

Dowling Richard

The Duke's Sweetheart: A Romance



Richard Dowling

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PART I.

THE DUKE OF LONG ACRE

CHAPTER I.

THE DUKE'S SWEETHEART

Charles Augustus Cheyne, Duke of Long Acre, had no land. Neither in the United Kingdom nor in any other state of earth did he own a perch of ground. He did not own mines or railways, or Consols, or foreign or domestic stock of any kind. All the money he had was the result of his own industrious fingers, of his own industrious brain. Neither the Heralds' College nor the Lord Chancellor had ever heard of the Duke of Long Acre. The title was one purely of courtesy, conferred upon him by his peers, who were no peers of the realm, but untitled citizens of the Republic of Letters. If he was no duke, he would have furnished sufficient material for making two dukes of satisfactory size, as dukes go now. He was six feet tall, measured fifty inches round the chest, and forty-two round the waist. He had a large, beaming, good-humoured face. He wore no hair on his face; the hair of his head was of a dull dun colour, and always closely cut. No one could remember the colour of his eyes. He was reported to be the strongest and best-tempered man in Fleet Street. He could bend a kitchen-poker into a triangle, and bend it back again, so that one would scarcely notice it had ever been out of shape. He had never struck a man in anger, although he had been often sorely provoked, and more than once absolutely assaulted. On an occasion when a powerful rough attacked him, late at night, in one of the western squares, he had closed with his assailant, caught him round the body, first pinned one hand down, and then the other. Having given his prisoner a good squeeze, which nearly crushed the rough's ribs flat, Long Acre carried the man across the roadway, tossed him over the railings among some shrubs, and walked away. He was never known to curse or swear, or borrow money, or drink too much. His honour was above impeachment; he had never done anything mean or low or shabby. He was a gentleman in the perfect meaning of the word. He dressed in good taste; his clothes always looked fresh, although his coat was often far from new. He walked with the gait of one who would willingly stop to do a favour or lend assistance. He was sufficiently, not oppressively, attentive to women; when men were talking he would always step in gallantly to the rescue of a fair fame. He was loyal to his friends; he would have been forgiving to his enemies, if there were any, but none existed. He made friends very quickly. "I want all the friends I can make," he would say, "for I haven't a single relative alive."

He was thirty-four years of age, and lived in two rooms at the top of a house in Long Acre. With the exception of his rooms all the house was taken up with the business of carriage-making. The name of the carriage-maker was Whiteshaw.

No one of his grace's acquaintances knew anything of his history before sixteen years ago, when he first appeared in Fleet Street. At that time he was a slender, graceful, handsome lad, modest of manner and courteous of address. He was then known as Charles Augustus Cheyne; he had not displayed the wealth of imagination which, later on, caused him to be advanced to the front rank of the peerage. He had a faculty for writing prose stories, which, if never strong, were never vulgar. He would not at any time refer to his past history; and if one put to him a point-blank question, such as "Who was your father, Cheyne?" he would always answer vaguely, "A poor gentleman, who met with

a great reverse of fortune, and was ruined and died before I can remember." "And is your mother dead also?" "Yes, my mother is dead also. It is a dismal thing to be as I am without a relative in the world. Let us not speak any more on the subject."

Owing to the splendour of his imagination, which he never allowed for a moment to be dominated by facts, and to the easy and familiar way in which he spoke of the nobility, his friends had created him Duke of Long Acre. Although he preferred being called Cheyne, he answered to the name of Long Acre without any sort of resentment, or even displeasure.

One bright June morning he arose and dressed himself with peculiar care. He had business of the very first importance to transact that day. The Duke of Long Acre had at last given away his heart, and today he was to meet the lady of his choice in Hyde Park at eleven o'clock.

Mrs. Ward, an extremely slatternly woman of fifty, whom Cheyne called his housekeeper-and who came from her home in the Dials, lit his fire and got his breakfast for him of mornings, and made up his rooms, for the modest sum of five shillings a week-had toasted the bacon in a little Dutch oven, and put it on a fiery-hot plate, and made the tea for him, and set forth the milk and bread and butter.

Cheyne sat down and began his breakfast.

"This bacon is delicious, Mrs. Ward," he called out to the charwoman in the next room.

"I am glad you like it, sir."

"Delicious! I could eat a whole pig, Mrs. Ward, I think, if you cooked it."

"It is very good of you to say so, sir."

"And I am sure I don't know how it is you always get such good butter and such exceedingly good milk. I assure you, when I was staying with the Duke of Dorsetshire last summer I got much inferior butter, although he has the reputation of producing in his dairy the very finest butter of the kingdom. He told me he often sends a tub of his butter to the Prince of Wales, just in a friendly way, you know. I own his grace's butter has the full buttercup flavour; but this goes farther-this tastes of nothing but violets and cowslips."

"It ought to be good, sir; it's fivepence-halfpenny the quarter. Eating butter is eating money these times."

"You can't expect to get the essential oil of violets and cowslips permeating the most nutritious and delicate of all fixed oils at less than fivepence-halfpenny for a quarter of a pound."

"Maybe not, sir, if you put it that way."

All through his breakfast, Cheyne chatted with Mrs. Ward. When he had finished he rose, put on his hat, and having bade Mrs. Ward good-bye, went out.

It was bright and clear and fresh even in Long Acre that morning, and Cheyne had a theory that bright, clear, fresh days were made for walking, so he set off for Hyde Park at a quick pace. He would have walked all round the world rather than take an omnibus, and cabs are expensive luxuries to be used only in extreme cases. What can be finer than for a man in good health and spirits to walk down Piccadilly on a bright June day, and turn into Hyde Park to meet his sweetheart? All round you were the mansions of the richest aristocracy in the world. Here was the sense that, even if one did not belong to this privileged class, one was as free to the sunlight and the street and beautifully-kept park as the owner of the bluest blood in England. If one hired ever so sorry a nag, one was as free to a gallop in the Ride as a prince of the blood. If one borrowed any kind of a carriage, one could crawl up and down that Drive with the most yellow and wrinkled of dowager countesses. And then if one were conscious of ability and ambition, there was no reason for not imagining a coronet might not some day encircle one's own brows.

There was John Churchill, who had risen from being the son of a simple Devonshire baronet to be a duke of England. But when, in addition to all these general sources of gratitude, one has the certainty that under a particular tree and upon a particular seat one is sure to find the girl whom one holds to be the dearest in all England, joy and radiance flood the whole scene, and one can hardly believe that Hyde Park is not Paradise.

As Cheyne approached the appointed seat, he found a pair of very bright brown eyes fixed on him. The face to which those eyes belonged was that of a brunette under the medium height. She rose briskly as he drew near, and as he held out his hand to her, and she gave him hers, she said, with a saucy smile:

"I have been waiting a whole five minutes for you, sir."

"I envy those five minutes that were near you when I was away."

"A pretty speech," she said, with a dainty toss of her head; "but I am in a bad humour, and you will have to say all the civil things to-day."

"If we are not to part until I have said all the civil things I have in my heart, we shall not part till sundown."

"Oh goodness! fancy speaking to the one man from five minutes past eleven in June till sundown! It would kill any girl I know."

"Which simply means that you don't know anything at all about yourself."

"I think, Mr. Cheyne, you are the most conceited man I ever met in all my life."

"Then you must have been in a nunnery from your birth till now."

"Are you going to talk in this horrible way for the remainder of my hour and a half, or are you going to take me for a nice comfortable walk through the park and tell me things?"

Said he:

"Comfort? comfort, scorned of devils! this is truth the poet sings, That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."

"But, Mr. Cheyne, have the goodness to remember I am not of the class of persons the poet sings of."

"No. You are an angel."

"I declare you've wasted another five minutes in this foolish way. I'll go home."

"A proud spirit always rebels against a threat. I assure you, if you say anything more of that kind, I'll put my hat in the middle of the path and walk away from it, so as to attract the attention of everyone in the park to us."

"Don't be absurd."

"What I am is nothing compared to what we will be when I sigh for the hat I've left behind me."

"Charlie-"

"That's better. There is a tone of humanity in your voice now, May."

"Well, let us make it up, Charlie, and be friends, not comedians."

"With all my heart, May. Before we go any farther I must say I never saw you looking so-so nice. I know 'nice' isn't the right word; but if I say anything stronger you won't give me time to say something else I want to say. Something of the greatest importance."

"Can't you say it out instead of making a speech about it?"

"Well, I never was so happy in all my life before. I never was so much in love before. You know, May, I never told you anything but the simple truth."

She took the arm he had frequently unavailingly offered since they had met.

"You are a good old fellow, and I won't abuse you any more to-day. Have you any news to tell me?"

"Not a word. Except that Effingham has sold that novel at last. Sold it for a song; but then it is a beginning."

"Well then, tell me about Lady Clarinda. What has she done!"

"Run away with the German adventurer."

"Nonsense! I won't have it."

"Can't be helped now."

"Yes, but it must. I insist upon her marrying Sir Gabriel Fairfax."

"But, my dear May, what's done can't be undone."

"Yes; but, Charlie, I insist upon Lady Clarinda marrying Sir Gabriel."

"Oh, nonsense! The public would not have it."

"You must really change it. Why should a young girl like that run away with a red-headed foreigner? She would never have done it."

"That's the new plan, dear. You can't have your hero too wild or your heroine too ugly; for men as a rule are bad, and women are not all as lovely as you, and it flatters bad men and ugly women to find bad men and ugly women heroes and heroines."

"Well, but I don't care what the new plan is, I won't have that horrid German adventurer marry Lady Clarinda."

"Oh, very well; of course, if you insist upon her marrying Sir Gabriel, she shall; although it will compel me to tear up twelve manuscript sheets worth four shillings a sheet."

"And what is going to happen in the other one when the old Duke of Fenwick dies?"

"Oh, you'd be greatly surprised."

"What?"

"You remember the long, tall, thin man who played the violoncello in the theatre orchestra, early in the story?"

"Yes. With a red nose and warts on his fingers."

"That's he. But I must read that chapter to you the next time I am at Knightsbridge."

CHAPTER II. A DUCAL CARRIAGE

Reginald Francis Henry Cheyne, seventh Duke of Shropshire, lived most of the year at his splendid castle Silverview, on the German Ocean. The Duke was an undersized man with a dingy dull complexion and bandy legs. He looked more like an ostler than anything else; and yet he was not only a duke, but a duke of the bluest blood, owner of Silverview Castle, three other country seats, a palatial town-house, and an income of three to four hundred thousand a year. Fate paid him every day for waking upwards of five hundred pounds, and upwards of five hundred pounds on that same day for going to bed again.

He owned one whole city, four parliamentary boroughs, and sixty-four villages. He wasn't the richest peer in England, for he had neither a seventy-foot seam of coal nor a few hundred acres in the West End of London. But against the unpleasant feeling of not being the richest peer in England he had two things to cheer him. In the first place, his city and four parliamentary boroughs were docile, and elected men whom he suggested; and in the second place, beyond his son and heir, the Marquis of Southwold, he had no family, and therefore he had no one to provide for. Consequently he could live up to his income. This he did, but he went no farther; and in all England there was no property more free from encumbrance. He was sixty-three years of age, a widower, and extremely fond of yachting. Although he had a house or castle in each of the three kingdoms and in Wales, he rarely left Silverview, except in his yacht. He was passionately fond of the sea, and had spent as much of his time afloat as ashore. Another thing that wedded him to the sea was the delicacy of his son, who, although now eight-and-thirty years of age, had been from almost his birth obliged to live much at sea, owing to general weakness, and an affection of the eyes, which the doctors said would inevitably end in blindness if he lived permanently on shore.

The reason why the Duke preferred Silverview Castle to any of his other houses or castles was because it stood on a height at the top of a narrow bay. For miles on each side of this bay the land belonged to the Duke, and in his castle above his bay he was as far out of the world as if he had been in the Zaraha, and yet so close to his yacht riding at anchor that he could see from his bedroom-window when he got up if the brasses had been polished and the decks holystoned that morning.

The Duke and his son rode as every Englishman must, but he rode as little as any Englishman may. But neither the sea nor riding had bowed the Duke's legs. From generation to generation the house of Cheyne had been noted, with two exceptions, for its bowed legs. Of course, in the family portraits you saw no sign of this, for the family had taken care never to have any more extended counterfeit presentment than a kit-cat. Whenever, even while he was on land, the Duke encountered a gale he invariably threw out his sea-legs, and straddled, as though the road or field was, while rolling horribly, mounting a mighty swell.

There was nothing particularly interesting about the Duke of Shropshire. He was a commonplace-looking little man with very commonplace ideas. He was an excellent man of business, and every day, when he was at the Castle, gave two hours to his business folk. He was a model landlord. The tenants said it would be impossible to find better, but he was not popular among them. He was too dark and reserved and taciturn. Every sailor wants to have a garden and grow vegetables. Every farmer does not want to go a long sea-voyage. The land is no mystery to the sailor, but the sea is a mystery to the farmer. To people who have no dealings with the sea, those who frequent its plains seem aliens in race. This may, in some way, account for the fact that the Duke made no personal progress in the affections of his tenantry.

The father was not popular, the son was partly pitied and partly despised. His delicacy, and the fact that he could not live on land, separated him still more effectually from the people than his father. The people looked forward with no pleasure to the fact that this man was heir, and would be duke

some day. Another thing, too, that the tenants did not like was the way father and son kept together. They knew the marquis was not strong, but still he might have a little will of his own. Why hadn't he a yacht of his own? not go about always with his father, as though he was only twelve years of age instead of thirty-eight. Surely one of the richest peers in the world could afford an allowance to his only son which would enable that son to keep a yacht! Men like men for masters. They do not care to work under invalids and recluses.

Personally the Duke spent little or nothing of his large income. On Sundays his head-gardener was much better dressed than his master. The only luxury the Duke demanded was solitude, and for this solitude he was willing to give up nine-tenths of his fortune. He kept servants at all his seats, and any of his friends of thirty-five years ago was welcome to a loan of one, servants, shooting, fishing included. But no friend was to drive up to Silverview Castle and claim hospitality.

For upwards of thirty years the Duke had not gone into society, nor had he received any guest at Silverview Castle. His wife died soon after his heir was born, and he had gone very little into society since. When not on board his yacht *Seabird*, she lay moored under the windows of the Castle, and nothing was easier than, upon receiving a notice from So-and-so saying he would call upon the Duke on a certain day, for the Duke to write, saying he was very sorry that he intended leaving on a cruise that very day.

There was no general agreement as to the cause of the Duke's avoidance of society. Some said it was owing to grief at the death of his wife; others declared he had done some dire wrong in his young days; and others that it was all the result of whim.

Although he interfered in politics he did not take an active part in them. He merely intimated to his agent which candidates had won his favour. For years he had not made an appearance in the House of Lords. On the rare occasions when he went there it was to record a silent vote on some measure of great importance.

It so happened one of those big questions arose in June, and that his grace had made up his mind to visit London for a few days, and record his vote against some Radical measure which had been sent up from the Lower Chamber. It was of course an event in the great world when the rich Duke of Shropshire came up to London even for an hour.

It was known he did not intend marrying again. But then who knows anything for certain? And then there was the Marquis. Of course he would marry some day. It wasn't probable the present owner of the dukedom would like to think there was a chance of that magnificent collection of properties being broken up amongst an unknown number of remote cousins, and the fine old title dying out; for everyone knew there was no heir to the dukedom, however, looking back beyond the seven dukes, the property might be found settled. One thing was clear, namely, that all the property which had come into the family since the first duke must go goodness knew whither, for there was absolutely no heir. It was also perfectly clear that the title would become extinct; for, with but one exception, from the first to the sixth duke, the title and entailed estates had descended through a single file of sons, and, though many children may have been born, when each duke came into possession he was the last member of the ducal house. The one exception was that of the present Duke, for when he inherited the title he had a younger brother, who, however, died unmarried.

Such was the talk of general society about the Duke of Shropshire. Of course there were people who knew everything that would happen if the line of dukes failed; but then that was, after all, a very remote contingency, and the great question was: Would the Duke marry again? and whom would the Marquis marry?

Shropshire House is in Piccadilly. Cheyne had seen in one of the morning papers that the Duke was in town, and as he and Marion Durrant walked through Piccadilly that bright June noon, they met a bandy-legged common-looking man emerging from a crowd in the roadway.

"What is the matter?" asked Marion of Cheyne.

Cheyne raised himself on his toes and answered: "There's been a smash of some kind. I can see now. The pole of a 'bus has gone through the door of a brougham. That sort of thing comes of shaving corners too fine. I'll bet any money it is the brougham that was in fault."

Marion Durrant, the orphan of Captain Durrant of the Fusiliers, was three-and-twenty years of age, and lived with an invalid maiden aunt in a very quiet street in Knightsbridge. There Miss Traynor, Marion Durrant's aunt, had a neat little house, possessing all reasonable comforts, and even modest luxuries. She and her dead sister had each settled upon her by their father two hundred a year, and as May had inherited her mother's two hundred a year, their joint income was four hundred pounds. Although Miss Traynor was an invalid she was an excellent housekeeper, and, with the aid of a bright handy little maid-of-all-work, the small house in Knightsbridge was as well managed, as well kept, and as comfortable as any other in London.

To this home Charles Cheyne was free as the acknowledged lover of Marion Durrant. Miss Traynor was one of those good, genial, generous old souls who, while keeping a dignified reserve upon her feelings, thought nothing on earth too good for those whom she loved. At the threshold of the snug little home at Knightsbridge Cheyne laid aside all his grand airs. He never carried into that home the oppressive atmosphere of dukes and earls. Here he was simply the lively and kindly gentleman who loved his love with all his loyal heart, and did all in his power to enliven and amuse the guardian angel of his sweetheart.

Towards that quiet comfortable home he was conducting Miss Durrant when they encountered the crowd and the injured brougham. As they arrived at the door she said: "Won't you come in, Charlie?"

"I really can't," he answered. "I am already very late with my copy, and I must go home and attend to my duke. Otherwise I shall get into awful trouble with the proprietor of my duke. You cannot be hasty with your duke. You must treat him as if he was fat and scant of breath. You may have noticed that in my present duke I make him say 'hem,' 'hum,' very often. This is just to spread out the ducal speech. You can't expect to get as many articulate words out of a duke as out of an ordinary mortal, and the hem-hums are wonderfully efficacious."

Having taken leave of Marion, he turned his face east, and began walking back at a rapid rate towards his lodgings in Long Acre.

In the meantime the brougham, through which the pole of the omnibus had gone, had been driven along Piccadilly through Leicester Square to Long Acre. "Take the number of that omnibus," the occupant of the injured vehicle had said to the coachman as he stepped to the ground, "and then drive to Whiteshaw's in Long Acre, and tell him to repair that door."

The coachman had done as he was told, and by the time Cheyne got back to Long Acre the brougham had arrived, the horses had been unharnessed, and the coachman had got a man to lead the horses home.

When Cheyne arrived at the place he lived in he found Mr. Whiteshaw, with whom he was friendly, examining the injured brougham.

"That was an ugly smash," said the carriage-builder. "Nearly killed the Duke."

"What Duke?" asked Cheyne, with great interest.

"The Duke of Shropshire. See the arms on the other panel. He had a very narrow escape. The pole went slap through the door, and when the 'bus-driver threw his horses on their haunches the pole made a plunge up, and just barely missed the chin of the Duke."

"By Jove, I am very sorry for poor Regi."

"Who's Regi? the 'bus-driver? Is the 'bus-driver a friend of yours?"

"No, my dear friend, but the Duke, Reginald Francis Henry Cheyne, seventh Duke of Shropshire. He is a most particular friend of mine. The other day-let me see, how long ago is it? A fortnight? Well, say eighteen days ago, I had a letter from him asking me to go down to Silverview and stay a week or ten days with him. But, Whiteshaw, although it was excessively kind of his grace, you

see, I tell you in confidence, I can't afford to go to such places. I am really only a poor man, although people will say the other thing, and it runs away with an awful lot of money to go to such places."

"I daresay it does. But I thought the Duke of Shropshire was a queer kind of moody man, who never had anyone at his house?" said the carriage-builder maliciously.

"You are quite right. He lives the life of a recluse. But he now and then will see an old friend. You must know he has rather a fancy for the stories I write-no accounting for tastes, you know-and when I go to him he always insists on my reading my manuscripts to him before they go to the printer. Very flattering, you know."

"But he never lives ashore. He is nearly always in his yacht with his son the Marquis of Southwold."

"Of course. It is aboard ship I always read to Regi and Southwold. Reading is all very well in the day, but I tell you it is no little difficulty to read by the light of a swinging lamp when a ship is lying at anchor and rolling. Where did this accident happen, Whiteshaw?"

"In Piccadilly, at noon."

"By Jove, it must be this smash I saw. I was just passing along, but took little or no notice, as at the time I was explaining some matters of court etiquette to Lady Evelina de Lacy, who is to be presented this year."

"It has never struck me before, Cheyne, that your name is the same as that of the Shropshire family. Can it be that you are related to it?"

"No, no. It is merely a coincidence. The name is not uncommon. My father was a poor gentleman, with no pretensions to blood-connection with a ducal house. Good-day, Whiteshaw."

"Good-day, Cheyne," cried out the carriage-builder; adding mentally: "There goes the greatest and the most harmless liar in London."

CHAPTER III. A VILLAGE STORY

Anerly is one of the smallest villages in Devonshire. It, in fact, does not rise to the dignity of a village, but is called one, rather out of objection to use the more unfamiliar word hamlet than its own particular claims. Such as it is, it stands at cross-roads, and although the resident population is small, many wayfarers of all degrees pass through it by day, not a few of whom draw up at the Beagle Inn—the only one in the place—to taste the cider, for which that house is famous all through the district. In Anerly there is a theory that a good-sized lump of bread and a good-sized piece of cheese and a pint of The Beagle cider form a repast at which the Emperor of China's nose would cease to turn up.

In dwelling thus on the cider, it must not be supposed other things at The Beagle were not of good quality. As a matter of fact, The Beagle prided itself on keeping nothing which was not of the very first quality. But the cider was what capped the climax, and gave a tone to the whole. In addition to the excellence of the cider, The Beagle had another great attraction: it was very favourably situated, and there was no window or door of it from which you could not see a quiet, soothing little landscape.

Whoever built the inn, in the time of the Stuarts, knew what he was about, and set the face of the house towards the prettiest landscape of all. As the men of Anerly sat smoking their long pipes and drinking their incomparable cider in front of The Beagle on summer evenings, they had before them a long stretch of winding and descending road, bordered at irregular intervals with fine elms and beeches. To the left lay a quiet valley, the lowest line of which was marked by a broad stream. To the right a hill thinly wooded, sloped upward to where the gaunt naked trunks of the pines stood out sharply against the darkening sky. Halfway down the winding road lay the small village church. Nothing could be more peaceful or soothing than the view from the front of The Beagle on a warm June night.

Half-a-dozen of the better-off men of the village met every evening at The Beagle. When the weather was wet they had their pipes and their cider in the front parlour, where the flash of the great fire on the ruddy sand strewn on the floor made one feel warm on entering. On warm nights, the men sat outside under a roof supported by pillars and trellis, up which climbed clematis and jasmine.

This June evening happening to be warm, the men were all seated out of doors under the verandah. As a rule, the conversation on such occasions was neither animated nor sustained. The clerk and sexton of the church, a wheelwright by trade, was by courtesy supposed to be the brain-carrier of the party; but he being a man of extremely few words, it seemed as though the weight of intelligence was against conversation. It was well known there were subjects on which Stephen Goolby could be interested. Any mention of Napoleon I. made him fire up with most unpatriotic ardour in favour of the Corsican. Upon the mention of the name of the Man of Destiny, Stephen Goolby would double up his fist and, smiting the table a mighty blow, cry out:

"The greatest general of this or of any other age was Napoleon Bonaparte. I tell you what it is, sir: if Napoleon put his foot on this country, with an army at his heels, there wouldn't be a man of us alive now, and English would be as much a dead language as Latin or Greek or double Dutch."

Upon a suggestion from someone that the Corsican met his match at Waterloo, Stephen Goolby would cry out:

"His match, sir, his match! Why, sir, answer me this, if you can: Weren't the Allies beaten when the Prussians came up? Answer me that, if you can; but I think you'll find it a stiff one. Look here, sir, if the battle was won by the Allies when the Prussians came up, what made old Wellington go about the camp all the day, thumping his chest, and saying, 'For the love of Heaven, send me night or the Prussians'? Tell me, what did he mean by that? I tell you, sir, only them Prussians came up then, every man Jack of us would be a Frenchman now, and instead of answering the service down there in good English 'Amens,' they'd be parleyvooving, so that neither you, sir, nor I would have comfort or peace."

It so happened on the June night referred to, there was exceptional reason for the exercise of the gifts which it had pleased Providence to bestow on Stephen Goolby. Edward Graham, a young landscape painter, on a walking and sketching tour through Devonshire, had arrived at Anerly that night, put up at The Beagle, and now made one of the party under the verandah.

Upon an occasion such as the present—that is, when there was company—Goolby having made the allusion to Anerly church, it became the duty of one of the regular company to suggest that Stephen Goolby had a story to tell in connection with that church and a great temptation which befell him. This having been done, Stephen Goolby refilled his pipe, put his head carefully on one side, so as to open the valves of his memory, and spoke:

"I won't do myself or anyone else hurt if I say I am close up to sixty-five years of age. I am strong and hearty still, I thank God, and can do a fair day's work, though I'm not so brisk as I was once.

"For seven-and-thirty years I have been clerk and sexton to Anerly Church; and the thing that lies in my memory now took place when I was about thirty years old, and when, as I was just then trying to set up a home for myself and my poor wife, who is dead and gone, a little ready money would have been more useful than any time before or since.

"A few months before the great temptation came in my way—I am now speaking of five-and-thirty years ago—a gentleman drove into the village one day. He had a young girl with him. I did not see him when he drove into the village; but I saw him and her often afterwards. He took the best room in The Beagle for her, and having given great instructions to the landlady, old Mrs. Timmons, dead and gone long ago, he drove away again; and we did not see him any more for a few days.

"As I said before, I have often seen both him and her since. I've been in London in my time, and seen as handsome faces as any man alive, I'll bet my life; but never did I see anywhere such a lovely creature as that young girl the gentleman left here at The Beagle five-and-thirty years ago. He was a fine tall man, with an open free manner as you'd please to meet. Soon we got word there was going to be a marriage, and that there was some secret at the bottom of all of it. What that secret was we never found out from that day to this.

"Mrs. Timmons noticed that the young girl often wept and cried when he was away; but when he came back she seemed ready to die of joy. I've never seen a prettier picture in all my life than when he took her on his arm and walked down the village with her. The people all came out of doors to look at her and him; for he was a fine man too, well made and shapely.

"Well, after a little while, we heard that the wedding was to be soon, and that it wasn't to be by banns, but by license. In time it came. There was no bridesmaid or best man. They walked down to the church together, went in, were married. I gave away the bride and signed the register. Old Billy Newton, long since dead and gone, he that led the choir then, was the other witness.

"The two left the church, and got in a chaise standing by, and drove away towards Moorfield.

"Although I did not forget the marriage, I had other things on my mind, and I gave no thought to it. I had been married a couple of years myself, and, between my trade, and my duties at the church, and shifting to my new house and the birth of a daughter, I had my hands and my head full of my own affairs.

"About six months after the marriage, who must ride up to the door of this very same Beagle but the gentleman who had married the lovely young girl in the church down there. They took his horse round. Those that saw him when he came said he looked excited and wild-like. He ordered them to keep a room for him, and to get him some supper, no matter what; and then he came straight on to me.

"'Goolby,' says he as free as if he had known me all his life, 'I want to have a few words with you in private.'

"It was to the old house he came, and we were just leaving it for good, my wife and myself, taking a last look round to see we had forgotten nothing. I beckoned to my wife to go on, and, shutting the door, I asked him to step back into one of the empty rooms.

"'Goolby,' says he, 'I see you are house-shifting. Five hundred pounds would be very useful to you now.'

"'It would be a small fortune to me at any time, sir,' says I.

"'Goolby,' says he, putting one hand on my shoulder, and putting the other into my pocket, 'I've put five one-hundred-pound Bank of England notes in your pocket now.'

"I felt all of a tremble. I put my hand in my pocket and took out what he had put in. I felt that weak then you could have knocked me down with a little push. The sweat came out on my forehead and my throat felt twisted up. Here was more money than I could hope to lay by in a lifetime in my hand-my own, he said.

"'If you please, sir,' I says, 'I'd rather not take the money. Put it away, sir, and let me go.'

"I felt getting weaker and weaker every minute.

"'Nonsense!' says he. 'Put the money in your pocket, and don't be a fool.'

"'I can't take it, sir. You're not giving it to me for nothing; and I know I cannot do for any money what you want,' says I; for I guessed at once what he wanted.

"'What do I want?' says he, getting white and red all by turns.

"'It's something about the register, sir; and I can't think of it any longer. I must go now,' says I, 'There's your money.' And with these words I stuffed the notes into the pocket of his riding-coat, and opened the door and ran home.

"I did not tell the rector. I was too much afraid. But that night, and every night for a fortnight after, I slept in the vestry, with an axe and a crowbar handy, but no one ever came. I never saw the gentleman since; and the leaf is still in the book.

"'And what are the names on that leaf?' asked Edward Graham, the young artist.

"George Temple Cheyne and Harriet Mansfield."

CHAPTER IV. A TOWN STORY

"It is the fifty-second chapter," said the Duke of Long Acre. "You will remember, May," his grace continued, as he turned over the proof-slips in his hand, "you will remember, May, that in the chapter before this Antony Belmore had been out of employment for two months, and that he was at his wits' end to know how to get even bread."

"Yes, and he had a broken pane of glass to let in the cold wind; and that there was a wide gaping fireplace to let down more cold; and that he had got rid of his violoncello; and that his landlord was pressing him horribly—"

"For one pound, eighteen, and sixpence, rent."

"But, Charlie, what is the good of writing uncomfortable stories, that have no pious object? I can understand why Sunday-school tales are dismal."

"My dear May, the public won't have anything but groans and tears. If you can manage yells for them, all the better. Gladiators don't fight now in the arena. Gentle creatures like you, darling, have no chance of voting violent death to a man by holding down your thumbs in the Colosseum. The modern novel is the portable arena of to-day; and gentle darlings like you, May, must be permitted to view the death-agony of men and women, or you would not patronise the libraries."

"Charlie, if you dare to say any more such horrible untruths, I'll go down to the kitchen, put on an apron, and make the pastry for to-morrow."

"If you do that, I'll go down and eat up all the nasty indigestible dough; and then what will you say at the inquest?"

"Take your arm away, sir; I won't stay here another minute. You have, I think, made up your mind to be disagreeable."

"Well, run away now, if you like."

"But you are holding me, and I can't stir."

"And I mean to hold you if you will not sit still while I read the chapter."

"Oh dear, you are a horrible tease! There, let me go; I promise not to run away."

"Very well. Now don't stir."

The Duke of Long Acre and Marion Durrant, his sweetheart, were seated in one of the smallest conservatories in London. This conservatory was situated at the back of Miss Traynor's house in Knightsbridge. The house and all that it contained, with the exception of Marion's aunt, the owner, were small. Two people could not possibly walk abreast in the hall, nor up the stairs. It was a saying of the Duke's that one of those days he should get wedged in that hall, and would have to be extracted from it by violent means. There was a tiny front drawing-room and a tiny back drawing-room, and between them a pair of folding-doors which always stood open. At the rear of the back drawing-room was the little conservatory in which Marion and the Duke were seated. The conservatory was as wide as the room, and three feet deep. Owing to shelves at the ends and sides for flowerpots, the absolute dimensions of the place were much reduced, and it was impossible for two people to sit at the same side; so when the Duke held Marion he was standing beside her. He had risen from his chair opposite her a few minutes before. The conservatory was separated from the back drawing-room by a glass door opening into the room. At the back of the conservatory was a glass door yielding outwards on a little wooden landing, which, by means of a flight of wooden steps, communicated with the very small garden below.

Now, this being one of the fairest days of June, the door opening outwards on the landing and the door opening inwards on the back drawing-room were open. It was one of those days which make the old young, the young poetical, and love the sweetest pastime for those who have anyone to love. The day was in the fresh warm youth of the year; all the asperities of winter and spring had passed

away, and the time had not yet been fatigued with summer heats; the air was moist and full of the scent of young leaves. In the dustiest street of all London there was some faint suggestion of the forest. According to the calendar it was summer; but really it was the summer end of spring, when the land is heaviest with leaves and the air is thickest with the songs of birds. There is a savour of resin in the breeze which made those who had been country-born, and were now penned in the city, raise in unguarded moments their heads, and listen for the murmur of the brittle pine-leaves.

"With your kind permission, or rather, having plainly shown you that I do not want your permission, kind or otherwise, I will now read to you the fifty-second chapter:

"His tall thin form had shrunken almost to a skeleton. Privation and sorrow had at length broken down his health and spirits. Although he had scarcely reached his fiftieth year, he was already an old man. His eyes were dim; his cheeks had fallen in; his hands were emaciated and tremulous, his eyes were deep-sunken and unnaturally bright.

"All the clothes he possessed were on him, with the exception of one shirt, a pair of socks, and three or four dilapidated collars. His elbows were through his coat; his trousers were frayed at the edges; the uppers and soles of his boots had, in more than one place, parted company.

"He lived in a back attic off Cursitor Street, near Chancery Lane. There he had contracted to pay four shillings a week for an unfurnished room. One part of the contract had been fulfilled, for it might almost be said with literal truth that the room was unfurnished. It contained one chair, which had been cane-seated once, but which was now a skeleton. Across the framework of this seat had been placed a board. On this board were now set a cup and saucer and small black crockeryware teapot, a knife and fork, and a common delf plate. These, with the exception of a tin candlestick and a battered old quart tin kettle, were all the articles connected with the kitchen or table which could be seen in the place. In a corner farthest from the skylight lay a wretched stretcher, and by the side of the stretcher a common soap-box, which served as a seat, while the board across the chair answered as a table. Under the broken pane in the skylight stood a basin, and on the chimney-piece were a piece of soap, a worn-out comb and brush, a towel, and two small jugs.

"Beyond the things mentioned above there was absolutely nothing in the room, except the most wretched of all things-Antony Belmore himself. He was sitting on the box at the head of his miserable stretcher, when a knock came to the door.

"Come in," said Belmore. Only two people ever called on him now-his landlord and his friend Valentine de Montmorency.

"Mr. Jeremiah Watkins entered. He was a stout prosperous-looking man of about the same age as Belmore. "Well," said Mr. Jeremiah Watkins, the landlord, coming into the room, "got any money for me, Mr. Belmore?"

"The musician raised his head and shook it sadly. "Nothing yet, nothing yet."

"It is Saturday, you know, and I'm blowed if I don't think I've had plenty of patience. One eighteen six is no joke, you know."

"Again Belmore shook his head. "I have earned nothing for months. Nothing."

"I know that. It's bad for you; but it's bad for me also. What am I to do about my money?"

"I can only ask you to wait-to wait until I get something to do; then I'll pay you. How am I to pay you when I am idle, and have been idle for months?"

"I own it's hard on you; but then, you see, this is harder on me. You are out of situation, and therefore you get no money, which is natural and proper, as I say; but here is my room in situation, as I may say, and it gets no wages. Now that's not fair or reasonable, I say."

"I cannot answer you, Mr. Watkins. I am as sorry as you can be that I am not able to pay. What can I do? tell me, what can I do?"

"Mr. Watkins owned three houses in this alley. Each one was let in tenements, and in all he had sixteen tenants. But in Antony Belmore he knew he had a tenant far superior in mind and manners to any of his other lodgers. And yet, although he was not by nature a hard man, and although he knew

he was dealing with a gentleman, and although he would not do anything harsh to poor old Belmore for a much larger sum, yet he could not be importunate with graciousness. He had one of those hard, blunt, direct natures which can never step out of the routine manner, no matter how much their minds may out of the routine course. Said he:

""But what I look at is this, how are you ever going to pay? You are out of situation; you see no chance of getting a situation. You've sold or pawned all you could sell or pawn. Even your old fiddle is gone-

""It is," said Belmore, with laconic sadness.

""Then how, in the name of all that's black and blue, are you ever going to get any money if that old fiddle is up the spout? That's what's the puzzle to me."

""Belmore rose, and clasping his long, knotty, emaciated hands in front of him, said:

""I cannot say more than that I am very sorry I cannot pay you Mr. Watkins. If you wish it, I am willing to go. If I go I have my choice of two things-the workhouse or the river-

""And you would choose the river?"

""And I would choose the river."

""That is the way always with you-" Mr. Watkins paused. Belmore waited for him. "With all you fools," said Mr. Watkins, using the most tender word his nature would allow, instead of the most offensive, as he had intended when he had set out with the sentence.

""I will go if you wish it," said Belmore meekly, making a motion first to an old battered hat that lay on the floor, and then towards the door.

""Who asked you to go?" said Watkins doggedly.

""No one has asked me," answered Belmore; "but of course you have a perfect right to ask me to go if you wish."

""I didn't ask you to go, and I don't ask you to go, and it's manners to wait to be asked," said Watkins ungraciously. "You may stay another week. At the end of a week I hope you will have got some employment."

""Mr. Watkins, I should be deceiving you if I led you to suppose I shall have got anything to do in a week. This is the dull season," said the poor gentleman, dropping both his hands and looking hopelessly at his landlord.

""Now, Mr. Belmore," said Watkins; "don't you think it a little rough on me to take me so cool? I tell you, who owe me rent, you may stay another week, and I say I hope you may get something to do in the meantime; and you then round on me, and tell me there is no use in my hoping you'll be able to get anything to do. I say it's downright rough on me. It's like telling me I'm a fool for trusting you any further."

""Indeed I did not mean to imply anything of the kind," said the poor gentleman, in a tone of deep concern. "But if I told you I hoped to be able to get anything to do in a week, it would be a lie."

""But I am a business man, and I like to be dealt with in a business way; and a business man would never say there was no chance of his getting employment in a week."

""Unfortunately, I not am a business man. I never have been one."

""More's the pity. You see, if you were only a business man, you would have a much better chance of getting something to do, and you would not make such unreasonable answers. But there, there; don't say any more about it. I am only wasting my time talking to you."

""I am very sorry it should be so," said the poor gentleman; "very sorry. If I had any property-" He paused, and looked at the dilapidated chair, the soap-box, and the stretcher.

""Bah!" cried the landlord; "I'm not going to touch them. I'm a business man and no fool, but I'm not a wild beast. Do your best now this week, and try and get something to do."

""I am sure I am very grateful to you, Mr. Watkins."

""Grateful! grateful! What's the good of being grateful? Be businesslike; that's the main thing. Next week you'll owe me more than two pounds, so stir yourself and get something to do."

"Without another word Mr. Jeremiah Watkins left the room, closing the door softly after him.

"When the landlord had gone, Belmore took a few feeble steps across the room, and then staggered back again to his old place by the head of the bed. No fire burned in the huge yawning grate, on the bottom bars of which the cold grey light of a winter afternoon fell through the chimney-pot above. Through the skylight nothing could be seen but the leaden November sky. It was raw and damp and dismal.

"Belmore dropped his head on his hands and rested his elbows on his knees. Thus he sat in thought for a long while without moving. At last he raised his head and shook it gravely, smiled sadly, and whispered:

"It is more than likely I shall have proved myself, according to his idea, a fool; for a gentleman – at this word he drew himself together, paused for a moment, and then finished – "for a gentleman cannot afford to die of starvation in a garret."

"Then his head fell once more. Once more he dropped his face into the hollow of his hands, and resting his elbows on his knees, sat motionless.

"So deeply absorbed was he in his thought he did not hear a brisk step on the stairs or a faint knock at the door. The knock was repeated. Belmore heard it now. He raised his head slowly, compressed his lips for a moment, and then whispered: "If he says another word about the rent I will not look at to-morrow." He arose, and having steadied himself by holding the chimney-piece for a second, crossed the room with an air of dignity and breeding in pathetic contrast with his mean attire and squalid surroundings.

"He opened the door and exclaimed, holding out his hand: "Ah, De Montmorency, is it you? I am delighted to see you. Come in."

"All at once the firmness died out of his manner, and he uttered a sob. Of this the visitor took no notice, but, walking to the middle of the room where stood the chair with the board across it, he began humming a lively air as he put down on the board a few parcels. When he had given Belmore a minute to recover himself, he faced round briskly and said gaily:

"Any good news about yourself, Belmore?"

"No."

"I'm sorry. But, if your luck is bad mine has been good. I have come into money. What do you think of that, Belmore?"

"I am sincerely glad to hear it. You did not expect it, did you?"

"I had no more expectation of coming into money than you have. Blessed are those who expect nothing. I have run through three fortunes; and no man I ever met had a chance of running through more than three fortunes. Who ever heard of any other fellow having had four fortunes?"

"Is it much?"

"Half-a-crown."

"What!"

"Half-a-crown."

"It's a poor joke, de Montmorency; a poor joke."

"I think it's a capital joke. Now, if, as I came along the street, I lost the half-a-crown, I'd consider it a poor joke. I was looking over an old waistcoat, when, hey presto! out drops half-a-crown. I'd like to know what you'd call that, if not a good joke."

"The speaker was a short little man, with dark eyes and hair, and a swarthy southern complexion.

"Ah, De Montmorency, if I had only such spirits as yours!"

"It isn't the best, at all, Belmore. It's only a quarter of London gin. Please observe this is no joke. No; look here, Belmore, you mustn't be offended if I have taken a liberty. I have long been wishing you would dine with me; but I've been so cruelly hard up I couldn't do the thing decently at an outside place. But, as we are both Bohemians, I've ventured to order the rag-and-bone merchant

in the Lane to send over a peck of coals and a bundle of wood. I waited to see the boy start with the coal and wood before I left the place; and then I ran off and got a few little things. So I'm going-if you will not think it a liberty-to light up a fire here and cook a bit of luncheon, and ask you to have a bit with me, Belmore. You are not offended?"

""If, De Montmorency, it were any one but you-"

""Ah, that is right, my dear Belmore; that is right! That young scamp must have stopped to play with other boys. Ah, here he is! You young scamp! Put it there on the hearthstone, and, look you, here's a penny for yourself. Now vanish! Well, my dear Belmore, I don't think much of our coal merchant. When I am Comptroller of the Household I shall not give him the contract. I shall be very corrupt in those days. I shall take bribes-when I can. Now there is a piece of undesirable slate. If either of us had young children that slate might be useful in forming their young minds and making them familiar with figures."

""Thank Heaven we have no children."

""Ay, ay, ay! Have it as you will, have it as you will. No doubt you are right. Now you don't happen to have a frying-pan?"

""No, I have nothing of the kind."

""Never mind; we'll toast the rashers and fortunately a toasting-fork is within reach."

""There is not one in this place."

""I'll make a capital one out of three pieces of this wood, with the aid of string. I think this fire will light now. It is beautifully designed and excellently built. I am a connoisseur in fires. I have been accused of resorting to bludgeon tactics. But I don't care what they may call my tactics, they always succeed. First you get a few pieces of paper-if they are greasy, all so much the better-and you roll them up loosely, as I did the piece that came round the rashers. Then you put on as much wood as you judge sufficient, taking care to cross-hatch the pieces, as an artist would say. Then put on more wood loosely until you think there is too much. After that put on more wood until you are perfectly sure there is too much. When you have done this, lay on eight pieces of coal neither larger nor smaller than a bantam's egg, and upon these eight lay three pieces as big as a turkey's egg. After that set fire to your paper, as I do. I will now, while the fire is kindling and clearing, make our toasting-fork."

""He rose from his knees before the grate, and proceeded to splice two thin pieces of firewood, one on either side of a thick piece, having first cut a slanting bit out of the ends of the thinner ones where he applied them to the thick one. These prongs he had only to sharpen.

""While De Montmorency was engaged in making his toasting-fork, Belmore, attracted by the unfamiliar blaze and glow in that chill room, drew the soap-box to the fire, and sat down to enjoy the heat.

""Nothing ages a man more quickly than cold and hunger, and as Belmore sat before the mounting flames he looked seventy.

""There is no fender," said De Montmorency; "but I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll put the teapot down on the ground, take the lid off, and put a saucer on the top of the teapot. That will make a capital gravy-dish to catch the rich nectar from the rashers."

""All this time Belmore never moved or spoke. With his thin hands hanging down over big knees, he simply gave himself to the animal enjoyment of warmth, a pleasure he had not known for a long time.

""At last the toasting began; and now, for the first time, the attention of Belmore was withdrawn from the fire to be concentrated on the food. He had tasted food since he had felt the heat of a fire, but that food had been the simplest and most scanty. Convicts would have mutinied if they had been kept on such a scale as the poor gentleman had been obliged to adopt for a month; that is, if convicts, after a month of such diet, would have had strength enough to lift up their hands in menace.

""At length the first piece of bacon was toasted. With a large pocket-knife De Montmorency cut off a slice of bread from a loaf, which had formed one of the parcels he had brought in; and

having placed this on the chair-table, he removed everything else. Then he took up the saucer from the fire and put that on the table, and dropped the hissing crisp bacon into the rich straw-coloured gravy. He poured some gin out of the bottle into a cup, and added water from a jug.

""You go on and eat now," the visitor said; "I'll cook and serve, and will naturally wait. I'll make a gravy-dish of a slice of bread this time. You don't object to a slice of bread soaked in red-hot dripping of toasted bacon? Of course you don't. I should like to see the man with a wholesome appetite who did. Pretend the bacon is fish, and that we have lent our fish-forks to the bishop who lives on the landing below this, and that you have to eat your fish with a fork and a piece of bread, and then all you've got to do is to fancy my knife is an old-fashioned fork, and there is nothing more to be desired."

""As Belmore had cut off the first piece of bacon and was raising it to his lips, someone knocked at the door. Belmore put down the bit untasted, and said, in a tremulous voice: "De Montmorency, will you ask him to leave me in peace, or tell me I must go? Ask him to spare me or send me away."

""De Montmorency opened the door softly and looked out.

""Is Mr. Belmore in?" asked a very low voice.

""Yes," answered De Montmorency. "May I ask what is the nature of your business?" – he kept the door partly closed so that the man outside could not see in – "because Mr. Belmore is engaged at present."

""I want to see him on very particular business indeed."

""Of what nature?"

""Well, I am a lawyer."

""If it is anything about the rent," said Belmore, "I am willing to go, but I cannot pay; nor do I think I shall be able to pay next week."

""As Mr. Belmore has spoken of paying rent, I may as well tell you at once that I am in a position to say he can pay it now."

""No, no, no!" cried the poor gentleman; "I really haven't any money."

""But I will pay it for him, with the greatest pleasure. I have very good news for Mr. Belmore, if I may see him."

""Good news?" repeated De Montmorency. "Did I understand you to say you have good news for Mr. Belmore?"

""Unquestionably. Very good news indeed."

""As Mr. Belmore is very particularly engaged at present, would it not be better if he called upon you at your office in half an hour?"

""Yes, that will suit admirably. You are a friend of Mr. Belmore?"

""Oh yes; I think I may say I am."

""Then will you allow me the privilege of a few moments' conversation with you, sir?"

""Certainly." And De Montmorency went out on the landing and closed the door.

""He found there a tall stoutish man of middle age and very dark complexion. The stranger moved a few paces from the door, and then spoke in a very low, confidential, and friendly voice. "My name is Jackson. I am senior partner of the firm of Jackson and Connington, Lothbury. You are a friend of Mr. Belmore?"

""Yes; I think his only friend."

""I am glad to have this opportunity of having a little chat with you, for the news I have for him is not only good, but so astoundingly good that we must break it to him gently. I will not now trouble you further than to ask you if you can tell me who Mr. Antony Belmore's father was, and where and when was Mr. Belmore born? We know all about it. I ask the question merely to put all doubt of his identity out of the way finally."

""Mr. Belmore-whom I have known since we were boys, and whose father I also knew-is the only son of George Belmore, of Berley, in Lincolnshire. I think Mr. Belmore is about fifty years of age."

""All right, all right! You may break to him as gently as you can that he has fallen into an exceedingly good thing. Our firm has just found out he is heir to a fine estate. You will, I trust, excuse me for having taken the liberty of bringing this with me: but we thought it possible Mr. Belmore might want a little money before he opens his own banking account to-morrow or the day after. You will, I think, find fifty in notes and fifty in gold here."

""Thank you very much, I'm sure. It was very thoughtful of you to bring this. Would it put you to any inconvenience if we did not call upon you for a couple of hours instead of half an hour? Some of this" – he held up the money-"might in the meantime be usefully employed."

"He touched his coat with his other hand.

""Oh, I understand," said the lawyer with a sympathetic look towards the door, behind which the poor gentleman concealed his poverty. "Let it be two hours. That will be-let me see-five o'clock. Good-day."

""Good-day," said De Montmorency, dropping the money into his trousers pocket. "The shock of knowing he had fallen into even a hundred pounds would be too great now."

"He re-entered the room. "It was really good news, after all-I don't know how good yet; but, anyway, 'tis good enough for him to give me some money for you on account."

""Did he give you enough to pay Watkins?"

""How much is that?"

""One pound eighteen and sixpence."

""Oh, yes. He gave me five pounds. Here you are. Come now, and put on your hat. You see this lawyer believes in your luck, or he wouldn't put down his money without even being asked."

""And do you, too, believe there is some good luck in store for me?"

""Most emphatically."

""Then I'll go and pay Watkins, and never come back again."

""You must send for those things."

""Those wretched things! Why should I send for them? They would only bring up many of my cruellest memories."

""Ay, but you mustn't leave them here; you must take them away, if you only burn them. Suppose you are to turn out very lucky? Suppose you are the real King of Burmah; then, of course, these things will be bought up, and exhibited as curiosities. But come, put on your hat. We won't waste time with Watkins. Come out, and we will have something better in the form of luncheon than we were just about to eat. I have arranged with the lawyer that we need not call upon him for a couple of hours.

""Belmore had eaten the slice of bread and rasher. He had drunk a little of the gin, too, and had already begun to revive. Casting a look down at his wretched clothes, he said:

""De Montmorency, it was very good of you to prevent the lawyer seeing how things are here. But I am not much better off now. I am scarcely in a plight to call upon this gentleman."

""That will be all right. Suppose he gave me ten instead of five pounds for you? You can get all you want. Finish your gin, and I'll have some, and then we will go."

"In a few minutes they were in Holborn. De Montmorency took Belmore into a ready-made clothing shop, and got him a suit of clothes, an ulster, and a hat. They came out, and then got boots and gloves. After this, De Montmorency surveyed his friend from top to toe, and muttered with a sigh:

""You'll do. Now let us go and have a good solid meal somewhere. But stay. Ask me to dine or lunch with you, Belmore; for you are the financier. I am only your agent."

""Where shall we go, De Montmorency?"

""To The Holborn."

""But I am afraid you have already spent more than the lawyer gave you."

""Let us go to The Holborn, by all means. As to money, that lawyer gave me a hundred pounds, not ten; and now here is the balance in gold, notes, silver, and copper."

""A hundred pounds! It must be good luck, indeed, when he gave you a hundred pounds! Why, this morning I should have thought ten pounds miraculous luck, and here now am I getting a hundred on account! De Montmorency, it must be wonderful luck!"

""They went to The Holborn, and had a substantial luncheon, and a bottle of burgundy between them. Belmore paid the bill, and gave the waiter half-a-crown. He said "Thank you, sir. Very much obliged, indeed;" and flew for Belmore's ulster as though Satan were at his heels.

""When they got into the street, Belmore called a hansom, and told the man to drive to Jackson and Connington, Lothbury. As soon as the cab drew up, De Montmorency said:

""I'll wait for you in the cab. I'll ask the driver to let down the glass, and I shall be all right and comfortable."

""But won't you come up with me?"

""No, I think it better not, I am almost sure the lawyers do not want me, and I should not like to feel that, if I went up. I shall be quite comfortable. Run away now, Belmore, and hurry back and tell me you are the real King of Burmah."

""Belmore did not care to force him against his wish; so he stepped out of the cab and walked into the house and upstairs.

""He had been gone about half an hour, when a man dashed out of that door and rushed at the hansom, crying:

""Engaged?"

""Yes, sir."

""By whom?"

""Tall gentleman in ulster coat-gone upstairs half an hour ago."

""All right! You'll do! He's taken suddenly ill, and I want you to drive me for a doctor. The job is a sovereign, remember!"

""But there's a gentleman inside."

""De Montmorency knocked at the glass, and the driver drew it up. De Montmorency said to the man on the pathway:

""Mr. Belmore ill, did you say?"

""Yes, sir; taken suddenly ill."

""De Montmorency leaped out, crying:

""Jump in, jump in! I'll run up and see him."

""When he reached the room where Mr. Jackson and his partner stood, he found Belmore lying on a couch deadly white.

""Mr. de Montmorency, this is my partner, Mr. Connington. Mr. Connington, this is Mr. de Montmorency, a friend of his Grace."

""His Grace be-!" said De Montmorency. "I am a friend of Mr. Belmore. What's the matter with him?"

""His Grace the Duke of Fenwick has fainted upon hearing the honours and wealth that have suddenly come upon him.*"

""And who, in the name of Heaven, is His Grace the Duke of Fenwick?"

""The person you knew as Mr. Antony Belmore is Duke of Fenwick, with a rent-roll of ninety thousand a year!""

Here Cheyne finished reading, and throwing down the proofs, said:

"Well, May, what do you think of it?"

"Oh, I think it very clever indeed, only-only-"

"Yes, my ungrateful and critical sweetheart?"

"Only-only-doesn't everyone know who the heir to a dukedom is, like the heir to a kingdom?"

"No; everyone knows nothing."

"But doesn't the Duke himself know who his heir is? Or doesn't the House of Commons, or someone?"

"Dukes know absolutely nothing at all, and the House of Commons knows less."

While Charles Cheyne was reading chapter fifty-two in the little conservatory to his darling sprightly May, the Duke of Shropshire, having voted against the detested Radicals, was returning by express train to Silverview Castle, and Edward Graham was seated in front of the Beagle Inn, Anerly, painting the peaceful valley with Anerly Church in the near middle distance.

CHAPTER V. UNDER ANERLY BRIDGE

Although the view from the portico in front of the Beagle Inn at Anerly was very lovely, it would by no means make a good picture. It was too broad and monotonous and scattered. There was no composition in it. The pleasure derived from looking down that peaceful slope and valley was gained by glancing at it unconsciously from several points of view rather than from any particular one. If you fixed your eyes on the central or road line, no doubt you commanded Anerly Church and some fine trees and the wide plain below; but then there was no right-hand or left-hand frame to the picture, and the effect was insipid, if not distracting. If you looked through the trees you had the broad valley and the silver streak of stream; but you missed the church and the pine-clad slope which lent the romantic air to the whole scene.

Edward Graham was not a great artist. He was one of those indolent men who study art no more than the study yields pleasure. He liked painting and artists, but preferred the society of artists to that of a lonely easel, a laborious sketch-book. He was a Bohemian born, not made. He loved art for what it brought him from without more than for any divine joy it aroused within. By fortune he was poor, and by nature idle. He did not like doing anything; but of all occupations that could bring him money he disliked painting least. Therefore he painted for his bread. If he had been rich-so much did he enjoy the atmosphere of art, and the companionship of those who follow art-he would have painted all the same, that he might be entitled to smoke pipes and discuss pictures with better painters than he. He was one of those men who, although earning their bread by a profession, are amateurs to the last, one of those to whom talk of art is dearer than the use of artist's tools. He always wore a brown velveteen coat, a soft hat with a broad brim, and a Cambridge-blue tie. He was about twenty-eight years of age, of medium height, lightly built, and of dark complexion; the most remarkable thing in his face being a pair of large, round, brown eyes. In manner he was cordial, enthusiastic, almost boisterous.

The morning after Edward Graham had heard the story of Stephen Goolby's temptation was bright with dew and sunshine, and sweet with spices from the pine-trees and brisk balm of the meadows. Young Graham was on a walking tour. In his knapsack he carried two clean flannel shirts, a few collars, toilette brushes, and a comb; a couple of pair of thick knitted stockings, and a razor and strop; for Edward Graham shaved his chin and cheeks, wearing no hair on his face but a pair of moustaches. At the back of his knapsack was strapped a small rectangular japanned case, containing a large sketching-pad, three small canvases, a mahlstick, moist water-colours, oil-colours, brushes, and so on. A stout walking-stick he carried was a folded-up easel, and his knapsack served as a seat when he was painting or sketching in the open air.

On this beautiful morning in June Graham rose early, and, having filled and lighted a briar-root pipe, strolled out in front of the Beagle Inn. He took a leisurely survey of the place, drew his hat knowingly on the side of his head, as though to show the crows-the only living things in view-that Nature might be very clever in her way, but that she could not impose on him, and that he was about to probe her to the core.

He lounged indolently down the winding road that led by Anerly Church to the valley and broad stream beyond. He had his hands in the pockets of his velveteen shooting-jacket, as, with hat on one side and head on the other, and legs moving loosely and without any premeditation, he strolled down the hill.

As soon as he got near Anerly Church he paused, and, turning half round, looked up the pine-clad slope. After a careful scrutiny of a few minutes, he shook his head gloomily at it, as though he had expected and deserved much better treatment at its hands. Then, drawing his jacket tightly round his hips in a leisurely and dejected way, he continued his descent.

When he got as far as Anerly Church he paused again and looked round him. There was a slight relaxation of his critical stare, and a glance of approval in his large brown eyes. The approval was not so much of the landscape as of the fact that he, Edward Graham, approved of himself for having found out a suitable standpoint from which to make a picture of the place. For, give Nature all her due, what was the good of setting forth fair landscapes if no one with an artistic eye and artistic skill came her way to paint them?

The aspect which the young artist selected was gentle and charming as the soul who loves peaceful England could desire. Beneath the road ran a small stream.

From the right-hand side of the road, as one went down from the village, the ground sloped rapidly towards the valley below. The little stream running under the road had worn a deep narrow ravine, which expanded lower down, and over this rose a gaunt stone bridge supporting the road. The sides of this glen were lined with mountain ash, silver beeches, splay alders, gigantic ferns, and tangles of broad-bladed grasses, and masses of mingled bush and bramble and shrub, down to the golden mosses that slept upon the dark cold rocks above the sparkling curves of falling water. And below each tiny cascade lay a level miniature swamp, with a few huge flags standing up in each green, rush-fringed, open space.

On the slope of this glen, and on the slope of the great valley, stood Anerly Church, a couple of hundred yards from the bridge. Past the church the glen opened, and the dwarf vegetation near the bridge gave way to lofty pines, whose tops made a long sombre arch over the stream. Beyond this dark arch lay a blaze of green light, and a scarf of flaming white satin, where the valley and the stream caught the full sunlight.

"This will be jolly!" said Edward Graham, as he scaled the low parapet to the approach of the bridge, and threw himself down on the slope of the glen. "That archway is partly dry; I'll walk up in it until I get the picture focussed, and then I'll paint it. The bridge is so high there is sure to be plenty of light."

But when he got under the arch, and had picked his way to the rear of it, he altered his mind slightly. "By Jove!" he cried, for a moment looking at the startling effect of light and shade. "I don't know whether Salvator Rosa or Rembrandt would have admired this the more, but I am going to paint it; and instead of using the arch merely as a means of focussing the scene, I will paint the whole blessed lot, archway and stalactites, water under the archway and all."

The picture was striking.

By the sober light of the vault it was possible to make out with dim distinctness the outline of every object in it. This dimness did not arise from want of light, but from the fact that the floor and the sides of the vault were damp, and the outlines of damp objects in such a light are always uncertain to the eye. The archway looked north and south, and now a small portion of the western inner wall had caught a beam of the early sun, and the water in a pool at the eastern side, struck by the rays refracted by the wall, threw a blue and brown patch of trembling light on the middle of the roof. This light in return fell into another pool at the eastern side, where it made a trembling veil of orange-brown and golden-green; while all round, on the grey walls, the white roof, and the ashen stalactites, were scattered wandering hints of prismatic fire, which seemed rather to come through the stone than to be reflected from the water below.

Thus the huge barrel formed by the bridge, with its wavering, dull, dappled, transparent lights, was connected by one patch of brightness on the western pier and vault with the foreground of blue-and-white water, and rich green and yellow stripes of the rushes and grasses and underwood in the flat light of the glen. Beyond the flat light was the gloomy tunnel formed by the pines, where the yellows turned to browns, and the greens to sad blues; and the water flowed furtively from dull olive pool to dull olive pool, until at last it sprang out, a white blaze, into the full sunlight beyond, and fell headlong in foam to join the silver scarf of stream lying across the golden meadows below.

For a long while Edward Graham paused in reverence. He was not in his essence an artist, and the impulse which would have come first to an artist, came second to him.

His first distinct thought was: "What a picture it will make!" His second, "How beautiful it is!" Then he looked for a long time without thinking. He was gazing at the simple whole without reflection, as one may listen to a note prolonged, and be yet content, although there is no succession of anything produced in the mind, no idea suggested by the sound.

Then his mind came back suddenly, and he thought: "By Jove! it requires no painting at all. It paints itself." He had not been able to say "By Jove!" as long as his form of thought was abstract. But the moment he thought of the concrete, of brushes and canvas, and tubes and palette, he fell to the level of his own mind in his studio, where came no intoxicating visions of delight, no visitings of poetry, no fine frenzy to cause the eye to roll. Of his own nature he was not capable of evolving a thought or idea worthy of any more powerful or enthusiastic form of expression than "By Jove!" But here something new had been set before him. He felt there was poetry in the scene. He knew at a glance it would make a good picture. A second glance showed him there was poetry in it, but where he could not tell. He had no originality. He was a reflector, not a prism.

After another period of mere gazing, he looked around. Yes, the place would do admirably for a painting room. The vault ran north and south, and the back or lower end of the archway, that from which the scene should be painted, faced the north, which settled the question of light in his favour. Then the archway was quite wide enough for an easel.

The legs of the easel might stand in the water, and he could make a little platform of flat stones on which to rest a seat for himself. At the back of the archway spread an open green space. The place was damp. But then in summer the roof would not drip, and that was all he cared about. He should have to write up to London for a much larger canvas than any he had with him. His easel, too, he should write for. Well, he'd go back to The Beagle now and have some breakfast, and write his letters afterwards.

He clambered up out of the hollow on the northern side, and walked back to the inn much more briskly than he had come.

"I shall make sketches and studies of the place while I am waiting for the easel and the canvas," he thought, as he went along the road.

When he arrived at the inn he ordered breakfast, and sat down to write a couple of letters while he was waiting. The first of these was to the man in London from whom he got his colours, asking him to send a canvas of the size he wanted. The second ran as follows:

*"Beagle Inn, Anerly, Devonshire,
"June, 18-*

"May it please your Grace, – I am now sojourning in Anerly, one of the most charming villages in the dominions of her who calls you Our right trusty and right entirely beloved Cousin. Everything here, including, of course, myself, is excellent, except the bread, which is beastly. The cocks and hens, the scenery, the cider, and all other things of that class, cannot be surpassed. There is a man here, six feet high, twenty-three years of age, sixteen stone ten (not an ounce of which you could pinch with a steel nippers), whom I have been telling of you, and who is awfully anxious to fight you. He is by profession a carpenter. He never saws a three-inch deal, but breaks it across his knee. He says he will fight you for nothing with great pleasure. I want you to come down at once and stop with me for a week or two. I'll treat you like a prince. You shall have three full meals and as many quarts of cider. The fact is, dear old Duke, I am going to paint a picture here. It's awfully good. I'll swear to you it's the loveliest thing you ever saw. It's the real whangdoodle, and no mistake. Come down and judge for yourself. And now I want you to do a thing for me. Go to my diggings (I mean the studio), get my big box of oils and my easel, and send them on here. You shall have one extra quart of cider for this job if you come. But if you don't come you shall not have a stiver. If you come I will tell

you a story I heard here, and which will surely make your fortune if you write it. I am going to paint Anerly church, and this story is about Anerly church; so that if you come down, see the place, and do the story, it will be in a magnificent way writing up to my picture; and if you get out your book by next May, when your 'Romance of Anerly Church' is in the libraries, and my 'Under Anerly Bridge' is on the line, we shall both be helping one another to fame and fortune. Now, whatever you do or avoid doing, you must come here. I am called for breakfast. But remember and come. – I have the honour to be, my lord Duke, your Grace's most obliged and obedient servant,

"Edward Graham.

"To His Grace the Duke of Long Acre.

"P.S. – By-the-way, the people about whom I am to tell you the romance, are namesakes of yours.

"E. G."

CHAPTER VI. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

When the Duke of Long Acre got Edward Graham's letter, he immediately packed off the easel and colours. He liked Graham very much, and Graham loved him. Cheyne was one of those men who are always asked to do odd jobs for friends. He was good-humoured, of active habits, and liked to be busy always.

Although he was prompt about the commission he had received, he had no intention of doing the other thing Graham asked. No inducement of an ordinary kind could drag him out of London just now. He was moderately busy for the papers and magazines to which he contributed, and he was exceedingly busy with the affairs of his heart.

There was no happier lover in all London than Charles Augustus Cheyne. He loved his love, and his love loved him, and he envied no man's lot. She was as bright and dear a sweetheart as ever man had, and he loved her in a thoroughly comfortable common-sense way. He had written about romantic love, but he had never felt a pang of it in his private experience. Romance was a good thing in a book, for it amused one, but it was a poor stock-in-trade on which to begin matrimony. So he kept his romance for the public and his friends, and his straightforward manhood for his sweetheart. "Sweetheart" is the finest love-word we have in English, and she was his sweetheart-his sweetheart-his sweet heart.

He loved her simply, frankly, wholly, without any mental reservation. He never told her he wanted to die for her, or that she was blameless or perfect. He told her she was as good a girl as any man ever might hope to marry. He knew she was as well as he knew that two and two are four. He praised her face less than was reasonable. He told her she had most lovely eyes, which was a temperate and judicial way of putting the matter. He was quite sure of his girl. He did not want anyone to tell him anything about her. He did not want her to tell him anything about herself. The only thing he wanted was to make her happy, and he thought he could do that. If she were happy he should be happy for three reasons—first, because he had an excellent constitution and was not soured by ill-health; secondly, because he had a gay and cheerful nature; thirdly, because the very sight of her happiness could not fail to be a source of abiding joy to him.

When he put his arms round her he always felt glad he was big enough and strong enough to protect her. Once, while holding her a moment in his arms, he said:

"I could crush you to death now. May, if I liked."

"You great bear, don't frighten me to death first," she said.

"Or," he added, "I think I could kill any man who annoyed you; of course I mean who injured you desperately."

"Well," she said, "as I don't mean to be injured dreadfully by anyone, as I don't want to be frightened to death or crushed to death, I don't see why you should not let me go. Oh dear, men are such plagues."

Yes, Charles Augustus Cheyne was a very strong man physically; mentally he was by no means so strong. Notwithstanding the fact that he told lies by the thousand, no one ever dreamed of saying he was a dishonourable man. He made no earthly use of his lies. If he told a new acquaintance that he had the day before dined with the Marquis of Belgravia, and his listener then asked him to dinner next day, Cheyne would most certainly decline to go. If he lied he lied for his own pleasure, not for his profit, not for the injury of anyone. He never said a bad word of any man he knew, and he never said a bad word of any member of the aristocracy, for had he not broken the bread of every member of it?

But of all the weak points in Cheyne's mental equipment the weakest was a dread of an allusion to his family. Any allusion to his people always made him uncomfortable; and, where he could possibly manage to do so, he always changed the conversation as soon as possible. When asked point-blank

who his father was, he replied in almost the same form of words: "My father was a poor gentleman who met many reverses of fortune." He never said anything about his mother, and those who knew him best had long ago made up their minds that he had no right to his father's name, and that Cheyne had been his mother's name, or an assumed one. Indeed most of his friends were convinced that neither his mother nor father had borne the name of Cheyne.

He did not know much more about himself than those around him. He did not remember his father or mother. His earliest recollection was of an elderly spinster who wore corkscrew curls, kept a day-school for young ladies, and took in a few boarders. He was one of these boarders, and now he always looked back on that part of his life with the deadliest hatred. Two facts connected with that establishment clung to his imagination with terrible tenacity. First, that he never got anything to eat there but bread steeped in boiled milk; secondly, that on frosty days his schoolmistress hit him on the knuckles with a lead-pencil because he did not hold his pen properly. Even now the smell of bread steeped in boiling milk made him ill.

From this school he was sent to another, a private one kept by a clergyman in Cumberland. No one ever visited him, and he never left school for holidays. He did not know who paid for him at those houses. He had a small allowance of pocket-money. At school he had displayed some taste for literature. He always took first place in essay-writing. He assumed from this that the clergyman must have suggested he should in some way be linked to literature: for when he left school, at sixteen years of age, the clergyman told him a situation had been secured for him in a publisher's office in London. The clergyman came up to town with him, introduced him to his new master, handed him a ten-pound note, saying it came from his guardian, and then took leave of him.

From the day he left that old maid's school he had never seen or heard anything of her. From the day that clergyman handed him the that ten-pound note and bade him good-bye he had never seen or heard anything of him. At the date he first found himself in the publisher's office he was too young to set any inquiries on foot about himself; and as time went on and he began to know something of the world and its ways, he came to the conclusion he had no right to his father's name, and that the one he bore was his mother's. When he had grown to be a man he felt deeply the humiliation of his position, and made up his mind to look no further into the matter, lest what was now only matter of inference might become matter of certainty. "Let sleeping dogs lie" was the motto he adopted, and he had never departed from it. To Marion Durrant he had told all he absolutely knew of himself. He had not told her anything he inferred or suspected. He had been told by the clergyman who had looked after his education that both his father and mother were dead. He had told Marion that he had never known either his father or mother, that they were both dead, that he had no memory of his childhood and youth apart from those two schools, and that as far as he knew he had no relative alive. But he had said nothing to her of his misgivings or doubts.

From all this it will be seen that Graham's allusion to the story connected with Anerly and his name would be anything but an inducement for Cheyne to leave London for that Devonshire village.

Every day he found his way out to Knightsbridge, and every day he had long sweet hours with his May.

It was afternoon on the day he got Graham's letter before he could leave home, and four o'clock had struck before he knocked at the hall-door of the little house in Knightsbridge.

When he came into the room where Marion Durrant sat hemming an apron, she said:

"What! come again to-day! In the name of wonder, what brought *you* here now?"

"You know, May, the pressure of race is ever from east to west,"

"The pressure of race! What on earth are you talking about? Don't! that hurts my hand."

"I was slapping your hand to prevent you from fainting at the unexpected sight of your slave and master. I meant the pressure of the human race-or more accurately, the attraction of the inhuman race-meaning yourself, sweetheart."

"Do you know, Charlie, you always begin a conversation as if you wanted me to think you clever; and if there is one thing I hate it is cleverness in a man."

"Do you know, Miss Durrant, you never by any means allow me to begin a conversation. Before I am fully in the room you always fly at me with some question or other."

"But you are so slow, Charlie. You take up half an hour getting ready to say 'Howd'y'do'; and if there is one thing more odious in a man than cleverness it is slowness."

"But you must admit. Miss Durrant, that if, when we meet, I am slow of speech, I am not slow in other matters proper to our meeting."

"Go away, sir! How dare you? I will not let you do that again. Sometimes I think you a bear, and sometimes I think you an elephant, but I think I hate you always."

"If you say any more I'll get a divorce on the grounds of cruelty and desertion. May, let us drop this sort of thing. Run and bring me a glass of beer. I've been trotting about the whole morning, and am dying for a glass of beer."

"You deserve to be starved, and you deserve to be thirsty, and you deserve to be--"

"I admit it all. I deserve it all, and every other thing that's awful, except to be married to you. Marion Durrant, spinster, what would you do if I cut my throat?"

"Charlie!"

"Or if I put my head under the wheel of an omnibus laden with exceedingly fat people?"

"Charlie! Charlie!"

"Or if I threw myself over Westminster Bridge with a couple of forty-pound shot tied round my heels?"

"I'll run for the beer, Charlie."

"Ah, I thought I'd get you to move at last. You see you can't bear to leave me even for a minute."

"Conceited fellow!" and she tripped out of the room.

She went herself with a jug into the little cellar under the front-door step, and drew the beer in a most elaborate and painstaking manner. She looked into three jugs before she was satisfied with one, although they were all as immaculate as human hands could make them. She looked at the glass as if it were a jewel she was thinking of buying, and the slightest flaw in it would render it valueless. She placed the jug and the tumbler and a plate of biscuits on an exceedingly slippery Japanese wooden tray, and declined to let the maid carry it up. She was proud of that polished jug, that polished glass, that polished tray. The jug and the glass and the tray were more to her than the condition of the beer. As a matter of fact, she never thought of the beer at all. It would be a pity if the beer was not in good condition; but it would be a disgrace if the jug, glass, and tray were not in perfect order.

When she came back to the room she was meek and penitential. We are always softened towards those to whom we have done ever so slight a service. When he had taken a draught of the ale and broken a biscuit, she said plaintively:

"Charlie!"

"Well, my fire-eating she-dragon, what bloodthirsty thing have you to say to your down-trodden slave now?"

"Only that you were right when you said--"

"When I spoke about cutting my throat?"

"No, no, no! When you said I did not like to go away from you even for a moment. Charlie, I hate going away from you, and I hate myself when you are away; for then I remember all the foolish things I have said to you, and-and I am always afraid--"

"Of my taking four pounds, apothecaries' weight, of solid opium?"

"No. Of your being angry with me some day, or of your not forgiving me."

She was pretty and very penitent, and he had had a long walk and a glass of beer, and he felt perfectly at rest and happy; so he put out his arms and took her into them for a moment, and when

he let her go they both felt that, say what you like about love, it is the finest thing in all the world, and that there is nothing else which makes people so utterly unselfish.

"I had a letter from Graham this morning," said Charlie, after a pause.

"Where is he now?"

"In Devonshire still, sketching at some place called Anerly. He wrote me to send him some painting materials. He is going to begin a picture there, so I suppose we shall not see anything of him for some time. He has asked me to run down to him for a few days?"

"And will you go?"

"Not I. I am too busy just now."

"But you could do your work down there, and I am sure you want a run away and a little fresh air."

"Yes; I could write, no doubt. But then you see, May, I should not be able to come and read my MS. to you, and I should not get on very well. While I am at work at Long Acre I am in a hurry to be done, in order that I may get back to you, and I am too anxious to please you to do slovenly work; so the result is that I work longer and yet have more leisure, which is a paradox, and a paradox is particularly unsuited to the understanding of women."

"You are always saying nice and disagreeable things in the one breath; and I don't know whether to like you or to hate you."

"To cases of this kind an infrangible rule applies. It is, when I say nice things, hate me; when I say disagreeable things, love me. This is another paradox. Paradoxes, although they are not intelligible to women, are all the more dear to them on that very account. You never yet knew a woman who thoroughly understood a man care for him. I never did."

"But, Charlie, I think I understand you very well."

"Rank presumption. The rankest presumption I ever heard in all my life. Know me, May! Why, you don't even know who my father and mother were."

"You told me they were dead."

"Yes, they are dead. But you know nothing of them. You do not know if they were felons, or shopkeepers, or gentlefolk."

"I am sure, Charlie, they were gentlefolk."

"Ah, you do not know. And now, May," said he, taking her hand very tenderly and softly patting the back of it with the palm of his own, "I must tell you a secret I ought perhaps to have told you long ago, as it might influence you in your decision of accepting or not accepting me."

"Nothing you could have told me would have made the slightest difference in my decision, Charlie," she said, in a very faint voice.

He ceased patting her hand, and pressed it softly between his two palms. He spoke in a low voice:

"Well, May, the fact of it is I do not know who my father and mother were. It could do no good, dear, if this fact were made public, and I count on you for keeping it secret."

"You may," she whispered back, returning the pressure of his hands, and laying her disengaged hand upon the upper one of his. The action was slight and made without thought, yet he felt its import. He knew by that gesture she meant to convey to him that not only was the hand his own, but that all the faculties of her nature owed allegiance to him alone.

"Thank you, darling; I know how good you are. Every day I see you I am more and more convinced of your goodness. But you see. May, that is my only great trouble, and day by day I am afraid I may find out something very, unpleasant, something disgraceful about my father and mother."

"But nothing you can find out will be disgraceful to you, Charlie."

"No, logically and morally not. But then you know the sins of the parent are visited on the children, not merely by Heaven, but by the world. You know very well that if a man's father had been a hangman, or a murderer, or a forger, his son would be looked on with suspicion and dislike by the

majority of the world. A man in my position is of course more alive to the discomfort of any such discovery than a man who knows about his parents. He is continually fancying all manner of horrible surprises, until the mind becomes morbidly sensitive on the subject. I confess I am morbidly sensitive on the subject; and of one thing I am certain, that if I made any discovery of the kind I have been speaking of, I could not stand England-London. I'd emigrate. I'd go to the United States or Australia; some place where the English language is spoken, and where I might have a chance of making a living by my pen. I am telling you all this for a purpose, May. It is all only a preface to a question. And the question: In case anything of the kind arose, and I was about to leave for the United States or a colony, would you marry me and come with me?"

"Oh, how can you ask such a question? I'd go anywhere with you. What does it matter where I am so long as I am with you, Charlie?"

He thanked her and kissed her, and soon after took his leave; for he had work to do that evening.

As he walked home in the fresh bright air his step was elastic, and he carried his head thrown back. His happiness was now complete. The two great points he had reserved had been cleared up. May cared only for himself. Whatever time might unearth about his father and mother, she would not be altered by it; and if anything obliging him to leave the country did transpire, she would marry him and go with him all the same as if nothing had come to light. This was the most peaceful, contented and joyous day of his life.

When Cheyne arrived at the house in Long Acre, he found Mr. Whiteshaw, the carriage-builder, standing in his wareroom.

"Good afternoon, Cheyne," cried the builder cheerily.

"Good afternoon," said Cheyne, pausing and drawing near.

"What news?" asked the carriage-builder, rubbing his hands, as though news ever so dismal would be preferable to none.

"Not a word," said Cheyne, stepping into the wareroom.

"Heard anything of the Duke of Shropshire since?"

"No, no. Nothing particular. Except that the Duke of Dorsetshire, in a note I got from him a day or two ago, says his grace is awfully cut up by the way these rascally Radicals are behaving."

"If I were at the head of affairs now, I'd pass a law treating all Radicals as working-men out of situations, and I'd clap every man Jack of them into jail. That's what I'd do."

"You'd never get a bill like that through the Commons, although you might through the Lords."

"Ah, I suppose not; I suppose not, Cheyne. We live in a degenerate age. But you, if you were in the House, would you vote for such a measure?"

"I am afraid it is extreme," said Cheyne, with a good-humoured smile.

"But you, you ought to be dead against Radicals and demagogues. Your name alone-why, sir, your name alone shows you come of a great stock, the great house of Shropshire. (By-the-way, we weren't long putting that brougham right for his grace. There it is, you see; and a pretty job too.) But, as I was saying, you must be a member of that family. Why, look at how few there are of the name."

"No, no. I assure you, most sincerely, I am in no way connected with any great house. The name is common enough in England-common enough. Well, I must be off to work. I have a whole lot of stuff to get away by to-night's mail for the morning."

With these words Cheyne walked out of the wareroom and got to the hall-door, and mounted the stairs.

"I never can understand," thought the carriage-maker, "why this Cheyne, who lies right and left about noblemen, should have such a strong objection to thinking he was descended from a big swell."

When Cheyne reached his own room he sat down and thought a moment. Then he said to himself very gravely:

"I wish Whiteshaw would give up this connecting my name with that of the Duke of Shropshire. Supposing a person found a poor deserted child, would it be kinder to name it Fitzalan Howard or plain William Brown?"

And when he had put the question to himself, he fell to wondering very unpleasantly whether or not he had at one time been a poor deserted child, picked up by some passer-by, to whom had been given the high-sounding name of Charles Augustus Cheyne.

So the afternoon which had been the happiest of his life ended under a sombre cloud.

CHAPTER VII. A STORY OF A CITY

Wyecheater is a small city in the Midlands. It does not contain more than thirty thousand people, so that it is possible for every man and woman of the middle class to know everyone of the same class, or, at all events, to know everything about everybody, which is almost as good, if not better.

Wyecheater is not a place of any importance now, save what it draws from its cathedral and its bishop, and the other great dignitaries around the cathedral. If the city disappeared wholly one night the world of England would hardly miss it, provided the cathedral and church dignitaries were spared. It does not manufacture anything; it has no mines near it. No one ever thought of hunting or shooting in the neighbourhood but those who lived in the neighbourhood. The fishing is poor; and the land, although fairly fertile, is not held in much esteem by farmers. It is a faded, washed-out, old cathedral city, surrounded on all sides by an uninteresting country.

It had one virtue, which, as it concerned only itself, did not spread its fame—it was pious. It was the most pious city in England. It could not, of course, be said with truth that there was no hypocrisy in it; but, speaking relatively, there was very little, much less than in any other city of its size.

It was pious, and it was severe. To do any wrong there was much worse than to do the same wrong in any other city or town in England. Going to church twice on Sunday regularly for thirty years entitled one to consideration; going once freed one from adverse comment; going only twice a month was looked on as bad, very bad; but not going at all made middle-class people in Wyecheater think that the sooner the offender left the diocese the better.

Five-and-thirty years before the pole of the omnibus went through the door of the Duke of Shropshire's brougham, five-and-thirty years before Edward Graham decided upon painting that landscape revealed to him under the bridge at Anerly, Mrs. Mansfield, widow of the Rev. James Mansfield, lived in Wyecheater. The Rev. James Mansfield died very young. He was, at the time of his death, curate to one of the city churches, and was looked upon as a very exemplary and clever young man, who had a career before him. But his career seemed never to have begun, for he died before he was thirty. He left behind him a widow and daughter and about a hundred and fifty pounds a year, from money in the Funds, willed him by an aunt who had the warmest affection for this nephew.

On this modest income, and about seventy pounds a year coming in from other sources, the widow managed to live quietly, respectably, and to give her daughter a very good education. Five-and-thirty years before what may be taken as the present time of this story, a thing occurred which horrified all Wyecheater and bowed down the head of Mrs. Mansfield for ever.

At that time Harriet Mansfield was on a visit with some friends in the country. One morning Miss Mansfield left the house of the friends she was staying with and did not return. Neither did she go home. After days of anxiety a letter, in the daughter's handwriting, came from London, in which she simply said she had left her home for good, and that there was no chance whatever of her going back.

Mrs. Mansfield was then forty-three years of age, but, with the flight of her daughter, her life may be said to have closed, although she was living at the time this story opened, being then seventy-eight years of age. She loved her daughter with all the love she was capable of. But she was a hard, cold, stern nature. To her daughter she never showed her love except in rigours, and insisting on doing her own duty by her child, without any sympathetic conception of what effect doing her own duty would have on a gentle, soft, and confiding nature like her daughter's. The result was that the mother did her duty according to her own lights. She endeavoured to bring up her daughter according to her own rigid code, and she justified herself to herself.

But the daughter had no Spartan nature. She loved pretty things and soft subjects to wear. She was not allowed to keep pets, or to be too familiar with other children. While in the world, and now and then coming in contact for a brief period with pleasant people and grateful things, she was under

a discipline as rigid as a convent without any sustaining code; for she did not believe it necessary to be uncomfortable in order to be good. So when love for the first time approached her, and she was from under the immediate eye of her mother, the oppressive goodness of that cathedral city, and the prospect of love and brightness and sunshine and freedom were all presented to her eyes by a man who owned the gift of erratic eloquence, and who was richer than any other man she had ever met, richer than even the bishop, she did not hesitate long. She fled with him. She knew that running away was wrong, but she under-estimated the risk, or indeed did not think there was any risk at all; for she was as simple as a child, and did willingly all things her lover told her, as all her life she had reluctantly obeyed her mother when uncongenial tasks were imposed.

In that letter from London, a letter dictated by the companion of her flight, she said nothing about him, nothing about marriage. It was therefore plain to the mother that the daughter was not married. So the mother cast the image of her daughter out of her heart, and shut up her heart against her child for ever. All through her widowhood this girl had been the sole source of her secret love and happiness, as far as worldly things were allowed to count in the love and happiness of one who ruled herself by the rule of duty.

Now that child had become the only source of secret and open reproach to her. Soon after she got that letter everyone in the city knew all about her misfortune, and the neighbours turned up their eyes and held aloft their hands in virtuous shame. Her daughter had disgraced her home, had disgraced the sacred order to which she might be said to belong, had disgraced the city which had given her birth. Into the mother's heart the image of the daughter should come no more. Across the mother's threshold the foot of the daughter should never pass. It was hard to keep the image out always; but no sooner did it gain an entrance than she cast it forth with bitter reproaches against herself for her sinful weakness in holding commune with the only thing which had ever brought shame to her.

The mother made no steps to follow the daughter. Several people came and offered help. She wanted no help. Her daughter had taken her fate into her own hands, and there matters should rest. She was inflexible. Nothing could move her in the least way.

Clergymen who had been friends of her husband called and expostulated, and said that it was wrong and sinful of her not to do something to win back the fugitive. But she would not listen to them with patience. She told them she had done her duty by the girl, and the girl had taken herself off, and she, the mother, could not think of receiving her daughter back. They then told her this was not a Christian spirit, and that she must remember the story of the poor Prodigal. And, upon this, she grew angry with them, for it hurt her beyond endurance to hear her daughter, her only child, referred to in such a way. She told them she knew her duty as a Christian as well as anyone, that they ought to be aware she had been under good guidance, the guidance of her husband, for many years, and that she was much obliged to them, but that her mind was made up beyond the chance of change.

Time proved she could adhere to her resolve, for she never made the least inquiry. Nor did she ever see her child again.

Harriet Mansfield had behaved very badly. There could be no excuse for her running away as she did. She was weak by nature, and her weakness betrayed her; but her weakness was no justification. Yet her folly had not betrayed her into such a desperate position as her mother imagined. She had run away, and she had run away with a lover; but there the disgrace ended.

The people with whom Harriet Mansfield was staying when she eloped were Mr. and Mrs. Gore, old friends of Mrs. Mansfield. They were childless, and lived in good style in a comfortable house close by an excellent trout-stream. Mr. Gore went to his office in town close by every day, and came home to a late dinner. During most of the day Mrs. Gore was engaged about domestic affairs, and could give little attention to her guest. This was the first time Harriet had ever been free. It was lovely weather, and she soon found out a few pleasant walks in the neighbourhood. The place was beautiful compared to the dull monotony of the scenery round Wychechester. Her favourite walk

was along the banks of this trout-stream, which wound in and out through delightful shady glens and peaceful meadows.

One day by chance she met here a fine stalwart gentleman fishing. He was more impetuous than careful, and he managed to fix one of the flies of his casting-line in her dress. The hook had to be extracted at the cost of some slight injury to the dress; apologies had to be made; and by the time apologies had been offered and accepted, an acquaintance had been established. He asked if he might be permitted to know the name of the lady to whom he had caused such annoyance, and whose dress he had so shamefully injured. She told him her name, and then he in return told her his name was Cheyne.

From that day forth they met daily by the stream, and before a fortnight had gone he had asked her to marry him and she had consented. He was impulsive, chivalric, romantic; the man more than any other calculated to set on fire the heart of a girl who had been so repressed all her life.

He obtained a complete mastery over her. She submitted herself to his word as she had submitted herself to her mother's; only one submission was voluntary, joyous-the other a task, a burden. He made passionate speeches to her, explaining how, if they got married now, it must for his sake be kept an inviolate secret. She did not understand the reasons he gave, but she understood his wish-that no word of their marriage should go abroad then or it would injure him-and she made the necessary promise. She understood only one thing of the reason why their marriage should not be made known at present; and that was, that if it was known he had married a poor woman now, a property worth ten thousand a year might be taken from him. Whereas, under the will of his father, he would in a year or so come into more than would pay all his debts twice over.

He had told her the simple truth. If he had told her the simplest lie, it would have been just as satisfactory to her; for she did not think in any matter which concerned him. She was willing to do, to dare, to suffer anything for the love of him. So she took him at his word, and ran away with him on the understanding that they were to be married in some quiet out-of-the-way place, and that she was to say nothing of their marriage until he came into his fortune.

He brought her first to London, where she wrote that letter dictated by him. Then he took her to Anerly, where he married her. Between the time of his taking her away from the Gores' house until the ceremony at Anerly Church he treated her as though she were a foreign princess whom he was escorting to espouse a prince.

For a few months after the marriage the life of Harriet Cheyne went on like a dream of delight. Her husband was erratic; but he was kindly erratic. He never tired of inventing or devising some agreeable treat or pleasing wonder for her. They travelled much in England and on the Continent. Every place she went to was Fairyland, and he was the enchanter. He was never from her side. He told her he would rather hear her call his name than find the praise of all the world else within his ears. She was intoxicated with happiness, and could scarcely speak, her joy was so great. The black dreary past was more than a million times compensated for. When she lay down at night she dreaded to go to sleep, lest on waking she should find herself back in cold wretched Wyecheater. Each waking of mornings was a new delivery from the past. She now knew how unwise her mother's treatment of her had been. But she forgave her; and often, when she woke at dead of night, she thought of her hard-faced stern mother at home, and a tear stole down her cheek-a tear of pity for the poor woman who had the misfortune to bring up a daughter that had acted with such perfect indifference to a mother's feelings.

But at last a sad change came. They were abroad. A letter arrived one day to her husband, saying that some of his enemies had got hold of the fact of his marriage, and were preparing to sell the information to his creditors. Something must be done at once. The bride and bridegroom were then at Brussels. It was essential he should set off at once for England, and under the circumstances it would be exceedingly dangerous for her to accompany him. So he went, giving her emphatic instructions not to leave Brussels, no matter what might happen, until she saw him or heard from him.

She never heard from him nor saw him afterwards.

He got to England safely, and reached Anerly, made an ineffectual attempt to bribe Goolby, left Anerly that day, and died within a couple of days. His death made a final settlement with his creditors, and whether he had married or not was no longer a matter of the least consequence to them.

At Brussels, Cheyne's child was born months afterwards. The mother, whose stock of money had by this time dwindled down to almost nothing, had saved a twenty-pound note, and this she gave to a woman whom she knew she could trust to bring her baby-boy to Wyechester to her mother; for she was dying, and knew it. She sent a very brief note with the boy, saying he had not been christened, that his name was Charles Augustus Cheyne, that she was dying, that she had been legally married, but that owing to circumstances the fact of her marriage could not be divulged. Then she appealed to her mother in very pathetic terms to be kind to the boy and provide for him, as she had no means, and had not heard of her husband for months. She also said she sent by bearer a sealed packet of letters and papers belonging to her husband, and begged her mother to keep it, and not to break the seals until some momentous occasion arose for doing so, as she was under important promises to her husband regarding certain matters reference to which was contained in the papers in the packet. Then there came a plea for forgiveness.

At first Mrs. Mansfield was filled with dismay. It was horrible to think of her daughter dying, deserted by the man who had taken her away, and dying in a foreign land too. There was of course an appeal for forgiveness in the letter; but to Mrs. Mansfield's mind the appeal came far too late, and even if it had come earlier it would have appeared an appeal to an affection of the flesh, which was in itself an offence against the spirit.

Mrs. Mansfield had tried to crush down Nature, but Nature was too strong for her; and when the messenger threw back the covering from the face of the infant, the tears, tears of the flesh, stood in her eyes, and her hand trembled. For that small, white, contented, sleeping baby-face reminded her of the time when her own infant lay in her own arms, and she speculated as to what her baby's future might be. And now here was her child's child; and the little one who had lain sleeping in her lap years ago, that seemed no farther off than yesterday, was dying in disgrace among strangers. Her own baby had come into the world sanctified, to her mind, by the very atmosphere in which it was born. Its father was an exemplar of what a man and a clergyman should be. There was every reason to suppose her baby would grow up into a woman who would be spoken of as a model of all a woman should be. Now here was her child's child. It was an unholy, an unrighteous child. There was no blessing or grace about it.

Ah, it was hard to hold that babe in her arms and think of her own child, and have a proper Christian feeling towards its father!

And the grandmother, who was not yet forty-five years of age, undid the baby's hood and passed her hand over the child's beating head, and touched the little fat double chin with her bent finger, softly pinched its white cheeks, and forgot for a while all that had happened since, and was back again in the old time.

Then all at once, as though God had taken pity on her, her tears began to fall, and she became less of a rigid Christian of the poor and narrow kind, and more of a Christian in light of the Sermon on the Mount and the story of the Good Samaritan. She said: "I'll take the boy and do my duty by him." She added after a pause: "I'll take the boy and do all I can for him," At that moment she did not so much want to do her own duty as to be good to him.

But when the messenger had gone, and she found herself alone with the baby, she receded somewhat from the advanced position she had taken. She had resolved for a few moments to keep the boy and live down the talk of idle tongues. Now that idea seemed no more than a temptation to give way to vainglory, and she resolved to send the boy away as speedily as possible.

She took the boy with her to a town a hundred miles from Wyecheater, and had him there baptized Charles Augustus Cheyne. Subsequently she got a nurse for him, and, having made a liberal arrangement with the nurse, she said:

"I shall come and see you and him at irregular intervals; and whenever I come and find him looking well and comfortable, I will give you a guinea in addition to what I have arranged with you for."

By this she intended to secure the continual good treatment of the child; for though she had failed in her heroic resolve of living down talk of the idle tongues of Wyecheater, she had made up her mind to be as good to the orphan as she could.

When she got home she found news awaiting her of the death of her daughter. She put away the thought of her daughter as much as she could from her mind; and, in a few years, when the boy was old enough to go to school, she went to that town again, and having requested an attorney to preserve secrecy in the matter, without giving him any reason for it, she asked the lawyer to find a school for the boy. Accordingly he was sent to the school kept by the old maid, and later to a college. Subsequently he was put to business in London; but from the time he left the place where he had been brought up, he had never seen his grandmother, and the early days at his nurse's had completely faded out of his memory.

The grandmother was now a very old woman. She still lived in her house at Wyecheater. She had altered greatly in face and figure, but her nature had softened in no way with years. She was still as stiff and intellectually assured as ever she had been. She had the willing power of one hundred and fifty pounds a year; the other seventy died with her; and she had made this will in favour of Charles Augustus Cheyne, of Long Acre, in London. Although he had never within his memory heard her name, she had always taken care to know what he was doing, and how he was getting on.

She had even so far given way to worldliness as to read the publications to which he contributed; and as she read them she thought of how strange it should be that his grandfather was younger than his grandson when he died, and here was she now reading what the grandson had written!

But in all that Charles Augustus Cheyne had ever written, there was nothing so surprising as would have been the result of bringing together the sealed packet held by his grandmother, the registry of Anerly Church, and Charles Augustus Cheyne.

CHAPTER VIII. ON BOARD THE YACHT "SEABIRD."

The bodily and mental conditions of the Marquis of Southwold, which forbade him living ashore any length of time, were many and almost insurmountable. The greatest doctors had of course been consulted, but without being able to afford any relief. They had called his lordship's symptoms by a number of very learned names, seldom heard in the medical profession. They could go no further than that. They had tried every resource of their art, and had failed. Men at the top of the profession can afford to confess failure much better than their brethren of a less degree. When the greatest doctors declare a patient must die soon, the sooner that patient dies the better for conventional decency.

The doctors had not said that Lord Southwold must die soon; but they had declared him incurable, and advised him to try the sea. He tried the sea, and the remedy was most successful. On shore his eyes were tender and dim, his limbs dumb and nerveless, his appetite failed, and his spirits sank almost to melancholia. But no sooner did he go on board a ship than all these symptoms began to abate. His eyes grew stronger, his sight improved, the lassitude lessened, he could eat with relish, and his spirits gradually returned.

The Marquis of Southwold was now a man of thirty-eight years of age, tall, lank, long-cheeked, and without the hereditary bow-legs. His features were vague and expressionless. He had a remarkably large mouth, and dull faded grey eyes. There was upon his face always the look of pain past rather than pain present. His face was that of one who was fading out, rather than of one who suffered any violent assault. He was more languid and subdued than his father; but, like him too, he was very taciturn.

His health was good while on board the yacht, although she only lay at anchor in Silver Bay, beneath the ducal castle. Thus, for a large portion of the year, his grace's schooner-yacht, the *Seabird* lay at anchor in Silver Bay. The bay was excellently suited to the requirements of the ailing nobleman: for it was protected from the wind by high lands on three sides, and from the rolling sea of the German Ocean by a barrier of rocks, extending more than halfway across the bay from the northern side. The best anchorage was just under the shelter of this jagged barrier of rocks. Here, even in the most severe gales from the east, the water was always smooth. The holding ground was also excellent; and the rocks, as they rose twenty, thirty, forty feet high, protected the hull of the schooner from the force of the wind.

The entrance to this bay was safe and easy. It was about a quarter of a mile wide, and quite free from rocks. The largest vessel afloat would have water enough in any part of that opening, from a point twenty fathoms from the end of the bar to a point twenty fathoms from the opposite shore of the bay. The only great danger was if, in tacking in or out in heavy weather, anything should give way; for it was necessary to reach in or out on the one tack, there being no room for tacking in the passage itself in a strong wind and high sea.

Of course, if Lord Southwold wished for a steam-yacht, he might have the finest that could be designed. But he could not endure a steamer. It was almost worse for him than being on shore. The air is never brisk aboard a steamboat, and then the vibration jarred upon him horribly.

He was not an enterprising sailor, and did not court adventure. He did not love the sea for its perils, or for the chance it affords of enjoying the sense of struggling successfully against an enemy. He looked on dwelling afloat as a birthright, or birthwrong, against which there was no good in growling. His father allowed him twenty thousand a year pocket-money. He would have given up his twenty thousand a year and his right of succession to the title and vast estates, if he might have a thousand a year and the constitution of a navvy. It is not utterly impossible that a navvy may become a duke, but it is utterly impossible that a man with such a constitution as his could enjoy the health of a navvy.

He found it impossible to spend his pocket-money, and he hated the notion of it accumulating at his banker's. When he had a large balance, it always seemed as if it were placed there as the wages

of his bodily infirmities. He hated money as honourable men hate debt. When he found a balance of ten or twelve thousand at his banker's, he could, he knew, draw it out and drop it over the side of the yacht. But that would be wilful waste. He might have given it in charity; but he had so little contact with the world that he had hardly any sense of the necessity for charity, except through reading, which is a cold and formal way of kindling one's sympathy. He might have gambled; but he had hardly ever attended a race or coursing match. They very rarely had a guest at the Castle or on board the yacht; and he did not care for cards, even if guests were more numerous. He led an isolated and dreary life; but he had experience of hardly any other. He could not with comfort, live more than a few days ashore, or with safety more than a couple of weeks.

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