of the Norwegian type, especially such abounding suffixes and prefixes as *seat* from "set," a dwelling; *dale* from "dal," a valley; *fell* from "fjeld," a mountain; *garth* from "gard," an enclosure; and *thwaite*, from "thveit," a clearing. It is certain, also, that, in spite of much Anglo-Saxon admixture, the salt blood of the roving Viking is still in the Cumberland dalesman. Centuries of bucolic isolation have not obliterated it. Every now and then the sea calls some farmer or shepherd, and the restless drop in his veins gives him no peace till he has found his way over the hills and fells to the port of Whitehaven, and gone back to the cradling bosom that rocked his ancestors.

But in the main, this lovely spot was a northern Lotus-land to the Viking. The great hills shut him in from the sight of the sea. He built himself a "seat," and enclosed "thwaites" of greater or less extent; and, forgetting the world in his green

paradise, was for centuries almost forgotten by the world. And if long descent and an ancient family have any special claim to be held honorable, it is among the Cumberland "statesmen," or freeholders, it must be looked for in England.

The Sandals have been wise and fortunate owners of the acres which Lögberg Sandal cleared for his descendants. They have a family tradition that he came from Iceland in his own galley; and a late generation has written out portions of a saga,—long orally transmitted,—which relates the incidents of his voyage. All the Sandals believe implicitly in its authenticity; and, indeed, though it is full of fighting, of the plunder of gold and rich raiment, and the carrying off of fair women, there is nothing improbable in its relations, considering the people and the time whose story it professes to tell.

Doubtless this very Lögberg Sandal built the central hall of Seat-Sandal. There were giants in those days; and it must have been the hands of giants that piled the massive blocks, and eyes accustomed to great expanses that measured off the large and lofty space. Smaller rooms have been built above it and around it, and every generation has added something to its beauty and comfort; but Lögberg's great hall, with its enormous fireplace, is still the heart of the home.

For nowhere better than among these "dalesmen" can the English elemental resistance to fusion be seen. Only at the extreme point of necessity have they exchanged ideas with any other section, yet they have left their mark all over English

history. In Cumberland and Westmoreland, the most pathetic romances of the Red Rose were enacted. In the strength of these hills, the very spirit of the Reformation was cradled. From among them came the Wyckliffite queen of Henry the Eighth, and the noble confessor and apostle Bernard Gilpin. No lover of Protestantism can afford to forget the man who refused the bishopric of Carlisle, and a provostship at Oxford, that he might traverse the hills and dales, and read to the simple "statesmen" and shepherds the unknown Gospels in the vernacular. They gathered round him in joyful wonder, and listened kneeling to the Scriptures. Only the death of Mary prevented his martyrdom; and to-day his memory is as green as are the ivies and sycamores around his old home.

The Protestant spirit which Gilpin raised among these English Northmen was exceptionally intense; and here George Fox found ready the strong mystical element necessary for his doctrines. For these men had long worshipped "in temples not made with hands." In the solemn "high places" they had learned to interpret the voices of winds and waters; and among the stupendous crags, more like clouds at sunset than fragments of solid land, they had seen and heard wonderful things. All over this country, from Kendal to old Ulverston, Fox was known and loved; and from Swarthmoor Hall, a manor-house not very far from Seat-Sandal, he took his wife.

After this the Stuarts came marching through the dales, but the followers of Wyckliffe and Fox had little sympathy with the

Stuarts. In the rebellion of 1715, their own lord, the Earl of Derwentwater, was beheaded for aiding the unfortunate family; and the hills and waters around are sad with the memories of his lady's heroic efforts and sufferings. So, when Prince Charles came again, in 1745, they were moved neither by his beauty nor his romantic daring: they would take no part at all in his brilliant blunder.

It was for his stanch loyalty on this occasion, that the Christopher Sandal of that day was put among the men whom King George determined to honor. A baronetcy was offered him, which he declined; for he had a feeling that he would deeply offend old Lögberg Sandal, and perhaps all the rest of his ancestral wraiths, if he merged their ancient name in that of Baron of Torver. The sentiment was one the German King of England could understand and respect; and Sandal received, in place of a costly title, the lucrative office of High Sheriff of Cumberland, and a good share besides of the forfeited lands of the rebel houses of Huddleston and Millom.

Then he took his place among the great county families of England. He passed over his own hills, and went up to London, and did homage for the king's grace to him. And that strange journey awakened in the mountain lord some old spirit of adventure and curiosity. He came home by the ocean, and perceived that he had only half lived before. He sent his sons to Oxford; he made them travel; he was delighted when the youngest two took to the sea as naturally as the eider-ducks

fledged in a sea-sand nest.

Good fortune did not spoil the old, cautious family. It went "cannily" forward, and knew how "to take occasion by the hand," and how to choose its friends. Towards the close of the eighteenth century, an opportune loan again set the doors of the House of Lords open to the Sandals; but the head of the family was even less inclined to enter it than his grandfather had been.

"Nay, then," was his answer, "t' Sandals are too old a family to hide their heads in a coronet. Happen, I am a bit opinion-tied, but it's over late to loosen knots made centuries ago; and I don't want to loosen them, neither."

So it will be perceived, that, though the Sandals moved, they moved slowly. A little change went a great way with them. The men were all conservative in politics, the women intensely so in all domestic traditions. They made their own sweet waters and unguents and pomades, long after the nearest chemist supplied a far better and cheaper article. Their spinning-wheels hummed by the kitchen-fire, and their shuttles glided deftly in the weaving-room, many a year after Manchester cottons were cheap and plentiful. But they were pleasant, kindly women, who did wonderful needlework, and made all kinds of dainty dishes and cordials and sirups. They were famous florists and gardeners, and the very neatest of housewives. They visited the poor and sick, and never went empty-handed. They were hearty Churchwomen. They loved God, and were truly pious, and were hardly aware of it; for those were not days of much inquiry.

People did their duty and were happy, and did not reason as to "why" they did it, nor try to ascertain if there were a legitimate cause for the effect.

But about the beginning of this century, a different day began to dawn over Sandal-Side. The young heir came to his own, and signalized the event by marrying the rich Miss Lowther of Whitehaven. She had been finely educated. She had lived in large cities, and been to court. She dressed elegantly; she had a piano and much grand furniture brought over the hills to Sandal; and she filled the old house during the summer with lords and ladies, and poets and artists, who flitted about the idyllic little village, like gay butterflies in a lovely garden.

The husband and children of such a woman were not likely to stand still. Sandal, encouraged by her political influence, went into Parliament. Her children did fairly well; for though one boy was wild, and cost them a deal of money, and another went away in a passion one morning, and never came back, the heir was a good son, and the two girls made splendid marriages. On the whole, she could feel that she had done well to her generation. Even after she had been long dead, the old women in the village talked of her beauty and spirit, of the tight hand she kept over every one and every thing pertaining to Sandal. Of all the mistresses of the old "seat," this Mistress Charlotte was the most prominent and the best remembered.

Every one who steps within the wide, cool hall of Seat-Sandal faces first of all things her picture. It is a life-size painting of a

beautiful woman, in the queer, scant costume of the regency. She wears a white satin frock and white satin slippers, and carries in her hand a bunch of white roses. She appears to be coming down a flight of wide stairs; one foot is lifted for the descent, and the dark background, and the dim light in which it hangs, give to the illusion an almost startling reality. It was her fancy to have the painting hung there to welcome all who entered her doors; and though it is now old-fashioned, and rather shabby and faded, no one of the present generation cares to order its removal. All hold quietly to the opinion that "grandmother would not like it."

In that quiet acre on the hillside, which holds the generations of the Sandals, she had been at rest for ten years. But her son still bared his gray head whenever he passed her picture; still, at times, stood a minute before it, and said with tender respect, "I salute thee, mother." And in her granddaughter's lives still she interfered; for she had left in their father's charge a sum of money, which was to be used solely to give them some pleasure which they could not have without it. In this way, though dead, she kept herself a part of their young lives; became a kind of fairy grandmother, who gave them only delightful things, and her name continued a household word.

Only the mother seemed averse to speak it; and Charlotte, who was most observant, noticed that she never lifted her eyes to the picture as she passed it. There were reasons for these things which the children did not understand. They had been too young at her death to estimate the bondage in which she had kept

her daughter-in-law, who, for her husband's sake, had been ever patient and reticent. Nothing is, indeed, more remarkable than the patience of wives under this particular trial. They may be restive under many far less wrongs, but they bear the mother-in-law grievance with a dignity which shames the grim joking and the petulant abuse of men towards the same relationship. And for many years the young wife had borne nobly a domestic tyranny which pressed her on every hand. If then, she was glad to be set free from it, the feeling was too natural to be severely blamed; for she never said so,—no, not even by a look. Her children had the benefit of their grandmother's kindness, and she was too honorable to deprive the dead of their meed of gratitude.

The present holder of Sandal had none of his mother's ambitious will. He cared for neither political nor fashionable life; and as soon as he came to his inheritance, married a handsome, sensible daleswoman with whom he had long been in love. Then he retired from a world which had nothing to give him comparable, in his eyes, with the simple, dignified pleasures incident to his position as Squire of Sandal-Side. For dearly he loved the old hall, with its sheltering sycamores and oaks,—oaks which had been young trees when the knights lying in Furness Abbey led the Grasmere bowmen at Crécy and Agincourt. Dearly he loved the large, low rooms, full of comfortable elegance; and the sweet, old-fashioned, Dutch garden, so green through all the snows of winter, so cheerfully grave and fragrant in the summer twilights, so shady and cool even in the hottest noons.

Thirty years ago he was coming through it one July evening. It had been a very hot day; and the flowers were drooping, and the birds weary and silent. But Squire Sandal, though flushed and rumpled looking, had still the air of drippy mornings and hazy afternoons about him. There was a creel at his back, and a fishing-rod in his hand, and he had just come from the high, unplanted places, and the broomy, breezy moorlands; and his broad, rosy face expressed nothing but happiness.

At his side walked his favorite daughter Charlotte,—his dear companion, the confidant and sharer of all his sylvan pleasures. She was tired and dusty; and her short printed gown showed traces of green, spongy grass, and lichen-covered rocks. But her face was a joy to see: she had such bright eyes, such a kind, handsome mouth, such a cheerful voice, such a merry laugh. As they came in sight of the wide-open front-doors, she looked ruefully down at her feet and her grass-and-water-stained skirt, and then into her father's face.

"I don't know what Sophia will say if she sees me, father; I don't, indeed."

"Never you mind her, dear. Sophia's rather high, you know. And we've had a rare good time. Eh? What?"

"I should think we have! There are not many pleasures in life better than persuading a fine trout to go a little way down stream with you. Are there, father?"

"You are right, Charlotte. Trout are the kind of company you want on an outing. And then, you know, if you can only persuade

one to go down stream a bit with you, there's not much difficulty in persuading him to let you have the pleasure of seeing him to dinner. Eh? What?"

"I think I will go round by the side-door, father. I might meet some one in the hall."

"Nay, don't do that. There isn't any need to shab off. You've done nothing wrong, and I'm ready to stand by you, my dear; and you know what a good time we've been having all day. Eh? What?"

"Of course I know, father,—

"Showers and clouds and winds,
All things well and proper;
Trailer, red and white,
Dark and wily dropper.

Midges true to fling
Made of plover hackle,
With a gaudy wing,
And a cobweb tackle."

"Cobweb tackle, eh, Charlotte? Yes, certainly; for a hand that can manage it. Lancie Crossthwaite will land you a trout, three pounds weight, with a line that wouldn't lift a dead weight of one pound from the floor to the table. I'll uphold he will. Eh? What?"

"I'll do it myself, some day; see if I don't, father."

"I've no doubt of it, Charlotte; not a bit." Then being in

the entrance-hall, they parted with a smile of confidence, and Charlotte hastened up-stairs to prepare herself for the evening meal. She gave one quick glance at her grandmother's picture as she passed it, a glance of mingled deprecation and annoyance; for there were times when the complacent serenity of the perfect face, and the perfect propriety of the white satin gown, gave her a little spasm of indignation.

She dressed rapidly, with a certain deft grace that was part of her character. And it was a delightful surprise to watch the metamorphosis; the more so, as it went on with a perfect unconsciousness of its wonderful beauty. Here a change, and there a change, until the bright brown hair was loosened from its net of knotted silk, to fall in wavy, curly masses; and the printed gown was exchanged for one of the finest muslin, pink and flowing, and pinned together with bows of pale blue satin. A daring combination, which precisely suited her blonde, brilliant beauty. Her eyes were shining; her cheeks touched by the sun till they had the charming tints of a peach on a southern wall. She looked at herself with a little nod of satisfaction, and then tapped at the door of the room adjoining her own. It was Miss Sandal's room; and Miss Sandal, though only sixteen months older than Charlotte, exacted all the deference due to her by the right of primogeniture.

"Come in, Charlotte."

"How did you know it was I?"

"I know your knock, however you vary it. Nobody knocks like

you. I suppose no two people would make three taps just the same." She was far too polite to yawn; but she made as much of the movement as she could not control, and then put a mark in her book, and laid it down. A very different girl, indeed, was she from her younger sister; a stranger would never have suspected her of the same parentage.

She had dark, fine eyes, which, however, did not express what she felt: they rather gave the idea of storing up impressions to be re-acted upon by some interior power. She had a delicate complexion, a great deal of soft, black hair compactly dressed, and a neat figure. Her disposition was dreamy and self-willed; occult studies fascinated her, and she was passionately fond of moonlight. She was simply dressed in a white muslin frock, with a black ribbon around her slim waist; but the ribbon was clasped by a buckle of heavily chased gold, and her fingers had many rings on them, and looked—a very rare circumstance—the better for them. Having put down her book, she rose from her chair; and as she dipped the tips of her hands in water, and wiped them with elaborate nicety, she talked to Charlotte in a soft, deliberate way.

"Where have you been, you and father, ever since daybreak?"

"Up to Blaeberry Tarn, and then home by Holler Beck. We caught a creel full of trout, and had a very happy day."

"Really, you know?"

"Yes, really; why not?"

"I cannot understand it, Charlotte. I suppose we never were sisters before." She said the words with the air of one who

rather states a fact than asks a question; and Charlotte, not at all comprehending, looked at her curiously and interrogatively.

"I mean that our relationship in this life does not touch our anterior lives."

"Oh, you know you are talking nonsense, Sophia! It gives me such a feel, you can't tell, to think of having lived before; and I don't believe it. There, now! Come, dear, let us go to dinner; I'm that hungry I'm fit to drop." For Charlotte was watching, with a feeling of injury, Sophia's leisurely method of putting every book and chair and hairpin in its place.

The sisters' rooms were precisely alike in their general features, and yet there was as great a relative difference in their apartments as in their natures. Both were large, low rooms, facing the sunrise. The walls of both were of dark oak; the roofs of both were of the same sombre wood; so also were the floors. They were literally oak chambers. And in both rooms the draperies of the beds, chairs, and windows were of white dimity. But in Sophia's, there were many pictures, souvenirs of girlhood's friendships, needlework, finished and unfinished drawings, and a great number of books mostly on subjects not usually attractive to young women. Charlotte's room had no pictures on its walls, and no odds and ends of memorials; and as sewing was to her a duty and not a pleasure, there was no crotcheting or Berlin-wool work in hand; and with the exception of a handsome copy of "Izaak Walton," there were no books on her table but a Bible, Book of Common Prayer, and a very shabby Thomas à Kempis.

So dissimilar were the girls in their appearance and their tastes; and yet they loved each other with that calm, habitual, family affection, which, undemonstrative as it is, stands the wear and tug of life with a wonderful tenacity. Down the broad, oak stairway they sauntered together; Charlotte's tall, erect figure, bright, loose hair, pink dress, and flowing ribbons, throwing into effective contrast the dark hair, dark eyes, white drapery, and gleaming ornaments of her elder sister.

In the hall they met the squire. He was very fond and very proud of his daughters; and he gave his right arm to Sophia, and slipped his left hand into Charlotte's hand with an affectionate pride and confidence that was charming.

"Any news, mother?" he asked, as he lifted one of the crisp brown trout from its bed of white damask and curly green parsley.

"None, squire; only the sheep-shearing at the Up-Hill Farm to-morrow. John of Middle Barra called with the statesman's respects. Will you go, squire?"

"Certainly. My men are all to lend a hand. Barf Latrigg is ageing fast now; he was my father's crony; if I slighted him, I should feel as if father knew about it. Which of you will go with me? Thou, mother?"

"That, I cannot, squire. The servant lasses are all promised for the fleece-folding; and it's a poor house that won't keep one woman busy in it."

"Sophia and Charlotte will go then?"

"Excuse me, father," answered Sophia languidly. "I shall have a headache to-morrow, I fear; I have been nervous and poorly all the afternoon."

"Why, Sophia, I didn't think I had such a foolish lass! Taking fancies for she doesn't know what. If you plan for to-morrow, plan a bit of pleasure with it; that's a long way better than expecting a headache. Charlotte will go then. Eh? What?"

"Yes, father; I will go. Sophia never could bear walking in the heat. I like it; and I think there are few things merrier than a sheep-shearing."

"So poetic! So idyllic!" murmured Sophia, with mild sarcasm.

"Many people think so, Sophia. Mr. Wordsworth would remember Pan and Arcadian shepherds playing on reedy pipes, and Chaldæan shepherds studying the stars, and those on Judæa's hills who heard the angels singing. He would think of wild Tartar shepherds, and handsome Spanish and Italian."

"And still handsomer Cumberland ones." And Sophia, having given this little sisterly reminder, added calmly, "I met Mr. Wordsworth to-day, father. He had come over the fells with a party, and he looked very much bored with his company."

"I shouldn't wonder if he were. He likes his own company best. He is a great man now, but I remember well when people thought he was just a little off-at-side. You knew Nancy Butterworth, mother?"

"Certainly I did, squire. She lived near Rydal."

"Yes. Nancy wasn't very bright herself. A stranger once asked

her what Mr. Wordsworth was like; and she said, 'He's canny enough at times. Mostly he's wandering up and down t' hills, talking his po-et-ry; but now and then he'll say, "How do ye do, Nancy?" as sensible as you or me.'"

"Mr. Wordsworth speaks foolishness to a great many people besides Nancy Butterworth," said Sophia warmly; "but he is a great poet and a great seer to those who can understand him."

"Well, well, Mr. Wordsworth is neither here nor there in our affairs. We'll go up to Latriggs in the afternoon, Charlotte. I'll be ready at two o'clock."

"And I, also, father." Her face was flushed and thoughtful, and she had become suddenly quiet. The squire glanced at her, but without curiosity; he only thought, "What a pity she is a lass! I wish Harry had her good sense and her good heart; I do that."

CHAPTER II.
THE SHEEP-SHEARING

"Plain living and high thinking …
The homely beauty of the good old cause,
…our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws."

"A happy youth, and their old age
Is beautiful and free."

The sheep-shearings at Up-Hill Farm were a kind of rural Olympics. Shepherds came there from far and near to try their skill against each other,—young men in their prime mostly, with brown, ruddy faces, and eyes of that bright blue lustre which is only gained by a free, open-air life. The hillside was just turning purple with heather bloom, and along the winding, stony road the yellow asphodels were dancing in the wind. Everywhere there was the scent of bog-myrtle and wild-rose and sweetbrier, and the tinkling sound of becks babbling over glossy rocks; and in the glorious sunshine and luminous air, the mountains appeared to expand and elevate, and to throw out glowing peaks and summits into infinite space.

Hand in hand the squire and his daughter climbed the fellside. They had left home in high spirits, merrily flinging back the

mother's and Sophia's last advices; but gradually they became silent, and then a little mournful. "I wonder why it is, father?" asked Charlotte; "I'm not at all tired, and how can fresh air and sunshine make one melancholy?"

"Maybe, now, sad thoughts are catching. I was having a few. Eh? What?"

"I don't know. Why were you having sad thoughts?"

"Well, then, I really can't understand why. There's no need to fret over changes. At the long end the great change puts all right. Charlotte, I have been coming to Barf Latrigg's shearings for about half a century. I remember the first. I held my nurse's hand, and wore such a funny little coat, and such a big lace collar. And, dear me! it was just such a day as this, thirty-two years ago, that your mother walked up to the shearing with me, Charlotte; and I asked her if she would be my wife, and she said she would. Thou takes after her a good deal; she had the very same bright eyes and bonny face, and straight, tall shape thou has to-day. Barf Latrigg was sixty then, turning a bit gray, but able to shear with any man they could put against him. He'll be ninety now; but his father lived till he was more than a hundred, and most of his fore-elders touched the century. He's had his troubles too."

"I never heard of them."

"No. They are dead and buried. A dead trouble may be forgot: it is the living troubles that make the eyes dim, and the heart fail. Yes, yes; Barf is as happy as a boy now, but I remember when he was back-set and fore-set with trouble. In life every thing goes

round like a cart-wheel. Eh? What?"

In a short time they reached the outer wall of the farm. They were eight hundred feet above the valley; and looking backwards upon the woods from their airy shelf, the tops of the trees appeared like a solid green road, on which they might drop down and walk. Stone steps in the stone wall admitted them into the enclosure, and then they saw the low gray house spreading itself in the shadow of the noble sycamores—

> … "musical with bees;
> Such tents the patriarchs loved."

As they approached, the old statesman strode to the open door to meet them. He was a very tall man, with a bright, florid face, and a great deal of fine, white hair. Two large sheep-dogs, which only wanted a hint to be uncivil, walked beside him. He had that independent manner which honorable descent and absolute ownership of house and land give; and he looked every inch a gentleman, though he wore only the old dalesman's costume, —breeches of buckskin fastened at the knees with five silver buttons, home-knit stockings and low shoes, and a red waistcoat, open that day, in order to show the fine ruffles on his shirt. He was precisely what Squire Sandal would have been, if the Sandals had not been forced by circumstances into contact with a more cultivated and a more ambitious life.

"Welcome, Sandal! I have been watching for thee. There

would be little prosperation in a shearing if thou wert absent. And a good day to thee, Charlotte. My Ducie was speaking of thee a minute ago. Here she comes to help thee off with thy things."

Charlotte was untying her bonnet as she entered the deep, cool porch, and a moment afterward Ducie was at her side. It was easy to see the women loved each other, though Ducie only smiled, and said, "Come in; I'm right glad to see you, Charlotte. Come into t' best room, and cool your face a bit. And how is Mrs. Sandal and Sophia? Be things at their usual, dear?"

"Thank you, Ducie; all and every thing is well,—I hope. We have not heard from Harry lately. I think it worrits father a little, but he is never the one to show it. Oh, how sweet this room is!"

She was standing before the old-fashioned swivel mirror, that had reflected three generations,—a fair, bright girl, with the light and hope of youth in her face. The old room, with its oak walls, immense bed, carved awmries, drawers, and cupboards, made a fine environment for so much life and color. And yet there were touches in it that resembled her, and seemed to be the protest of the present with the past,—vivid green and scarlet masses of geranium and fuchsia in the latticed window, and a great pot of odorous flowers upon the hearthstone. But the peculiar sweetness which Charlotte noticed came from the polished oak floor, which was strewed with bits of rosemary and lavender, to prevent the slipping of the feet upon it.

Charlotte looked down at them as she ejaculated, "How sweet this room is!" and the shadow of a frown crossed her face. "I

would not do it, Ducie, for any one," she said. "Poor herbs of grace! What sin have they committed to be trodden under foot? I would not do it, Ducie: I feel as if it hurt them."

"Nay, now; flowers grow to be pulled dear, just as lasses grow to be loved and married."

"Is that what you think, Ducie? Some cherished in the jar; some thrown under the feet, and bruised to death,—the feet of wrong and sorrow,"—

"Don't you talk that way, Charlotte. It isn't lucky for girls to talk of wrong and sorrow. Talking of things bespeaks them. There's always *them* that hear; *them* that we don't see. And everybody pulls flowers, dearie."

"I don't. If I pull a rose, I always believe every other rose on that tree is sad about it. They may be in families, Ducie, who can tell? And the little roses may be like the little children, and very dear to the grown roses."

"Why, what fancies! Let us go into the yard, and see the shearing. You've made me feel as if I'd never like to pull a posy again. You shouldn't say such things, indeed you shouldn't: you've given me quite a turn, I'm sure."

As Ducie talked, they went through the back-door into a large yard walled in from the hillside, and having in it three grand old sycamores. One of these was at the top of the enclosure, and a circle of green shadow like a tent was around it. In this shadow the squire and the statesman were sitting. Their heads were uncovered, their long clay pipes in their hands; and, with a

placid complacency, they were watching the score of busy men before them. Many had come long distances to try their skill against each other; for the shearings at Latrigg's were a pastoral game, at which it was a local honor to be the winner. There the young statesman who could shear his six score a day found others of a like capacity, and it was Greek against Greek at Up-Hill shearing that afternoon.

"I had two thousand sheep to get over," said Latrigg, "but they'll be bare by sunset, squire. That isn't bad for these days. When I was young we wouldn't have thought so much of two thousand, but every dalesman then knew what good shearing was. *Now*," and the old man shook his head slowly, "good shearers are few and far between. Why, there's some here from beyond Kirkstone Pass and Nab Scar!"

It was customary for young people of all conditions to give men as aged as Barf Latrigg the honorable name of "grandfather;" and Charlotte said, as she sat down in the breezy shadow beside him, "Who is first, grandfather?"

"Why, our Stephen, to be sure! They'll have to be up before day-dawn to keep sidey with our Steve.—Steve, how many is thou ahead now?" The voice that asked the question, though full of triumph, was thin and weak; but the answer came back in full, mellow tones,—

"Fifteen ahead, grandfather."

"Oh, I'm so glad!"

"Charlotte Sandal says 'she's so glad.' Now then, if thou loses

ground, I wouldn't give a ha'penny for thee."

Then the women who were folding the fleeces on tables under the other two sycamores lifted their eyes, and glanced at Steve; and some of the elder ones sent him a merry jibe, and some of the younger ones, smiles, that made his brown handsome face deepen in color; but he was far too earnest in his work to spare a moment for a reply. By and by, the squire put down his pipe, and sat watching with his hands upon his knees. And a stray child crept up to Charlotte, and climbed upon her lap, and went to sleep there, and the wind flecked these four representatives of four generations all over with wavering shadows; and Ducie came backwards and forwards, and finally carried the sleeping child into the house; and Stephen, busy as he was, saw every thing that went on in the group under the top sycamore.

Even before sundown, the last batch of sheep were fleeced and *smitten*,[1] and turned on to the hillside; and Charlotte, leaning over the wall, watched them wander contentedly up the fell, with their lambs trotting beside them. Grandfather and the squire had gone into the house; Ducie was calling her from the open door; she knew it was tea-time, and she was young and healthy and hungry enough to be glad of it.

At the table she met Stephen. The strong, bare-armed Hercules, whom she had watched tossing the sheep around for his shears as easily as if they had been kittens under his hands, was now dressed in a handsome tweed suit, and looking quite

[1] Smitten. Marked with the cipher of the owner in a mixture mostly of tar.

as much of a gentleman as the most fastidious maiden could desire. He came in after the meal had begun, flushed somewhat with his hard labor, and perhaps, also, with the hurry of his toilet; but there was no embarrassment in his manner. It had never yet entered Stephen's mind that there was any occasion for embarrassment, for the friendship between the squire's family and his own had been devoid of all sense of inequality. The squire was "the squire," and was perhaps richer than Latrigg, but even that fact was uncertain; and the Sandals had been to court, and married into county families; but then the Latriggs had been for exactly seven hundred years the neighbors of Sandal,—good neighbors, shoulder to shoulder with them in every trial or emergency.

The long friendship had never known but one temporary shadow, and this had been during the time that the present squire's mother ruled in Sandal; the Mistress Charlotte whose influence was still felt in the old seat. She had entirely disapproved the familiar affection with which Latrigg met her husband, and it was said the disputes which drove one of her sons from his home were caused by her determination to break up the companionship existing between the young people of the two houses at that time.

The squire remembered it. He had also, in some degree, regarded his mother's prejudices while she lived; but, after her death, Sophia and Charlotte, as well as their brother, began to go very often to Up-Hill Farm. Naturally Stephen, who was Ducie's

son, became the companion of Harry Sandal; and the girls grew up in his sight like two beautiful sisters. It was only within the past year that he had begun to understand that one was dearer to him than the other; but though none of the three was now ignorant of the fact, it was as yet tacitly ignored. The knowledge had not been pleasant to Sophia; and to Charlotte and Stephen it was such a delicious uncertainty, that they hardly desired to make it sure; and they imagined their secret was all their own, and were so happy in it, that they feared to look too curiously into their happiness.

There was to be a great feast and dance that night: and, as they sat at the tea-table, they heard the mirth and stir of its preparation; but it came into the room only like a pleasant echo, mingling with the barking of the sheep-dogs, and the bleating of the shorn sheep upon the fells, and the murmur of their quiet conversation about "the walks" Latrigg owned, and the scrambling, black-faced breed whose endurance made them so profitable. Something was also said of other shearings to which Stephen must go, if he would assure his claim to be "top-shearer," and of the wool-factories which the most astute statesmen were beginning to build.

"If I were a younger man, I'd be in with them," said Latrigg. "I'd spin and weave my own fleeces, and send them to Leeds market, with no go-between to share my profits." And Steve put in a sensible word now and then, and passed the berry-cake and honey and cream; and withal met Charlotte's eyes, and caught

her smiles, and was as happy as love and hope could make him.

After tea the squire wished to go; but Latrigg said, "Smoke one pipe with me Sandal," and they went into the porch together. Then Steve and Charlotte sauntered about the garden, or, leaning on the stone wall, looked down into the valley, or away off to the hills. Many things they said to each other which seemed to mean so little, but which meant so much when love was the interpreter. For Charlotte was eighteen and Stephen twenty-two; and when mortals still so young are in love, they are quite able to create worlds out of nothing.

After a while the squire lifted his eyes, and took in the bit of landscape which included them. The droop of the young heads towards each other, and their air of happy confidence, awakened a vague suspicion in his heart. Perhaps Latrigg was conscious of it; for he said, as if in answer to the squire's thought, "Steve will have all that is mine. It's a deal easier to die, Sandal, when you have a fine lad like Steve to leave the old place to."

"Steve is in the female line. That's a deal different to having sons. Lasses are cold comfort for sons. Eh? What?"

"To be sure; but I've given Steve my name. Any one not called Latrigg at Up-Hill would seem like a stranger."

"I know how you feel about that. A squire in Seat-Sandal out of the old name would have a very middling kind of time, I think. He'd have a sight of ill-will at his back."

"Thou means with *them*!"

The squire nodded gravely; and after a minute's silence said,

"It stands to reason *they* take an interest. I do in them. When I think of this or that Sandal, or when I look up at their faces as I sit smoking beside them, I'm sure I feel like their son; and I wouldn't grieve them any more than if they were to be seen and talked to. It's none likely, then, that *they* forget. I know they don't."

"I'm quite of thy way of thinking, Sandal; but Steve will be called Latrigg. He has never known any other name, thou sees."

"To be sure. Is Ducie willing?"

"Poor lass! She never names Steve's father. He'd no business in her life, and he very soon went out of it. Stray souls will get into families they have no business in, sometimes. They make a deal of unhappiness when they do."

Sandal sat listening with a sympathetic face. He hoped Latrigg was going to tell him something definite about his daughter's trouble; but the old man puffed, puffed, in silence a few minutes, and then turned the conversation. However, Sandal had been touched on a point where he was exceedingly sensitive; and he rose with a sigh, and said, "Well, well, Latrigg, good-by. I'll go down the fell now. Come, Charlotte."

Unconsciously he spoke with an authority not usual to him, and the parting was a little silent and hurried; for Ducie was in the throng of her festival, and rather impatient for Stephen's help. Only Latrigg walked to the gate with them. He looked after Sandal and his daughter with a grave, but not unhappy wistfulness; and when a belt of larches hid them from his view, he turned towards the house, saying softly,—

"It is like to be my last shearing. Very soon this life will *have been*, but through Christ's mercy I have the over-hand of the future."

It was almost as hard to go down the fell as to come up it, for the road was very steep and stony. The squire took it leisurely, carrying his straw hat in his hand, and often standing still to look around him. The day had been very warm; and limpid vapors hung over the mountains, like something far finer than mist,—like air made visible,—giving them an appearance of inconceivable remoteness, full of grandeur; for there is a sublimity of distance, as well as a sublimity of height. He made Charlotte notice them. "Maybe, many a year after this, you'll see the hills look just that way, dearie; then think on this evening and on me."

She did not speak, but she looked into his face, and clasped his hand tightly. She was troubled with her own mood. Try as she would, it was impossible to prevent herself drifting into most unusual silences. Stephen's words and looks filled her heart; she had only half heard the things her father had been saying. Never before had she found an hour in her life when she wished for solitude in preference to his society,—her good, tender father. She put Stephen out of her mind, and tried again to feel all her old interest in his plans for their amusement. Alas, alas! The first secret, especially if it be a love-secret, makes a break in that sweet, confidential intercourse between a parent and child which nothing restores. The squire hardly comprehended that there

might be a secret. Charlotte was unthoughtful of wrong; but still there was a repression, a something undefinable between them, impalpable, but positive as a breath of polar air. She noticed the mountains, for he made her do so; but the birds sang sleepy songs to her unheeded, and the yellow asphodels made a kind of sunshine at her feet that she never saw; and even her father's voice disturbed the dreamy charm of thoughts that touched a deeper, sweeter joy than moor or mountain, bird or flower, had ever given her.

Before they reached home, the squire had also become silent. He came into the hall with the face of one dissatisfied and unhappy. The feeling spread through the house, as a drop of ink spreads itself through a glass of water. It almost suited Sophia's mood, and Mrs. Sandal was not inclined to discuss it until the squire was alone with her. Then she asked the question of all questions the most irritating, "What is the matter with you, squire?"

"What is the matter, indeed? Love-making. That is the matter, Alice."

"Charlotte?"

"Yes."

"And Stephen Latrigg?"

"Yes."

"I thought as much. Opportunity is a dangerous thing."

"My word! To hear you talk, one would think it was matterless how our girls married."

"It is never matterless how any girl marries, squire; and our Charlotte"—

"Oh, I thought Charlotte was a child yet! How could I tell there was danger at Up-Hill? You ought to have looked better after your daughters. See that she doesn't go near-hand Latrigg's again."

"I wouldn't be so foolish, William. It's a deal better not to notice. Make no words about it; and, if you don't like Stephen, send Charlotte away a bit. Half of young people's love-affairs is just because they are handy to each other."

"'Like Stephen!' It is more than a matter of liking, as you know very well. If Harry Sandal goes on as he has been going, there will be little enough left for the girls; and they must marry where money will not be wanted. More than that, I've been thinking of brother Tom's boy for one of them. Eh? What?"

"You mean, you have been writing to Tom about a marriage? I would have been above a thing like that, William. I suppose you did it to please your mother. She always did hanker after Tom, and she always did dislike the Latriggs. I have heard that when people were in the grave they 'ceased from troubling,' but"—

"Alice!"

"I meant no harm, squire, I'm sure; and I would not say wrong of the dead for any thing, specially of your mother; but I think about my own girls."

"There, now, Alice, don't whimper and cry. I am not going to harm your girls, not I. Only mother was promised that Tom's

son should have the first chance for their favor. I'm sure there's nothing amiss in that. Eh?"

"A young man born in a foreign country among blacks, or very near blacks. And nobody knows who his mother was."

"Oh, yes! his mother was a judge's daughter, and she had a deal of money. Her son has been well done to; sent to the very best German and French schools, and now he is at Oxford. I dare say he is a very good young man, and at any rate he is the only Sandal of this generation except our own boy."

"Your sisters have sons."

"Yes, Mary has three: they are *Lockerbys*. Elizabeth has two: they are *Piersons*. My poor brother Launcie was drowned, and never had son or daughter; so that Tom's Julius is the nearest blood we have."

"Julius! I never heard tell of such a name."

"Yes, it is a silly kind of a foreign name. His mother is called Julia: I suppose that is how it comes. No Sandal was ever called such a name before, but the young man mustn't be blamed for his godfather's foolishness, Alice. Eh?"

"I'm not so unjust. Poor Launcie! I saw him once at a ball in Kendal. Are you sure he was drowned?"

"I followed him to Whitehaven, and found out that he had gone away in a ship that never came home. Mother and Launcie were in bad bread when he left, and she never fretted for him as she did for Tom."

"Why did you not tell me all this before?"

"I said to myself, there's time enough yet to be planning husbands for girls that haven't a thought of the kind. We were very happy with them; I couldn't bear to break things up; and I never once feared about Steve Latrigg, not I."

"What does your brother and his wife say?"

"Tom is with me. As for his wife, I know nothing of her, and she knows nothing of us. She has been in England a good many times, but she never said she would like to come and see us, and my mother never wanted to see her; so there wasn't a compliment wasted, you see. Eh? What?"

"No, I don't see, William. All about it is in a muddle, and I must say I never heard tell of such ways. It is like offering your own flesh and blood for sale. And to people who want nothing to do with us. I'm astonished at you, squire."

"Don't go on so, Alice. Tom and I never had any falling out. He just got out of the way of writing. He likes India, and he had his own reasons for not liking England in any shape you could offer England to him. There's no back reckonings between Tom and me, and he'll be glad for Julius to come to his own people. We will ask Julius to Sandal; and you say, yourself, that the half of young folks' loving is in being handy to each other. Eh? What?"

"I never thought you would bring my words up that way. But I'll tell you one thing, my girls are not made of melted wax, William. You'll be a wise man, and a strong man, if you get a ring on their fingers, if they don't want it there. Sophia will say very soft and sweet, 'No, thank you, father;' and you'll move

Scawfell and Langdale Pikes before you get her beyond it. As for Charlotte, you yourself will stand 'making' better than she will. And you know that nothing short of an earthquake can lift you an inch outside your own way."

And perhaps Sandal thought the hyperbole a compliment; for he smiled a little, and walked away, with what his wife privately called "a peacocky air," saying something about "Greek meeting Greek" as he did so. Mrs. Sandal did not in the least understand him: she wondered a little over the remark, and then dismissed it as "some of the squire's foolishness."

CHAPTER III.
JULIUS SANDAL

"Variety's the very spice of life
That gives it all its flavor."

"Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has survived the fall."

Life has a chronology quite independent of the almanac. The heart divides it into periods. When the sheep-shearing had been forgotten by all others, the squire often looked back to it with longing. It was a boundary which he could never repass, and which shut him out forever from the happy days of his daughters' girlhood,—the days when they had no will but his will, and no pleasures but in his smile and companionship. His son Harry had never been to him what Sophia and Charlotte were. Harry had spent his boyhood in public schools, and, when his education was completed, had defied all the Sandal traditions, and gone into the army. At this time he was with his regiment,—the old Cameronian,—in Edinburgh. And in other points, besides his choice of the military profession, Harry had asserted his will against his father's will. But the squire's daughters gave him nothing but delight. He was proud of their beauty, proud of

Charlotte's love of out-door pleasures, proud of Sophia's love of books; and he was immeasurably happy in their affection and obedience.

If Sandal had been really a wise man he would have been content with his good fortune; and like the happy Corinthian have only prayed, "O goddess, let the days of my prosperity continue!" But he had the self-sufficiency and impatience of a man who is without peer in his own small arena. He believed himself to be as capable of ordering his daughters' lives as of directing his sheep "walks," or the change of crops in his valley and upland meadows.

Suddenly it had been revealed to him, that Stephen Latrigg had found his way into a life he thought wholly his own. Until that moment of revelation he had liked Stephen; but he liked him no longer. He felt that Stephen had stolen the privilege he should have asked for, and he deeply resented the position the young man had taken. On the contrary, Stephen had been guilty of no intentional wrong. He had simply grown into an affection too sweet to be spoken of, too uncertain and immature to be subjected to the prudential rules of daily life; yet, had the question been plainly put to him, he would have gone at once to the squire, and said, "I love Charlotte, and I ask for your sanction to my love." He would have felt such an acknowledgment to be the father's most sacred and evident right, and he was thinking of making it at the very hour in which Sandal was feeling bitterly toward him for its omission. And thus the old, old tragedy of

mutual misunderstanding works to sorrowful ends.

The night of the sheep-shearing the squire could not sleep. To lay awake and peer into the future through the dark hours was a new experience, and it made him full of restless anxieties. Of course he expected Sophia and Charlotte to marry, but not just yet. He had so far persistently postponed the consideration of this subject, and he was angry at Stephen Latrigg for showing him that further delay might be dangerous to his own plans.

"A presumptuous young coxcomb," he muttered. "Does he think that being 'top-shearer' gives him a right to make love to Charlotte Sandal?"

In the morning he wrote the following letter:—

> Nephew Julius Sandal,—I hear you are at Oxford, and I should think you would wish to make the acquaintance of your nearest relatives. They will be glad to see you at Seat-Sandal during the vacation, if your liking leads you that way. To hear soon from you is the hope of your affectionate uncle,
>
> WILLIAM SANDAL, *of Sandal-Side*.

He finished the autograph with a broad flourish, and handed the paper to his wife. "What do you think of that, Alice? Eh? What?"

There was a short silence, then Mrs. Sandal laid the note upon the table. "I don't think over much of it, William. Good-fortune won't bear hurrying. Can't you wait till events ripen naturally?"

"And have all my plans put out of the way?"

"Are you sure that your plans are the best plans?"

"They will be a bit better than any Charlotte and Stephen Latrigg have made."

"I don't believe they have such a thing as a plan between them. But if you think so, send Charlotte to her aunt Lockerby for a few months. Love is just like fire: it goes out if it hasn't fuel."

"Nay, I want Charlotte here. After our Harry, Julius is the next heir, and I'm set on him marrying one of the girls. If he doesn't like Sophia he may like Charlotte. I have two chances then, and I'm not going to throw one away for Steve Latrigg's liking or loving. Don't you see, Alice? Eh? What?"

"No: I never was one to see beyond the horizon. But if you must have to-morrow in to-day, why then send off your letter. I would let 'well' alone. When change comes to the door, it is time enough to ask it over the threshold. We are very happy now, William, and every happy day is so much certain gain in life."

"That is a woman's way of talking. A man looks for the future."

"And how seldom does he get what he looks for. But I know you, William Sandal. You will take your own way, be it good or bad; and what is more, you will make others take it with you."

"I am inviting my own nephew, Alice. Eh? What?"

"You know nothing about it. There are kin that are not kindred. You are inviting you know not who or what. But,"—and she pushed the letter towards him, with a gesture which seemed to say, "I am not responsible for the consequences."

The squire after a moment's thought accepted them. He went into the yard, humming a strain of "The Bay of Biscay," and gave the letter to a groom, with orders to take it at once to the post-office. Then he called Charlotte from the rose-walk. "The horses are saddled," he said, "and I want you to trot over to Dalton with me."

Mrs. Sandal had gone to her eldest daughter. She was in the habit of seeking Sophia's advice; or, more strictly speaking, she liked to discuss with her the things she had already determined to do. Sophia was sitting in the coolest and prettiest of gowns, working out with elaborate care a pencil drawing of Rydal Mount. She listened to her mother with the utmost respect and attention, and her fine color brightened slightly at the mention of Julius Sandal; but she never neglected once to change an F or an H pencil for a B at the precise stroke the change was necessary.

"And so you see, Sophia, we may have a strange young man in the house for weeks, and where to put him I can't decide. And I wanted to begin the preserving and the raspberry vinegar next week, but your father is as thoughtless as ever was; and I am sure if Julius is like *his* father he'll be no blessing in a house, for I have heard your grandmother speak in such a way of her son Tom."

"I thought uncle Tom was grandmother's favorite."

"I mean of his high temper and fine ways, and his quarrels with his eldest brother Launcelot."

"Oh! What did they quarrel about?"

"A good many things; among the rest, about the Latriggs.

There was more than one pretty girl at Up-Hill then, and the young men all knew it. Tom and his mother were always finger and thumb. He was her youngest boy, and she fretted after him all her life."

"And uncle Launcelot, did she not fret for him?"

"Not so much. Launcelot was the eldest, and very set in his own way: she couldn't order him around."

"The eldest? Then father would not have been squire of Sandal-Side if Launcelot had lived?"

"No, indeed. Launcelot's death made a deal of difference to your father and me. Father was very solemn and set about his brother's rights; and even after grandfather died, he didn't like to be called 'squire' until every hope was long gone. But I would as soon have thought of poor Launcie coming back from the dead as of Tom's son visiting here; and it is inconvenient right now, exceedingly so; harvesting coming on, and preserving time, and none of the spare rooms opened since the spring cleaning."

"It is trying for you, mother, but perhaps Julius may not be very much trouble. He'll be with father all the time, and he'll make a change."

"Change! That is just what I dread. Young people are always for change. They are certain that every change must be a gain. Old people know that changes mean loss of some kind or other. After one is forty years old, Sophia, the seasons bring change enough."

"I dare say they do, mother. I don't care much for change, even

at my age. Have you told Charlotte?"

"No, I haven't told her yet. I think she is off to Dalton. Father said he was going this morning, and he never would go without her."

Indeed, the squire and his younger daughter were at that moment cantering down the valley, mid the fresh green of the fields, and the yellow of the ripening wheat, and the hazy purple of mountains holding the whole landscape in their solemn shelter except in front, where the road stretched to the sea, amid low hills overgrown with parsley-fern and stag's-horn-moss. They had not gone very far before they met Stephen Latrigg. He was well mounted and handsomely dressed; and, as he bowed to the squire and Charlotte, his happy face expressed a delight which Sandal in his present mood felt to be offensive. Evidently Steve intended to accompany them as far as their roads were identical; but the squire pointedly drew rein, and by the cool civility of his manner made the young man so sensible of his intrusion, that he had no alternative but to take the hint. He looked at Charlotte with eyes full of tender reproach, and she was too unprepared for such a speedy termination to their meeting to oppose it. So Stephen was galloping at headlong speed in advance, before she realized that he had been virtually refused their company.

"Father, why did you do that?"

"Do what, Charlotte? Eh? What?"

"Send Steve away. I am sure I do not know what to make of you doing such a thing. Poor Steve!"

"Well, then, I had my reason for it. Did you see the way he looked at you? Eh? What?"

"Dear me! A cat may look at a king. Did you send Steve away for a look? You have put me about, father."

"There's looks and other looks, my lass. Cats don't look at kings the way Steve looked at you. Now, then, I want no love-making between you and Steve Latrigg."

"What nonsense! Steve hasn't said a word of love-making, as you call it."

"I thought you had all your woman-senses, Charlotte. Bethink you of the garden walk last night."

"We were talking all the time of the sweetbrier and hollyhocks,—and things like that."

"You might have talked of the days of the week or the multiplication-table: one kind of words was just as good as another. Any thing Steve said last night could have been spelled with four letters."

"Four letters?"

"To be sure. L-o-v-e."

"You used to like Stephen."

"I like all bright, honest, good lads; but when they want to make love to Miss Charlotte Sandal, they think one thing, and I think another. There has been ill-luck with love-making between the Sandals and the Latriggs. My brothers Launcie and Tom quarrelled about one of Barf Latrigg's daughters, and mother lost them both through her. There is no love-line between the two

houses, or if there is nothing can make it run straight. Don't you try to, Charlotte; neither the dead nor the living will like it or have it."

He intended then to tell her about Julius Sandal, but a look at her face checked him. He had a wise perception about women; and he reflected that he had very seldom repented of speaking too little to them, but very often repented of speaking too much. So he dropped Stephen, and dropped Julius; and began to talk about the fish in the becks and tarns, and the new breed of sheep he was trying in the lower "walks." Ere long they came into the rich valley of Furness; and he made her notice the difference between it and the vale of Esk and Duddon, with its dreary waste of sullen moss and unfruitful solitudes.

"Those old Cistercian monks that built Furness Abbey knew how to choose a bit of good land, Charlotte. Eh? What?"

"I suppose so. What did they do with it?"

"Let it out."

"I wonder who would want to come here seven hundred years ago."

"You don't know what you are saying, Charlotte. There were great men here then, and great deeds doing. King Stephen kept things very lively; and the Scots were always running over the Border for cattle and sheep, and any thing else they could lay their hands on. And the monks had great flocks, so they rented their lands to companies of four fighting men; and one of the four was to be ready day and night to protect the sheep, and the

Scots kept them busy. Eh? What?"

"The Musgraves and Armstrongs and Netherbys, I know," and the cloud passed from her face; and to the clatter of her horse's hoofs, she lilted merrily a stanza of an old border song:—

> "The mountain sheep were sweeter,
> But the valley sheep were fatter;
> We therefore deemed it meeter
> To carry off the latter.
> We made an expedition;
> We met a force, and quelled it;
> We took a strong position,
> And killed the men who held it."

And the squire, who knew the effort it cost her, fell readily into her mood of forced gayety until the simulated feeling became a real one; and they entered Dalton neck and neck together, after a mile's hard race.

In the mean time the letter which was to summon Fate sped to its destination. When it arrived in Oxford, Julius had left Oxford for London, and it followed him there. He was sitting in his hotel the ensuing night, when it was delivered into his hands; and as it happened, he was in a mood most favorable to its success. He had been down the river on a picnic, had found his company very tedious; and early in the day the climate had shown him what it was capable of, even at mid-summer. As he sat cowering before the smoky fire, the rain plashed in the

muddy streets, and dripped mournfully down the dim window-panes. He was wondering what he must do with himself during the long vacation. He was tired of the Continent, he was lonely in England; and the United States had not then become the great playground for earth's weary or curious children.

Many times the idea of seeking out his own relations occurred to him. He had promised his father to do so. But, as a rule, people haven't much enthusiasm about unknown relations; and Julius regarded his promise more in the light of a duty to be performed than as the realization of a pleasure. Still, on that dreary night, in the solitary dulness of his very respectable inn, the Sandals, Lockerbys, and Piersons became three possible sources of interest. While his thoughts were drifting in this direction, the squire's letter was received; and the young man, who was something of a fatalist, accepted it as the solution of a difficulty.

"Sandal turns the new leaf for me," he murmured; "the new leaf in the book of life. I wonder what story will be written in it."

He answered the invitation while the enthusiasm of its reception swayed him, and he promised to follow the letter immediately. The squire received this information on Saturday night, as he was sitting with his wife and daughters. "Your nephew Julius Sandal, from Calcutta, is coming to pay us a visit, Alice," he said; and his air was that of a man who thinks he is communicating a piece of startling intelligence. But the three women had already exchanged every possible idea on the subject,

and felt no great interest in its further discussion.

"When is he coming?" asked Mrs. Sandal without enthusiasm; and Sophia supplemented the question by remarking, "I suppose he has nowhere else to go."

"I wouldn't say such things, Sophia; I would not."

"He has been in England some months, father."

"Well, then, he was only waiting till he was asked to come. I'm sure that was a proper thing. If there is any blame between us, it is my fault. I sent him a word of welcome last Wednesday morning, and it is very likely he will be here to-morrow. I'm sure he hasn't let any grass grow under his feet. Eh? What?"

Charlotte looked up quickly. "*Wednesday morning*." She was quite capable of putting this and that together, and by a momentary mental process she arrived at an exceedingly correct estimate of her father's invitation. Her blue eyes scintillated beneath her dropped lids; and, though she went calmly on tying the feather to the fishing-fly she was making, she said, in a hurried and unsteady voice, "I know he will be disagreeable, and I have made up my mind to dislike him."

Julius Sandal arrived the next morning when the ladies were preparing for church. He had passed the night at Ambleside, and driven over to Sandal in the first cool hours of the day. The squire was walking about the garden, and he saw the carriage enter the park gates. He said nothing to any one, but laid down his pipe, and went to meet it. Then Julius made the first step towards his uncle's affection,—he left the vehicle when they met, and insisted

upon walking by his side.

When they reached the house, his valet was attending to the removal of his luggage, and they entered the great hall together. At that moment Mistress Charlotte's remarkable likeness seemed to force itself upon the squire's attention. He was unable to resist the impulse which made him lead his nephew up to it. "Let me introduce you, first of all, to your father's mother. I greet you in her name as well as in my own." As he spoke, the squire lifted his hat, and Julius did the same. It was a sudden, and to both men a quite unexpected, ceremonial; and it gave an air, touching and unusual, to his welcome.

And if that man is an ingrate who does not love his native land, how much more *immediate*, tender, and personal must the feeling be for the *home* of one's own race. That stately lady, who seemed to meet him at the threshold, was only the last of a long, shadowy line, whose hands were stretched out to him, even from the dark, forgotten days in which Lögberg Sandal laid the foundations of it. Julius was sensitive, and full of imagination: he felt his heart beat quick, and his eyes grow dim to the thought; and he loitered up the wide, low steps, feeling very like a man going up the phantom stairway of a dream.

The squire's cheery voice broke the spell. "We shall be ready for church in a quarter of an hour, Julius; will you remain at home, or go with us?"

"I should like to go with you."

"That's good. It is but a walk through the park: the church is

almost at its gates."

When he returned to the hall, the family were waiting for him; Mrs. Sandal and her daughters standing together in a little group, the squire walking leisurely about with his hands crossed behind his back. It would have been to some men a rather trying ordeal to descend the long flight of stairs, with three pairs of ladies' eyes watching him; but Julius knew that he had a striking personal appearance, and that every appointment of his toilet was faultless. He knew also the value of the respectable middle-aged valet following him, and felt that his irreproachable manner of serving his hat and gloves was a satisfactory reflection of his own importance.

It is the women of a family that give the tone and place to it. One glance at his aunt and cousins satisfied Julius. Mrs. Sandal was stately and comely, and had the quiet manners of a high-bred woman. Sophia, in white mull, with a large hat covered with white drooping feathers, and a glimmer of gold at her throat and wrists, was at least picturesque. Of Charlotte, he saw nothing in the first moments of their meeting but a pair of bright blue eyes, and a face as sweet and fresh as if it had been made out of a rose. He took his place between the girls, and the squire and his wife walked behind them. Sophia, being the eldest, took the initiative, talking softly and thoughtfully, as it was proper to do upon a Sunday morning.

The sods under their feet were thick and green; the oaks and sycamores above them had the broad shadows of many

centuries. The air was balmy with emanations from the woods and fields, and full of the expanding melody of church-bells travelling from hill to hill. Julius was conscious of every thing; even of the proud, shy girl who walked on his left hand, and whose attitude impressed him as slightly antagonistic. They soon reached the church, a very ancient one, built in the bloody days of the Plantagenets by the two knights whose grim effigies kept guard within the porch. It was dim and still when they entered: the congregation all kneeling at the solemn confession; the clergyman's voice, low and pathetic, intensifying silence to which it only added mortal minors of lament and entreaty. He was a small, spare man, with a face almost as white as the vesture of his holy office. Julius glanced up at him, and for a few minutes forgot all his dreamy philosophies, aggressive free thought, and shallow infidelities. He could not resist the influences around him; and when the people rose, and the organ filled the silence with melody, and a young sweet voice chanted joyfully,—

> "O come let us sing unto the Lord: let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.
> Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving: and shew ourselves glad in him with Psalms,"—

he turned round, and looked up to the singer, with a heart beating to every triumphant note. Then he saw it was Charlotte Sandal; and he did not wonder at the hearty way in which the squire joined in the melodious invocation, nor at his happy face,

nor at his shining eyes; and he said to himself with a sigh, "That is a Psalm one could sing oftener than once in seven days."

He had not noticed Charlotte much as they went to church: he amended his error as he returned to the "seat." And he thought that the old sylvan goddesses must have been as she was; must have had just the same fresh faces, and bright brown hair; just the same tall, erect forms and light steps; just the same garments of mingled wood-colors and pale green.

The squire had a very complacent feeling. He looked upon Julius as a nephew of his own discovering, and he felt something of a personal pride in all that was excellent in the young man. He watched impatiently for his wife to express her satisfaction, but Mrs. Sandal was not yet sure that she had any good reason to express it.

"Is he not handsome, Alice?"

"Some people would think so, William. I like a face I can read."

"I'm sure it is a long way better to keep yourself to yourself. Say what you will, I am sure he will have plenty of good qualities. Eh? What?"

"For instance, a great deal of money."

"Treat him fair, Alice; treat him fair. You never were one to be unfair, and I don't think you'll begin with my nephew."

"No, I'll never be unfair, not as long as I live; and I'll take up for Julius Sandal as soon as I am half sure he deserves it."

"You can't think what a pleasure it would be to me if he

fancied one of our girls. I've planned it this many a long day, Alice."

"Well, then, William, if you have a wish as strong as that, it is something more than a wish, it is a kind of right; and I'll never go against you in any fair matter."

"And though you spoke scornful of money, it is a good thing; and the girl Julius marries will be a rich woman. Eh? What?"

"Perhaps; but it is the happiness and not the riches of her child that is a good mother's reward, and a good father's too. Eh, William?"

"Certainly, Alice, certainly." But his unspoken reflection was, "women are that short sighted, they cannot put up with a small evil to prevent a big one."

He had forgotten that "the wise One" and the "Counsellor" thought one day's joys and sorrows "sufficient" for the heart to bear.

CHAPTER IV.
THUS RUNS THE WORLD AWAY

"But we mortals
Planted so lowly, with death to bless us,
Sorrow no longer."

"Our choices are our destiny. Nothing is ours that our choices
have not made ours."

Julius Sandal had precisely those superficial excellences which the world is ready to accept at their apparent value; and he had been in so many schools, and imbibed such a variety of opinions, that he had a mental suit for all occasions. "He knows about every thing," said Sandal to the clergyman, at the close of an evening spent together,—an evening in which Julius had been particularly interesting. "Don't you think so, sir?"

The rector looked up at the starry sky, and around the mountain-girdled valley, and answered slowly, "He has a great many ideas, squire; but they are second-hand, and do not fit his intellect."

Charlotte had much the same opinion of the paragon, only she expressed it in a different way. "He believes in every thing, and he might as well believe in nothing. Confucius and Christ are

about the same to him, and he thinks Juggernaut only 'a clumsier spelling of a name which no man spells correctly.'"

"His mind is like a fine mosaic, Charlotte."

"Oh, indeed, Sophia, I don't think so! Mosaics have a design and fit it. The mind of Julius is more like that quilt of a thousand pieces which grandmother patched. There they are, the whole thousand, just bits of color, all sizes and shapes. I would rather have a good square of white Marseilles."

"I don't think you ought to speak in such a way, Charlotte. You can't help seeing how much he admires you."

There was a tone in Sophia's carefully modulated voice which made Charlotte turn, and look at her sister. She was sitting at her embroidery-frame, and apparently counting the stitches in the rose-leaf she was copying; but Charlotte noticed that her hand trembled, and that she was counting at random. In a moment the veil fell from her eyes: she understood that Sophia was in love with Julius, and fearful of her own influence over him. She had been about to leave the room: she returned to the window, and stood at it a few moments, as if considering the assertion.

"I should be very sorry if that were the case, Sophia."

"Why?"

"Because I do not admire Julius in any way. I never could admire him. I don't want to be in debt to him for even one-half hour of sentimental affection."

"You should let him understand that, Charlotte, if it be so."

"He must be very dull if he does not understand."

"When father and you went fishing yesterday, he went with you."

"Why did you not come also? We begged you to do so."

"Because I hate to be hot and untidy, and to get my hands soiled, and my face flushed. That was your condition when you returned home; but all the same, he said you looked like a water-nymph or a wood-nymph."

"I think very little of him for such talk. There is nothing 'nymphy' about me. I should hate myself if there were. I am going to write, and ask Harry to get a furlough for a few weeks. I want to talk sensibly to some one. I am tired of being on the heights or in the depths all the time; and as for poetry, I wish I might never hear words that rhyme again. I've got to feel that way about it, that if I open a book, and see the lines begin with capitals, my first impulse is to tear it to pieces. There, now, you have my opinions, Sophia!"

Sophia laughed softly. "Where are you going? I see you have your bonnet on."

"I am going to Up-Hill. Grandfather Latrigg had a fall yesterday, and that's a bad thing at his age. Father is quite put out about it."

"Is he going with you?"

"He was, but two of the shepherds from Holler Scree have just come for him. There is something wrong with the flocks."

"Julius?"

"He does not know I am going; and if he did, I should tell

him plainly he was not wanted either at Up-Hill, or on the way to it. Ducie thinks little of him, and grandfather Latrigg makes his face like a stone wall when Julius talks his finest."

"They don't understand Julius. How can they? Steve is their model, and Steve is not the least like Julius."

"I should think not."

"What do you mean?"

"Never mind. Good-by."

She shut the door with more emphasis than she was aware of, and went to her mother for some cordials and dainties to take with her. As she passed through the hall the squire called her, and she followed his voice into the small parlor which was emphatically "master's room."

"I have had very bad news about the Holler Scree flock, Charlotte, and I must away there to see what can be done. Tell Barf Latrigg it is the sheep, and he will understand: he was always one to put the dumb creatures first. The kindest thing that is in your own heart say it to the dear old man for me; will you, Charlotte?"

"You can trust to me, father."

"Yes, I know I can; for that and more too. And there is more. I feel a bit about Stephen. Happen I was less than kind to him the other day. But I gave you good reasons, Charlotte; and I have such confidence in you, that I said to mother, 'You can send Charlotte. There is nothing underhand about her. She knows my will, and she'll do it.' Eh? What?"

"Yes, father: I'll be square on all four sides with you. But I told you there had been no love-making between me and Steve."

"Steve was doing his best at it. Depend upon it he meant love-making; and I must say I thought you made out to understand him very well. Maybe I was mistaken. Every woman is a new book, and a book by herself; and it isn't likely I can understand them all."

"Stephen is sure to speak to me about your being so queer to him. Had I not better tell the truth?"

"I have a high opinion of that way. Truth may be blamed, but it can't be shamed. However, if he was not making love to you at the shearing, won't you find it a bit difficult to speak your mind? Eh? What?"

"He will understand."

"Ay, I thought so."

"Father, we have never had any secrets, you and me. If I am not to encourage Stephen Latrigg, do you want me to marry Julius Sandal?"

"Well, I never! Such a question! What for?"

"Because, at the very first, I want to tell you that I could not do it—*no way*. I am quite ready to give up my will to your will, and my pleasure to your pleasure. That is my duty; but to marry cousin Julius is a different thing."

"Don't get too far forward, Charlotte. Julius has not said a word to me about marrying you."

"But he is doing his best at it. Depend upon it he means

marrying; and I must say I thought you made out to understand him very well. Maybe I was mistaken. Every man is a new book, and a book by himself; and it is not likely I can understand them all."

"Now you are picking up my own words, and throwing them back at me. That isn't right. I don't know whatever to say for myself. Eh? What?"

"Say, 'dear Charlotte,' and 'good-by Charlotte,' and take an easy mind with you to Holler Scree, father. As far as I am concerned, I will never grieve you, and never deceive you,—no, not in the least little thing."

So she left him. Her face was bright with smiles, and her words had even a ring of mirth in them; but below all there was a stubborn weight that she could not throw off, a darkness of spirit that no sunshine could brighten. Since Julius had come into their home, home had never been the same. There was a stranger at the table and in all its sweet, familiar places, and she was sure that to her he always would be a stranger. Something was said or done that put them farther apart every day. She could not understand how any Sandal could be so absolutely out of her love and sympathy. Who has not experienced these invasions of hostile natures? Alien voices, characters fundamentally different, yet bound to them by natural ties which the soul refuses to recognize.

The somberness of her thoughts affected her surroundings very much as rain affects the atmosphere. The hills looked

melancholy: she was aware of every stone on the road. Alas! this morning she had begun to grow old, for she felt that she had *a past*,—a past that could never return. Hitherto her life had been to-day and to-morrow, and to-morrow always in the sunshine. Hitherto the thought of Stephen had been blended with something that was to happen. Now she knew she must always be remembering the days that for them would come no more. She found herself reviewing even her former visits to Up-Hill. In them also change had begun. And it is over the young, sorrow triumphs most cruelly. They are so easily wounded, so inapt to resist, so harassed by scruples, so astonished at troubles they cannot comprehend, that their very sensitiveness prepares them for suffering. Very bitter tears are shed before we are twenty years old. At forty we have learned to accept the inevitable, and to feel many things possible which we once declared would break our hearts in two.

There was an air of great depression also at Up-Hill. Ducie was full of apprehension. She said to Charlotte, "When men as old as father fall, they stumble at their own grave; and I can't think what I'll do without father."

"You have Steve."

"Steve is going away. He would have left this morning, but for this fresh trouble. I see you are startled, Charlotte."

"I am that. I heard nothing of it. He moves in a great hurry."

"He always moves that way, does Steve."

"How is grandfather?"

"He has had quite a backening since yesterday night. He has got 'the call,' Charlotte. I've had more than one sign of it. Just before he fell he went into the garden, and brought in with him a sprig of 'Death-come-quickly.'[2] 'Father,' I asked, 'whatever made you pull that?' Then he looked so queerly, and answered, 'I didn't pull it, Ducie: I found it on the wall.' He was quite curious, and sent me to ask this one and the other one if they had been in the garden. No one had been there; and, at the long end, he said, 'Make no more talk about it, Ducie. There's *them* that go up and down the fellside that no one sees. *They* lift the latch, and wait not for the open door, the king's command being urgent. I have had a message.' He fell an hour afterwards, Charlotte. He did not think he was much hurt at the time, but he got his death-throw. I know it."

"I should like to speak to him, Ducie. Tell him that Charlotte Sandal wants his blessing."

He was lying on the big oak bed in the best room, waiting for his dismissal in cheerful serenity. "Come here, Charlotte," he said; "stoop down, and let me see you once more. My sight grows dim. I am going away, dear."

"O grandfather! is there any thing I can do for you?"

"Be a good girl. Be good, and do good. Stand true to Steve, —remember,—true to Steve." And he did not seem inclined to talk more.

"He is saving his strength for the squire," said Ducie. "He has

[2] The plant *Geranium Robertianum*.

a deal to say to him."

"Father hoped to be back this afternoon."

"Though it be the darkening when he gets home, ask him to come at once, Charlotte. Father is waiting for him, and I don't think he will pass the turn of the night."

There were many subtle links of sympathy between Up-Hill and Sandal. Death could not be in one house without casting a shadow in the other. Julius privately thought such a fellow-feeling a little stretched. The Latriggs were on a distinctly lower social footing than the Sandals. Rich they might be; but they were not written among the list of county families, nor had they even married into their ranks. He could not understand why Barf Latrigg's death should be allowed to interfere with life at Seat-Sandal. Yet Mrs. Sandal was at Up-Hill all the afternoon; and, though the squire did not get home until quite the darkening, he went at once, without taking food or rest, to the dying man.

"Why, Barf is very near all the same as my own father," he said. And then, in a lower voice, "and he may see my father before the strike of day. I wouldn't miss Barfs last words for a year of life. I wouldn't that."

It was a lovely night,—warm, and sweet with the scent of August lilies, and the rich aromas of ripening fruit and grain. The great hills and the peaceful valleys lay under the soft radiance of a full moon; and there was not a sound but the gurgle of running water, or the bark of some solitary sheep-dog, watching the folds on the high fells. Sophia and Julius were walking in the garden,

both feeling the sensitive suggestiveness of the hour, talking softly together on topics people seldom discuss in the sunshine,—intimations of lost powers, prior existences, immortal life. Julius was learned in the Oriental view of metempsychosis. Sophia could trace the veiled intuition through the highest inspiration of Western thought.

"It whispers in the heart of every shepherd on these hills," she said; "and they interpreted for Mr. Wordsworth the dream of his own soul."

"I know, Sophia. I lifted the book yesterday: your mark was in it." And he recited in a low, intense voice,—

> "'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar:
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home:'"

"Oh, yes!" answered Sophia, lifting her dark eyes in a real enthusiasm.

> "Though inland far we be,
> Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither.'"

And they were both very happy in this luxury of mystical speculation. Eternity was behind as before them. Soft impulses from moon and stars, and from the witching beauty of lonely hills and scented garden-ways, touched within their souls some primal sympathy that drew them close to that unseen boundary dividing spirits from shadow-casting men. It is true they rather felt than understood; but when the soul has faith, what matters comprehension?

In the cold sweetness of the following dawn, the squire returned from Up-Hill. "Barf is gone, Alice," were his first words.

"But all is well, William."

"No doubt of it. I met the rector on the hillside. 'How is Barf?' I asked; and he answered, 'Thank God, he has the mastery!' Then he went on without another word. Barf had lost his sight when I got there; but he knew my voice, and he asked me to lay my face against his face. 'I've done well to Sandal,—well to Sandal,' he muttered at intervals. 'You'll know it some day, William.' I can't think what he meant. I hope he hasn't left me any money. I could not take it, Alice."

"Was that all?"

"When Steve came in he said something like 'Charlotte,' and he looked hard at me; and then again, 'I've done well by Sandal.' But I was too late. Ducie said he had been very restless about me earlier in the afternoon: he was nearly outside life when I got there. We thought he would speak no more; but about three

o'clock this morning he called quite clearly, '*Ducie, the abbot's cross*.' Then Ducie unlocked the oak chest that stands by the bedside, and took from it an ivory crucifix. She put it in his left hand. With a smile he touched the Christ upon it; and so, clasping the abbot's cross, he died."

"I wonder at that, William. A better Church-of-England man was not in all the dales than Barf Latrigg."

"Ay; but you see, Alice, that cross is older than the Church of England. It was given to the first Latrigg of Up-Hill by the first abbot of Furness. Before the days of Wyckliffe and Latimer, every one of them, babe and hoary-head, died with it in their hands. There are things that go deeper down than creeds, Alice; and the cross with the Saviour on it is one of them. I would like to feel it myself, even when I was past seeing it. I would like to take the step between here and there with it in my hands."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.