

**ALLEN GRANT**

PHILISTIA

Grant Allen

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# Grant Allen Philistia

## CHAPTER I CHILDREN OF LIGHT

It was Sunday evening, and on Sundays Max Schurz, the chief of the London Socialists, always held his weekly receptions. That night his cosmopolitan refugee friends were all at liberty; his French disciples could pour in from the little lanes and courts in Soho, where, since the Commune, they had plied their peaceful trades as engravers, picture-framers, artists'-colourmen, models, pointers, and so forth—for most of them were hangers-on in one way or another of the artistic world; his German adherents could stroll round, pipe in mouth, from their printing-houses, their ham-and-beef shops, or their naturalists' chambers, where they stuffed birds or set up exotic butterflies in little cabinets—for most of them were more or less literary or scientific in their pursuits; and his few English sympathisers, chiefly dissatisfied philosophical Radicals of the upper classes, could drop in casually for a chat and a smoke, on their way home from the churches to which they had been dutifully escorting their un-emancipated wives and sisters. Max Schurz kept open house for all on Sunday evenings, and there was not a drawing-room in London better filled than his with the very advanced and not undistinguished set who alone had the much-prized entrée of his exclusive salon.

The salon itself did not form any component part of Max Schurz's own private residence in any way. The great Socialist, the man whose mandates shook the thrones of Russia and Austria, whose movements spread terror in Paris and Berlin, whose dictates were even obeyed in Kerry and in Chicago, occupied for his own use two small rooms at the top of a shabby composite tenement in a doubtful district of Marylebone. The little parlour where he carried on his trade of a microscope-lens grinder would not have sufficed to hold one-tenth of the eager half-washed crowd that pressed itself enthusiastically upon him every Sunday. But a large room on the ground floor of the tenement, opening towards the main street, was used during the week by one of his French refugee friends as a dancing-saloon; and in this room on every Sunday evening the uncrowned king of the proletariat Socialists was permitted to hold his royal levees. Thither all that was best and truest in the socially rebellious classes domiciled in London used to make its way; and there men calmly talked over the ultimate chances of social revolutions which would have made the hair of respectable Philistine Marylebone stand stiffly on end, had it only known the rank political heresies that were quietly hatching in its unconscious midst.

While Max Schurz's hall was rapidly filling with the polyglot crowd of democratic solidarists, Ernest Le Breton and his brother were waiting in the chilly little drawing-room at Epsilon Terrace, Bayswater, for the expected arrival of Harry Oswald. Ernest had promised to introduce Oswald to Max Schurz's reception; and it was now past eight o'clock, getting rather a late hour for those simple-minded, early-rising Communists. 'I'm afraid, Herbert,' said Ernest to his brother, 'he forgets that Max is a working-man who has to be at his trade again punctually by seven o'clock to-morrow. He thinks he's going out to a regular society At Home, where ten o'clock's considered just the beginning of the evening. Max won't at all like his turning up so late; it smells of non-productivity.'

'If Herr Schurz wants to convert the world,' Herbert answered chillily, rolling himself a tiny cigarette, 'he must convince the unproductive as well as the proletariat before he can set things fairly on the roll for better arrangement. The proletariat's all very well in its way, no doubt, but the unproductive happen to hold the key of the situation. One convert like you or me is worth a thousand ignorant East-end labourers, with nothing but their hands and their votes to count upon.'

'But you are not a convert, Herbert.'

'I didn't say I was. I'm a critic. There's no necessity to throw oneself open-armed into the embrace of either party. The wise man can wait and watch the progress of the game, backing the winner for the time being at all the critical moments, and hedging if necessary when the chances turn momentarily against the favourite. There's a ring at the bell: that's Oswald; let's go down to the door to meet him.'

Ernest ran down the stairs rapidly, as was his wont; Herbert followed in a more leisurely fashion, still rolling the cigarette between his delicate finger and thumb. 'Goodness gracious, Oswald!' Ernest exclaimed as his friend stepped in, 'why, you've actually come in evening dress! A white tie and all! What on earth will Max say? He'll be perfectly scandalised at such a shocking and unprecedented outrage. This will never do; you must dissemble somehow or other.'

Oswald laughed. 'I had no idea,' he said, 'Herr Schurz was such a truculent sans-culotte as that comes to. As it was an evening reception I thought, of course, one ought to turn up in evening clothes.'

'Evening clothes! My dear fellow, how on earth do you suppose a set of poor Leicester Square outlaws are going to get themselves correctly set up in black broadcloth coats and trousers? They might wash their white ties themselves, to be sure; they mostly do their own washing, I believe, in their own basins.' ('And not much at that either,' put in Herbert, parenthetically.) 'But as to evening clothes, why, they'd as soon think of arraying themselves for dinner in full court dress as of putting on an obscurantist swallow-tail. It's the badge of a class, a distinct aristocratic outrage; we must alter it at once, I assure you, Oswald.'

'At any rate,' said Oswald laughing, 'I've had the pleasure of finding myself accused for the first time in the course of my existence of being aristocratic. It's quite worth while going to Max Schurz's once in one's life, if it were only for the sake of that single new sensation.'

'Well, my dear fellow, we must rectify you, anyhow, before you go. Let me see; luckily you've got your dust-coat on, and you needn't take that off; it'll do splendidly to hide your coat and waistcoat. I'll lend you a blue tie, which will at once transform your upper man entirely. But you show the cloven hoof below; the trousers will surely betray you. They're absolutely inadmissible under any circumstances whatsoever, as the Court Circular says, and you must positively wear a coloured pair of Herbert's instead of them. Run upstairs quickly, there's a good fellow, and get rid of the mark of the Beast as fast as you can.'

Oswald did as he was told without demur, and in about a minute more presented himself again, with the mark of the Beast certainly most effectually obliterated, at least so far as outer appearance went. His blue tie, light dust-coat, and borrowed grey trousers, made up an ensemble much more like an omnibus conductor out for a holiday than a gentleman of the period in correct evening dress. 'Now mind,' Ernest said seriously, as he opened the door, 'whatever you do, Oswald, if you stew to death for it—and Schurz's rooms are often very close and hot, I can assure you—don't for heaven's sake go and unbutton your dust-coat. If you do they'll see at once you're a wolf in sheep's clothing, and I shouldn't be at all surprised if they were to turn and rend you. At least, I'm sure Max would be very much annoyed with me for unsocially introducing a plutocratic traitor into the bosom of the fold.'

They walked along briskly in the direction of Marylebone, and stopped at last at a dull, yellow-washed house, which bore on its door a very dingy brass plate, inscribed in red letters, 'M. et Mdlle. Tirard. Salon de Danse.' Ernest opened the door without ringing, and turned down the passage towards the salon. 'Remember,' he said, turning to Harry Oswald by way of a last warning, with his hand on the inner door-handle, 'coûte que coûte, my dear fellow, don't on any account open your dust-coat. No anti-social opinions; and please bear in mind that Max is, in his own way, a potentate.'

The big hall, badly lighted by a few contribution candles (for the whole colony subscribed to the best of its ability for the support of the weekly entertainment), was all alive with eager figures and the mingled busy hum of earnest conversation. A few chairs ranged round the wall were mostly occupied by Mdlle. Tirard and the other ladies of the Socialist party; but the mass of the guests were

men, and they were almost all smoking, in utter indifference to the scanty presence of the fair sex. Not that they were intentionally rude or boorish; that they never were; except where an emperor or an aristocrat is concerned, there is no being on earth more courteous, kindly, and considerate for the feelings of others than your exiled Socialist. He has suffered much himself in his own time, and so miseris succurrere discit. Emperors he mentally classes with cobras, tarantulas, and scorpions, as outside the pale of humanitarian sympathies altogether; but, with this slight political exception, he is the broadest and tenderest and most catholic in his feelings of all living breathing creatures. However, the ladies of his party have all been brought up from their childhood onward in a mingled atmosphere of smoke and democracy; so that he no more thinks of abstaining from tobacco in their presence than he thinks of commiserating the poor fish for being so dreadfully wet, or the unfortunate mole for his unpleasantly slimy diet of live earthworms.

'Herr Schurz,' said Ernest, singling out the great leader in the gloom immediately, 'I've brought my brother Herbert here, whom you know already, to see you, as well as another Oxford friend of mind, Mr. Harry Oswald, Fellow and Lecturer of Oriel. He's almost one of us at heart, I'm happy to say, and at any rate I'm sure you'll be glad to make his acquaintance.'

The little spare wizened-up grey man, in the threadbare brown velveteen jacket, who stood in the middle of the hall, caught Ernest's hand warmly, and held it for a moment fettered in his iron grip. There was an honesty in that grip and in those hazy blue-spectacled eyes that nobody could for a second misunderstand. If an emperor had been introduced to Max Schurz he might have felt a little abashed one minute at the old Socialist's royal disdain, but he could not have failed to say to himself as he looked at him from head to foot, 'Here, at least, is a true man.' So Harry Oswald felt, as the spare grey thinker took his hand in his, and grasped it firmly with a kindly pressure, but less friendly than that with which he had greeted his known admirer, Ernest Le Breton. As for Herbert, he merely bowed to him politely from a little distance; and Herbert, who had picked up at once with a Polish exile in a corner, returned the bow frigidly without coming up to the host himself at all for a moment's welcome.

'I'm always pleased to meet friends of the cause from Oxford,' Herr Schurz said, in almost perfect English. 'We want recruits most of all among the thinking classes. If we are ever to make headway against the banded monopolies—against the place-holders, the land-grabbers, the labour-taxers, the robbers of the poor—we must first secure the perfect undivided confidence of the brain-workers, the thinkers, and the writers. At present everything is against us; we are but a little leaven, trying vainly in our helpless fashion to leaven the whole lump. The capitalist journals carry off all the writing talent in the world; they are timid, as capital must always be; they tremble for their tens of thousands a year, and their vast circulations among the propertied classes. We cannot get at the heart of the people, save by the Archimedean lever of the thinking world. For that reason, my dear Le Breton, I am always glad to muster here your Oxford neophytes.'

'And yet, Herr Schurz,' said Ernest gently, 'you know we must not after all despair. Look at the history of your own people! When the cause of Jehovah seemed most hopeless, there were still seven thousand left in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. We are gaining strength every day, while they are losing it.'

'Ah yes, my friend. I know that too,' the old man answered, with a solemn shake of the head; 'but the wheels move slowly, they move slowly—very surely, but oh, so slowly. You are young, friend Ernest, and I am growing old. You look forward to the future with hope; I look back to the past with regret: so many years gone, so little, so very little done. It will come, it will come as surely as the next glacial period, but I shall not live to see it. I stand like Moses on Pisgah; I see the promised land before me; I look down upon the equally allotted vineyards, and the glebe flowing with milk and honey in the distance; but I shall not lead you into it; I shall not even lead you against the Canaanites; another than I must lead you in. But I am an old man, Mr. Oswald, an old man now, and I am talking all

about myself—an anti-social trick we have inherited from our fathers. What is your friend's special line at Oxford, did you say, Ernest?

'Oswald is a mathematician, sir,' said Ernest, 'perhaps the greatest mathematician among the younger men in the whole University.'

'Ah! that is well. We want exact science. We want clear and definite thinking. Biologists and physicists and mathematicians, those are our best recruits, you may depend upon it. We need logic, not mere gas. Our French friends and our Irish friends—I have nothing in the world to say against them; they are useful men, ardent men, full of fire, full of enthusiasm, ready to do and dare anything—but they lack ballast. You can't take the kingdom of heaven by storm. The social revolution is not to be accomplished by violence, it is not even to be carried by the most vivid eloquence; the victory will be in the end to the clearest brain and the subtlest intellect. The orthodox political economists are clever sophists; they mask and confuse the truth very speciously; we must have keen eyes and sharp noses to spy out and scent out their tortuous fallacies. I'm glad you're a mathematician, Mr. Oswald. And so you have thought on social problems?'

'I have read "Gold and the Proletariate,"' Oswald answered modestly, 'and I learned much from it, and thought more. I won't say you have quite converted me, Herr Schurz, but you have given me plenty of food for future reflection.'

'That is well, said the old man, passing one skinny brown hand gently up and down over the other. 'That is well. There's no hurry. Don't make up your mind too fast. Don't jump at conclusions. It's intellectual dishonesty to do that. Wait till you have convinced yourself. Spell out your problems slowly; they are not easy ones; try to see how the present complex system works; try to probe its inequalities and injustices; try to compare it with the ideal commonwealth: and you'll find the light in the end, you'll find the light.'

As he spoke, Herbert Le Breton lounged up quietly from his farther corner towards the little group. 'Ah, your brother, Ernest!' said Max Schurz, drawing himself up a little more stiffly; 'he has found the light already, I believe, but he neglects it; still he is not with us, and he that is not with us is against us. You hold aloof always, Mr. Herbert, is it not so?'

'Well, not quite aloof, Herr Schurz, I'm certain, but not on your side exactly either. I like to look on and hold the balance evenly, not to throw my own weight too lightly into either scale. The objective attitude of the mere spectator is after all the right one for an impartial philosopher to take up.'

'Ah, Mr. Herbert, this philosophy of your Oxford contemplative Radicals is only another name for a kind of social selfishness, I fancy,' said the old man solemnly. 'It seems to me your head is with us, but your heart, your heart is elsewhere.'

Herbert Le Breton played a moment quietly with the Roman aureus of Domitian on his watch-chain; then he said slowly in his clear cold voice, 'There may be something in that, no doubt, Herr Schurz, for each of us has his own game to play, and while the world remains unreformed, he must play it on his own gambit to a great extent, without reference to the independent game of others. We all agree that the board is too full of counters, and as each counter is not responsible for its own presence and position on the board, having been put there without previous consultation by the players, we must each do the best we can for ourselves in our own fashion. My sympathies, as you say, are on your side, but perhaps my interests lie the other way, and after all, till you start your millennium, we must all rattle along as well as we can in the box together, jarring against one another in our old ugly round of competition, and supply and demand, and survival of the fittest, and mutual accommodation, and all the rest of it, to the end of the chapter. Every man for himself and God for us all, you know. You have the logic, to be sure, Herr Schurz, but the monopolists have the law and the money.'

'Ah, yes,' said the old Socialist grimly; 'Demas, Demas; he and his silver mine; you remember your Bunyan, don't you? Well, all faiths and systems have their Demases. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. He's bursar of his college, isn't he, Ernest? I thought so. "He had the bag,

and bare what was put therein." A dangerous office, isn't it, Mr. Oswald? A very dangerous office. You can't touch pitch or property without being defiled.'

'You at least, sir, said Ernest, reverentially, 'have kept yourself unspotted from the world.'

The old man sighed, and turned for a moment to speak in French to a tall, big-bearded new-comer who advanced to meet him. 'Impossible!' he said quickly; 'I am truly distressed to hear it. It is very imprudent, very unnecessary.'

'What is the news?' asked Ernest, also in French.

The new-comer answered him with a marked South Russian accent. 'There has been another attempt on the life of Alexander Nicolaiovitch.'

'You don't mean to say so!' cried Ernest in surprise.

'Yes, I do,' replied the Russian, 'and it has nearly succeeded too.'

'An attempt on whom?' asked Oswald, who was new to the peculiar vocabulary of the Socialists, and not particularly accustomed to following spoken French.

'On Alexander Nicolaiovitch,' answered the red-bearded stranger.

'Not the Czar?' Oswald inquired of Ernest.

'Yes, the one whom you call Czar,' said the stranger, quickly, in tolerable English. The confusion of tongues seemed to be treated as a small matter at Max Schurz's receptions, for everybody appeared to speak all languages at once, in the true spirit of solidarity, as though Babel had never been.

Oswald did not attempt to conceal a slight gesture of horror. The tall Russian looked down upon him commiseratingly. 'He is of the Few?' he asked of Ernest, that being the slang of the initiated for a member of the aristocratic and capitalist oligarchy.

'Not exactly,' Ernest answered with a smile; 'but he has not entirely learned the way we here regard these penal measures. His sympathies are one-sided as to Alexander, no doubt. He thinks merely of the hunted, wretched life the man bears about with him, and he forgets poor bleeding, groaning, down-trodden, long-suffering Russia. It is the common way of Englishmen. They do not realise Siberia and Poland and the Third Section, and all the rest of it; they think only of Alexander as of the benevolent despot who freed the serf and befriended the Bulgarian. They never remember that they have all the freedom and privileges themselves which you poor Russians ask for in vain; they do not bear in mind that he has only to sign his name to a constitution, a very little constitution, and he might walk abroad as light-hearted in St. Petersburg to-morrow as you and I walk in Regent Street to-day. We are mostly lopsided, we English, but you must bear with us in our obliquity; we have had freedom ourselves so long that we hardly know how to make due allowance for those unfortunate folks who are still in search of it.'

'If you had an Alexander yourselves for half a day,' the Russian said fiercely, turning to Oswald, 'you would soon see the difference. You would forget your virtuous indignation against Nihilist assassins in the white heat of your anger against unendurable tyranny. You had a King Charles in England once—the mere shadow of a Russian Czar—and you were not so very ceremonious with him, you order-loving English, after all.'

'It is a foolish thing, Borodinsky,' said Max Schurz, looking up from the long telegram the other had handed him, 'and I told Toroloff as much a fortnight ago, when he spoke to me about the matter. You can do no good by these constant attacks, and you only rouse the minds of the oligarchy against you by your importunity. Bloodshed will avail us nothing; the world cannot be regenerated by a baptism like that. Every peasant won over, every student enrolled, every mother engaged to feed her little ones on the gospel of Socialism together with her own milk, is worth a thousand times more to us and to the people than a dead Czar. If your friends had really blown him up, what then? You would have had another Czar, and another Third Section, and another reign of terror, and another raid and massacre; and we should have lost twenty good men from our poor little side for ever. We must not waste the salt of the earth in that reckless fashion. Besides, I don't like this dynamite. It's a bad argument, it smacks too much of the old royal and repressive method. You know the motto Louis

Quatorze used to cast on his bronze cannon—"Ultima ratio regum." Well, we Socialists ought to be able to find better logic for our opponents than that, oughtn't we?'

'But in Russia,' cried the bearded man hotly, 'in poor stricken-down groaning Russia, what other argument have they left us? Are we to be hunted to death without real law or trial, tortured into sham confessions, deluded with mock pardons, arraigned before hypocritical tribunals, ensnared by all the chicanery, and lying, and treachery, and ferreting of the false bureaucracy, with its spies, and its bloodhounds, and its knout-bearing police-agents; and then are we not to make war the only way we can—open war, mind you, with fair declaration, and due formalities, and proper warning beforehand—against the irresponsible autocrat and his wire-pulled office-puppets who kill us off mercilessly? You are too hard upon us, Herr Schurz; even you yourself have no sympathy at all for unhappy Russia.'

The old man looked up at him tenderly and regretfully. 'My poor Borodinsky,' he said in a gentle tremulous voice, 'I have indeed sympathy and pity in abundance for you. I do not blame you; you will have enough and to spare to do that, even here in free England; I would not say a harsh word against you or your terrible methods for all the world. You have been hard-driven, and you stand at bay like tigers. But I think you are going to work the wrong way, not using your energies to the best possible advantage for the proletariat. What we have really got to do is to gain over every man, woman, and child of the working-classes individually, and to array on our side all the learning and intellect and economical science of the thinking classes individually; and then we can present such a grand united front to the banded monopolists that for very shame they will not dare to gainsay us. Indeed, if it comes to that, we can leave them quietly alone, till for pure hunger they will come and beg our assistance. When we have enticed away all the workmen from their masters to our co-operative factories, the masters may keep their rusty empty mills and looms and engines to themselves as long as they like, but they must come to us in the end, and ask us to give them the bread they used to refuse us. For my part, I would kill no man and rob no man; but I would let no man kill or rob another either.'

'And how about Alexander Nicolaiovitch, then?' persisted the Russian, eagerly. 'Has he killed none in his loathsome prisons and in his Siberian quicksilver mines? Has he robbed none of their own hardly got earnings by his poisoned vodki and his autocratically imposed taxes and imposts? Who gave him an absolute hereditary right to put us to death, to throw us in prison, to take our money from us against our will and without our leave, to treat us as if we existed, body and soul, and wives and children, only as chattels for the greater glory of his own orthodox imperial majesty? If we may justly slay the highway robber who meets us, arms in hand, in the outskirts of the city, and demands of us our money or our life, may we not justly slay Alexander Nicolaiovitch, who comes to our homes in the person of his tax-gatherers to take the bread out of our children's mouths and to help himself to whatever he chooses by the divine right of his Romanoff heirship? I tell you, Herr Max, we may blamelessly lie in wait for him wherever we find him, and whoso says us nay is siding with the wolf against the lambs, with the robber and the slayer against the honest representative of right and justice.'

'I never met a Nihilist before,' said Oswald to Ernest, in a half-undertone, 'and it never struck me to think what they might have to say for themselves from their own side of the question.'

'That's one of the uses of coming here to Herr Schurz's,' Ernest answered quickly. 'You may not agree with all you hear, but at least you learn to see others as they see themselves; whereas if you mix always in English society, and read only English papers, you will see them only as we English see them.'

'But just fancy,' Oswald went on, as they both stood back a little to make way for others who wished for interviews with the great man, 'just fancy that this Borodinsky, or whatever his name may be, has himself very likely helped in dynamite plots, or manufactured nitro-glycerine cartridges to blow up the Czar; and yet we stand here talking with him as coolly as if he were an ordinary respectable innocent Englishman.'

'What of that?' Ernest answered, smiling. 'Didn't we meet Prince Strelinoffsky at Oriel last term, and didn't we talk with him too, as if he was an honest, hard-working, bread-earning Christian?'

and yet we knew he was a member of the St. Petersburg office clique, and at the bottom of half the trouble in Poland for the last ten years or so. Grant even that Borodinsky is quite wrong in his way of dealing with noxious autocrats, and yet which do you think is the worst criminal of the two—he with his little honest glazier's shop in a back slum of Paddington, or Strelinoffsky with his jewelled fingers calmly signing accursed warrants to send chiding Polish women to die of cold and hunger and ill-treatment on the way to Siberia?'

'Well, really, Le Breton, you know I'm a passably good Radical, but you're positively just one stage too Radical even for me.'

'Come here oftener,' answered Ernest; 'and perhaps you'll begin to think a little differently about some things.'

An hour later in the evening Max Schurz found Ernest alone in a quiet corner. 'One moment, my dear Le Breton,' he said; 'you know I always like to find out all about people's political antecedents; it helps one to fathom the potentialities of their characters. From what social stratum, now, do we get your clever friend, Mr. Oswald?'

'His father's a petty tradesman in a country town in Devonshire, I believe,' Ernest answered; 'and he himself is a good general democrat, without any very pronounced socialistic colouring.'

'A petty tradesman! Hum, I thought so. He has rather the mental bearing and equipment of a man from the petite bourgeoisie. I have been talking to him, and drawing him out. Clever, very, and with good instincts, but not wholly and entirely sound. A fibre wrong somewhere, socially speaking, a false note suspected in his ideas of life; too much acquiescence in the thing that is, and too little faith or enthusiasm for the thing that ought to be. But we shall make something of him yet. He has read "Gold" and understands it. That is already a beginning. Bring him again. I shall always be glad to see him here.'

'I will,' said Ernest, 'and I believe the more you know him, Herr Max, the better you will like him.'

'And what did you think of the sons of the prophets?' asked Herbert Le Breton of Oswald as they left the salon at the close of the reception.

'Frankly speaking,' answered Oswald, looking half aside at Ernest, 'I didn't quite care for all of them—the Nihilists and Communards took my breath away at first; but as to Max Schurz himself I think there can be only one opinion possible about him.'

'And that is—?'

'That he's a magnificent old man, with a genuine apostolic inspiration. I don't care twopence whether he is right or wrong, but he's a perfectly splendid old fellow, as honest and transparent as the day's long. He believes in it all, and would give his life for it freely, if he thought he could forward the cause a single inch by doing it.'

'You're quite right,' said Herbert calmly. 'He's an Elijah thrown blankly upon these prosaic latter days; and what's more, his gospel's all true; but it doesn't matter a sou to you or me, for it will never come about in our time, no nor for a century after. "Post nos millennium." So what on earth's the good of our troubling our poor overworked heads about it?'

'He's the only really great man I ever knew,' said Ernest enthusiastically, 'and I consider that his friendship's the one thing in my life that has been really and truly worth living for. If a pessimist were to ask me what was the use of human existence, I should give him a card of introduction to go to Max Schurz's.'

'Excuse my interrupting your rhapsody, Ernest,' Herbert put in blandly, 'but will you have your own trousers tonight, Oswald, or will you wear mine back to your lodgings now, and I'll send one of the servants round with yours for them in the morning?'

'Thanks,' said Harry Oswald, slapping the sides of the unopened dust-coat; 'I think I'll go home as I am at present, and I'll recover the marks of the Beast again to-morrow. You see, I didn't betray my evening waistcoat after all, now did I?'

And they parted at the corner, each of them going his own way in his own mood and manner.

## CHAPTER II

### THE COASTS OF THE GENTILES

The decayed and disfranchised borough of Calcombe Pomeroy, or Calcombe-on-the-Sea, is one of the prettiest and quietest little out-of-the-way watering-places in the whole smiling southern slope of the county of Devon. Thank heaven, the Great Western Railway, when planning its organised devastations along the beautiful rural region of the South Hams, left poor little Calcombe out in the cold; and the consequence is that those few people who still love to linger in the uncontaminated rustic England of our wiser forefathers can here find a beach unspoiled by goat-carriages or black-faced minstrels, a tiny parade uninvasioned by stucco terraces or German brass bands, and an ancient stone pier off which swimmers may take a header direct, in the early morning, before the sumptuary edicts of his worship the Mayor compel them to resort to the use of bathing-machines and the decent covering of an approved costume, between the hours of eight and eight. A board beside the mouth of the harbour, signed by a Secretary of State to his late Majesty King William the Fourth, still announces to a heedless world the tolls to be paid for entry by the ships that never arrive; and a superannuated official in a wooden leg and a gold cap-band retains the honourable sinecure of a harbour-mastership, with a hypothetical salary nominally payable from the non-existent fees and port dues. The little river Cale, at the bottom of whose combe the wee town nestles snugly, has cut itself a deep valley in the soft sandstone hills; and the gap in the cliffs formed by its mouth gives room for the few hundred yards of level on which the antiquated little parade is warmly ensconced. On either hand tall bluffs of brilliant red marl raise their honeycombed faces fronting the sea; and in the distance the sheeny grey rocks of the harder Devonian promontories gleam like watered satin in the slant rays of the afternoon sun. Altogether a very sleepy little old-world place is Calcombe Pomeroy, specially reserved by the overruling chance of the universe to be a summer retreat for quiet, peace-loving, old-world people.

The Londoner who escapes for a while from the great teeming human ant-hill, with its dark foggy lanes and solid firmament of hanging smoke, to draw in a little unadulterated atmosphere at Calcombe Pomeroy, finds himself landed by the Plymouth slow train at Calcombe Road Station, twelve miles by cross-country highway from his final destination. The little grey box, described in the time-tables as a commodious omnibus, which takes him on for the rest of his journey, crawls slowly up the first six miles to the summit of the intervening range at the Cross Foxes Inn, and jolts swiftly down the other six miles, with red hot drag creaking and groaning lugubriously, till it seems to topple over sheer into the sea at the clambering High Street of the old borough. As you turn to descend the seaward slope at the Cross Foxes, you appear to leave modern industrial England and the nineteenth century well behind you on the north, and you go down into a little isolated primaeval dale, cut off from all the outer world by the high ridge that girds it round on every side, and turned only on the southern front towards the open Channel and the backing sun. Half-way down the steep cobble-paved High Street, just after you pass the big dull russet church, a small shop on the left-hand side bears a signboard with the painted legend, 'Oswald, Family Grocer and Provision Dealer.' In the front bay window of that red-brick house, built out just over the shop, Harry Oswald, Fellow and Lecturer of Oriel College, Oxford, kept his big oak writing-desk; and at that desk he might be seen reading or writing on most mornings during the long vacation, after the end of his three weeks' stay at a London West-end lodging-house, from which he had paid his first visit to Max Schurz's Sunday evening receptions.

'Two pounds of best black tea, good quality—yours is generally atrocious, Mrs. Oswald—that's the next thing on the list,' said poor trembling, shaky Miss Luttrell, the Squire's sister, a palsied old lady with a quavering, querulous, rasping voice. 'Two pounds of best black tea, and mind you don't send it all dust, as you usually do. No good tea to be got nowadays, since they took the duties off

and ruined the country. And I see a tall young man lounging about the place sometimes, and never touching his hat to me as he ought to do. Young people have no manners in these times, Mrs. Oswald, as they used to have when you and I were young. Your son, I suppose, come home from sea or something? He's in the fish-curing line, isn't he, I think I've heard you say?'

'I don't rightly know who 'ee may mean, Miss Luttrell,' replied the mother proudly, 'by a young man lounging about the place; but my son's at home from Oxford at present for his vacations, and he isn't in the fish-curing line at all, ma'am, but he's a Fellow of his college, as I've told 'ee more than once already; but you're getting old, I see, Miss Luttrell, and your memory isn't just what it had used to be, dost know.'

'Oh, at Oxford, is he?' Miss Luttrell chimed on vacantly, wagging her wrinkled old head in solemn deprecation of the evil omen. She knew it as well as Mrs. Oswald herself did, having heard the fact at least a thousand times before; but she made it a matter of principle never to encourage these upstart pretensions on the part of the lower orders, and just to keep them rigorously at their proper level she always made a feint of forgetting any steps in advance which they might have been bold enough to take, without humbly obtaining her previous permission, out of their original and natural obscurity. 'Fellow of his college is he, really? Fellow of a college! Dear me, how completely Oxford is going to the dogs. Admitting all kinds of odd people into the University, I understand. Why, my second brother—the Archdeacon, you know—was a Fellow of Magdalen for some time in his younger days. You surprise me, quite. Fellow of a college! You're perfectly sure he isn't a National schoolmaster at Oxford instead, and that you and his father haven't got the two things mixed up together in your heads, Mrs. Oswald?'

'No, ma'am, we're perfectly sure of it, and we haven't got the things mixed up in our heads at all, no more nor you have, Miss Luttrell. He was a scholar of Trinity first, and now he's got a Fellowship at Oriel. You must mind hearing all about it at the time, only you're getting so forgetful like now, with years and such like.' Mrs. Oswald knew there was nothing that annoyed the old lady so much as any allusion to her increasing age or infirmities, and she took her revenge out of her in that simple retributive fashion.

'A scholar of Trinity, was he? Ah, yes, patronage will do a great deal in these days, for certain. The Rector took a wonderful interest in your boy, I think, Mrs. Oswald. He went to Plymouth Grammar School, I remember now, with a nomination no doubt; and there, I dare say, he attracted some attention, being a decent, hard-working lad, and got sent to Oxford with a sizarship, or something of the sort; there are all kinds of arrangements like that at the Universities, I believe, to encourage poor young men of respectable character. They become missionaries or ushers in the end, and often get very good salaries, considering everything, I'm told.'

'There you're wrong, again, ma'am,' put in Mrs. Oswald, stoutly. 'My husband, he sent Harry to Plymouth School at our own expense; and after that he got an exhibition from the school, and an open scholarship, I think they call it, at the college; and he's been no more beholden to patronage, ma'am, than your brother the Archdeacon was, nor for the matter o' that not so much neither; for I've a'ways understood the old Squire sent him first to the Charterhouse, and afterwards he got a living through Lord Modbury's influence, as the Squire voted regular with the Modbury people for the borough and county. But George was always independent, Miss Luttrell, and beholden to neither Luttrells nor Modburies, and that I tell 'ee to your face, ma'am, and no shame of it either.'

'Well, well, Mrs. Oswald,' said the old lady, shaking her head more violently than ever at this direct discomfiture, 'I don't want to argue with you about the matter. I dare say your son's a very worthy young man, and has worked his way up into a position he wasn't intended for by Providence. But it's no business of mine, thank heaven, it's no business of mine, for I'm not responsible for all the vagaries of all the tradespeople on my brother's estate, nor don't want to be. There's Mrs. Figgins, now, the baker's wife; her daughter has just chosen to get married to a bank clerk in London; and I said to her this morning, "Well, Mrs. Figgins, so you've let your Polly go and pick up with some

young fellow from town that you've never seen before, haven't you? And that's the way of all you people. You marry your girls to bank clerks without a reference, for the sake of getting 'em off your hands, and what's the consequence? They rob their employers to keep up a pretty household for their wives, as if they were fine ladies; and then at last the thing's discovered, there comes a smash, they run away to America, and you have your daughters and their children thrown back again penniless upon your hands." That's what I said to her, Mrs. Oswald. And how's YOUR daughter, by the way—Jemima I think you call her; how's she, eh, tell me?'

'I beg your pardon, Miss Luttrell, but her name's not Jemima; it's Edith.'

'Oh, Edith, is it? Well to be sure! The grand names girls have dangling about with them nowadays! My name's plain Catherine, and it's good enough for me, thank goodness. But these young ladies of the new style must be Ediths and Eleanors and Ophelias, and all that heathenish kind of thing, as if they were princesses of the blood or play-actresses, instead of being good Christian Susans and Janes and Betties, like their grandmothers were before them. And Miss Edith, now, what is SHE doing?'

'She's doing nothing in particular at this moment, Miss Luttrell, leastways not so far as I know of; but she's going up to Oxford part of this term on a visit to her brother.'

'Going up to Oxford, my good woman! Why, heaven bless the girl, she'd much better stop at home and learn her catechism. She should try to do her duty in that station of life to which it has pleased Providence to call her, instead of running after young gentlemen above her own rank and place in society at Oxford. Tell her so from me, Mrs. Oswald, and mind you don't send the tea dusty. Two pounds of your best, if you please, as soon as you can send it. Good-morning.' And Miss Luttrell, having discovered the absolute truth of the shocking rumour which had reached her about Edith's projected visit, the confirmation of which was the sole object of her colloquy, wagged her way out of the shop again successfully, and was duly assisted by the page-boy into her shambling little palsied donkey-chair.

'That was all the old cat came about, you warr'nt you,' muttered Mr. Oswald himself from behind his biscuit-boxes. 'Must have heard it from the Rector's wife, and wanted to find out if it was true, to go and tell Mrs. Walters o' such a bit o' turble presumptuousness.'

Meanwhile, in the little study with the bow-window over the shop, Harry and Edie Oswald were busily discussing the necessary preparations for Edie's long-promised visit to the University.

'I hope you've got everything nice in the way of dress, you know, Edie,' said Harry. 'You'll want a decent dinner dress, of course, for you'll be asked out to dine at least once or twice; and I want you to have everything exceedingly proper and pretty.'

'I think I've got all I need in that way, Harry; I've my dark poplin, cut square in the bodice, for one dinner dress, and my high black silk to fall back upon for another. Worn open in front, with a lace handkerchief and a locket, it does really very nicely. Then I've got three afternoon dresses, the grey you gave me, the sage-greeny aesthetic one, and the peacock-blue with the satin box-pleats. It's a charming dress, the peacock-blue; it looks as if it might have stepped straight out of a genuine Titian. It came home from Miss Wells's this morning. Wait five minutes, like a dear boy, and I'll run and put it on and let you see me in it.'

'That's a good girl, do. I'm so anxious you should have all your clothes the exact pink of perfection, Popsy. Though I'm afraid I'm a very poor critic in that matter—if you were only a problem in space of four dimensions, now! Yet, after all, every man or woman is more of a problem than anything in  $x$  square plus  $y$  square you can possibly set yourself.'

Edie ran lightly up into her own room, and soon reappeared clad resplendent in the new peacock-blue dress, with hat and parasol to match, and a little creamy lamb's-wool scarf thrown with artful carelessness around her pretty neck and shoulders. Harry looked at her with unfeigned admiration. Indeed, you would not easily find many lighter or more fairly-like little girls than Edie Oswald, even in the beautiful half-Celtic South Hams of Devon. In figure she was rather small than

short, for though she was but a wee thing, her form was so exactly and delicately modelled that she might have looked tall if she stood alone at a little distance. She never walked, but seemed to dance about from place to place, so buoyant and light, that Harry doubted whether in her case gravitation could really vary as the square of the distance—it seemed, in fact, to be almost diminished in the proportions of the cube. Her hair and eyes—such big bright eyes!—were dark; but her complexion was scarcely brunette, and the colour in her cheeks was rich and peach-like, after the true Devonian type. She was dimpled whenever she smiled, and she smiled often; her full lips giving a peculiar ripe look to her laughing mouth that suited admirably with her light and delicate style of beauty. Perhaps some people might have thought them too full; certainly they irresistibly suggested to a critical eye the distinct notion of kissability. As she stood there, faintly blushing, waiting to be admired by her brother, in her neatly fitting dainty blue dress, her lips half parted, and her arms held carelessly at her side, she looked about as much like a fairy picture as it is given to mere human flesh and blood to look.

'It's delicious, Edie,' said Harry, surveying her from, head to foot with a smile of satisfaction which made her blush deepen; 'it's simply delicious. Where on earth did you get the idea of it?'

'Well, it's partly the present style,' said Edie; 'but I took the notion of the bodice partly too from that Vandyck, you know, in the Palazzo Bossi at Genoa.'

'I remember, I remember,' Harry answered, contemplating her with an admiring eye. 'Now just turn round and show me how it sits behind, Edie. You recollect Théophile Gautier says the one great advantage which a beautiful woman possesses over a beautiful statue is this, that while a man has to walk round the beautiful statue in order to see it from every side, he can ask the beautiful woman to turn herself round and let him see her, without requiring to take that trouble.'

'Théophile Gautier was a horrid man, and if anybody but my brother quoted such a thing as that to me I should be very angry with him indeed.'

'Théophile Gautier was quite as horrid as you consider him to be, and if you were anybody but my sister it isn't probable I should have quoted him to you. But if there is any statue on earth prettier or more graceful than you are in that dress at this moment, Edie, then the Venus of Milo ought immediately to be pulverised to ultimate atoms for a rank artistic impostor.'

'Thank you, Harry, for the compliment. What pretty things you must be capable of saying to somebody else's sister, when you're so polite and courtly to your own.'

'On the contrary, Popsy, when it comes to somebody else's sister I'm much too nervous and funky to say anything of the kind. But you must at least do Gautier the justice to observe that if I had described a circle round you, instead of allowing you to revolve once on your own axis, I shouldn't have been able to get the gloss on the satin in the sunlight as I do now that you turn the panniers toward the window. That, you must admit, is a very important aesthetic consideration.'

'Oh, of course it's essentially a sunshiny dress,' said Edie, smiling. 'It's meant to be worn out of doors, on a fine afternoon, when the light is falling slantwise, you know, just as it does now through the low window. That's the light painters always choose for doing satin in.'

'It's certainly very pretty,' Harry went on, musing; 'but I'm afraid Le Breton would say it was a serious piece of economic hubris.'

'Piece of what?' asked Edie quickly.

'Piece of hubris—an economical outrage, don't you see; a gross anti-social and individualist demonstration. Hubris, you know, is Greek for insolence; at least, not quite insolence, but a sort of pride and overweening rebelliousness against the gods, the kind of arrogance that brings Nemesis after it, you understand. It was hubris in Agamemnon and Xerxes to go swelling about and ruffling themselves like turkey-cocks, because they were great conquerors and all that sort of thing; and it was their Nemesis to get murdered by Clytemnestra, or jolly well beaten by the Athenians at Salamis. Well, Le Breton always uses the word for anything that he thinks socially wrong—and he thinks a good many things socially wrong, I can tell you—anything that partakes of the nature of a class distinction, or a mere vulgar ostentation of wealth, or a useless waste of good, serviceable, labour-

gotten material. He would call it hubris to have silver spoons when electroplate would do just as well; or to keep a valet for your own personal attendant, making one man into the mere bodily appanage of another; or to buy anything you didn't really need, causing somebody else to do work for you which might otherwise have been avoided.'

'Which Mr. Le Breton—the elder or the younger one?'

'Oh, the younger—Ernest. As for Herbert, the Fellow of St. Aldate's, he's not troubled with any such scruples; he takes the world as he finds it.'

'They've both gone in for their degrees, haven't they?'

'Yes, Herbert has got a fellowship; Ernest's up in residence still looking about for one.'

'It's Ernest that would think my dress a piece of what-you-may-call-it?'

'Yes, Ernest.'

'Then I'm sure I shan't like him. I should insist upon every woman's natural right to wear the dress or hat or bonnet that suits her complexion best.'

'You can't tell, Edie, till you've met him. He's a very good fellow; and of one thing I'm certain, whatever he thinks right he does, and sticks to it.'

'But do YOU think, Harry, I oughtn't to wear a new peacock-blue camel-hair dress on my first visit up to Oxford?'

'Well, Edie dear, I don't quite know what my own opinions are exactly upon that matter. I'm not an economist, you see, I'm a man of science. When I look at you, standing there so pretty in that pretty dress, I feel inclined to say to myself, "Every woman ought to do her best to make herself look as beautiful as she can for the common delectation of all humanity." Your beauty, a Greek would have said, is a gift from the gods to us all, and we ought all gratefully to make the most of it. I'm sure *I* do.'

'Thank you, Harry, again. You're in your politest humour this afternoon.'

'But then, on the other hand, I know if Le Breton were here he'd soon argue me over to the other side. He has the enthusiasm of humanity so strong upon him that you can't help agreeing with him as long as he's talking to you.'

'Then if he were here you'd probably make me put away the peacock-blue, for fear of hubris and Nemesis and so forth, and go up to Oxford a perfect fright in my shabby old Indian tussore!'

'I don't know that I should do that, even then, Edie. In the first place, nothing on earth could make you look a perfect fright, or anything like one, Popsy dear; and in the second place, I don't know that I'm Socialist enough myself ever to have the courage of my opinions as Le Breton has. Certainly, I should never attempt to force them unwillingly upon others. You must remember, Edie, it's one thing for Le Breton to be so communistic as all that comes to, and quite another thing for you and me. Le Breton's father was a general and a knight, you see; and people will never forget that his mother's Lady Le Breton still, whatever he does. He may do what he likes in the way of social eccentricities, and the world will only say he's such a very strange advanced young fellow. But if I were to take you up to Oxford badly dressed, or out of the fashion, or looking peculiar in any way, the world wouldn't put it down to our political beliefs, but would say we were mere country tradespeople by birth, and didn't know any better. That makes a lot of difference, you know.'

'You're quite right, Harry; and yet, do you know, I think there must be something, too, in sticking to one's own opinions, like Mr. Le Breton. I should stick to mine, I'm sure, and wear whatever dress I liked, in spite of anybody. It's a sweet thing, really, isn't it?' And she turned herself round, craning over her shoulder to look at the effect, in a vain attempt to assume an objective attitude towards her own back.

'I'm glad I'm going to Oxford at last, Harry,' she said, after a short pause. 'I HAVE so longed to go all these years while you were an undergraduate; and I'm dying to have got there, now the chance has really come at last, after all. I shall glory in the place, I'm certain; and it'll be so nice to make the acquaintance of all your clever friends.'

'Well, Edie,' said her brother, smiling gently at the light, joyous, tremulous little figure, 'I think I've done right in putting it off till now. It's just as well you haven't gone up to Oxford till after your trip on the Continent with me. That three months in Paris, and Switzerland, and Venice, and Florence, did you a lot of good, you see; improved you, and gave you tone, and supplied you with things to talk about.'

'Why, you oughtn't to think I needed any improvement at all, sir,' Edie answered, pouting; 'and as to talking, I'm not aware I had ever any dearth of subjects for conversation even before I went on the Continent. There are things enough to be said about heaven and earth in England, surely, without one having to hurry through France and Italy, like Cook's excursionists, just to hunt up something fresh to chatter about. It's my belief that a person who can't find anything new to say about the every-day world around her won't discover much suggestive matter for conversation in a Continental Bradshaw. It's like that feeble watery lady I met at the table d'hote at Geneva. From something she said I gathered she'd been in India, and I asked her how she liked it. "Oh," she said, "it's very hot." I told her I had heard so before. Presently she said something casually about having been in Brazil. I asked her what sort of place Brazil was. "Oh," she said, "it's dreadfully hot." I told her I'd heard that too. By-and-by she began to talk again about Barbadoes. "What did you think of the West Indies?" I said. "Oh," said she, "they're terribly hot, really." I told her I had gathered as much from previous travellers. And that was positively all in the end I ever got out of her, for all her travels.'

'My dear Edie, I've always admitted that you were simply perfect,' Harry said, glancing at her with visible admiration, 'and I don't think anything on earth could possibly improve you—except perhaps a judicious course of differential and integral calculus, which might possibly serve to tone down slightly your exuberant and excessive vitality. Still, you know, from the point of view of society, which is a force we have always to reckon with—a constant, in fact, that we may call Pi—there can be no doubt in the world that to have been on the Continent is a differentiating factor in one's social position. It doesn't matter in the least what your own private evaluation of Pi may be; if you don't happen to know the particular things and places that Pi knows, Pi's evaluation of you will be approximately a minimum, of that you may be certain.'

'Well, for my part, I don't care twopence about Pi as you call it,' said Edie, tossing her pretty little head contemptuously; 'but I'm very glad indeed to have been on the Continent for my own sake, because of the pictures, and palaces, and mountains, and waterfalls we've seen, and not because of Pi's opinion of me for having seen them. I would have been the same person really whether I'd seen them or not; but I'm so much the richer myself for that view from the top of the Col de Balme, and for that Murillo—oh, do you remember the flood of light on that Murillo?—in the far corner of that delicious gallery at Bologna. Why, mother darling, what on earth has been vexing you?'

'Nothing at all, Edie dear; leastways, that is, nothing to speak of,' said her mother, coming up from the shop hot and flurried from her desperate encounter with the redoubtable Miss Luttrell.

'Oh, I know just what it is, darling,' cried the girl, putting her arm around her mother's waist caressingly, and drawing her down to kiss her face half a dozen times over in her outburst of sympathy. 'That horrid old Miss Catherine has been here again, I'm sure, for I saw her going out of the shop just now, and she's been saying something or other spiteful, as she always does, to vex my dearie. What did she say to you to-day, now do tell us, duckie mother?'

'Well, there,' said Mrs. Oswald, half laughing and half crying, 'I can't tell 'ee exactly what she did say, but it was just the kind of thing that she mostly does, impudent like, just to hurt a body's feelings. She said you'd better not go to Oxford, Edie, but stop at home and learn your catechism.'

'You might have pointed out to her, mother dear,' said the young man, smoothing her hair softly with his hand, and kissing her forehead, 'that in the most advanced intellectual centres the Church catechism is perhaps no longer regarded as the absolute ultimatum of the highest and deepest economical wisdom.'

'Bless your heart, Harry, what'd be the good of talking that way to the likes of she? She wouldn't understand a single word of what you were driving at. It must be all plain sailing with her, without it's in the way of spite, and then she sees her chance to tack round the hardest corner with half a wind in her sails only, as soon as look at it. Her sharpness goes all off toward ill-nature, that it do. Why, she said you'd got on at Oxford by good patronage!'

'There, you see, Edie,' cried Harry demonstratively, 'that's an infinitesimal fraction of Pi; that's a minute decimal of this great, sneering, ugly aggregate "society" that we have to deal with whether we will or no, and that rends us and grinds us to powder if only it can once get in the thin end of a chance. Take shaky bitter old Miss Catherine for your unit, multiply her to the nth, and there you see the irreducible power we have to fight against. All one's political economy is very well in its way; but the practical master of the situation is Pi, sitting autocratically in many-headed judgment on our poor solitary little individualities, and crushing us irretrievably with the dead weight of its inexorable cumulative nothingness. And to think that that quivering old mass of perambulating jealousy—that living incarnation of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness—should be able to make you uncomfortable for a single moment, mother darling, with her petty, dribbling, doddering venom, why, it's simply unendurable.'

'There now, Harry,' said Mrs. Oswald, relenting, 'you mustn't be too hard, neither, on poor old Miss Catherine. She's a bit soured, you see, by disappointments and one thing and another. She doesn't mean it, really, but it's just her nature. Folks can't be blamed for their nature, now, can they?'

'It occurs to me,' said Harry quietly, 'that vipers only sting because it's their nature; and Dr. Watts has made a similar observation with regard to the growling and fighting of bears and lions. But I'm not aware that anybody has yet proposed to get up a Society for the protection of those much-misunderstood creatures, on the ground that they are not really responsible for their own inherited dispositions. Mr. William Sikes had a nature (no doubt congenital) which impelled him to beat his wife—I'm not sure that she was even his wife at all, now I come to think of it, but that's a mere detail—and to kick his familiar acquaintances casually about the head. We, on the other hand, have natures which impel us, when we catch Mr. William Sikes indulging in these innate idiosyncrasies by way of recreation, to clap him promptly into prison, and even, under certain aggravating conditions, to cause him to be hanged by the neck till he be dead. This may be a regrettable incident of our own peculiar dispositions, mother dear, but it has at least the same justification as Mr. Sikes's or the bears' and lions', that 'tis our nature to. And I feel pretty much the same way about old Miss Luttrell.'

'Well, there,' said his mother, kissing him gently, 'you're a bad rebellious boy to be calling names, like a chatter-mag, and I won't listen to you any longer. How pretty Edie do look in her new dress, to be sure, Harry. I'll warr'nt there won't be a prettier girl in Oxford next week than what she is; no, nor a better one and a sweeter one neither.'

Harry put his arms round both their waists at once, with an affectionate pressure; and they went down to their old-fashioned tea together in the little parlour behind the shop, looking out over the garden, and the beach, and the great cliffs beyond on either hand, to the very farthest edge of the distant clear-cut blue horizon.

## CHAPTER III

### MAGDALEN QUAD

The Reverend Arthur Collingham Berkeley, curate of St. Fredegond's, lounged lazily in his own neatly padded wickerwork easy-chair, opposite the large lattice-paned windows of his pretty little first-floor rooms in the front quad of Magdalen.

'There's a great deal to be said, Le Breton, in favour of October term,' he observed, in his soft, musical voice, as he gazed pensively across the central grass-plot to the crimson drapery of the Founder's Tower. 'Just look at that magnificent Virginia creeper over there, now; just look at the way the red on it melts imperceptibly into Tyrian purple and cloth of gold! Isn't that in itself argument enough to fling at Hartmann's head, if he ventured to come here sprinkling about his heresies, with his affected little spray-shooter, in the midst of a drowsy Oxford autumn? The Cardinal never saw Virginia creeper, I suppose; a man of his taste wouldn't have been guilty of committing such a gross practical anachronism as that, any more than he would have smoked a cigarette before tobacco was invented; but if only he could have seen the October effect on that tower yonder, he'd have acknowledged that his own hat and robe were positively nowhere in the running, for colour, wouldn't he?'

'Well,' answered Herbert, putting down the Venetian glass goblet he had been examining closely with due care into its niche in the over-mantel, 'I've no doubt Wolsey had too much historical sense ever to step entirely out of his own century, like my brother Ernest, for instance; but I've never heard his opinion on the subject of colour-harmonies, and I should suspect it of having been distinctly tinged with nascent symptoms of renaissance vulgarity. This is a lovely bit of Venetian, really, Berkeley. How the dickens do you manage to pick up all these pretty things, I wonder? Why can't I afford them, now?'

'What a question for the endowed and established to put to a poor starving devil of a curate like me!' said Berkeley lightly. 'You, an incarnate sinecure and vested interest, a creature revelling in an unearned income of fabulous Oriental magnificence—I dare say, putting one thing with another, fully as much as five hundred a year—to ask me, the unbeneficed and insignificant, with my wretched pittance of eighty pounds per annum and my three pass-men a term for classical mods, how I scrape together the few miserable, hoarded ha'pence which I grudgingly invest in my pots and pipkins! I save them from my dinner, Mr. Bursar—I save them. If the Church only recognised modest merit as it ought to do!—if the bishops only listened with due attention to the sound and scholarly exegesis of my Sunday evening discourses at St. Fredegond's!—then, indeed, I might be disposed to regard things through a more satisfied medium—the medium of a nice, fat, juicy country living. But for you, Le Breton—you, sir, a pluralist and a sanguisorb of the deepest dye—to reproach me with my Franciscan poverty—oh, it's too cruel!'

'I'm an abuse, I know,' Herbert answered, smiling and waving his hand gracefully. 'I at once admit it. Abuses exist, unhappily; and while they continue do so, isn't it better they should envisage themselves as me than as some other and probably less deserving fellow?'

'No, it's not, decidedly. I should much prefer that one of them envisaged itself as me.'

'Ah, of course. From your own strictly subjective point of view that's very natural. I also look at the question abstractly from the side of the empirical ego, and correctly deduce a corresponding conclusion. Only then, you see, the terms of the minor premiss are luckily reversed.'

'Well, my dear fellow,' said the curate, 'the fact about the tea-things is this. You eat up your income, devour your substance in riotous living; I prefer to feast my eyes and ears to my grosser senses. You dine at high table, and fare sumptuously every day; I take a commons of cold beef for lunch, and have tea off an egg and roll in my own rooms at seven. You drink St. Emilion or still hock;

I drink water from the well or the cup that cheers but not obfuscates. The difference goes to pay for the crockery. Do likewise, and with your untold wealth you might play Aunt Sally at Oriental blue, and take cock-shots with a boot-jack at hawthorn-pattern vases.'

'At any rate, Berkeley, you always manage to get your money's worth of amusement out of your money.'

'Of course, because I lay myself out to do it. Buy a bottle of champagne, drink it off, and there you have to show for your total permanent investment on the transaction the memory of a noisy evening and a headache the next morning. Buy a flute, or a book of poems, or a little picture, or a Palissy platter, and you have something to turn to with delight and admiration for half a lifetime.'

'Ah, but it isn't everybody who can isolate himself so utterly from the workaday world and live so completely in his own little paradise of art as you can, my dear fellow. Non omnia possumus omnes. You seem to be always up in the aesthetic clouds, with your own music automatically laid on, and no need of cherubim or seraphim to chant continually for your gratification. Play me something of your own on your flute now, like a good fellow.'

'No, I won't; because the spirit doesn't move me. It's treachery to the divine gift to play when you don't want to. Besides, what's the use of playing before YOU when you're not the dean of a musical cathedral? David was wiser; he played only before Saul, who had of course all the livings in his own gift, no doubt. I've got a new thing running in my head this very minute that you shall hear though, all the same, as soon as I've hammered it into shape—a sort of villanette in music, a little whiff of country freshness, suggested by the new ethereal acquisition, little Miss Butterfly. Have you seen Miss Butterfly yet?'

'Not by that name, at any rate. Who is she?'

'Oh, the name's my own invention. Mademoiselle Volauvent, I mean—the little bit of whirligig thistledown from Devonshire, Oswald's sister, you know, of Oriel.'

'Ah, that one! Yes; just caught a glimpse of her in the High on Thursday. Very pretty, certainly, and as airy as a humming-bird.'

'That's her! She's coming here to lunch this morning. If you're a good boy, and will promise not to say anything naughty, you may stop and meet her. She's a nice little thing, but rather timid at seeing so many fresh faces. You mustn't frighten her by discussing the Absolute and the Unconditioned, or bore her by talking about Aristotle's Politics, or the revolutions in Corcyra. For you know, my dear Le Breton, if you HAVE a fault, it is that you're such a consummate and irrepressible prig; now aren't you really?'

'I'm hardly a fair judge on that subject, I suppose, Berkeley; but if YOU have a rudimentary glimmering of a virtue, it is that you're such a deliciously frank and yet considerate critic. I'll pocket your rudeness though, and eat your lunch, in spite of it. Is Miss Butterfly, as you call her, as stand-off as her brother?'

'Not at all. She's accueillante to the last degree.'

'Very restricted, I suppose—a country girl of the first water? Horizon absolutely bounded by the high hedges of her native parish?'

'Oh dear no! Anything but that. She's like her brother, naturally quick and adaptive.'

'Oswald's an excellent fellow in his way,' said Herbert, button-holing his own waistcoat; 'but he's spoilt by two bad traits. In the first place, he's so dreadfully conscious of the fact that he has risen from a lower position; and then, again, he's so engrossingly and pervadingly mathematical. X square seems to have seized upon him bodily, and to have wormed its fatal way into his very marrow.'

'Ah, you must remember, he's true to his first love. Culture came to him first, while yet he abode in Philistia, under the playful disguise of a conic section. He scaled his way out of Gath by means of a treatise on elementary trigonometry, and evaded Askelon on the wings of an undulatory theory of light. It is different with us, you know, who have emerged from the land of darkness by the regular classical and literary highway. We feed upon Rabelais and Burton; he flits carelessly from

flower to flower of the theory of Quantics. If he were an idealist painter, like Rossetti, he would paint great allegorical pictures for us, representing an asymptotic curve appearing to him in a dream, and introducing that blushing maiden, Hyperbola, to his affectionate consideration.'

As Berkeley spoke, a rap sounded on the oak, and Ernest Le Breton entered the room.

'What, you here, Herbert?' he said with a shade of displeasure in his tone. 'Are you, too, of the bidden?'

'Berkeley has asked me to stop and lunch with him, if that's what you mean.'

'We shall be quite a party,' said Ernest, seating himself, and looking abstractedly round the room. 'Why, Berkeley,' as his eye fell upon the Venetian vase, 'you've positively got some more gew-gaws here. This one's new, isn't it? Eh!'

'Yes. I picked it up for a song, this long, at a stranded village in the Apennines. Literally for a song, for it cost me just what I got from Fradelli for that last little piece of mine. It's very pretty, isn't it?'

'Very; exquisite, really; the blending of the tones is so perfect. I wish I knew what to think about these things. I can't make up my mind about them. Sometimes I think it's all right to make them and buy them; sometimes I think it's all wrong.'

'Oh, if that's your difficulty,' said Berkeley, pulling his white tie straight at the tiny round looking-glass, 'I can easily reassure you. Do you think a hundred and eighty pounds a year an excessive sum for one person to spend upon his own entire living?'

'It doesn't seem so, as expenses go amongst US,' said Ernest, seriously, 'though I dare say it would look like shocking extravagance to a working man with a wife and family.'

'Very well, that's the very outside I ever spend upon myself in any one year, for the excellent reason that it's all I ever get to spend in any way. Now, why shouldn't I spend it on the things that please me best and are joys for ever, instead of on the things that disappear at once and perish in the using?'

'Ah, but that's not the whole question,' Ernest answered, looking at the curate fixedly. 'What right have you and I to spend so much when others are wanting for bread? And what right have you or I to make other people work at producing these useless trinkets for our sole selfish gratification?'

'Well now, Le Breton,' said the parson, assuming a more serious tone, 'you know you're a reasonable creature, so I don't mind discussing this question with you. You've got an ethical foundation to your nature, and you want to see things done on decent grounds of distributive justice. There I am one with you. But you've also got an aesthetic side to your nature, which makes you worth arguing with upon the matter. I won't argue with your vulgar materialised socialist, who would break up the frieze of the Parthenon for road metal, or pull down Giotto's frescoes because they represent scenes in the fabulous lives of saints and martyrs. You know what a work of art is when you see it; and therefore you're worth arguing with, which your vulgar Continental socialist really isn't. The one cogent argument for him is the whiff of grape-shot.'

'I recognise,' said Ernest, 'that the works of art, of poetry, or of music, which we possess are a grand inheritance from the past; and I would do all I could to preserve them intact for those that come after us.'

'I'm sure you would. No restoration or tinkering in you, I'm certain. Well, then, would you give anything for a world which hadn't got this aesthetic side to its corporate existence? Would you give anything for a world which didn't care at all for painting, sculpture, music, poetry? I wouldn't. I don't want such a world. I won't countenance such a world. I'll do nothing to further or advance such a world. It's utterly repugnant to me, and I banish it, as Themistocles banished the Athenians.'

'But consider,' said Ernest, 'we live in a world where men and women are actually starving. How can we reconcile to our consciences the spending of one penny on one useless thing when others are dying of sheer want, and cold, and nakedness? That's the great question that's always oppressing my poor dissatisfied conscience.'

'So it does everybody's—except Herbert's: he explains it all on biological grounds as the beautiful discriminative action of natural selection. Simple, but not consolatory. Still, look at the other side of the question. Suppose you and everybody else were to give up all superfluities, and confine all your energies to the unlimited production of bare necessities. Suppose you occupy every acre of land with your corn-fields, or your piggeries; and sweep away all the parks, and woods, and heaths, and moorlands in England. Suppose you keep on letting your population multiply as fast as it chooses—and it WILL multiply, you know, in that ugly, reckless, anti-Malthusian fashion of its own—till every rood of ground maintains its man, and only just maintains him; and what will you have got then?'

'A dead level of abject pauperism,' put in Herbert blandly; 'a *reductio ad absurdum* of all your visionary Schurzian philosophy, my dear Ernest. Look at it another way, now, and just consider. Which really and truly matters most to you and me, a great work of art or a highly respectable horny-handed son of toil, whose acquaintance we have never had the pleasure of personally making? Suppose you read in the Times that the respectable horny-handed one has fallen off a scaffolding and broken his neck; and that the Dresden Madonna has been burnt by an unexpected accident; which of the two items of intelligence affects you the most acutely? My dear fellow, you may push your humanitarian enthusiasm as far as ever you like; but in your heart of hearts you know as well as I do that you'll deeply regret the loss of the Madonna, and you'll never think again about the fate of the respectable horny-handed, his wife or children.'

Ernest's answer, if he had any to make, was effectually nipped in the bud by the entrance of the scout, who came in to announce Mr. and Miss Oswald and Mrs. Martindale. Edie wore the grey dress, her brother's present, and flitted into the room after her joyous fashion, full of her first fresh delight at the cloistered quad of Magdalen.

'What a delicious college, Mr. Berkeley!' she said, holding out her hand to him brightly. 'Good-morning, Mr. Le Breton; this is your brother, I know by the likeness. I thought New College very beautiful, but nothing I've seen is quite as beautiful as Magdalen. What a privilege to live always in such a place! And what an exquisite view from your window here!'

'Yes,' said Berkeley, moving a few music-books from the seat in the window-sill; 'come and sit by it, Miss Oswald. Mrs. Martindale, won't you put your shawl down? How's the Professor to-day? So sorry he couldn't come.'

'Ah, he had to go to sit on one of his Boards,' said the old lady, seating herself. 'But you know I'm quite accustomed to going out without him.'

Arthur Berkeley knew as much; indeed, being a person of minute strategical intellect, he had purposely looked out a day on which the Professor had to attend a meeting of the delegates of something or other, so as to secure Mrs. Martindale's services without the supplementary drawback of that prodigious bore. Not that he was particularly anxious for Mrs. Martindale's own society, which was of the most strictly negative character; but he didn't wish Edie to be the one lady in a party of four men, and he invited the Professor's wife as an excellent neutral figure-head, to keep her in countenance. Ladies were scarcer then in Oxford than they are nowadays. The married fellow was still a tentative problematical experiment in those years, and the invasion of the Parks by young couples had hardly yet begun in earnest. So female society was still at a considerable local premium, and Berkeley was glad enough to secure even colourless old Mrs. Martindale to square his party at any price.

'And how do you like Oxford, Miss Oswald?' asked Ernest, making his way towards the window.

'My dear Le Breton, what a question to put to her!' said Berkeley, smiling. 'As if Oxford were a place to be appraised offhand, on three days' acquaintance. You remind me of the American who went to look at Niagara, and made an approving note in his memorandum book to say that he found it really a very elegant cataract.'

'Oh, but you MUST form some opinion of it at least, at first sight,' cried Edie; 'you can't help having an impression of a place from the first moment, even if you haven't a judgment on it, can you

now? I think it really surpasses my expectations, Mr. Le Breton, which is always a pleasant surprise. Venice fell below them; Florence just came up to them; but Oxford, I think, really surpasses them.'

'We have three beautiful towns in Britain,' Berkeley said. ('As if he were a Welsh Triad,' suggested Herbert Le Breton, parenthetically.) 'Torquay, Oxford, Edinburgh. Torquay is all nature, spoilt by what I won't call art; Oxford is all art, superimposed on a swamp that I won't call nature; Edinburgh is both nature and art, working pretty harmoniously together, to make up a unique and exquisite picture.'

'Just like Naples, Venice, and Heidelberg,' said Edie, half to herself; but Berkeley caught at the words quickly as she said them. 'Yes,' he answered; 'a very good parallel, only Oxford has a trifle more nature about it than Venice. The lagoon, without the palaces, would be simply hideous; the Oseney flats, without the colleges, would be nothing worse than merely dull.'

'We owe a great deal,' said Ernest, gazing out towards the quadrangle, 'to the forgotten mass of labouring humanity who piled all those blocks of shapeless stone into beautiful forms for us who come after to admire and worship. I often wonder, when I sit here in Berkeley's window-seat, and look across the quad to the carved pinnacles on the Founder's Tower there, whether any of us can ever hope to leave behind to our successors any legacy at all comparable to the one left us by those nameless old mediaeval masons. It's a very saddening thought that we for whom all these beautiful things have been put together—we whom labouring humanity has pampered and petted from our cradles upward, feeding us on its whitest bread, and toiling for us with all its weary sinews—that we probably will never do anything at all for it and for the world in return, but will simply eat our way through life aimlessly, and die forgotten in the end like the beasts that perish. It ought to make us, as a class, terribly ashamed of our own utter and abject inutility.'

Edie looked at him with a sort of hushed surprise; she was accustomed to hear Harry talk radical talk enough after his own fashion, but radicalism of this particular pensive tinge she was not accustomed to. It interested her, and made her wonder what sort of man Mr. Le Breton might really be.

'Well, you know, Mr. Le Breton,' said old Mrs. Martindale, complacently, 'we must remember that Providence has wisely ordained that we shouldn't all of us be masons or carpenters. Some of us are clergymen, now, and look what a useful, valuable life a clergyman's is, after all, isn't it, Mr. Berkeley?' Berkeley smiled a faint smile of amusement, but said nothing. 'Others are squires and landed gentry; and I'm sure the landed gentry are very desirable in keeping up the tone of the country districts, and setting a pattern of virtue and refinement to their poorer neighbours. What would the country villages be, for example, if it weren't for the centres of culture afforded by the rectory and the hall, eh, Miss Oswald.' Edith thought of quavering old Miss Catherine Luttrell gossiping with the rector's wife, and held her peace. 'You may depend upon it Providence has ordained these distinctions of classes for its own wise purposes, and we needn't trouble our heads at all about trying to alter them.'

'I've always observed,' said Harry Oswald, 'that Providence is supposed to have ordained the existing order for the time being, whatever it may be, but not the order that is at that exact moment endeavouring to supplant it. If I were to visit Central Africa, I should confidently expect to be told by the rain-doctors that Providence had ordained the absolute power of the chief, and the custom of massacring his wives and slaves at his open grave side. I believe in Russia it's usually allowed that Providence has placed the orthodox Czar at the head of the nation, and that any attempt to obtain a constitution from him is simply flat rebellion and flying in the face of Providence. In England we had a King John once, and we extracted a constitution out of him and sundry other kings by main force; and here, it's acquiescence in the present limited aristocratic government that makes up obedience to the Providential arrangement of things apparently. But how about America? eh, Mrs. Martindale? Did Providence ordain that George Washington was to rebel against his most sacred majesty King George III., or did it not? And did it ordain that George Washington was to knock his most sacred majesty's troops into a cocked hat, or did it not? And did it ordain that Abraham Lincoln was to free

the slaves, or did it not? What I want to know is this: can it be said that Providence has ordained every class distinction in the whole world, from Dahomey to San Francisco? And has it ordained every Government, past and present, from the Chinese Empire to the French Convention? Did it ordain, for example, the revolution of '89? That's the question I should like to have answered.'

'Dear me, Mr. Oswald,' said the old lady meekly, taken aback by Harry's voluble vehemence: 'I suppose Providence permits some things and ordains others.'

'And does it permit American democracy or ordain it?' asked the merciless Harry.

'Don't you see, Mrs. Martindale,' put in Berkeley, coming gently to her rescue, 'your principle amounts in effect to saying that whatever is, is right.'

'Exactly,' said the old lady, forgetting at once all about Dahomey or the Convention, and coming back mentally to her squires and rectors. 'The existing order is wisely arranged by Providence, and we mustn't try to set ourselves up against it.'

'But if whatever is, is right,' Edie said, laughing, 'then Mr. Le Breton's socialism must be right too, you see, because it exists in him no doubt for some wise purpose of Providence; and if he and those who think with him can succeed in changing things generally according to their own pattern, then the new system that they introduce will be the one that Providence has shown by the result to be the favoured one.'

'In short,' said Ernest, musingly, 'Mrs. Martindale's principle sanctifies success. It's the old theory of "treason never prospers—what's the reason? Because whene'er it prospers 'tis not treason." If we could only introduce a socialist republic, then it would be the reactionaries who would be setting themselves up against constituted authority, and so flying in the face of Providence.'

'Fancy lecturing a recalcitrant archbishop and a remonstrant ci-devant duchess,' cried Berkeley, lightly, 'upon the moral guilt and religious sinfulness of rebellion against the constituted authority of a communist phalanstery. It would be simply charming. I can imagine myself composing a dignified exhortation to deliver to his grace, entirely compiled out of his own printed pastorals, on the duty of submission and the danger of harbouring an insubordinate spirit. Do make me chaplain-in-ordinary to your house of correction for irreclaimable aristocrats, Le Breton, as soon as you once get your coming socialist republic fairly under way.'

'Luncheon is on the table, sir,' said the scout, breaking in unceremoniously upon their discussion.

If Arthur Berkeley lunched by himself upon a solitary commons of cold beef, he certainly did not treat his friends and guests in corresponding fashion. His little entertainment was of the daintiest and airiest character, so airy that, as Edie herself observed afterwards to Harry, it took away all the sense of meat and drink altogether, and left one only a pleased consciousness of full artistic gratification. Even Ernest, though he had his scruples about the aspic jelly, might eat the famous Magdalen chicken cutlets, his brother said, 'with a distinct feeling of exalted gratitude to the arduous culinary evolution of collective humanity.'

'Consider,' said Herbert, balancing neatly a little pyramid of whip cream and apricot jam upon his fork, 'consider what ages of slow endeavour must have gone to the development of such a complex mixture as this, Ernest, and thank your stars that you were born in this nineteenth century of Soyer and Francatelli, instead of being condemned to devour a Homeric feast with the unsophisticated aid of your own five fingers.'

'But do tell me, Mr. Le Breton,' asked Edie, with one of her pretty smiles, 'what will this socialist republic of yours be like when it actually comes about? I'm dying to know all about it.'

'Really, Miss Oswald,' Ernest answered, in a half-embarrassed tone, 'I don't quite know how to reply to such a very wide and indefinite question. I haven't got any cut-and-dried constitutional scheme of my own for reorganising the whole system of society, any distinct panacea to cure all the ills that collective flesh is heir to. I leave the details of the future order to your brother Harry. The thing that troubles me is not so much how to reform the world at large as how to shape one's own

individual course aright in the actual midst of it. As a single unit of the whole, I want rather guidance for my private conduct than a scheme for redressing the universal dislocation of things in general. It seems to me, every man's first duty is to see that he himself is in the right attitude towards society, and afterwards he may proceed to enquire whether society is in the right attitude towards him and all its other members. But if we were all to begin by redressing ourselves, there would be nothing left to redress, I imagine, when we turned to attack the second half of our problem. The great difficulty I myself experience is this, that *I* can't discover any adequate social justification for my own personal existence. But I really oughtn't to bore other people with my private embarrassments upon that head.'

'You see,' said Herbert Le Breton, carelessly, 'my brother represents the ethical element in the socialist movement, Miss Oswald, while Harry represents the political element. Each is valuable in its way; but Oswald's is the more practical. You can move great masses into demanding their rights; you can't so easily move them into cordially recognising their duties. Hammer, hammer, hammer at the most obvious abuses; that's the way all the political victories are finally won. If I were a radical at all, I should go with you, Oswald. But happily I'm not one; I prefer the calm philosophic attitude of perfectly objective neutrality.'

'And if I were a radical,' said Berkeley, with a tinge of sadness in his voice as he poured himself out a glass of hock, 'I should go with Le Breton. But unfortunately I'm not one, Miss Oswald, I'm only a parson.'

## CHAPTER IV

### A LITTLE MUSIC

After lunch, Herbert Le Breton went off for his afternoon ride—a grave social misdemeanour, Ernest thought it—and Arthur Berkeley took Edie round to show her about the college and the shady gardens. Ernest would have liked to walk with her himself, for there was something in her that began to interest him somewhat; and besides, she was so pretty, and so graceful, and so sympathetic: but he felt he must not take her away from her host for the time being, who had a sort of proprietary right in the pleasing duty of acting as showman to her over his own college. So he dropped behind with Harry Oswald and old Mrs. Martindale, and endeavoured to simulate a polite interest in the old lady's scraps of conversation upon the heads of houses, their wives and families.

'This is Addison's Walk, Miss Oswald,' said Berkeley, taking her through the gate into the wooded path beside the Cherwell; 'so called because the ingenious Mr. Addison is said to have specially patronised it. As he was an undergraduate of this college, and a singularly lazy person, it's very probable that he really did so; every other undergraduate certainly does, for it's the nearest walk an idle man can get without ever taking the trouble to go outside the grounds of Magdalen.'

'The ingenious Mr. Addison was quite right then,' Edie answered, smiling; 'for he couldn't have chosen a lovelier place on earth to stroll in. How exquisite it looks just now, with the mellow light falling down upon the path through this beautiful autumnal foliage! It's just a natural cathedral aisle, with a lot of pale straw-coloured glass in the painted windows, like that splendid one we went to see the other day at Merton Chapel.'

'Yes, there are certainly tones in that window I never saw in any other,' Berkeley said, 'and the walk to-day is very much the same in its delicate colouring. You're fond of colour, I should think, Miss Oswald, from what you say.'

'Oh, nobody could help being struck by the autumn colouring of the Thames valley, I should fancy,' said Edie, blushing. 'We noticed it all the way up as we came in the train from Reading, a perfect glow of crimson and orange at Pangbourne, Goring, Mapledurham, and Nuneham. I always thought the Dart in October the loveliest blaze of warm reds and yellows I had ever seen anywhere in nature, but the Thames valley beats it hollow, as Harry says. This walk to-day is just one's ideal picture of Milton's Vallombrosa.'

'Ah, yes, I always look forward to the first days of October term,' said Berkeley, slowly, 'as one of the greatest and purest treats in the whole round workaday twelvemonth. When the creeper on the Founder's Tower first begins to redden and crimson in the autumn, I could sit all day long by my open window, and just look at that glorious sight alone instead of having my dinner. But I'm very fond of these walks in full summer time too. I often stop up alone all through the long (being tied to my curacy here permanently, you know), and then I have the run of the place entirely to myself. Sometimes I take my flute out, and sit under the shade here and compose some of my little pieces.'

'I can easily understand that they were composed here,' said Edie quickly. 'They've caught exactly the flavour of the place—especially your exquisite little Penseroso.'

'Ah, you know my music, then, Miss Oswald?'

'Oh yes, Harry always brings me home all your pieces whenever he comes back at the end of term. I can play every one of them without the notes. But the Penseroso is my special favourite.'

'It's mine, too. I'm so glad you like it. But I'm working away at a little thing now which you shall hear as soon as I've finished it; something lighter and daintier than anything else I've ever attempted. I shall call it the Butterfly Canzonet.'

'Why don't you publish your music under your own name, Mr. Berkeley?'

'Oh, because it would never do. I'm a parson now, and I must keep up the dignity of the cloth by fighting shy of any aesthetic heterodoxies. It would be professional suicide for me to be suspected of artistic leanings. All very well in an archdeacon, you know, to cultivate his tastes for chants and anthems, but for a simple curate!—and secular songs too!—why, it would be sheer contumacy. His chances of a living would shrink at once to what your brother would call a vanishing quantity.'

'Well, you can't imagine how much I admire your songs and airs, Mr. Berkeley. I was so pleased when you invited us, to think I was going to lunch with a real composer. There's no music I love so much as yours.'

'I'm very glad to hear it, Miss Oswald, I assure you. But I'm only a beginner and a trifler yet. Some day I mean to produce something that will be worth listening to. Only, do you remember what some French novelist once said?—"A poet's sweetest poem is always the one he has never been able to compose." I often think that's true of music, too. Away up in the higher stories of one's brain somewhere, there's a tune floating about, or rather a whole oratorio full of them, that one can never catch and fix upon ruled paper. The idea's there, such a beautiful and vague idea, so familiar to one, but so utterly unrealisable on any known instrument—a sort of musical Ariel, flitting before one and tantalising one for ever, but never allowing one to come up with it and see its real features. I'm always dissatisfied with what I've actually written, and longing to crystallise into a score the imaginary airs I can never catch. Except in this last piece of mine; that's the only thing I've ever done that thoroughly and completely pleases me. Come and see me next week, and I'll play it over to you.'

They walked all round the meadows, and back again beside the arches of the beautiful bridge, and then returned to Berkeley's rooms once more for a cup of afternoon tea, and an air or two of Berkeley's own composing. Edie enjoyed the walk and the talk immensely; she enjoyed the music even more. In a way, it was all so new to her. For though she had always seen much of Harry, and though Harry, who was the kindest and proudest of brothers, had always instinctively kept her up to his own level of thought and conversation, still, she wasn't used to seeing so many intelligent and educated young men together, and the novelty of their society was delightfully exhilarating to her eager little mind. To a bright girl of nineteen, wherever she may come from, the atmosphere of Oxford has a wonderfully cheering and stimulating effect; to a country tradesman's daughter from a tiny west-country village it is like a little paradise on earth with a ceaseless round of intensely enjoyable breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, and water-parties.

Ernest, for his part, was not so well pleased. He wanted to have a little conversation with Oswald's sister; and he was compelled by politeness to give her up in favour of Arthur Berkeley. However, he made up for it when he returned, and monopolised the pretty little visitor himself for almost the entire tea-hour.

As soon as they had gone, Arthur Berkeley sported his oak, and sat down by himself in his comfortable crimson-covered basket chair. 'I won't let anybody come and disturb me this evening,' he said to himself moodily. 'I won't let any of these noisy Magdalen men come with their racket and riot to cut off the memory of that bright little dream. No desecration after she has gone. Little Miss Butterfly! What a pretty, airy, dainty, delicate little morsel it is! How she flits, and sips, and natters about every possible subject, just touching the tip of it so gracefully with her tiny white fingers, and blushing so unfeignedly when she thinks she's paid you a compliment, or you've paid her one. How she blushed when she said she liked my music! How she blushed when I said she had a splendid ear for minute discrimination! Somehow, if I were a falling-in-love sort of fellow, I half fancy I could manage to fall in love with her on the spot. Or rather, if I were a good analytical psychologist, perhaps I ought more correctly to say I AM in love with her already.'

He sat down idly at the piano and played a few bars softly to himself—a beautiful, airy sort of melody, as it shaped itself vaguely in his head at the moment, with a little of the new wine of first love running like a trill through the midst of its fast-flowing quavers and dainty undulations. 'That will do,' he said to himself approvingly. 'That will do very well; that's little Miss Butterfly. Here she flits,

flits, flits, flickers, sip, sip, sip, at her honeyed flowers; twirl away, whirl away, off in the sunshine—there you go, Miss Butterfly, eddying and circling with your painted mate. Flirt, flirt, flirt, coquetting and curvetting, in your pretty rhythmical aërial quadrille. Down again, down to the hare-bell on the hill side; sip at it, sip at it, sip at it, sweet little honey-drops, clear little honey-drops, bright little honey-drops; oh, for a song to be set to the melody! Tra-la-la, tro-lo-lo, up again, Butterfly. Little silk handkerchief, little lace neckerchief, fluttering, fluttering! Feathery wings of her, bright little eyes of her, flit, flit, flicker! Now, she blushes, blushes, blushes; deep crimson; oh, what a colour! Paint it, painter! Now she speaks. Oh, what laughter! Silvery, silvery, treble, treble, treble; trill away, trill away, silvery treble. Musical, beautiful; beautiful, musical; little Miss Butterfly—fly—fly—fly away!' And he brought his fingers down upon the gamut at last, with a hasty, flickering touch that seemed really as delicate as Edie's own.

'I can never get words for it in English,' he said again, half speaking with his parted lips; 'it's too dactylic in rhythm for English verse to go to it. Béranger might have written a lilt for it, as far as mere syllables go, but Béranger to write about Miss Butterfly!—pho, no Frenchman could possibly catch it. Swinburne could fit the metres, I dare say, but he couldn't fit the feeling. It shall be a song without words, unless I write some Italian lines for it myself. Animula, blandula vagula—that's the sort of ring for it, but Latin's mostly too heavy. Io, Hymen, Hymenae, Io; Io, Hymen, Hymenae! What's that? A wedding song of Catullus—absit omen. I must be in love with her indeed.' He got up from the piano, and paced quickly and feverishly up and down the room.

'And yet,' he went on, 'if only I weren't bound down so by this unprofitable trade of parson! A curate on eighty pounds a year, and a few pupils! The presumptuousness of the man in venturing to think of falling in love, as if he were actually one of the beneficed clergy! What are deacons coming to, I wonder! And yet, hath not a deacon eyes; hath not a deacon hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? And if you show us a little Miss Butterfly, beautiful to the finger-ends, do we not fall in love with her at least as unaffectedly as if we were canons residentiary or rural deans? Fancy little Miss Butterfly a rural deaness! the notion's too ridiculous. Fly away, little Miss Butterfly; fly away, sweet little frolicsome, laughsome creature. I won't try to tie you down to a man in a black clerical coat with a very distant hypothetical reversionary prospect of a dull and dingy country parsonage. Flit elsewhere, little Miss Butterfly, flit elsewhere, and find yourself a gayer, gaudier-coloured mate!'

He sat down again, and strummed a few more bars of his half-composed, half-extemporised melody. Then he leant back on the music-stool, and said gently to himself once more: 'Still, if it were possible, how happy I should try to make her! Bright little Miss Butterfly, I would try never to let a cold cloud pass chillily over your sunshiny head! I would live for you, and work for you, and write songs for your sake, all full of you, you, you, and so all full of life and grace and thrilling music. What's my life good for, to me or to the world? "A clergyman's life is such a useful one," that amiable old conventionality gurgled out this morning; what's the good of mine, as it stands now, to its owner or to anybody else, I should like to know, except the dear old Progenitor? A mere bit of cracked blue china, a fanciful air from a comic opera, masquerading in black and white as a piece of sacred music! What good am I to anyone on earth but the Progenitor (God bless him!), and when he's gone, dear old fellow, what on earth shall I have left to live for. A selfish blank, that's all. But with HER, ah, how different! With her to live for and to cherish, with an object to set before oneself as worth one's consideration, what mightn't I do at last? Make her happy—after all, that's the great thing. Make her fond of my music, that music that floats and evades me now, but would harden into scores as if by magic with her to help one to spell it out—I know it would, at last, I know it would. Ah, well, perhaps some day I may be able; perhaps some day the dream will realise itself; till then, work, work, work; let me try to work towards making it possible, a living or a livelihood, no matter which. But not a breath of it to you meanwhile, Miss Butterfly; flit about freely and joyously while you may; I would

not spoil your untrammelled flight for worlds by trying to tether it too soon around the fixed centre of my own poor doubtful diaconal destinies.'

At the same moment while Arthur Berkeley was thus garrulously conversing with his heated fancy, Harry and Edie Oswald were strolling lazily down the High, to Edie's lodgings.

'Well, what do you think now of Berkeley and Le Breton, Edie?' asked her brother. 'Which of them do you like the best?'

'I like them both immensely, Harry; I really can't choose between them. When Mr. Berkeley plays, he almost makes me fall in love with him; and when Mr. Le Breton talks, he almost makes me transfer my affections to him instead... But Mr. Berkeley plays divinely... And Mr. Le Breton talks beautifully... You know, I've never seen such clever men before—except you, of course, Harry dear, for you're cleverer and nicer than anybody. Oh, do let me look at those lovely silks over there?' And she danced across the road before he could answer her, like a tripping sylph in a painter's dreamland.

'Mr. Le Breton's very nice,' she went on, after she had duly examined and classified the silks, 'but I don't exactly understand what it is he's got on his conscience.'

'Nothing whatsoever, except the fact of his own existence,' Harry answered with a laugh. 'He has conscientious scruples against the existence of idle people in the community—do-nothings and eat-alls—and therefore he has conscientious scruples against himself for not immediately committing suicide. I believe, if he did exactly what he thought was abstractly right, he'd go away and cut his own throat incontinently for an unprofitable, unproductive, useless citizen.'

'Oh, dear, I hope he'll do nothing of the sort,' cried Edie hastily. 'I think I shall really ask him not to for my sake, if not for anybody else's.'

'He'd be very much flattered indeed by your interposition on his behalf, no doubt, Popsy; but I'm afraid it wouldn't produce much effect upon his ultimate decision.'

'Tell me, Harry, is Mr. Berkeley High Church?'

'Oh dear no, I shouldn't say so. I don't suppose he ever gave the subject a single moment's consideration.'

'But St. Fredegond's is very High Church, I'm told.'

'Ah, yes; but Berkeley's curate of St. Fredegond's, not in virtue of his theology—I never heard he'd got any to speak of—but in virtue of his musical talents. He went into the Church, I suppose, on purely aesthetic grounds. He liked a musical service, and it seemed natural to him to take part in one, just as it seemed natural to a mediaeval Italian with artistic tendencies to paint Madonnas and St. Sebastians. There's nothing more in his clerical coat than that, I fancy, Edie. He probably never thought twice about it on theological grounds.'

'Oh, but that's very wrong of him, Harry. I don't mean having no particular theological beliefs, of course; one expects that nowadays; but going into the Church without them.'

'Well, you see, Edie, you mustn't judge Berkeley in quite the same way as you'd judge other people. In his mind, the aesthetic side is always uppermost; the logical side is comparatively in abeyance. Questions of creed, questions of philosophical belief, questions of science don't interest him at all; he looks at all of them from the point of view of the impression alone. What he sees in the Church is not a body of dogmas, like the High Churchmen, nor a set of opinions, like the Low Churchmen, but a close corporation of educated and cultivated gentlemen, charged with the duty of caring for a number of beautiful mediaeval architectural monuments, and of carrying on a set of grand and impressive musical or oral services. To him, a cathedral is a magnificent historical heritage; a sermon is a sort of ingenious literary exercise; and a hymn is a capital vehicle for very solemn emotional music. That's all; and we can hardly blame him for not seeing these things as we should see them.'

'Well, Harry, I don't know. I like them both immensely. Mr. Berkeley's very nice, but perhaps I like Mr. Le Breton the best of the two.'

## CHAPTER V

### ASKELON VILLA, GATH

Number, 28, Epsilon Terrace, Bayswater, was one of the very smallest houses that a person with any pretensions to move in that Society which habitually spells itself with a capital initial could ever possibly have dreamt of condescending to inhabit. Indeed, if Dame Eleanor, relict of the late Sir Owen Le Breton, Knight, had consulted merely the length of her purse and the interests of her personal comfort, she would doubtless have found for the same rental a far more convenient and roomy cottage in Upper Clapton or Stoke Newington. But Lady Le Breton was a thoroughly and conscientiously religious woman, who in all things consulted first and foremost the esoteric interests of her ingrained creed. It was a prime article of this cherished social faith that nobody with any shadow of personal self-respect could endure to live under any other postal letter than W. or S.W. Better not to be at all than to drag out a miserable existence in the painful obscurity of N. or S.E. Happily for people situated like Lady Le Breton, the metropolitan house-contractor (it would be gross flattery to describe him as a builder) has divined, with his usual practical sagacity, the necessity for supplying this felt want for eligible family residences at once comparatively cheap and relatively fashionable. By driving little culs-de-sac and re-entrant alleys at the back of his larger rows of shoddy mansions, he is enabled to run up a smaller terrace, or crescent, or place, as the case may be, composed of tiny shallow cottages with the narrowest possible frontage, and the tallest possible elevation, which will yet entitle their occupiers to feel themselves within the sacred pale of social salvation, in the blest security of the mystic W. Narrowest, shallowest, and tallest of these marginal Society residences is the little block of blank-faced, stucco-fronted, porticoed rabbit-hutches, which blazons itself forth in the Court Guide under the imposing designation of Epsilon Terrace, Bayswater.

The interior of No. 28 in this eminently respectable back alley was quite of a piece, it must be confessed, with the vacant Philistinism of its naked exterior. 'Mother has really an immense amount of taste,' Herbert Le Breton used to say, blandly, 'and all of it of the most atrocious description; she picked it up, I believe, when my poor father was quartered at Lahore, a station absolutely fatal to the aesthetic faculties; and she will never get rid of it again as long as she lives.' Indeed, when once Lady Le Breton got anything whatsoever into her head, it was not easy for anybody else to get it out again; you might much more readily expect to draw one of her double teeth than to eliminate one of her pet opinions. Not that she was a stupid or a near-sighted woman—the mother of clever sons never is—but she was a perfectly immovable rock of social and political orthodoxy. The three Le Breton boys—for there was a third at home—would gladly have reformed the terrors of that awful drawing-room if they had dared; but they knew it was as much as their places were worth, Herbert said, to attempt a remonstrance, and they wisely left it alone, and said nothing.

Of course the house was not vulgarly furnished, at least in the conventional sense of the word; Lady Le Breton was far too rigid in her social orthodoxy to have admitted into her rooms anything that savoured of what she considered bad form, according to her lights. It was only vulgar with the underlying vulgarity of mere tasteless fashionable uniformity. There was nothing in it that any well-bred footman could object to; nothing that anybody with one grain of genuine originality could possibly tolerate. The little occasional chairs and tables set casually about the room were of the strictest *négligé* Belgravian type, a sort of studied protest against the formal stiffness of the ordinary unused middle-class drawing-room. The portrait of the late Sir Owen in the wee library, presented by his brother-officers, was painted by that distinguished R. A., Sir Francis Thomson, a light of the middle of this century; and an excellent work of art it was too, in its own solemn academic kind. The dining-room, tiny as it was, possessed that inevitable Canaletti without which no gentleman's dining-room in England is ever considered to be complete. Everything spoke at once the stereotyped

Society style of a dozen years ago (before Mr. Morris had reformed the outer aspect of the West End), entirely free from anything so startling or indecorous as a gleam of spontaneity in the possessor's mind. To be sure, it was very far indeed from the centre round-table and brilliant-flowered-table-cover style of the utter unregenerate Philistine household; but it was further still from the simple natural taste and graceful fancy of Edie Oswald's cosy little back parlour behind the village grocer's shop at Calcombe-Pomeroy.

The portrait and the Canaletti were relics of Lady Le Breton's best days, when Sir Owen was alive, and the boys were still in their first babyhood. Sir Owen was an Indian officer of the old school, a simple-minded, gentle, brave man, very religious after his own fashion, and an excellent soldier, with the true Anglo-Indian faculty for administration and organisation. It was partly from him, no doubt, that the boys inherited their marked intelligence; and it was wholly from him, beyond any doubt at all, that Ernest and his younger brother Ronald inherited their moral or religious sincerity—for that was an element in which poor formally orthodox Lady Le Breton was wholly deficient. The good General had been brought up in the strictest doctrines of the Clapham sect; he had gone to India young, as a cadet from Haileybury; and he had applied his intellect all his life long rather to the arduous task of extending 'the blessings of British rule' to Sikhs and Ghoorkas, than to those abstract ethical or theological questions which agitated the souls of a later generation. If a new district had to be assimilated in settlement to the established model of the British raj, if a tribe of hill-savages had to be conciliated by gentler means than rifles or bayonets, if a difficult bit of diplomatic duty had to be performed on the debateable frontiers, Sir Owen Le Breton was always the person chosen to undertake it. An earnest, honest, God-fearing man he remained to the end, impressed by a profound sense of duty as he understood it, and a firm conviction that his true business in life consisted in serving his Queen and country, and in bringing more and more of the native populations within the pale of the Company's empire, and the future evangelisation that was ultimately to follow. But during the great upheaval of the Mutiny, he fell at the head of his own unrevolted regiment in one of the hottest battles of that terrible time, and my Lady Le Breton found herself left alone with three young children, on little more than the scanty pension of a general officer's widow on the late Company's establishment.

Happily, enough remained to bring up the boys, with the aid of their terminable annuities (which fell in on their attaining their majority), in decent respect for the feelings and demands of exacting Society; and as the two elder were decidedly clever boys, they managed to get scholarships at Oxford, which enabled them to tide over the dangerous intermediate period as far as their degree. Herbert then stepped at once into a fellowship and sundry other good things of like sort; and Ernest was even now trying to follow in his brother's steps, in this particular. Only the youngest boy, Ronald, still remained quite unprovided for. Ronald was a tall, pale, gentle, weakly, enthusiastic young fellow of nineteen, with so marked a predisposition to lung disease that it had not been thought well to let him run the chance of over-reading himself; and so he had to be content with remaining at home in the uncongenial atmosphere of Epsilon Terrace, instead of joining his two elder brothers at the university. Uncongenial, because Ronald alone followed Sir Owen in the religious half of his nature, and found the 'worldliness' and conventionality of his unflinching mother a serious bar to his enjoyment of home society.

'Ronald,' said my lady, at the breakfast-table on the very morning of Arthur Berkeley's little luncheon party, 'here's a letter for you from Mackenzie and Anderson. No doubt your Aunt Sarah's will has been recovered and proved at last, and I hope it'll turn out satisfactory, as we wish it.'

'For my part, I really almost hope it won't, mother,' said Ronald, turning it over; 'for I don't want to be compelled to profit by Ernest's excessive generosity. He's too good to me, just because he thinks me the weaker vessel; but though we must bear one another's burdens, you know, we should each bear his own cross as well, shouldn't we, mother?'

'Well, it can't be much in any case,' said his mother, a little testily, 'whoever gets it. Open the envelope at once, my boy, and don't stand looking at it like a goose in that abstracted way.'

'Oh, mother, she was my father's only sister, and I'm not in such a hurry to find out how she has disposed of her mere perishing worldly goods,' answered Ronald, gravely. 'It seems to me a terrible thing that before poor dear good Aunt Sarah is cold in her grave almost, we should be speculating and conjecturing as to what she has done with her poor little trifle of earthly riches.'

'It's always usual to read the will immediately after the funeral,' said Lady Le Breton, firmly, to whom the ordinary usage of society formed an absolutely unanswerable argument; 'and how you, Ronald, who haven't even the common decency to wear a bit of crape around your arm for her—a thing that Ernest himself, with all his nonsensical theories, consents to do—can talk in that absurd way about what's quite right and proper to be done, I for my part, really can't imagine.'

'Ah, but you know, mother, I object to wearing crape on the ground that it isn't allowable for us to sorrow as them that have no hope: and I'm sure I'm paying no disrespect to dear Aunt Sarah's memory in this matter, for she was always the first herself, you remember, to wish that I should follow the dictates of my own conscience.'

'I remember she always upheld you in acts of opposition to your own mother, Ronald,' Lady Le Breton said coldly, 'and I suppose you're going to do honour to her religious precepts now by not opening that letter when your mother tells you to do so. In MY Bible, sir, I find a place for the Fourth Commandment.'

Ronald looked at her gently and unrepvingly; but though a quiet smile played involuntarily around the corners of his mouth, he resisted the natural inclination to correct her mistake, and to suggest blandly that she probably alluded to the fifth. He knew he must turn his left cheek also—a Christian virtue which he had abundant opportunities of practising in that household; and he felt that to score off his mother for such a verbal mistake as the one she had just made would not be in keeping with the spirit of the commandment to which, no doubt, she meant to refer him. So without another word he opened the envelope and glanced rapidly at the contents of the letter it enclosed.

'They've found the second will,' he said, after a moment, with a rather husky voice, 'and they're taking steps to get it confirmed, whatever that may be.'

'Broad Scotch for getting probate, I believe,' said Lady Le Breton, in a slight tone of irony; for to her mind any departure from the laws or language she was herself accustomed to use, assumed at once the guise of a rank and offensive provincialism. 'Your poor Aunt WOULD go and marry a Scotchman, and he a Scotch business man too; so of course we must expect to put up with all kinds of ridiculous technicalities and Edinburgh jargon accordingly. All law's bad enough in the way of odd words, but commend me to Scotch law for utter and meaningless incomprehensibility. Well, and what does the second will say, Ronald?'

'There, mother,' cried Ronald, flinging the letter down hurriedly with a burst of tears. 'Read it yourself, if you will, for I can't. Poor dear Aunt Sarah, and dear, good unselfish Ernest! It makes me cry even to think of them.'

Lady Le Breton took the paper up from the table without a word and read it carefully through. 'I am very glad to hear it,' she said, 'very glad indeed to hear it. "And in order to guard against any misinterpretation of my reasons for making this disposition of my property," your Aunt says, "I wish to put it on record that I had previously drawn up another will, bequeathing my effects to be divided between my two nephews Ernest and Ronald Le Breton equally; that I communicated the contents of that will"—a horrid Scotticism—"to my nephew Ernest; and that at his express desire I have now revoked it, and drawn up this present testament, leaving the share intended for him to his brother Ronald." Why, she never even mentions dear Herbert!'

'She knew that Herbert had provided for himself,' Ronald answered, raising his head from his hands, 'while Ernest and I were unprovided for. But Ernest said he could fight the world for himself, while I couldn't; and that unearned wealth ought only to be accepted in trust for those who were

incapacitated by nature or misfortune from earning their own bread. I don't always quite agree with all Ernest's theories any more than you do, but we must both admit that at least he always conscientiously acts up to them himself, mother, mustn't we?'

'It's a very extraordinary thing,' Lady Le Breton went on, 'that Aunt Sarah invariably encouraged both you boys in all your absurdities and Quixotisms. She was Quixotic herself at heart, that's the truth of it, just like your poor dear father. I remember once, when we were quartered at Meean Meer in the Punjaub, poor dear Sir Owen nearly got into disgrace with the colonel—he was only a sub. in those days—because he wanted to go trying to convert his syces, which was a most imprudent thing to do, and directly opposed to the Company's orders. Aunt Sarah was just the same. Herbert's the only one of you three who has never given me one moment's anxiety, and of course poor Herbert must be passed over in absolute silence. However, I'm very glad she's left the money to you, Ronald, as you need it the most, and Mackenzie and Anderson say it'll come to about a hundred and sixty a year.'

'One can do a great deal of good with that much money,' said Ronald meditatively. 'I mean, after arranging with you, mother, for the expenses of my maintenance at home, which of course I shall do, as soon as the pension ceases, and after meeting one's own necessary expenditure in the way of clothing and so forth. It's more than any one Christian man ought to spend upon himself, I'm sure.'

'It's not at all too much for a young man in your position in society, Ronald; but there—I know you'll want to spend half of it on indiscriminate charity. However, there'll be time enough to talk about that when you've actually got it, thank goodness.'

Ronald murmured a few words softly to himself, of which Lady Le Breton only caught the last echo—'laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.'

'Just like Ernest's communistic notions,' she murmured in return, half audibly. 'I do declare, between them both, a plain woman hardly knows whether she's standing on her head or on her heels. I live in daily fear that one or other of them will be taken up by the police, for being implicated in some dynamite plot or other, to blow up the Queen or destroy the Houses of Parliament.' Ronald smiled again, gently, but answered nothing. 'There's another letter for you there, though, with the Exmoor coronet upon it. Why don't you open it? I hope it's an invitation for you to go down and stop at Dunbude for a week or two. Nothing on earth would do you so much good as to get away for a while from your ranters and canters, and mix occasionally in a little decent and rational society.'

Ronald took up the second letter with a sigh. He feared as much himself, and had doleful visions of a painful fortnight to be spent in a big country house, where the conversation would be all concerning the slaughter of pheasants and the torture of foxes, which his soul loathed to listen to. 'It's from Lady Hilda,' he said, glancing through it, 'and it ISN'T an invitation after all.' He could hardly keep down a faint tone of gratification as he discovered this reprieve. 'Here's what she says:—

"DEAR MR. LE BRETON,—Mamma wishes me to write and tell you that Lynmouth's tutor, Mr. Walsh, is going to leave us at Christmas, and she thinks it just possible that one of your two brothers at Oxford might like to come down to Dunbude and give us their kind aid in taking charge of Lynmouth. He's a dreadful pickle, as you know; but we are very anxious to get somebody to look after him in whom mamma can have perfect confidence. We don't know your brothers' addresses or we would have written to them direct about it. Perhaps you will kindly let them hear this suggestion; and if they think the matter worth while, we might afterwards arrange details as to business and so forth. With kind regards to Lady Le Breton, believe me,

"Yours very sincerely,

**"HILDA TREGELLIS."**

'My dear Ronald,' said Lady Le Breton, much more warmly than before, 'this is really quite providential. Are they at Dunbude now?'

'No, mother. She writes from Wilton Place. They're up in town for Lord Exmoor's gout, I know. I heard they were on Sunday.'

'Then I shall go and see Lady Exmoor this very morning about it. It's exactly the right place for Ernest. A little good society will get rid of all his nonsensical notions in a month or two. He's lived too exclusively among his radical set at Oxford. And then it'll be such a capital thing for him to be in the house continually with Hilda; she's a girl of such excellent tone. I fancy—I'm not quite sure, but I fancy—that Ernest has a decided taste for the company of people, and even of young girls, who are not in Society. He's so fond of that young man Oswald, who Herbert tells me is positively the son of a grocer—yes, I'm sure he said a grocer!—and it seems, from what Herbert writes me, that this Oswald has brought a sister of his up this term from behind the counter, on purpose to set her cap at Ernest. Now you boys have, unfortunately, no sisters, and therefore you haven't seen as much of girls of a good stamp—not daily and domestically I mean—as is desirable for you, from the point of view of Society. But if Ernest can only be induced to take this tutorship at the Exmoors', he'll have an opportunity of meeting daily with a really nice girl, like Hilda; and though of course it isn't likely that Hilda would take a fancy to her brother's tutor—the Exmoors are such VERY conservative people in matters of rank and wealth and family and so forth—quite un-Christianly so, I consider—yet it can't fail to improve Ernest's tone a great deal, and raise his standard of female society generally. It's really a very distressing thought to me, Ronald, that all my boys, except dear Herbert, should show such a marked preference for low and vulgar companionship. It seems to me, you both positively prefer as far as possible the society of your natural inferiors. There's Ernest must go and take up with the friendship of that snuffy old German Socialist glass-cutter; while you are always running after your Plymouth Brethren and your Bible Christians, and your other ignorant fanatical people, instead of going with me respectably to St. Alphege's to hear the dear Archdeacon! It's very discouraging to a mother, really, very discouraging.'

## CHAPTER VI

### DOWN THE RIVER

'Berkeley couldn't come to-day, Le Breton: it's Thursday, of course: I forgot about it altogether,' Oswald said, on the barge at Salter's. 'You know he pays a mysterious flying visit to town every Thursday afternoon—to see an imprisoned lady-love, I always tell him.'

'It's very late in the season for taking ladies on the water, Miss Oswald,' said Ernest, putting his oar into the rowlock, and secretly congratulating himself on the deliverance; 'but better go now than not see Iffley church and Nuneham woods at all. You ought to have come up in summer term, and let us have the pleasure of showing you over the place when it was in its full leafy glory. May's decidedly the time to see Oxford to the greatest advantage.'

'So Harry tells me, and he wanted me to come up then, but it wasn't convenient for them at home to spare me just at that moment, so I was obliged to put it off till late in the autumn. I have to help my mother a good deal in the house, you know, and I can't always go dancing about the world whenever I should like to. Which string must I pull, Harry, to make her turn into the middle of the river? She always seems to twist round the exact way I don't want her to.'

'Right, right, hard right,' cried Harry from the bow—they were in a tub pair bound down the river for Iffley. 'Keep to the Oxfordshire shore as far as the willows; then cross over to the Berkshire. Le Breton'll tell you when and where to change sides; he knows the river as well as I do.'

'That'll do splendidly for the present,' Ernest said, looking ahead over his shoulder. 'Mind the flags there; don't go too near the corner. You certainly ought to see these meadows in early spring, when the fritillaries are all out over the spongy places, Miss Oswald. Has your brother ever sent you any of the fritillaries?'

'What? snake-heads? Oh, boxes full of them. They're lovely flowers, but not lovelier than our own Devonshire daffodils. You should see a Devonshire water-meadow in April! Why don't you come down some time to Calcombe Pomeroy? It's the dearest little peaceful seaside corner in all England.'

Harry bit his lip, for he was not over-fond of bringing people down to spy out his domestic sanctities; but Ernest answered cordially, 'I should like it above everything in the world, Miss Oswald. If you will let me, I certainly shall as soon as possible. Mind, quick, get out of the way of that practising eight, or we shall foul her! Left, as hard as you can! That'll do. The cox was getting as red as a salamander, till he saw it was a lady steering. When coxes catch a man fouling them, their language is apt to be highly unparliamentary.—Yes, I shall try to get away to Calcombe as soon as ever I can manage to leave Oxford. It wouldn't surprise me if I were to run down and spend Christmas there.'

'You'd find it as dull as ditch-water at Christmas, Le Breton,' said Harry. 'Much better wait till next summer.'

'I'm sure I don't think so, Harry dear,' Edie interrupted, with that tell-tale blush of hers. 'If Mr. Le Breton wants to come then, I believe he'd really find it quite delightful. Of course he wouldn't expect theatres, or dances, or anything like that, in a country village; and we're dreadfully busy just about Christmas day itself, sending out orders, and all that sort of thing,'—Harry bit his lip again:—'but if you don't mind a very quiet place and a very quiet time, Mr. Le Breton, I don't think myself our cliffs ever look grander, or our sea more impressive, than in stormy winter weather.'

'I wish to goodness she wasn't so transparently candid and guileless,' thought Harry to himself. 'I never CAN teach her duly to respect the prejudices of Pi. Not that it matters twopence to Le Breton, of course: but if she talks that way to any of the other men here, they'll be laughing in every common-room in Oxford over my Christmas raisins and pounds of sugar—commonplace cynics that they are. I must tell her about it the moment we get home again, and adjure her by all that's holy not to repeat the indiscretion.'

'A penny for your thoughts, Harry,' cried Edie, seeing by his look that she had somehow vexed him. 'What are you thinking of?'

'Thinking that all Oxford men are horrid cynics,' said Harry, boldly shaming the devil.

'Why are they?' Edie asked.

'I suppose because it's an inexpensive substitute for wit or intellect,' Harry answered. 'Indeed, I'm a bit of a cynic myself, I believe, for the same reason and on strictly economical principles. It saves one the trouble of having any intelligible or original opinion of one's own upon any subject.'

Below Iffley Lock they landed for half an hour, in order to give Edie time for a pencil sketch of the famous old Norman church-tower, with its quaint variations on the dog-tooth ornament, and its ancient cross and mouldering yew-tree behind. Harry sat below in the boat, propped on the cushions, reading the last number of the 'Nineteenth Century;' Ernest and Edie took their seat upon the bank above, and had a first chance of an unbroken tête-à-tête.

'How delicious to live in Oxford always!' said Edie, sketching in the first outline of the great round arches. 'I would give anything to have the opportunity of settling here for life. Some day I shall make Harry set up house, and bring me up here as his housekeeper:—I mean,' she added with a blush, thinking of Harry's warning look just before, 'as soon as they can spare me from home.' She purposely avoided saying 'when they retire from business,' the first phrase that sprang naturally to her simple little lips. 'Let me see, Mr. Le Breton; you haven't got any permanent appointment here yourself, have you?'

'Oh no,' Ernest answered: 'no appointment of any sort at all, Miss Oswald. I'm loitering up casually on the look-out for a fellowship. I've been in for two or three already, but haven't got them.'

'Why didn't you?' asked Edie, with a look of candid surprise.

'I suppose I wasn't clever enough,' Ernest answered simply. 'Not so clever, I mean, as the men who actually got them.'

'Oh, but you **MUST** be,' Edie replied confidently; 'and a great deal cleverer, too, I'm sure. I know you must, because Harry told me you were one of the very cleverest men in the whole 'Varsity. And besides, I see you are, myself. And Harry says most of the men who get fellowships are really great donkeys.'

'Harry must have been talking in one of those cynical moods he told us about,' said Ernest, laughing. 'At any rate, the examiners didn't feel satisfied with my papers, and I've never got a fellowship yet. Perhaps they thought my political economy just a trifle too advanced for them.'

'You may depend upon it, that's it,' said Edie, jumping at the conclusion with the easy omniscience of a girl of nineteen. 'Next time, make your political economy a little more moderate, you know, without any sacrifice of principle, just to suit them. What fellowship are you going in for now?'

'Pembroke, in November.'

'Oh, I do hope you'll get it.'

'Thank you very much. So do I. It would be very nice to have one.'

'But of course it won't matter so much to you as it did to Harry. Your family are such very great people, aren't they?'

Ernest smiled a broad smile at her delicious simplicity. 'If by very great people you mean rich,' he said, 'we couldn't very well be poorer—for people of our sort, I mean. My mother lives almost entirely on her pension; and we boys have only been able to come up to Oxford, just as Harry was, by the aid of our scholarships. If we hadn't saved in our first two years, while we had our government allowances, we shouldn't have been able to stop up for our degrees at all. So if I don't get a fellowship I shall have to take to school-mastering or something of the sort, for a livelihood. Indeed, this at Pembroke will be my very last chance, for I can't hold on much longer.'

'And if you got a fellowship you could never marry, could you?' asked Edie, going on with her work.

'Not, while I held it, certainly. But I wouldn't hold it long. I regard it only as a makeshift for a time. Unhappily, I don't know how to earn my own bread by the labour of my hands, as I think we ought all to do in a well-constituted society; so unless I choose to starve (about the rightfulness of which I don't feel quite certain), I MUST manage somehow to get over the interval. But as soon as I could I would try to find some useful work to do, in which I could repay society the debt I owe it for my bringing up. You see, I've been fed and educated by a Government grant, which of course came out of the taxes—your people have had to help, whether they would or not, in paying for my board and lodging—and I feel that I owe it as a duty to the world to look out some employment in which I could really repay it for the cost of my maintenance.'

'How funnily you do look at everything, Mr. Le Breton,' said Edie. 'It would never have struck me to think of a pension from the army in that light. And yet of course it's the right light; only we don't most of us take the trouble to go to the bottom of things, as you do. But what will you do if you don't get the fellowship?'

'In that case, I've just heard from my mother that she would like me to take a tutorship at Lord Exmoor's,' Ernest answered. 'Lynmouth, their eldest son, was my junior at school by six or seven years, and now he's going to prepare for Christ Church. I don't quite know whether it's a right place for me to accept or not; but I shall ask Max Schurz about it, if I don't get Pembroke. I always take Herr Max's advice in all questions of conscience, for I'm quite sure whatever he approves of is the thing one ought to do for the greatest good of humanity.'

'Harry told me about Herr Schurz,' Edie said, filling in the details of the doorway. 'He thinks him a very earnest, self-convinced, good old man, but a terrible revolutionist. For my part, I believe I rather like revolutionists, provided, of course, they don't cut off people's heads. Harry made me read Carlyle, and I positively fell in love with Camille Desmoulins; only I don't really think he ought to have approved of QUITE so much guillotining, do you? But why shouldn't you take the tutorship at the Exmoors?'

'Oh, because it isn't a very useful work in the world to prepare a young hereditary loafer like Lynmouth for going to Christ Church. Lynmouth will be just like his father when he grows up—an amiable wholesale partridge-slayer; and I don't see that the world at large will be any the better or the worse off for his being able to grope his way somehow through two plays of Sophocles and the first six books of Euclid. If only one were a shoemaker now! What a delightful thing to sit down at the end of a day and say to oneself, "I have made two pairs of good, honest boots for a fellow-mortal this week, and now I deserve to have my supper!" Still, it'll be better, anyway, than doing nothing at all, and living off my mother.'

'If you went to Dunbude, when would you go?'

'After the Christmas vacation, I suppose, from what Lady Hilda says.'

'Lady Hilda? Oh, so there's a sister, is there?'

'Yes. A very pretty girl, about twenty, I should say, and rather clever too, I believe. My mother knows them a little.'

Poor little Edie! What made her heart jump so at the mere mention of Lady Hilda? and what made the last few strokes at the top of the broken yew-tree look so very weak and shaky? How absurd of herself, she thought, to feel so much moved at hearing that there was another girl in the world whom Ernest might possibly fall in love with! And yet she had never even seen Ernest only ten days ago! Lady Hilda! What a grand name, to be sure, and what a grand person she must be. And then Ernest himself belonged by birth to the same class! For in poor little Edie's mind, innocent as she was of the nice distinctions of the peerage, Lady So-and-So was Lady So-and-So still, whoever she might be, from the wife of a premier marquis to the wife of the latest created knight bachelor. To her, Lady Hilda Tregellis and Lady Le Breton were both 'ladies of title'; and the difference between their positions, which seemed so immense to Ernest, seemed nothing at all to the merry little country girl who sat sketching beside him. After all, how could she ever have even vaguely fancied that such

a young man as Ernest, in spite of all his socialistic whims, would ever dream of caring for a girl of the people like her? No doubt he would go to the Exmoors', fall naturally in love with Lady Hilda, and marry decorously in what Edie considered his own proper sphere of life! She went on with the finishing touches of her little picture in silence, and folded it up into the tiny portfolio at last with a half-uttered sigh. So her poor wee castle in the air was knocked down before she had begun to build it up in any real seriousness, and she turned to join Harry in the boat almost without speaking.

'I hope you'll get the Pembroke fellowship,' she said again, a little later, as they rowed onward down the river to Nuneham. 'But in any case, Mr. Le Breton, you mustn't forget you've half promised to come and look us up at Calcombe Pomeroy in the Christmas vacation.'

Ernest smiled, and nodded acquiescence.

Meanwhile, on that same Thursday afternoon, Arthur Berkeley had gone up from Oxford by the fast train to Paddington, as was his weekly wont, and had dived quickly down one of the small lanes that open out from the left-hand side of Praed Street. He walked along it for a little way, humming an air to himself as he went, and then stopped at last in front of a small, decent brick house, with a clean muslin blind across the window (clean muslin forms a notable object in most London back streets), and a printed card hanging from the central pane, bearing the inscription, 'G. Berkeley, Working Shoemaker.—The Trade supplied with Ready-closed Uppers.' At the window a beaming face was watching for his appearance, and Arthur said to himself as he saw it through the curtain, 'The dear old Progenitor's looking better again this week, God bless him!' In a moment he had opened the door, and greeted his father in the old boyish fashion, with an honest kiss on either cheek. They had kissed one another so whenever they met from Arthur's childhood upward; and the Oxford curate had never felt himself grown too much of a man to keep up a habit which seemed to him by far the most sacred thing in his whole existence.

'Well, father dear, I needn't ask you how you are to-day,' said Arthur, seating himself comfortably in the second easy-chair of the trim little workshop parlour. 'I can see at once you're a good deal better. Any more pain in the head and eyes, eh, or any trouble about the forehead?'

The old shoemaker passed his hand over his big, bulging brow, bent outward as it is so often in men of his trade by the constant habit of stooping over their work, and said briskly, 'No, Artie, my boy, not a sign of it this week—not a single sign of it. I've been taking a bit of holiday, you see, and it's done me a lot of good, I can tell you;—made me feel another man entirely. I've been playing my violin till the neighbours began to complain of it; and if I hadn't asked them to come and hear me tune up a bit, I really believe they'd have been having me up before the magistrate for a public nuisance.'

'That's right, Daddy dear; I'm always glad when you've been having a little music. It does you more good than anything. And the jelly—I hope you've eaten the jelly?'

'Oh, I've eaten it right enough, Artie, thank your dear heart; and the soup too, dearie. Came by a boy from Walters's every day, addressed to "Berkeley, Esquire, 42 Whalley Street;" and the boy wouldn't leave it the first day, because he thought there must have been a mistake about the address. His contention was that a journeyman shoemaker wasn't an esquire; and my contention was that the "Berkeley" was essential, and the "Esquire" accidental, which was beyond his logic, bless you, Artie; for I've often noticed, my son, that your errand-boy is a naturally illogical and contradictory creature. Now, shoemakers aren't, you know. I've always taken a just pride in the profession, and I've always asserted that it develops logic; it develops logic, Artie, or else why are all cobblers good Liberals, I should like to know? Eh, can you tell me that; with all your Oxford training, sir, can you tell me that?'

'It develops logic beyond the possibility of a doubt. Daddy; and it develops a good kind heart as well,' said Arthur, smiling. 'And it develops musical taste, and literary talent, and a marked predilection for the beautiful in art and nature. In fact, whenever I meet a good man of any sort, anywhere, I always begin now by inquiring which of his immediate ancestors can have been a journeyman shoemaker. Depend upon it, Daddy, there's nothing like leather.'

'There you are, poking fun at your poor old Progenitor again,' said the old cobbler, with a merry twinkle in the corner of his eye. 'If it weren't for the jelly, and the natural affections always engendered by shoemaking, I think I should almost feel inclined to cut you off with a shilling, Artie, my boy—to cut you off with a shilling. Well, Artie, I'm quite convalescent now (don't you call it? I'm afraid of my long shoemaker's words before you, nowadays, you've grown so literary; for I suppose parsons are more literary than even shoemakers). I'm quite convalescent now, and I think, my boy, I must get to work again this week, and have no more of your expensive soups and jellies. If I didn't keep a sharp look-out upon you, Artie, lad, I believe you'd starve yourself outright up there at Oxford to pamper your poor old useless father here with luxuries he's never been accustomed to in his whole life.'

'My dear simple old Progenitor, you don't know how utterly you're mistaken,' cried Arthur, eagerly. 'I believe I'm really the most selfish and unnatural son in all Christendom. I'm positively rolling in wealth up there at Magdalen; I've had my room papered again since you saw it last long vacation; and I live like a prince, absolutely like a Russian prince, upon my present income. I assure you on my solemn word of honour, Father, that I eat meat for lunch—that's my dinner—every day; and an egg for tea as regular as clockwork. I often think when I look around my palatial rooms in college, what a shame it is that I should let you, who are worth ten of me, any day, live any longer in a back street up here in London; and I won't allow it, Daddy, I really won't allow it from this day forth, I'm determined. I've come up especially to speak to you about it this afternoon, for I've made up my mind that this abnormal state of things can't continue.'—'Very good word, abnormal,' murmured his father.—'And I've also made up my mind,' Arthur said, almost firmly, for him, 'that you shall come up and live at Oxford. I can't bear having you so far away from me, now that you're weaker than you used to be, Father dear, and so often ailing.'

The old shoemaker laughed aloud. 'Oh no, Artie, my boy,' he said cheerily, shaking his head with a continuous series of merry chuckles. 'It won't do at all, it won't do, I assure you. I may be a terrible free-thinker and all that kind of thing, as the neighbours say I am—poor bodies, they never read a word of modern criticism in their lives, heaven bless 'em—stragglers from the march of intellect, mere stragglers—but I've too much respect for the cloth to bring a curate of St. Fredegond's into such disgrace as that would mean for you, Artie. You shan't have your career at Oxford spoiled by its being said of you that your father was a working shoemaker. What with the ready-closed uppers, and what with your ten shillings a week, and what with all the presents you give me, and what with the hire of the piano, I'm as comfortable as ever I want to be, growing into a gentleman in my old age, Artie, and I even begin to have my doubts as to whether it's quite consistent in me as a good Radical to continue my own acquaintance with myself—I'm getting to be such a regular idle do-nothing aristocrat! Go to Oxford and mend shoes, indeed, with you living there as a full-fledged parson in your own rooms at Magdalen! No, no, I won't hear of it. I'll come up for a day or two in long vacation, my boy, as I've always done hitherto, and take a room in Holywell, and look in upon you a bit, accidentally, so as not to shame you before the scouts (who are a servile set of flunkies, incapable of understanding the elevated feelings of a journeyman shoemaker); but I wouldn't dream of going to live in the place, any more than I'd dream of asking to be presented at court on the occasion of my receiving a commission for a pair of evening shoes for the Queen's head footman.'

'Father,' said Arthur, smiling, 'you're absolutely incorrigible. Such a dreadful old rebel against all constituted authority, human and divine, I never did meet in the course of my existence, I believe you're really capable of arguing a point of theology against an archbishop. But I don't want you to come up to Oxford as a shoemaker; I mean you to come up and live with me in rooms of our own, out of college. Whenever I think of you, dear Father—you, who are so infinitely nobler, and better, and truer, and more really a gentleman than any other than I ever knew in my life—whenever I think of you, coming secretly up to Oxford as if you were ashamed of yourself, and visiting your own son by stealth in his rooms in college as if you were a dun coming to ask him for money, instead of the person whom he delights to honour—whenever I think of it, Father, it makes my cheeks burn with

shame, and I loathe myself for ever allowing you so to bemean your own frank, true, noble nature. I oughtn't to permit it, Father, I oughtn't to permit it; and I won't permit it any longer.'

'Well, you never would have permitted it, Artie, if I hadn't compelled you; for I've got all the prudence and common sense of the family bottled up here in my own forehead,' said the old man, tapping his bulging brow significantly. 'I don't deny that Oxford may be an excellent school for Greek and Latin, and philosophy, and so forth; but if you want prudence and sagacity and common-sense it's a well-known fact that there's nothing like the practice of making ready-closed uppers, sir, to develop 'em. If I'd taken your advice, my boy, I'd have come up to visit you when you were an undergraduate, and ruined your prospects at the very outset. No, no, Artie, I shall stop here, and stick to my last, my dear boy, stick to my last, to the end of all things.'

'You shall do nothing of the sort, Daddy; that I'm determined upon,' Arthur cried vehemently. 'I'm not going to let you do any more shoemaking. The time has come when you must retire, and devote all your undivided energies to the constant study of modern criticism. Whether you come to Oxford or stop in London, I've made up my mind that you shan't do another stroke of work as long as you live. Look here, dear old Daddy, I'm getting to be a perfect millionaire, I assure you. Do you see this fiver? well, I got that for knocking out that last trashy little song for Fradelli; and it cost me no more trouble to compose it than to sit down and write the score out on a sheet of ruled paper. I'm as rich as Croesus—made a hundred and eighty pounds last year, and expect to make over two hundred this one. Now, if a man with that perfectly prodigious fortune can't afford to keep his own father in comfort and affluence, what an absolute Sybarite and gourmand of a fellow he must be himself.'

'It's a lot of money, certainly, Artie,' said the old shoemaker, turning it over thoughtfully: 'two hundred pounds is a lot of money; but I doubt very much whether it's more than enough to keep you up to the standard of your own society, up there at Oxford. As John Stuart Mill says, these things are all comparative to the standard of comfort of your class. Now, Artie, I believe you have to stint yourself of things that everybody else about you has at Oxford, to keep me in luxuries I was never used to.'

'My dear Dad, it's only of the nature of a repayment,' cried Arthur, earnestly. 'You slaved and sacrificed and denied yourself when I was a boy to send me to school, without which I would never have got to Oxford at all; and you taught me music in your spare hours (when you had any); and I owe everything I have or am or ever will be to your unceasing and indefatigable kindness. So now you've got to take repayment whether you will or not, for I insist upon it. And if you won't come up to Oxford, which perhaps would be an uncongenial place for you in many ways, I'll tell you what I'll do, Daddy; I'll look out for a curacy somewhere in London, and we'll take a little house together, and I'll furnish it nicely, and there we shall live, sir, whatever you say, so not another word about it. And now I want you to listen to the very best thing I've ever composed, and tell me what you think of it.'

He sat down to the little hired cottage piano that occupied the corner of the neat small room, and began to run his deft fingers lightly over the keys. It was the Butterfly fantasia. The father sat back in his red easy-chair, listening with all his ears, first critically, then admiringly, at last enthusiastically. As Arthur's closing notes died away softly towards the end, the old shoemaker's delight could be restrained no longer. 'Artie,' he cried, gloating over it, 'that's music! That's real music! You're quite right, my boy; that's far and away the best thing you've ever written. It's exquisite—so light, so airy, so unearthlike. But, Artie, there's more than that in it. There's soul in it; and I know what it means. You don't deceive your poor old Progenitor in a matter of musical inspiration, I can tell you. I know where you got that fantasia from as well as if I'd seen you getting it. You got it out of your own heart, my boy, out of your own heart. And the thing it says to me as plain as language is just this—you're in love! You're in love, Artie, and there's no good denying it. If any man ever wrote that fantasia without being in love at the time—first love—ecstasy—tremor—tiptoe of expectation—why, then, I tell you, music hasn't got such a thing as a tongue or a meaning in it.'

Arthur looked at him gently and smiled, but said nothing.

'Will you tell me about her, Artie?' asked the old man, caressingly, laying his hand upon his son's arm.

'Not now, Father; not just now, please. Some other time, perhaps, but not now. I hardly know about it myself, yet. It may be something—it may be nothing; but, at any rate, it was peg enough to hang a fantasia upon. You've surprised my little secret, Father, and I dare say it's no real secret at all, but just a passing whiff of fancy. If it ever comes to anything, you shall know first of all the world about it. Now take out your violin, there's a dear old Dad, and give me a tune upon it.'

The father took the precious instrument from its carefully covered case with a sort of loving reverence, and began to play a piece of Arthur's own composition. From the moment the bow touched the chords it was easy enough to see whence the son got his musical instincts. Old George Berkeley was a born musician, and he could make his violin discourse to him with rare power of execution. There they sat, playing and talking at intervals, till nearly eight, when Arthur went out hurriedly to catch the last train to Oxford, and left the old shoemaker once more to his week's solitude. 'Not for much longer,' the curate whispered to himself, as he got into his third-class carriage quickly; 'not for much longer, if I can help it. A curacy in or near London's the only right thing for me to look out for!'

## CHAPTER VII

### GHOSTLY COUNSEL

November came, and with it came the Pembroke fellowship examination. Ernest went in manfully, and tried hard to do his best; for somehow, in spite of the immorality of fellowships, he had a sort of floating notion in his head that he would like to get one, because he was beginning to paint himself a little fancy picture of a home that was to be, with a little fairy Edie flitting through it, and brightening it all delightfully with her dainty airy presence. So he even went so far as to mitigate considerably the native truculence of his political economy paper, after Edie's advice—not, of course, by making any suggestion of opinions he did not hold, but by suppressing the too-prominent expression of those he actually believed in. Max Schurz's name was not once mentioned throughout the whole ten or twelve pages of closely written foolscap; 'Gold and the Proletariate' was utterly ignored; and in place of the strong meat served out for men by the apostles of socialism in the Marylebone dancing-saloon, Ernest dished up for his examiner's edification merely such watery milk for babes as he had extracted from the eminently orthodox economical pages of Fawcett, Mill, and Thorold Rogers. He went back to his rooms, satisfied that he had done himself full justice, and anxiously waited for the result to be duly announced on the Saturday morning.

Was it that piece of Latin prose, too obviously modelled upon the Annals of Tacitus, while the senior tutor was a confirmed Ciceronian, with the Second Philippic constitutionally on the brain? Was it the Greek verse, containing one senarius with a long syllable before the caesura in the fifth foot, as Herbert pointed out to his brother on the very evening when that hideous oversight—say rather crime—had been openly perpetrated in plain black and white on a virgin sheet of innocent paper? Was it some faint ineffaceable savour of the Schurzian economics, peeping through in spite of all disguises, like the garlic in an Italian ragout, from under the sedulous cloak of Ricardo's theory of rent? Was it some flying rumour, extra-official, and unconnected with the examination in any way, to the effect that young Le Breton was a person of very dubious religious, political, and social orthodoxy? Or was it merely that fortunate dispensation of Providence whereby Oxford almost invariably manages to let her best men slip unobserved through her fingers, and so insures a decent crop of them to fill up her share of the passing vacancies in politics, literature, science, and art? Heaven or the Pembroke examiners alone can answer these abstruse and difficult questions; but this much at least is certain, that when Ernest Le Breton went into the Pembroke porter's lodge on the predestined Saturday, he found another name than his placarded upon the notice board, and turned back, sick at heart and disappointed, to his lonely lodgings. There he spent an unhappy hour or two, hewing down what remained of his little aerial castle off-hand; and then he went out for a solitary row upon the upper river, endeavouring to work off his disappointment like a man, with a good hard spell of muscular labour.

Edie had already returned to Calcombe-Pomeroy, so in the evening he went to tell his misfortune to Harry Oswald. Harry was really sorry to hear it, for Ernest was his best friend in Oxford, and he had hoped to have him settled close by. 'You'll stop up and try again for Christ Church in February, won't you, Le Breton?' he asked.

'No,' said Ernest, shaking his head a little gloomily; 'I don't think I will. It's clear I'm not up to the Oxford standard for a fellowship, and I couldn't spend another term in residence without coming down upon my mother to pay my expenses—a thing she can't easily afford to do. So I suppose I must fall back for the present upon the Exmoor tutorship. That'll give me time to look about me, till I can get something else to do; and after all, it isn't a bit more immoral than a fellowship, when one comes to look it fairly in the face. However, I shall go first and ask Herr Max's opinion upon the matter.'

'I'm going to spend a fortnight in town in the Christmas vac,' said Oswald, 'and I should like to go with you to Max's again, if I may.'

Ernest coloured up a little, for he would have liked to invite Oswald to his mother's house; and yet he felt there were two reasons why he should not do so; he must himself be dependent this time upon his mother's hospitality, and he didn't think Lady Le Breton would be perfectly cordial in her welcome to Harry Oswald.

In the end, however, it was arranged that Harry should engage rooms at his former lodgings in London, and that Ernest should take him once more to call upon the old socialist when he went to consult him on the question of conscience.

'For my part, Ernest,' said Lady Le Breton to her son, the morning after his return from Oxford, 'I'm not altogether sorry you didn't get this Pembroke fellowship. It would have kept you among the same set you are at present mixing in for an indefinite period. Of course now you'll accept Lady Exmoor's kind proposal. I saw her about it the same morning we got Hilda's letter; and she offers 200L. a year, which, of course, is mere pocket money, as your board and lodging are all found for you, so to speak, and you'll have nothing to do but to dress and amuse yourself.'

'Well, mother, I shall see about it. I'm going to consult Herr Schurz upon the subject this morning.'

'Herr Schurz!' said Lady Le Breton, in her bitterest tone of irony. 'It appears to me you make that snuffy old German microscope man your father confessor. It's very disagreeable to a mother to find that her sons, instead of taking her advice about what is most material to their own interests, should invariably go to confer with communist refugees and ignorant ranters. Ronald, what is your programme, if you please, for this morning's annoyance?'

Ronald, with the fear of the fifth commandment steadily before his eyes, took no notice of the last word, and answered calmly, 'You know, mother, this is the regular day for the mission-house prayer-meeting.'

'The mission-house prayer-meeting! I know nothing of the sort, I assure you. I don't keep a perfect calendar in my mind of all your meetings and your religious engagements. Then I suppose I must go alone to the Waltons' to see Mr. Walton's water-colours?'

'I'll give up the prayer-meeting, if you wish it,' Ronald answered, with his unvarying meekness. 'Only, I'm afraid I must walk very slowly. My cough's rather bad this morning.'

'No, no,' Ernest put in, 'you mustn't dream of going, Ronald; I couldn't allow you to walk so far on any account. I'll put off my engagement with Oswald, who was going with me to Herr Schurz's, and I'll take you round to the Waltons', mother, whenever you like.'

'Dear me, dear me,' moaned Lady Le Breton, piteously, pretending to wring her hands in lady-like and mitigated despair; 'I can't do anything without its being made the opportunity for a scene, it seems. I shall NOT go to the Waltons'; and I shall leave you both to follow your own particular devices to your heart's content. I'm sorry I proposed anything whatsoever, I'm sure, and I shall take care never to do such an imprudent thing again.' And her ladyship walked in her stateliest and most chilly manner out of the freezing little dining-room.

'It's a great cross, living always with poor mother, Ernest,' said Ronald, his eyes filling with tears as he spoke; 'but we must try to bear with her, you know, for after all she leads a very lonely life herself, because she's so very unsympathetic.' Ernest took the spare white hand in his and smoothed it compassionately. 'My dear, dear Ronald,' he said, 'I know it's hard for you. I must try the best I can to make it a little easier!'

They walked together as far as the mission-house, arm in arm, for though in some things the two young Le Bretons were wide apart as the poles, in others they were fundamentally at one in inmost spirit; and even Ronald, in spite of his occasional little narrow sectarianisms, felt the underlying unity of purpose no less than Ernest. He was one of those enthusiastic ethereal natures which care little for outer forms or ceremonies, and nothing at all for churches and organisations, but love to

commune as pure spirit with pure spirit, living every day a life of ecstatic spirituality, and never troubling themselves one whit about theological controversy or established religious constitutions. As long as Ronald Le Breton could read his Greek Testament every morning, and talk face to face in their own tongue with the Paul of First Corinthians or the John of the Epistles, in the solitude of his own bedroom, he was supremely indifferent about the serious question, of free-will and fore-knowledge, or about the important question of apostolical succession, or even about that other burning question of eternal punishment, which was just then setting his own little sect of Apostolic Christian Missioners roundly by the ears. These things seemed to his enthusiastic mind mere fading echoes of an alien language; all that he himself really cared for in religion was the constant sense of essential personal communion with that higher Power which spoke directly to his soul all day long and always; or the equally constant sense of moral exaltation which he drew from the reading of the written Word in its own original language. He had never BECOME an Apostolic Christian; he had grown up to be one, unconsciously to himself. 'Your son Ronald's religion, my dear Lady Le Breton,' Archdeacon Luttrell used often to say, 'is, I fear, too purely emotional. He cannot be made to feel sufficiently the necessity for a sound practical grasp of doctrinal Christianity.' To Ronald himself, he might as well have talked about the necessity for a sound practical grasp of doctrinal Buddhism. And if Ronald had really met a devout Buddhist, he would doubtless have found, after half an hour's conversation, that they were at one in everything save the petty matter of dialect and vocabulary.

At Oswald's lodging, Ernest found his friend ready and waiting for him. They went on together to the same street in Marylebone as before, and mounted the stair till they reached Herr Schurz's gloomy little work-room on the third floor. The old apostle was seated at his small table by the half-open window, grinding the edges of a lens to fit the brass mounting at his side; while his daughter Uta, a still good-looking, quiet, broad-faced South German woman, about forty or a little more, sat close by, busily translating a scientific book into English by alternate reading and consultation with her father. Harry saw the title on her page was 'Researches into the Embryology of the Isopodal Crustaceans,' and conceived at once an immense respect for the learning and wisdom of the communist exile's daughter. Herr Schurz hardly stopped a moment from his work—he never allowed his numerous visitors to interfere in any way with his daily duties—but motioned them both to seats on the bare bench beside him, and waited to bear the nature of their particular business. It was an understood thing that no one came to see the Socialist leader on week days except for a good and sufficient reason.

The talk at first was general and desultory; but after a little time Ernest brought conversation round to its proper focus, and placed his case of conscience fairly before his father confessor. Was it allowable for a consistent socialist to accept the place of tutor to the son of a peer and a landowner?

'For my part, Herr Schurz,' Oswald said confidently, 'I don't see any reason on earth, from the point of view of any political economy whatsoever, why Ernest shouldn't take the position. The question isn't how the Exmoors have come by their money, even allowing that private property in land is in itself utterly indefensible; which is a proposition I don't myself feel inclined unreservedly to admit, though I know you and Le Breton do: the real question's this,—since they've got this money into their hands to distribute, and since in any case they will have the distribution of it, isn't it better that some of it should go into Le Breton's pocket than that it should go into any other person's? That's the way I for my part look at the matter.'

'What do you say to that, friend Ernest?' asked the old German, smiling and waiting to see whether Ernest would detect what from their own standpoint he regarded as the ethical fallacy of Harry Oswald's argument.

'Well, to tell you the truth, Herr Schurz,' answered Ernest, in his deliberate, quiet way, 'I don't think I've envisaged the subject to myself from quite the same point of view as Oswald has done. I have rather asked myself whether it was right of a man to accept a function in which he would really be doing nothing worthy for humanity in return for his daily board and lodging. It isn't so much a

question who exactly is to get certain sums out of the Exmoors' pockets, which ought no doubt never to have been in them; it's more a question whether a man has any right to live off the collective labour of the world, and do nothing of any good to the world on his own part by way of repayment.'

'That's it, friend Ernest,' cried the old man, with a pleased nod of his big grey head; 'the socialistic Iliad in a nutshell! That's the very root of the question. Don't be deceived by capitalist sophisms. So long as we go on each of us trying to get as much as we can individually out of the world, instead of asking what the world is getting out of us, in return, there will be no revolution and no millennium. We must make sure that we're doing some good ourselves, instead of sponging upon the people perpetually to feed us for nothing. What's the first gospel given to man at the creation in your popular cosmogonies? Why, that in the sweat of his face shall he eat bread, and till the ground from which he was taken. That's the native gospel of the toiling many, always; your doctrines of fair exchange, and honest livelihoods, and free contract, and all the rest of it, are only the artificial gospel of the political economists, and of the bourgeoisie and the aristocrats into whose hands they play—the rascals!'

'Then you think I oughtn't to take the post?' asked Ernest, a little ruefully.

'I don't say that, Le Breton—I don't say that,' said Herr Schurz, more quietly than before, still grinding away at his lens. 'The question's a broad one, and it has many aspects. The best work a man can do is undoubtedly the most useful work—the work that conduces most to the general happiness. But we of the proletariat can't take our choice always: as your English proverb plainly puts it, with your true English bluntness, "beggars mustn't be choosers." We must, each in his place, do the work that's set before us by the privileged classes. It's impossible for us to go nicely discriminating between work that's useful for the community, work that's merely harmless, and work that's positively detrimental. How can we insure it? A man's a printer, say. There's a generally useful trade, in which, on the whole, he labours for the good and enlightenment of the world—for he may print scientific books, good books, useful books; and most printing, on the average, is useful. But how's he to know what sort of thing he's printing? He may be printing "Gold and the Proletariate," or he may be printing obscurantist and retrogressive treatises by the enemies of humanity. Look at my own trade, again. You'd say at first sight, Mr. Oswald, that to make microscopes must be a good thing in the end for the world at large: and so it is, no doubt; but half of them—ay, more than half of them—are thrown away: mere wasted labour, a good workman's time and skill lavished needlessly on some foolish rich man's caprices and amusement. Often enough, now, I make a good instrument—an instrument, with all its fittings, worth fifty or a hundred pounds. That takes a long time to make, and I'm a skilled workman; and the instrument may fall into the hands of a scientific man who'll use it in discovery, in verification, in promoting knowledge, in lessening disease and mitigating human suffering. That's the good side of my trade. But, mark you, now,' and the old man wiped his forehead rapidly with his sleeve, 'it has its bad side too. As often as not, I know, some rich man will buy that machine, that cost me so much time and trouble to make, and will buy a few dozen stock slides with it, and will bring it out once in a moon to show his children or a few idle visitors the scales on a butterfly's wing, or the hairs on the leg of a common flea. Uta sets those things up by the thousand for the dealers to sell to indolent dilettanti. The appetite of the world at large for the common flea is simply insatiable. And it's for that, perhaps, that I'm spoiling my eyesight now, grinding and grinding and grinding at this very lens, and fitting the thing to an accurate fraction of a millimetre, as we always fit these things—we who are careful and honest workmen—to show an idle man's friends the hairs on a flea's fore-leg. If that isn't enough to make a man ashamed of our present wasteful and chaotic organisation, I should think he must be a survival from the preglacial epoch—as, indeed, most of us actually are!'

'But, after all, Herr Schurz,' said Harry, expostulating, 'you get paid for your labour, and the rich man is doing better by encouraging your skill than by encouraging the less useful skill of other workmen.'

'Ah, yes,' cried Herr Schurz, warmly, 'that's the doctrine of the one-eyed economists; that's the capitalist way of looking at it; but it isn't our way—it isn't ours. Is it nothing, think you, that all that toil of mine—of a sensible man's—goes to waste, to gratify the senseless passing whim of a wealthy nobody? Is it nothing that he uselessly monopolises the valuable product of my labour, which in other and abler hands might be bringing forth good fruit for the bettering and furthering of universal humanity? I tell you, Mr. Oswald, half the best books, half the best apparatus, half the best appliances in all Europe, are locked up idle in rich men's cabinets, effecting no good, begetting no discoveries, bringing forth no interest, doing nothing but foster the anti-social pride of their wealthy possessors. But that isn't what friend Ernest wants to ask me about to-day. He wants to know about his own course in a difficult case; and instead of answering him, here am I, mauding away, like an old man that I am, into the generalised platitudes of "Gold and the Proletariate." Well, Le Breton, what I should say in your particular instance is this. A man with the fear of right before his eyes may, under existing circumstances, lawfully accept any work that will keep him alive, provided he sees no better and more useful work equally open to him. He may take the job the capitalists impose, if he can get nothing worthier to do elsewhere. Now, if you don't teach this young Tregellis, what alternative have you? Why, to become a master in a school—Eton, perhaps, or Rugby, or Marlborough—and teach other equally useless members of prospective aristocratic society. That being so, I think you ought to do what's best for yourself and your family for the present—for the present—till the time of deliverance comes. You see, there is one member of your family to whom the matter is of immediate importance.'

'Ronald,' said Ernest, interrupting him.

'Yes, Ronald. A good boy; a socialist, too, though he doesn't know it—one of us, born of us, and only apart from us in bare externals. Well, would it be most comfortable for poor Ronald that you should go to these Exmoor people, or that you should take a mastership, get rooms somewhere, and let him live with you? He's not very happy with your mother, you say. Wouldn't he be happier with you? What think you? Charity begins at home, you know: a good proverb—a good, sound, sensible, narrow-minded, practical English proverb!'

'I've thought of that,' Ernest said, 'and I'll ask him about it. Whichever he prefers, then, I'd better decide upon, had I?'

'Do so,' Herr Max answered, with a nod. 'Other things equal, our first duty is to those nearest to us.'

What Herr Max said was law to his disciples, and Ernest went his way contented.

'Mr. Oswald seems a very nice young man,' Uta Schurz said, looking up from the microscope slides she had begun to mount at the moment her regular translating work was interrupted by their sudden entry. She had been taking quiet glances at Harry all the while, in her unobtrusive fashion; for Uta had learned always to be personally unobtrusive—'the prophet's donkey,' those irreverent French exiles used to call her—and she had come to the conclusion that he was a decidedly handsome and manly fellow.

'Which do you like best, Uta—Oswald or Le Breton?' asked her father.

'Personally,' Uta answered, 'I should prefer Mr. Oswald. To live always with Mr. Le Breton would be like living with an abstraction. No woman would ever care for him; she might just as well marry Spinoza's Ethics or the Ten Commandments. He's a perfect model of a socialist, and nothing else. Mr. Oswald has some human nature in him as well.'

'There are two kinds of socialists,' said Herr Max, bending once more over his glasses; 'the one kind is always thinking most of its rights; the other kind is always thinking most of its duties. Oswald belongs to the first, Le Breton to the second. I've often observed it so among men of their two sorts. The best socialists never come from the bourgeoisie, nor even from the proletariat; they come from among the voluntarily déclassés aristocrats. Your workman or your bourgeois who has risen, and who interests himself in social or political questions, is always thinking, "Why shouldn't I have as many rights and privileges as these other people have?" The aristocrat who descends is always

thinking, "Why shouldn't these other people have as many rights and privileges as I have?" The one type begets aggressive self-assertion, the other type begets a certain gentle spirit of self-effacement. You don't often find men of the aristocratic class with any ethical element in them—their hereditary antecedents, their breeding, their environment, are all hostile to it; but when you do find them, mark my words, Uta, they make the truest and most earnest friends of the popular cause of any. Their sympathy and interest in it is all unselfish.'

'And yet,' Uta answered firmly, 'I still prefer Mr. Oswald. And if you care for my opinion, I should say that the aristocrat does all the dreaming, but the bourgeois does all the fighting; and that's the most important thing practically, after all.'

An hour later, Ernest was talking his future plans over with his brother Ronald. Would it be best for Ronald that he should take a mastership, and both should live together, or that he should go for the present to the Exmoors', and leave the question of Ronald's home arrangements still unsettled?

'It's so good of you to think of me in the matter, Ernest,' Ronald said, pressing his hand gently; 'but I don't think I ought to go away from mother before I'm twenty-one. To tell you the truth, Ernest, I hardly flatter myself she'd be really sorry to get rid of me; I'm afraid I'm a dreadful thorn in her side at present; she doesn't understand my ways, and perhaps I don't sympathise enough with hers; but still, if I were to propose to go, I feel sure she'd be very much annoyed, and treat it as a serious act of insubordination on my part. While I'm a minor, at least, I ought to remain with her; the Apostle tells us to obey our parents, in the Lord; and as long as she requires nothing from me that doesn't involve a dereliction of principle I think I must bear with it, though I acknowledge it's a cross, a heavy cross. Thank you so much for thinking of it, dearest Ernest.' And his eyes filled once more with tears as he spoke.

So it was finally arranged that for the present at least Ernest should accept Lady Exmoor's offer, and that as soon as Ronald was twenty-one he should look about for a suitable mastership, in order for the two brothers to go immediately into rooms together. Lady Le Breton was surprised at the decision; but as it was in her favour, she wisely abstained from gratifying her natural desire to make some more uncomplimentary references to the snuffy old German socialist. Sufficient unto the day was the triumph thereof; and she had no doubt in her own mind that if once Ernest could be induced to live for a while in really good society the well-known charms and graces of that society must finally tame his rugged breast, and wean him away from his unaccountable devotion to those horrid continental communists.

## CHAPTER VIII IN THE CAMP OF THE PHILISTINES

Dunbude Castle, Lord Exmoor's family seat, stands on the last spurs of the great North Devon uplands, overlooking the steep glen of a little boulder-encumbered stream, and commanding a distant view of the Severn Sea and the dim outlines of the blue Welsh hills beyond it. Behind the house, a castle only by courtesy (on the same principle as that by which every bishop lives in a palace), rises the jagged summit of the Cleave, a great weather-worn granite hill, sculptured on top by wind and rain into those fantastic lichen-covered pillars and tora and logans in which antiquarian fancy used so long to find the visible monuments of Druidical worship. All around, a wide brown waste of heather undulates and tosses wildly to the sky; and on the summit of the rolling moor where it rises and swells in one of its many rounded bosses, the antlered heads and shoulders of the red deer may often be seen etched in bold relief against the clear sky-line to the west, on sunny autumn evenings. But the castle itself and the surrounding grounds are not planned to harmonise with the rough moorland English scenery into whose midst they were unceremoniously pitchforked by the second earl. That distinguished man of taste, a light of the artistic world in his own day, had brought back from his Grand Tour his own ideal of a strictly classical domestic building, formed by impartially compounding a Palladian palace, a Doric temple, and a square redbrick English manor-house. After pulling down the original fourteenth-century castle, he had induced an eminent architect of the time to conspire with him in giving solid and permanent reality to this his awful imagining; and when he had completed it all, from portico to attic, he had extorted even the critical praise of Horace Walpole, who described it in one of his letters as a 'singular triumph of classical taste and architectural ingenuity.' It still remains unrivalled in its kind, the ugliest great country-seat in the county of Devon—some respectable authorities even say in the whole of England.

In front of the house an Italian garden, with balustrades of very doubtful marble, leads down by successive terraces and broad flights of steps to an artificial octagonal pool, formed by carefully destroying the whole natural beauty of the wild and rocky little English glen beneath. To feed it by fitting a conduit, the moss-grown boulders that strew the bed of the torrent above and below have been carefully removed, and the unwilling stream, as it runs into the pool, has been coerced into a long straight channel, bordered on either side by bedded turf, and planed off at measured intervals so as to produce a series of eminently regular and classical cascades. Even Lord Exmoor himself, who was a hunting man, without any pretence to that stupid rubbish about taste, did not care for the hopeless exterior of Dunbude Castle: he frankly admitted that the place was altogether too doosid artificial for the line of country. If they'd only left it alone, he said, in its own native condition, it would have been really pretty; but as they'd doctored it and spoilt it, why, there was nothing on earth to be done but just put up with it and whistle over it. What with the hounds, and the mortgages, and the settlements, and the red deer, and Goodwood, the estate couldn't possibly afford any money for making alterations down in the gardens.

The dog-cart was in waiting at the station to carry Ernest up to the castle; and as he reached the front door, Lady Hilda Tregellis strolled up the broad flight of steps from the garden to meet him. Lady Hilda was tall and decidedly handsome, as Ernest had rightly told Edie, but not pretty, and she was also just twenty. There was a free, careless, bold look in her face, that showed her at once a girl of spirit; indeed, if she had not been born a Tregellis, it was quite clear that she would have been predestined to turn out a strong-minded woman. There was nothing particularly delicate in Lady Hilda's features; they were well-modelled, but neither regular nor cold, nor with that peculiar stamp of artificial breeding which is so often found in the faces of English ladies. On the contrary, she looked like a perfectly self-confident handsome actress, too self-confident to be self-conscious,

and accustomed to admiration wherever she turned. As Ernest jumped down from the dog-cart she advanced quickly to shake hands with him, and look him over critically from head to foot like a schoolboy taking stock of a new fellow.

'I'm so glad you've come, Mr. Le Breton,' she said, with an open smile upon her frank face. 'I was dreadfully afraid you wouldn't care for our proposition. Dunbude's the dullest hole in England, and we want somebody here to brighten it up, sadly. Did you ever see such an ugly monstrosity before, anywhere?'

'The country about's lovely,' Ernest answered, 'but the house itself is certainly rather ugly.'

'Ugly! It's hideous. And it's as dull as it's big,' said Hilda vehemently. 'You can't think what a time we have of it here half the year! I'm always longing for the season to come. Papa fills the house here with hunting men and shooting men—people without two ideas in their heads, you know, just like himself; and even THEY go out all day, and leave us women from morning till night to the society of their wives and daughters, who are exactly like them. Mr. Walsh—that's Lynmouth's last tutor—he was a perfect stick, a Cambridge man; Cambridge men always ARE sticks, I believe; you're Oxford, of course, aren't you? I thought so. Still, even Mr. Walsh was a little society, for I assure you, if it hadn't been for him, I should never have seen anybody, to talk to, from year's end to year's end. So when Mr. Walsh was going to leave us, I said to mamma, "Why not ask one of the Mr. Le Bretons?" I wanted to have somebody sensible here, and so I got her to let me write to your brother Ronald about the tutorship. Did he send you the letter? I hope you didn't think it was mine. Mamma dictated it, for I don't write such formal letters as that on my own account, I can tell you. I hate conventionality of any sort. At Dunbude we're all conventional, except me; but I won't be. Come up into the billiard-room, here, and sit down awhile; William will see about your portmanteau and things. Papa's out, of course, and so's Lynmouth; and mamma's somewhere or other, I don't know where; and so there's nobody in particular at home for you to report yourself to. You may as well come in here while I ring for them to get you some lunch ready. Nobody ever gets anything ready beforehand in this house. We lunched ourselves an hour ago.'

Ernest smiled at her volubility, and followed her quickly into the big bare billiard-room. He walked over to the fire and began to warm himself, while Hilda took down a cue and made stray shots in extraordinary angles at impossible cannons, all the time, as she went on talking to him. 'Was it very cold on the way down?' she asked.

'Yes, fairly. I'm not sorry to see the fire again. Why, you're quite an accomplished player.'

'There's nothing else to do at Dunbude, that's why. I practise about half my lifetime. So I wrote to your brother Ronald, as I was telling you, from mamma's dictation; and when I heard you were really coming, I was quite delighted about it. Do you remember, I met you twice last year, once at the Dolburys', and once somewhere else; and I thought you'd be a very good sort of person for Dunbude, you know, and about as much use to Lynmouth as anybody could be, which isn't saying much, of course, for he's a dreadful pickle. I insisted on putting in my letter that he was a dreadful pickle (that's a good stroke off the red; just enough side on), though mamma didn't want me to; because I thought you ought to know about it beforehand. But you remember him at Marlborough, of course; he was only a little fellow then, but still a pickle. He always was and he always will be. He's out shooting, now, with papa; and you'll never get him to settle down to anything, as long as there's a snipe or a plover banging about on the moor anywhere. He's quite incorrigible. Do you play at all? Won't you take a cue till your lunch's ready?'

'No, I don't play,' Ernest answered, half hesitating, 'or at least very little.'

'Oh, then you'll learn here, because you'll find nothing else to do. Do you shoot?'

'Oh no, never. I don't think it right.'

'Ah, yes, I remember. How delightful! Lady Le Breton told me all about it. You've got notions, haven't you? You're a Nihilist or a Fenian or something of that sort, and you don't shoot anything but czars and grand dukes, do you? I believe you want to cut all our heads off and have a red republic.'

Well, I'm sure that's very refreshing; for down here we're all as dull as sticks together; Tories, every one of us to a man; perfect unanimity; no differences of opinion; all as conventional and proper as the vicar's sermons. Now, to have somebody who wants to cut your head off, in the house, is really delightful. I love originality. Not that I've ever seen anybody original in all my life, for I haven't, but I'm sure it would be delightful if I did. One reads about original people in novels, you know, Dickens and that sort of thing; and I often think I should like to meet some of them (good stroke again; legs, legs, legs, if you please—no, it hasn't legs enough); but here, or for the matter of that, in town either, we never see anybody but the same eternal round of Algies, and Monties, and Berties, and Hughs—all very nice young men, no doubt; exceedingly proper, nothing against them; good shots, capital partners, excellent families, everything on earth that anybody could desire, except a single atom of personal originality. I assure you, if they were all shaken up in a bag together and well mixed, in evening clothes (so as not to tell them apart by the tweeds, you know), their own mothers wouldn't be able to separate them afterwards. But if you don't shoot and don't play billiards, I'm sure I don't know what you'll ever find to do with yourself here at Dunbude.'

'Don't you think,' Ernest said quietly, taking down a cue, 'one ought to have something better to do with one's time than shooting and playing billiards? In a world where so many labouring people are toiling and slaving in poverty and misery on our behalf, don't you think we should be trying to do something or other in return for universal humanity, to whom we owe so much for our board and lodging and clothing and amusement?'

'Well, now, that's just what I mean,' said Hilda ecstatically, with a neat shot off the cushion against the red and into the middle pocket; 'that's such a delightfully original way of looking at things, you see. We all of us here talk always about the partridges, and the red deer, and the turnips, and the Church, and dear Lady This, and that odious Lady That, and the growing insolence of the farmers, and the shocking insubordination of the lower classes, and the difficulty of getting really good servants, and the dreadful way those horrid Irish are shooting their kind-hearted indulgent landlords; or else we talk—the women especially—about how awfully bored we are. Lawn-tennis, you know, and dinners, and what a bad match Ethel Thingumbob has made. But you talk another kind of slang; I dare say it doesn't mean much; you know you're not working at anything very much more serious than we are; still it's a novelty. When we go to a coursing meeting, we're all on the hounds; but you're on the hare, and that's so delightfully original. I haven't the least doubt that if we were to talk about the Irish, you'd say you thought they ought to shoot their landlords. I remember you shocked mamma by saying something like it at the Dolburys'. Now, of course, it doesn't matter to me a bit which is right; you say the poor tenants are starving, and papa says the poor landlords can't get in their rents, and actually have to give up their hounds, poor fellows; and I don't know which of you is the most to be believed; only, what papa says is just the same thing that everybody says, and what you say has a certain charming freshness and variety about it. It's so funny to be told that one ought really to take the tenants into consideration. Exactly like your brother Ronald's notions about servants!'

'Your lunch is ready in the dining-room, sir,' said a voice at the door.

'Come back here when you've finished, Mr. Le Breton,' Hilda called after him. 'I'll teach you how to make that cannon you missed just now. If you mean to exist at Dunbude at all, it's absolutely necessary for you to learn billiards.'

Ernest turned in to lunch with an uncomfortable misgiving on his mind already that Dunbude was not exactly the right place for such a man as he to live in.

During the afternoon he saw nothing more of the family, save Lady Hilda; and it was not till the party assembled in the drawing-room before dinner that he met Lord and Lady Exmoor and his future pupil. Lynmouth had grown into a tall, handsome, manly-looking boy since Ernest last saw him; but he certainly looked exactly what Hilda had called him—a pickle. A few minutes' introductory conversation sufficed to show Ernest that whatever mind he possessed was wholly given over to

horses, dogs, and partridges, and that the post of tutor at Dunbude Castle was not likely to prove a bed of roses.

'Seen the paper, Connemara?' Lord Exmoor asked of one of his guests, as they sat down to dinner. 'I haven't had a moment myself to snatch a look at the "Times" yet this evening; I'm really too busy almost even to read the daily papers. Anything fresh from Ireland?'

'Haven't seen it either,' Lord Connemara answered, glancing towards Lady Hilda. 'Perhaps somebody else has looked at the papers?'

Nobody answered, so Ernest ventured to remark that the Irish news was rather worse again. Two bailiffs had been murdered near Castlebar.

'That's bad,' Lord Exmoor said, turning towards Ernest. 'I'm afraid there's a deal of distress in the West.'

'A great deal,' Ernest answered; 'positive starvation, I believe, in some parts of County Galway.'

'Well, not quite so bad as that,' Lord Exmoor replied, a little startled. 'I don't think any of the landlords are actually starving yet, though I've no doubt many of them are put to very great straits indeed by their inability to get in their rents.'

Ernest couldn't forbear gently smiling to himself at the misapprehension. 'Oh, I didn't mean the landlords,' he said quickly: 'I meant among the poor people.' As he spoke he was aware that Lady Hilda's eyes were fixed keenly upon him, and that she was immensely delighted at the temerity and originality displayed in the notion of his publicly taking Irish tenants into consideration at her father's table.

'Ah, the poor people,' Lord Exmoor answered with a slight sigh of relief, as who should say that THEIR condition didn't much matter to a philosophic mind. 'Yes, to be sure; I've no doubt some of them are very badly off, poor souls. But then they're such an idle improvident lot. Why don't they emigrate now, I should like to know?'

Ernest reflected silently that the inmates of Dunbude Castle did not exactly set them a model of patient industry; and that Lady Hilda's numerous allusions during the afternoon to the fact that the Dunbude estates were 'mortgaged up to the eyelids' (a condition of affairs to which she always alluded as though it were rather a subject of pride and congratulation than otherwise) did not speak very highly for their provident economy either. But even Ernest Le Breton had a solitary grain of worldly wisdom laid up somewhere in a corner of his brain, and he didn't think it advisable to give them the benefit of his own views upon the subject.

'There's a great deal of rubbish talked in England about Irish affairs, you know, Exmoor,' said Lord Connemara confidently. 'People never understand Ireland, I'm sure, until they've actually lived there. Would you believe it now, the correspondent of one of the London papers was quite indignant the other day because my agent had to evict a man for three years' rent at Ballynamara, and the man unfortunately went and died a week later on the public roadside. We produced medical evidence to show that he had suffered for years from heart disease, and would have died in any case, wherever he had been; but the editor fellow wanted to make political capital out of it, and kicked up quite a fuss about my agent's shocking inhumanity. As if we could possibly help ourselves in the matter! People must get their rents in somehow, mustn't they?'

'People must get their rents in somehow, of course,' Lord Exmoor assented, sympathetically; 'and I know all you men who are unlucky enough to own property in Ireland have a lot of trouble about it nowadays. Upon my word, what with Fenians, and what with Nihilists, and what with Communards, I really don't know what the world is coming to.'

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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