

Coleridge Christabel Rose

Waynflete



Christabel Coleridge

Waynflete

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Coleridge Christabel R. Christabel Rose Waynflete

Prologue

In 1785

“That the character of the inhabitants of any country has much to do in forming a distinct devil for that country no man can doubt.”

From “*John Inglesant*.”

At ten o'clock at night on the 4th of October, 1785, the master of Waynflete Hall sat playing at cards with Mr Maxwell of Ouseley, his neighbour and his enemy. By the fireside sat Waynflete's brother, the parson of the parish, and over the chimney, in the light of the candle's on the card-table, was the picture of his eldest son and heir. The squire and the vicar were big, powerful men, with fair, bushy brows, and faces that told of rough riding and coarse living, hard weather and hard drinking, the only mark of their gentle blood that frank expectation of deference and service which marks a ruling class. The keener, thinner face of their visitor had the opposite look, that of a man accustomed to defer, and perhaps to flatter, for his livelihood. The face of the boy in the picture was fair and delicate, with eyes that seemed pleading and entreating for dear life.

Outside, all was dark and dreary, a wild autumn wind sweeping over the wide Yorkshire moors, and a noisy river, swelled by recent floods, rushing through the valley in which Waynflete stood. Within, the candles and the fire were reflected in panels of polished oak all round the little octagon-shaped chamber, and showed choice furniture with slender spindle legs and fine inlaying. The common mould candles burnt in heavy silver candlesticks of Corinthian pattern, and the many-times used cards lay on a pattern of thick twining roses worked in finest tent-stitch.

On a little side table was placed a shabby leather case, and a small oak chest with iron hasps and hinges. On another, within easy reach of the card-players, was a plentiful supply of port wine and of spirits.

Now and again, when the tall clock in the corner struck a quarter or a half-hour, the vicar got up and, opening one of the deep-recessed windows, stared out into the night. Then he flung the casement back again in silence, came back to his chair, and he and his brother filled their glasses full and drank them down. But Mr Maxwell of Ouseley only set his lips to his. At last eleven strokes, quick, sharp, and loud, rang out from the clock in the corner. The squire flung his cards down, and the parson swore a round oath.

“Time gets on,” said Maxwell of Ouseley. “I hope Mr Guy's journey has not been unduly delayed. I hope it sincerely.”

“Do you, Mr Maxwell of Ouseley?” said the squire. “Your hope's very likely to be disappointed, for my son Guy never fulfilled anybody's hopes in his life. Not his mother's.”

And the squire looked round at the familiar furniture, dropped his rough hand on the delicate needlework, and looked with his frowning brows at the picture, the token of his dead wife's love for her first-born son.

“Time yet, time yet,” said the parson, and got heavily up once more, and flung the window open. The wind rushed in, wailing and howling, and with it a sound as of a horse galloping on the wet ground.

“He is coming!” cried Maxwell; but the Waynfletes laughed.

“No, no, no!” cried the squire; “that horse never draws bridle. He has galloped ever since Guy Waynflete betrayed his friend to King James the Second, and saved his own dirty skin. Ye’ll hear him, Mr Maxwell, when you sleep under this roof when the wind’s up – and luck’s down. Maybe ye’ll see the traitor’s ghost. My son Guy has seen him – or else he lied, which is like enough. Shut the window, brother Godfrey, and snuff the candles.”

“Will you deal again, sir?” said Maxwell of Ouseley.

“No,” cried the squire; “cards won’t bring the lad back. Get your book, brother Godfrey, and read us a prayer. Pray, man, pray! and Mr Maxwell can join us.”

“With pleasure, sir,” said Maxwell of Ouseley, bowing.

“The prayer-book’s in the church, brother,” said the parson.

Then the squire got up and opened a drawer in the little side table, and took out a well-worn book with a red cover.

“There’s the mother’s book,” he said. “Read on. We’ll fight it out to the last.”

Then the parson of the parish turned his heavy chair round towards the light, and knelt up against the back of it, for his bones were something too stiff to reach the floor.

“What – what do you want to pray for, brother?” he said.

“What?” cried the squire with an oath, “that my fool of a son may get here before the clock strikes twelve, and save his honour and his house. Can’t you find a prayer? Read the first in the book. The Almighty’ll understand it.”

The squire leant his elbows on the card-table and his forehead on his hands. Mr Maxwell of Ouseley stood up decorously, and held his three-cornered hat before his face.

And the parson turned to the evening service, and read it straight through sonorously. The words implored pardon and peace, and light in darkness; but they carried but one prayer up to the throne of Heaven, “Let him come.”

Then the parson began the Litany till he came to the travellers by land and by water, when he rustled over the leaves of his book, and behold there was a mark in the prayer for those at sea, which did not run so ill in a storm of trouble and distress. “Save, Lord, or else we perish,” he said, and the squire groaned and said, “Amen.”

And through the storm and the loud rough voice the clock ticked and struck, quarter, half-hour, and three quarters, till at last, with his rough voice shaking and growing thick, and his dull old heart beating fit to choke him, the parson found himself reading the prayer for “All sorts and conditions of men.”

“Mind, body and estate – ”

“Eh-h!” groaned the squire.

“And a happy issue out of all – ”

The first note of twelve clanged out, and the parson flung down his book.

“Lord help us!” he cried, and Mr Maxwell of Ouseley took his hat from before his face, and waited till the clock had struck twelve. Then the squire got up from his chair, and took up the oak chest and set it down upon the card-table with a heavy thud. He turned the key in the lock, and took out a bundle of parchments and laid them down on his dead wife’s needlework, among the cards and the wine-glasses, with her prayer-book by their side.

Then he drew himself straight up, and bowed. “Mr Maxwell of Ouseley,” he said, “these are the terms on which we stand. This house and estate were to pass to you, my attorney-at-law, in repayment of the loans ye’ve made me, unless my son Guy came back by twelve to-night, ready to sign such other bonds as ye might please, and to marry your girl whom ye’d like to make a lady of quality as well as the heiress of ye’re gains and gettings.”

“Yes, Mr Waynflete, those were the terms, and I regret – ”

The squire turned and swore at him, then went on in the same tone as before, “But my eldest son Guy, who broke his mother’s heart, and was too late for her deathbed, is *too late* to save his father,

and himself. I leave him my curse for a coward and a fool. And I leave it for all that come after him to follow in his steps. And for t'other one, brother Godfrey, you'd better take and put him into the Church, if you can; he's a thickhead, but an honest lad. So there, Attorney Maxwell, take your own, and the luck ye've earned go with it!"

And Mr Maxwell, still murmuring regrets that he daren't speak aloud, closed his long fingers over the deeds. And the parson, the son of the house, put his handkerchief over his face and wept, while the wind rose higher and wailed louder, till it seemed as if cries and prayers for mercy mingled with the thud of the hoofs of the horse that never drew bridle at any door.

Then Waynflete of Waynflete Hall took up his dead wife's prayer-book and kissed it, then he walked over to the side table, and stood with his back to the other two. "God have mercy on my soul!" said he, and took something out of the leathern box. And there was a loud noise and a heavy fall, and the old drinking, gambling, hard-living squire never lived to see whether his unlucky son came home too late.

But in the gloomy mists of the next morning, while the scared household were watching the body laid out for its last sleep in the room where it had fallen, there staggered into the midst of them the ruined heir, his trim locks wild and wet, his fair face marred and degraded, and his eyes mad with fear.

"The traitor's ghost – or the devil in his shape – stood in my way – I was coming –" he stuttered in thick, shaking tones.

"To the devil with your ghost! You're drunk!" shouted the old parson, and lifted his hand.

The boy cowered, stumbled and fell on the threshold. He was indeed too late.

That was what happened at Waynflete Hall, in October, 1785.

Part 1, Chapter I

The Family

The splendid sunset of a late August day in the year 1885 was staining the smoky atmosphere which enveloped the manufacturing district of Ingleby with rich and subtle tints.

Margaret Waynflete sat at an upstairs window of a large square stone house, looking across a garden, filled with brilliant flowers and smoke-dulled shrubs, over lovely undulations of wood and field, and unlovely forms of mill and chimney half veiled in tawny, luminous mist, Beyond, hill behind hill, and moor above moor, in endless succession, were lost in grey-gold smoke and fog. She was an old woman, with a line strong face of marked outline, and a tall, strong frame, dressed handsomely in sober and dignified garments suitable to her years and position. Her face was wrinkled and weather-beaten, with the look that comes of facing hard weather through a long life; but it told of perfect health, of unimpaired strength of mind and body.

Nevertheless Margaret Waynflete was engaged in the religious duty of “considering her latter end.” So probably she would have expressed herself, for she was a person who always endeavoured to fulfil any duty that she recognised, and such consideration was becoming to a woman of seventy-six. But what she was really considering was her former life, and that, not so much with a view to repenting her sins, or regretting her shortcomings – though if she had such she was truly desirous of repenting and regretting them – as of shaping the future in such a way that her past work should not be undone by those who would come after her.

She had had a life work. She had attempted something and had done it. She had lifted her good old name out of the dust, and had restored her fallen family to its natural station. And she was intensely proud both of her family name, of her own success, and of the means by which the success had been obtained. When she thought of the day when she should be laid in the old churchyard at Waynflete, she desired as much that the business, to which the restored fortunes of the family were owing, should be honourably and skilfully managed, as that the family name should be borne with grace and dignity.

“We owe the old place to the business,” she said once to her two great-nephews; “and it’s a poor thing to forget the bridge that carries you over.”

Sixty years before Margaret Waynflete had been a fine, strong girl, intensely conscious of her good blood, though her father was but a working farmer, and she herself had had a humble education, and spoke with the strongest accent of her native county. The family had fallen so completely that every one but Margaret had forgotten the fact, and it hardly appeared extraordinary, though it might be sad, when her father’s death left her with the choice of going to service or of working in the mills with her little brother.

Margaret put her shawl over her head and went to her work every day; a fair, rosy girl with abundant flaxen hair, and large, finely cut features. Her beauty attracted the attention of the mill-owner, Thomas Palmer, a man no longer young, of humbler origin, and not much better education than her own, but of rapidly increasing wealth.

He courted Margaret honourably, and she married him on condition that he would send her little brother Godfrey to school. Years passed, of rising fortune which no children came to inherit. Thomas Palmer’s relations were all well established in businesses of their own, and when he died he left everything he possessed to his wife, and Godfrey Waynflete was her natural heir. Already, a little bit of the old Waynflete property, which lay in a moorland valley twenty miles away from Ingleby, had been bought by the wealthy mill-owner, and as time went on, Margaret, in whose hands the mills prospered, recovered it all, and when the house itself came into her possession she took her own name again. Her brother had married well; but he died young, leaving a son who bore the other

family name of Guy. He should be the future Waynflete of Waynflete; but again disappointment came, for Guy was killed by an accident three years after his marriage. His young wife died in giving birth to a second son, and the old great-aunt was left with two babies, Guy and Godfrey, on whom to fix her long-deferred hopes.

Sixteen years had passed since that day, during which the business had been the duty, and the family name the romance of her life. She loved both now, as people do love the objects of a life's devotion, with an imperious demand that those who came after her should love them also; and now, as she sat in her armchair, and thought of her age, and of preparing for death, she was really thinking about the two young lads, whose future fate lay in her power.

The eldest ought to have Waynflete; but it did not suit with her ideas to make him the squire and his brother the mill-owner, as might have seemed natural. The money that had been made in Ingleby Mills ought not to be diverted from their interests for the support of the Squire of Waynflete. He must be a partner in the business, even if the chief management of it fell to his brother. And the Squire of Waynflete ought to be the eldest son.

Such was the view of life maintained by this hard-working old lady, who had never known an idle day, nor a doubt as to the value of her day's work.

But she liked the youngest boy the best, and believed that he was the most likely to follow in her footsteps. Old people do not always regard young ones with blind admiration, and Mrs Waynflete appraised her great-nephews exactly according to her own measure. She did not know that there were other scales in the universe differently weighted.

So, as she reviewed her past life, she questioned herself whether all her payments had been fair, whether she had exacted enough, and not too much, work from her subordinates; whether she had spent enough money on improvements, or too much on buying back the last piece of unprofitable moor that had belonged to the old Waynfletes; whether, on the other hand, she had ever sacrificed honesty to gain, or failed honourably to fulfil an obligation. And in all these respects her conscience was clear.

And when she thought of the future – she took heaven for granted, as her well-earned portion; but she could picture nothing but Guy and Godfrey in her place, and herself somehow cognisant of their actions. Their young voices, through the open window, disturbed her meditations, as they came across the lawn together.

She rapped on the window, and called to them to come up, and in a minute or two, they were in the handsome, heavily furnished drawing-room, in which their white tennis-suits hardly looked at home. They were tall lads of eighteen and sixteen, like each other, and like their great-aunt; Godfrey the younger, remarkably so. He was the taller of the two, with high cheek-bones and prominent features, light flaxen hair and large grey eyes, with a certain direct honesty of expression. He was still only a big boy, while his brother was slighter, and of more finished appearance, and more delicate outlines. His eyes were also of a light grey, but they were softened by dark eyelashes set thickly on the lower lids as well as on the upper, which gave them a wistful, pleading look, quite independent of their owner's intentions, and inconsistent with his slightly critical smile and reticent manner.

“Did you want us, Auntie Waynflete?” said Godfrey, in blunt, boyish tones, and using the old-fashioned form of address, in which he had been trained.

“Yes. I've an invitation for you, which I've a mind you shall accept.”

“Are the Rabys giving a dance?” asked Guy, who was becoming an eligible partner.

“No; this is from Constance Palmer. Her husband was your great-uncle's cousin. She wanted to spend some months in bracing air, so I let Waynflete to her. You know the old lease of the house fell in this spring. She asks you two to come there for a visit. You shall go.”

“I should like to see Waynflete,” said Guy, with some curiosity, while Godfrey said —

“Is it only an old lady? Will there be any other fellows there?”

“She isn’t old, young gentleman. There are some little girls – or young ladies, perhaps you’d call them – that she has brought up. She says the neighbours have called on her.”

“Is Waynflete much of a place?” asked Guy. “Why have we never seen it?”

“No, Guy,” said Mrs Waynflete. “It’s but a poor place, and while the house was let to strangers – as, indeed, a good part of the property is still in the hands of the old tenants – I did not care for you to go there. Now, you can both see what you think of it.”

Guy gave a quick glance at her, while Godfrey said —

“I don’t suppose it’s jollier than this.”

“Before you go,” said the old lady, sitting up in her chair, “there’s something I want to say to you.”

“Yes, auntie,” said Godfrey, staring at her, while Guy said, “Yes?” politely.

“You both know how Waynflete has been got back for the family. By hard work, and doing of duty, and courage. When my heart is set on a thing, lads, I don’t fear trouble. I don’t fear man, and I’ve no need to fear the devil, since I know I’m in the right. And I never shall fear what folks may say of any course I choose to follow. I’m an old woman, and I tell you that a single aim always hits the mark.”

As she spoke in her strong voice, and looked at the lads with her strong eyes, Guy felt that the manifesto had a purpose. Godfrey listened quite simply as to an improving remark.

“You know how, bit by bit, your great-uncle Palmer and I have got Waynflete back. And I’ve often told you how *my* great-uncle Guy lost it?”

“Oh yes, auntie,” said Godfrey, cheerfully. “He got screwed, and then made up a cock-and-bull story about the family ghost stopping him at the bridge. Awful bad lot he must have been. Then he died, didn’t he, and Maxwell of Ouseley had the place till *he* went to the bad, and had to sell it?”

“Yes, he died delirious, and my grandfather was turned out to make his way in the world. So you see, ’twas self-indulgence, drinking and gambling that lost the place, and ruined the family.”

“I don’t think my namesake deserves all the blame,” said Guy. “His father, as I understand the story, got him into a pretty tight place.”

“He had his chance, Guy, and he lost it by his cowardice – if, as some think, he was stopped by highwaymen, or by his vicious habits, if he was drunk. He was a very fine gentleman, I’ve heard; played the fiddle, Guy, and wrote verses; but that was no stand-by in his hour of need.”

“The family ghost, himself,” said Guy, in a slow, dry voice, “seems to have been an unpleasant person to know.”

“Ay; there was a young Waynflete who betrayed his friend in Monmouth’s rebellion, to save his own life. He went mad, and shot himself – as the story runs – so ignorant folk say his ghost haunts Waynflete, and think, when the wind blows, they hear his horse galloping.”

“That Guy who was too late was an awful duffer, if he wasn’t drunk!” said Godfrey. “I’d have got over the river, ghost or highwayman, or been killed on the spot.”

“It’s not a nice story,” said Guy. “I should think Waynflete was haunted by all their ghosts!”

“Ghost-stories are very proper for old families,” said Mrs Waynflete; “but of course no one believes them. There, it’s a disgraceful story; take it as a warning. You’d better get ready for dinner.”

She rose and walked out of the room as she spoke, with a quick, firm step, while Guy laughed rather scornfully.

“What an anachronism the dear old lady is!” he said. “As if all the world depended on Waynflete!”

“I don’t know what you mean!” said Godfrey, angrily. “I think she’s an awfully splendid old woman to have stuck to her point all her life and won it. Catch a highwayman stopping me!”

“My unlucky namesake said it was a ghost.”

“Well, but it wasn’t, you know. There aren’t any.”

“You’re the right heir for Aunt Margaret, Godfrey. She ought to leave you Waynflete.”

“Why; you’re the eldest,” said Godfrey; “she says interfering with natural laws is wicked.”

“If primogeniture *is* a natural law?”

“It’s the law of England,” said Godfrey, as if that settled the point.

Guy laughed again.

“Ah, Godfrey,” he said, “you’ll always get past the ghosts! Well, the visit will be rather jolly. I’ve a great curiosity about Waynflete, and at least it will be clean. I agree with Ruskin that smoke is sinful.”

“There’s a great deal of rot in Ruskin,” said Godfrey, “and you ought not to say things are sinful, when they ain’t. Plenty of things are.”

Part 1, Chapter II

The House

Constancy Vyner was sitting at a table, sorting and arranging a little pile of manuscripts, neatly clipped together, and written in the distinct upright hand of the modern high-school girl. She was dressed in a plain, girlish frock, well cut and well put on, her thick brown hair hung on her shoulders, and curled over her square low forehead in vigorous waves, as if every hair was full of elastic life. Her handsome eyes, of a clear shade of hazel, looked out under straight brown eyebrows, from a brown, rosy face with an air of keen and critical observation; while the straight nose and firm round chin added to her purposeful look. She was tall and strongly made for her sixteen years, and the white, well-shaped hands that held the papers looked as if made to carry out the work which the well-shaped head would conceive. The room in which she sat was as old-fashioned as she herself was modern and up to date, with small irregular panels, sloping roof, and tiny casements, through which the evening sun danced in distorted gleams.

“I *think* I’m doing well,” said Constancy aloud to herself, as if convincing an opponent. “Ten shillings from the *Guide of Youth* for the best essay on Reading. I’m glad I was so careful as to what books I mentioned. One must respect people’s prejudices. I have much the best chance for all those acrostics and search questions. The editor of *The Children’s Friend* has asked me for another story. This will do. The little delicate boy must catch cold in a thunderstorm when his sister takes him out without leave. Shall he quite die? I think not. The district-visitor shall save his life. And this story for *The Penny Pleasure Giver*. There mustn’t be any moral in that at all! Altogether I have got twenty pounds in the last year, and some of the editors write ‘Dear Madam,’ and don’t find out I’m only a little girl! Something ought to come out of this place. It’s beautiful copy!” she continued, leaning back in her chair and glancing round her, while a certain absorbed receptive look came into her keen eyes, altering her whole expression.

She jumped up, and swinging herself into the deep high recess of the little casement, pushed it open and looked out.

Beneath her lay a wild untrimmed garden divide! by a sunk fence from a large paddock sloping towards a narrow valley, with heathery hills beyond. The sky was blue and still, with long streaks of pearly silvery cloud across the hilltops. A flight of rooks came home to a group of tall elm trees beside the house, filling the still air with sound.

“It’s awfully jolly and heavenly!” said Constancy, staring at the dazzling clouds with strong, unflinching eyes. “It’ll do for a description.”

“What will do for a description?” said an answering voice, like a softer echo of her own, as another girl, a year or so younger than herself, came in and stood below the window, lifting up a face of almost exactly the same shape, more delicate and perhaps less forcible.

“Rooks – peace – brownish meadows, and blue sky,” said Constancy. “Nice description. What have you been doing, Florella?”

“Talking to Aunt Constance about the Waynfletes, and the place. She says she is glad we have come; the house is gloomy, and she has heard odd noises. Oh, Cosy, do you think it could be haunted?”

“That would be luck!” said Constancy, jumping down. “Oh, I say, even a little noise would do to begin with! If I could only get a ghost, and the way people behaved with a ghost, it would be beautiful! It would do for the *Penny Pleasure*. Now, Flo, remember, you are not to tell auntie I read all those novels at Weymouth. One must have lovers, if one writes a novel, and I never can understand going into raptures about anybody, so I must get it at secondhand. Let us come down to tea – the Waynflete boys will be coming. Perhaps they can tell us about the ghost. I shall investigate it thoroughly, and

if ever I am interviewed by the Psychological Society, I shall take care to give more lucid answers than most people seem to do.”

Constancy and Florella Vyner were the orphan daughters of a man who had never known how to make his considerable talents marketable, or to adapt his style to the *Guide of Youth*, or to the *Penny Pleasure Giver*, as self-interest required. He lived and died the vicar of a small town parish, and his two little girls, already motherless and with only a few thousand pounds between them, came under the care of their mother’s sister, Mrs John Palmer, who had married one of Mrs Waynflete’s connections. She was a widow, well off and childless, with a house in London, and she gave all the advantages to Constancy and Florella which she would have bestowed on her own daughters. She was very fond of Florella, and as much so of Constancy as a not very clever aunt was likely to be of a girl who not only thought that she knew better than her elders, but, like Prince Prigio, always did.

Constancy did not mean to be the mere society young lady into which her aunt expected the shining light of the high-school to develop. She had definite ambitions, and definite powers to enable her to fulfil them.

“What sort of noises did auntie hear, Flo?” she asked as she put away her papers.

“She hasn’t heard any. But the servants say there are queer whisperings and rustlings, and the lodge-keeper told them that one of the old Waynflete’s ‘walks.’ Oh! what’s that?”

“The ghost,” said Constancy, laughing, and emerging from behind the rustling, fresh calendered chintz of the old-fashioned four-post bed. “You hear a little faint rustle all round you, then *crack* goes a panel! You listen for footsteps, and pit-a-pat up the stairs they come. The door slowly opens – ”

“Don’t, Cosy; I don’t like it,” said Florella, shrinking.

“Stop a moment, I’ll show you,” cried Constancy, opening a door, and running along the narrow polished oak passage beyond it. The younger girl stood still at the head of the dark old staircase, and looked timidly around her. The wind whistled softly round the house, and stirred the neglected creepers outside, so that they creaked on their rusty nails, and tapped with their long arms against the windows. She felt the bygoneness and unusedness of the place, and a feeling of awe stole over her. Suddenly a sound of eerie sobbing and sighing, followed first by a wild, mournful cry and then by a ringing laugh sounded through the house. The next moment Cosy came running down the passage, laughing still.

“There! See how easy it is,” she said. “That’s how ghost-stories are hatched. I can make up a beauty for Waynflete, and study the results. Bless me! is it ringing the door-bell? No, that must be the Waynflete boys arriving. Come along, Flo, we’ll be ready to receive them.”

Mrs John Palmer, kind, pretty, and easy-mannered, was a charming hostess, and the two lads had not been many minutes in the long, low drawing-room of the ancestral home that was so strange to them before she had set them quite at their ease. She pointed out to them the quaint old furniture, some of which must have been in Waynflete Hall before it was sold, and praised the old panelling and the low ceiling, with big black beams running across it. Then she encouraged them to talk about themselves, found out that they were both at a great public school, but that Guy was just going to Oxford. He was musical, and meant to read for honours, while Godfrey, besides being well up in the school, had done everything in the way of athletics which was possible at sixteen.

Then she proposed that the girls should show them round the place; and the four young people went out together, across a lawn cut up by odd-shaped flower-beds, full of old-fashioned flowers, “inconvenient, but unique,” as Constancy said, moving towards the paddock, where they discovered the possibility of making a tennis-ground.

The two boys were soon congenially employed in stepping it out, and they all grew intimate over their respective experiences of the game, and of other occupations and amusements. Florella was a kind and cheerful girl, wishful of giving pleasure; and Constancy, though she watched the two Waynfletes keenly, and “studied” them as she talked with spirit, was not at all occupied with her own

relations to them; and, as Godfrey remarked afterwards, “was more like a fellow than a girl, except that she talked about the work her form was doing, which a fellow never wanted to do.”

The four found their way into the old kitchen garden, with lavender and rosemary bushes nearly as tall as themselves, and wildernesses of untrimmed raspberries, which, in that northern country, were still bearing large specimens of red and white berries. Then, through a gate in the old stone wall, they came out into the stables and farm-buildings, picturesque and woefully tumble-down.

“Shabby old place,” said Godfrey, contemptuously; but Guy already knew that the whole scene was fastening itself on his affections. He had never liked any other so much. Constancy watched his soft gazing eyes and satirical little smile as they turned round to the entrance of the farmyard where were a pair of large iron gates with handsome stone gate-posts. Beyond was the remains of an avenue of elms, leading through rough, sunlit fields.

“The river is down there,” said Constancy. “I believe this used to be the entrance.” And Guy instantly thought of his unhappy namesake riding up to the gates – too late. A vivid picture presented itself to his eyes.

“Is that the church?” asked Godfrey, pointing to a little grey building low down at one side; while Guy said, “Let us go and see where our ‘rude forefathers sleep.’”

“Isn’t it like a slug?” said Cosy.

The comparison was not romantic, but it was apt. The long, low, moss-grown church seemed to cling to the uneven, heaped-up ground. An old woman was cleaning it, and the young people went in.

The church was dark, damp, and cold, but a flood of yellow sunlight streamed through the open door and fell upon a flat stone at the entrance on which was no name, but only a date, “1785,” and two words – “Too Late.”

“Cruel!” ejaculated Guy, and caught himself up.

“Eh, sir,” said the old woman, coming forward with a curtsey; “there be the last o’ t’owd Waynflètes, him as saw some’at and died raving. Here outside’s fayther, as shot hisself, and could na’ lie in t’kirkyard, so’s brother, t’vicar, laid un here in t’field and pu’d t’wa’ doon, and built ’t oop agen, round ’s tomb. Here a ligs.”

She led them out among the heaped-up graves, and showed them a round excrescence in the churchyard wall, within which was an old-fashioned oblong tombstone.

A tall, fair-haired, young man, with a lanky figure and stumbling steps, went before them, as if doing the honours of the dreary neglected place.

“Yon’s soft Jem Outhwaite,” said the old woman in a whisper. “He’ve seen t’owd genleman—*him as walks*, sir. He seed un when he wor a laddie, and went silly. He maks a bit o’ brass by fetchin’ and carryin’ fer t’sexton and me.”

“Soft” Jem touched his hat and grinned cheerfully. Guy gave him a shilling, and the old woman another, with youthful lordliness but he disliked the sight of these dishonoured graves more than he could have supposed possible, and the poor delighted softy, tying up his shilling in an old spotted handkerchief made a vivid impression on him.

Part 1, Chapter III

The Inheritance

Constancy made Godfrey tell her all the story of the loss of Waynflete, of the traitor's ghost, and of the Guy who was too late, as they walked home round the paddock, and looked down over Flete Edge to the river Flete at the bottom of the valley. A rough, ill-grown plantation covered the steep descent, while scattered cottages were planted on the equally steep hill opposite to them. Guy studied it with silent interest, while Godfrey compared it unfavourably with the Ingleby valley, and scoffed at the legends which he was repeating.

"Ghosts are all bosh," he said, with decision.

"Well, there are some odd noises at Waynflete," said Constancy, as they reached the house. "Now, come and see a picture. It must be this wretched Guy who was too late."

She took them upstairs to the extreme end of the wing of the house next the stables. Here, with windows looking out three ways, was a little octagon room, with polished oak floor, and scanty old-fashioned furniture. Over the chimney was the head of a handsome fair-faced youth, with the last rays of sun falling on his face.

"I declare, Guy," said Godfrey, "he's uncommonly like you, especially about the eyes."

"I dare say," said Guy, but the likeness annoyed him.

"He looks very sad, poor fellow," said Florella, softly; while Constancy looked from one to the other, and thought, "I've got a lot of 'study.'" Rooms had been assigned to the two boys at the other end of this same wing of the house, opening into each other, as was the way of rooms at Waynflete.

Godfrey went to bed, thinking that he did not much like these old legends and old scandals; and as for ghosts, the idea was too ridiculous! Still, there were certainly an odd variety of nocturnal noises at Waynflete – scratch, tap – rats and mice? Then a low murmuring and sobbing – the wind? He stuck his candle in the open window, and the flame hardly stirred. There was an interval of silence, and he got into bed and fell asleep as he ran through in his mind all the causes of mysterious noises – distant trains, coughing sheep, scraping creepers, pecking pigeons, whistling wind, scratching mice, etc. etc.

He was awakened by a violent clutch on his shoulder, and starting up saw, in the stream of moonlight from the window, his brother, half dressed and deadly pale, who fell on his knees beside him, hiding his face and grasping him so tightly that he was hardly able to move.

"Guy – I say! Guy! Good Lord, what's the matter with you? Ill? Got the nightmare? I say – let go – I can't stir!"

Guy loosened his hold after a moment or two, but he shook from head to foot, and Godfrey, tumbling out of the bed, pushed him up on to it, and stood staring at him as he lay with hidden face.

"What the dickens is the matter with you? I say, Guy! Can't you speak?"

There was no answer, and Godfrey bethinking himself that cold water was supposed to be an appropriate remedy for sudden ailments, plunged his sponge into the water-jug, and soused it on his brother's head. It was so far effectual that Guy began to fetch his breath again, in long sobbing gasps, while Godfrey, to his increased horror, felt that there were tears on the face that was pressed against his hand.

"Oh, I say, Guy! I say – what is making you such an awful duffer? What *is* the matter with you?"

Poor Guy shivered and trembled, perhaps not finding Godfrey's method very helpful; but he came more to himself by degrees, asked for some water to drink, and pulled the coverings round him.

"Didn't you see – him?" he whispered at last. "See – see what? Oh, I say! Guy, you haven't been dreaming of the ghost? Oh, I say! how can you be such a duffer! You're as bad as when you used to climb into my crib, and Auntie Waynflete whipped you, after that nursemaid made the bogie and scared you." What difference it might have made to Guy Waynflete if, at that moment of terrible

experience he had had some comprehending friend to soothe and sustain him, it is impossible to say; as it was, his boyish pride and self-consciousness began to revive, under his brother's rough dealing; he made an effort to pull himself together, laughed in an odd, startling way, and said —

“Dreaming! Yes, of course I was dreaming. Don't you ever say one word about it.”

“Not I,” said Godfrey. “A nice story it would be to get about. Now, am I to go into your room, and sleep with the ghost? It's getting chilly.”

Guy raised himself on his arm, and stared out into the moonlight.

“No,” he said, “I'll go back myself. You'll never hear another word about it.”

He got up, still tremulously, and went away, *shutting the door* behind him.

Godfrey was but a boy, with all the callous stupidity of his sixteen years. He thought that the incident had been very odd, and rather disgraceful to Guy's manhood. He was glad it was over, and he tumbled back into bed again, and went to sleep.

Guy looked much paler than usual the next morning, but confessed to nothing amiss. As he went out with the others to join in trying the new tennis-ground, he saw Florella, standing a little apart from the others, evidently just getting over a fit of crying.

“I say – can I help you about anything?” he said, good naturedly.

“No,” said Florella, turning upon him a pair of translucent eyes, almost as steadfast as Constance's, and even more candid. “I – I – I've been helping to do something wrong – that's all.”

She ran away before he could speak; but, surprised as he was, there remained in his mind the feeling that somehow she was a nice little girl.

Godfrey heard no more of Guy's midnight adventure during the remaining three days of the visit. The time passed pleasantly, and the aged vicar of the parish and one or two of the neighbouring gentlemen called formally on “Mr Waynflete.” The recognition pleased Guy, or at least that part of him which was free to care about it. He had very little to say to his aunt when they came back about Waynflete, speaking of it in a satirical, rather contemptuous fashion, which annoyed her very much; while Godfrey described it fully, though he staunchly declared that he liked Ingleby best.

Shortly afterwards Guy had a sharp attack of illness. He had never been quite so strong as his brother, and he did not recover from its effects for some time. Mrs Waynflete had little patience with any ailment less definite than the measles, and thought him fanciful and self-indulgent.

She was also much put out by Mrs John Palmer's complaints of odd and unaccountable noises at Waynflete, which upset her nerves and frightened her servants. But for these, she would have liked to take the house again next summer, as the air suited her, and she was glad to be near her husband's family. As it was, she did not feel able to settle down comfortably.

Mrs Waynflete thought Constance Palmer would have had more sense. She let Waynflete Hall to a working farmer, with directions to look after the house carefully, and keep it dry.

Nothing more was heard of mysterious noises, and Guy and Godfrey did not see the place again for nearly five years, when the farmer's tenancy had come to an end.

Part 1, Chapter IV

Hereditary Foes

“Very few people appreciate the feeling of a place. Hardly any one can feel the London atmosphere,” said Constancy Vyner, one Sunday afternoon nearly five years after the events last recorded, as she sat drinking tea on a balcony in a square on the London side of Kensington.

“I shouldn’t have thought our atmosphere so ethereal as to be imperceptible to any one,” said a young man who formed one of the party.

“That’s a most obvious remark, Mr Staunton; but I didn’t mean fogs. I don’t believe the country ever gives one just such a feel of summer as there is now. Hot air, balcony-flowers, rustling brown trees, they’re drier and more papery than country ones; sunny dust, dusty sun, and people, pavements, and omnibuses, and undergrounds – and smart fashionable clothes. It’s so summery! Nobody’s got the idea exactly,” she said. “Of course Dickens has a London feel; but that’s on another level, ghastly and squalid – or best parlour and hot-buttered toast; nor does it quite belong to the swells, though it has fashion and the season in it, too.”

“Your idea is coming?” said Mr Staunton, watching her curiously.

“I’ve got it!” said Constancy, sitting up with a broad smile of pleasure. “It’s modern – it’s democratic. It’s life’s fulness, roses, strawberries, sun, summer – got with some trouble, for the many. So there’s a little dust. You have the best of everything – music, parties; but you go by the underground!”

When Constancy was present, she always took the stage – or, rather, people gave it to her – she commanded attention. She was now at college, thinking, talking, making friends according to her wont, and though her literary ambitions were necessarily much in abeyance, she wrote, now and then, an article or short story, which had just the distinction that wins acceptance, and was not quite like every one else’s.

The youngest Miss Staunton was a college friend, and Constancy was intimate with her family, which consisted of two or three sisters, all busy with various forms of self-help and self-expression, and of the brother now present. The whole party lived harmoniously together, on a conjunction of small incomes, on terms of mutual independence, and, as Constancy epigrammatically put it, “went into society in the underground,” and into very good society too, which is no doubt a modern and democratic development.

“Don’t let us collect material for magazine articles,” said Violet Staunton; “but let us settle about the reading party. Cuthbert has heard of a jolly old-fashioned place on the moors up above Rilston, in Yorkshire, within reach of all kinds of fine scenery.”

“Rilston!” interposed Constancy. “We stayed once with Aunt Connie, at a place near there – Waynflete.”

“How odd!” said Violet. “It was from Mr Waynflete that Cuth heard of the place.”

“Guy Waynflete is a friend of mine,” said Mr Staunton. “I stayed with him once at Ingleby. We came upon Moorhead in our walks, and I should think it might suit for the preparation of future double firsts and senior-wranglers.”

“Thank you, Mr Staunton,” said Constancy, frankly rising to the bait. “I dare say you would expect to find us crocheting antimacassars!”

A little more discussion followed as to ways and means, and as to the number of the party, which was to consist of Constancy and her sister, of the eldest and youngest Miss Stauntons, and of two other college students.

“I should like to see Waynflete again,” said Constancy; “it was a lovely old place – haunted, too. The family lost it to a villain called Maxwell, and the old lady who has it now bought it back again.”

“I never heard anything of the family history from Waynflete,” said Cuthbert Staunton, “beyond the fact that the old place had been recovered. But I believe we are connected with some Yorkshire Maxwells. Do you know any particulars of the ‘villain,’ Miss Vyner?”

“You, descended from the hereditary foe, and friends with Guy Waynflete, without knowing it? How splendid!” said Constancy, sitting upright. “This is the story.”

And with exact memory and considerable force she related the legend of the loss of Waynflete as she had heard it five years ago from Godfrey; putting in a vivid description of the eerie old house, and the still more eerie picture of the unhappy heir, concluding with —

“The eldest one was so like the picture. He is in the business now, isn’t he? I heard he didn’t take a good degree. And Godfrey was such a big boy.”

“Well, he is a very big boy still,” said Cuthbert Staunton, who had listened with much interest. “He is a fine fellow, still at Oxford. Guy is made of rather complex stuff. Perhaps you may see him – he is in London, and I asked him to look in to tell my sisters about this moorland paradise.”

As he spoke there was a movement, and a fair, slight young man came in, whom Cuthbert greeted cordially, and introduced as Mr Waynflete.

The five years had not greatly changed him. He had the same slightly supercilious manner and the same “pretty” wistful eyes, into which, at the sight of Constancy, there came a startled look.

“I remember Waynflete so well,” she said, after the greeting. “Is it as delightful as ever?”

“I have never seen it since,” said Guy; “but the lease is out this year, and I believe some of us are to go and inspect it. Moorhead is eight or ten miles off – up on the moors.”

“Will you tell us about it, Mr Waynflete,” said the elder Miss Staunton. “We want to go in August. Is it a place where we are likely to be shot, or glared at by indignant keepers, if we walk about? We shouldn’t like to be a grievance – or to be treated as one.”

“No,” said Guy, with a smile. “It’s only the fringe of the moor, and there are very few grouse there. I think you’d be tolerated, even if you picked bilberries and had picnics.”

“That’s just what we want to do,” said Constancy, “picnics on improved principles. But we shall each have an *etna*, we shan’t trust to sticks and a gipsy-kettle.”

“I don’t know how young ladies amuse themselves when they’re not reading,” said Guy. “But there’s nothing to do at Moorhead. It’s two miles from High Hinton, and four from Kirk Hinton, and nine from Rilston – and it mostly rains up there. But Mrs Shipley’s very good at scones and tea-cakes, and the view is first-class of its kind.”

“Then, when it rains, we can put on our mackintoshes, and walk two – or four – miles to buy postage stamps,” said Constancy, rising. “Good-bye, Kitty, I must be going. Mind you look up your duties as chaperon and eldest of the party. Mr Waynflete, I’m sure my aunt will be delighted to see you if you like to call. We are at home on Tuesdays – 12, Sumner Square. Mr Staunton, perhaps we shall see you too?”

The young men made proper acknowledgments, and when Constancy, with no ladies’ last words, had taken her departure, Guy stated that he wished to hear the evening service at Westminster, and asked his friend to walk there with him by way of the Thames Embankment.

Part 1, Chapter V

Interesting

Cuthbert Staunton was a man with a history, and rather a sad one. He had been engaged to be married to a girl who had died within a week of the wedding-day. In the first shock of his trouble, he threw up his appointment, a recorder-ship which had been obtained for him by some legal connections, and went off on an aimless wandering, which greatly exhausted his small means, and put him out of the running for the prizes of life. He quieted down in time, however, his trouble receded into the background, and he came back to the family home, settled down, as his sisters said, into a regular old bachelor, with set little tastes and set little ways, a quiet, contented face, and a very kind heart. He had much cultivation and some literary power, and felt himself more fortunate than he could have hoped in being employed by his University as an Extension lecturer on literature and modern history. In this way he obtained interesting occupation, and a sufficient addition to his income for his very moderate wants.

Now, at two and thirty, no one would have suspected him of having had a “Wanderjahr” in his life; but perhaps it was from an under-sense of sympathy with a not very lucky person that he had taken to Guy Waynflete; when he had met him first abroad, and then at Oxford, a year or two before the present occasion.

For Guy was a person who did not get on well with life, he experienced and caused a great many disappointments. Once or twice at important examinations some sudden illness had come in his way and spoiled his chances. Such, at least, was his own account of his ill success, when he was pressed to give one. With other engagements he was apt, his friends said, to fail to come up to the scratch. If he undertook to play cricket, sometimes he did not turn up, and sometimes he played badly. He was musical enough to be a coveted member of various clubs and societies, but his performances could never be calculated on, and were sometimes brilliant and sometimes disappointing. There were times when his friends could make nothing of him, and no one felt really to know him. Cuthbert Staunton did not know much about him, he suspected him of more uncertain health than he chose to confess, and had discovered that the home life was not smooth for him. But he did not want to bring his own past into the present, or to inquire into Guy's. He found him congenial, in spite of the eight or nine years between them, and did not think that his various shortcomings were due to any discreditable cause.

“You are doing your London?” he said, as they started.

“Yes,” said Guy, “I've hardly ever been in town. You know we haven't many friends who can be said to be in London society. Most of the Ingleby neighbours come up for three weeks to a good hotel, and do pictures and theatres, and visit each other a little. I am sent up now to ‘make my way’ with some of our city business connections.”

“By the way,” said Staunton, “what Maxwells were those who seem to have been rather unpleasantly connected with your family history? My mother was a Yorkshire Maxwell.”

“Was she?” said Guy.

He was quite silent for a noticeable moment, then he said, with the little ring in his voice which people called satirical, “This is very interesting. Did your mother come from the Rilston neighbourhood? When we've settled the fact, we can consider of our future relations to each other.”

The Stauntons were not people of pedigree; but Cuthbert produced facts enough to prove that his mother had really belonged to a family which had originally owned a small estate called Ouseley, not far from Rilston.

“That's the place,” said Guy.

“But as for Waynflete,” said Cuthbert, “my forefather must have had to drop it again pretty quickly. I suppose he played cards too often. I never heard of its having been in the family. My grandfather Maxwell was a country doctor, and didn’t think family traditions consistent with hard work. I never thought about the matter, till Miss Vyner was so much excited at discovering your hereditary foe.”

“I don’t myself care about traditions,” said Guy, in a slow, soft, argumentative tone that told of his county. “I don’t, you know, unfortunately share my aunt’s profound respect for the house of Waynflete. She is an ancestor worth having, I grant you I think, if she knew, she’d make a Christian effort to receive you kindly; but we won’t tell her. As for me, I object to feuds and obligations – and – ghosts, and heredity’s a hobby that’s overridden nowadays. We won’t part for ever.”

He turned his soft eyes round on his friend, with a smile, but Staunton, who had spoken without a serious thought, saw with surprise that he had thought the avowal necessary.

“Well, my dear boy,” he said, “I’m glad you don’t say, ‘Here’s Vauxhall Bridge and there’s Vauxhall Bridge Road – take the tram, I take the ’bus. Farewell.’ But we must hurry up; it’s getting late.”

When they came into the Abbey, Guy looked all round him in a searching, attentive way. He joined in the singing with a voice full and sweet enough to do justice to his Yorkshire blood, and when it was over, and they parted, said, as if it was a thing to be thankfully noted, “I have very much enjoyed it.”

When, on the Tuesday afternoon, the two young men appeared in Mrs Palmer’s handsome drawing-room, it was full of other visitors, and their entertainment fell at first to Florella’s share. Her figure, as she sat a little apart by a table covered with the usual knick-knacks and flowers, had a harmonious and pictorial effect which caught Guy’s fancy and remained in his memory. She was still very like Constancy, but with softened tints; hair and eyes had not the same bright chestnut hue, but were of a dim shady brown; she was paler, and though her young outlines were plump and full, they had an indescribable grace and softness. She had Constancy’s straight brows and square forehead; but the eyes beneath were of another but equally modern type, seeking, longing, as the eyes of Fiametta or of the Blessed Damozel herself, but with this difference: they were happy as if in faith that a good answer waited their questioning. Florella did not talk, or learn, or do, as much as Constancy; but she knew all about learning and doing, and, in a girlish way, lived in the face of the questions of her time. She had one gift, too, which was likely to bring her much joy, and to this, after a few commonplaces, Cuthbert turned the conversation.

“And your painting, Miss Vyner? Has it been getting on?”

“Yes,” said Florella, “I have been having lessons.”

“May we see?”

Florella, without any excuses or shyness, took a little portfolio from the table, and showed some sketches of flowers in water-colour. The execution was slight and not perfectly skilful; but each little drawing had a characteristic suggestiveness which freed it entirely from the inexpressible dulness of most fruit and flower pieces.

A bunch of growing sweet peas labelled, “A tiptoe for a flight,” had the summer breeze blowing through them; “Pure lilies of eternal peace,” had a certain dreamy, unearthly fairness that suggested “airs of heaven,” and “A bit of green” was a cheerful, struggling plant of flowering musk, in sooty soil, on a smutty window-sill, with a yellow fog behind it.

“Why, that’s just how flowers look against smoke,” said Guy. “They *glare* with brightness.”

“Ah, that’s what I meant!” said Florella, pleased. “Do you draw, Mr Waynflete? You are fond of pictures?”

“I can’t draw,” said Guy; “but I can *write down* faces in pen-and-ink outline. I can’t make pictures. I don’t think I enjoy them.”

“Waynflete likes music,” said Cuthbert; “that is more in his line.”

“Tunes often put drawings into my head,” said Florella, simply. “The time when I began to do flower pictures was at Waynflete,” she added. “Some of the flowers there looked so wonderfully old; and age is a very difficult sentiment to convey in a flower! I never could manage it.”

As she spoke, there was a movement among the guests, and Mrs Palmer caught the name.

“Ah, Waynflete!” she said. “It was such a delightful old place, and so bracing. I should have liked to stay there very much, but the noises were such a worry. I declare when I sat in that old drawing-room by myself in a summer evening, I used to feel quite creepy. Mr Waynflete, do tell me if any noises have been heard since?”

Some of the company pricked up their ears. There are several aspects under which “ghosts” may be viewed, and there is no question that they are both fashionable and interesting. A haunted house and its owner are not often under notice at once.

Guy did not speak very quickly, and Constancy struck in.

“Aunt Con,” she said, “the situation would be quite spoiled if Mr Waynflete was willing to talk of his own ghost – or his own noises. Of course he will not. It would not be the thing at all.”

“It had not struck me that a ghost was interesting,” said Guy, dryly. “As for the noises – ”

“Oh,” interposed Florella, decidedly; “the noises were all nonsense.”

“My dear Flo,” said Mrs Palmer, “they are not pleasant when you can’t explain them. They might be burglars or the servants’ friends, or anything. But it’s a lovely place.”

The conversation now developed into ghost-stories, some of a scientific, others of a romantic type. Mr Staunton remarking that cock-crow would be nothing to ghosts nowadays, since they were accustomed to the searching light of science.

Guy stood by the mantelpiece, and fingered a Dresden-china figure in a way that gave Mrs Palmer a distinct presentiment of its downfall.

He looked up suddenly, “Did it ever occur to you to wonder,” he said, as a lady concluded a rather ghastly story, of a white lady who brushed by people on the staircase, and left a cold chill behind her, “whether contact with us makes the spooks feel hot?”

“Ah, Mr Waynflete,” said Mrs Palmer, as there was a general laugh. “You’re very sceptical, I can see. But you’re behind the age.”

She was rather glad to shake hands and say good-bye, as she was anxious to see whether he had damaged the Dresden shepherdess. But it was quite safe, even to the fine edges of its gilt roses.

“He is a nice-looking fellow, but his fingers should have been rapped when he was little to cure him of fidgeting,” she said, when they were alone. “But I shouldn’t think old Mrs Waynflete knew much about children.”

“He didn’t like to discuss his ghost,” said Constancy; “that was why he fidgeted. Family ghosts are personal.”

“Cosy,” said Florella, as her aunt left the room, “I can’t bear to think of the tricks we played at Waynflete. We ought to tell. It’s far too serious a thing to give a place the name of being haunted.”

“It was a very curious study,” said Cosy; “but, somehow, it did not frighten people nearly as much as we expected. And we did not make nearly all the noises that people fancied they heard.”

“We may have set them fancying,” said Florella. “I could have fancied things myself, after you had been whispering and scuttering about those passages. And, remember, I don’t feel bound to keep up the idea.”

“It was rather disappointing,” said Cosy, reflectively; “because the boys never took any notice. I don’t believe they heard us, the walls are so thick. But there, Flo,” she added, laughing, “it was just a bit of fun. And there are times when I feel as if I *must*– well – kick up a shindy. It’s the shape in which I feel the fires of youth.”

“That’s all very well,” said Florella. “You kick up a good many shindies. But I don’t like making fun of what I don’t understand.”

“I don’t see all the new pseudo-science,” returned Constancy. “I think it’s all a delusion.”

“I wonder if Guy Waynflete thinks so,” said Florella, thoughtfully, as she went to dress.

Part 1, Chapter VI

Good Comrades

Under a great copper-beech on the lawn at Ingleby one hot afternoon, Godfrey Waynflete was enjoying the “summer feeling” on which Constance Vyner had expatiated in London, and was spending an idle hour in teaching his young Skye terrier to jump over a stick. Rawdon Crawley, a name appropriate to the creature’s hairy simplicity, was a long grey object, like a caterpillar, with huge pricked black ears, and an expression which combined guileless innocence and philosophic power. Nevertheless, when he was coaxed, he ran under the stick, and when he was threatened, he sat still and sulked, for the perverseness of his race is fathomless.

“You confounded little obstinate beggar,” cried Godfrey, shaking the stick at him; “you’ll have to learn who’s master.”

Rawdon Crawley wriggled away to some distance, like a snake, then lay with his face on his paws, looking at his owner.

“Eh, Godfrey, ye’re letting that pup get the better of ye!”

“He’d die rather than give in,” said Godfrey, as his old aunt came across the lawn towards him.

The last five years had increased Mrs Waynflete’s wrinkles, but she was still upright, slim, and vigorous, enjoying the presence of her younger nephew, and, possibly also, the elder one’s absence. The expression is rather strong; but Guy was so uncongenial to her that his presence could not be said to add to her happiness.

“Eh, well,” she said; “I like a man that can speak up to you, and has got some grit. I’ve no opinion of limp characters.”

“Things generally settle themselves if a fellow looks them in the face,” said Godfrey, cheerfully.

“Ay, but they don’t always settle themselves to our liking. I’d like, maybe, to look myself back into a young woman; but I’m in my eighty-two, and there’s no help for it.”

“Eh, what, auntie? You’re as young as the best of us,” said Godfrey, warmly.

“Why, I’ve no cause of complaint. The Lord’s given me a long life, and I’ve kept my health and my faculties through it all. But, all the same, I’m an aged woman, and I might be struck down any day. So I’ve asked Susan Joshua, my cousin Joshua Palmer’s widow, to come here and make her home for a time, and bring Sarah Jane with her. She was poorly left, poor thing; and then, if I should have a stroke, there’ll be some one to look after the maids, and make you lads comfortable.”

Godfrey was much taken aback, but before he could interpose, she went on —

“And I’ve another reason for sending for her, Godfrey. I’ve made up my mind to spend some time at Waynflete before I die. So she can attend to the house here while I’m absent.”

“At Waynflete, auntie? But it’s not in any sort of order. Have you ever seen it?”

“Once, my lad, once,” said the old lady, face and voice softening. “I made your good uncle take me there for a honeymoon trip, and I said to him, as we stood on the bridge, and looked up and down the bonnie valley, ‘Eh, Mr Thomas, ye’ll be wanting a bit of land, as the money comes in to ye. Ye wedded me with my shawl over my head, but ye might be Waynflete of Waynflete yet, if ye liked to try.’ And he said, ‘Margaret, if I can give ye your will, my lass, ye shall have it.’ So I educated myself for this, and I kept his house well, and was as saving as was fitting for him and me. But there, Mr Thomas never owned but Upper Flete Farm before the Lord took him, and it was a lonesome thing for an old woman like me to set up in a fine house alone; besides that, I had the mill to attend to. But now, it’s time I took my place before I die. Guy can go and see what’s wanting.”

“Let me go, auntie. Guy does not care about Waynflete,” said Godfrey, thoughtlessly.

“Eh?” said his aunt. But here a rapturous bark from Rawdon Crawley, who had been penitently licking the blacking off his master’s boots, directed attention to Guy’s figure at the house door.

He had had a long, hot journey from London, and now threw himself into a garden-chair, exclaiming with delight at the coolness and shade.

“So you’ve seen the Miss Vyners again?” said Godfrey, referring to a note previously received from his brother.

“Yes; they and two of Staunton’s sisters are coming down to Moorhead for a reading party in their vacation.”

“A reading party,” said Mrs Waynflete. “Young ladies?”

“That’s all quite correct, auntie,” said Godfrey. “Girls go to college nowadays, and of course they must read for their exams. They *do*, generally.”

“Eh, well,” said the old lady. “I see no reason against it. I never doubted that a woman’s brains were as good as a man’s. I could have taken a degree myself. I’ll ask Constance Palmer to bring them here before we go to Waynflete. They can pursue their studies afterwards.”

“Waynflete?” said Guy, with a start.

“Yes. I’ve been telling your brother,” – here she recapitulated her two proposals. “I’ll get you to go over, and see if the place is in order.”

“Oh yes, Aunt Margaret, if you wish; but I’ve been some time away from the mill, and there are one or two matters – ”

“I hope you’ve brought back no new-fangled notions from town,” interrupted the old lady, sharply.

“Well, I’ve acquired a few ideas in conversation,” said Guy, slowly. “John Cooper, no doubt, will show me the fallacy of them.”

“You’ll have to live a long time before you’re wiser than John Cooper. Tea?” as the servant appeared with some for which Guy had asked as he came through the house. “I never take tea between meals myself.”

“It’s new-fangled,” said Guy, meekly, “or *was* once.”

“Eh, Godfrey,” said Mrs Waynflete, “there’s a plant broken in the ribbon border. That’s Crawley, I’ll be bound. He needs a whipping.” But her tone, as she walked over to the border, had lost all its asperity. Godfrey and his dog were privileged offenders.

“Going to Waynflete is a jolly idea,” said Godfrey; “but Cousin Susan and Sarah Jane will be confounded bores, if they’re to stay here for good.”

“They will so,” said Guy. “As for Waynflete, it’s a great move for my aunt at her age.”

“Oh, she’s up to anything. I say, do you remember waking me up because you had the nightmare. You ate too many raspberries with those jolly girls in the old fruit-garden. That story would be a fortune to the fellows who *go* in for spooks. Do you ever see ghosts now?”

“If I do, I shall not come to you for protection. You threw too much cold water on that early effort of my subliminal self to rise into consciousness.”

“I say, I don’t go in for that jargon. Give me a good square ghost with a sheet and a turnip, not all that psychical rot.”

“If ever you do see a ghost, my boy, it will certainly be a sheet and a turnip, and by George, how it’ll frighten you!”

Godfrey was boy enough to rise to this bait; though he did not like his brother very much nor get on very smoothly with him, his growls were not much more serious than those of Rawdie at the end of a stick. He was too prosperous to be discontented with his surroundings.

When Constance came down with her aunt to the Mill House – Florella had a previous engagement, and did not accept the invitation – she found plenty of contrasts to study, and she studied each with equal zest.

She was never tired and never bored, she was ready to play tennis from four till eight, and then, after supper, as was customary at Ingleby parties, to dance from nine to twelve. She waltzed with Godfrey as untiringly as if all her brains were in her feet. She made him coach her up in all

the ways of grouse shooting, and then she roused him to fury, by wondering how long the barbaric desire to kill something would survive in the English gentleman. She made much of Rawdie, till a certain proverb occurred frequently to the mind of his master. But she also went over the mills with Guy, and learned how to tell good wool from bad, and what were the processes of conversion into broadcloth and tweed. She picked his brains about her own special subjects, or his. She had been writing an article on English musical instruments, she had worked it all up from books, but there was a bit about music itself.

“What it does for humanity,” she said; “as it does nothing for me, I have to guess it all. You are musical, have I got it right? I don’t have these experiences, you know. There are such a splendid lot of things to do and to think of, I can’t tell how people have time for feelings.”

Guy was apparently as willing to discuss music as Godfrey to defend the game laws, and it was impossible to say whether Constancy preferred his languid, satirical courtesy and soft, preoccupied eyes, or Godfrey’s overflowing vitality, and look as of a vigorous young Viking, with his exaggeration of the high, marked family features, and of the family fairness, so that his old school nickname of “Towhead” was still extremely appropriate. The rosy, round-faced Sarah Jane, who desired to be called Jeanie, and blushed whenever Guy or Godfrey spoke to her, and was always wondering how familiar she ought to be with so-called cousins, looked on in amaze. When Constancy called Godfrey a Philistine, Jeanie thought that a flippant allusion was being made to Scripture characters, and when she talked of writing an article, as simply as of making a pincushion, the allusion appeared as a social *faux pas* to Jeanie’s idea of propriety. If Constancy was so unlucky as to possess an unpopular taste, she had better have said nothing about it. But the young men did not appear to be repelled, and were both of them on most friendly terms with the visitor, while they regulated their conduct to Jeanie with a propriety and skill which any chaperon might have envied. They were aware of a crowded background of Palmer aunts and cousins, and, though they did not think it becoming to make objections to her introduction to the family, they were agreed on the point of their relations towards her. Jeanie was a good little girl; but she knew quite well which “cousin’s” attention to Constancy meant as she called it, “something particular;” she knew quite well which of the two was the most interesting to herself.

But Constancy took the young men much for granted. She was more struck with Mrs Waynflete than with either of them.

Cousin Susan Joshua – it was the custom in the Palmer family to call the wives by their Christian names attached to those of their husbands – limited her intercourse with “Aunt Waynflete,” to receiving her commands; “Constance John,” as she submitted to be called with a shrug, to sympathetic and polite commonplaces, Jeanie was far too much afraid of her hostess to say anything but, “Yes, aunt,” and “Very well, aunt;” but Constancy talked and listened by the hour together. Her imagination was caught by the stately, flaxen-haired old woman whose strong personality was impressed on every detail of the life around her, whose household must breakfast at eight, and go to bed at ten, go to church on Sunday afternoon, and stay at home on Sunday evening, as by the law of the Medes and Persians. She heard, more than any one else had ever done, of old Margaret’s early struggles, of her strong purpose, and of how the only birthright of which she had been actively conscious had been won at last, since of that she was more than worthy. Constancy noted keenly how impatient she was of any change in the methods of her prime; she saw plainly how Guy’s indifferent manner irritated her, and how Godfrey was the kind of youth that pleased her. It was to Constancy’s credit that she could bridge over sixty years, and see a point of view so alien to her young modern spirit; and Mrs Waynflete was flattered by her preference as age must be by the admiration of brilliant youth.

Godfrey looked on delighted, and drew quite false conclusions; for, if Constancy loved Rawdie, and admired Mrs Waynflete, it was for their own sakes and not for his.

The hour and the maiden had come for the happy, prosperous youth. The vigorous inspiring companionship filled him with delight, the roses of that summer were redder and its sun warmer than

he had ever known. Love came upon him with a rush of joyful hope, and, as was natural to him, his passion became a purpose, which he expected to fulfil. He would work hard for a degree, for she would scout a failure. He must win her; but Guy – He was furiously jealous when Guy obtained a monograph on the “Music of the Greeks,” and presented it to Miss Vyner, though it was given openly in the family circle. Godfrey could not dare to give her a bunch of the dark red dog roses of the north country, which he had heard her admire.

He was “over head and ears in love,” – no other expression could express his condition – and when she went to join her friends at Moorhead, and her aunt tired, as she said in private, of making talk for Mrs Joshua, betook herself to Harrogate, only hopes of speedy meetings modified his despair.

The girls’ reading party must come over both to Ingleby and to Waynflete, and Cousin Susan and Jeanie would both want to see the spinster housekeeping at Moorhead.

But before these visits took place, the situation, already strained, between Guy and his aunt was intensified in an unexpected manner.

Part 1, Chapter VII

The Cupboard in the Wall

Guy had really returned from London with a “new-fangled idea,” or, rather, with plans for carrying out one long entertained, and with more courage than usual for putting it forward. He liked the business, and had no lack of ideas concerning it; but during the two years that he had been at work in the mill his position there had become more and more difficult. He could not feel himself a nobody, and he knew what ought to be done; but his aunt had given him no place and no authority; to use the idiom of his county, “he had no say in the work,” and Mrs Waynflete thought so little of his powers or of his character that she never received his suggestions with favour. She distrusted him, and he knew it, and to a certain extent he knew why. But he was quite sure of his ground now, and as soon as the visitors had departed, he proceeded to unfold his mind.

He told her, with as much delicacy as he could, but with something of her own tenacity, that in his opinion the two faithful old managers were hardly up to the requirements of the day. He thought that more pains should be taken to follow the changes of fashion, and that besides producing broadcloth and plain tweed, certain classes of fancy goods should be undertaken. This would involve an outlay for machinery suited for weaving patterns, and it might also be necessary to engage an overseer who could superintend the production of this class of goods; some extension of the premises might also be required. If his aunt disliked the notion of alterations in the old mills, there was a little mill near which had been worked in a small and unsuccessful way by a man without sufficient capital to carry it on, who would gladly let it to “Palmer Brothers,” as the Ingleby firm was still called, from Mr Thomas’s father and uncle. Guy adduced facts and figures, and made it plain that he knew what he was talking about; and, in short, showed more of the old lady’s own faculty for business than she had ever given him credit for.

But one of the principles of Palmer Brothers had always been that it was a risky and unsound way of doing business to follow the changes and chances of fashion. People would always want broadcloth and tweed, but fancy goods might lie on hand, and fail to find a market; and, in short, did not suit with Palmer’s way of doing business.

Old Mrs Waynflete sat in her chair in what was called the library at the Mill House, though it contained very few books. She watched the pale, slight youth before her with the most absolute want of respect for his personality, with an innate distrust for his facts and figures, and yet feeling with the first painful pangs of old age that she could not entirely grasp the argument. Guy was talking of conditions unknown to her. Surely the day had not come when she and her good old servants were unable to judge what was the best for the business. Surely this lad could not have pointed out to her what she had failed to see for herself. Surely he could not be in the right.

“Is there any other matter you want to find fault with?” she said. “I’d like to hear your true opinion.”

Guy hesitated a little; but, quiet as he looked, he had the obstinacy of his race, and he could not resist giving his true opinion.

“Well,” he said, “I don’t think the mills are as popular with the work-people as they were once. There are modern ways of attending to their health and their comfort, in which we’re deficient. Ventilation, and so on. But a small outlay would set all that to rights. One must move with the times.”

“So you think John Cooper and Jos Howarth are past their work?”

“Not exactly. I think Cooper’s a good old fellow. Howarth I’m not so sure of.”

“You seem very sure of yourself, Guy. Late hours and days away from business were not the way to make a fortune in my time.”

Guy flushed up.

“I should do my best,” he said; “and I believe – I am sure – that I am not incapable of carrying out these plans. And one thing more I wish to say, Aunt Waynflete. After Christmas, Godfrey will be coming in to the business. As things are now, there is no scope for both of us. With the scheme I propose, there would be plenty to do – if you allow us to do it.”

“You need not to think that all the ideas come first into your head, my lad. I have thought of that. There’ll be an agent wanted for Waynflete.”

Now, this was a remark which it was nearly impossible for Guy to answer. He was the natural heir of Waynflete, but Waynflete was in the old lady’s own power, and she had never dropped a word as to her intentions regarding it. He could not assume that Waynflete concerned him rather than Godfrey; and yet, if it did not, the whole principle of his aunt’s life would be falsified. Besides, the idea was most distasteful to him. He said hurriedly and unwisely —

“Waynflete is hardly enough of a place to occupy a man’s whole time, in any case.”

“Well,” said Mrs Waynflete, “you have said your say, and I’ll consider my answer. But I’ve known the business forty years before you were born, my lad, after all.”

It was the way of the Waynfletes to hide their real selves from each other as carefully as if each one had been plotting treason. They erected quickset hedges round their hearts and souls, as if to be misunderstood was needful to their self-respect. Guy said no more, and withdrew, and he never spoke a word to Godfrey of what had passed between his aunt and himself.

The next day, just before luncheon, Jeanie was gathering flowers on the lawn, when a door in the wall that led to the mills opened, and Guy dashed in, with so white and wild a look, and a step at once so hurried and so faltering, that she ran up to him, exclaiming —

“Guy! Are you ill? What is the matter?” Guy looked at her, as she said afterwards, as if he did not see her, and hurried in and upstairs without a word, and as she followed, scared and puzzled, she heard him shut and lock his bedroom door behind him. Turning away in distress and alarm, she met Godfrey strolling along in the sunshine, with Rawdie at his heels, and a book under his arm, a picture of idle holiday enjoyment.

“Oh,” he said, in answer to her appeal, “Guy is like that if he has a headache. He likes to be let alone; he never wants anything.”

Jeanie still looked doubtful.

“People don’t generally look so with a headache,” she said. “Does he often have such bad ones?”

“No,” said Godfrey; “only once in a way. He’ll be all right in an hour or two. Let him alone.”

Jeanie thought it a very odd headache; but no more was said, though, from Mrs Waynflete’s face when Guy did not appear at luncheon, it might have been argued that his sudden illness told against his plans.

She put on her bonnet, and took her way down to the mill with a step that was still firm, though slower than of old, and asked for John Cooper. She was no unusual visitor, and had never let her hold of the business drop; and as she sat down in the little office, and cast her still keen blue eyes round her, it was more than ever difficult to believe, more than ever distasteful to feel, that her day was almost done. The two old men who had long managed the business, though some years younger than herself, now seemed like contemporaries. She had worked under their fathers in her girlhood, she had seen them rise in office under her husband, she had now worked with them for many years, and with them she felt at one.

Partly from this, and partly, perhaps, from the incautiousness of old age, before many minutes had passed, she had made John Cooper aware, both of Guy’s plans and of his strictures. It was so natural to discuss the crude ideas of the youth with her experienced old friend.

John Cooper was very much taken by surprise. The reticent and cautious Guy had never betrayed how carefully he had been “takin’ notes.” Had this lad really put his finger on the weak places? John Cooper was much too careful to commit himself to a direct contradiction.

“Well, Mrs Waynflete,” he said; “Mr Guy is young, and young folks like to have something to show for their opinions. But, there’s been many new fashions since you and I began to work the business. The old master never held with following the fashion.”

“You can be making changes every year if you do.”

“So you can do, Mrs Waynflete; so you can. Eh, but I’ve seen changes.”

“Mr Guy has a notion of business, too,” said the old lady.

“Did ye see Mr Guy when he came home, ma’am?” said John Cooper, suddenly.

“No; he had a bit of headache, and went to his room. Young men aren’t as tough as they used to be.”

There was a silence. The old man watched the lady over the writing-table between them. He, too, was a vigorous old grey-head, with a hard mouth and keen eyes wrinkled up close. The little room was full of bills and letters and safes. A stray ray of afternoon sun shot through the small-paned window, and showed the dusty air and the dusty floor, and the well-arranged contents of the dusty shelves.

John Cooper crossed the little room, and stood in the streak of sunshine. It shone upon his well-known grey hair, on his shrewd, weather-beaten face, and glittered on a small key left in a little oak cupboard in the wall. John Cooper opened the cupboard, and the sun shot in and sparkled with sudden brilliant reflections on something inside.

“Eh, what have you there?” said Mrs Waynflete.

John Cooper took out a tall brandy-bottle, nearly empty, and a glass still containing some drops of spirit, and set them on the table.

“Mr Guy left the key by mistake,” he said.

“John Cooper! What do you mean?”

No asseveration could have added to the abrupt force of the intonation, as Mrs Waynflete sat upright, grasping the arms of her wooden chair, and looking straight at the manager.

“Mr Guy keeps that cupboard close locked. But to-day he left it swinging open, when he went home – with a headache.”

“Did ye see him go?”

“I came in at the door here, Mrs Waynflete, and Mr Guy staggered past me, and never saw me. He went stumbling out and up the lane. Hurrying and reeling as he went – as once and again I’ve seen him before.”

Mrs Waynflete’s brown old face grew a shade paler, she still held by the arms of the chair, as she rapidly weighed what had been said.

It seemed to her that the fact of the young man’s possessing a bottle of spirits was as nothing compared with the secrecy with which he had concealed it. Nor would he be the first in the house of Waynflete to fall a victim to such a temptation.

On the one hand, Mrs Waynflete had seen it in her father, and feared it for her brother; on the other, there was nothing in Guy’s look or ways to suggest it, save the occasional attacks of illness, as to which he was always mysterious and secretive.

“Lock up the cupboard,” she said, “and give me the key. And ye’ll not say a word of this matter.”

“Nay, not to Joshua Howarth, nor to young Jos, nor to my own John Henry. It’s no matter for talking of.”

Mrs Waynflete put the key in her pocket, rose, and standing at her full height, said – “Good day to you,” and walked away with firm, unflinching step, across the paved entrance, up the bit of lane that led to the garden wall. She went in through the gate and across the garden, and upstairs to Guy’s room, at which she knocked sharply.

“Guy, I wish to come in.”

The door was unfastened, and Guy stood there in great surprise.

“Aunt Margaret!” he said. “What is it? I am much better. I am coming down for some tea.”

Mrs Waynflete put him aside with her hand, entered the room, and shut the door.

It was a large, comfortable room, with a bookcase and a good supply of books, a writing-table, a sofa and an armchair, besides the little iron bed in the corner, and it was brilliantly light, for there was not a curtain or a hanging of any sort in the room. Such was Guy's taste. He looked pale still, but quite himself, and there was nothing peculiar in his manner, as he repeated —

“What is it, Aunt Margaret?”

“This,” said his aunt, as she sat down in the armchair, and held out the key.

“What is it that you mean?” said Guy, with a sudden look of being on his guard, and much in the tone of her own question to John Cooper.

“You left your cupboard open, Guy, and John Cooper, very properly, locked it up, and gave me the key. What should a lad of your age do with a bottle of brandy?”

“Confound John Cooper's meddling impertinence!” said Guy, passionately. “It is nothing to him or to any one what I choose to keep there.”

“That depends upon the use you make of it.”

“Has John Cooper been setting it about that I've been drinking?” said Guy, with an angry laugh. “Is that — is *that* what it looks like?”

He caught himself up with a start, and turning away to the window, stood staring out of it, while his aunt said —

“It's a matter I'll have cleared up, Guy, before I answer all your questions of this morning. I've known many young fellows take a drop too much in company. That wasn't thought so much of when I was young. But it's different nowadays; and what that bottle of brandy means, if it means anything at all, is a very different matter again.”

Whether Guy was struggling with temper or embarrassment, or whether he really did not know what to say, he was silent for some time. At last he turned round, and said ungraciously — “On my word and honour, I don't drink. I have never been drunk in my life — yet.”

“Then what does this mean?” still holding out the key.

“Sometimes — very seldom — I get faint or dizzy — with a headache — I hate a fuss, and I can set myself right with a little brandy.” There was something in the extreme reluctance with which the answer was given that justified suspicion.

“You ought to see a doctor, if that is so,” said Mrs Waynflete, with much reason; “and when I hear what he says, I'll think of what you say.”

“As you please, Aunt Margaret,” said Guy. “If my word is not to be taken, I don't care in the least to be cleared by another person's.”

“You ought to care how your character stands in my eyes,” said Mrs Waynflete. “Take back your key. I shall judge for myself.”

She looked keenly at the young man standing in the sunlight. It was obvious that now, at any rate, he was fully master of himself, and Mrs Waynflete had lived too much with men, and knew their ways too well, not to perceive that there was nothing in his look to substantiate the charge against him.

Suddenly he looked round at her, in a curious, furtive way — a look which he withdrew at once as she met it, but which startled her. She had caught the glance of fear and suspicion.

“Time will show,” she said, as she left the room. “But I'll have it all made clear to me, before I trust matters in your hands.”

When left alone, Guy hastily locked his door again, then flung himself down on the sofa.

“Oh, I am a fool, a fool!” he cried to himself. “God knows what will become of me!”

He turned his face downwards with a gesture of despair. There was no one to help him, and he could not help himself.

Part 1, Chapter VIII

The Skeleton in the Cupboard

After a few moments Guy recalled himself from his despair, and, turning his face to the light of the open window, began, with what courage he might, to consider the situation. A shameful charge had been brought against him, and an untrue one, and yet the truth was so inexpressibly galling to him that he could hardly bring himself to contradict the falsehood.

Drinking, especially in secret, was a degrading vice; but, however sinful, it was natural, being shared by thousands of poor miserable fellows. But the secret curse of Guy's life was, he thought, peculiar to himself, alien from and repugnant to happier folk. It was worse than wicked, it was abnormal. He himself would have pitied, but he would not have liked, certainly not have respected, another man who – Even to himself he would not think the fact in quotable words. That he could and did bear his hard fate in secret was all that preserved for him a shadow of self-respect.

A crisis had now, however, come, and his instinctive decisions must be reconsidered. He got up, and, unlocking his desk, took from its most secret corner a little pen-and-ink drawing, and, laying it on the table, sat down, and leaning on his elbows, looked it full in the face. For it was a face “written down,” as he had phrased it to Florella Vyner, – a face almost identical with his own, and with the picture of his unhappy namesake, but neither framed by the close-cut hair of the present day nor by the powdered peruke of the Guy who was too late, but set in wild, fair locks that hung loosely round it, while, through the misery of the large, mournful eyes, there was a look of malice, fitting the Guy Waynflete who had betrayed his friend, and whose apparition had, by tradition, caused the second Guy to die disgraced and ruined. The present Guy sat and gazed at it, till the likeness grew in his own face, and he tried to force his trembling lips into the contemptuous smile which he felt himself to deserve. Once, as he believed, he had seen this fatal face with his bodily eyes, and since then the fear of it, the sense of its unseen presence, the influence of it, was enough to shake his manhood and shatter his nerves, was altogether irresistible to him. He never knew when he might wake from sleep with this awful dread upon him. Never had he been able to stand up against it.

The code of the British schoolboy, backed by the reserve of proud and canny Yorkshire, is not calculated to deal with an abnormal strain on a delicate nervous system.

When Guy first “saw the ghost,” if it may be so phrased, at Waynflete, he had felt its effect upon him simply as a disgrace; and, though he knew somewhat better now, his instincts had never allowed him to treat it otherwise. A reasonable man might have consulted a doctor, and found out how to deal with his own nerves; but down below all Guy's opinions on the subject, all the explanations which he gave himself, there was an awful conviction of the personality and reality of this thing, which seemed half his double and half his evil genius; and what could any doctor do for that? – while he entertained the most utter disbelief in the genuineness of all modern scientific inquiries into such matters. What! analyse this frightful thing for other people's benefit? – have his experiences printed? – be regarded as a person possessing an enviable faculty denied to others? No; no one who knew what “seeing a ghost” was like could undergo such torture! They were all humbugs. While, as for religious help or consolation, Guy feared spiritual impressions or spiritual efforts; and whether his trouble was the work of his own fancy, a possession of the devil, or a revelation from the unseen, it put him in a different relation to all supernatural questions to that of his fellows. He kept altogether apart from the subject, never joined in religious discussions, nor let himself speculate on religious questions. He feared, also, all his finer impulses; they touched on the terrible and tender point.

As he was liable to nervous headaches on other occasions than when the fear of a spiritual presence overwhelmed him, he usually attributed all disturbance that he could not conceal to such a cause. Nobody troubled about a headache. Fainting or palpitations might lead to questions, and be

supposed to be dangerous. Of course all this was crude and young and foolish in the extreme; but it was instinctive to a nature, one part of which was so antagonistic to the other. It never could have continued if he had belonged to people of ordinary insight or experience; but the spiritual terrors, to which he was subject, were very uncertain in their recurrence, and, in fact, were usually apt to come upon him at some crisis which excited his nerves; and, in his ordinary life at college, he had suffered less from them than at home, when, certainly, his grand-aunt and his brother were not likely to suspect them.

But what was he to do now? If he told, if he could so far oppose his instincts, his aunt would think him a liar, like the other Guy – or mad? That last might be. It was a view of the matter which had not escaped him. As for drinking, well, he might be driven to that before the end. There were times when the brandy was tempting. That was another ancestral ghost that might be more dreadful than the first.

But he could not confute the charge, and, besides – here a much simpler part of the Waynflete nature came into play – he was not going to notice such confounded insolence on Cooper's part, or such suspicious mistrust on that of his great-aunt.

He locked up the picture, and then, perceiving that it was still only five o'clock, and that the mill had not yet "loosed," he took up his hat and went down there, walking in upon the astonished John Cooper, with as cool a manner as if nothing had passed.

"Step into my room, will you?" he said. "There are two or three letters that I left this morning."

Then, as the old manager took up and turned over the letters indicated, not knowing what to say, and feeling his statements to Mrs Waynflete considerably invalidated by the young gentleman's look and manner, Guy deliberately unlocked the cupboard, took out the brandy-bottle, and held it up to the light.

"Nearly empty," he said, in his soft, mocking voice. "Here, Joe Cass," to the office boy, "just run down to the Lion, and ask for a bottle of the best French brandy – for me. Bring it back with you."

"Lord! sir!" exclaimed Cooper, as the boy departed staring; "if you *do* want brandy, you'd a deal better bring it down from the house yourself, than send the boy on such errands!"

"Perhaps Mrs Waynflete wouldn't give it to me; and you see, I like to have it, to 'put to my lips, when I feel so disposed.' Take half a glass of the remains of this? No? Then I will. Now, as to that colonial contract – "

Guy poured out the remainder of the brandy and drank it off. He felt revived by it, and went on with the details of the colonial contract with the most accurate clearness, till the boy came back, when he took the bottle, locked it up, put the key in his pocket, and gave Joe the old bottle to throw away.

"Well, Mr Guy," said Cooper, desperately; "I ask your pardon if I mistook your condition; but I'd as soon see my own son with a locked-up brandy-bottle as you – at your age. Eh, my lad, it's a grand mistake ye're making."

"I shan't let the business go to the dogs in consequence, if I've ever a hand in it," said Guy, but with more softness; "but just make up your mind that I don't care a – " Here Guy used an expression which appeared to Cooper almost as bad a breach of business propriety as the brandy, and added with much bathos, "I don't care a brass farthing what any one thinks."

This act of schoolboy defiance was the refuge of Guy's manhood, which had not learned a better mode of self-assertion. His soft eyes had a somewhat evil look as he watched his routed enemy, and then went back to the house, where he was unusually lively at dinner, and through the evening.

But either the brandy or the excitement revenged itself next day with a real headache, so violent that he could not lift up his head, and which left him pale and languid and without spirits for any more defiance of consequences. Moreover, Mrs Waynflete decreed that he was to go with her to Waynflete.

Guy resented the proposal as an act of mistrust, and dreaded it from the bottom of his soul. He resisted it, and offended his aunt more bitterly than he had ever done before, since he could only put forward indifference to and contempt of Waynflete and its interests.

And after all, Howarth, the second manager, had a violent attack of gout, and Guy's presence at Ingleby could hardly be dispensed with. So he remained, in semi-disgrace, with Cousin Susan Joshua to keep house for him. Jeanie went up to Waynflete with the rest of the party.

He had got no answer to his proposals, and no definite authority for the mill. Nevertheless, he made his presence felt there, and people began to feel that he was master.

Part 1, Chapter IX

“Go Back, My Lord, Across the Moor.”

“Cousin Susan,” said Guy, a few days after he had been left behind at Ingleby, “I promised Miss Vyner that she and her friends should see the mills. If it suits you, I should like to ride over to Moorhead, and ask them to come down next Thursday, and have luncheon here. Then I would take them round.”

“Yes, my dear Guy; yes, certainly. I think it would be most proper, under the circumstances; and with my being here, there can be no objection. I’m glad you’ve given me the hint, my dear Guy.”

Guy thought his very straightforward request had been something more than a hint. He had made it partly because he was extremely dull, and wanted a little variety, and partly because he did not choose to acquiesce in the idea that he was out of favour. Most of Guy’s actions at this time were marked by a certain note of defiance.

He set off on a fresh breezy afternoon, when great clouds flung great shadows over the open moor, and the dark green of the bilberry and the purple of the heather were in full glory of contrast. He rode slowly uphill, over wide roads with low grey walls on either side, behind which grew oats and turnips, past strong-looking stone villages, all white and grey and wind swept, till the land grew poorer and more open, and turf, mixed with furze and heather, began to appear, and at length he turned over the top, and came out upon the great rolling moors, here clear and sunny, there veiled in the smoke and fog of distant centres of human life.

As he drew near the end of his ride, he saw a figure sitting on some rough ground by the roadside, and looking up and away at a broken hillock of rock and heather, which, owing to the falling away of the ground behind, was relieved against the sky.

By the pose of her head and the lines of her figure he at once recognised Florella Vyner, and as he came near she saw him, and rising, answered his greeting with a smile as he dismounted beside her.

“I have ridden over,” said Guy, “with a message from Mrs Joshua Palmer, to ask if your sister still cares to show Ingleby Mills to her friends. My aunt and my brother are at Waynflete, but I have been left behind. And I hope, too, that Moorhead is satisfactory?”

“Oh yes,” said Florella, “we are delighted with it. It suits us quite. The others are all very near by. Would you like to take your horse to the farm, and then come and join us? You will see them a few steps further on.”

“There’s Bill Shipley,” said Guy, looking up the road. “I’ll ask him to take Stella.”

He came back after giving his horse to the boy, with a brighter and sweeter look on his face than it often wore. “May I look first at the drawing? What have you found out about the moor flowers?”

“Oh, they are so difficult – look at those harebells on the top of the road, swinging about in the wind – blue against blue. It is such heavenly colour. But I can’t paint them! I haven’t begun to try. I’m seeing them!”

“I see,” said Guy. “Yes, the sky seems to show through. But what do they say? Your pictures all say something. Are they moor spirits?”

“Well,” she said, “I don’t think I quite know. But what I want to say is ‘living blue,’ – you know the hymn? —

”Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
All dressed in living green.’

“That gives one such a feeling of spring.”

“Yes,” said Guy, “things growing. And ‘living blue’?”

“Well,” said Florella, looking up at the harebells, “I think it must mean thoughts – spirit, soul, growing and springing, perhaps. They are so very ethereal!”

Florella had much of Constancy’s self-possession. In her it showed in a calm simplicity of manner, absolutely without effort or constraint. Guy forgot himself also, for him a rare pleasure.

“I see,” he said, “I hope you’ll get them done.”

“But they *shine* so,” she said; “one can’t make them glisten. And the heather is very difficult, too. But that I have tried.”

She showed her sketch-book, containing more flower studies and a few landscapes.

“I should like to sketch,” said Guy, as he looked, and made a few comments.

“But you could, I think, because you can see. And it is very interesting. It is impossible to think of anything in the world but the thing you are drawing. That is all I have. My sister and all of them are just behind the harebell rock – shall we come?”

Guy followed, and in a few minutes they were looking down on a cheery group gathered in a hollow of the ground – five skirts and hats among the heather. One or two little puffs of steam showed where the sophisticated “Etnas” were boiling the water, and in the midst Constancy, in a red blouse and brown cap, was evidently concluding an argument.

“Very likely we might like it as well as they did, if we had the same opportunities.”

“Cosy! you’re a traitor. As if we want young men to come and interrupt us, like those dreadful girls in –”

“Mr Waynflete,” said Florella, descending upon the party.

Violet Staunton, who was the last speaker, sank into the heather with a gasp, and a sensation ran through the party. Constancy stood up and held out her hand.

“Mr Waynflete, we are abusing Miss Austen’s heroines for liking visitors. But, you know, we promised to give you some tea.”

Guy coloured and smiled. He felt a little shy, but much as if he had stepped into a fairy-ring. Away from his own people and his perplexities, he was like another person, bright and gay, and was soon giving his invitation, and asking if Cuthbert Staunton had made his holiday plans, or if he could come to Ingleby for a bit, while he helped to hand round the tea and the tea-cakes, for the merits of which he had vouched in London. Thus, at his ease, he had a gentle, friendly manner and a pleasant face, as he dealt with the eccentricities of an “Etna” which refused to boil. Florella felt as if her short, childish intercourse with him had been longer and more recent.

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