Castle Egerton

The Light of Scarthey: A Romance

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Содержание

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PART I
SIR ADRIAN LANDALE, LIGHT-KEEPER OF SCARTHEY

We all were sea-swallowed, though some cast again;
And by that destiny to perform an act,
Whereof what's past is Prologue.

The Tempest

CHAPTER I
THE PEEL OF SCARTHEY

He makes a solitude and calls it peace.

Byron.

Alone in the south and seaward corner of the great bight on the Lancastrian coast – mournfully alone some say, gloriously alone to my thinking – rises in singular unexpected fashion the islet of Scarthey; a green oasis secure on its white rocky seat amidst the breezy wilderness of sands and waters.

There is, in truth, more sand than water at most times round Scarthey. For miles northward the wet strand stretches its silent expanse, tawny at first, then merging into silver grey as in the dim distance it meets the shallow advance of briny ripple. Wet sand, brown and dull, with here and there a brighter trail as of some undecided river seeking an aimless way, spreads westward, deep inland, until stopped in a jagged line by bluffs that spring up abruptly in successions of white rocky steps and green terraces.

Turn you seaward, at low tide there lies sand again and shingle (albeit but a narrow beach, for here a depth of water sinks rapidly) laved with relentless obstinacy by long, furling, growling rollers that are grey at their sluggish base and emerald-lighted at their curvetting crest. Sand yet again to the south, towards the

nearer coast line, for a mile or perhaps less, dotted, along an irregular path, with grey rocks that look as though the advance guard of a giant army had attempted to ford its insecure footing, had sunk into its treacherous shifting pits, and left their blanching skull-tops half emerging to record the disaster.

On the land side of the bight, far away beyond the grandly desolate, silent, yellow tract, a misty blue fringe on the horizon heralds the presence of the North Country; whilst beyond the nearer beach a sprinkling of greenly ensconced homesteads cluster round some peaceful and paternal looking church tower. Near the salty shore a fishing village scatters its greystone cabins along the first terrace of the bluffs.

Outwards, ever changing in colour and temper roll and fret the grey waters of the Irish Sea, turbulent at times, but generally lenient enough to the brown-sailed ketches that break the regular sweep of the western horizon as they toil at the perpetual harvest of the deep.

Thus stands Scarthey. Although appearing as an island on the charts, at low tides it becomes accessible dry-foot from the land by a narrow causeway along the line of the white shallow reefs, which connect the main pile to the rocky steps and terraces of the coast. But woe betide man or beast that diverges many feet from the one secure path! The sands of the great bay have already but too well earned their sinister reputation.

During the greater part of the day, however, Scarthey justifies its name – Skard- or Scarth-ey, the Knoll Island in the language

of the old Scandinavian masters of the land.

In fair weather, or in foul, whether rising out of sunny sands when the ebbing waters have retired, or assailed on all sides by ramping breakers, Scarthey in its isolation, with its well-preserved ruins and its turret, from which for the last hundred years a light has been burning to warn the seafarer, has a comfortable look of security and privacy.

The low thick wall which in warlike times encompassed the bailey (now surrounding and sheltering a wide paddock and neat kitchen gardens) almost disappears under a growth of stunted, but sturdy trees; dwarf alders and squat firs that shake their white-backed leaves, and swing their needle clusters, merrily if the breeze is mild, obstinately if the gale is rousing and seem to proclaim: "Here are we, well and secure. Ruffle and toss, and lash, O winds, the faithless waters, *we* shall ever cling to this hospitable footing, the only kindly soil amid this dreariness; here you once wafted our seed; here shall we live and perpetuate our life."

On the sea front of the bailey walls rise, sheer from the steep rock, the main body and the keep of the Peel. They are ruinous and shorn of their whilom great height, humbled more by the wilful destruction of man than by the decay of time.

But although from a distance the castle on the green island seems utterly dismantled, it is not, even now, all ruin. And, at the time when Sir Adrian Landale, of Pulwick, eighth baronet, adopted it as his residence, it was far from being such.

True, the greater portion of that mediæval building, half monastic, half military, exposed even then to the searching winds many bare and roofless chambers; broken vaults filled with driven sands; more than one spiral stair with hanging steps leading into space. But the massive square keep had been substantially restored. Although roofless its upper platform was as firm as when it was first built; and in a corner, solidly ensconced, rose the more modern turret that sheltered the honest warning light.

The wide chambers of the two remaining floors, which in old warlike days were maintained bare and free, and lighted only by narrow watching loopholes on all sides, had been, for purposes of peaceful tenanncy, divided into sundry small apartments. New windows had been pierced into the enormous thickness of stone and cement; the bare coldness of walls was also hidden under more home-like panellings. Close-fitting casements and solid doors insured peace within; the wind in stormy hours might moan or rage outside this rocky pile, might hiss and shriek and tear its wings among the jagged ruins, bellow and thunder in and out of opened vaults, but it might not rattle a window of the modern castellan's quarters or shake a latch of his chamber door.

There, for reasons understood then only by himself, had Sir Adrian elected, about the "year seven" of this century and in the prime of his age, to transplant his lares and penates.

The while, this Adrian Landale's ancestral home stood, in its placid and double pride of ancient and settled wealth, only some

few miles away as the bee flies, in the midst of its noble park, slightly retired from the coast-line; and from its upper casements could be descried by day the little green patch of Scarthey and the jagged outline of its ruins on the yellow or glimmering face of the great bay, and by night the light of its turret. And there he was still living, in some kind of happiness, in the "year fourteen," when, out of the eternal store of events, began to shape themselves the latter episodes of a life in which storm and peace followed each other as abruptly as in the very atmosphere that he then breathed.

For some eight years he had nested on that rock with no other companions but a dog, a very ancient housekeeper who cooked and washed for "t' young mester" as she obstinately persisted in calling the man whom she had once nursed upon her knee, and a singular sturdy foreign man (René L'Apôtre in the language of his own land, but known as Renny Potter to the land of his adoption); which latter was more than suspected of having escaped from the Liverpool Tower, at that time the lawful place of custody of French war prisoners.

His own voluntary captivity, however, had nothing really dismal for Adrian Landale. And the inhabited portions of Scarthey ruins had certainly nothing prison-like about them, nothing even that recalled the wilful contrition of a hermitage.

On the second floor of the tower (the first being allotted to the use, official and private, of the small household), clear of the surrounding walls and dismantled battlements, the rooms were laid out much as they might have been up at Pulwick Priory

itself, yonder within the verdant grounds on the distant rise. His sleeping quarters plainly, though by no means ascetically furnished, opened into a large chamber, where the philosophic light-keeper spent the best part of his days. Here were broad and deep windows, one to the south with a wide view of the bay and the nearer coast, the other to the west where the open sea displayed her changeable moods. On three sides of this room, the high walls, from the white stone floor to the time-blackened beams that bore the ceiling, almost disappeared under the irregular rows of many thousand of volumes. Two wooden arm-chairs, bespeaking little aversion to an occasional guest, flanked the hearth.

The hearth is the chief refuge of the lone thinker; this was a cosy recess, deep cut in the mediæval stone and mortar; within which, on chilly days, a generous heap of sea-cast timber and dried turf shot forth dancing blue flames over a mound of white ash and glowing cinders; but which, in warmer times, when the casements were unlatched to let in with spring or summer breeze the cries of circling sea-fowls and the distant plash of billows, offered shelter to such green plants as the briny air would favour.

At the far end of the room rose in systematical clusters the pipes of a small organ, built against the walls where it bevelled off a corner. And in the middle of the otherwise bare apartment stood a broad and heavy table, giving support to a miscellaneous array of books, open or closed, sundry philosophical instruments, and papers in orderly disorder; some

still in their virginal freshness, most, however, bearing marks of notemaking in various stages.

Here, in short, was the study and general keeping-room of the master of Scarthey, and here, for the greater part, daily sat Sir Adrian Landale, placidly reading, writing, or thinking at his table; or at his organ, lost in soaring melody; or yet, by the fireside, in his wooden arm-chair musing over the events of that strange world of thought he had made his own; whilst the aging black retriever with muzzle stretched between his paws slept his light, lazy sleep, ever and anon opening an eye of inquiry upon his master when the latter spoke aloud his thoughts (as solitary men are wont to do), and then with a deep, comfortable sigh, resuming dog-life dreams.

CHAPTER II
THE LIGHT-KEEPER

He who sits by the fire doth dream,
Doth dream that his heart is warm.
But when he awakes his heart is afraid for the bitter cold.

Luteplayer's Song.

The year 1814 was eventful in the annals of the political world. Little, however, of the world's din reached the little northern island; and what there came of it was not willingly hearkened to. There was too much of wars past and present, too many rumours of wars future about it, for the ear of the recluse.

Late in the autumn of that red-letter year which brought a short respite of peace to war-ridden Europe – a fine, but rather tumultuous day round Scarthey – the light-keeper, having completed the morning's menial task in the light-turret (during a temporary absence of his factotum) sat, according to custom, at his long table, reading.

With head resting on his right hand whilst the left held a page ready to turn, he solaced himself, pending the appearance of the mid-day meal, with a few hundred lines of a favourite work – the didactic poems, I believe, of a certain Doctor Erasmus Darwin, on the analogies of the outer world.

There was quite as little of the ascetic in Adrian Landale's physical man as of the hermitage in his chosen abode.

With the exception of the hair, which he wore long and free, and of which the fair brown had begun to fade to silver-grey, the master of Scarthey was still the living presentment of the portrait which, even at that moment, presided among the assembly of canvas Landales in the gallery of Pulwick Priory. Eight years had passed over the model since the likeness had been fixed. But in their present repose, the features clear cut and pronounced, the kindly thoughtful eyes looked, if anything, younger than their counterfeit; indeed, almost incongruously young under the flow of fading hair.

Clean shaven, with hands of refinement, still fastidious, his long years of solitude notwithstanding, as to general neatness of attire, he might at any moment of the day have walked up the great stair of honour at Pulwick without by his appearance eliciting other remarks than that his clothes, in cut and colour, belonged to fashions now some years lapsed.

The high clock on the mantelshelf hummed and gurgled, and with much deliberation struck one. Only an instant later, lagging footsteps ascended the wooden, echoing stairs without, and the door was pushed open by the attendant, an old dame. She was very dingy as to garb, very wrinkled and feeble as to face, yet with a conscious achievement of respectability, both in appearance and manner, befitting her post as housekeeper to the "young master." The young master, be it stated at once, was at that time

fast approaching the end of his second score years.

"Margery," said Adrian, rising to take the heavy tray from the knotted, trembling hands; "you know that I will not allow you to carry those heavy things upstairs yourself." He raised his voice to sing-song pitch near the withered old ear. "I have already told you that when Renny is not at home, I can take my food in your kitchen."

Margery paused, after her wont, to wait till the sounds had filtered as far as her intellect, then proceeded to give a few angry headshakes.

"Eh! Eh! It would become Sir Adrian Landale o' Pulwick – Barrownite – to have 's meat i' the kitchen – it would that. Nay, nay, Mester Adrian, I'm none so old but I can do my day's work yet. Ah! an' it 'ud be well if that gomerl, Renny Potter, 'ud do his'n. See here, now, Mester Adrian, nowt but a pint of wine left; and it the last," pointing her withered finger, erratically as the palsy shook it, at a cut-glass decanter where a modicum of port wine sparkled richly under the facets. "And he not back yet, whatever mischief's agate wi' him, though he kens yo like your meat at one." And then circumstances obliged her to add: "He is landing now, but it's ower late i' the day."

"So – there, Margery," sang the "Squire," giving his old nurse affectionate little taps on the back. "Never fash yourself; tides cannot always fit in with dinner-hours, you know. And as for poor Renny, I believe after all you are as fond of him, at the bottom of your heart, as I am. Now what good fare have you got for me

to-day?" bending from his great height to inspect the refection, "Ah – hum, excellent."

The old woman, after another pause for comprehension, retired battling with dignity against the obvious pleasure caused by her master's affectionate familiarity, and the latter sat down at a small table in front of the south window.

Through this deep, port-hole-like aperture he could, whilst disposing of his simple meal, watch the arrival of the yawl which did ferrying duty between Scarthey and the mainland. The sturdy little craft, heavily laden with packages, was being hauled up to its usual place of safety high on the shingle bank, under cover of a remnant of walling which in the days of the castle's strength had been a secure landing-place for the garrison's boats, but which now was almost filled by the cast-up sands and stone of the beach.

This was done under the superintendence of René, man of all work, and with the mechanical intermediary of rollers and capstan, by a small white horse shackled to a lever, and patiently grinding his steady rounds on the sand.

His preliminary task achieved, the man, after a few friendly smacks, set the beast free to trot back to his loose pasture: proceeding himself to unship his cargo.

Through the narrow frame of his window, the master, with eyes of approval, could see the servant dexterously load himself with a well-balanced pile of parcels, disappearing to return after intervals empty-handed, within the field of view, and select another burden, now heavier now more bulky.

In due course René came up and reported himself in person, and as he stopped on the threshold the dark doorway framed a not unstriking presentment; a young-looking man for his years (he was a trifle junior to his master), short and sturdy in build, on whose very broad shoulders sat a phenomenally fair head – the hair short, crisp, and curly, in colour like faded tow – and who, in smilingly respectful silence, gazed into the room out of small, light-blue eyes, brimful of alertness and intelligence, waiting to be addressed.

"Renny," said Adrian Landale, returning the glance with one of comfortable friendliness, "you will have to make your peace with Margery; she considers that you neglect me shamefully. Why, you are actually twenty minutes late after three days' journeying, and perils by land and sea!"

The Frenchman answered the pleasantry by a broader smile and a scrape.

"And, your honour," he said, "if what is now arriving on us had come half an hour sooner, I should have rested planted there" (with a jerk of the flaxen head towards the mainland), "turning my thumbs, till to-morrow, at the least. We shall have a grain, number one, soon."

He spoke English fluently, though with the guttural accent of Brittany, and an unconquerable tendency to translate his own jargon almost word for word.

In their daily intercourse master and man had come for many years past to eschew French almost entirely; René had

let it be understood that he considered his proficiency in the vernacular quite undeniable, and with characteristic readiness Sir Adrian had fallen in with the little vanity. In former days the dependant's form of address had been *Monseigneur* (considering, and shrewdly so, an English landowner to stand in that relation to a simple individual like himself); in later days "Monseigneur" having demurred at the appellation, "My lord," in his own tongue, the devoted servant had discovered "Your honour" as a happy substitute, and adhered to this discovery with satisfaction.

"Oh, we are going to have a squall, say you," interpreted the master, rising to inspect the weather-glass, which in truth had fallen deep with much suddenness. "More than a squall, I think; this looks like a hurricane coming. But since you are safe home, all's well; we are secure and sound here, and the fishing fleet are drawing in, I see," peering through the seaward window. "And now," continued Adrian, laying down his napkin, and brushing away a few crumbs from the folds of a faultless silk stock, "what have you for me there – and what news?"

"News, your honour! Oh, for that I have news this time," said Mr. Renny Potter, with an emphatic nod, "but if your honour will permit, I shall say them last. I have brought the clothes and the linen, the wine, the brandy, and the books. Brandy and wine, your honour, I heard, out of the last prize brought into Liverpool, and a Nantes ship it was, too" – this in a pathetically philosophical tone. Then after a pause: "Also provisions and bulbs for the devil's pot, as Margery will call it. But there is no saying, your

honour eats more when I have brought him back onions, eschalot, and *ail*; now do I lie, your honour? May I?" added the speaker, and forthwith took his answer from his master's smile; "may I respectfully see what the old one has kitchened for you when I was not there?"

And Adrian Landale with some amusement watched the Frenchman rise from the package he was then uncording to examine the platters on the table and loudly sniff his disdain.

"Ah, ah, boiled escallops again. Perfectly – boiled cabbage seasoned with salt. Not a taste in the whole affair. Prison food – oh, yes, old woman! Why, we nourished ourselves better in the Tower, when we could have meat at all. Ah, your honour," sighed the man returning to his talk; "you others, English, are big and strong, but you waste great things in small enjoyment!"

"Oho, Renny," said the light-keeper squire, as he leant against the fireplace leisurely filling a long clay pipe, "this is one of your epigrams; I must make a note of it anon; but let me see now what you really have in those parcels of books – for books they are, are they not? so carefully and neatly packed."

"Books," assented the man, undoing the final fold of paper. "Mr. Young in the High Street of Liverpool had the packets ready. He says you must have them all; and all printed this year. What so many people can want to say, I for my count cannot comprehend. Three more parcels on the stairs, your honour. Mr. Young says you must have them. But it took two porters to carry them to the Preston diligence."

Not without eagerness did the recluse of Scarthey bend over and finger the unequal rows of volumes arrayed on the table, and with a smile of expectation examine the labels.

"The Corsair" and "Lara" he read aloud, lifting a small tome more daintily printed than the rest. "Lord Byron. What's this? Jane Austen, a novel. 'Roderick, last of the Goths.' Dear, dear," his smile fading into blankness; "tiresome man, I never gave him orders for any such things."

René, battling with his second parcel, shrugged his shoulders.

"The librarian," he explained, "said that all the world read these books, and your honour must have them."

"Well, well," continued the hermit, "what else? 'Jeremy Bentham,' a new work; Ricardo, another book on economy; Southey the Laureate, 'Life of Nelson.' Really, Mr. Young might have known that naval deeds have no joy for me, hardly more than for you, Renny," smiling grimly on his servant. "'Edinburgh Review,' a London magazine for the last six months; 'Rees's Cyclopædia,' vols. 24-27; Wordsworth, 'The Recluse.' Ah, old Willie Wordsworth! Now I am anxious to see what he has to say on such a topic."

"Dear Willie Wordsworth," mused Sir Adrian, sitting down to turn over the pages of the 'Excursion,' "how widely have our lives drifted apart since those college days of ours, when we both believed in the coming millennium and the noble future of mankind – noble mankind!"

He read a few lines and became absorbed, whilst René

noiselessly busied himself in and out of the chamber. Presently he got up, book in hand, slowly walked to the north window, and passively gazed at the misty distance where rose the blue outline of the lake hills.

"So my old friend, almost forgotten," he murmured, "that is where you indite such worthy lines. It were enough to tempt me out into men's world again to think that there would be many readers and lovers abroad of these words of yours. So, that is what five and twenty years have done for you – what would you say to what they have done for me…?"

It was a long retrospect.

Sir Adrian was deeply immersed in thought when he became aware that his servant had come to a standstill, as if waiting for a return of attention. And in answer to the mute appeal he turned his head once more in René's direction.

"Your honour, everything is in its place," began the latter, with a fitting sense of his own method. "I have now to report that I saw your man of business in Lancaster, and he has attended to the matter of the brothers Shearman's boat that was lost. I saw the young men themselves this morning. They are as grateful to Sir Adrian as people in this country can express." This last with a certain superiority.

Sir Adrian received the announcement of the working of one of his usual bounties with a quiet smile of gratification.

"They also told me to say that they would bring the firewood and the turf to-morrow. But they won't be able to do that because

we shall have dirty weather. Then they told me that when your honour wants fish they begged your honour to run up a white flag over the lantern – they thought that a beautiful idea – and they would bring some as soon as possible. I took on myself to assure them that I could catch what fish your honour requires; and the prawns, too … but that is what they asked me to say."

"Well, well, and so you can," said the master, amused by the show of sub-acute jealousy. "What else?"

"The books of the man of business and the banker are on the table. I have also brought gazettes from Liverpool." Here the fellow's countenance brimmed with the sense of his news' importance. "I know your honour cares little for them. But this time I think you will read them. Peace, your honour, it is the peace! It is all explained in these journals – the 'Liverpool Mercury.'"

Renny lifted the folded sheets from the table and handed them with contained glee. "There has been peace these six months, and we never knew it. I read about it the whole way back from the town. The Emperor is shut up on an island – but not so willingly as your Honour, ah, no! – and there is an end of citizen Bonaparte. Peace, France and England no longer fighting, it is hard to believe – and our old kings are coming back, and everything to be again as in the old days."

Sir Adrian took the papers, not without eagerness, and glanced over the narrative of events, already months old, with all the surprise of one who, having wilfully shut himself out from the

affairs of the world, ignored the series of disasters that had brought about the tyrant's downfall.

"As you say, my friend, it is almost incredible," he said, at length. Then thoughtfully: "And now you will be wanting to return home?" said he.

René, who had been scanning his master's face with high expectation, felt his heart leap as he thought he perceived a hidden tone of regret in the question.

He drew himself up to his short height, and with a very decided voice made answer straightway:

"I shall go away from your honour the day when your honour dismisses me. If your honour decides to live on this rock till my hour, or his, strikes – on this rock with him I remain. I am not conceited, I hope, but what, pray, will become of your honour here without me?"

There was force in this last remark, simply as it was pronounced. Through the mist of interlacing thoughts suggested by the word Peace! (the end of the Revolution, that distant event which, nevertheless, had had such sweeping influence over the course of his whole life), it brought a faint smile to Sir Adrian's lips.

He took two steps forward and laid his hand familiarly on the man's broad shoulder, and, in a musing way, he said at intervals:

"Yes, yes, indeed, good Renny, what would become of me? – what would have become of me? – how long ago it seems! – without you? And yet it might have been as well if two skeletons,

closely locked in embrace, blanched by the grinding of the waters and the greed of the crabs, now reposed somewhere deep in the sands of that Vilaine estuary… This score of years, she has had rest from the nightmare that men have made of life on God's beautiful earth. I have been through more of it, my good Renny."

René's brain was never equal to coping with his master's periodic fits of pessimism, though he well knew their first and ever-present cause. In a troubled way he looked about the room, so peaceful, so retired and studious; and Sir Adrian understood.

"Yes, yes, you are right; I have cut off the old life," he made answer to the unspoken expostulation, "and that I can live in my own small world without foregoing all my duties, I owe to you, my good friend; but startling news like this brings back the past very livingly, dead though it be – dead."

René hesitated; he was pondering over the advisability of disburdening himself of yet another strange item of information he had in reserve; but, as his master, rousing himself with an effort as if to dismiss some haunting thought, turned round again to the table, he decided that the moment was not propitious.

"So you have seen to all these things," said Sir Adrian wearily. "Good; I will look over them."

He touched the neat pile of books and papers, listlessly, as he spoke, yet, instead of sitting down, remained as he was, with eyes that had grown wondering, staring out across the sea.

"Look," he said presently, in a low voice, and René noticed a rare flush of colour rise to the thin cheeks. "Look – is not this

day just like – one we both remember well…? Listen, the wind is coming up as it did then. And look at yonder sky!"

And taking the man by the arm, he advanced slowly with him towards the window.

In the west the heavens on the horizon had grown threateningly dark; but under the awe-inspiring slate-coloured canopy of clouds there opened a broad archway filled with primrose light – the luminous arch, well known to seafarers, through which charge the furious southwestern squalls. The rushing of the storm was already visible in the distance over the grey waters, which having been swayed for days by a steady Aquilon were now lashed in flank by the sudden change of wind.

The two men looked out for a while in silence at the spectacle of the coming storm. In the servant's mind ran various trivial thoughts bearing on the present – what a lucky matter it was that he should have returned in time; only just in time it was; from the angry look of the outer world the island would now, for many a day be besieged by seas impassable to such small craft as alone could reach the reef. Had he tarried but to the next tide (and how sorely he had been tempted to remain an hour more in the gatekeeper's lodge within sight and hearing of buxom Moggie, Margery's grand-daughter), had he missed the tide, for days, maybe for weeks, would the master have had to watch and tend, alone, the beacon fire. But here he was, and all was well; and he had still the marvellous news to tell. Should he tell them now? No, the master was in one of his trances – lost far away in

the past no doubt, that past that terminated on such a day as this. And Sir Adrian, with eyes fixed on the widening arch of yellow light, was looking inwards on the far-away distance of time.

Men, who have been snatched back to life from death in the deep, recall how, before seeming to yield the ghost, the picture of their whole existence passed in vivid light before the eye of their mind. Swift beyond the power of understanding are such revelations; in one flash the events of a good or an evil life leap before the seeing soul – moment of anguish intolerable or of sublime peace!

On such a boisterous day as this, some nineteen years before, by the sandy mouth of the river Vilaine, on the confines of Brittany and Vendée had Adrian Landale been drowned; under such a sky, and under the buffets of such an angry wind had he been recalled to life, and in the interval, he had seen the same pictures which now, coursing back many years in a few seconds, passed before his inward vision.

CHAPTER III
DAY DREAMS: A PHILOSOPHER'S FATE

> Le beau temps de ma jeunesse … quand j'étais si malheureux.

The borderland between adolescence and manhood, in the life of men of refined aspirations and enthusiastic mettle, is oftener than not an unconsciously miserable period – one which more mature years recall as hollow, deceiving, bitterly unprofitable.

Yet there is always that about the memories of those far-off young days, their lofty dreams long since scattered, their virgin delights long since lost in the drudgery of earthly experience, which ever and anon seizes the heart unawares and fills it with that infinite weakness: that mourning for the dead and gone past, which yet is not regret.

In the high days of the Revolutionary movement across the water, Adrian Landale was a dreamy student living in one of those venerable Colleges on the Cam, the very atmosphere of which would seem sufficient to glorify the merits of past ages and past institutions.

Amidst such peaceful surroundings this eldest scion of an ancient, north-country race – which had produced many a hardy fighter, though never yet a thinker nor even a scholar – amid

a society as prejudiced and narrow-minded as all privileged communities are bound to become, had nevertheless drifted resistlessly towards that unfathomable sea whither a love for the abstract beautiful, a yearning for super-earthly harmony and justice, must inevitably waft a young intelligence.

As the academical years glided over him, he accumulated much classical lore, withal read much latter-day philosophy and developed a fine youthful, theoretical love for the new humanitarianism. He dipped æsthetically into science, wherein he found a dim kind of help towards a more recondite appreciation of the beauties of nature. His was not a mind to delight in profound knowledge, but rather in "intellectual cream."

He solaced himself with essays that would have been voted brilliant had they dealt with things less extravagant than Universal Harmony and Fraternal Happiness; with verses that all admitted to be highly polished and melodious, but something too mystical in meaning for the understanding of an every-day world; with music, whereof he was conceded an interpreter of no mean order.

In fact the worship of his soul might have been said to be the Beautiful in the abstract – the Beautiful in all its manifestations which include Justice, Harmony, Truth, and Kindliness – the one indispensable element of his physical happiness, the Beautiful in the concrete.

This is saying that Adrian Landale, for all his array of definite accomplishments, which might have been a never-failing source of interest in an easy existence, was fitted in a singularly

unfortunate manner for the life into which one sudden turn of fortune's wheel unexpectedly launched him.

During the short halcyon days of his opening independence, however, he was able to make himself the centre of such a world as he would have loved to live in. He was not, of course, generally popular, either at college or at home; nor yet in town, except among that small set in whose midst he inevitably found his way wherever he went; his inferiors in social status perhaps, these chosen friends of his; but their lofty enthusiasms were both appreciative of and congenial to his own. Most of them, indeed, came in after-life to add their names to England's roll of intellectual fame, partly because they had that in them which Adrian loathed as unlovely – the instinct and will of strife, partly; it must be added, because they remained free in their circumstances to follow the lead of their nature. Which freedom was not allotted to him.

On one magnificent frosty afternoon, early in the year 1794, the London coach deposited Adrian Landale in front of the best hostelry in Lancaster, after more than a year's separation from his family.

This separation was not due to estrangement, but rather to the instigation of his own sire, Sir Thomas – a gentleman of the "fine old school" – who, exasperated by the, to him, incomprehensible and insupportable turn of mind developed by his heir (whom he loved well enough, notwithstanding, in his own way), had hoped, in good utilitarian fashion, that a prolonged period of contact

with the world, lubricated by a plentiful supply of money, might shake his "big sawney of a son" out of his sickly-sentimental views; that it would show him that *gentlemen's* society – and, "by gad, ladies' too" – was not a thing to be shunned for the sake of "wild-haired poets, dirty firebrands, and such cattle."

The downright old baronet was even prepared, in an unformed sort of way, to see his successor that was to be return to the paternal hearth the richer for a few gentlemanly vices, provided he left his nonsense behind him.

As the great lumbering vehicle, upon the box seat of which sat the young traveller, lost in dreamy speculation according to his wont, drew clattering to a halt, he failed at first to notice the central figure in the midst of the usual expectant crowd of inn guests and inn retainers, called forward by the triumphant trumpeting which heralds the approach of the mail. There, however, stood the Squire of Pulwick, "Sir Tummus" himself, in portly and jovial importance.

The father's eyes, bright and piercing under his bushy white brows, had already detected his boy from a distance; and they twinkled as he took note, with all the pride of an author in his work, of the symmetry of limb and shoulders set forth by the youth's faultless attire – and the dress of men in the old years of the century was indeed calculated to display a figure to advantage – of the lightness and grace of his frame as he dismounted from his perch; in short of the increased manliness of his looks and bearing.

But a transient frown soon came to overshade Sir Thomas's ruddy content as he descried the deep flush (an old weakness) which mantled the young cheeks under the spur of unexpected recognition.

And when, later, the pair emerged from the inn after an hour's conversation over a bottle of burnt sherry – conversation which, upon the father's side, had borne, in truth, much the character of cross-examination – to mount the phaeton with which a pair of high-mettled bays were impatiently waiting the return homewards, there was a very definite look of mutual dissatisfaction to be read upon their countenances.

Whiling away the time in fitful constrained talk, parcelled out by long silences, they drove again through the gorgeous, frost-speckled scenery of rocky lands until the sheen of the great bay suddenly peered between two distant scars, proclaiming the approach to the Pulwick estate. The father then broke a long spell of muteness, and thus to his son, in his ringing country tones, as if pursuing aloud the tenor of his thoughts:

"Hark'ee, Master Adrian," said he, "that you are now a man of parts, as they say, I can quite see. You seem to have read a powerful lot of things that do not come our way up here. But let us understand each other. I cannot make head or tail of these far-fetched new-fangle notions you, somehow or other, have fallen in love with – your James Fox, your Wilberforce, your Adam Smith, they may be very fine fellows, but to my humble thinking they're but a pack of traitors to king and country, when all is

said and done. All this does not suit an English gentleman. You think differently; or perhaps you do not care whether it does or not. I admit I can't hold forth as you do; nor string a lot of fine words together. I am only an old nincompoop compared to a clever young spark like you. But I request you to keep off these topics in the company I like to see round my table. They don't like Jacobins, you know, no more do I!"

"Nor do I," said Adrian fervently.

"Nor do you? Don't you, sir, don't you? Why, then what the devil have you been driving at?"

"I am afraid, sir, you do not understand my views."

"Well, never mind; I don't like 'em, that's short, and if you bring them out before your cousin, little Madame Savenaye, you will come off second best, my lad, great man as you are, and so I warn you!"

In tones as unconcerned as he could render them the young man sought to turn the intercourse to less personal topics, by inquiring further anent this unknown cousin whose very name was strange to him.

Sir Thomas, easily placable if easily roused, started willingly enough on a congenial topic. And thus Adrian conceived his first impression of that romantic being whose deeds have remained legendary in the French west country, and who was destined to exercise so strong an influence upon his own life.

"Who is she?" quoth the old gentleman, with evident zest. "Ay. All this is news to you, of course. Well: she *was* Cécile

de Kermelégan. You know your mother's sister Mary Donoghue (murthering Moll, they called her on account of her killing eyes) married a M. de Kermelégan, a gentleman of Brittany. Madame de Savenaye is her daughter (first cousin of yours), that means that she has good old English blood in her veins and Irish to boot. She speaks English as well as you or I, her mother's teaching of course, but she is French all the same; and, by gad, of the sort which would reconcile even an Englishman with the breed!"

Sir Thomas's eyes sparkled with enthusiasm; his son examined him with grave wonder.

"The very sight of her, my boy, is enough to make a man's heart warm. Wait till you see her and she begins to talk of what the red-caps are doing over there – those friends of yours, who are putting in practice all your fine theories! And, bookworm as you are, I'll warrant she'll warm your sluggish blood for you. Ha! she's a rare little lady. She married last year the Count of Savenaye."

Adrian assumed a look of polite interest.

"Emigré, I presume?" he said, quietly.

"Emigré? No, sir. He is even now fighting the republican rapscallions, d – n them, and thrashing them, too, yonder in his country. She stuck by his side; ay, like a good plucked one she did, until it became palpable that, if there was to be a son and heir to the name, she had better go and attend to its coming somewhere else, in peace. Ho, ho, ho! Well, England was the safest place, of course, and, for her, the natural one. She came

and offered herself to us on the plea of relationship. I was rather taken aback at first, I own; but, gad, boy, when I saw the woman, after hearing what she had had to go through to reach us at all, I sang another song. Well, she is a fine creature – finer than ever now that the progeny has been satisfactorily hatched; a brace of girls instead of the son and heir, after all! Two of them; no less. Ho, ho, ho! And she was furious, the pretty dear! However, you'll soon see for yourself. You will see a woman, sir, who has loaded and fired cannon with her own hands, when the last man to serve it had been shot. Ay, and more than that, my lad – she's brained a hulking sans-culotte that was about to pin her servant to the floor. The lad has told me so himself, and I daresay he can tell you more if you care to practise your French with master René L'Apôtre, that's the fellow! A woman who sticks to her lord and master in mud and powder-smoke until there is precious little time to spare, when she makes straight for a strange land, in a fishing-smack, with no other protector than a peasant; and now, with an imp of a black-eyed infant to her breast (Sally Mearson's got the other; you remember Sally, your own nurse's daughter?), looks like a chit of seventeen. That's what you'll see, sir. And when she sails downstairs for dinner, dressed up, powdered and high-heeled, she might be a princess, a queen who has never felt a crumpled roseleaf in her life. Gad! I'm getting poetical, I declare."

In this strain did the Squire, guiding his horses with strong, dexterous hand, expatiate to his son; the crisp air rushing past them, making their faces glow with the tingling blood until,

burning the ground, they dashed up the avenue that leads to the white mansion of Pulwick, and halted amidst a cloud of steam before its Palladian portico.

What happened to Adrian the moment after happens, as a rule, only once in a man's lifetime.

Through the opening portals the guest, whose condensed biography the Squire had been imparting to his son (all unconsciously eliciting thereby more repulsion than admiration in the breast of that fastidious young misogynist), appeared herself to welcome the return of her host.

Adrian, as he retired a pace to let his father ascend the steps, first caught a glimpse of a miraculously small and arched foot, clad in pink silk, and, looking suddenly up, met fully the flash of great dark eyes, set in a small white face, more brilliant in their immense blackness than even the glinting icicles pendant over the lintel that now shot back the sun's sinking glory.

The spell was of the kind that the reason of man can never sanction, and yet that have been ever and will be while man is. This youth, virgin of heart, dreamy of head who had drifted to his twentieth year, all unscathed by passion or desire, because he had never met aught in flesh and blood answering to his unconscious ideal, was struck to the depth of his soul by the presence of one, as unlike this same ideal as any living creature could be; struck with fantastic suddenness, and in that all-encompassing manner which seizes the innermost fibres of the being.

It was a pang of pain, but a revelation of glory.

He stood for some moments, with paling cheeks and hotly-beating heart, gazing back into the wondrous eyes. She, yielding her cheek carelessly to the Squire's hearty kiss, examined the new-comer curiously the while:

"Why – how now, tut, tut, what's this?" thundered the father, who, following the direction of her eyes, wheeled round suddenly to discover his son's strange bearing, "Have you lost all the manners as well as the notions of a gentleman, these last two years? Speak to Madame de Savenaye, sir! – Cécile, this is my son; pray forgive him, my dear; the fellow's shyness before ladies is inconceivable. It makes a perfect fool of him, as you see."

But Madame de Savenaye's finer wits had already perceived something different from the ordinary display of English shyness in the young man, whose eyes remained fixed on her face with an intentness that savoured in no way, of awkwardness. She now broke the spell with a broader smile and a word of greeting.

"You are surprised," said she in tripping words, tinged with a distinct foreign intonation, "to see a strange face here, Mr. Adrian – or, shall I say cousin? for that is the style I should adopt in my Brittany. Yes, you see in me a poor foreign cousin, fleeing for protection to your noble country. How do you do, my cousin?"

She extended a slender, white hand, one rosy nail of which, bending low, Adrian gravely kissed.

"*Mais, comment donc!*" exclaimed the lady, "my dear uncle did you chide your son just now? Why, but these are Versailles manners – so gallant, so courtly!"

And she gave the boy's fingers, as they lingered under hers, first a discreet little pressure, and then a swift flip aside.

"Ah! how cold you are!" she exclaimed; and then, laughing, added sweetly: "Cold hands, warm heart, of course."

And with rapping heels she turned into the great hall and into the drawing-room whither the two men – the father all chuckles, and the son still struck with wonder – followed her.

She was standing by the hearth holding each foot alternately to the great logs flaming on the tiles, ever and anon looking over her shoulder at Adrian, who had advanced closer, without self-consciousness, but still in silence.

"Now, cousin," she remarked gaily, "there is room for you here, big as you are, to warm yourself. You must be cold. I know already all about your family, and I must know all about you, too! I am very curious, I find them all such good, kind, handsome people here, and I am told to expect in you something quite different from any of them. Now, where does the difference come in? You are as tall as your father, but in face – no, I believe it is your pretty sisters you are like in face."

Here the Squire interrupted with his loud laugh, and, clapping his hand on his stalwart son's head:

"You have just hit it, Cécile, it's here the difference lies. Adrian, I really believe, is a little mistake of Dame Nature; his brain was meant for a girl and was tacked on to that big body by accident, ho, ho, ho! He is quite lady-like in his accomplishments – loves music, and plays, by gad, better than our organist. Writes

poetry, too. I found some devilish queer things on his writing-table once, which were not *all* Latin verses, though he would fain I thought so. And as for deportment, Madame Cécile, why there is more propriety, in that hobbedehoy, at least, more blushing in him, than in all the bread-and-butter misses in the county!"

Adrian said nothing; but, when not turned towards the ground, his gaze still sought the Countess, who now returned the look with a ripening smile open to any interpretation.

"Surely," she remarked, glancing then at the elder for an instant with some archness, "surely you English gentlemen, who have so much propriety, would not rather … there was young Mr. Bradbury, we heard talked of yesterday, whom every farmer with a red-cheeked lass of his own – "

"No, no!" hastily interrupted the baronet, with a blush himself, while Adrian's cheek in spite of the recent indictment preserved its smooth pallor – in truth, the boy, lost in his first love-dream, had not understood the allusion. "No, I don't want a Landale to be a blackguard, you know, but – " And the father, unable to split this ethical hair, to logical satisfaction, stopped and entered another channel of grumbling vituperation, whilst the Countess, very much amused by her private thoughts, gave a little rippling laugh, and resumed her indulgent contemplation of the accused.

"What a pity, now, school-boy Rupert is not the eldest; there would be a country gentleman for you! Whereas, this successor that is to be of mine is a man of books and a philosopher. Forsooth, a first-class bookworm; by gad, I believe the first of

our race! And he might make a name for himself, I've been told, among that lot, though the pack o' nonsense he treats us to at times cannot, I'm thinking, really go down even among those college fuzzle-heads. But I am confounded if that chap will ever be of any use as a landlord whenever he steps into my shoes. He hates a gun, and takes more pleasure – what was it he said last time he was here? – oh, yes, more pleasure in watching a bird dart in the blue than bringing it down, be it never so neat a shot. Ho, ho! did ye ever hear such a thing? And though he can sit a horse – I will say that for him (I should like to see a Landale that could not!) – I have seen this big boy of mine positively sicken, ay! and scandalise the hunt by riding away from the death. Moreover, I believe that, when I am gone, he will always let off any poaching scoundrel on the plea that the vermin only take for their necessity what we preserve for sport."

The little foreign lady, smiling no longer, eyed her big cousin with wondering looks.

"Strange, indeed," she remarked, "that a man should fail to appreciate the boon of man's existence, the strength and freedom to dominate, to be up and doing, to *live* in fact. How I should long to be a man myself, if I ever allowed myself to long for anything; but I am a woman, as you see," she added, rising to the full height of her exquisite figure, "and must submit to woman's lot – and that is just now to the point, for I must leave you to go and see to the wants of that *mioche* of mine which I hear whining upstairs. But I do not believe my uncle's account of you is a complete

picture after all, cousin Adrian. I shall get it out of you anon, catechise you in my own way, and, if needs be, convert you to a proper sense of the glorious privileges of your sex."

And she ran out of the room.

"Well, my lad," said Sir Thomas, that evening, when the ladies had left the two men to their decanter, "I thought my Frenchwoman would wake you up, but, by George, I hardly expected she would knock you all of a heap so quick. Hey! you're winged, Adrian, winged, or this is not port."

"I cannot say, sir," answered Adrian, musing.

The old man caught up the unsatisfactory reply in an exasperated burlesque of mimicry: "I cannot say, sir – you cannot say? Pooh, pooh, there is no shame in being in love with her. We all are more or less; pass the bottle. As for you, since you clapped eyes on her you have been like a man in the moon, not a word to throw to a dog, no eyes, no ears but for your own thoughts, so long as madam is not there. Enter madam, you're alive again, by George, and pretty lively, too! Gad, I never thought I'd ever see *you* do the lady's man, all in your own queer way, of course; but, hang it all, she seems to like it, the little minx! Ay, and if she has plenty of smiles for the old man she's ready to give her earnest to you – I saw her, I saw her. But don't you forget she's married, sir, very much married, too. She don't forget it either, I can tell you, though you may think she does. Now, what sort of game is she making of you? What were you talking about in the picture gallery for an hour before dinner, eh?"

"To say the truth," answered the son, simply, "it was about myself almost the whole time."

"And she flattered you finely, I'll be bound, of course," said his elder, with a knowing look. "Oh, these women, these women!"

"On the contrary, sir, she thinks even less of me than you do. That woman has the soul of a savage; we have not one thought in common."

The father burst into a loud laugh. "A pretty savage to look at, anyhow; a well-polished one in the bargain, ho, ho, ho! Well, well, I must make up my mind, I suppose, that my eldest son is a lunatic in love with a savage."

Adrian remained silent for a while, toying with his glass, his young brow contracted under a painful frown. At length, checking a sigh, he answered with deliberation:

"Since it is so palpable to others, I suppose it must be love, as you say. I had thought hitherto that love of which people talk so much was a feeling of sweetness. What I feel in this lady's presence is much more kin to anguish; for all that, as you have noticed, I appear to live only when she is nigh."

The father looked at his son and gaped. The latter went on, after another pause:

"I suppose it is so, and may as well own it to myself and to you, though nothing can come of it, good or bad. She is married, and she is your guest; and even if any thought concerning me could enter her heart, the merest show of love on my part would be an

insult to her and treason to you. But trust me, I shall now be on my guard, since my behaviour has already appeared strange."

"Tut, tut," said the Baronet, turning to his wine in some dudgeon, his rubicund face clouding as he looked with disfavour at this strange heir of his, who could not even fall in love like the rest of his race. "What are you talking about? Come, get out of that and see what the little lady's about, and let me hear no more of this. She'll not compromise herself with a zany like you, anyhow, that I'll warrant."

But Adrian with all the earnestness of his nature and his very young fears was strenuously resolved to watch himself narrowly in his intercourse with his too fascinating relative; little recking how infinitesimal is the power of a man's free-will upon the conduct of his life.

The next morning found the little Countess in the highest spirits. Particularly good news had arrived from her land with the early courier. True, the news were more than ten days old, but she had that insuperable buoyancy of hopefulness which attends active and healthy natures.

The Breton peasants (she explained to the company round the breakfast table), headed by their lords (among whom was her own *Seigneur et Maître*) had again crushed the swarms of ragged brigands that called themselves soldiers. From all accounts there was no hope for the latter, their atrocities had been such that the whole land, from Normandy to Guyenne, was now in arms against them.

And in Paris, the hot pit whence had issued the storm of foulness that blasted the fair kingdom of France after laying low the hallowed heads of a good king and a beautiful queen, in Paris, leaders and led were now chopping each other's heads off, *à qui mieux mieux*. "Those thinkers, those lofty patriots, *hein, beau cousin*, for whom, it seems, you have an admiration," commented the lady, interrupting her account to sip her cup of cream and chocolate, with a little finger daintily cocked, and shoot a mocking shaft at the young philosopher from the depth of her black eyes.

"Like demented wolves they are destroying each other – Pray the God of Justice," quoted she from her husband's letter, "that it may only last; in a few months, then, there will be none of them left, and the people, relieved from this rule of blood, will all clamour for the true order of things, and the poor country may again know peace and happiness. Meanwhile, all has yet to be won, by much devotion and self-sacrifice in the cause of God and King; and afterwards will come the reward!..

"And the revenge," added Madame de Savenaye, with a little, fierce laugh, folding the sanguine budget of news. "Oh! they must leave us a few for revenge! How we shall make the hounds smart when the King returns to his own! And then for pleasures and for life again. And we may yet meet at the mansion of Savenaye, in Paris," she went on gaily, "my good uncle and fair cousins, for the King cannot fail to recall his faithful supporter. And there will be feasts and balls. And there, maybe, we shall be able to repay

in part some of your kindness and hospitality. And you, cousin Adrian, you will have to take me through pavanne and gavotte and minuet; and I shall be proud of my northern cavalier. What! not know how one dances the gavotte? *Fi donc!* what ignorance! I shall have to teach you. Your hand, monsieur," slipping the missive from the seat of war into her fair bosom. "La! not that way; with a *grace*, if you please," making a profound curtsey. "Ah, still that cold hand; your great English heart must be a very furnace. Come, point your right foot – so. And look round at your partner with – what shall I say —*admiration sérieuse*!"

That she saw admiration, serious enough in all conscience in Adrian's eyes, there was little doubt. With sombre heart he failed not to mark every point of this all-human grace, but to him goddess-like beauty, the triumph and glory of youth. The coy, dainty poise of the adorable foot – pointed *so*– and treading the ground with the softness of a kitten at play; the maddening curve of her waist, which a sacque, depending from an exquisite nape, partly concealed, only to enhance its lithe suppleness; the divinely young throat and bust; and above all the dazzling black rays from eyes alternately mocking, fierce or caressing.

Well might his hand be cold with all his young untried blood, biting at his heart, singing in his head. Why did God place such creatures on His earth to take all savour from aught else under the sun?

"Fair cousin, fair cousin, though I said serious admiration, I did not mean you to look as if you were taking me to a funeral.

You are supposed to be enjoying yourself, you know!"

The youth struggled with a ghastly smile; and the father laughed outright. But Madame de Savenaye checked herself into gravity once more.

"Alas! *Nous n'en sommes pas encore là*," she said, and relinquished her adorer's hand. "We have still to fight for it… Oh! that I were free to be up and doing!"

The impatient exclamation was wrung out of her, apparently, by the appearance of two nurses, each bearing an infant in long, white robes for the mother's inspection; a preliminary to the daily outing.

The elder of these matrons was Adrian's own old nurse who, much occupied with her new duties of attendant to Madame de Savenaye and one of her babies, now beheld her foster-son again for the first time since his return.

"Eh – but you've grown a gradely mon, Mester Adrian!" she cried, in her long-drawn Lancastrian, dandling her bundle energetically from side to side in the excess of her admiration, and added with a laugh of tender delight: "Eh, but you're my own lad still, as how 'tis!" when, blushing, the young man crossed the room and stooped to kiss her, glancing shyly the while at the white bundle in her arms.

"Well, and how are the little ones?" quoth Madame de Savenaye, swinging her dainty person up to the group and halting by beaming Sally – the second nurse, who proudly held forth her charge – merely to lay a finger lightly on the infant's little cheek.

"Ah, my good Sally, your child does you credit! – Now Margery, when you have done embracing that fine young man, perhaps you will give me my child, *hein*?"

Both the nurses blushed; Margery at the soft impeachment as she delivered over the minute burden; her daughter in honest indignation at the insulting want of interest shown for her foster-babe.

"No, I was not made to play with puppets like you, mademoiselle," said the comtesse, addressing herself to the unconscious little being as she took it in her arms, but belying her words by the grace and instinctive maternal expertness with which she handled and soothed the infant. "Yes, you can go, Sarah —*au revoir*, Mademoiselle Madeleine. Fie the little wretch, what faces she pulls! And you, Margery, you need not wait either; I shall keep this creature for a while. Poor little one!" sang the mother, walking up and down, and patting the small back with her jewelled hand as she held the wee thing against her shoulder, "indeed I shall have soon to leave you – "

"What's this – what's this?" exclaimed the master of the house with sudden sharpness. He had been surveying the scene from the hearthrug, chuckling in benevolent amusement at little Madam's ways.

Yes, it was her intention to return to her place by the side of her lord, she explained, halting in her walk to face him gravely; she had come to that resolution. No doubt her uncle would take the children under his care until better times – those good times

that were so fast approaching. Buxom Sally could manage them both – and to spare, too!

Adrian felt his heart contract at the unexpected announcement; a look of dismay overspread Sir Thomas's face.

"Why – what? what nonsense, child!" cried he again in rueful tones. "*You*, return to that place now … what good do you think you could do – eh?" But here recollecting himself, he hesitated and started upon a more plausible line of expostulation. "Pooh, pooh! You can't leave the little ones, your husband does not ask you to come back and leave them, does he? In any case," with assumed authority, "I shall not let you go."

She looked up with a smile.

"Would *you* allow your friends to continue fighting alone for all you love, because you happened to be in safe and pleasant circumstances yourself?" she asked. Then she added ingenuously: "I have heard you say of one that was strong of will and staunch to his purpose, that he was a regular Briton. I thought that flattering: I am a Briton, of Brittany, you know, myself, uncle: would you have *me* be a worthless Briton? As to what a woman can do there – ah, you have no idea what it means for all these poor peasants of ours to see their lords remain among them, sharing their hardship in defence of their cause. Concerning the children," kissing the one she held and gazing into its face with wistful look, "they can better afford to do without me than my husband and our men. A strong woman to tend them till we come back, is all that is wanted, since a good relative is willing to give

them shelter. René cannot be long in returning now, with the last news. Indeed, M. de Savenaye says that he will only keep him a few days longer, and, according to the tidings he brings must I fix the date for my departure."

Sir Thomas, with an inarticulate growl, relapsed into silence; and she resumed her walk with bent head, lost in thought, up and down the great room, out of the pale winter sunshine into the shadow, and back again, to the tune of "Malbrook s'en va t'en guerre," which she hummed beneath her breath, while the baby's foolish little head, in its white cap from which protruded one tiny straight wisp of brown hair, with its beady, unseeing black eyes and its round mouth dribbling peacefully, bobbed over her shoulder as she went.

Adrian stood in silence too, following her with his eyes, while the picture, so sweet to see, so strange to one who knew all that was brewing in the young mother's head and heart, stamped itself upon his brain.

At the door, at length, she halted a moment, and looked at them both.

"Yes, my friends," she said, and her eyes shot flame; "I must go soon." The baby bobbed its head against her cheek as if in affirmative; then the great door closed upon the pair.

CHAPTER IV
DAY DREAMS: A FAIR EMISSARY

Many guests had been convened to the hospitable board of Pulwick upon the evening which followed Adrian's return home; and as, besides the fact that the fame of the French lady had spread enthusiasm in most of the male breasts of the district and anxious curiosity in gentler bosoms, there was a natural neighbourly desire to criticise the young heir of the house after his year's absence, the county had responded in a body to the invitation.

It was a goodly company therefore that was assembled in the great withdrawing rooms, when the Countess herself came tripping down the shallow oaken stairs, and found Adrian waiting for her in the hall.

He glanced up as she descended towards him to cover her with an ardent look and feast his eyes despairingly on her beauty; and she halted a moment to return his gaze with a light but meaning air of chiding.

"Cousin!" she said, "you have very singular manners for one supposed to be so shy with ladies. Do you know that if my husband were here to notice them you might be taken to task?"

Adrian ran up the steps to meet her. The man in him was growing apace with the growth of a man's passion, and by the boldness of his answer belying all his recent wise resolutions, he

now astonished himself even more than her.

"You are going back to him," he said, with halting voice. "All is well – for him; perhaps for you. For us, who remain behind there is nothing left but the bitterness of regret – and envy."

Then in silence they descended together.

As they were crossing the hall there entered suddenly to them, stumbling as he went, René, the young Breton retainer, whom the lord of Savenaye had appointed as squire to his lady upon her travels, and who, since her establishment at Pulwick, had been sent to carry news and money back to Brittany.

No sooner had the boy – for such he was, though in intelligence and blind devotion beyond his years – passed into the light, than on his haggard countenance was read news of disastrous import. Recent tears had blurred his sunburnt cheek, and the hand that tore the hat from his head at the unexpected sight of his mistress, partly in instinctive humility, partly, it seemed, to conceal some papers he held against his breast, twitched with nervous anguish.

"René!" cried the Countess, eagerly, in French. "What hast thou brought? Sweet Jesu! Bad news – bad news? Give!"

For an instant the courier looked around like a hunted animal seeking a retreat, and then up at her in dumb pleading; but she stamped her foot and held him to the spot by the imperiousness of her eye.

"Give, I tell thee," she repeated; and, striking the hat away, snatched the papers from his hand. "Dost thou think I cannot

bear ill news – My husband?"

She drew nearer to a candelabra, and the little white hands impatiently broke the seals and shook the sheets asunder.

Sir Thomas, attracted by his favourite's raised tones and uneasy at her non-appearance, opened the drawing-room door and came forward anxiously, whilst his assembled guests, among whom a sense that something of importance was passing had rapidly spread, now gathered curiously about the open doorway.

The Countess read on, unnoticing, with compressed lips and knitted brows – those brows that looked so black on the fair skin, under the powdered hair.

"My husband! ah, I knew it, my André … the common fate of the loyal!" A sigh lifted the fair young bosom, but she showed no other sign of weakness.

Indeed those who watched this unexpected scene were struck by the contrast between the bearing of this young, almost girlish creature, who, holding the written sheets with firm hands to the light, read their terrible contents with dry eyes, and that of the man who had sunk, kneeling, at her feet, all undone, to have had the bringing of the news.

The silence was profound, save for the crackling of the pages as she turned them over, and an occasional long-drawn sob from the messenger.

When she came to the end the young widow – for such she was now – remained some moments absorbed in thought, absently refolding the letter into its original neatness. Then her eyes fell

on René's prostrate figure and she stooped to lay a kind hand for an instant on his shoulder.

"Bear up, my good René," she said. At her voice and touch he dragged his limbs together and stood humbly before her.

"We must be brave," she went on; "your master's task is done – ours, yours and mine, is not."

He lifted his bloodshot eyes to her with the gaze of a faithful dog in distress, scraped an uncouth bow and abruptly turned away, brushing the tears from his cheek with his sleeve, and hurrying, to relieve his choking grief in solitude. She stood a while, again absorbed in her own reflection, and of those who would have rushed to speak gentle words to her, and uphold her with tender hands, had she wept or swooned, there was none who dared approach this grief that gave no sign.

In a short time, however, she seemed to recollect herself and awaken to the consciousness of the many watching eyes.

"Good uncle," she said, going up to the old man and kissing his cheek, after sweeping the assembled company with dark, thoughtful gaze. "Here are news that I should have expected sooner – but that I would not entertain the thought. It has come upon us at last, the fate of the others … André has paid his debt to the king, like many hundreds of true people before – though none better. He has now his reward. I glory in his noble death," she said with a gleam of exaltation in her eyes, then added after a pause, between clenched teeth, almost in a whisper:

"And my sister too – she too is with him – but I will tell you

of it later; they are at rest now."

Jovial Sir Thomas, greatly discomposed and fairly at a loss how to deal with the stricken woman, who was so unlike any womankind he had ever yet come across, patted her hand in silence, placed it within his arm and quietly led her into the drawing-room, rolling, as he did so, uneasy eyes upon his guests. But she followed the current of her thoughts as her little feet kept pace beside him.

"That is bad – but worse – the worst of all, the cause of God and king is again crushed; everything to begin afresh. But, for the present, we" – here she looked round the room, and her eyes rested an instant upon a group of young men, who were surveying her from a corner with mingled admiration and awe – "we, that is René and I, have work to do in this country before we return. For you will keep us a little longer?" she added with an attempt at a smile.

"Will I keep you a little longer?" exclaimed the squire hotly, "will I ever let you go, now!"

She shook her head at him, with something of her natural archness. Then, turning to make a grave curtsey to the circle of ladies around her:

"I and my misfortune," she said, "have kept your company and your dinner waiting, I hardly know how long. No doubt, in their kindness they will forgive me."

And accepting again her uncle's arm which, delighted at the solution of the present difficulty, and nodding to Adrian to start

the other guests, he hastened to offer her, she preceded the rest into the dining-hall with her usual alert bearing.

The behaviour of the Countess of Savenaye, had affected the various spectators in various ways. The male sex, to a man, extolled her fortitude; the ladies, however, condemned such unfeminine strength of mind, while the more charitable prophesied that she would pay dearly for this unnatural repression. And the whispered remark of one of the prettier and younger damsels, that the loss of a husband did not seem to crush her, at any rate, met, on the whole, with covert approval.

As for Adrian, who shall describe the tumult of his soul – the regret, the hungering over her in her sorrow, the wild unbidden hopes and his shame of them? Careful of what his burning eyes might reveal, he hardly dared raise them from the ground; and yet to keep them long from her face was an utter impossibility. The whispered comments of the young men behind him, their admiration, and astonishment drove him to desperation. And the high-nosed dowager, whom it was his privilege to escort to his father's table, arose from it convinced that Sir Thomas's heir had lost in his travels the few poor wits he ever possessed.

The dinner that evening was without doubt the most dismal meal the neighbourhood had ever sat down to at the hospitable board of Pulwick, past funeral refections not excepted. The host, quite taken up with his little foreign relative, had words only for her; and these, indeed, consisted merely in fruitless attempts to induce her to partake largely of every course – removes, relieves,

side-dishes, joints, as their separate turn came round. Long spells of silence fell upon him meantime, which he emphasised by lugubriously clearing his throat. Except for the pretty courtesy with which she would answer him, she remained lost in her own thoughts – ever and anon consulting the letter which lay beside her to fall again, it seemed, into a deeper muse; but never a tear glinted between her black lashes.

More than once Adrian from his distant end of the table, met her eyes, fixed on him for a moment, and the look, so full of mysterious meanings made his heart beat in anguish, expecting he knew not what.

Among the rest of the assembly, part deference to a calamity so stoutly borne, part amazement at such strange ways, part discomfort at their positions as feasters in the midst of mourning, had reduced conversation to the merest pretence. The ladies were glad enough when the time came for them to withdraw; nor did most of the men view with reluctance a moment which would send the decanters gliding freely over the mahogany, and relieve them from this unwonted restraint.

Madame de Savenaye had, however, other interests in store for these latter.

She rose with the rest of the ladies, but halted at the door, and laying her hand upon her uncle's arm, said an earnest word in his ear, in obedience to which he bundled out his daughters, as they hung back politely, closed the door upon the last skirt, and reconducted the Countess to the head of the table, scratching his

chin in some perplexity, but ready to humour her slightest whim.

She stood at her former place and looked for a moment in silence from one to another of the faces turned with different expressions of astonishment and anticipation towards her – ruddy faces most of them, young, or old, handsome or homely, the honest English stamp upon each; and distinct from them all, Adrian's pallid, thoughtful features and his ardent eyes.

Upon him her gaze rested the longest. Then with a little wave of her hand she prayed them to be seated, and waited to begin her say until the wine had passed round.

"Gentlemen," then quoth she, "with my good uncle's permission I shall read you the letter which I have this night received, so that English gentlemen may learn how those who are faithful to their God and their King are being dealt with in my country. This letter is from Monsieur de Puisaye, one of the most active partisans of the Royal cause, a connection of the ancient house of Savenaye. And he begins by telling me of the unexpected reverses sustained by our men so close upon their successes at Chateau-Gonthier, successes that had raised our loyal hopes so high. 'The most crushing defeat,' he writes, 'has taken place near the town of Savenaye itself, on your own estate, and your historic house is now, alas! in ruins… During the last obstinate fight your husband had been wounded, but after performing prodigies of valour – such as, it was hoped or trusted, the king should in time hear of – he escaped from the hands of his enemies. For many weeks with a few hundred followers he

held the fields in the Marais, but he was at last hemmed in and captured by one of the monster Thureau's *Colonnes Infernales*, those hellish legions with an account of whose deeds,' so says this gallant gentleman our friend, 'I will not defile my pen, but whose boasts are like those of Attila the Hun, and who in their malice have invented obscene tortures worthy of Iroquois savages for all who fall into their clutches, be they men, women, or children… But, by Heaven's mercy, dear Madame,' says M. de Puisaye to me, 'your noble husband was too weak to afford sport to those demons, and so he has escaped torment. He was hanged with all speed indeed, for fear he might die first of his toils and his wounds, and so defeat them at the last.'"

A rustling murmur of horror and indignation went round the table; but the little woman faced the audience proudly.

"He died," she said, "as beseems a brave man. But this is not all. I had a sister, she was very fair – like me some people said, in looks – she used to be the merry one at home in the days of peace," she gave a little smile, far more piteous than tears would be – "She chose to remain among her people when they were fighting, to help the wounded, the sick." Here Madame de Savenaye paused a moment and put down the letter from which she had been reading; for the first time since she had begun to speak she grew pale; knitting her black brows and with downcast eyes she went on: "Monsieur de Puisaye says he asks my pardon humbly on his knees for writing such tidings to me, bereaved as I am of all I hold dear, but 'it is meet,' he says, 'that the

civilised world should know the deeds these followers of *liberty* and *enlightenment* have wrought upon gallant men and highborn ladies,' and I hold that he says well."

She flashed once more her black gaze round upon the men, who with heads all turned towards her and forgetting their wine, hung upon her words. "It is right that I should know, and you too! It is meet that such deeds should be made known to the world: my sister was taken by these men, but less fortunate than my husband she had life enough left for torture – she too is dead now; M. de Puisaye adds: Thank God! And that is all that I can say too – Thank God!"

There was a dead silence in the room as she ceased speaking, broken at last, here and there, along the table by exclamations and groans and a deep execration from Sir Thomas, which was echoed deep-mouthed by his guests.

Adrian himself, the pacific, the philosopher, with both arms, stretched out on the table, clenched his hands, and set his teeth and gazed into space with murderous looks.

Then the clear young voice went on again:

"You, who have honoured mothers and wives of your own, and have young sweethearts, or sisters or daughters – you English gentlemen who love to see justice, how long will you allow such things to be done while you have arms to strike? We are not beaten yet; there are French hearts still left that will be up and doing so long as they have a drop of blood to shed. Our gallant Bretons and Vendéens are uniting once more, our émigrés are

collecting, but we want aid, brave English friends, we want arms, money, soldiers. My task lies to my hand; the sacred legacy of my dead I have accepted; is there any of you here who will help the widow to maintain the fight?"

She had risen to her feet; the blood glowed on her cheek as she concluded her appeal; a thousand stars danced in her eyes.

Old men and young they leapt up, with a roar; pressing round her, pouring forth acclamations, asseverations and oaths – Would they help her? By God – they would die for her – Never had the old rafters of Pulwick rung to such enthusiasm.

And when with proud smiles and crimsoned face she withdraws at last from so much ardour, the door has scarcely fallen behind her before Sir Thomas proposes her health in a bellow, that trembles upon tears:

"Gentlemen, this lady's courage is such as might put most men's strength to shame. Here is, gentlemen, to Madame de Savenaye!"

And she, halting on the stairs for a moment, to still her high-beating heart, before she lay her babe against it, hears the toast honoured with three times three.

When the Lancastrian ladies had succeeded at length in collecting and carrying off such among the hiccupping husbands, and maudlin sons, who were able to move, Sir Thomas re-entering the hall, after speeding the last departing chariot, and prudently leaning upon his tall son – for though he had a seasoned head the night's potations had been deep and fiery – was startled

well-nigh into soberness, at the sight of his niece waiting for him at the foot of the stairs.

"Why, Cis, my love, we thought you had been in bed this long while! why – where have you been then since you ran away from the dining-room? By George!" chuckling, "the fellows were mad to get another glimpse of you!"

His bloodshot eye hung over her fondly. There was not a trace of fatigue upon that delicate, pretty face.

"I wanted to think – I have much to think on now. I have had to read and ponder upon my instructions here," – tapping her teeth with the letter, she still carried, "Good uncle, I would speak with you – yes, even now," quick to notice Adrian's slight frown of disapproval (poor fellow, he was sober enough at any rate!), "there is no time like the present. I have my work to do, and I shall not rest to-night, till I have planned it in my head."

Surely the brilliancy of those eyes was feverish; the little hands she laid upon them to draw them into the dim-lit library were hot as fire.

"Why, yes, my pretty," quoth the good uncle, stifling a portentous yawn, and striving to look wondrous wise, "Adrian, she wants to consult me, sir, hic!"

He fell into an arm-chair as he spoke, and she sank on her knees beside him, the firelight playing upon her eager face, while Adrian, in the shadow, watched.

"Do you think," she asked of the old man, eagerly, "that these gentlemen, who spoke so kindly to me a few hours ago, will be

as much in earnest in the morning?"

"Why d – n them! if they go back on their word, I'll call them out!" thundered Sir Thomas, in a great rage all of a sudden. She surveyed him inquiringly, and shot a swift keen glance from the placid, bulky figure in the chair, to Adrian pale and erect, behind it, then rose to her feet and stood a few paces off, as it were pondering.

"What is now required of me – I have been thinking it well over," she said at last, "can hardly be achieved by a woman alone. And yet, with proper help and support, I think I could do more than any man by himself. There is that in a woman's entreaties which will win, when a man may fail. But I must have a knight at my side; a protector, at the same time as a faithful servant. These are not the times to stand on conventional scruples. Do you think, among these gentlemen, any could be found with sufficient enthusiasm, for the Royal cause, here represented by me, to attend, and support me through all the fatigues, the endless errands, the interviews – ay, also the rebuffs, the ridicule at times, perhaps the danger of the conjuration, which must be set on foot in this country – to do all that, without hope of other reward than the consciousness of helping a good cause, and – and the gratitude of one, who may have nothing else to give?"

She stopped with a little nervous laugh: "No, it is absurd! no man, on reflection would enter into such a service unless it were for his own country."

As the last words fell from her lips, she suddenly turned to

Adrian and met his earnest gaze.

"Or for his kindred," said the young man, coming up to her with grave simplicity, "if his kindred required it."

A gleam of satisfaction passed across her face. The father, who had caught her meaning – sharp enough, as some men can be in their cups – nodded his head with great vigour.

"Yes, why should you think first of strangers," he grumbled, "when you have your own blood, to stand by you – blood is thicker than water, ain't it? Am I too old, or is he too young, to wait on you – hey, madam?"

She extended her hand, allowing it to linger in Adrian's grasp, whilst she laid the other tenderly on the old man's shoulder.

"My good uncle! my kind cousin! Have I the choice already between two such cavaliers? I am fortunate indeed in my misfortune. In other circumstances to decide would be difficult between two men, each so good; but," she added, after a moment's hesitation, and looking at Adrian in a manner that made the young man's heart beat thickly, "in this case it is obvious I must have some one whom I need not fear to direct."

"Ay, ay," muttered the baronet, "I'd go with you, my darling, to the world's end; but there's that young philosopher of mine breaking his heart for you. And when all's said and done, it's the young fellow that'll be the most use to you, I reckon. Ay, you've chosen already, I'll be bound. The gouty old man had best stop at home. Ho, ho, ho! You've the luck, Adrian; more luck than you deserve."

"It is I who have more luck than I deserve," answered Madame de Savenaye, smiling upon her young knight as, taking heart of grace, he stooped to seal the treaty upon her hand. "To say the truth, I had hoped for this, yet hardly dared to allow myself to count upon it. And really, uncle, you give your own son to my cause? – and you, cousin, you are willing to work for me? I am indeed strengthened at the outset of my undertaking. I shall pray that you may never have cause to regret your chivalrous goodness."

She dropped Adrian's hand with a faint pressure, and moved sighing towards the door.

"Do you wonder that I have no tears, cousin?" she said, a little wistfully; "they must gather in my heart till I have time to sit down and shed them."

Thus it was that a letter penned by this unknown M. de Puisaye from some hidden fastness in the Bocage of Brittany came to divert the course of Adrian Landale's existence into a channel where neither he, nor any of those who knew him, would ever have dreamed to see it drift.

CHAPTER V
THE AWAKENING

Oh, what hadst thou to do with cruel Death,
Who wast so full of life, or Death with thee?

Longfellow.

Sir Adrian Landale, in his sea-girt fastness, still absorbed in dreams of bygone days, loosed his grasp of faithful René's shoulder and fell to pacing the chamber with sombre mien; while René, to whom these fits of abstraction in his master were not unfamiliar, but yet to his superstitious peasant soul, eerie and awe-inspiring visitations, slipped unnoticed from his presence.

The light-keeper sate down by his lonely hearth and buried his gaze in the glowing wood-embers, over which, with each fitful thundering rush of wind round the chimney, fluttered little eddies of silvery ash.

So, that long strife was over, which had wrought such havoc to the world, had shaped so dismally the course of his own life! The monster of selfish ambition, the tyrannic, insatiable conqueror whose very existence had so long made peaceable pursuits unprofitable to mankind, the final outcome of that Revolution that, at the starting point, had boded so nobly for human welfare – he was at last laid low, and all the misery of the

protracted struggle now belonged to the annals of the past.

It was all over – but the waste! The waste of life and happiness, far and wide away among innocent and uninterested beings, the waste remained.

And, looking back on it, the most bitter portion of his own wrecked life was the short time he had yet thought happy; three months, spent as knight-errant.

How far they seemed, far as irrevocable youth, those days when, in the wake of that love-compelling emissary, he moved from intrigue to intrigue among the émigrés in London, and their English sympathisers, to bustling yet secret activity in seafaring parts!

The mechanical instrument directed by the ingenious mind of Cécile de Savenaye; the discreet minister who, for all his young years, secured the help of some important political sympathiser one day, scoured the country for arms and clothing, powder and *assignats* another; who treated with smuggling captains and chartered vessels that were to run the gauntlet on the Norman and Breton coast, and supply the means of war to struggling and undaunted loyalists. All this relentless work, little suited, on the whole, to an Englishman, and in a cause the rights of which he himself had, up to then, refused to admit, was then repaid a hundredfold by a look of gratitude, of pleasure even, a few sweet moments of his lady's company, before being sent hence again upon some fresh enterprise.

Ah, how he loved her! He, the youth on the threshold of

manhood, who had never known passion before, how he loved this young widowed mother who used him as a man to deal for her with men, yet so loftily treated him as a boy when she dealt with him herself. And if he loved her in the earlier period of his thraldom, when scarce would he see her one hour in the twenty-four, to what all-encompassing fervour did the bootless passion rise when, the day of departure having dawned and sunk, he found himself on board the privateer, sailing away with her towards unknown warlike ventures, her knight to protect her, her servant to obey!

On all these things mused the recluse of Scarthey, sinking deeper and deeper into the past: the spell of haunting recollection closing on him as he sat by his hearthside, whilst the increasing fury of the gale toiled and troubled outside fighting the impassable walls of his tower.

Could it have been possible that she – the only woman that had ever existed for him, the love for whom had so distorted his mind from its natural sympathies, had killed in him the spring of youth and the savour of life – never really learnt to love him in return till the last?

And yet there was a woman's soul in that delicious woman's body – it showed itself at least once, though until that supreme moment of union and parting, it seemed as if a man's mind alone governed it, becoming sterner, more unbendable, as hardships and difficulties multiplied.

In the melancholy phantasm passing before his mind's eye,

of a period of unprecedented bloodshed and savagery, when on the one side Chouans, Vendéens, and such guerillas of which Madame de Savenaye was the moving spirit, and on the other the *colonnes infernales* of the revolutionary leaders, vied with each other in ferocity and cunning, she stood ever foremost, ever the central point of thought, with a vividness that almost a score of years had failed to dim.

When the mood was upon him, he could unfold the roll of that story buried now in the lonely graves of the many, or in the fickle memories of the few, but upon his soul printed in letters of fire and blood – to endure for ever.

Round this goddess of his young and only love clustered the sole impressions of the outer world that had ever stirred his heart: the grandeur of the ocean, of the storm, the glory of sunrise over a dishevelled sea, the ineffable melancholy of twilight rising from an unknown strand; then the solemn coldness of moonlight watches, the scent of the burnt land under the fierce sun, when all nature was hushed save the dreamy buzz of insect-life: the green coolness of underwood or forest, the unutterable harmony of the sighing breeze, and the song of wild birds during the long patient ambushes of partisan war; the taste of bread in hunger, of the stream in the fever of thirst, of approaching sleep in exhaustion – and, mixed with these, the acrid emotions of fight and carnage, anguish of suspense, savage exultation of victory – all the doings of a life which he, bred to intellectual pleasures and high moral ideas, would have deemed a nightmare, but which, lived as it was

in the atmosphere of his longing and devotion, yet held for him a strange and pungent joy: a cup of cruel memories, yet one to be lingered over luxuriously till the savour of each cherished drop of bitterness be gathered to the uttermost.

Now, in the brightness of the embers, between the fitful flames of crumbling wood, spreads before his eyes the dreary strand near Quiberon, immense in the gathering darkness of a boisterous evening. Well hidden under the stone table of a Druidical men-hir glows a small camp-fire sedulously kept alive by René for the service of The Lady. She, wrapped up in a coarse peasant-cloak, pensively gazes into the cheerless smoke and holds her worn and muddy boots to the smouldering wood in the vain hope of warmth.

And Adrian stands silently behind her, brooding on many things – on the vicissitudes of that desultory war which has left them not a roof whereunder they can lay their heads, during which the little English contingent has melted from them one by one; on the critical action of the morrow when the republican columns, now hastening to oppose the landing of the great royalist expedition to Quiberon (that supreme effort upon which all their hopes centre) must be surprised and cut off at whatever cost; on the mighty doings to follow, which are to complete the result of the recent sea fight off Ushant and crown their devoted toil with victory at last…

And through his thoughts he watches the pretty foot, in its hideous disguise of patched, worn, ill-fitting leather, and he sees

it as on the first day of their meeting, in its gleaming slipper and dainty silken stocking.

Now and then an owl-cry, repeated from point to point, tells of unremitting guard, but for which, in the vast silence, none could suspect that a thousand men and more are lying stretched upon the plain all around them, fireless, well-nigh without food, yet patiently waiting for the morrow when their chiefs shall lead them to death; nor that, in a closer circle, within call, are some fifty *gars*, remnant of the indomitable "Savenaye band," and tacitly sworn bodyguard to The Lady who came back from ease and safety over seas to share their peril.

No sound besides, but the wind as it whistles and moans over the heath – and the two are together in the mist which comes closing in upon them as if to shroud them from all the rest, for even René has crept away, to sleep perhaps.

She turns at last towards him, her small face in the dying light of this sullen evening, how wan and weather-beaten!

"Pensive, as usual, cousin?" she says in English, and extends her hand, browned and scratched, that was once so exquisite, and she smiles, the smile of a dauntless soul from a weary body.

Poor little hands, poor little feet, so cold, so battered, so ill-used! He, who would have warmed them in his bosom, given his heart for them to tread upon, breaks down now, for the first time; and falling on his knees covers the cold fingers with kisses, and then lays his lips against those pitiful torn boots.

But she spurns him from her – even from her feet:

"Shame on you!" she says angrily; and adds, more gently, yet with some contempt: "*Enfant, va!*– is this the time for such follies?"

And, suddenly recalled to honour and grim actuality, he realises with dismay his breach of trust – he, who in their earlier days in London had called out that sprightly little émigré merely for the vulgar flippancy (aimed in compliment, too, at the grave aide-de-camp), "that the fate of the late Count weighed somewhat lightly upon Madame de Savenaye;" he, who had struck that too literary countryman of his own across the face – ay, and shot him in the shoulder, all in the secret early dawn of the day they left England – for daring to remark within his hearing: "By George, the handsome Frenchwoman and her cousin may be a little less than kin, but they are a little more than kind."

But yet, as the rage of love contending in his heart with self-reproach, he rises to his feet in shame, she gives him her hand once more, and in a different voice:

"Courage, cousin," says she, "perhaps some day we may both have our reward. But will not my knight continue to fight for my bidding, even without hope of such?"

Pondering on this enigmatic sentence he leaves her to her rest.

When next he finds himself by her side the anticipated action has begun; and it is to be the last day that those beautiful burning eyes shall see the glory of the rising sun.

The Chouans are fighting like demons, extended in long skirmishing lines, picking out the cluster of gunners, making

right deadly use of their English powder; imperceptibly but unflinchingly closing their scattered groups until the signal comes and with ringing cries: "*Notre Dame d'Auray!*" and "*Vive le roi!*" they charge, undismayed by odds, the serried ranks of the Republicans.

She, from the top of the druidical stone, watches the progress of the day. Her red, parted mouth twitches as she follows the efforts of the men. Behind her, the *gars* of Savenaye, grasping with angry clutch, some a new musket, others an ancient straightened scythe, gaze fiercely on the scene from under their broad felts. Now and then a flight of republican bullets hum about their ears, and they look anxiously to Their Lady, but that fearless head never bends.

Then the moment arrives, and with a fervent, "God be with you, brave people," she hurls, by a stirring gesture, the last reserve on to the fight.

And now he finds himself in the midst of the furious medley, striking mechanically, his soul away behind on that stone, with her. Presently, as the frenzy waxes wilder, he is conscious that victory is not with them, but that they are pressed back and encompassed, and that for each blue coat cast down amidst the yells and oaths, two more seem to come out of the rain and smoke; whilst the bare feet and wooden shoes and the long hair of his peasants are seen in ever-lessening ranks. And, in time, they find themselves thrown back to the men-hir; she is there, still calm but ghastly white, a pistol in each hand. Around her,

through the wet smoke, rise and fall with sickening thuds the clubbed muskets of three or four men, and then one by one these sink to the ground too. With a wailing groan like a man in a nightmare, he sees the inevitable end and rushes to place his body before hers. A bullet shatters his sword-blade; now none are left around them but the begrimed and sinister faces of their enemies.

As they stand prisoners, and unheeding the hideous clamour, he, with despair thinking of her inevitable fate at the hands of such victors, and scarcely daring to look at her, suddenly sees *that* in her eyes which fills his soul to overflowing.

"All is lost," she whispers, "and I shall never repay you for all you have done, cousin!"

The words are uttered falteringly, almost plaintively.

"We are not long now for this world, friend," she adds more firmly. "Give me your forgiveness."

How often has Adrian heard this dead voice during the strange vicissitudes of these long, long years! And, hearing it whisper in the vivid world of his brain, how often has he not passionately longed that he also had been able to yield his poor spark of life on the last day of her existence.

For the usual fate of Chouan prisoners swiftly overtakes the surviving leaders of the Savenaye "band of brigands," as that doughty knot of loyalists was termed by their arch-enemy, Thureau.

A long journey towards the nearest town, in an open cart, under the pitiless rain, amidst a crowd of evil-smelling,

blaspheming, wounded republicans, who, when a more cruel jolt than usual awakens their wounds, curse the woman in words that should have drawn avenging bolts from heaven. She sits silent, lofty, tearless; but her eyes, when they are not lost in the grey distance, ever wistfully seek his face.

The day is drawing to a close; they reach their goal, a miserable, grey, draggled town at the mouth of the Vilaine, and are roughly brought before the arbiter of their lives – Thureau himself, the monstrous excrescence of the times, who, like Marat and Carrier, sees nothing in the new freedom but a free opening for the lowest instincts of ferocity.

And before this monstrous beast, bedizened in his general's frippery, in a reeking tavern-room, stand the noble lady of Savenaye and the young heir of Pulwick.

The ruffian's voice rings with laughter as he gazes on the silent youthful pair.

"Aha, what have we here; a couple of drowned rats? or have we trapped you at last, the ci-devant Savenaye and her *godam* from England? I ought really to send you as a present to the Convention, but I am too soft-hearted, you see, my pigeons; and so, to save time and make sure, we will marry you to-day."

One of the officers whispers some words in his ear, which Thureau, suddenly growing purple with rage, denies with a foul oath and an emphatic thump of his huge fist on the table.

"Hoche has forbidden it, has he? Hoche does not command here. Hoche has not had to hunt down the brigands these last two

years. Dead the beast, dead the venom, I say. And here is the order," scribbling hurriedly on a page torn from a pocket-book. "It shall not be said that I have had the bitch of Savenaye in my hands and trusted her on the road again. Hoche has forbidden it! Call the cantineer and hop: the marriage and quick – the soup waits."

Unable to understand the hidden meaning of the order, Adrian looks at his lady askance, to find that, with eyes closed upon the sight of the grinning faces, she is whispering prayers and fervently crossing herself. When she turns to him again her face is almost serene.

"They are going to drown us together; that is their republican marriage of aristocrats," she says in soft English. "I had feared worse. Thank heaven there is no time now for worse. We shall be firm to the last, shall we not, cousin?"

There is a pathetic smile on her worn weather-stained face, as the cantineer and a corporal enter with ropes and proceed to pinion the prisoners.

But, as they are marched away once more under the slanting rain, are forced into a worn-out boat and lashed face to face, her fortitude melts apace.

"There, my turtle-doves," sneers the truculent corporal, "another kindness of the general. The Nantes way is back to back, but he thought it would amuse you to see each other's grimaces."

On the strand resounds the muffled roll of wet drums,

announcing the execution of national justice; with one blow of an axe the craft is scuttled; a push from a gaff sends it spinning on the swift swollen waters into the estuary. Adrian's lips are on her forehead, but she lifts her face; her eyes now are haggard.

"Adrian," she sobs, "you have forgiven me? I have your death on my soul! Oh, Adrian, … I could have loved you!"

Helpless and palsied by the merciless ropes, she tries passionately to reach her little mouth to his. A stream of fire rushes through his brain – maddening frenzy of regret, furious clinging to escaping life! – Their lips have met, but the sinking craft is full, and, with a sudden lurch, falls beneath the eddies… A last roll of the drums, and the pinioned bodies of these lovers of a few seconds are silently swirling under the waters of the Vilaine.

And now the end of this poor life has come – with heart-breaking sorrow of mind and struggle of body, overpowering horror at the writhings of torture in the limbs lashed against his – and vainly he strives to force his last breath into her hard-clenched mouth.

Such was the end of Adrian Landale, aged twenty – the end that should have been – The pity that it was not permitted!

After the pangs of unwelcome death, the misery of unwelcome return to life. Oh, René, René, too faithful follower; thou and the other true men who, heedless of danger, hanging on the flanks of the victorious enemy, never ceased to watch your lady from afar. You would have saved her, could courage and

faithfulness and cunning have availed! But, since she was dead, René, would thou hadst left us to drift on to the endless sea! How often have I cursed thee, good friend, who staked thy life in the angry bore to snatch two spent bodies from its merciless tossing. It was not to be endured, said you, that the remains of the Lady of Savenaye should drift away unheeded, to be devoured by the beasts of the sea! They now repose in sacred ground, and I live on! Oh, hadst thou but reached us a minute later! – ah, God, or a minute earlier!

Rarely had Sir Adrian's haunting visions of the past assumed such lurid reality. Rising in torment from the hearth to pace unceasingly the length and breadth of the restful, studious room, so closely secure from the outer turmoil of heaven and earth, he is once more back in the unknown sea-cave, in front of the angry breakers. Slowly, agonisingly, he is recalled to life through wheeling spaces of pain and confusion, only that his bruised and smarting eyes may see the actual proof of his own desolateness – a small, stark figure wrapped in coarse sailcloth, which now two or three ragged, long-haired men are silently lifting between them.

He wonders, at first, vaguely, why the tears course down those wild, dark faces; and then, as vainly he struggles to speak, and is gently held down by some unknown hand, the little white bundle is gone, and he knows that *there* was the pitiful relict of his love – that he will never see her again!

Sir Adrian halted in front of his seaward window, staring at

the driven rain, which bounded and plashed and spread in minute torrents down the glass, obscuring the already darkening vision of furious sea and sky.

The dog, that for some moments had shown an anxious restlessness in singular concert with his master's, now rose at last to sniff beneath the door. No sound penetrated the roar of the blast; but the old retriever's uneasiness, his sharp, warning bark at length recalled Sir Adrian's wandering thoughts to the present. And, walking up to the door, he opened it.

Oh, God! Had the sea given up its dead?

Sir Adrian staggered back, fell on his knees and clapped his hands together with an agonised cry:

"Cécile…!"

CHAPTER VI
THE WHEEL OF TIME

And to his eye
There was but one beloved face on earth,
And that was shining on him.

Byron.

Upon the threshold she stood, looking in upon him with dark, luminous eyes; round the small wet face tangles of raven hair fell limp and streaming; dark raiments clung to her form, diapered with sand and sea-foam, sodden with the moisture that dripped from them to the floor; under the hem of her skirt one foot peered forth, shoeless in its mud-stained stocking.

Sir Adrian stared up at her, his brain whirling with a frenzy of joy, gripped in its soaring ecstasy by terror of the incomprehensible.

On the wings of the storm and the wind had she come to him, his love – across the awful barriers that divide life and death? Had his longings and the clamour of his desolate soul reached her, after all these years, in the far-beyond, and was her sweet ghost here to bid him cease from them and let her lie at rest? Or, yet, had she come to call him from the weary world that their souls might meet and be one at last?.. Then let her but lay her

lips against his, as once in the bitterness of death, that his sorely-tried heart may break with the exquisite pang and he, too, may die upon their kiss.

Swift such thoughts were tossing in the turmoil of his mind when the vision smiled … a young, rosy, living smile; and then reason, memory, the wonder of her coming, the haunting of her grave went from him; possessed by one single rapturous certainty he started up and gathered the wet form into his strong arms – yet gently as if he feared to crush the vision into void – and showered kisses on the wet face.

Not death – but life! A beating heart beneath his; a lithe young form under his hand, warm lips to his kisses, … Merciful Heaven! Were, then, these twenty years all an evil, fevered dream, and was he awake at length?

She turned her face from him after a moment and put her hand against his breast to push him from her; and as she did so the wonder in the lovely, familiar eyes turned to merriment, and the lips parted into laughter.

The sound of the girlish laughter broke the spell. Sir Adrian stepped back, and passed his hand across his forehead with a dazed look.

And still she laughed on.

"Why, cousin Landale," she said, at length between the peals; "I came to throw myself upon your kindness for shelter from the storm, but – I had not anticipated such a reception."

The voice, clear and sweet, with just a tinge of outlandish

intonation, struck Adrian to the heart.

"I have not heard," he faltered, "that voice for twenty years…!"

Then, coming up to her, he took her hands; and, drawing her towards the firelight, scanned her features with eager, hungering eyes.

"Do not think me mad, child," he said at last; "tell me who you are – what has brought you here? Ah, God, at such a moment! Who is it," he pursued, as if to himself, whilst still she smiled mockingly and answered not; "who is it, then, since Cécile de Savenaye is dead – and I am not dreaming – nor in fever? No vision either – this is flesh and blood."

"Yes, indeed," mocked the girl with another burst of merriment; "flesh and blood, please, and very living! Why, cousin Landale, you that knew Cécile de Savenaye so well have you forgotten two babes that were born at your own house of Pulwick? I believe, 'tis true, I have somewhat altered since you saw me last."

And again the old room echoed to the unwonted sound of a girl's laughter.

Now was the hallucination clearing; but the reality evoked a new and almost as poignant tenderness. Cécile – phantom of a life-time's love, reborn in the flesh, young as on the last day of her earthly existence, coming back into his life again, even the same as she had left it! A second wonder, almost as sweet as the first! He clung to it as one clings to the presence of a dream, and,

joy unspeakable, the dream did not melt away, but remained, smiling, beautiful, unchanged.

"Cécile's daughter …" he murmured: "Cécile's self again; but she was not so tall, I think," and drew trembling, reverent hands from her head to her straight young shoulders. And then he started, crying in a changed voice:

"How wet and cold you are! Come closer to the fire – sit you into this chair, here, in the warmth."

He piled up the hearth with faggots till the flames roared again. She dropped into the proffered chair with a little shiver; now that he recalled her to it, she was wet and cold too.

He surveyed her with gathering concern.

"My child," he began, and hesitated, continuing, after a short pause of musing – for the thought struck him as strange – "I may call you so, I suppose; I that am nearly old enough to be your father; my mind was so unhinged by your sudden appearance, by the wonderful resemblance, that I have neglected all my duties as host. You will suffer from this – what shall we do to comfort you? Here, Jem, good dog! Call René!"

The old retriever who, concluding that the visitor was welcome, had returned to his doze, here gathered his stiff limbs together, hobbled out through the doorway to give two or three yelping barks at some point on the stairs, and then crawl back to his cosy corner by the hearth.

The girl laughed again. It was all odd, new, exciting. Adrian looked down at her. Cécile, too, had had a merry heart, even

through peril and misfortune.

And now there were hasty steps upon the stairs, creaking above the outer tumult of sea and wind; and, in accordance with the long-established custom of summoning him, René appeared upon the threshold, holding a pair of candles.

At the sight of the figure sitting by the fire he halted, as if rooted to the ground, and threw up his hands, each still clutching its candle.

"Mademoiselle…!" he ejaculated. "Mademoiselle here!" Then, rapidly recovering his quick wits, he deposited his burden of light upon the table, advanced towards the lady, made an uncouth but profound bow, and turned to his master.

"And this, your honour," he remarked, oracularly, and in his usual manner of literal adaptation, "was also part of the news I had for your honour from my last journey; but, my faith, I did not know how to take myself to it, as your honour was so much occupied with old times this evening. But I had seen Mademoiselle at the castle, as Mademoiselle can tell you herself. And if your honour," he added, with a look of astonishment, "will have the goodness to say how it is possible that Mademoiselle managed to arrive here on our isle, in this weather of all the devils – reverence speaking, and I humbly beg the pardon of Mademoiselle for using such words – when it was with pain I could land myself, and that before the storm – I should be grateful to your honour. For I avow I cannot comprehend it at all. Ah, your honour!" continued René, with an altered tone, "'tis a strange

thing, this!"

The looks of master and man crossed suddenly, and in the frank blue eyes of the Breton peasant, Sir Adrian read a reflex of his own thoughts.

"Yes," he said, more in answer to the look than to the exclamation, "yes, it is a strange thing, friend."

"And his Honour cannot read the riddle any more than you yourself, René," quoth Mademoiselle de Savenaye, composedly from her corner; "and, as for me, I can give no explanations until I am a little warmer."

"Why, truly," exclaimed Sir Adrian, striking his forehead, "we are a very pair of dolts! Hurry, Renny, hurry, call up Margery, and bid her bring some hot drink – tea, broth, or what she has – and blankets. Stay! first fetch my furred cloak; quick, René, every moment is precious!"

With all the agitation of a rarely excited man Sir Adrian threw more wood on the fire, hunted for a cushion to place beneath her feet, and then, seizing the cloak from René's hands, he helped her to rise, and wrapped its ample folds round her as carefully as if she were too precious almost to be touched.

Thus enveloped she sank back in the great arm-chair with a cosy, deliberate, kitten-like movement, and stretched out her feet to the blaze, laying the little shoeless one upon Jem's grey muzzle.

Adrian knelt beside her, and began gently to chafe it with both hands. And, as he knelt, silence fell between them, and the storm howled out yonder; he heard her give a little sigh – that sigh which

would escape from Cécile's weariness in moments of rest, which had once been so familiar and so pathetic a sound in his ear. And once more the power of the past came over him; again he was upon the heath near Quiberon, and Cécile was sitting by him and seeking warmth by the secret fire.

"Oh, my darling," he murmured, "your poor little feet were so cold; and yet you would not let me gather them to my breast." And, stooping slowly, he kissed the pretty foot in its torn, stained stocking with a passion he had not yet shown.

The girl looked on with an odd little smile. It was a novel experience, to inspire – even vicariously – such feelings as these; and there was something not unpleasant in the sense of the power which had brought this strange handsome man prostrate before her – a maidenly tremor, too, in the sensation of those burning lips upon her feet.

He raised his eyes suddenly, with the old expectation of a rebuff; and then, at the sight of the youthful, curious face above him, betook himself to sighing too; and, laying the little foot back tenderly upon the cushion, he rose.

From between the huge fur collar which all but covered her head, the black eyes followed him as alertly as a bird's; intercepting the soft melancholy of his gaze, she smiled at him, mischievous, confident, and uncommunicative, and snuggled deeper into the fur.

Leaning against the high mantel-board, he remained silent, brooding over her; the clock ticked off solemnly the fleeting

moments of the wonderful hour; and ever and anon the dog drew a long breath of comfort and stretched out his gaunt limbs more luxuriously to the heat. After a while Sir Adrian spoke.

"He who has hospitality to dispense," said he, smiling down at her mutinous grace, "should never ask whence or how the guest came to his hearth … and yet – "

She made a slight movement of laziness, but volunteered nothing; and he continued, his look becoming more wistful as he spoke:

"Your having reached this rock, during such weather, is startling enough; it is God's providence that there should live those in these ruins who are able to give you succour. But that you should come in to me at the moment you did – " He halted before the bold inquisitive brightness of her eyes. "Some day perhaps you will let me explain," he went on, embarrassed. "Indeed I must have seemed the most absolute madman, to you. But he who thinks he sees one returned from death in angry waters, may be pardoned some display of emotion."

The girl sat up briskly and shook herself as if in protest against the sadness of his smile and look.

"I rise indeed from a watery grave," she said lightly, "or at least from what should have been my grave, had I had my deserts for my foolishness; as it has turned out I do not regret it now; though I did, about midway."

The red lips parted and the little teeth gleamed. "I have found such kindness and welcome." She caressed the dog who, lazily,

tried to lick her hand. "It is all such an adventure; so much more amusing than Pulwick; so much more interesting than ever I fancied it might be!"

"Pulwick; you come from Pulwick?" said Sir Adrian musing; "true, René has said it but just now. Yet, it is of a piece with the strangeness of it all."

"Yes," said Mademoiselle de Savenaye, once more collecting her cloak, which her hurried movement had thrown off her shoulder. "Madelon and I are now at Pulwick – I am Molly, cousin, please to remember – or rather I am here, very warm now, and comfortable, and she is somewhere along the shore – perhaps – she and John, as wet as drowned rats. Well, well, I had best tell you the tale from the beginning, or else we never shall be out of the labyrinth. – We started from Pulwick, for a ride by the shore, Madelon and I. When we were on the strand it came on to rain. There was smoke out of your chimney. I proposed a canter as far as the ruins, for shelter. I knew very well Madelon would not follow; but I threw poor Lucifer – you know Lucifer, Mr. Landale has reserved him for me; of course you know Lucifer, I believe he belongs to you! Well, I threw him along the causeway. John, he's the groom you know, and Madelon, shrieked after me. But it was beautiful – this magnificent tearing gallop in the rain – I was not going to stop. – But when we were half way, Lucifer and I, I saw suddenly that the foam seemed to cover the sand in front of me. Then I pulled up quick and turned round to look behind me. There was already a frightful wind, and the sand and

the rain blinded me almost, but there was no mistake – the sea was running between the shore and me. Oh! my God! but I was frightened then; I beat poor Lucifer until my whip broke, and he started away with a will. But when his feet began to splash the water he too became frightened and stopped. I did not know what to do; I pulled out my broach to spur him with the pin, but, at the first prick I gave him, he reared, and swerved and I fell right on my face in the froth. I got up and began to run through the water; then I came to some stones and I knew I was saved, though the water was up to my knees and rushing by like a torrent. When I had clambered up the beach I thought again of poor Lucifer. I looked about and saw him a little way off. He was shaking and tossing his dear black head, and neighing, though I really did not hear him, for the wind was in my ears; his body was stock still, I could not see his legs… And gradually he sank lower, and lower, and lower, and at last the water passed over his head. Oh! it was horrible, horrible!"

The girl shuddered and her bright face clouded. After a moment she resumed:

"It was only then I thought of the moving sands they spoke of the other day at Pulwick – and that was why Madelon and that poltroon groom would not follow me! Yet perhaps they were wise, after all, for the thought of being buried alive made me turn weak all of a sudden. My knees shook and I had to sit down, although I knew I had passed through the danger. But I was so sorry for poor Lucifer! I thought if I had come down and led him,

poor fellow, he might have come with me. Death is so awful, so hideous; he was so full of life and carried me so bravely, only a few minutes before! Is it not a shame that there should be such a thing as death?" she cried, rebelliously, and looked up at the man above her, whose face had grown white at the thought of the danger she had barely escaped.

"I waited," she resumed at length, "till I thought he must be quite dead, there below, and came up to the ruins, and looked for an entrance. I knocked at some doors and called, but the wind was so loud, no one heard. And then, at last, there was one door I could open, so I entered and came up the stairs and startled you, as you know. And that is how I came here and how Lucifer is drowned."

As she finished her tale at last, she looked up at her companion. But Sir Adrian, who had followed her with ever-deepening earnestness of mien, remained silent; noticing which she added quickly and with a certain tinge of defiance:

"And now, no doubt, you are not quite so pleased as you seemed at first with the apparition which has caused you the loss of one of your best horses!"

"Why child," cried Sir Adrian, "so that you be safe you might have left all Pulwick at the bottom of the sands for me!" And René who entered the room at that moment, heading the advance of Dame Margery with the posset, here caught the extraordinary sound of a laugh on his master's lips, and stepped back to chuckle to himself and rub his hands.

"Who would have believed that!" he muttered, "and I who was afraid to tell his honour! Oh, yes, there are better times coming. Now in with you, Mother Margery, see for yourself who is there."

Holding in both hands a fragrant, steaming bowl, the old crone made her slow entrance upon the scene, peering with dim eyes, and dropping tremulous curtseys every two or three steps.

"Renny towd me as you wanted summat hot for a lady," she began cautiously; and then having approached near for recognition at last, burst forth into a long-drawn cry!

"Eh, you never says! Eh, dear o' me," and was fain to relinquish the bowl to her fellow-servant who narrowly watching, dived forward just in time to catch it from her, that she might clasp her aged hands together once and again with ever-renewed gestures of astonishment. "An' it were truth then, an' I that towd Renny to give over his nonsense – I didn't believe it, I welly couldn't. Eh, Mester Adrian, but she's like the poor lady that's dead and gone, the spit an' image she is – e-eh, she is!"

Molly de Savenaye laughed aloud, stretched out her hand for the bowl, and began with dainty caution to sip its scalding contents.

"Ah, my dear Margery," said the master, "we little thought what a guest the sea would cast up at our doors to-night! and now we must do our best for her; when she's finished your comforting mixture I shall give her into your charge. You ought to put her to bed – it will not be the first time."

"Ah! it will not, and a troublesome child she was," replied

Margery, after the usual pause for the assimilation of his remark, turning to the speaker from her palsied yet critical survey of her whilom nursling.

"And I'll see to her, never fear, I'll fettle up a room for her at once – blankets is airing already, an' sheets, an' Renny he's seen to the fire, so that as soon as Miss, here, is ready, I am."

Upon which, dropping a last curtsey with an assumed dignity which would have befitted a mistress of the robes, she took her departure, leaving Adrian smiling with amusement at her specious manner of announcing that his own bedroom – the only one available for the purpose in the ruins – was being duly converted into a lady's bower.

"It grieves me to think," mused he after a pause, while René still bursting with ungratified curiosity, hung about the further end of the room, "of the terrible anxiety they must be in about you at Pulwick, and of our absolute inability to convey to them the good news of your safety."

The girl gave a little laugh, with her lips over the cup, and shrugged her shoulders but said nothing.

"My God, yes," quoth René cheerfully from his corner. "Notre Dame d'Auray has watched over Mademoiselle to-day. She would not permit the daughter to die like the mother. And now we have got her ladyship we shall keep her too. This, if your honour remembers his sailor's knowledge, looks like a three-days' gale."

"You are right, I fancy," said Sir Adrian, going over to him

and looking out of the window. "Mademoiselle de Savenaye will have to take up her abode in our lighthouse for a longer time than she bargained. I do not remember hearing the breakers thunder in our cave so loud for many years. I trust," continued the light-keeper, coming down to his fair guest again, "that you may be able to endure such rough hospitality as ours must needs be!"

"It has been much more pleasant and I feel far more welcome already than at Pulwick," remarked Mademoiselle, between two deliberate sips, and in no way discomposed, it seemed, at the prospect held out to her.

"How?" cried Sir Adrian with a start, while the unwonted flush mounted to his forehead, "you, not welcome at Pulwick! Have they not welcomed a child of Cécile de Savenaye at Pulwick?.. Thank God, then, for the accident that has sent you to me!"

The girl looked at him with an inquisitive smile in her eyes; there was something on her lips which she restrained. Surrendering her cup, she remarked demurely:

"Yes, it was a lucky accident, was it not, that there was some one to offer shelter to the outcast from the sea? It is like a tale of old. It is delightful. Delightful, too, not to be drowned, safe and sound … and welcome in this curious old place."

She had risen and, as the cloak fell from her steaming garments, again she shivered.

"But you are right," she said, "I must go to bed, and get these damp garments off. And so, my Lord of Scarthey, I will retire

to my apartments; my Lady in Waiting I see yonder is ready for me."

With a quaint mixture of playfulness and gravity, she extended her hand, and Adrian stooped and kissed it – as he had kissed fair Cécile de Savenaye's rosy finger-tip upon the porch of Pulwick, twenty years before.

CHAPTER VII
FOREBODINGS OF GLADNESS

Molly de Savenaye in her improvised bedroom, wet as she was, could hardly betake herself to disrobing, so amused was she in surveying the fresh and romantic oddity of her surroundings, with their mixture of barbarous rudeness and almost womanish refinement.

Old Margery's fumbling hands were not nimble either, and it was long since she had acted as attendant upon one of her own sex. And so the matter progressed but slowly; but the speed of Margery's tongue was apparently not affected by its length of service. It wagged ceaselessly; the girl between her own moods of curious speculation vouchsafing an amused, half-contemptuous ear.

Presently, however, as the nurse's reminiscences wandered from the less interesting topic of her own vicissitudes, the children she had reared or buried, and the marvellous ailments she had endured, to an account of those days when she had served the French Madam and her babes, Molly, slowly peeling a clinging sleeve from her arm, turned a more eager and attentive face to her.

"Ah," quoth Margery, appraising her with blear eyes, "it's a queer thing how ye favour your mother, miss. She had just they beautiful shoulders and arms, as firm an' as white; but you're

taller, I think, and may be so, to speak, a stouter make altogether. Eh, dear, you were always a fine child and the poor lady set a deal of store on you, she did. She took you with her and left your sister with my Sally, when she was trapesing up to London and back with Mester Adrian, ay, and me with ye. And many the day that I wished myself safe at Pulwick! And I mind the day she took leave of you, I do that, well."

Here Dame Margery paused and shook her head solemnly, then pursued in another key:

"See now, miss, dear, just step out of they wet things, will ye now, and let me put this hot sheet round ye?"

"But I want to hear about myself," said Molly, gratefully wrapping the hot linen round her young beauty, and beginning to rub her black locks energetically. "Where was it my mother parted from me?"

"Why, I'll tell you, miss. When Madam – we allus used to call her Madam, ye know – was goin' her ways to the ship as was to take her to France, I took you after her mysel' down to the shore that she might have the very last of ye. Eh, I mind it as if it were yesterday. Mester Adrian was to go with her – Sir Adrian, I should say, but he was but Mester Adrian then – an' a two three more o' th' gentry as was all fur havin' a share o' th' fightin'. Sir Thomas himsel' was theer – I like as if I could see him now, poor owd gentleman, talkin' an' laughin' very hard an' jov'al, an' wipin' 's e'en when he thought nobody noticed. Eh, dear, yes! I could ha' cried mysel' to see th' bonny young lady goin' off fro' her bairns.

An' to think she niver came back to them no more. Well, well! An' Mester Adrian too – such a fine well-set-up young gentleman as he were – and *he* niver comed back for ten year an' when he did, he was that warsened – " she stopped, shook her head and groaned.

"Well, but how about me, nurse," observed Molly, "what about *me*?"

"Miss, please it was this way. Madam was wantin' a last look at her bairn – eh, she did, poor thing! You was allus her favoryite, ye know, miss – our Sally was wet-nurse to Miss Maddyline, but Madam had you hersel'. Well, miss, I'd brought you well lapped up i' my shawl an' William Shearman – that was Thomas Shearman's son, feyther to William an' Tom as lives over yonder at Pulwick village – well, William was standin' in 's great sea-boots ready to carry her through th' surf into the boat; an' Mester Adrian – Sir Adrian, I mean – stood it might be here, miss, an' there was Renny, an' yon were th' t'other gentry. Well, Madam stopped an' took you out o' my arms, an' hugged you to her breast – an' then she geet agate o' kissin' you – your head an' your little 'ands. An' you was jumpin' an' crowin' in her arms – the wind had blown your cap off, an' your little downy black hair was standing back. (Just let me get at your hair now, miss, please – Eh! it's cruel full of sand, my word, it is.)"

"It's 'ard, when all's said an' done, to part wi' th' babe ye've suckled, an' Madam, though there was niver nought nesh about 'er same as there is about most women, an' specially ladies – she

'ad th' mother's 'eart, she 'ad, miss, an when th' time coom for her to leave th' little un, I could see, as it were, welly burstin'. There we stood wi' th' wind blowin' our clothes an' our 'air, an' the waves roarin', an' one bigger nor th' t'others ran up till th' foam reached Madam's little feet, but she niver took no notice. Then all of a sudden she gets th' notion that she'd like to take you with 'er, an' she turns an' tells Mester Adrian so. 'She shall come with me,' she says, quite sharp an' determined, an' makes a sign to William Shearman to carry 'em both over. 'No, no,' says Mester Adrian, 'quite impossible,' says he, as wise as if he'd been an owd man i' stead o' nobbut a lad, ye might say. 'It would be madness both for you an' th' child. Now,' he says, very quiet an' gentle, 'if I might advise, I should say stay here with the child.' Eh, I couldn't tell ye all he said, an' then Sir Tummas coom bustlin' up, 'Do, now, my dear; think of it,' he says, pattin' her o' th' hand. 'Stay with us,' he says, 'ye'll be welcome as th' flowers in May!' An' there was Renny wi' 's 'at off, an' th' tears pourin' down his face, beggin' an' prayin' Madam to stop – at least, I reckoned that was what he were sayin' for it was all in 's own outlandish gibberish. The poor lady! she'd look from one to th' t'other an' a body a' must think she'd give in – an' then she'd unbethink hersel' again. An' Sir Thomas, he'd say, 'Do now, my dear,' an' then when she'd look at him that pitiful, he'd out wi' 's red 'andkercher an' frown over at Mester Adrian, an', says he, 'I wonder ye can ax her!' Well, all of a sudden off went th' big gun in th' ship – that was to let 'em know, miss, do ye see – an' up went Madam's head,

an' then th' wind fetched th' salt spray to her face, an' a kind o' change came over her. She looked at the child, then across at the ship – an' then she fair tossed ye back to me. Big William catched her up in his arms just same as another bairn, an' carried her to the boat."

"Yes," said Molly, gazing into the burning logs with brilliant eyes, but speaking low, as if to herself, so that her attendant's deaf ears failed to catch the meaning of the words. "Ah, that was life indeed! Happy mother to have seen such life – though she did die young."

"As ye say, miss," answered Margery, making a guess at the most likely comment from a daughter's lips, "it was cruel hard – it was that. 'Come, make haste!' cries the other young gentlemen: my word, they were in a hurry lest Madam happen to change her mind. I could welly have laughed to see their faces when Mester Adrian were trying to persuade her to stop at Pulwick, and let the men go alone. 'T wern't for that they reckoned to go all that road to France, ye may think, miss. Well, miss, in a few minutes they was all out i' the boat wi' th' waves tossin' 'em – an' I stood watchin' with you i' my arms, cryin' and kickin' out wi' your little legs, an' hittin' of me wi' your little 'ands, same as if ye knowed summat o' what was agate, poor lamb, an' was angry wi' me for keepin' ye. Then in a little while the big, white sails o' th' ship went swellin' out an' soon it was gone. An' that was th' last we saw o' Madam. A two-three year arter you an' Miss Maddyline was fetched away, to France, as I've been towd. I doubt you didn't so

much as think there was such a place as Pulwick, though many a one there minds how they dandled and played wi' you when you was a wee bairn, miss."

"Well, I am very glad to be back in England, anyhow," said Molly, nimbly slipping into bed. "Oh, Margery, what delicious warm sheets, and how good it is to be in bed alive, dry, and warm, after all!"

A new atmosphere pervaded Scarthey that night. The peaceful monotony of years, since the master of Pulwick had migrated to his "ruins," was broken at last, and happily. A warm colour seemed to have crept upon the hitherto dun and dull surroundings and brightened all the prospects.

At any rate René, over his busy work in the lantern, whistled and hummed snatches of song with unwonted blithesomeness, and, after lighting the steady watch-light and securing all his paraphernalia with extra care, dallied some time longer than usual on the outer platform, striving to snatch through the driven wraith a glance of the distant lights of Pulwick. For there, in the long distance, ensconced among the woods, stood a certain gate-lodge of greystone, much covered with ivy, which sheltered, among other inmates, the gatekeeper's blue-eyed, ripe and ruddy daughter – Dame Margery's pet grandchild.

The idea of ever leaving the master – even for the sake of the happiness to be found over yonder – was not one to be entertained by René. But what if dreams of a return to the life of the world should arise after to-day in the recluse's mind? Ah, the master's

eyes had been filled with light!.. and had he not actually laughed?

René peered again through the wind, but nothing could be seen of the world abroad, save grey, tumbling waters foaming at the foot of the islet; fretful waters coalescing all around with the driven, misty air. A desolate view enough, had there been room for melancholy thoughts in his heart.

Blithely did he descend the steep wooden stairs from the roaring, weather-beaten platform, to the more secure inhabited keep; and, humming a satisfied tune, he entered upon Margery in her flaming kitchen, to find the old lady intent on sorting out a heap of feminine garments and spreading them before the fire.

René took up a little shoe, sand-soiled and limp, and reverentially rubbed it on his sleeve.

"Well, mother," he said, cheerfully, "it is a long while since you had to do with such pretty things. My faith, these are droll doings, ah – and good, too! You will see, Mother Margery, there will be good out of all this."

But Margery invariably saw fit, on principle, to doubt all the opinions of her rival.

Eh, she didn't hold so much wi' wenches hersel', an' Mester Adrian, she reckoned, hadn't come to live here all by himsel' to have visitors breaking in on him that gate!

"There be visitors *and* visitors, mother – I tell you, I who speak to you, that his honour is happy."

Margery, with a mysterious air, smoothed out a long silk stocking and gave an additional impetus to the tremor Nature

had already bestowed upon her aged head.

Well, it wasn't for her to say. She hoped and prayed there was nowt bad a coomin' on the family again; but sich likenesses as that of Miss to her mother was not lucky, to her minding; it was not. Nowt good had come to Mester Adrian from the French Madam. Ah, Mester Adrian had been happy like with her too, and she had taken him away from his home, an' his people, an' sent him back wi'out 's soul in the end.

"And now her daughter has come to give it him back," retorted René, as he fell to, with a zest, on the savoury mess he had concocted for his own supper.

"Eh, well, I hope nowt bad's i' the road," said Margery with senile iteration. "They do say no good ever comes o' saving bodies from drowning; not that one 'ud wish the poor Miss to have gone into the sands – an' she the babby I weaned too!"

René interrupted her with a hearty laugh. "Yes, every one knows it carries misfortune to save people from the drowning, but there, you see, her ladyship, she saved herself – so that ought to bring good fortune. Good-night, Mother Margery, take good care of the lady… Ah, how I wish I had the care of her!" he added simply, and, seizing his lantern, proceeded to ascend once more to his post aloft.

He paused once on his way, in the loud sighing stairs, struck with a fresh aspect of the day's singular events – a quaint thought, born of his native religious faith: The Lady, the dear Mistress had just reached Heaven, no doubt, and had straightway sent them

the young one to console and comfort them. Eh bien! they had had their time of Purgatory too, and now they might be happy.

Pleasant therefore were René's musings, up in the light watcher's bunk, underneath the lantern, as, smoking a pipe of rest, he listened complacently to the hissing storm around him.

And in the master's sleeping chamber beneath him, now so curiously turned into a feminine sanctum, pleasant thoughts too, if less formed, and less concerned with the future, lulled its dainty occupant to rest.

Luxuriously stretched between the warm lavender-scented sheets, watching from her pillow the leaping fire on the hearth, Miss Molly wondered lazily at her own luck; at the many possible results of the day's escapade; wondered amusedly whether any poignant sorrow – except, indeed poor Madeleine's tears – for her supposed demise, really darkened the supper party at Pulwick this evening; wondered agreeably how the Lord of the Ruined Castle would meet her on the morrow, after his singular reception of her this day; how long she would remain in these romantic surroundings and whether she would like them as well at the end of the visitation.

And as the blast howled with increasing rage, and the cold night drew closer on, and the great guns in the sea-cave boomed more angrily with the risen tide, she dimly began to dwell upon the thought of poor Lucifer being sucked deeper into his cold rapacious grave, whilst she was held in the warm embrace of a man whose eyes were masterful and yet gentle, whose arm was

strong, whose kisses were tender.

And in the delight of the contrast, Mademoiselle de Savenaye fell into the profound slumber of the young and vigorous.

CHAPTER VIII
THE PATH OF WASTED YEARS

And I only think of the woman that weeps;
But I forget, always forget, the smiling child.

Luteplayer's Song.

That night, even when sheer fatigue had subdued the currents of blood and thought that surged in his head, Sir Adrian was too restless to avail himself of the emergency couch providently prepared by René in a corner. But, ceasing his fretful pacing to and fro, he sat down in the arm-chair by the hearth where she had sat – the waif of the sea – wrapped round him the cloak that had enfolded the young body, hugging himself in the salt moisture the fur still retained, to spend the long hours in half-waking, firelight dreams.

And every burst of tempest rage, every lash of rain at the window, every thud of hurricane breaking itself on impassable ramparts, and shriek of baffled winds searching the roofless halls around, found a strangely glad echo in his brain – made a sort of burden to his thoughts:

Heap up the waters round this happy island, most welcome winds – heap them up high and boiling, and retain her long captive in these lonely ruins!

And ever the image in his mind's eye was, as before, Cécile – Cécile who had come back to him, for all sober reason knew it was but the child.

The child – ! Why had he never thought of the children these weary years? They, all that remained of Cécile, were living and might have been sought. Strange that he had not remembered him of the children!

Twenty years since he had last set eyes upon the little living creature in her mother's arms. And the picture that the memory evoked was, after all, Cécile again, only Cécile – not the queer little black-eyed puppet, even then associated with sea-foam and salty breeze. Twenty years during which she was growing and waxing in beauty, and unawares, maturing towards this wonderful meeting – and he had never given a thought to her existence.

In what sheltered ways had this fair duplicate of his love been growing from a child to womanhood during that space of life, so long to look back upon – or so short and transient, according to the mood of the thinker?

And, lazily, in his happier and tender present mood he tried to measure once again the cycles of past discontent, this time in terms of the girl's own lifetime.

It is bitter in misery to recall past misery – almost as bitter, for all Dante's cry, as to dwell on past happiness. But, be the past really dead, and a new and better life begun, the scanning back of a sombre existence done with for ever, may bring with it a

kind of secret complacency.

Truly, mused Sir Adrian, for one who ever cherished ideal aspirations, for the student, the "man of books" (as his father had been banteringly wont to term him), worshipper of the muses, intellectual Epicurean, and would-be optimist philosopher, it must be admitted he had strangely dealt, and been dealt with, since he first beheld that face, now returned to light his solitude! Ah, God bless the child! Pulwick at least nursed it warmly, whilst unhappy Adrian, ragged and degraded into a mere fighting beast, roamed through the Marais with Chouan bands, hunted down by the merciless revolutionists, like vermin; falling, as months of that existence passed over him, from his high estate to the level of vermin indeed; outlawed, predatory, cunning, slinking, filthy – trapped at last, the fit end of vermin!

Scarcely better the long months of confinement in the hulks of Rochelle. How often he had regretted it, then, not to have been one of the chosen few who, the day after capture, stood in front of six levelled muskets, and were sped to rest in some unknown charnel! Then! – not now. No, it was worth having lived to this hour, to know of that fair face, in living sleep upon his pillow, under the safeguard of his roof.

Good it was, that he had escaped at last, though with the blood of one of his jailors red upon his hands; the blood of a perhaps innocent man, upon his soul. It was the only time he had taken a life other than in fair fight, and the thought of it had been wont to fill him with a sort of nausea; but to-night, he found he could

face it, not only without remorse, but without regret. He was glad he had listened to René's insidious whispers – René, who could not endure the captivity to which his master might, in time, have fallen a passive, hopeless slave, and yet who would have faced a thousand years of it rather than escape alone – the faithful heart!

Yes, it was good, and he was glad of it, or time would not have come when she (stay, how old was the child then? – almost three years, and still sheltered and cherished by the house of Landale) – when she would return, and gladden his eyes with a living sight of Cécile, while René watched in his tower above; ay, and old Margery herself lay once more near the child she had nursed.

Marvellous turn of the wheel of fate!

But, who had come for the children, and where had they been taken? To their motherland, perhaps; even it might have been before he himself had left it; or yet to Ireland, where still dwelt kinsfolk of their blood? Probably it was at the breaking up of the family, caused by the death of Sir Thomas, that these poor little birds had been removed from the nest, that had held them so safe and close.

That was in '97, in the yellow autumn of which year Adrian Landale, then French fisherman, parted from his brother René L'Apôtre upon the sea off Belle Isle; parted one grizzly dawn after embracing, as brothers should. Oh, the stealthy cold of that blank, cheerless daybreak, how it crept into the marrow of his bones, and chilled the little energy and spirits he had left! For a whole year they had fruitlessly sought some English vessel, to

convey this English gentleman back to his native land. He could remember how, at the moment of separation, from the one friend who had loved both him and her, his heart sank within him – remember how he clambered from aboard the poor little smack, up the forbidding sides of the English brig; how René's broken words had bidden God bless him, and restore him safely home (home!); remember how swiftly the crafts had moved apart, the mist, the greyness and desolateness; the lapping of the waters, the hoarse cries of the seamen, all so full of heart-piercing associations to him, and the last vision of René's simple face, with tears pouring down it, and his open mouth spasmodically trying to give out a hearty cheer, despite the sobs that came heaving up to it. How little the simple fellow dreamed of what bitterness the future was yet holding for his brother and master, to end in these reunions at last!

The vessel which had taken Adrian Landale on board, in answer to the frantic signals of the fishing-smack, that had sailed from Belle Isle obviously to meet her, proved to be a privateer, bound for the West Indies, but cruising somewhat out of her way, in the hope of outgoing prizes from Nantes.

The captain, who had been led to expect something of importance from the smack's behaviour, in high dudgeon at finding that so much bustle and waste of time was only to burden him with a mere castaway seeking a passage home – one who, albeit a countryman, was too ragged and disreputable in looks to be trusted in his assurances of reward – granted him indeed the

hospitality of his ship, but on the condition of his becoming a hand in the company during the forthcoming expedition.

There was a rough measure of equity in the arrangement, and Adrian accepted it. The only alternative, moreover, would have been a jump overboard. And so began a hard spell of life, but a few shades removed from his existence among the Chouan guerillas; a predatory cruise lasting over a year, during which the only changes rung in the gamut of its purpose were the swooping down, as a vulture might, upon unprotected ships; flying with superior speed from obviously stronger crafts; engaging, with hawk-like bravery, everything afloat that displayed inimical colours, if it offered an equal chance of fight.

And this for more than a year, until the privateer, much battered, but safe, despite her vicissitudes made Halifax for refitting. Here, at the first suitable port she had touched, Adrian claimed and obtained his release from obligations which made his life almost unendurable.

Then ensued a period of the most absolute penury; unpopular with most of his messmates for his melancholy taciturnity, despised by the more brutal as one who had as little stomach for a carouse as for a bloody fight, he left the ship without receiving, or even thinking of his share of prize-money. And he had to support existence with such mean mechanical employment as came in his way, till an opportunity was offered of engaging himself as seaman, again from sheer necessity, on a homeward-bound merchantman – an opportunity which he seized, if not

eagerly, for there was no eagerness left in him, yet under the pressure of purpose.

Next the long, slowly plodding, toilsome, seemingly eternal course across the ocean.

But even a convoy, restricted to the speed of its slowest member, if it escape capture or natural destruction, must meet the opposite shore at length, and the last year of the century had lapsed in the even race of time when, after many dreary weeks, on the first of January 1801, the long low lines of sandhills on the Lancastrian coast loomed in sight. The escort drew away, swiftly southwards, as if in joyful relief from the tedious task, leaving the convoy to enter the Mersey, safe and sound.

That evening Adrian, the rough-looking and taciturn sailor, set foot, for a short while, on his native land, after six years of an exile which had made of him at five and twenty a prematurely aged and hopelessly disillusioned man.

And Sir Adrian, as he mused, wrapped in the honoured fur cloak, with eyes half closed, by his sympathetic fire, recalled how little of joy this return had had for him. It was the goal he had striven to reach, and he had reached it, that was all; nay, he recalled how, when at hand, he had almost dreaded the actual arrival home, dreaded, with the infinite heart-sickness of sorrow, the emotions of the family welcome to one restored from such perils by flood and field – if not indeed already mourned for and forgotten – little wotting how far that return to Pulwick, that seemed near and certain, was still away in the dim future of life.

Yet, but for the fit of hypochondriacal humour which had fallen black upon him that day of deliverance and made him yearn, with an intensity increasing every moment, to separate himself from his repugnant associates and haste the moment of solitude and silence, he might have been rescued, then and for ever, from the quagmire in which perverse circumstances had enslaved him.

"Look'ee here, matey," said one of his fellow-workers to him, in a transient fit of good-fellowship which the prospect of approaching sprees had engendered in him even towards one whom all on board had felt vaguely to be of a different order, and disliked accordingly, "you don't seem to like a jolly merchantman – but, maybe, you wouldn't take more kindly to a man-o'-war. Do you see that there ship? – a frigate she is; and, whenever there's a King's ship in the Mersey that means that it's more wholesome for the likes of us to lie low. You take a hint, matey, and don't be about Liverpool to-night, or until she's gone. Now, I know a crib that's pretty safe, Birkenhead way; Mother Redcap's, we call it – no one's ever been nabbed at Mother Redcap's, and if you'll come along o' me – why then if you won't, go your way and be damned to you for a – "

This was the parting of Adrian Landale from his fellow-workers. The idea of spending even one night more in that atmosphere of rum and filth, in the intimate hearing of blasphemous and obscene language, was too repulsive to be entertained, and he had turned away from the offer with a gesture

of horror.

With half a dozen others, in whose souls the attractions of the town at night proved stronger than the fear of the press party, he disembarked on the Lancashire side, and separating from his companions, for ever, as he thought, ascended the miserable lanes leading from the river to the upper town.

His purpose was to sleep in one of the more decent hotels, to call the next day for help at the banking-house with which the Landales had dealt for ages past, and thence to take coach for Pulwick. But he had planned without taking reck of his circumstances. No hotel of repute would entertain this weather-beaten common sailor in the meanest of work-stained clothes. After failing at various places even to obtain a hearing, being threatened with forcible ejectment, derisively referred to suitable cribs in Love Lane or Tower Street, he gave up the attempt; and, in his usual dejection of spirit, intensified by unavowed and unreasonable anger, wandered through the dark streets, brooding. Thus aimlessly wandering, the remembrance of his young Utopian imaginings came back to him to mock him. Dreams of universal brotherhood, of equality, of harmony. He had already seen the apostles of equality and brotherhood at work – on the banks of the Vilaine. And realising how he himself, now reduced to the lowest level in the social scale, hunted with insult from every haunt above that level, yet loathed and abhorred the very thought of associating again with his recent brothers in degradation, he laughed a laugh of bitter self-contempt.

But the night was piercing cold; and, in time, the question arose whether the stench and closeness of a riverside eating-house would not be more endurable than the cutting wind, the sleet, and the sharper pangs of hunger.

His roaming had brought him once more to that quarter of the town "best suited to the likes of him," according to the innkeeper's opinion, and he found himself actually seeking a house of entertainment in the slimy, ill-lighted narrow street, when, from out the dimness, running towards him, with bare feet paddling in the sludge, came a slatternly girl, with unkempt wisps of red hair hanging over her face under the tartan shawl.

"Run, run, Jack," she cried, hoarsely, as she passed by breathless, "t' gang's comin' up…"

A sudden loathly fear seized Adrian by the heart. He too, took to his heels by the side of the slut with all the swiftness his tired frame could muster.

"I'm going to warn my Jo," she gasped, as, jostling each other, they darted through a maze of nameless alleys.

And then as, spent with running, they emerged at last into a broader street, it was to find themselves in the very midst of another party of man-of-war's men, whose brass belt-buckles glinted under the flickering light of the oil-lamp swinging across the way.

Adrian stopped dead short and looked at the girl in mute reproach.

"May God strike me dead," she screamed, clapping her hands

together, "if I knew the bloody thieves were there! Oh, my bonny lad, I meant to save ye!" And as her words rang in the air two sailors had Adrian by the collar and a facetious bluejacket seized her round the waist with hideous bantering.

A very young officer, wrapped up in a cloak, stood a few paces apart calmly looking on. To him Adrian called out in fierce, yet anguished, expostulation:

"I am a free and independent subject, sir, an English gentleman. I demand that you order your men to release me. For heaven's sake," he added, pleadingly, "give me but a moment's private hearing!"

A loud guffaw rang through the group. In truth, if appearances make the gentleman, Adrian was then but a sorry specimen.

The officer smiled – the insufferable smile of a conceited boy raised to authority.

"I can have no possible doubt of your gentility, sir," he said, with mocking politeness, and measuring, under the glimmering light, first the prisoner, from head to foot, and then the girl who, scratching and blaspheming, vainly tried to make her escape; "but, sir, as a free-born English gentleman, it will be your duty to help his Majesty to fight his French enemies. Take the English gentleman along, my lads!"

A roar of approbation at the officer's facetiousness ran through the party.

"An' his mother's milk not dry upon his lips," cried the girl, with a crow of derisive fury, planting as she spoke a sounding

smack on a broad tanned face bent towards her. The little officer grew pink. "Come, my men, do your duty," he thundered, in his deepest bass.

A rage such as he never had felt in his life suddenly filled Adrian's whole being. He was a bigger man than any of the party, and the rough life that fate had imposed on him, had fostered a strength of limb beyond the common. A thrust of his knee prostrated one of his captors, a blow in the eye from his elbow staggered the other; the next instant he had snatched away the cutlass which a third was drawing, and with it he cleared, for a moment, a space around him.

But as he would have bounded into freedom, a felling blow descended on his head from behind, a sheet of flame spread before his eyes, and behind this blaze disappeared the last that Adrian Landale was to see of England for another spell of years.

When he came back to his senses he was once more on board ship – a slave, legally kidnapped; degraded by full and proper warrant from his legitimate status for no crime that could even be invented against him; a slave to be retained for work or war at his master's pleasure, liable like a slave to be flogged to death for daring to assert his light of independence.

The memory of that night's doing and of the odious bondage to which it was a prelude, rarely failed to stir the gall of resentment in Sir Adrian; men of peaceable instincts are perhaps the most prone to the feeling of indignation.

But, to-night, a change had come over the spirit of his dreams;

he could think of that past simply as the past – the period of time which would have had to be spent until the advent of the wonder-working present: these decrees of Fate had had a purpose. Had the past, by one jot, been different, the events of this admirable day might never have been.

The glowing edifice on the hearth collapsed with a darting of sudden flame and a rolling of red cinders. Sir Adrian rose to rebuild his fire for the night; and, being once roused, was tempted by the ruddiness of the wine, glinting under the quiet rays of the lamp, to advance to the table and partake of his forgotten supper.

The calm atmosphere, the warmth and quiet of the room, in which he broke his bread and sipped his wine, whilst old Jem stretched by the hearth gazed at him with yellow up-turned eyes full of lazy inquiry concerning this departure from the usual nightly regularity; the serene placidity of the scene indoors as contrasting with the angry voices of elements without, answered to the peace – the strange peace – that filled the man's soul, even in the midst of such uncongenial memories as now rose up before him in vivid concatenation.

She was then five years old. Where was she, when he began that seemingly endless cruise with the frigate *Porcupine*? He tried to fancy a Cécile five years old – a chubby, curly-headed mite, nursing dolls and teasing kittens, whilst he was bullied and browbeaten by coarse petty officers, shunned and hated by his messmates, and flogged at length by a tyrannizing captain for obduracy – but he could only see a Cécile in the spring of

womanhood, nestling in the arm-chair yonder by the fire and looking up at him from the folds of a fur cloak.

She was seven years old when he was flogged. Ah, God! those had been days! And yet, in the lofty soul of him he had counted it no disgrace; and he had been flogged again, ay, and a third time for that obstinate head that would not bend, that obstinate tongue that would persist in demanding restitution of liberty. The life on board the privateer had been a matter of bargain; he had bartered also labour and obedience with the merchantman for the passage home, but the king had no right to compel the service of a free man!

She was but twelve years old when he was finally released from thraldom – it had only lasted four years after all; yet what a cycle for one of his temper! Four years with scarce a moment of solitude – for no shore-leave was ever allowed to one who openly repudiated any service contract: four years of a life, where the sole prospect of change was in these engagements, orgies of carnage, so eagerly anticipated by officers and men alike, including himself, though for a reason little suspected by his companions. But even the historic sea-fights of the *Porcupine*, so far as they affected Adrian Landale, formed in themselves a chain of monotony. It was ever the same hurling of shot from ship to ship, the same fierce exchange of cutlass-throws and pike-pushes between men who had never seen each other before; the same yelling and execrations, sights, sounds, and smells ever the same in horror; the same cheers when the enemy's colours were

lowered, followed by the same transient depression; the cleansing of decks from stains of powder and mire of human blood, the casting overboard of human bodies that had done their life's work, broken waste and other rubbish. For weeks Adrian after would taste blood, smell blood, dream blood, till it seemed in his nausea that all the waters of the wide clean seas could never wash the taint from him again. And before the first horrid impressions had time to fade, the next occasion would have come round again: it was not the fate of Adrian Landale that either steel or shot, or splintered timber or falling tackles should put an end to his dreary life, welcome as such an end would have been to him then.

Then … but not now. Remembering now his unaccountable escape from the destruction which had swept from his side many another whose eagerness for the fray had certes not sprung, like his own, from a desire to court destruction, he shuddered. And there arose in his mind the trite old adage:

"Man proposeth…"

God had disposed otherwise.

It was not destined that Adrian Landale should be shot on the high seas any more than he should be drowned in the rolling mud of the Vilaine – he was reserved for this day as a set-off to all the bitterness that had been meted out to him; he was to see the image of his dead love rise from the sea once more. And, meanwhile, his very despair and sullenness had been turned to his good. It would not be said, if history should take count of the fact, that while the Lord of Pulwick had served four years before

the mast, he had ever disgraced his name by cowardice…

Whether such reasonings were in accordance even with the most optimistic philosophy, Sir Adrian himself at other times might have doubted. But he was tender in thought this stormy night, with the grateful relaxation that a happy break brings in the midst of long-drawn melancholy.

Everything had been working towards this end – that he should be the light-keeper of Scarthey on the day when out of the raging waters Cécile would rise and knock and ask for succour at his chamber.

Cécile! pshaw! – raving again.

Well, the child! Where was she on the day of the last engagement of that pugnacious *Porcupine*, in the year 1805, when England was freed from her long incubus of invasion? She was then twelve.

It had seemed if nothing short of a wholesale disaster could terminate that incongruous existence of his.

The last action of the frigate was a fruitless struggle against fearful odds. After a prolonged fight with an enemy as dauntless as herself, with two-thirds of her ship's company laid low, and commanded at length by the youngest lieutenant, she was tackled as the sun went low over the scene of a drawn battle, by a fresh sail errant; and, had it not been for a timely dismasting on board the new-comer, would have been captured or finally sunk then and there. But that fate was only held in reserve for her. Bleeding and disabled, she had drawn away under cover of night from

her two hard-hit adversaries, to encounter a squall that further dismantled her, and, in such forlorn conditions, was met and finally conquered by the French privateer *Espoir de Brest*, that pounced upon her in her agony as the vulture upon his prey.

Among the remainder of the once formidable crew, now seized and battened down under French hatches, was of course Adrian Landale – he bore a charmed life. And for a short while the only change probable in his prospects was a return to French prisons, until such time as it pleased Heaven to restore peace between the two nations.

But the fortune of war, especially at sea, is fickle and fitful.

The daring brig, lettre de marque, *L'Espoir de Brest*, soon after her unwonted haul of English prisoners, was overtaken herself by one of her own species, the *St. Nicholas* of Liverpool, from whose swiftness nothing over the sea, that had not wings, could hope to escape if she chose to give the chase.

Again did Adrian, from the darkness among his fellow-captives, hear the familiar roar and crash of cannon fight, the hustling and the thud of leaping feet, the screams and oaths of battle, and, finally, the triumphant shouts of English throats, and he knew that the Frenchman was boarded. A last ringing British cheer told of the Frenchman's surrender, and when he and his comrades were once more free to breathe a draught of living air, after the deathly atmosphere under hatches, Adrian learned that the victor was not a man-of-war, but a free-lance, and conceived again a faint hope that deliverance might be at hand.

It was soon after this action, last of the fights that Adrian the peace-lover had to pass through, and as the two swift vessels, now sailing in consort, and under the same colours cleaved the waters, bound for the Mersey, that a singular little drama took place on board the *Espoir de Brest*.

Among the younger officers of the English privateer, who were left in charge of the prize, was a lad upon whom Adrian's jaded eyes rested with a feeling of mournful sympathy, so handsome was he, and so young; so full of hope and spirits and joy of life, of all, in fact, of which he himself had been left coldly bare. Moreover, the ring of the merry voice, the glint of the clear eye awakened in his memory some fitful chord, the key of which he vainly sought to trace.

One day, as the trim young lieutenant stood looking across the waters, with his brave eager gaze that seemed to have absorbed some of the blue-green shimmer of the element he loved, all unnoting the haggard sailor at his elbow, a sudden flourish of the spy-glass which he, with an eager movement, swung up to bear on some distant speck, sent his watch and seals flying out of his fob upon the deck at Adrian's feet.

Adrian picked them up, and as he waited to restore them to their owner, who tarried some time intent on his distant peering, he had time to notice the coat and crest engraved upon one of the massive trinkets hanging from their black ribbons.

When at last the officer lowered his telescope, Adrian came forward and saluted him with a slight bow, all unconsciously as

unlike the average Jack Tar's scrape to his superior as can be well imagined:

"Am I not," he asked, "addressing in you, sir, one of the Cochranes of the Shaws?"

The question and the tone from a common sailor were, of course, enough to astonish the young man. But there must be more than this, as Adrian surmised, to cause him to blush, wax angry, and stammer like a very school-boy found at fault. Speaking with much sharpness:

"My name is Smith, my man," cried he, seizing his belongings, "and you – just carry on with that coiling!"

"And my name, sir, is Adrian Landale, of Pulwick Priory. I would like a moment's talk with you, if you will spare me the time. The Cochranes of the Shaws have been friends of our family for generations."

A guffaw burst from a group of Adrian's mates working hard by, at this recurrence of what had become with them a standing joke; but the officer, who had turned on his heels, veered round immediately, and stood eyeing the speaker in profound astonishment.

"Great God, is it possible! Did you say you were a Landale of Pulwick? How the devil came you here then, and thus?"

"Press-gang," was Adrian's laconic answer.

The lad gave a prolonged whistle, and was lost for a moment in cogitation.

"If you are really Mr. Landale," he began, adding hastily,

as if to cover an implied admission – "of course I have heard the name: it is well known in Lancashire – you had better see the skipper. It must have been some damnable mistake that has caused a man of your standing to be pressed."

The speaker ended with almost a deferential air and the smile that had already warmed Adrian's heart. At the door of the Captain's quarters he said, with the suspicion of a twinkle in his eye:

"A curious error it was you made, I assure you my name is Smith – Jack Smith, of Liverpool."

"An excusable error," quoth Adrian, smiling back, "for one of your seals bear unmistakably the arms of Cochrane of the Shaws, doubtless some heirloom, some inter-marriage."

"No, sir, hang it!" retorted Mr. Jack Smith of Liverpool, his boyish face flushing again, and as he spoke he disengaged the trinket from its neighbours, and jerked it pettishly overboard, "I know nothing of your Shaws or your Cochranes."

And then he rapped loudly at the cabin-door, as if anxious to avoid further discussion or comment on the subject.

The result of the interview which followed – interview during which Adrian in a few words overcame the skipper's scepticism, and was bidden with all the curiosity men feel at sea for any novelty, to relate, over a bottle of wine, the chain of his adventures – was his passing from the forecastle to the officers' quarters, as an honoured guest on board the *St. Nicholas*, during the rest of her cruise.

Thinking back now upon the last few weeks of his sea-going life, Sir Adrian realised with something of wonder that he had always dwelt on them without dislike. They were gilded in his memory by the rays of his new friendship.

And yet that this young Jack Smith (to keep for him the nondescript name he had for unknown reasons chosen to assume) should be the first man to awaken in the misanthropic Adrian the charm of human intercourse, was singular indeed; one who followed from choice the odious trade of legally chartered corsair, who was ever ready to barter the chance of life and limb against what fortune might bring in his path, to sacrifice human life to secure his own end of enrichment.

Well, the springs of friendship are to be no more discerned than those of love; there was none of high or low degree, with the exception of René, whose appearance at any time was so welcome to the recluse upon his rock, as that of the privateersman.

And so, turning to his friend in to-night's softened mood, Sir Adrian thought gratefully that to him it was that he owed deliverance from the slavery of the King's service, that it was Jack Smith who had made it possible for Adrian Landale to live to this great day and await its coming in peace.

The old clock struck two; and Jem shivered on the rug as the light-keeper rose at length from the table and sank in his arm-chair once more.

Visions of the past had been ever his companions; now for the

first time came visions of the future to commingle with them. As if caught up in the tide of his visitor's bright young life, it seemed as though he were passing at length out of the valley of the shadow of death.

René, coming with noiseless bare feet, in the angry yellow dawn of the second day of the storm, to keep an eye on his master's comfort, found him sleeping in his chair with a new look of rest upon his face and a smile upon his lips.

CHAPTER IX
A GENEALOGICAL EPISTLE

… and braided thereupon
All the devices blazoned on the shield,
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,
A border fantasy of branch and flower.

Idylls of the King.

Pulwick Priory, the ancestral home of the Cumbrian Landales, a dignified if not overpoweringly lordly mansion, rises almost on the ridge of the green slope which connects the high land with the sandy strand of Morecambe; overlooking to the west the great brown breezy bight, whilst on all other sides it is sheltered by its wooded park.

When the air is clear, from the east window of Scarthey keep, the tall garden front of greystone is visible, in the extreme distance, against the darker screen of foliage; whitely glinting if the sun is high; golden or rosy at the end of day.

As its name implies, Pulwick Priory stands on the site of an extinct religious house; its oldest walls, in fact, were built from the spoils of once sacred masonry. It is a house of solid if not regular proportions, full of unexpected quaintness; showing a medley of distinct styles, in and out; it has a wide portico in

the best approved neo-classic taste, leading to romantic oaken stairs; here wide cheerful rooms and airy corridors, there sombre vaulted basements and mysterious unforeseen nooks.

On the whole, however, it is a harmonious pile of buildings, though gathering its character from many different centuries, for it has been mellowed by time, under a hard climate. And it was, in the days of the pride of the Landales, a most meet dwelling-place for that ancient race, insomuch as the history of so many of their ancestors was written successively upon stone and mortar, brick and tile, as well as upon carved oak, canvas-decked walls, and emblazoned windows.

Exactly one week before the disaster, which was supposed to have befallen Mademoiselle Molly de Savenaye on Scarthey sands, the acting Lord of Pulwick, if one may so term Mr. Rupert Landale, had received a letter, the first reading of which caused him a vivid annoyance, followed by profound reflection.

A slightly-built, dark-visaged man, this younger brother of Sir Adrian, and vicarious master of his house and lands; like to the recluse in his exquisite neatness of attire, somewhat like also in the mould of his features, which were, however, more notably handsome than Sir Adrian's; but most unlike him, in an emphasised artificiality of manner, in a restless and wary eye, and in the curious twist of a thin lip which seemed to give hidden sarcastic meaning even to the most ordinary remark.

As now he sat by his desk, his straight brows drawn over his amber-coloured eyes, perusing the closely written sheets of

this troublesome missive, there entered to him the long plaintive figure of his maiden sister, who had held house for him, under his own minute directions, ever since the death in premature child-birth of his young year-wed wife.

Miss Landale, the eldest of the family, had had a disappointment in her youth, as a result of which she now played the ungrateful *rôle* of old maid of the family. She suffered from chronic toothache, as well as from repressed romantic aspirations, and was the *âme damnée* of Rupert. One of the most melancholy of human beings, she was tersely characterised by the village folk as a "*wummicky* poor thing."

At the sight of Mr. Landale's weighted brow she propped up her own long sallow face, upon its aching side, with a trembling hand, and, full of agonised prescience, ventured to ask if anything had happened.

"Sit down," said her brother, with a sort of snarl – He possessed an extremely irritable temper under his cool sarcastic exterior, a temper which his peculiar anomalous circumstances, whilst they combined to excite it, forced him to conceal rigidly from most, and it was a relief to him to let it out occasionally upon Sophia's meek, ringleted head.

Sophia collapsed with hasty obedience into a chair, and then Mr. Landale handed to her the thin fluttering sheets, voluminously crossed and re-crossed with fine Italian handwriting:

"From Tanty," ejaculated Miss Sophia, "Oh my dear Rupert!"

"Read it," said Rupert peremptorily. "Read it aloud."

And throwing himself back upon his chair, he shaded his mouth with one flexible thin hand, and prepared himself to listen.

"Camden Place, Bath, October 29th," read the maiden lady in those plaintive tones, which seemed to send out all speech upon the breath of a sigh. "My Dear Rupert, – You will doubtless be astonished, but your invariably affectionate Behaviour towards myself inclines me to believe that you will also be *pleased* to hear, from these few lines, that very shortly after their receipt – if indeed not before – you may expect to see me arrive at Pulwick Priory."

Miss Landale put down the letter, and gazed at her brother through vacant mists of astonishment.

"Why, I thought Tanty said she would not put foot in Pulwick again till Adrian returned home."

Rupert measured the innocent elderly countenance with a dark look. He had sundry excellent reasons, other than mere family affection, for remaining on good terms with his rich Irish aunt, but he had likewise reasons, these less obvious, for wishing to pay his devoirs to her anywhere but under the roof of which he was nominal master.

"She has found it convenient to change her mind," he said, with his twisting lip. "Constancy in your sex, my dear, is merely a matter of convenience – or opportunity."

"Oh Rupert!" moaned Sophia, clasping the locket which

contained her dead lover's hair with a gesture with which all who knew her were very familiar. Mr. Landale never could resist a thrust at the faithful foolish bosom always ready to bleed under his stabs, yet never resenting them. Inexplicable vagary of the feminine heart! Miss Sophia worshipped before the shrine of her younger brother, to the absolute exclusion of any sentiment for the elder, whose generosity and kindness to her were yet as great as was Rupert's tyranny.

"Go on," said the latter, alternately smiling at his nails and biting them, "Tanty O'Donoghue observes that I shall be surprised to hear that she will arrive very shortly after this letter, if not before it. Poor old Tanty, there can be no mistake about her nationality. Have the kindness to read straight on, Sophia. I don't want to hear any more of your interesting comments. And don't stop till you have finished, no matter how amazed you are."

Again he composed himself to listen, while his sister plunged at the letter, and, after several false starts, found her place and proceeded:

"Since, owing to his most *unfortunate* peculiarity of Temperament and consequent strange choice of abode, I cannot apply to my nephew Adrian, *à qui de droit* (as Head of the House) I must needs address myself to you, my dear Rupert, to request hospitality for myself and the two young Ladies now under my Charge."

The letter wavered in Miss Sophia's hand and an exclamation hung upon her lip, but a sudden movement of Rupert's exquisite

crossed legs recalled her to her task.

"These young ladies are *Mesdemoiselles de Savenaye*, and the daughters of Madame la Comtesse de Savenaye, who was my sister Mary's child. She and I, and Alice your mother, were sister co-heiresses as you know, and therefore these young ladies are *my* grand-nieces and your *own* cousins once removed. Of Cécile de Savenaye, her *strange* adventures and ultimate *sad* Fate in which your own brother was implicated, you cannot but have heard, but you may probably have forgotten even to the *very existence* of these charming young women, who were nevertheless born at Pulwick, and whom you must at some time or other have beheld as infants during your *excellent* and *lamented* father's lifetime. They are, as you are doubtless also unaware – for I have remarked a *growing* Tendency in the younger generations to neglect the study of Genealogy, even as it affects their own Families – as well born on the father's side as upon the maternal. M. de Savenaye bore *argent à la fasce-canton d'hermine*, with an *augmentation of the fleurs de lis d'or*, *cleft in twain* for his ancestor's *memorable* deed at the siege of Dinan."

"There is Tante O'Donoghue fully displayed, *haut volante* as she might say herself," here interrupted Mr. Landale with a laugh. "Always the same, evidently. The first thing I remember about her is her lecturing me on genealogy and heraldry, when I wanted to go fishing, till, school-boy rampant as I was, I heartily wished her impaled and debruised on her own Donoghue herse proper. For God's sake, Sophia, do not expect me to explain! Go

on."

"He was entitled to eighteen quarters, and related to such as Coucy and Armagnac and Tavannes," proceeded Miss Sophia, controlling her bewilderment as best she might, "also to Gwynne of Llanadoc in this kingdom – Honours to which Mesdemoiselles de Savenaye, being sole heiresses both of Kermelégan and Savenaye, not to speak of their own mother's share of O'Donoghue, which now-a-days is of greater substance – are personally entitled.

"If I am the *sole* Relative they have left in these Realms, Adrian and you are the next. I have had the charge of my two young Kinswomen during the last six months, that is since they left the Couvent des Dames Anglaises in Jersey.

"Now, I think it is time that your Branch of the Family should incur the share of the *responsibility* your relationship to them entails.

"If Adrian were *as* and *where* he should be, I feel sure he would embrace this opportunity of doing his duty as the Head of the House without the smallest hesitation, and I have no doubt that he would offer the *hospitality* of Pulwick Priory and his *Protection* to these amiable young persons for as long as they *remain unmarried*.

"From you, my dear Nephew, who have undertaken under these melancholy family circumstances to fill your Brother's place, I do not, however, *expect* so much; all I ask is that you and my niece Sophia be kind enough to *shelter* and *entertain* your

cousins for the space of two months, while I remain at Bath for the benefit of my Health.

"At my age (for it is of no use, nephew, for us to deny our years when any Peerage guide must reveal them pretty closely to the curious), and I am this month passing sixty-nine, at my *age* the charge of two high-spirited young Females, in whom conventional education has failed to subdue Aspirations for worldly happiness whilst it has left them somewhat inexperienced in the Conventions of Society, I find a *little trying*. It does not harmonise with the retired, peaceful existence to which I am accustomed (and at my time of life, I think, entitled), in which it is my humble endeavour to wean myself from this earth which is so full of Emptiness and to prepare myself for that other and *better* Home into which we must all resign ourselves to enter. And happy, indeed, my dear Rupert, such of us as will be found worthy; for come to it we all must, and the longer we live, the sooner we may expect to do so.

"The necessity of producing them in Society, is, however, rendered a matter of greater responsibility by the fact of the *handsome* Fortunes which these young creatures possess already, not to speak of their expectations."

Rupert, who had been listening to his aunt's letter, through the intermediary of Miss Sophia's depressing sing-song, with an abstracted air, here lifted up his head, and commanded the reader to repeat this last passage. She did so, and paused, awaiting his further pleasure, while he threw his handsome head back upon

his chair, and closed his eyes as if lost in calculations.

At length he waved his hand, and Miss Sophia proceeded after the usual floundering:

"A neighbour of mine at Bunratty, Mrs. Hambledon of Brianstown, a *lively* widow (herself one of the Macnamaras of the Reeks, and thus a distant connection of the Ballinasloe branch of O'Donoghues), and whom I had reason to believe I could trust – but I will not anticipate – took a prodigious fancy to Miss Molly and proposed, towards the beginning of the Autumn, carrying her away to Dublin. At the same time the wet summer, producing in me an acute recurrence of that Affection from which, as you know, I suffer, and about which you *never fail* to make such kind Enquiries at Christmas and Easter, compelled me to call in Mr. O'Mally, the apothecary, who has been my very *obliging* medical adviser for so many years, and who strenuously advocated an immediate course of waters at Bath. In short, my dear Nephew, thus the matter was settled, your cousin Molly departed *radiant* with *good* spirits, and *good* looks for a spell of gayety in Dublin, while your cousin Madeleine, prepared (with *equal* content) to accompany her old aunt to Bath. It being arranged with Mrs. Hambledon that she should herself conduct Molly to us later on.

"We have been here about three weeks. Though persuaded by good Mr. O'Mally that the waters would benefit my old bones, I was actuated, I must confess, by another motive in seeking this Fashionable Resort. In such a place as this, thronged as it is by all the Rank and Family of England, one can at least know *who*

is who, and I was not without hopes that my nieces, with their faces, their name, and their fortunes, would have the opportunity of contracting suitable Alliances, and thus relieve me of a charge for which I am, I fear, little fitted.

"But, alas! my dear Rupert, I was most woefully mistaken. Bath is *distinctly not* the place for two beautiful and unsophisticated Heiresses, and I am certainly neither possessed of the Spirits, nor of the Health to guard them from fortune-hunters and *needy nameless* Adventurers. While it is my desire to impress upon you, and my niece Sophia, that the conduct of these young ladies has been *quite* beyond reproach, I will not conceal from you that the attentions of a certain person, of the name of *Smith*, known here, and a favorite in the circles of frivolity and fashion as *Captain Jack*, have already made Madeleine *conspicuous*, and although the dear girl conducts herself with the utmost propriety, there is an air of *Romance* and *mystery* about the Young Man, not to speak of his unmistakable good looks, which have determined me to remove her from his vicinity before her Affections be *irreparably* engaged. As for Molly, who is a thorough O'Donoghue and the image of her grandmother, that celebrated Murthering Moll (herself the toast of Bath in our young days), whose elopement with the Marquis de Kermelégan, after he had killed an English rival in a duel, was once a nine-days' wonder in this very town, and of whom you must have heard, Mrs. Hambledon restored her to my care only three days ago, and she has already twenty Beaux to her String, though

favouring *nobody*, I am bound to say, but her own amusement. Yesterday she departed under Mrs. Hambledon's chaperonage, in the Company of a dozen of the highest in rank here, on an expedition to Clifton; the while my demure Madeleine spends the day at the house of her dear friend Lady Maria Harewood, whither, I only learnt upon her return at ten o'clock under his escort, *Captain Jack*– in my days that sort of *captain* would have been strongly suspected, of having a shade too much of the *Heath* or the *London Road* about him – had likewise been convened. It was long after midnight when, with a great *tow-row*, a coach full of very merry company (amongst whom the widow Hambledon struck me as over-merry, perhaps) landed my other Miss *sur le perron*.

"This has decided me. We shall decamp *sans tambou ni trompette*. To-morrow, without allowing discussion from the girls (in which I should probably be worsted), we pack ourselves into my travelling coach, and find our Way to you. But, until we are fairly on the Road, I shall not even let these ladies know *whither* we are bound.

"With your kind permission, then, I shall remain a few days at Pulwick, to recruit from the *fatigues* of such a long Journey, before leaving your fair cousins in your charge, and in that of the gentle Sophia (whom I trust to entertain them with something besides her usual melancholy), till the time comes for me to bring them back with me to Bunratty.

"Unless, therefore, you should hear to the contrary, you will

know that on Tuesday your three *unprotected* female relatives will be hoping to see your travelling carriage arrive to fetch them at the Crown in Lancaster.

"Your Affectionate Aunt,

"Rose O'Donoghue."

As Miss Landale sighed forth the concluding words, she dropped the little folio on her lap, and looked at her brother with a world of apprehension in her faded eyes.

"Oh, Rupert, what shall we do?"

"Do," said Mr. Landale, quickly turning on her, out of his absorption, "you will kindly see that suitable rooms are prepared for your aunt and cousins, and you will endeavour, if you please, to show these ladies a cheerful countenance, as your aunt requests."

"The oak and the chintz rooms, I suppose," Sophia timidly suggested. "Tanty used to say she liked the aspect, and I daresay the young ladies will find it pleasant to look out on the garden."

"Ay," returned Rupert, absently. He had risen from his seat, and fallen to pacing the room. Presently a short laugh broke from him. "Tolerably cool, I must say," he remarked, "tolerably cool. It seems to be a tradition with that Savenaye family, when in difficulties, to go to Pulwick."

Miss Landale looked up with relief. Perhaps Rupert would think better of it, and make up his mind to elude receiving the unwelcome visitors after all. But his next speech dashed her budding hopes.

"Ay, as in the days of their mother before them, when she came here to lay her eggs, like a cuckoo in another bird's nest – I wish they had been addled, I do indeed – we may expect to have the whole place turned topsy-turvy, I suppose. It is a pretty assortment, *faith* (as Tanty says herself); an old papist, and two young ones, fresh from a convent school – and of these, one a hoyden, and the other lovesick! Faugh! Sophia you will have to keep your eyes open when the old lady is gone. I'll have no unseemly pranks in this house."

"Oh, Rupert," with a moan of maidenly horror, and conscious incompetence.

"Stop that," cried the brother, with a contained intensity of exasperation, at which the poor lady jumped and trembled as if she had been struck. "All your whining won't improve matters. Now listen to me," sitting down beside her, and speaking slowly and impressively, "you are to make our relatives feel welcome, do you understand? Everything is to be of the best. Get out the embroidered sheets, and see that there are flowers in the rooms. Tell the cook to keep back that haunch of venison, the girls won't like it, but the old lady knows a good thing when she gets it – let there be lots of sweet things for the young ones too. I shall be giving some silver out this afternoon. I leave it to you to see that it is properly cleaned. What are you mumbling about to yourself? Write it down if you can't remember, and now go, go – I am busy."

PART II
"MURTHERING MOLL THE SECOND"

Then did the blood awaken in the veins
Of the young maiden wandering in the fields.

Luteplayer's Song.

CHAPTER X
THE THRESHOLD OF WOMANHOOD

> Onward floweth the water, onward through meadows broad,
> "How happy," the meadows say, "art thou to be rippling onward."
> "And my heart is beating, beating beneath my girdle here;"
> "O Heart," the girdle saith, "how happy art thou that thou beatest."
>
> *Luteplayer's Song.*

Dublin, *October 15th, 1814*. – This day do I, Molly de Savenaye, begin my diary.

Madeleine writes to me from Bath that she has purchased a very fine book, in which she intends to set forth each evening all that has happened her since the morning; she advises me to do so too. She says that since *real life* has begun for us; life, of which every succeeding day is not, as in the convent, the repetition of the previous day, but brings some new discovery, pleasure, or pain, we ought to write down and preserve their remembrance.

It will be so interesting for us to read when a new life once more begins for us, and we are *married*. Besides it is the *fashion*, and all the young ladies she knows do it. And she has, she says, already plenty to write down. Now I *should* like to know what

about.

When ought one to start such a record? Surely not on a day like this.

"Why *demme*" (as Mrs. Hambledon's nephew says), "*what the deyvil* have I got to say?"

Item: I went out shopping this morning with Mrs. Hambledon, and, bearing Madeleine's advice in mind, purchased at Kelly's, in Sackville Street, an album book, bound in green morocco, with clasp and lock, which Mr. Kelly protests is quite secure.

Item: We met Captain Segrave of the Royal Dragoons (who was so attentive to me at Lady Rigtoun's rout, two days ago). He looked very well on his charger, but how conceited! When he saw me, he rolled his eyes and grew quite red; and then he stuck his spurs into his horse, that we might admire how he could sit it; which he did, indeed, to perfection.

Mrs. Hambledon looked vastly knowing, and I laughed. If ever I try to fancy myself married to such a man I cannot help laughing.

This, however, is not diary. —*Item:* We returned home because it began to rain, and to pass the time, here am I at my book.

But is *this* the sort of thing that will be of interest to read hereafter? I have begun too late; I should have written in those days when I saw the dull walls of our convent prison for the last time. It seems so far back now (though, by the calendar it is hardly six months), that I cannot quite recall how it felt to live in

prison. And yet it was not unhappy, and there was no horror in the thought we both had sometimes then, that we should pass and end our lives in the cage. It did not strike us as hard. It seemed, indeed, in the nature of things. But the bare thought of returning to that existence now, to resume the placid daily task, to fold up again like a plant that has once expanded to sun and breeze, to have never a change of scene, of impression, to look forward to nothing but *submission*, sleep, and *death*; oh, it makes me turn cold all over!

And yet there are women who, of their own will, give up the *freedom of the world* to enter a convent *after* they have tasted life! Oh, I would rather be the poorest, the ugliest peasant hag, toiling for daily bread, than one of these cold cloistered souls, so that the free air of heaven, be it with the winds or the rain, might beat upon me, so that I might live and love *as I like*, do right *as I like*; ay, and do wrong *if* I liked, with the free will which is my *own*.

We were told that the outer world, with all its sorrows and trials, and dangers – how I remember the Reverend Mother's words and face, and how they impressed me then, and how I should laugh at them, *now!*– that the world was but a valley of tears. We were warned that all that awaited us, if we left the fold, was *misery*; that the joys of this world were *bitter* to the taste, its pleasures *hollow*, and its griefs *lasting*.

We believed it. And yet, when the choice was actually ours to make, we chose all we had been taught to dread and despise.

Why? I wonder. For the same reason as Eve ate the apple, I suppose. I would, if I had been Eve. I almost wish I could go back now, for a day, to the cool white rooms, to see the nuns flitting about like black and white ghosts, with only a jingle of beads to warn one of their coming, see the blue sky through the great bare windows, and the shadows of the trees lengthening on the cold flagged floors, hear the bells going ding-dong, ding-dong, and the murmur of the sea in the distance, and the drone of the school, and the drone of the chapel, to go back, and feel once more the dull sort of content, the calmness, the rest!

But no, no! I should be trembling all the while lest the blessed doors leading back to that *horrible* world should never open to me again.

The sorrows and trials of the world! I suppose the Reverend Mother really meant it; and if I had gone on living there till my face was wrinkled like hers, poor woman, I might have thought so too, in the end, and talked the same nonsense.

Was it really I that endured such a life for seventeen years? O God! I wonder that the sight of the swallows coming and going, the sound of the free waves, did not drive me mad. Twist as I will my memory, I cannot recall *that* Molly of six months ago, whose hours and days passed and dropped all alike, all lifeless, just like the slow tac, tac, tac of our great horloge in the Refectory, and were to go on as slow and as alike, for ever and ever, till she was old, dried, wrinkled, and then died. The real Molly de Savenaye's life began on the April morning when that dear old turbaned fairy

godmother of ours carried us, poor little Cinderellas, away in her coach. Well do I remember my birthday.

I have read since in one of those musty books of Bunratty, that *moths* and *butterflies* come to life by shaking themselves out, one fine day, from a dull-looking, shapeless, ugly thing they call a *grub*, in which they have been buried for a long time. They unfold their wings and fly out in the sunshine, and flit from flower to flower, and they look beautiful and happy – the world, the wicked world, is open to them.

There were pictures in the book; the ugly grub below, dreary and brown, and the lovely *butterfly* in all its colours above. I showed them to Madeleine, and said: "Look, Madeleine, as we were, and as we are."

And she said: "Yes, those brown gowns they made us wear were ugly; but I should not like to put on anything so bright as red and yellow. Would you?"

That is the worst of Madeleine; she never realises in the least what I mean. And she *does* love her clothes; that is the difference between her and me, she loves fine things because they are fine and dainty and all that – I like them because they make *me* fine.

And yet, how she did weep when she left the convent. Madeleine would have made a good nun after all; she does so hate anything ugly or coarse. She grows quite white if she hears people fighting; if there is a "row" or a "shindy," as they say here. Whereas Tanty and I think it all the fun in the world, and would enjoy joining in the fray ourselves, I believe, if we dared. I know *I*

should; it sets my blood tingling. But Madeleine is a real princess, a sort of Ermine; and yet she enjoys her new life, too, the beauty of it, the refinement, being waited upon and delicately fed and clothed. But although she has ceased to weep for the convent, if it had not been for me she would be there still. The only thing, I believe, that could make me weep now would be to find one fine morning that this had only been a dream, and that I was once more *the grub*! To find that I could not open my window and look into the wide, wide world over to the long, green hills in the distance, and know that I could wander or gallop up to them, as I did at Bunratty, and see for myself *what lies beyond*– surely that was a taste of heaven that day when Tanty Rose first allowed me to mount her old pony, and I flew over the turf with the wind whistling in my ears – to find that I could not go out when I pleased and hear new voices and see new faces, and men and women who *live each their own life*, and not the *same* life as mine.

When I think of what I am now, and what I might have remained, I breathe deep and feel like singing; I stretch my arms out and feel like flying.

Our aunt told us she thought Bunratty would be dull for us, and so it was in comparison with this place. Perhaps *this* is dull in comparison with what *may* come. For good Tanty, as she likes us to call her, is intent on doing great things for us.

"Je vous marierai," she tells us in her funny old French, "Je vous marierai bien, mes filles, si vous êtes sages," and she winks both eyes.

Marriage! That, it is quite evident, is the goal of every properly constituted young female; and every respectable person who has the care of said young female is consequently bent upon her reaching that goal.

So marriage is *another* good thing to look forward to. And *love*, that love all the verses, all the books one reads are so full of; *that* will come to us.

They say that *love is life*. Well, all I want is to live. But with a grey past such as we have had, the present is good enough to ponder upon. We now can lie abed if we have sweet dreams and pursue them waking, and be lazy, yet not be troubled with the self-indulgence as with an enormity; or we can rise and breathe the sunshine at our own time. We can be frivolous, and yet meet with smiles in response, dress our hair and persons, and be pleased with ourselves, and with being admired or envied, yet not be told horrid things about death and corruption and skeletons. And, above all – oh, above *all*, we can think of the future as different from the past, as *changing*, be it even for the worse; as unknown and fascinating, not as a repetition, until death, of the same dreary round.

In Mrs. Hambledon's parlour here are huge glasses at either end; whenever you look into them you see a never-ending chain of rooms with yourself standing in the middle, vanishing in the distance, every one the same, with the same person in the middle, only a little smaller, a little more insignificant, a little darker, till it all becomes *nothing*. It always reminds me of life's prospects

in the convent.

I dislike that room. When I told Mrs. Hambledon the reason why, she laughed, and promised me that, with my looks and disposition, my life would be eventful enough. I have every mind that it shall.

October 18th.– Yesterday, I woke up in an amazing state of happiness, though for no particular reason that I can think of. It could not be simply because we were to go out for a visit to the country and see new people and places, for I have already learned to find that most new people are cut out on the same pattern as those one already knows. It must have been rather because I awoke under the impression of one of my lovely dreams – such dreams as I have only had since I left my *grub* state; dreams of space, air, long, long views of beautiful scenery, always changing, always wider, such as swallows flying between sky and earth might see, under an exquisite and brilliant light, till for very joy I wake up, my cheeks covered with tears.

This time, I was sitting on the prow of some vessel with lofty white sails, and it was cutting through the water, blue as the sky, with wreaths of snow-like foam, towards some unknown shores, ever faster and faster, and I was singing to some one next to me on the prow – some one I did not know, but who felt with me – singing a song so perfect, so sweet (though it had no human words) that I thought *it explained all*: the blue of the heaven, the freshness of the breeze, the fragrance of the earth, and why we were so eagerly pressing onwards. I thought the melody was such

that when once heard it could never be forgotten. When I woke it still rang in my ears, but now I can no more recall it. How is it we never know such delight in waking hours? Is that some of the joy we are to feel in Heaven, the music we are to hear? And yet it can be heard in this life if one only knew where to go and listen. And this life is beautiful which lies in front of us, though they would speak of it as a sorrowful span not to be reckoned. It is good to be young and think of the life still to come. Every moment is precious for its enjoyment, and yet sometimes I find that one only knows of a pleasure when it is just gone. One ought to try and be more awake at each hour to the happiness it may bring. I shall try, and you, my diary, shall help me.

This is really *no* diary-keeping. It is not a bit like those one reads in books. It ought to tell of other people and the events of each day. But other people are really very uninteresting; as for events, well, so far, they are uninteresting too; it is only what they cause to spring up in our hearts that is worth thinking upon; and that is so difficult to put in words that mostly I spend my time merely pondering and not writing.

Last night Mrs. Hambledon took me to the *play*. It was for the first time in my life, and I was full of curiosity. It was a long drama, pretty enough and sometimes very exciting. But I could see that though the actress was very handsome and mostly so unhappy as to draw tears from the spectators, there were people, especially some gentlemen, who were more interested in looking at the box where I sat with Mrs. Hambledon. Indeed, I could not

pretend, when I found myself before my glass that night, that I was not amazingly prettier than that Mrs. Colebrook, about whose beauty the whole town goes mad.

When I recalled the hero's ravings about his Matilda's eyes and cheeks, and her foot and her sylph-like waist, and her raven hair, I wondered what *that* young man would say of me if he were my lover and I his persecuted mistress. The Matilda was a pleasing person enough; but if I take her point by point, it would be absurd to speak of her charms in the same breath with mine. Oh, my dear Molly, how beautiful I thought you last night! How happy I should be, were I a dashing young lover and eyes like *yours* smiled on me. I never before thought myself prettier than Madeleine, but now I do.

Lovers, love, mistress, bride; they talked of nothing else in the play. And it was all ecstasy in their words, and nothing but *misery* in fact (just as the Reverend Mother would have had it).

The young man who played the hero was a very fine fellow; and yet when I conceive *him* making love to me as he did last night to Mrs. Colebrook, the notion seems really *too* ludicrous!

What sort of man then is it I would allow to love me? I do not mind the thought of lovers sighing and burning for me (as some do now indeed, or pretend to) I like to feel that I can crush them with a frown and revive them with a smile; I like to see them fighting for my favour. But to give a man the right to love me, the right to my smiles, the *right to me*! Indeed, I have yet seen *none* who could make me bear the thought.

And yet I think that I could love, and I know that the man that I am to love must be living somewhere till fate brings him to me. He does not think of me. He does not know of me. And neither of us, I suppose, will taste life as life is till the day when we meet.

Camden Place, Bath, *November 1st.* – Bath at last, which, must please poor Mrs. Hambledon exceedingly, for she certainly did *not* enjoy the transit. I cannot conceive how people can allow themselves to be so utterly distraught by illness. I feel I can never have any respect for her again; she moaned and lamented in such cowardly fashion, was so peevish all the time on board the vessel, and looked so very begrimed and untidy and *plain* when she was carried out on Bristol quay. The captain called it *dirty* weather, but I thought it *lovely*, and I don't think I ever enjoyed myself more – except when Captain Segrave's Black Douglas ran away with me in Phœnix Park.

It was beautiful to see our brave boat plough the sea and quiver with anger, as if it were a living thing, when it was checked by some great green wave, then gather itself again under the wind and dash on to the fight, until it conquered. And when we came into the river and the sun shone once more it glided on swiftly, though looking just a little tired for a while until its decks and sails were dry and clean again, and I thought it was just like a bird that has shaken and plumed itself. I was sorry to leave it. The captain and the mate and the sailors, who had wrapped me up in their great, stiff tarpaulin coats and placed me in a safe corner where I could sit out and look, were also sorry that I should go.

But it was good to be with Madeleine again and Tanty Donoghue, who always has such a kind smile on her old wrinkled face when she looks at me.

Madeleine was astonished when I told her I had loved the storm at sea and when I mimicked poor Mrs. Hambledon. She says she also thought she was dying, so ill was she on her crossing, and that she was quite a week before she got over the impression.

It seems odd to think that we are sisters, and twin sisters too; in so many things she is different from me. She has changed in manner since I left her. She seems so absorbed in some great thought that all her words and smiles have little meaning in them. I told her I had tried to keep my diary, but had not done much work, and when I asked to see hers (for a model) Madeleine blushed, and said I should see it this day year.

Madeleine is in love; that is the only way I can account for that blush. I fear she is a sly puss, but there is such a bustle around us, and so much to do and see, I have no time to make her confess. So I said I would keep mine from her for that period also.

It seems a long span to look ahead. What a number of things will happen before this day year!

Bath, *November 3rd*. – Bath is delightful! I have only been here two days, and already I am what Tanty, in her old-fashioned way, calls *the belle*. Already there are a dozen sparks who declare that my eyes have *shot death* to them. This afternoon comes my Lord of Manningham, nicknamed *King of Bath*, to "drink a dish of tea," as he has it, with his "dear old friend Miss O'Donoghue."

Tanty has been here three weeks, and he has only just discovered her existence, and remembered their tender friendship. Of course, I know very well what has really brought him. He is Lord Dereham's grandfather on the mother's side, and Lord Dereham, who is the son of the Duke of Wells, is "the catch," as Mrs. Hambledon vows, of the fashionable world this year. And Lord Dereham has seen me twice, and *is in love with me*.

But as Lord Dereham is more like a little white rat than a man, and swears more than he converses – which would be very shocking if it were not for his lisp, which makes it very funny – needless to say, my diary dear, your Molly is not in love with him – He has no chance.

And so Lord Manningham comes to tea, and Tanty orders me to remain and see her "old friend" instead of going to ride with the widow Hambledon. The widow Hambledon and I are everywhere together, and she knows all the most entertaining people in Bath, whereas Madeleine, whom I have hardly seen at all except at night, when I am so dead tired that I go to sleep as soon as my head touches the pillow (I vow Tanty's manner of speech is catching), Miss Madeleine keeps to her own select circle, and turns up her haughty little nose at *my* friends.

So now Madeleine is punished, for Tanty and I have had the honour of receiving the *King of Bath*, and I have been vouchsafed the stamp of his august approval.

"My dear Miss O'Donoghue," he cried, as I curtsied, "do my

senses deceive me, or do I not once more behold *Murthering Moll*?"

"I thought you could not fail to notice the likeness; my niece is, indeed, a complete O'Donoghue," says Tanty, amazingly pleased.

"Likeness, ma'am," cried the old wretch, bowing again, and scattering his snuff all over the place, while I sweep him another splendid curtsey, "likeness, ma'am, why this is no feeble copy, no humble imitation, 'tis *Murdering Moll herself*, and glad I am to see her again." And then he catches me under the chin, and peers into my face with his dim, wicked old eyes. "And so you are Murdering Moll's daughter," says he, chuckling to himself. "Ay, she and I were very good friends, my pretty child, very good friends, and that not so long ago, either. Ay, *Mater pulchra, filia pulchrior*."

"But I happen to be her grand-daughter, please my lord," said I, and then I ran to fetch him a chair (for I was dreadfully afraid he was going to kiss me). But though no one has ever accused me of speaking too modestly to be heard, my lord had a sudden fit of deafness, and I saw Tanty give me a little frown, while the old thing – he must be much older than Tanty even – tottered into a chair, and went on mumbling.

"I was only a boy in those days, my dear, only a boy, as your good aunt will tell you. I can remember how the bells rang the three beautiful Irish sisters into Bath, and I and the other dandies stood to watch them drive by. The bells rang in the *belles* in those

days, my dear, he, he, he! only we used to call them 'toasts' then, and your mother was the most beautiful of 'the three Graces' – we christened them 'the three Graces' – and by gad she led us all a pretty dance!"

"Ah, my lord," says Tanty, and I could see her old eyes gleam though her tone was so pious, "I fear we were three wild Irish girls indeed!"

Lord Manningham was too busy ogling me to attend to her.

"Your mother was just such another as you, and she had just such a pair of dimples," said he.

"You mean my grandmother," shouted I in his ear, just for fun, though Tanty looked as if she were on pins and needles. But he only pinched my cheek again and went on:

"Before she had been here a fortnight all the bucks in the town were at her feet. And so was I, so was I. Only, by gad, I was too young, you know, as Miss O'Donoghue here will tell you. But she liked me; she used to call me her 'little manny.' I declare I might have married her, only there were family reasons, and I was such a lad, you know. And then Jack Waterpark, some of us thought she would have had *him* in the end – being an Irishman, and a rich man, and a marquis to boot – he gave her the name of *Murthering Moll*, because of her killing eyes, young lady – he! he! he! – and there was Ned Cuffe ready to hang himself for her, and Jim Denham, and old Beau Vernon, ay, and a score of others. And then one night at the Assembly Rooms, after the dancing was over and we gay fellows were all together, up gets Waterpark,

he was a little tipsy, my dear, and by gad I can hear him speak now, with that brogue of his. 'Boys,' he says, 'it's no use your trying for her any more, for by God *I've won her*.' And out of his breast-pocket he pulls a little knot of blue ribbon. Your mother, my dear, had worn a very fine gown that evening, with little knots of blue ribbon all over the bodice of it. The words were not out of his mouth when Ned Cuffe starts to his feet as white as a sheet: 'It's a damned lie,' he cries, and out of his pocket *he* pulls another little knot. 'She gave it to me with her own hands,' he cried and glares round at us all. And then Vernon bursts out laughing and flourishes a third little bow in our eyes, and I had one too, I need not tell you, and so had all the rest, all save a French fellow – I forget his name – and it was he she had danced with the most of all. Ah, Miss O'Donoghue, how the little jade's eyes sparkle! I warrant you have never told her the story for fear she would want to copy her mother in other ways besides looks – Hey? Well, my pretty, give me your little hand, and then I shall go on – pretty little hand, um – um – um!" and then he kissed my hand, the horrid, snuffy thing! but I allowed it, for I did so want to hear how it all ended.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.