

SANDRA BELLONI

By

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VOL. -3

***Free*editorial** 

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Meantime Wilfrid was leading a town-life and occasionally visiting Stornley. He was certainly not in love with Lady Charlotte Chillingworth, but he was in harness to that lady. In love we have some idea whither we would go: in harness we are simply driven, and the destination may be anywhere. To be reduced to this condition (which will happen now and then in the case of very young men who are growing up to something, and is, if a momentary shame to them, rather a sign of promise than not) the gentle male need not be deeply fascinated. Lady Charlotte was not a fascinating person. She did not lay herself out to attract. Had she done so, she would have failed to catch Wilfrid, whose soul thirsted for poetical refinement and filmy delicacies in a woman. What she had, and what he knew that he wanted, and could only at intervals assume by acting as if he possessed it, was a victorious aplomb, which gave her a sort of gallant glory in his sight. He could act it well before his sisters, and here and there a damsel; and coming fresh from Lady Charlotte's school, he had recently done so with success, and had seen the ladies feel toward him, as he felt under his instructress in the art. Some nature, however, is required for every piece of art. Wilfrid knew that he had been brutal in his representation of the part, and the retrospect of his conduct at Brookfield did not satisfy his remorseless critical judgement. In consequence, when he again saw Lady Charlotte, his admiration of that one prized characteristic of hers paralyzed him. She looked, and moved, and spoke, as if the earth were her own. She was a note of true music, and he felt himself to be an indecisive chord; capable ultimately of a splendid performance, it might be, but at present crying out to be played upon. This is the condition of a man in harness, whom witlings may call what they will. He is subjugated: not won. In this state of subjugation he will joyfully sacrifice as much as a man in love. For, having no consolatory sense of happiness, such as encircles and makes a nest for lovers, he seeks to attain some stature, at least, by excesses of apparent devotion. Lady Charlotte believed herself beloved at last. She was about to strike thirty; and Rumour, stalking with a turban of cloud on her head,—enough that this shocking old celestial dowager, from condemnation had passed to pity of the dashing lady. Beloved at last! After a while there is no question of our loving; but we thirst for love, if we have not had it. The key of Lady Charlotte will come in the course of events. She was at the doubtful hour of her life, a warm-hearted woman, known to be so by few, generally consigned by devout-visaged Scandal (for who save the devout will dare to sit in the chair of judgement?) as a hopeless rebel against conventional laws; and worse than that, far worse,—though what, is not said.

At Stornley the following letter from Emilia hit its mark:—

Dear Mr. Wilfrid,

"It is time for me to see you. Come when you have read this letter. I cannot tell you how I am, because my heart feels beating in another body. Pray come; come now. Come on a swift horse. The thought of you galloping to me goes through me like a flame that hums. You will come, I

know. It is time. If I write foolishly, do forgive me. I can only make sure of the spelling, and I cannot please you on paper, only when I see you."

The signature of 'Emilia Alessandra Belloni' was given with her wonted proud flourish.

Wilfrid stared at the writing. "What! all this time she has been thinking the same thing!" Her constancy did not swim before him in alluring colours. He regarded it as a species of folly. Disgust had left him. The pool of Memory would have had to be stirred to remind him of the pipe-smoke in her hair. "You are sure to please me when you see me?" he murmured. "You are very confident, young lady!" So much had her charm faded. And then he thought kindly of her, and that a meeting would not be good for her, and that she ought to go to Italy and follow her profession. "If she grows famous," whispered coxcombry, "why then oneself will take a little of the praises given to her." And that seemed eminently satisfactory. Men think in this way when you have loved them, ladies. All men? No; only the coxcombs; but it is to these that you give your fresh affection. They are, as it were, the band of the regiment of adorers, marching ahead, while we sober working soldiers follow to their music. "If she grows famous, why then I can bear in mind that her heart was once in my possession: and it may return to its old owner, perchance." Wilfrid indulged in a pleasant little dream of her singing at the Opera-house, and he, tied to a ferocious, detested wife, how softly and luxuriously would he then be sighing for the old time! It was partly good seed in his nature, and an apprehension of her force of soul, that kept him from a thought of evil to her. Passion does not inspire dark appetite. Dainty innocence does, I am told. Things are tested by the emotions they provoke. Wilfrid knew that there was no trifling with Emilia, so he put the letter by, commenting thus "she's right, she doesn't spell badly." Behind, which, to those who have caught the springs of his character, volumes may be seen.

He put the letter by. Two days later, at noon, the card of Captain Gambier was brought to him in the billiard-room,—on it was written: "Miss Belloni waits on horseback to see you." Wilfrid thought "Waits!" and the impossibility of escape gave him a notion of her power.

"So, you are letting that go on," said Lady Charlotte, when she heard that Emilia and the captain were in company.

"There is no fear for her whatever."

"There is always fear when a man gives every minute of his time to that kind of business," retorted her ladyship.

Wilfrid smiled the smile of the knowing. Rivalry with Gambier (and successful too!) did not make Emilia's admiration so tasteless. Some one cries out: "But, what a weak creature is this young man!" I reply, he was at a critical stage of his career. All of us are weak in the period of growth, and are of small worth before the hour of trial. This fellow had been fattening all his life on prosperity; the very best dish in the world; but it does not prove us. It fattens and strengthens us, just as the sun does. Adversity is the inspector of our constitutions; she simply tries our muscle and powers of endurance, and should be a periodical visitor. But, until she comes, no man is known. Wilfrid was not absolutely engaged to Lady Charlotte (she had taken care of that),

and being free, and feeling his heart beat in more lively fashion, he turned almost delightedly to the girl he could not escape from. As when the wriggling eel that has been prodded by the countryman's fork, finds that no amount of wriggling will release it, to it twists in a knot around the imprisoning prong. This simile says more than I mean it to say, but those who understand similes will know the measure due to them.

There sat Emilia on her horse. "Has Gambier been giving her lessons?" thought Wilfrid. She sat up, well-balanced; and, as he approached, began to lean gently forward to him. A greeting 'equal to any lady's,' there was no doubt. This was the point Emilia had to attain, in his severe contemplation. A born lady, on her assured level, stood a chance of becoming a Goddess; but ladyship was Emilia's highest mark. Such is the state of things to the sentimental fancy when girls are at a disadvantage. She smiled, and held out both hands. He gave her one, nodding kindly, but was too confused to be the light-hearted cavalier. Lady Charlotte walked up to her horse's side, after receiving Captain Gambier's salute, and said: "Come, catch hold of my hands and jump."

"No," replied Emilia; "I only came to see him."

"But you will see him, and me in the bargain, if you stay."

"I fancy she has given her word to return early," interposed Wilfrid.

"Then we'll ride back with her," said Lady Charlotte. "Give me five minutes. I'll order a horse out for you."

She smiled, and considerately removed the captain, by despatching him to the stables.

A quivering dimple of tenderness hung for a moment in Emilia's cheeks, as she looked upon Wilfrid. Then she said falteringly, "I think they wish to be as we do."

"Alone?" cried Wilfrid.

"Yes; that is why I brought him over. He will come anywhere with me."

"You must be mistaken."

"No; I know it."

"Did he tell you so?"

"No; Mr. Powys did."

"Told you that Lady Charlotte—"

"Yes. Not, is; but, was. And he used that word... there is no word like it,... he said 'her lover'— Oh! mine!" Emilia lifted her arms. Her voice from its deepest fall had risen to a cry.

Wilfrid caught her as she slipped from her saddle. His heart was in a tumult; stirred both ways: stirred with wrath and with love. He clasped her tightly.

"Am I?—am I?" he breathed.

"My lover!" Emilia murmured.

He was her slave again.

For, here was something absolutely his own. His own from the roots; from the first growth of sensation. Something with the bloom on it: to which no other finger could point and say: "There is my mark."

(And, ladies, if you will consent to be likened to a fruit, you must bear with these observations, and really deserve the stigma. If you will smile on men, because they adore you as vegetable products, take what ensues.)

Lady Charlotte did no more than double the time she had asked for. The party were soon at a quiet canter up the lanes; but entering a broad furzy common with bramble-plots and oak-shaws, the Amazon flew ahead. Emilia's eyes were so taken with her, that she failed to observe a tiny red-flowing runlet in the clay, with yellow-ridged banks almost baked to brick. Over it she was borne, but at the expense of a shaking that caused her to rely on her hold of the reins, ignorant of the notions of a horse outstripped. Wilfrid looked to see that the jump had been accomplished, and was satisfied. Gambier was pressing his hack to keep a respectable second.

Lady Charlotte spun round suddenly, crying, "Catch the mare!" and galloped back to Emilia, who was deposited on a bush of bramble. Dismounting promptly, the lady said: "My child, you're not hurt?"

"Not a bit." Emilia blinked.

"Not frightened?"

"Not a bit," was half whispered.

"That's brave. Now jump on your feet. Tell me why you rode over to us this morning. Quick. Don't hesitate."

"Because I want Wilfrid to see his sister Cornelia," came the answer, with the required absence of indecision.

Emilia ran straightway to meet Wilfrid approaching; and as both her hands, according to her fashion, were stretched out to him to assure him of her safety and take his clasp, forgetful of the instincts derived from riding-habits, her feet became entangled; she trod herself down, falling plump forward and looking foolish—perhaps for the first time in her life plainly feeling so.

"Up! little woman," said Lady Charlotte, supporting her elbow.

"Now, Sir Wilfrid, we part here; and don't spoil her courage, now she has had a spill, by any 'assiduous attentions' and precautions. She's sure to take as many as are needed. If Captain Gambler thinks I require an escort, he may offer."

The captain, taken by surprise, bowed, and flowed in ardent commonplace. Wilfrid did not look of a wholesome colour.

"Do you return?" he stammered; not without a certain aspect of righteous reproach.

"Yes. You will ride over to us again, probably, in a day or two? Captain Gambler will see me safe from the savage admirers that crowd this country, if I interpreted him rightly."

Emilia was lifted to her seat. Lady Charlotte sprang unassisted to hers. "Ta-ta!" she waved her fingers from her lips. The pairs then separated; one couple turning into green lanes, the other dipping to blue hills.

CHAPTER XIX

Gossip of course was excited on the subject of the choice of a partner made by the member for the county. Cornelia placed her sisters in one of their most pleasing of difficulties. She had not as yet pledged her word. It was supposed that she considered it due to herself to withhold her word for a term. The rumour in the family was, that Sir Twickenham appreciated her hesitation, and desired that he might be intimately known before he was finally accepted. When the Tinleys called, they heard that Cornelia's acceptance of the baronet was doubtful. The Copleys, on the other hand, distinctly understood that she had decided in his favour. Owing to the amiable dissension between the Copleys and the Tinleys, each party called again; giving the ladies of Brookfield further opportunity for studying one of the levels from which they had risen. Arabella did almost all the fencing with Laura Tinley, contemptuously as a youth of station returned from college will turn and foil an ill-conditioned villager, whom formerly he has encountered on the green.

"Had they often met, previous to the... the proposal?" inquired Laura; and laughed: "I was going to say 'popping.'"

"Pray do not check yourself, if a phrase appears to suit you," returned Arabella.

"But it was in the neighbourhood, was it not?"

"They have met in the neighbourhood."

"At Richford?"

"Also at Richford."

"We thought it was sudden, dear; that's all."

"Why should it not be?"

"Perhaps the best things are, it is true."

"You congratulate us upon a benefit?"

"He is to be congratulated seriously. Naturally. When she decides, let me know early, I do entreat you, because... well, I am of a different opinion from some people, who talk of another attachment, or engagement, and I do not believe in it, and have said so."

Rising to depart, Laura Tinley resumed: "Most singular! You are aware, of course, that poor creature, our organist—I ought to say yours—who looked (it was Mr. Sumner I heard say it—such a good thing!) as if he had been a gentleman in another world, and was the ghost of one in this: really one of the cleverest things! but he is clever!—Barrett's his name: Barrett and some: musical name before it, like Handel. I mean one that we are used to. Well, the man has totally and unexpectedly thrown up his situation."

"His appointment," said Arabella. Permitting no surprise to be visible, she paused: "Yes. I don't think we shall give our consent to her filling the post."

Laura let it be seen that her adversary was here a sentence too quick for her.

"Ah! you mean your little Miss Belloni?"

"Was it not of her you were thinking?"

"When?" asked Laura, shamefully bewildered.

"When you alluded to Mr. Barrett's vacant place."

"Not at the moment."

"I thought you must be pointing to her advancement."

"I confess it was not in my mind."

"In what consisted the singularity, then?"

"The singularity?"

"You prefaced your remarks with the exclamation, 'Singular!'"

Laura showed that Arabella had passed her guard. She hastened to compliment her on her kindness to Emilia, and so sheathed her weapon for the time, having just enjoyed a casual inspection of Mrs. Chump entering the room, and heard the brogue an instant.

"Irish!" she whispered, smiling, with a sort of astonished discernment of the nationality, and swept through the doorway: thus conveying forcibly to Arabella her knowledge of what the ladies of Brookfield were enduring: a fine Parthian shot.

That Cornelia should hold a notable county man, a baronet and owner of great acres, in a state between acceptance and rejection, was considered high policy by the ladies, whom the idea of it elevated; and they encouraged her to pursue this course, without having a suspicion, shrewd as they were, that it was followed for any other object than the honour of the family. But Mr. Pole was in the utmost perplexity, and spoke of baronets as things almost holy, to be kneeled to, prayed for. He was profane. "I thought, papa," said Cornelia, "that women conferred the favour when they gave their hands!"

It was a new light to the plain merchant. "How should you say if a Prince came and asked for you?"

"Still that he asked a favour at my hands."

"Oh!" went Mr. Pole, in the voice of a man whose reason is outraged. The placidity of Cornelia's reply was not without its effect on him, nevertheless. He had always thought his girls extraordinary girls, and born to be distinguished. "Perhaps she has a lord in view," he concluded: it being his constant delusion to suppose that high towering female sense has always a practical aim at a material thing. He was no judge of the sex in its youth. "Just speak to her," he said to Wilfrid.

Wilfrid had heard from Emilia that there was a tragic background to this outward placidity; tears on the pillow at night and long vigils. Emilia had surprised her weeping, and though she obtained no confidences, the soft mood was so strong in the stately lady, that she consented to weep on while Emilia clasped her. Petitioning on her behalf to Wilfrid for aid, Emilia had told him the scene; and he, with a man's stupidity, alluded to it, not thinking what his knowledge of it revealed to a woman.

"Why do you vacillate, and keep us all in the dark as to what you mean?" he began.

"I am not prepared," said Cornelia; the voice of humility issuing from a monument.

"One of your oracular phrases! Are you prepared to be straightforward in your dealings?"

"I am prepared for any sacrifice, Wilfrid."

"The marrying of a man in his position is a sacrifice!"

"I cannot leave papa."

"And why not?"

"He is ill. He does not speak of it, but he is ill. His actions are strange. They are unaccountable."

"He has an old friend to reside in his house?"

"It is not that. I have noticed him. His mind...he requires watching."

"And how long is it since you made this discovery?"

"One sees clearer perhaps when one is not quite happy."

"Not happy! Then it's for him that you turn the night to tears?"

Cornelia closed her lips. She divined that her betrayer must be close in his confidence. She went shortly after to Emilia, whose secret at once stood out bare to a kindled suspicion. There was no fear that Cornelia would put her finger on it accusingly, or speak of it directly. She had the sentimentalist's profound respect for the name and notion of love. She addressed Emilia vaguely, bidding her keep guard on her emotions, and telling her there was one test of the truth of masculine protestations; this, Will he marry you? The which, if you are poor, is a passably infallible test. Emilia sucked this in thoughtfully. She heard that lovers were false. Why, then of course they were not like her lover! Cornelia finished what she deemed her duty, and departed, while Emilia thought: "I wonder whether he could be false to me;" and she gave herself shrewd half-delicious jarrings of pain, forcing herself to contemplate the impossible thing.

She was in this state when Mrs. Chump came across her, and with a slight pressure of a sovereign into her hand, said: "There, it's for you, little Belloni! and I see ye've been thinkin' me one o' the scrape-hards and close-fists. It's Pole who keeps me low, on purpose. And I'm a wretch if I haven't my purse full, so you see I'm all in the dark in the house, and don't know half so much as the sluts o' the kitchen. So, ye'll tell me, little Belloni, is Arr'bella goin' to marry Mr. Annybody? And is Cornelia goin' to marry Sir Tickleham? And whether Mr. Wilfrud's goin' to marry Lady Charlotte Chill'nworth? Becas, my dear, there's Arr'bella, who's sharp, she is, as a North-easter in January, (which Chump 'd cry out for, for the sake of his ships, poor fella—he kneelin' by 's bedside in a long nightgown and lookin' just twice what he was!) she has me like a nail to my vary words, and shows me that nothin' can happen betas o' what I've said. And Cornelia—if ye'll fancy a tall codfish on its tail: 'Mrs. Chump, I beg ye'll not go to believe annything of me.' So I says to her, 'Cornelia! my dear! do ye think, now, it's true that Chump went and marrud his cook, that ye treat me so? becas my father,' I tell her, 'he dealt in porrk in a large way, and I was a fine woman, full of the arr'stocracy, and Chump a little puffed-out bladder of a man.' So then she says: 'Mrs. Chump, I listen to no gossup: listen you to no gossup. 'And Mr. Wilfrud, my dear, he sends me on the flat o' my back, laughin'. And Ad'la she takes and turns me

right about, so that I don't see the thing I'm askin' after; and there's nobody but you, little Belloni, to help me, and if ye do, ye shall know what the crumple of paper sounds like."

Mrs. Chump gave a sugary suck with her tongue. Emilia returned the money to her.

"Ye're foolush!" said Mrs. Chump. "A shut fist's good in fight and bad in friendship. Do ye know that? Open your hand."

"Excuse me," persisted Emilia.

"Pooh! take the money, or I'll say ye're in a conspiracy to make me blindman's-buff of the parrrty. Take ut."

"I don't want it."

"Maybe, it's not enough?"

"I don't want any, ma'am."

"Ma'am, to the deuce with ye! I'll be callin' ye a forr'ner in a minute, I will."

Emilia walked away from a volley of terrific threats.

For some reason, unfathomed by her, she wanted to be alone with Wilfrid and put a question to him. No other, in sooth, than the infallible test. Not, mind you, that she wished to be married. But something she had heard (she had forgotten what it was) disturbed her, and that recent trifling with pain, in her excess of happiness, laid her open to it. Her heart was weaker, and fluttered, as if with a broken wing. She thought, "if I can be near him to lean against him for one full hour!" it would make her strong again. For, she found that if her heart was rising on a broad breath, suddenly, for no reason that she knew, it seemed to stop in its rise, break, and sink, like a wind-beaten billow. Once or twice, in a quick fear, she thought: "What is this? Is this a malady coming before death?" She walked out gloomily, thinking of the darkness of the world to Wilfrid, if she should die. She plucked flowers, and then reproached herself with plucking them. She tried to sing. "No, not till I have been with him alone;" she said, chiding her voice to silence. A shadow crossed her mind, as a Spring-mist dulls the glory of May. "Suppose all singing has gone from me—will he love wretched me?"

By-and-by she met him in the house. "Come out of doors to-night," she whispered.

Wilfrid's spirit of intrigue was never to be taken by surprise. "In the wood, under the pine, at nine," he replied.

"Not there," said Emilia, seeing this place mournfully dark from Cornelia's grief. "It is too still; say, where there's water falling. One can't be unhappy by noisy water."

Wilfrid considered, and named Wilming Weir. "And there we'll sit and you'll sing to me. I won't dine at home, so they won't susp-a-fancy anything.—Soh! and you want very much to be with me, my bird? What am I?" He bent his head.

"My lover."

He pressed her hand rapturously, half-doubting whether her pronunciation of the word had not a rather too confident twang.

Was it not delightful, he asked her, that they should be thus one to the other, and none know of it. She thought so too, and smiled happily, promising secrecy, at his request; for the sake of continuing so felicitous a life.

"You, you know, have an appointment with Captain Gambier, and, I with Lady Charlotte Chillingworth," said he. "How dare you make appointments with a captain of hussars?" and he bent her knuckles fondly.

Emilia smiled as before. He left her with a distinct impression that she did not comprehend that part of her lesson.

Wilfrid had just bled his father of a considerable sum of money; having assured him that he was the accepted suitor of Lady Charlotte Chillingworth, besides making himself pleasant in allusion to Mrs. Chump, so far as to cast some imputation on his sisters' judgement for not perceiving the virtues of the widow. The sum was improvidently large. Mr. Pole did not hear aright when he heard it named. Even at the repetition, he went: "Eh?" two or three times, vacantly. The amount was distinctly nailed to his ear: whereupon he said, "Ah!—yes! you young fellows want money: must have it, I suppose. Up from the bowels of the earth Up from the—: you're sure they're not playing the fool with you, over there?"

Wilfrid understood the indication to Stornley. "I think you need have no fear of that, sir." And so his father thought, after an examination of the youth, who was of manly shape, and had a fresh, non-fatuous, air.

"Well, if that's all right..." sighed Mr. Pole. "Of course you'll always know that money's money. I wish your sisters wouldn't lose their time, as they do. Time's worth more than money. What sum?"

"I told you, sir, I wanted—there's the yacht, you know, and a lot of tradesmen's bills, which you don't like to see standing:—about—perhaps I had better name the round sum. Suppose you write down eight hundred. I shan't want more for some months. If you fancy it too much..."

Mr. Pole had lifted his head. But he spoke nothing. His lips and brows were rigid in apparent calculation. Wilfrid kept his position for a minute or so; and then, a little piqued, he moved about. He had inherited the antipathy to the discussion of the money question, and fretted to find it unnecessarily prolonged.

"Shall I come to you on this business another time, sir?"

"No, God bless my soul!" cried his father; "are you going to keep this hanging over me for ever? Eight hundred, you said." He mumbled: "salary of a chief clerk of twenty years' standing. Eight: twice four:—there you have it exactly."

"Will you send it me in a letter?" said Wilfrid, out of patience.

"I'll send it you in a letter," assented his father. Upon which Wilfrid changed his mind. "I can take a chair, though. I can easily wait for it now."

"Save trouble, if I send it. Eh?"

"Do you wish to see whether you can afford it, sir?"

"I wish to see you show more sense—with your confounded 'afford.' Have you any idea of bankers' books?—bankers' accounts?" Mr. Pole fished his cheque-book from a drawer and wrote Wilfrid's name and the sum, tore out the leaf and tossed it to him. "There, I've written to-day. Don't present it for a week." He rubbed his forehead hastily, touching here and there a paper to put it scrupulously in a line with the others. Wilfrid left him, and thought: "Kind old boy! Of course, he always means kindly, but I think I see a glimpse of avarice as a sort of a sign of age coming on. I hope he'll live long!"

Wilfrid was walking in the garden, imagining perhaps that he was thinking, as the swarming sensations of little people help them to imagine, when Cornelia ran hurriedly up to him and said: "Come with me to papa. He's ill: I fear he is going to have a fit."

"I left him sound and well, just now," said Wilfrid. "This is your mania."

"I found him gasping in his chair not two minutes after you quitted him. Dearest, he is in a dangerous state!"

Wilfrid stepped back to his father, and was saluted with a ready "Well?" as he entered; but the mask had slipped from half of the old man's face, and for the first time in his life Wilfrid perceived that he had become an old man.

"Well, sir, you sent for me?" he said.

"Girls always try to persuade you you're ill—that's all," returned Mr. Pole. His voice was subdued; but turning to Cornelia, he fired up: "It's preposterous to tell a man who carries on a business like mine, you've observed for a long while that he's queer!—There, my dear child, I know that you mean well. I shall look all right the day you're married."

This allusion, and the sudden kindness, drew a storm of tears to Cornelia's eyelids.

"Papa! if you will but tell me what it is!" she moaned.

A nervous frenzy seemed to take possession of him. He ordered her out of the room.

She was gone, but his arm was still stretched out, and his expression of irritated command did not subside.

Wilfrid took his arm and put it gently down on the chair, saying: "You're not quite the thing to-day, sir."

"Are you a fool as well?" Mr. Pole retorted. "What do you know of, to make me ill? I live a regular life. I eat and drink just as you all do; and if I have a headache, I'm stunned with a whole family screaming as hard as they can that I'm going to die. Damned hard! I say, sir, it's—" He fell into a feebleness.

"A little glass of brandy, I think," Wilfrid suggested; and when Mr. Pole had gathered his mind he assented, begging his son particularly to take precautions to prevent any one from entering the room until he had tasted the reviving liquor.

CHAPTER XX

A half-circle of high-banked greensward, studded with old park-trees, hung round the roar of the water; distant enough from the white-twisting fall to be mirrored on a smooth-heaved surface, while its out-pushing brushwood below drooped under burdens of drowned reed-flags that caught the foam. Keen scent of hay, crossing the dark air, met Emilia as she entered the river-meadow. A little more, and she saw the white weir-piles shining, and the grey roller just beginning to glisten to the moon. Eastward on her left, behind a cedar, the moon had cast off a thick cloud, and shone through the cedar-bars with a yellowish hazy softness, making rosy gold of the first passion of the tide, which, writhing and straining on through many lights, grew wide upon the wonderful velvet darkness underlying the wooded banks. With the full force of a young soul that leaps from beauty seen to unimagined beauty, Emilia stood and watched the picture. Then she sat down, hushed, awaiting her lover.

Wilfrid, as it chanced, was ten minutes late. She did not hear his voice till he had sunk on his knee by her side.

"What a reverie!" he said half jealously. "Isn't it lovely here?"

Emilia pressed his hand, but without turning her face to him, as her habit was. He took it for shyness, and encouraged her with soft exclamations and expansive tenderness.

"I wish I had not come here!" she murmured.

"Tell me why?" He folded his arm about her waist.

"Why did you let me wait?" said she.

Wilfrid drew out his watch; blamed the accident that had detained him, and remarked that there were not many minutes to witness against him.

She appeared to throw off her moodiness. "You are here at last. Let me hold your hand, and think, and be quite silent."

"You shall hold my hand, and think, and be quite silent, my own girl! if you will tell me what's on your mind."

Emilia thought it enough to look in his face, smiling.

"Has any one annoyed you?" he cried out.

"No one."

"Then receive the command of your lord, that you kiss him."

"I will kiss him," said Emilia; and did so.

The salute might have appeased an imperious lord, but was not so satisfactory to an exacting lover. He perceived, however, that, whether as lover or as lord, he must wait for her now, owing to her having waited for him: so, he sat by her, permitting his hand to be softly squeezed, and trying to get at least in the track of her ideas, while her ear was turned to the weir, and her eyes were on the glowing edges of the cedar-tree.

Finally, on one of many deep breaths, she said: "It's over. Why were you late? But, never mind now. Never let it be long again when I am expecting you. It's then I feel so much at his mercy. I mean, if I am where I hear falling water; sometimes thunder."

Wilfrid masked his complete mystification with a caressing smile; not without a growing respect for the only person who could make him experience the pangs of conscious silliness. You see, he was not a coxcomb.

"That German!" Emilia enlightened him.

"Your old music-master?"

"I wish it, I wish it! I should soon be free from him. Don't you know that dreadful man I told you about, who's like a black angel to me, because there is no music like his? and he's a German! I told you how I first dreamed about him, and then regularly every night, after talking with my father about Italy and his black-yellow Tedeschi, this man came over my pillow and made me call him Master, Master. And he is. He seems as if he were the master of my soul, mocking me,

making me worship him in spite of my hate. I came here, thinking only of you. I heard the water like a great symphony. I fell into dreaming of my music. That's when I am at his mercy. There's no one like him. I must detest music to get free from him. How can I? He is like the God of music."

Wilfrid now remembered certain of her allusions to this rival, who had hitherto touched him very little. Perhaps it was partly the lovely scene that lifted him to a spiritual jealousy, partly his susceptibility to a sentimental exaggeration, and partly the mysterious new charm in Emilia's manner, that was as a bordering lustre, showing how the full orb was rising behind her.

"His name?" Wilfrid asked for.

Emilia's lips broke to the second letter of the alphabet; but she cut short the word. "Why should you hear it? And now that you are here, you drive him away. And the best is," she laughed, "I am sure you will not remember any of his pieces. I wish I could not—not that it's the memory; but he seems all round me, up in the air, and when the trees move all together...you chase him away, my lover!"

It was like a break in music, the way that Emilia suddenly closed her sentence; coming with a shock of flattering surprise upon Wilfrid.

Then she pursued: "My English lover! I am like Italy, in chains to that German, and you...but no, no, no! It's not quite a likeness, for my German is not a brute. I have seen his picture in shop-windows: the wind seemed in his hair, and he seemed to hear with his eyes: his forehead frowning so. Look at me, and see. So!"

Emilia pressed up the hair from her temples and bent her brows.

"It does not increase your beauty," said Wilfrid.

"There's the difference!" Emilia sighed mildly. "He sees angels, cherubs, and fairies, and imps, and devils; or he hears them: they come before him from far off, in music. They do to me, now and then. Only now and then, when my head's on fire.—My lover!"

Wilfrid pressed his mouth to the sweet instrument. She took his kiss fully, and gave her own frankly, in return. Then, sighing a very little, she said: "Do not kiss me much."

"Why not?"

"No!"

"But, look at me."

"I will look at you. Only take my hand. See the moon is getting whiter. The water there is like a pool of snakes, and then they struggle out, and roll over and over, and stream on lengthwise. I

can see their long flat heads, and their eyes: almost their skins. No, my lover! do not kiss me. I lose my peace."

Wilfrid was not willing to relinquish his advantage, and the tender deep tone of the remonstrance was most musical and catching. What if he pulled her to earth from that rival of his in her soul? She would then be wholly his own. His lover's sentiment had grown rageingly jealous of the lordly German. But Emilia said, "I have you on my heart more when I touch your hand only, and think. If you kiss me, I go into a cloud, and lose your face in my mind."

"Yes, yes;" replied Wilfrid, pleased to sustain the argument for the sake of its fruitful promises. "But you must submit to be kissed, my darling. You will have to."

She gazed inquiringly.

"When you are married, I mean."

"When will you marry me?" she said.

The heir-apparent of the house of Pole blinked probably at that moment more foolishly than most mortal men have done. Taming his astonishment to represent a smile, he remarked: "When? are you thinking about it already?"

She answered, in a quiet voice that conveyed the fact forcibly, "Yes."

"But you're too young yet; and you're going to Italy, to learn in the schools. You wouldn't take a husband there with you, would you? What would the poor devil do?"

"But you are not too young," said she.

Wilfrid supposed not.

"Could you not go to my Italy with me?"

"Impossible! What! as a dangling husband?" Wilfrid laughed scornfully.

"They would love you too," she said. "They are such loving people. Oh, come! Consent to come, my lover! I must learn. If I do not, you will despise me. How can I bring anything to lay at your feet, my dear! my dear! if I do not?"

"Impossible!" Wilfrid reiterated, as one who had found moorings in the word.

"Then I will give up Italy!"

He had not previously acted hypocrite with this amazing girl. Nevertheless, it became difficult not to do so. He could scarcely believe that he had on a sudden, and by strange agency, slipped into an earnest situation. Emilia's attitude and tone awakened him to see it. Her hands were

clenched straight down from the shoulders: all that she conceived herself to be renouncing for his sake was expressed in her face.

"Would you, really?" he murmured.

"I will!"

"And be English altogether?"

"Be yours!"

"Mine?"

"Yes; from this time."

Now stirred his better nature: though not before had he sceptically touched her lips and found them cold, as if the fire had been taken out of them by what they had uttered. He felt that it was no animal love, but the force of a soul drawn to him; and, forgetting the hypocritical foundation he had laid, he said: "How proud I shall be of you!"

"I shall go with you to battle," returned Emilia.

"My little darling! You won't care to see those black fellows killed, will you?"

Emilia shuddered. "No; poor things! Why do you hurt them? Kill wicked people, tyrant white-coats! And we will not talk of killing now. Proud of me? If I can make you!"

"You sigh so heavily!"

"Something makes me feel like a little beggar."

"When I tell you I love you?"

"Yes; but I only feel rich when I am giving; and I seem to have nothing to give now:—now that I have lost Italy!"

"But you give me your love, don't you?"

"All of it. But I seem to give it to you in tatters it's like a beggar; like a day without any sun."

"Do you think I shall have that idea when I hear you sing to me, and know that this little leaping fountain of music here is mine?"

Dim rays of a thought led Emilia to remark, "Must not men keel to women? I mean, if they are to love them for ever?"

Wilfrid smiled gallantly: "I will kneel to you, if it pleases you."

"Not now. You should have done so, once, I dreamed only once, just for a moment, in Italy; when all were crying out to me that I had caught their hearts. I fancied standing out like a bright thing in a dark crowd, and then saying 'I am his!' pointing to you, and folding my arms, waiting for you to take me."

The lover's imagination fired at the picture, and immediately he told a lover's lie; for the emotion excited by the thought of her glory coloured deliciously that image of her abnegation of all to him. He said: "I would rather have you as you are."

Emilia leaned to him more, and the pair fixed their eyes on the moon, that had now topped the cedar, and was pure silver: silver on the grass, on the leafage, on the waters. And in the West, facing it, was an arch of twilight and tremulous rose; as if a spirit hung there over the shrouded sun.

"At least," thought Wilfrid, "heaven, and the beauty of the world, approve my choice." And he looked up, fancying that he had a courage almost serene to meet his kindred with Emilia on his arm.

She felt his arm dreamily stressing its clasp about her, and said: "Now I know you love me. And you shall take me as I am. I need not be so poor after all. My dear! my dear! I cannot see beyond you."

"Is that your misery?" said he.

"My delight! my pleasure! One can live a life anywhere. And how can I belong to Italy, if I am yours? Do you know, when we were silent just now, I was thinking that water was the history of the world flowing out before me, all mixed up of kings and queens, and warriors with armour, and shouting armies; battles and numbers of mixed people; and great red sunsets, with women kneeling under them. Do you know those long low sunsets? I love them. They look like blood spilt for love. The noise of the water, and the moist green smell, gave me hundreds of pictures that seemed to hug me. I thought—what could stir music in me more than this? and, am I not just as rich if I stay here with my lover, instead of flying to strange countries, that I shall not care for now? So, you shall take me as I am. I do not feel poor any longer."

With that she gave him both her hands.

"Yes," said Wilfrid.

As if struck by the ridicule of so feeble a note, falling upon her passionate speech, he followed it up with the "yes!" of a man; adding: "Whatever you are, you are my dear girl; my own love; mine!"

Having said it, he was screwed up to feel it as nearly as possible, such virtue is there in uttered words.

Then he set about resolutely studying to appreciate her in the new character she had assumed to him. It is barely to be supposed that he should understand what in her love for him she sacrificed in giving up Italy, as she phrased it. He had some little notion of the sacrifice; but, as he did not demand any sacrifice of the sort, and as this involved a question perplexing, irritating, absurd, he did not regard it very favourably. As mistress of his fancy, her prospective musical triumphs were the crown of gold hanging over her. As wife of his bosom, they were not to be thought of. But the wife of his bosom must take her place by virtue of some wondrous charm. What was it that Emilia could show, if not music? Beautiful eyebrows: thick rare eyebrows, no doubt couched upon her full eyes, they were a marvel: and her eyes were a marvel. She had a sweet mouth, too, though the upper lip did not boast the aristocratic conventional curve of adorable pride, or the under lip a pretty droop to a petty rounded chin. Her face was like the aftersunset across a rose-garden, with the wings of an eagle poised outspread on the light. Some such coloured, vague, magnified impression Wilfrid took of her. Still, it was not quite enough to make him scorn contempt, should it whisper: nor even quite enough to combat successfully the image of elegant dames in their chosen attitudes—the queenly moments when perhaps they enter an assembly, or pour out tea with an exquisite exhibition of arm, or recline upon a couch, commanding homage of the world of little men. What else had this girl to count upon to make her exclusive? A devoted heart; she had a loyal heart, and perfect frankness: a mind impressible, intelligent, and fresh. She gave promise of fair companionship at all seasons. She could put a spell upon him, moreover. By that power of hers, never wilfully exercised, she came, in spite of the effect left on him by her early awkwardnesses and 'animalities,' nearer to his idea of superhuman nature than anything he knew of. But how would she be regarded when the announcement of Mrs. Wilfrid Pole brought scrutinizing eyes and gossiping mouths to bear on her?

It mattered nothing. He kissed her, and the vision of the critical world faded to a blank. Whatever she was, he was her prime luminary, so he determined to think that he cast light upon a precious, an unrivalled land.

"You are my own, are you not, Emilia?"

"Yes; I am," she answered.

"That water seems to say 'for ever,'" he murmured; and Emilia's fingers pressed upon his.

Of marriage there was no further word. Her heart was evidently quite at ease; and that it should be so without chaining him to a date, was Wilfrid's peculiar desire. He could pledge himself to eternity, but shrank from being bound to eleven o'clock on the morrow morning.

So, now, the soft Summer hours flew like white doves from off the mounting moon, and the lovers turned to go, all being still: even the noise of the waters still to their ears, as life that is muffled in sleep. They saw the cedar grey-edged under the moon: and Night, that clung like a bat beneath its ancient open palms. The bordering sward about the falls shone silvery. In its shadow was a swan. These scenes are but beckoning hands to the hearts of lovers, waving them on to that Eden which they claim: but when the hour has fled, they know it; and by the palpitating light in it they know that it holds the best of them.

CHAPTER XXI

At this season Mr. Pericles reappeared. He had been, he said, through "Paris, Turin, Milano, Veniss, and by Trieste over the Summering to Vienna on a tour for a voice." And in no part of the Continent, his vehement declaration assured the ladies, had he found a single one. It was one universal croak—ahi! And Mr. Pericles could, affirm that Purgatory would have no pains for him after the torments he had recently endured. "Zey are frogs if zey are not geese," said Mr. Pericles. "I give up. Opera is dead. Hein? for a time;" and he smiled almost graciously, adding: "Where is she?" For Emilia was not present.

The ladies now perceived a greatness of mind in the Greek's devotion to music, and in his non-mercenary travels to assist managers of Opera by discovering genius. His scheme for Emilia fired them with delight. They were about to lay down all the material arrangements at once, but Mrs. Chump, who had heard that there was a new man in the house, now entered the room, prepared to conquer him. As thus, after a short form of introduction: "D'ye do, sir! and ye're Mr. Paricles. Oh! but ye're a Sultan, they say. Not in morr'ls, sir. And vary pleasant to wander on the Cont'nent with a lot o' lacqueys at your heels. It's what a bachelor can do. But I ask ye, sir, is ut fair, ye think, to the poor garls that has to stop at home?"

Hereat the ladies of Brookfield, thus miserably indicated, drew upon their self-command that sprang from the high sense of martyrdom.

Mr. Pericles did not reply to Mrs. Chump at all. He turned to Adela, saying aloud: "What is zis person?"

It might have pleased them to hear any slight put publicly on Mrs. Chump in the first resistance to the woman, but in the present stage their pride defended her. "Our friend," was the reply with which Arabella rebuked his rudeness; and her sister approved her. "We can avoid showing that we are weak in our own opinion, whatsoever degrades us," they had said during a consultation. Simultaneously they felt that Mr. Pericles being simply a millionaire and not In Society, being also a middle-class foreigner (a Greek whose fathers ran with naked heels and long lank hair on the shores of the Aegean), before such a man they might venture to identify this their guest with themselves an undoubted duty, in any case, but not always to be done; at least, not with grace and personal satisfaction. Therefore, the "our friend" dispersed a common gratulatory glow. Very small points, my masters; but how are coral-islands built?

Mrs. Chump fanned her cheek, in complete ignorance of the offence and defence. Chump, deceased, in amorous mood, had praised her management of the fan once, when breath was in him: "'Martha,' says he, winkin' a sort of 'mavourneen' at me, ye know—'Martha! with a fan in your hand, if ye're not a black-eyed beauty of a Spaniard, ye little devil of Seville!' says he." This

she had occasionally confided to the ladies. The marital eulogy had touched her, and she was not a woman of coldly-flowing blood, she had an excuse for the constant employment of the fan.

"And well, Mr. Pericles! have ye got nothin' to tell us about foreign countesses and their slips? Because, we can listen, sir, garls or not. Sure, if they understand ye, ye teach 'em nothin'; and if they don't understand ye, where's the harm done? D'ye see, sir? It's clear in favour of talkin'."

Mr. Pericles administered consolation to his moustache by twisting it into long waxy points. "I do not know; I do not know," he put her away with, from time to time. In the end Mrs. Chump leaned over to Arabella. "Don't have 'm, my dear," she murmured.

"You mean—?" quoth Arabella.

"Here's the driest stick that ever stood without sap."

Arabella flushed when she took the implication that she was looking on the man as a husband. Adela heard the remarks, and flushed likewise. Mrs. Chump eyed them both. "It's for the money o' the man," she soliloquized aloud, as her fashion was. Adela jumped up, and with an easy sprightly posture of her fair, commonly studious person, and natural run of notes "Oh!" she cried, "I begin to feel what it is to be like a live fish on the fire, frying, frying, frying! and if he can keep his Christian sentiments under this infliction, what a wonderful hero he must be! What a hot day!"

She moved swiftly to the door, and flung it open. A sight met her eyes at which she lost her self-possession. She started back, uttering a soft cry.

"Ah! aha! oh!" went the bitter ironic drawl of Mr. Pericles, whose sharp glance had caught the scene as well.

Emilia came forward with a face like sunset. Diplomacy, under the form of Wilfrid Pole, kicked its heels behind, and said a word or two in a tone of false cheerfulness.

"Oh! so!" Mr. Pericles frowned, while Emilia held her hand out to him. "Yeas! You are quite well? H'm! You are burnt like a bean—hein? I shall ask you what you have been doing, by and by."

Happily for decency, Mrs. Chump had not participated in the fact presented by ocular demonstration. She turned about comfortably to greet Wilfrid, uttering the inspired remark: "Ye look red from a sly kiss!"

"For one?" said he, sharpening his blunted wits on this dull instrument.

The ladies talked down their talk. Then Wilfrid and Mr. Pericles interchanged quasi bows.

"Oh, if he doesn't show his upper teeth like an angry cat, or a leopard I've seen!" cried Mrs. Chump in Adela's ear, designating Mr. Pericles. "Does he know Mr. Wilfrud's in the British army, and a new lieuten't, gazetted and all?"

Mr. Pericles certainly did not look pleasantly upon Wilfrid: Emilia received his unconcealed wrath and spite.

"Go and sing a note!" he said.

"At the piano?" Emilia quietly asked.

"At piano, harp, what you will—it is ze voice I want."

Emilia pitched her note high from a full chest and with glad bright eyes, which her fair critics thought just one degree brazen, after the revelation in the doorway.

Mr. Pericles listened; wearing an aching expression, as if he were sending one eye to look up into his brain for a judgement disputed in that sovereign seat.

Still she held on, and then gave a tremulous, rich, contralto note.

"Oh! the human voice!" cried Adela, overcome by the transition of tones.

"Like going from the nightingale to the nightjar," said Arabella.

Mrs. Chump remarked: "Ye'll not find a more susceptible woman to musuc than me."

Wilfrid looked away. Pride coursed through his veins in a torrent.

When the voice was still, Mr. Pericles remained in a pondering posture.

"You go to play fool with zat voice in Milano, you are flogged," he cried terribly, shaking his forefinger.

Wilfrid faced round in wrath, but Mr. Pericles would not meet his challenge, continuing: "You hear? you hear?—so!" and Mr. Pericles brought the palms of his hands in collision.

"Marcy, man!" Mrs. Chump leaped from her chair; "d'ye mean that those horrud forr'ners'll smack a full-grown young woman?—Don't go to 'm, my dear. Now, take my 'dvice, little Belloni, and don't go. It isn't the sting o' the smack, ye know—"

"Shall I sing anything to you?" Emilia addressed Mr. Pericles. The latter shrugged to express indifference. Nevertheless she sang. She had never sung better. Mr. Pericles clutched his chin in one hand, elbow on knee. The ladies sighed to think of the loss of homage occasioned by the fact of so few being present to hear her. Wilfrid knew himself the fountain of it all, and stood fountain-like, in a shower of secret adulation: a really happy fellow. This: that his beloved should

be the centre of eyes, and pronounced exquisite by general approbation, besides subjecting him to a personal spell: this was what he wanted. It was mournful to think that Circumstance had not at the same time created the girl of noble birth, or with an instinct for spiritual elegance. But the world is imperfect.

Presently he became aware that she was understood to be singing pointedly to him: upon which he dismissed the council of his sensations, and began to diplomatize cleverly. Leaning over to Adela, he whispered:

"Pericles wants her to go to Italy. My belief is, that she won't."

"And why?" returned Adela, archly reproachful.

"Well, we've been spoiling her a little, perhaps. I mean, we men, of course. But, I really don't think that I'm chiefly to blame. You won't allow Captain Gambier to be in fault, I know."

"Why not?" said Adela.

"Well, if you will, then he is the principal offender."

Adela acted disbelief; but, unprepared for her brother's perfectly feminine audacity of dissimulation, she thought: "He can't be in earnest about the girl," and was led to fancy that Gambier might, and to determine to see whether it was so.

By this manoeuvre, Wilfrid prepared for himself a defender when the charge was brought against him.

Mr. Pericles was thunderstruck on hearing Emilia refuse to go to Italy. A scene of tragic denunciation on the one hand, and stubborn decision on the other, ensued.

"I shall not mind zis" (he spoke of Love and the awakening of the female heart) "not when you are trained. It is good, zen, and you have fire from it. But, now! little fool, I say, it is too airy—too airy! How shall you learn—eh? with your brain upon a man? And your voice, little fool, a thing of caprice, zat comes and goes as he will, not you will. Hein? like a barrel-organ, which he turns ze handle.—Mon Dieu! Why did I leave her?" Mr. Pericles struck his brow with his wrist, clutching at the long thin slice of hair that did greasy duty for the departed crop on his poll. "Did I not know it was a woman? And so you are, what you say, in lofe."

Emilia replied: "I have not said so," with exasperating coolness.

"You have your eye on a man. And I know him, zat man! When he is tired of you—whiff, away you go, a puff of smoke! And you zat I should make a Queen of Opera! A Queen? You shall have more rule zan twenty Queens—forty! See" (Mr. Pericles made his hand go like an aspen-leaf from his uplifted wrist); "So you shall set ze hearts of sossands! To dream of you, to adore you! and flowers, flowers everywhere, on your head, at your feet. You choose your lofer from ze world. A husband, if it is your taste. Bose, if you please. Zen, I say, you shall, you shall lofe a

man. Let him tease and sting—ah! it will be magnifique: Aha! ze voice will sharpen, go deep; yeas! to be a tale of blood. Lofe till you could stab yourself:—Brava! But now? Little fool, I say!"

Emilia believed that she was verily forfeiting an empire. Her face wore a soft look of delight. This renunciation of a splendid destiny for Wilfrid's sake, seemed to make her worthier of him, and as Mr. Pericles unrolled the list of her rejected treasures, her bosom heaved without a regret.

"Ha!" Mr. Pericles flung away from her: "go and be a little gutter-girl!"

The musical connoisseur drew on his own disappointment alone for eloquence. Had he been thinking of her, he might have touched cunningly on her love for Italy. Music was the passion of the man; and a millionaire's passion is something that can make a stir. He knew that in Emilia he had discovered a pearl of song rarely to be found, and his object was to polish and perfect her at all cost: perhaps, as a secondary and far removed consideration, to point to her as a thing belonging to him, for which Emperors might envy him. The thought of losing her drove him into fits of rage. He took the ladies one by one, and treated them each to a horrible scene of gesticulation and outraged English. He accused their brother of conduct which they were obliged to throw (by a process of their own) into the region of Fine Shades, before they dared venture to comprehend him. Gross facts in relationship with the voice, this grievous "machine, not man,"—as they said—stated to them, harshly, impetuously. The ladies felt that he had bored their ears with hot iron pins. Adela tried laughter as a defence from his suggestion against Wilfrid, but had shortly afterwards to fly from the fearful anatomist. She served her brother thoroughly in the Council of Three; so that Mr. Pericles was led by them to trust that there had; been mere fooling in his absence, and that the emotions he looked to as the triumphant reserve in Emilia's bosom, to be aroused at some crisis when she was before the world, slumbered still. She, on her part, contrasting her own burning sensations with this quaint, innocent devotion to Art and passion for music, felt in a manner guilty; and whenever he stormed with additional violence, she became suppliant, and seemed to bend and have regrets. Mr. Pericles would then say, with mollified irritability: "You will come to Italy to-morrow?—Ze day after?—not at all?" The last was given with a roar, for lack of her immediate response. Emilia would find a tear on her eyelids at times. Surround herself as she might with her illusions, she had no resting-place in Wilfrid's heart, and knew it. She knew it as the young know that they are to die on a future day, without feeling the sadness of it, but with a dimly prevalent idea that this life is therefore incomplete. And again her blood, as with a wave of rich emotion, washed out the blank spot. She thought: "What can he want but my love?" And thus she satisfied her own hungry questioning by seeming to supply an answer to his.

The ladies of Brookfield by no means encouraged Emilia to refuse the generous offer of Mr. Pericles. They thought, too, that she might—might she? Oh! certainly she might go to Italy under his protection. "Would you let one of your blood?" asked Wilfrid brutally. With some cunning he led them to admit that Emilia's parents should rightly be consulted in such a case.

One day Mr. Pericles said to the ladies: "I shall give a fete: a party monstre. In ze air: on grass. I beg you to invite friends of yours."

Before the excogitation of this splendid resolve, he had been observed to wear for some period a conspiratorial aspect. When it was delivered, and Arabella had undertaken the management of the "party monstre"—(which was to be on Besworth Lawn, and, as it was not their own party, could be conducted with a sort of quasi-contemptuous superiority to incongruous gatherings)—this being settled, the forehead of Mr. Pericles cleared and he ceased to persecute Emilia.

"I am not one that is wopped," he said significantly; nodding to his English hearers, as if this piece of shrewd acquaintance with the expressive mysteries of their language placed them upon equal terms.

It was really 'a providential thing' (as devout people phrase it) that Laura Tinley and Mabel Copley should call shortly after this, and invite the ladies to a proposed picnic of theirs on Besworth Lawn. On Besworth Lawn, of all places! and they used the word 'picnic.'

"A word suggestive of gnawed drumstick and ginger-beer bottles." Adela quoted some scapegoat of her acquaintance, as her way was when she wished to be pungent without incurring the cold sisterly eye of reproof for a vulgarism.

Both Laura and Mabel, when they heard of the mighty entertainment fixed for Besworth Lawn by Mr. Pericles, looked down. They were invited, and looked up. There was the usual amount of fencing with the combative Laura, who gave ground at all points, and as she was separating, said (so sweetly!) "Of course you have heard of the arrest of your—what does one call him?—friend?—or a French word?"

"You mean?" quoth Arabella.

"That poor, neatly brushed, nice creature whom you patronized—who played the organ!" she jerked to Arabella's dubious eyes.

"And he?" Arabella smiled, complacently.

"Then perhaps you may know that all is arranged for him?" said Laura, interpreting by the look more than the word, after a habit of women.

"Indeed, to tell you the truth, I know nothing," said Arabella.

"Really?" Laura turned sharply to Cornelia, who met her eyes and did not exhibit one weak dimple.

The story was, that Mr. Chips, the Bookseller of Hillford, objected to the departure of Mr. Barrett, until Mr. Barrett had paid the bill of Mr. Chips: and had signified his objection in the form of a writ. "When, if you know anything of law," said Laura, "you will see why he remains. For, a writ once served, you are a prisoner. That is, I believe, if it's above twenty pounds. And Mr. Chips' bill against Mr. Barrett was, I have heard, twenty-three pounds and odd shillings. Could anything be more preposterous? And Mr. Chips deserves to lose his money!"

Ah! to soar out of such a set as this, of which Laura Tinley is a sample, are not some trifling acts of inhumanity and practices in the art of 'cutting' permissible? So the ladies had often asked of the Unseen in their onward course, if they did not pointedly put the question now. Surely they had no desire to give pain, but the nature that endowed them with a delicate taste, inspired them to defend it. They listened gravely to Laura, who related that not only English books, but foreign (repeated and emphasized), had been supplied by Mr. Chips to Mr. Barrett.

They were in the library, and Laura's eyes rested on certain yellow and blue covers of books certainly not designed for the reading of Mr. Pole.

"I think you must be wrong as to Mr. Barrett's position," said Adela.

"No, dear; not at all," Laura was quick to reply. "Unless you know anything. He has stated that he awaits money remittances. He has, in fact, overrun the constable, and my brother Albert says, the constable is very likely to overrun him, in consequence. Only a joke! But an organist with, at the highest computation—poor absurd thing!—fifty-five pounds per annum: additional for singing lessons, it is true,—but an organist with a bookseller's bill of twenty-three pounds! Consider!"

"Foreign books, too!" interjected Adela.

"Not so particularly improving to his morals, either!" added Laura.

"You are severe upon the greater part of the human race," said Arabella.

"So are the preachers, dear," returned Laura.

"The men of our religion justify you?" asked Arabella.

"Let me see;—where were we?" Laura retreated in an affected mystification.

"You had reached the enlightened belief that books written by any but English hands were necessarily destructive of men's innocence," said Arabella; and her sisters thrilled at the neatness of the stroke, for the moment, while they forgot the ignoble object it transfixed. Laura was sufficiently foiled by it to be unable to return to the Chips-Barrett theme. Throughout the interview Cornelia had maintained a triumphant posture, superior to Arabella's skill in fencing, seeing that it exposed no weak point of the defence by making an attack, and concealed especially the confession implied by a relish for the conflict. Her sisters considerably left her to recover herself, after this mighty exercise of silence.

CHAPTER XXII

Cornelia sat with a clenched hand. "You are rich and he is poor," was the keynote of her thoughts, repeated from minute to minute. "And it is gold gives you the right in the world's eye to despise him!" she apostrophized the vanished Laura, clothing gold with all the baseness of that person. Now, when one really hates gold, one is at war with one's fellows. The tide sets that way. There is no compromise: to hate it is to try to stem the flood. It happens that this is one of the temptations of the sentimentalist, who should reflect, but does not, that the fine feelers by which the iniquities of gold are so keenly discerned, are a growth due to it, nevertheless. Those 'fine feelers,' or antennae of the senses, come of sweet ease; that is synonymous with gold in our island-latitude. The sentimentalists are represented by them among the civilized species. It is they that sensitively touch and reject, touch and select; whereby the laws of the polite world are ultimately regulated, and civilization continually advanced, sometimes ridiculously. The sentimentalists are ahead of us, not by weight of brain, but through delicacy of nerve, and, like all creatures in the front, they are open to be victims. I pray you to observe again the shrinking life that afflicts the adventurous horns of the snail, for example. Such are the sentimentalists to us—the fat body of mankind. We owe them much, and though they scorn us, let us pity them.

Especially when they are young they deserve pity, for they suffer cruelly. I for my part prefer to see boys and girls led into the ways of life by nature; but I admit that in many cases, in most cases, our good mother has not (occupied as her hands must be) made them perfectly presentable; by which fact I am warned to have tolerance for the finer beings who labour under these excessive sensual subtleties. I perceive their uses. And they are right good comedy; for which I may say that I almost love them. Man is the laughing animal: and at the end of an infinite search, the philosopher finds himself clinging to laughter as the best of human fruit, purely human, and sane, and comforting. So let us be cordially thankful to those who furnish matter for sound embracing laughter.

Cornelia detested gold—entirely on general grounds and for abstract reasons. Not a word of Mr. Barrett was shaped, even in fancy; but she interjected to herself, with meditative eye and mouth: "The saints were poor!" (the saints of whom he had read, translating from that old Latin book) "St. Francis! how divine was his life!" and so forth, until the figure of Mr. Penniless Barrett walked out in her imagination clad in saintly garments, superior not only to his creditor, Mr. Chips, but to all who bought or sold.

"I have been false," she said; implying the "to him." Seeing him on that radiant height above her, she thought "How could I have fallen so!" It was impossible for her mind to recover the delusion which had prompted her signing herself to bondage—pledging her hand to a man she did not love. Could it have been that she was guilty of the immense folly, simply to escape from that piece of coarse earth, Mrs. Chump? Cornelia smiled sadly, saying: "Oh, no! I should not have committed a wickedness for so miserable an object." Despairing for a solution of the puzzle, she cried out, "I was mad!", and with a gasp of horror saw herself madly signing her name to perdition.

"I was mad!" is a comfortable cloak to our sins in the past. Mournful to think that we have been bereft of reason; but the fit is over, and we are not in Bedlam!

Cornelia next wrestled with the pride of Mr. Barrett. Why had he not come to her once after reading the line pencilled in the book? Was it that he would make her his debtor in everything? He could have reproached her justly; why had he held aloof? She thirsted to be scourged by him, to hang her head ashamed under his glance, and hug the bitter pain he dealt her. Revolving how the worst man on earth would have behaved to a girl partially in his power (hands had been permitted to be pressed, and the gateways of the eyes had stood open: all but vows had been interchanged), she came to regard Mr. Barrett as the best man on the earth. That she alone saw it, did not depreciate the value of her knowledge. A goal gloriously illumined blazed on her from the distance. "Too late!" she put a curb on the hot courses in her brain, and they being checked, turned all at once to tears and came in a flood. How indignant would the fair sentimentalist have been at a whisper of her caring for the thing before it was too late!

Cornelia now daily trod the red pathways under the firs, and really imagined herself to be surprised, even vexed, when she met Mr. Barrett there at last. Emilia was by his side, near a drooping birch. She beckoned to Cornelia, whose North Pole armour was doing its best to keep down a thumping heart.

"We are taking our last walk in the old wood," said, Mr. Barrett, admirably collected. "That is, I must speak for myself."

"You leave early?" Cornelia felt her throat rattle hideously.

"In two days, I expect—I hope," said he.

"Why does he hope?" thought Cornelia, wounded, until a vision of the detaining Chips struck her with pity and remorse.

She turned to Emilia. "Our dear child is also going to leave us."

"I?" cried Emilia, fierily out of languor.

"Does not your Italy claim you?"

"I am nothing to Italy any more. Have I not said so? I love England now."

Cornelia smiled complacently. "Let us hope your heart is capacious enough to love both."

"Then your theory is" (Mr. Barrett addressed Cornelia in the winning old style), "that the love of one thing enlarges the heart for another?"

"Should it not?" She admired his cruel self-possession pitifully, as she contrasted her own husky tones with it.

Emilia looked from one to the other, fancying that they must have her case somewhere in prospect, since none could be unconscious of the vehement struggle going on in her bosom; but they went farther and farther off from her comprehension, and seemed to speak of bloodless

matters. "And yet he is her lover," she thought. "When they meet they talk across a river, and he knows she is going to another man, and does not gripe her wrist and drag her away!" The sense that she had no kinship with such flesh shut her mouth faster than Wilfrid's injunctions (which were ordinarily conveyed in too subtle a manner for her to feel their meaning enough to find them binding). Cornelia, for a mask to her emotions, gave Emilia a gentle, albeit high-worded lecture on the artist's duty toward Art, quoting favourite passages from Mr. Barrett's favourite Art-critic. And her fashion of dropping her voice as she declaimed the more dictatorial sentences (to imply, one might guess, by a show of personal humility that she would have you to know her preaching was vicarious; that she stood humbly in the pulpit, and was but a vessel for the delivery of the burden of the oracle), all this was beautiful to him who could see it. I cannot think it was wholesome for him; nor that Cornelia was unaware of a naughty wish to glitter temporarily in the eyes of the man who made her feel humble. The sorcery she sent through his blood communicated itself to hers. When she had done, Emilia, convincingly vanquished by big words, said, "I cannot talk," and turned heavily from them without bestowing a smile upon either.

Cornelia believed that the girl would turn back as abruptly as she had retreated; and it was not until Emilia was out of sight that she remembered the impropriety of being alone with Mr. Barrett. The Pitfall of Sentiment yawned visible, but this lady's strength had been too little tried for her to lack absolute faith in it. So, out of deep silences, the two leapt to speech and immediately subsided to the depths again: as on a sultry summer's day fishes flash their tails in the sunlight and leave a solitary circle widening on the water.

Then Cornelia knew what was coming. In set phrase, and as one who performs a duty frigidly pleasant, he congratulated her on her rumored union. One hand was in his buttoned coat; the other hung elegantly loose: not a feature betrayed emotion. He might have spoken it in a ballroom. To Cornelia, who exulted in self-compression, after the Roman method, it was more dangerous than a tremulous tone.

"You know me too well to say this, Mr. Barrett."

The words would come. She preserved her steadfast air, when they had escaped, to conceal her shame. Seeing thus much, he took it to mean that it was a time for plain-speaking. To what end, he did not ask.

"You have not to be told that I desire your happiness above all earthly things," he said: and the lady shrank back, and made an effort to recover her footing. Had he not been so careful to obliterate any badge of the Squire of low degree, at his elbows, cuffs, collar, kneecap, and head-piece, she might have achieved it with better success. For cynicism (the younger brother of sentiment and inheritor of the family property) is always on the watch to deal fatal blows through such vital parts as the hat or the H's, or indeed any sign of inferior estate. But Mr. Barrett was armed at all points by a consummate education and a most serviceable clothesbrush.

"You know how I love this neighbourhood!" said she.

"And I! above all that I have known!"

They left the pathway and walked on mosses—soft yellow beds, run over with grey lichen, and plots of emerald in the midst.

"You will not fall off with your reading?" he recommenced.

She answered "Yes," meaning "No"; and corrected the error languidly, thinking one of the weighty monosyllables as good as the other: for what was reading to her now?

"It would be ten thousand pities if you were to do as so many women do, when... when they make these great changes," he continued.

"Of what avail is the improvement of the mind?" she said, and followed his stumble over the "when," and dropped on it.

"Of what avail! Is marriage to stop your intellectual growth?"

"Without sympathy," she faltered, and was shocked at what she said; but it seemed a necessity.

"You must learn to conquer the need for it."

Alas! his admonition only made her feel the need more cravingly.

"Promise me one thing," he said. "You will not fall into the rut? Let me keep the ideal you have given me. For the sake of heaven, do not cloud for me the one bright image I hold! Let me know always that you are growing, and that the pure, noble intelligence which distinguishes you advances, and will not be subdued."

Cornelia smiled faintly. "You have judged me too generously, Mr. Barrett."

"Too little so! might I tell you!" He stopped short, and she felt the silence like a great wave sweeping over her.

They were nearing the lake, with the stump of the pollard-willow in sight, and toward it they went.

"I shall take the consolation of knowing that I shall hear of you, some day," she said, having recourse to a look of cheerfulness.

He knew her to allude to certain hopes of fame. "I am getting wiser, I fear—too wise for ambition!"

"That is a fallacy, a sophism."

He pointed to the hollow tree. "Is there promise of fruit from that?"

"You...you are young, Mr. Barrett."

"And on a young, forehead it may be written, 'Come not to gather more.'"

Cornelia put her hand out: "Oh, Mr. Barrett! unsay it!" The nakedness of her spirit stood forth in a stinging tear. "The words were cruel."

"But, if they live, and are?"

"I feel that you must misjudge me. When I wrote them...you cannot know! The misery of our domestic life was so bitter! And yet, I have no excuse, none! I can only ask for pity."

"And if you are wretched, must not I be? You pluck from me my last support. This, I petitioned Providence to hear from you—that you would be happy! I can have no comfort but in that."

"Happy!" Cornelia murmured the word musically, as if to suck an irony from the sweetness of the sound. "Are we made for happiness?"

Mr. Barrett quoted the favourite sage, concluding: "But a brilliant home and high social duties bring consolation. I do acknowledge that an eminent station will not only be graced by you, but that you give the impression of being born to occupy it. It is your destiny."

"A miserable destiny!"

It pleased Cornelia to become the wilful child who quarrels with its tutor's teachings, upon this point.

Then Mr. Barrett said quickly: "Your heart is not in this union?"

"Can you ask? I have done my duty."

"Have you, indeed!"

His tone was severe in the deliberation of its accents.

Was it her duty to live an incomplete life? He gave her a definition of personal duty, and shadowed out all her own ideas on the subject; seeming thus to speak terrible, unanswerable truth.

As one who changes the theme, he said: "I have forborne to revert to myself in our interviews; they were too divine for that. You will always remember that I have forborne much."

"Yes!" She was willing at the instant to confess how much.

"And if I speak now, I shall not be misinterpreted?"

"You never would have been, by me."

"Cornelia!"

Though she knew what was behind the door, this flinging of it open with her name startled the lady; and if he had faltered, it would not have been well for him. But, plainly, he claimed the right to call her by her Christian name. She admitted it; and thenceforward they were equals.

It was an odd story that he told of himself. She could not have repeated it to make it comprehensible. She drank at every sentence, getting no more from it than the gratification of her thirst. His father, at least, was a man of title, a baronet. What was meant by estates not entailed? What wild freak of fate put this noble young man in the power of an eccentric parent, who now caressed him, now made him an outcast? She heard of the sum that was his, coming from his dead mother to support him just one hundred pounds annual! Was ever fate so mournful?

Practically, she understood that if Mr. Barrett would write to his father, pledging himself to conform to his mysterious despotic will in something, he would be pardoned and reinstated.

He concluded: "Hitherto I have preferred poverty. You have taught me at what a cost! Is it too late?"

The fall of his voice, with the repetition of her name, seemed as if awakening her, but not in a land of reason.

"Why...why!" she whispered.

"Beloved?"

"Why did you not tell me this before?"

"Do you upbraid me?"

"Oh, no! Oh, never!" she felt his hand taking hers gently. "My friend," she said, half in self-defence; and they, who had never kissed as lovers, kissed under the plea of friendship.

CHAPTER XXIII

All Wilfrid's diplomacy was now brought into play to baffle Mr. Pericles, inspire Emilia with the spirit of secrecy, and carry on his engagement to two women to their common satisfaction. Adela, whose penetration he dreaded most, he had removed by a flattering invitation to Stornley; and that Emilia might be occupied during his absences, and Mr. Pericles thrown on a false scent,

he persuaded Tracy Runningbrook to come to Brookfield, and write libretti for Emilia's operas. The two would sit down together for an hour, drawing wonderful precocious noses upon juvenile visages, when Emilia would sigh and say: "I can't work!"—Tracy adding, with resignation: "I never can!" At first Mr. Pericles dogged them assiduously. After a little while he shrugged, remarking: "It is a nonsense."

They were, however, perfectly serious about the production of an opera, Tracy furnishing verse to Emilia's music. He wrote with extraordinary rapidity, but clung to graphic phrases, that were not always supple enough for nuptials with modulated notes. Then Emilia had to hit his sense of humour by giving the words as they came in the run of the song. "You make me crow, or I croak," she said.

"The woman follows the man, and music fits to verse," cried Tracy. "Music's the vine, verse the tree."

Emilia meditated. "Not if they grow up together," she suggested, and broke into a smile at his rapture of amusement; which was succeeded by a dark perplexity, worthy of the present aspect of Mr. Pericles.

"That's what has upset us," he said. "We have been trying to 'grow up together,' like first-cousins, and nature forbids the banns. To-morrow you shall have half a libretto. And then, really, my child, you must adapt yourself to the words."

"I will," Emilia promised; "only, not if they're like iron to the teeth."

"My belief is," said Tracy savagely, "that music's a fashion, and as delusive a growth as Cobbett's potatoes, which will go back to the deadly nightshade, just as music will go back to the tom-tom."

"What have you called out when I sang to you!" Emilia reproached him for this irreverent nonsense.

"Oh! it was you and not the music," he returned half-cajolingly, while he beat the tom-tom on air.

"Hark here!" cried Emilia. She recited a verse. "Doesn't that sound dead? Now hark!" She sang the verse, and looked confidently for Tracy's verdict at the close.

"What a girl that is!" He went about the house, raving of her to everybody, with sundry Gallic interjections; until Mrs. Chump said: "'Deed, sir, ye don't seem to have much idea of a woman's feelin's."

Tracy produced in a night two sketches of libretti for Emilia to choose from—the Roman Clelia being one, and Camillus the other. Tracy praised either impartially, and was indifferent between them, he told her. Clelia offered the better theme for passionate song, but there was a winning political object and rebuff to be given to Radicalism in Camillus. "Think of Rome!" he said.

Emilia gave the vote for Camillus, beginning forthwith to hum, with visions of a long roll of swarthy cavalry, headed by a clear-eyed young chief, sunlight perching on his helm.

"Yes; but you don't think of the situations in Clelia, and what I can do with her," snapped Tracy. "I see a song there that would light up all London. Unfortunately, the sentiment's dead Radical. It wouldn't so much matter if we were certain to do Camillus as well; because one would act as a counterpoise to the other, you know. Well, follow your own fancy. Camillus is strictly classical. I treat opera there as Alfieri conceived tragedy. Clelia is modern style. Cast the die for Camillus, and let's take horse. Only, we lose the love-business—exactly where I show my strength. Clelia in the camp of the king: dactylic chorus-accompaniment, while she, in heavy voluptuous anapaests, confesses her love for the enemy of her country. Remember, this is our romantic opera, where we do what we like with History, and make up our minds for asses telling us to go home and read our 'student's Rome.' Then that scene where she and the king dance the dactyls, and the anapaests go to the chorus. Sublime! Let's go into the woods and begin. We might give the first song or two to-night. In composition, mind, always strike out your great scene, and work from it—don't work up to it, or you've lost fire when you reach the point. That's my method."

They ran into the woods, skipping like schoolboy and schoolgirl. On hearing that Camillus would not be permitted to love other than his ungrateful country, Emilia's conception of the Roman lord grew pale, and a controversy ensued—she maintaining that a great hero must love a woman; he declaring that a great hero might love a dozen, but that it was beneath the dignity of this drama to allow of a rival to Rome in Camillus's love.

"He will not do for music," said Emilia firmly, and was immovable. In despair, Tracy proposed attaching a lanky barbarian daughter to Brennus, whose deeds of arms should provoke the admiration of the Roman.

"And so we relinquish Alfieri for Florian! There's a sentimental burlesque at once!" the youth ejaculated, in gloom. "I chose this subject entirely to give you Rome for a theme."

Emilia took his hand. "I do thank you. If Brennus has a daughter, why not let her be half Roman?"

Tracy fired out: "she's a bony woman, with a brawny development; mammoth haunches, strong of the skeleton; cheek-bones, flat-forward, as a fish 's rotting on a beach; long scissor lips—nippers to any wretched rose of a kiss! a pugilist's nose to the nostrils of a phoca; and eyes!—don't you see them?—luminaries of pestilence; blotted yellow, like a tallow candle shining through a horny lantern."

At this horrible forced-poetic portrait, Emilia cried in pain: "You hate her suddenly!"

"I loathe the creature—pah!" went Tracy.

"Why do you make her so hideous?" Emilia complained. "I feel myself hating her too. Look at me. Am I such a thing as that?"

"You!" Tracy was melted in a trice, and gave the motion of hugging, as a commentary on his private opinion.

"Can you also be sure that Camillus can love nothing but his country? Would one love stop the other?" she persisted, gazing with an air of steady anxiety for the answer.

"There isn't a doubt about it," said Tracy.

Emilia caught her face in her hands, and exclaimed in a stifling voice: "It's true! it's true!"

Tracy saw that her figure was shaken with sobs—unmistakeable, hard, sorrowful convulsions.

"Confound historical facts that make her cry!" he murmured to himself, in a fury at the Roman fables. "It's no use comforting her with Niebuhr now. She's got a live Camillus in her brain, and there he'll stick." Tracy began to mutter the emphatic D.; quite cognizant of her case, as he supposed. This intensity of human emotion about a dry faggot of history by no means surprised him; and he was as tender to the grief of his darling little friend as if he had known the conflict that tore her in two. Subsequently he related the incident, in a tone of tender delight, to Wilfrid, whom it smote. "Am I a brute?" asked the latter of the Intelligences in the seat of his consciousness, and they for the moment gravely affirmed it. I have observed that when young men obtain this mental confirmation of their suspicions, they wax less reluctant to act as brutes than when the doubt restrained them.

He reasoned thus: "I can bring my mind to the idea of losing her, if it must be so." (Hear, hear! from the unanimous internal Parliament.) "But I can't make her miserable (cheers)—I can't go and break her heart" (loud cheers, drowning a faint dissentient hum).—The scene, of which Tracy had told him, gave Wilfrid a kind of dread of the girl. If that was her state of feeling upon a distant subject, how would it be when he applied the knife. Simply, impossible to use the knife at all! Wield it thou, O Circumstance, babe-munching Chronos, whosoever thou art, that jarrest our poor human music effectually from hour to hour!

Colonel Pierson paid his promised visit, on his way back to his quarters at Verona. His stay was shortened by rumours of anticipated troubles in Italy. One day at table he chanced to observe, speaking of the Milanese, that they required another lesson, and that it would save the shedding of blood if, annually, the chief men of the city took a flogging for the community (senseless arrogance that sensible, and even kindly, men will sometimes be tempted to utter, and prompted to act on, in that deteriorating state of a perpetual repressive force).—Emilia looked at him till she caught his eye: "I hope I shall never meet you there," she said.

The colonel coloured, and drew his finger along each curve of his moustache. The table was silent. Colonel Pierson was a gentleman, but a false position and the irritating topic deprived him of proper self-command.

"What would you do?" he said, not gallantly.

Emilia would have been glad to have been allowed to subside, but the tone stung her.

"I could not do much; I am a woman," said she.

Whereto the colonel: "It's only the women who do anything over there."

"And that is why you flog them!"

The colonel, seeing himself surrounded by ladies, lost the right guidance of his wits, at this point, reddened, and was saved by an Irish outcry of horror from some unpleasant and possibly unmanly retort. "Mr. Paricles said exactly the same. Oh, sir! do ye wear an officer's uniform to go about behavin' in that shockin' way to poor helpless females?"

This was the first time Mrs. Chump had ever been found of service at the Brookfield dining-table. Colonel Pierson joined the current smile, and the matter passed.

He was affectionate with Wilfrid, and invited him to Verona, with the assurance that his (the Austrian) school of cavalry was the best in the world. "You beat us in pace and weight; but you can't skirmish, you can't manage squadrons, and you know nothing of outpost duty," said the colonel. Wilfrid promised to visit him some day: a fact he denied to Emilia, when she charged him with it. Her brain seemed to be set on fire by the presence of an Austrian officer. The miserable belief that she had abandoned her country pressing on her remorsefully, she lost appetite, briskness of eye, and the soft reddish-brown ripe blood-hue that made her cheeks sweet to contemplate. She looked worn, small, wretched: her very walk indicated self-contempt. Wilfrid was keen to see the change for which others might have accused a temporary headache. Now that she appeared under this blight, it seemed easier to give her up; and his magnanimity being thus encouraged (I am not hard on him—remember the constitution of love, in which a heart un-aroused is pure selfishness, and a heart aroused heroic generosity; they being one heart to outer life)—his magnanimity, I say, being under this favourable sun, he said to himself that there should be an end of double-dealing; and, possibly consoled by feeling a martyr, he persuaded himself to act the gentle ruffian. To which end, he was again absent from Brookfield, for a space, and bitterly missed.

Emilia, for the last two Sundays, had taken Mr. Barrett's place at the organ. She was playing the prelude to one of the evening hymns, when the lover, whose features she dreaded to be once more forgetting, appeared in the curtained enclosure. A stoppage in the tune, and a prolonged squeal of the instrument, gave the congregation below matter to speculate upon. Wilfrid put up his finger and sat reverently down, while Emilia plunged tremblingly at the note that was howling its life away. And as she managed to swim into the stream of the sacred melody again, her head was turned toward her lover under a new sensation; and the first words she murmured were, "We have never been in church together, before."

"Not in the evening," he whispered, likewise impressed.

"No," said Emilia softly; flattered by his greater accuracy.

If Wilfrid could have been sure that he would be perfect master of that sentimental crew known to him under the denomination of his feelings, the place he selected for their parting interview

might be held creditable to this young officer's acknowledged strategical ability. It was a place where any fervid appeals were impossible; where he could contemplate her, listen to her, be near her, alone with her, having nothing to dread from tears, supplications, or passion, as a consequence of the short indulgence of his tenderness. But he had failed to reckon on the chances that he himself might prove weak and be betrayed by the crew for whose comfort he was always providing; and now, as she sat there, her face being sideways to him, the flush of delight faint on her cheek, and her eyelids half raised to the gilded pipes, while full and sonorous harmony rolled out from her touch, it seemed the very chorus of the heavens that she commanded, and a subtle misty glory descended upon her forehead, which he was long in perceiving to be cast from a moisture on his eyelids.

When the sermon commenced, Emilia quitted the organ and took his hand. In very low whispers, they spoke:

"I have wanted to see you so!"

"You see me now, little woman."

"On Friday week next I am to go away."

"Nonsense! You shall not."

"Your sisters say, yes! Mr. Pericles has got my father's consent, they say, to take me to Italy."

"Do you think of going?"

Emilia gazed at her nerveless hands lying in her lap.

"You shall not go!" he breathed imperiously in her ear.

"Then you will marry me quite soon?" And Emilia looked as if she would be smiling April, at a word.

"My dear girl!" he had an air of caressing remonstrance.

"Because," she continued, "if my father finds me out, I must go to Italy, or go to that life of torment in London—seeing those Jew-people—horrible!—or others and the thought of it is like being under the earth, tasting bitter gravel! I could almost bear it before you kissed me, my lover! It would kill me now. Say! say! Tell me we shall be together. I shudder all day and night, and feel frozen hands catching at me. I faint—my heart falls deep down, in the dark...I think I know what dying is now!"

She stopped on a tearless sob; and, at her fingers' ends, Wilfrid felt the quivering of her frame.

"My darling!" he interjected. He wished to explain the situation to her, as he then conceived it. But he had, in his calculation, failed also to count on a peculiar nervous fretfulness, that the

necessity to reiterate an explanation in whispers must superinduce. So, when Emilia looked vacant of the intelligence imparted to her, he began anew, and emphatically; and ere he was half through it, Mr. Marter, from the pulpit underneath, sent forth a significant reprimand to the conscience of a particular culprit of his congregation, in the form of a solemn cough. Emilia had to remain unenlightened, and she proceeded to build on her previous assumption; doing the whispering easily and sweetly; in the prettiest way from her tongue's tip, with her chin lifted up; and sending the vowels on a prolonged hushed breath, that seemed to print them on the hearing far more distinctly than a volume of sound. Wilfrid fell back on monosyllables. He could not bring his mouth to utter flinty negatives, so it appeared that he assented; and then his better nature abused him for deluding her. He grew utterly ashamed of his aimless selfish double-dealing. "Can it be?" he questioned his own mind, and listened greedily to any mental confirmations of surpassing excellence in her, that the world might possibly acknowledge. Having, with great zeal, created a set of circumstances, he cursed them heartily, after the fashion of little people. He grew resigned to abandon Lady Charlotte, and to give his name to this subduing girl; but a comfortable quieting sensation came over him, at the thought that his filial duty stood in the way. His father, he knew, was anxious for him to marry into a noble family—incomprehensibly anxious to have the affair settled; and, as two or three scenes rose in his mind, Wilfrid perceived that the obstacle to his present fancy was his father.

As clearly as he could, with the dread of the preacher's admonishing cough before him, Wilfrid stated the case to Emilia; saying that he loved her with his whole heart; but that the truth was, his father was not in a condition of health to bear contradiction to his wishes, and would, he was sure, be absolutely opposed to their union. He brought on himself another reprimand from Mr. Marter, in seeking to propitiate Emilia's reason to comprehend the position rightly; and could add little more to the fact he had spoken, than that his father had other views, which it would require time to combat.

Emilia listened attentively, replying with a flying glance to the squeeze of his hand. He was astonished to see her so little disconcerted. But now the gradual fall of Mr. Marter's voice gave them warning.

"My lover?" breathed Emilia, hurriedly and eagerly; questioning with eye and tone.

"My darling!" returned Wilfrid.

She sat down to the organ with a smile. He was careful to retreat before the conclusion of the service; somewhat chagrined by his success. That smile of hers was inexplicable to him.

CHAPTER XXIV

Mr. Pole was closeted in his City counting-house with Mr. Pericles, before a heap of papers and newly-opened foreign letters; to one of which, bearing a Russian stamp, he referred fretfully at times, as if to verify a monstrous fact. Any one could have seen that he was not in a condition to transact business. His face was unnaturally patched with colour, and his grey-tinged hair hung tumbled over his forehead like waves blown by a changeing wind. Still, he maintained his habitual effort to look collected, and defeat the scrutiny of the sallow-eyed fellow opposite; who quietly glanced, now and then, from the nervous feet to the nervous fingers, and nodded to himself a sardonic outlandish nod.

"Now, listen to me," said Mr. Pericles. "We shall not burst out about zis Riga man. He is a villain,—very well. Say it. He is a villain,—say so. And stop. Because" (and up went the Greek's forefinger), "we must not have a scandal, in ze fairst place. We do not want pity, in ze second. Saird, we must seem to trust him, in spite. I say, yeas! What is pity to us of commerce? It is contempt. We trust him on, and we lose what he pocket—a sossand. We burst on him, and we lose twenty, serty, forty; and we lose reputation."

"I'd have every villain hanged," cried Mr. Pole. "The scoundrel! I'd hang him with his own hemp. He talks of a factory burnt, and dares to joke about tallow! and in a business letter! and when he is telling one of a loss of money to that amount!"

"Not bad, ze joke," grinned Mr. Pericles. "It is a lesson of coolness. We learn it. But mind! he say, 'possible loss.' It is not positif. Hein! ze man is trying us. So! shall we burst out and make him desperate? We are in his hand at Riga, you see?"

"I see this," said Mr. Pole, "that he's a confounded rascal, and I'll know whether the law can't reach him."

"Ha! ze law!" Mr. Pericles sneered. "So you are, you. English. Always, ze law! But, we are men—we are not machine. Law for a machine, not a man! We punish him, perhaps. Well; he is punished. He is imprisoned—forty monz. We pay for him a sossand pound a monz. He is flogged—forty lashes. We pay for him a sossand pound a lash. You can afford zat? It is a luxury like anozer. It is not for me."

"How long are we to trust the villain?" said Mr. Pole. "If we trust him at all, mind! I don't say I do, or will."

"Ze money is locked up for a year, my friend. So soon we get it, so soon he goes, from ze toe off." Mr. Pericles' shining toe's-tip performed an agile circuit, and he smoothed his square clean jaw and venomous moustache reflectively. "Not now," he resumed. "While he hold us in his hand, we will not drive him to ze devil, or we go too, I believe, or part of ze way. But now, we say, zat money is frozen in ze Nord. We will make it in Australie, and in Greek waters. I have exposed to you my plan."

"Yes," said Mr. Pole, "and I've told you I've no pretensions to be a capitalist. We have no less than three ventures out, already."

"It is like you English! When you have ze world to milk, you go to one point and stick. It fails, and you fail. What is zat word?"—Mr. Pericles tapped his brow—"pluck,—you want pluck. It is your decadence. Greek, and Russian, and Yankee, all zey beat you. For, it is pluck. You make a pin's head, not a pin. It is in brain and heart you do fail. You have only your position,—an island, and ships, and some favour. You are no match in pluck. We beat you. And we live for pleasure, while you groan and sweat—mon Dieu! it is slavery."

Mr. Pericles twinkled his white eyes over the blinking merchant, and rose from his chair, humming a bit of opera, and announcing, casually, that a certain prima-donna had obtained a divorce from her husband.

"But," he added suddenly, "I say to you, if you cannot afford to speculate, run away from it as ze fire. Run away from it, and hold up your coat-tail. Jump ditches, and do not stop till you are safe home—hein? you say 'cosy?' I hear my landlady. Run till you are safe cosy. But if you are a man wis a head and a pocket, zen you know that 'speculate' means a dozen ventures. So, you come clear. Or, it is ruin. It is ruin, I say: you have been playing."

"An Englishman," returned Mr. Pole, disgusted at the shrugs he had witnessed—"an Englishman's as good as any of you. Look at us—look at our history—look at our wealth. By Jingo! But we like plain-dealing and common sense; and as to afford, what do you mean?"

"No, no," Mr. Pericles petitioned with uplifted hand; "my English is bad. It is—ah! bad. You shall look it over—my plan. It will strike your sense. Next week I go to Italy. I take ze little Belloni. You will manage all. I have in you, my friend, perfec' confidence. An Englishman, he is honest. An Englishman and a Greek conjoined, zey beat ze world! It is true, ma foi. For zat, I seek you, and not a countryman. A Frenchman?—oh, no! A German?—not a bit! A Russian?—never! A Yankee?—save me! I am a Greek—I take an Englishman."

"Well, well, you must leave me to think it over," said Mr. Pole, pleasantly smoothed down. "As to honesty, that's a matter of course with us: that's the mere footing we go upon. We don't plume ourselves upon what's general, here. There is, I regret to say, a difference between us and other nations. I believe it's partly their religion. They swindle us, and pay their priests for absolution with our money. If you're a double-dyed sinner, you can easily get yourself whitewashed over there. Confound them! When that fellow sent no remittance last month, I told you I suspected him. Who was, the shrewdest then? As for pluck, I never failed in that yet. But, I will see a thing clear. The man who speculates blindfold, is a fowl who walks into market to be plucked. Between being plucked, and having pluck, you'll see a distinction when you know the language better; but you must make use of your head, or the chances are you won't be much of a difference,—eh? I'll think over your scheme. I'm not a man to hesitate, if the calculations are sound. I'll look at the papers here."

"My friend, you will decide before zat I go to Italy." said Mr. Pericles, and presently took his leave.

When he was gone, Mr. Pole turned his chair to the table, and made an attempt to inspect one of the papers deliberately. Having untied it, he retied it with care, put it aside, marked 'immediate,'

and read the letter from Riga anew. This he tore into shreds, with animadversions on the quality of the rags that had produced it, and opened the important paper once more. He got to the end of a sentence or two, when his fingers moved about for the letter; and then his mind conceived a necessity for turning to the directory, for which he rang the bell. The great red book was brought into his room by a youthful clerk, who waited by, while his master, unaware of his presence, tracked a name with his forefinger. It stopped at Pole, Samuel Bolton; and a lurking smile was on the merchant's face as he read the name: a smile of curious meaning, neither fresh nor sad; the meditative smile of one who looks upon an afflicted creature from whom he is aloof. After a lengthened contemplation of this name, he said, with a sigh, "Poor Chump! I wonder whether he's here, too." A search for the defunct proved that he was out of date. Mr. Pole thrust his hand to the bell that he might behold poor Chump in an old directory that would call up the blotted years.

"I am here, sir," said his clerk, who had been holding deferential watch at a few steps from the table.

"What do you do here then, sir, all this time?"

"I waited, sir, because—"

"You waste and dawdle away twenty or thirty minutes, when you ought to be doing your work. What do you mean?" Mr. Pole stood up and took an angry stride.

The young man could scarcely believe his master was not stooping to jest with him. He said: "For that matter, sir, it can't be a minute that I have been wasting."

"I called you in half an hour ago," returned Mr. Pole, fumbling at his watch-fob.

"It must have been somebody else, sir."

"Did you bring in this directory? Look at it! This?"

"This is the book that I brought in, sir."

"How long since?"

"I think, not a minute and a half, sir."

Mr. Pole gazed at him, and coughed slowly. "I could have sworn..." he murmured, and commenced blinking.

"I suppose I must be a little queer," he pursued; and instantly his right hand struck out, quivering. The young clerk grasped it, and drew him to a chair.

"Tush," said his master, working his feverish fingers across his forehead. "Want of food. I don't eat like you young fellows. Fetch me a glass of wine and a biscuit. Good wine, mind. Port. Or,

no; you can't trust tavern Port:—brandy. Get it yourself, don't rely on the porter. And bring it yourself, you understand the importance? What is your name?"

"Braintop," replied the youth, with the modesty of one whose name has been too frequently subjected to puns.

"I think I never heard so singular a name in my life," Mr. Pole ejaculated seriously. "Braintop! It'll always make me think of brandy. What are you waiting for now?"

"I took the liberty of waiting before, to say that a lady wished to see you, sir."

Mr. Pole started from his chair. "A foreign lady?"

"She may be foreign. She speaks English, sir, and her name, I think, was foreign. I've forgotten it, I fear."

"It's the wife of that fellow from Riga!" cried the merchant. "Show her in. Show her in, immediately. I suspected this. She's in London, I know. I'm equal to her: show her in. When you fetch the Braintop and biscuit, call me to the door. You understand."

The youth affected meekly to enjoy this fiery significance given to his name, and said that he understood, without any doubt. He retired, and in a few moments ushered in Emilia Belloni.

Mr. Pole was in the middle of the room, wearing a countenance of marked severity, and watchful to maintain it in his opening bow; but when he perceived his little Brookfield guest standing timidly in the doorway, his eyebrows lifted, and his hands spread out; and "Well, to be sure!" he cried; while Emilia hurried up to him. She had to assure him that everything was right at home, and was next called upon to state what had brought her to town; but his continued exclamation of "Bless my soul!" reprieved her reply, and she sat in a chair panting quickly.

Mr. Pole spoke tenderly of refreshments; wine and cake, or biscuits.

"I cannot eat or drink," said Emilia.

"Why, what's come to you, my dear?" returned Mr. Pole in unaffected wonder.

"I am not hungry."

"You generally are, at home, about this time—eh?"

Emilia sighed, and feigned the sad note to be a breath of fatigue.

"Well, and why are you here, my dear?" Mr. Pole was beginning to step to the right and the left of her uneasily.

"I have come—" she paused, with a curious quick speculating look between her eyes; "I have come to see you."

"See me, my dear? You saw me this morning."

"Yes; I wanted to see you alone."

Emilia was having the first conflict with her simplicity; out of which it was not to issue clear, as in the foregone days. She was thinking of the character of the man she spoke to, studying him, that she might win him to succour the object she had in view. It was a quality going, and a quality coming; nor will we, if you please, lament a law of growth.

"Why, you can see me alone, any day, my dear," said Mr. Pole; "for many a day, I hope."

"You are more alone to me here. I cannot speak at Brookfield. Oh!"—and Emilia had to still her heart's throbbing—"you do not want me to go to Italy, do you?"

"Want you to go? Not a bit. There is some talk of it, isn't there? I don't want you to go. Don't you want to go."

"No! no!" said Emilia, with decisive fervour.

"Don't want to go?"

"No: to stay! I want to stay!"

"Eh? to stay?"

"To stay with you! Never to leave England, at least! I want to give up all that I may stay."

"All?" repeated Mr. Pole, evidently marvelling as to what that sounding box might contain; and still more, perplexed to hear Emilia's vehement—"Yes! all!" as if there were that in the mighty abnegation to make a reasonable listener doubtful.

"No. I really don't want you to go," he said. "In fact," and the merchant's hospitable nature was at war with something in his mind, "I like you, my dear; I like to have you about me. You're cheerful; you're agreeable; I like your smile; your voice, too. You're a very pleasant companion. Only, you know, we may break up our house. If the girls get married, I must live somewhere in lodgings, and I couldn't very well ask you to cook for me."

"I can cook a little," Emilia smiled. "I went into the kitchen, till Adela objected."

"Yes, but it wouldn't do, you know," pursued Mr. Pole, with the seriousness of a man thrown out of his line of argument. "You can cook, eh? Got an idea of it? I always said you were a useful little woman. Do have a biscuit and some wine:—No? well, where was I?—That confounded boy. Brainty-top, top! that's it Braintop. Was I talking of him, my dear? Oh no! about your

getting married. For if you can cook, why not? Get a husband and then you won't got to Italy. You ought to get one. Some young fellows don't look for money."

"I shall make money come, in time," said Emilia; in the leaping ardour of whose eyes might be seen that what she had journeyed to speak was hot within her. "I know I shall be worth having. I shall win a name, I think—I do hope it!"

"Well, so Pericles says. He's got a great notion of you. Perhaps he means it himself. He's rich. Rash, I admit. But, as the chances go, he's tremendously rich. He may mean it."

"What?" asked Emilia.

"Marry you, you know."

"Ah, what a torture!"

In that heat of her feelings she realized the horror of the words to her, with an intensity that made them seem to quiver like an arrow in her breast.

"You don't like him?" said Mr. Pole.

"Not love him! not love him!"

"Yes, yes, but that comes after marriage. Often the case. Look here: don't you go against your interests. You mustn't be flighty. If Pericles speaks to you, have him. Clap your hands. Dozens of girls would, that I know."

"But, oh!" interposed Emilia; "if he married me he would kiss me!"

Mr. Pole coughed and blinked. "Well!" he remarked, as one gravely cogitating; and with the native delicacy of a Briton turned it off in a playful, "So shall I now," adding, "though I ain't your husband."

He stooped his head. Emilia put her hands on his shoulders, and submitted her face to him.

"There!" went Mr. Pole: "'pon my honour, it does me good:—better than medicine! But you mustn't give that dose to everybody, my dear. You don't, of course. All right, all right—I'm quite satisfied. I was only thinking of you going to Italy, among those foreign rascals, who've no more respect for a girl than they have for a monkey—their brother. A set of swindlers! I took you for the wife of one when you came in, at first. And now, business is business. Let's get it over. What have you come about? Glad to see you—understand that."

Emilia lifted her eyes to his.

"You know I love you, sir."

"I'm sure you're a grateful little woman."

She rose: "Oh! how can I speak it!"

An idea that his daughters had possibly sent her to herald one of the renowned physicians of London, concerning whom he was perpetually being plagued by them, or to lead him to one, flashed through Mr. Pole. He was not in a state to weigh the absolute value of such a suspicion, but it seemed probable; it explained an extraordinary proceeding; and, having conceived, his wrath took it up as a fact, and fought with it.

"Stop! If that's what you've come for, we'll bring matters to a crisis. You fancy me ill, don't you, my dear?"

"You do not look well, sir."

Emilia's unhesitating reply confirmed his suspicion.

"I am well. I am, I say! And now, understand that, if that's your business, I won't go to the fellow, and I won't see him here. They'll make me out mad, next. He shall never have a guinea from me while I live. No, nor when I die. Not a farthing! Sit down, my dear, and wait for the biscuits. I wish to heaven they'd come. There's brandy coming, too. Where's Braintop?"

He took out his handkerchief to wipe his forehead, and jerked it like a bell-rope.

Emilia, in a singular bewilderment, sat eyeing a beam of sombre city sunlight on the dusty carpet. She could only suppose that the offending "he" was Wilfrid; but, why he should be so, she could not guess: and how to plead for him, divided her mind.

"Don't blame him; be angry with me, if you are angry," she began softly. "I know he thinks of you anxiously. I know he would do nothing to hurt you. No one is so kind as he is. Would you deprive him of money, because he offends you?"

"Deprive him of money," repeated Mr. Pole, with ungrudging accentuation. "Well, I've heard about women, but I never knew one so anxious for a doctor to get his fee as you are."

Emilia wonderingly fixed her sight on him an instant, and, quite unilluminated, resumed: "Blame me, sir. But, I know you will be too kind. Oh! I love him. So, I must love you, and I would not give you pain. It is true he loves me. You will not see him, because he loves me?"

"The doctor?" muttered Mr. Pole. "The doctor?" he almost bellowed; and got sharp up from his chair, and looked at himself in the glass, blinking rapidly; and then turned to inspect Emilia.

Emilia drew him to her side again.

"Go on," he said; and there became visible in his face a frightful effort to comprehend her, and get to the sense of her words.

And why it was so frightful as to be tragic, you will know presently.

He thought of the arrival of Braintop, freighted with brandy, as the only light in the mist, and breathing heavily from his nose, almost snorting the air he took in from a widened mouth, he sat and tried to listen to her words as well as for Braintop's feet.

Emilia was growing too conscious of her halting eloquence, as the imminence of her happiness or misery hung balancing in doubtful scales before her.

"Oh! he loves me, and I love him," she gasped, and wondered why words should be failing her. "See us together, sir, and hear us. We will make you well."

The exclamation "Good Lord!" groaned out in a tone as from the lower pits of despair, cut her short.

Tearfully she murmured: "You will not see us, sir?"

"Together?" bawled the merchant.

"Yes, I mean together."

"If you're not mad, I am." And he jumped on his legs and walked to the farther corner of the room. "Which of us is it?" His features twitched in horribly comic fashion. "What do you mean? I can't understand a word. My brain must have gone;" throwing his hand over his forehead. "I've feared so for the last four months. Good God! a lunatic asylum! and the business torn like a piece of old rag! I know that fellow at Riga's dancing like a cannibal, and there—there 'll be articles in the papers.—Here, girl! come up to the light. Come here, I say."

Emilia walked up to him.

"You don't look mad. I dare say everybody else understands you. Do they?"

The sad-flushed pallor of his face provoked Emilia to say: "You ought to have the doctor here immediately. Let me bring him, sir."

A gleam as of a lantern through his oppressive mental fog calmed the awful irritability of his nerves somewhat.

"You've got him outside?"

"No, sir."

The merchant's eagerness faded out. He put his hand to her shoulder, and went along to a chair, sinking into it, and closing his eyelids. So they remained, Emilia at his right hand. She watched him breathing with a weak open mouth, and thought more of the doctor now than of Wilfrid.

CHAPTER XXV

Braintop's knock at the door had been unheeded for some minutes. At last Emilia let him in. The brandy and biscuits were placed on a table, and Emilia resumed her watch by Mr. Pole. She saw that his lips moved, after a space, and putting her ear down, understood that he desired not to see any one who might come for an interview with him: nor were the clerks to be admitted. The latter direction was given in precise terms. Emilia repeated the orders outside. On her return, the merchant's eyes were open.

"My forehead feels damp," he said; "and I'm not hot at all. Just take hold of my hands. They're like wet crumpets. I wonder what makes me so stiff. A man mustn't sit at business too long at a time. Sure to make people think he's ill. What was that about a doctor? I seem to remember. I won't see one."

Emilia had filled a glass with brandy. She brought it nearer to his hand, while he was speaking. At the touch of the glass, his fingers went round it slowly, and he raised it to his mouth. The liquor revived him. He breathed "ah!" several times, and grimaced, blinking, as if seeking to arouse a proper brightness in his eyes. Then, he held out his empty glass to her, and she filled it, and he sipped deliberately, saying: "I'm warm inside. I keep on perspiring so cold. Can't make it out. Look at my finger-ends, my dear. They're whitish, aren't they?"

Emilia took the hand he presented, and chafed it, and put it against her bosom, half under one arm. The action appeared to give some warmth to his heart, for he petted her, in return.

A third time he held out the glass, and remarked that this stuff was better than medicine.

"You women!" he sneered, as at a reminiscence of their faith in drugs.

"My legs are weak, though!" He had risen and tested the fact. "Very shaky. I wonder what makes 'em—I don't take much exercise." Pondering on this problem, he pursued: "It's the stomach. I'm as empty as an egg-shell. Odd, I've got no appetite. But, my spirits are up. I begin to feel myself again. I'll eat by-and-by, my dear. And, I say; I'll tell you what:—I'll take you to the theatre to-night. I want to laugh. A man's all right when he's laughing. I wish it was Christmas. Don't you like to see the old pantaloon tumbled over, my boy?—my girl, I mean. I did, when I was a boy. My father took me. I went in the pit. I can smell oranges, when I think of it. I remember, we supped on German sausage; or ham—one or the other. Those were happy old days!"

He shook his head at them across the misty gulf.

"Perhaps there's a good farce going on now. If so, we'll go. Girls ought to learn to laugh as well as boys. I'll ring for Braintop."

He rang the bell, and bade Emilia be careful to remind him that he wanted Braintop's address; for Braintop was useful.

It appeared that there were farces at several of the theatres. Braintop rattled them out, their plot and fun and the merits of the actors, with delightful volubility, as one whose happy subject had been finally discovered. He was forthwith commissioned to start immediately and take a stage-box at one of the places of entertainment, where two great rivals of the Doctor genus promised to laugh dull care out of the spirit of man triumphantly, and at the description of whose drolleries any one with faith might be half cured. The youth gave his address on paper to Emilia.

"Make haste, sir," said Mr. Pole. "And, stop. You shall go, yourself; go to the pit, and have a supper, and I'll pay for it. When you've ordered the box—do you know the Bedford Hotel? Go there, and see Mrs. Chickley, and tell her I am coming to dine and sleep, and shall bring one of my daughters. Dinner, sittingroom, and two bed-rooms, mind. And tell Mrs. Chickley we've got no carpet-bag, and must come upon her wardrobe. All clear to you? Dinner at half-past five going to theatre."

Braintop bowed comprehendingly.

"Now, that fellow goes off chirping," said Mr. Pole to Emilia. "It's just the thing I used to wish to happen to me, when I was his age—my master to call me in and say 'There! go and be jolly.' I dare say the rascal'll order a champagne supper. Poor young chap! let his heart be merry. Ha! ha! heigho!—Too much business is bad for man and boy. I feel better already, if it weren't for my legs. My feet are so cold. Don't you think I'm pretty talkative, my dear?"

"I am glad to hear you talk," said Emilia, striving to look less perplexed than she felt.

He asked her slyly why she had come to London; and she begged that she might speak of it by-and-by; whereat Mr. Pole declared that he intended to laugh them all out of that nonsense. "And what did you say about being in love with him? A doctor in good practice—but you needn't commence by killing me if you do go and marry the fellow. Eh? what is it?"

Emilia was too much entangled herself to attempt to extricate him; and apparently his wish to be enlightened passed away, for he was the next instant searching among his papers for the letter from Riga. Not finding it, he put on his hat.

"Must give up business to-day. Can't do business with a petticoat in the room. I wish the Lord Mayor'd stop them all at Temple Bar. Now we'll go out, and I'll show you a bit of the City."

He offered her his arm, and she noticed that in walking through the office, he was erect, and the few words he spoke were delivered in the peremptory elastic tone of a vigorous man.

"My girls," he said to her in an undertone, "never come here. Well! we don't expect ladies, you know. Different spheres in this world. They mean to be tip-top in society; and quite right too. My dear, I think we'll ride. Do you mind being seen in a cab?"

He asked her hesitatingly: and when Emilia said, "Oh, no! let us ride," he seemed relieved. "I can't see the harm in a cab. Different tastes, in this world. My girls—but, thank the Lord! they've got carriages."

For an hour the merchant and Emilia drove about the City. He showed her all the great buildings, and dilated on the fabulous piles of wealth they represented, taking evident pleasure in her exclamations of astonishment.

"Yes, yes; they may despise us City fellows. I say, 'Come and see,' that's all! Now, look up that court. Do you see three dusty windows on the second floor? That man there could buy up any ten princes in Europe—excepting one or two Austrians or Russians. He wears a coat just like mine."

"Does he?" said Emilia, involuntarily examining the one by her side.

"We don't show our gold-linings, in the City, my dear."

"But, you are rich, too."

"Oh! I—as far as that goes. Don't talk about me. I'm—I'm still cold in the feet. Now, look at that corner house. Three months ago that man was one of our most respected City merchants. Now he's a bankrupt, and can't show his head. It was all rotten. A medlar! He tampered with documents; betrayed trusts. What do you think of him?"

"What was it he did?" asked Emilia.

Mr. Pole explained, and excused him; then he explained, and abused him.

"He hadn't a family, my dear. Where did the money go? He's called a rascal now, poor devil! Business brings awful temptations. You think, this'll save me! You catch hold of it and it snaps. That'll save me; but you're too heavy, and the roots give way, and down you go lower and lower. Lower and lower! The gates of hell must be very low down if one of our bankrupts don't reach 'em." He spoke this in a deep underbreath. "Let's get out of the City. There's no air. Look at that cloud. It's about over Brookfield, I should say."

"Dear Brookfield!" echoed Emilia, feeling her heart fly forth to sing like a skylark under the cloud.

"And they're not satisfied with it," murmured Mr. Pole, with a voice of unwonted bitterness.

At the hotel, he was received very cordially by Mrs. Chickley, and Simon, the old waiter.

"You look as young as ever, ma'am," Mr. Pole complimented her cheerfully, while he stamped his feet on the floor, and put forward Emilia as one of his girls; but immediately took the landlady aside, to tell her that she was "merely a charge—a ward—something of that sort;" admitting, gladly enough, that she was a very nice young lady. "She's a genius, ma'am, in music:—going to do wonders. She's not one of them." And Mr. Pole informed Mrs. Chickley that when they came to town, they usually slept in one or other of the great squares. He, for his part, preferred old quarters: comfort versus grandeur.

Simon had soon dressed the dinner-table. By the time dinner was ready, Mr. Pole had sunk into such a condition of drowsiness, that it was hard to make him see why he should be aroused, and when he sat down, fronting Emilia, his eyes were glazed, and he complained that she was scarcely visible.

"Some of your old yellow seal, Simon. That's what I want. I haven't got better at home."

The contents of this old yellow seal formed the chief part of the merchant's meal. Emilia was induced to drink two full glasses.

"Doesn't that make your feet warm, my dear?" said Mr. Pole.

"It makes me want to talk," Emilia confessed.

"Ah! we shall have some fun to-night. 'To-the-rutte-ta-to!' If you could only sing, 'Begone dull care!' I like glees: good, honest, English, manly singing for me! Nothing like glees and madrigals, to my mind. With chops and baked potatoes, and a glass of good stout, they beat all other music."

Emilia sang softly to him.

When she had finished, Mr. Pole applauded her mildly.

"Your music, my dear?"

"My music: Mr. Runningbrook's words. But only look. He will not change a word, and some of the words are so curious, they make me lift my chin and pout. It's all in my throat. I feel as if I had to do it on tiptoe. Mr. Runningbrook wrote the song in ten minutes."

"He can afford to—comes of a family," said Mr. Pole, and struck up a bit of "Celia's Arbour," which wandered into "The Soldier Tired," as he came bendingly, both sets of fingers filliping, toward Emilia, with one of those ancient glee—suspensions, "Taia—haia—haia—haia," etc., which were meant for jolly fellows who could bear anything.

"Eh?" went Mr. Pole, to elicit approbation in return.

Emilia smoothed the wrinkles of her face, and smiled.

"There's nothing like Port," said Mr. Pole. "Get little Runningbrook to write a song: 'There's nothing like Port.' You put the music. I'll sing it."

"You will," cried Emilia.

"Yes, upon my honour! now my feet are warmer, I by Jingo! what's that?" and again he wore that strange calculating look, as if he were being internally sounded, and guessed at his probable depth. "What a twitch! Something wrong with my stomach. But a fellow must be all right when his spirits are up. We'll be off as quick as we can. Taia—haihaia—hum. If the farce is bad, it's my last night of theatre-going."

The delight at being in a theatre kept Emilia dumb when she gazed on the glittering lights. After an inspection of the house, Mr. Pole kindly remarked: "You must marry and get out of this. This'd never do. All very well in the boxes: but on the stage—oh, no! I shouldn't like you to be there. If my girls don't approve of the doctor, they shall look out somebody for you. I shouldn't like you to be painted, and rigged out; and have to squall in this sort of place. Stage won't do for you. No, no!"

Emilia replied that she had given up the stage; and looked mournfully at the drop-scene, as at a lost kingdom, scarcely repressing her tears.

The orchestra tuned and played a light overture. She followed up the windings of the drop-scene valley, meeting her lover somewhere beneath the castle-ruin, where the river narrowed and the trees intertwined. On from dream to dream the music carried her, and dull fell the first words of the farce. Mr. Pole said, "Now, then!" and began to chuckle. As the farce proceeded, he grew more serious, repeating to Emilia, quite anxiously: "I wonder whether that boy Braintop's enjoying it." Emilia glanced among the sea of heads, and finally eliminated the head of Braintop, who was respectfully devoting his gaze to the box she occupied. When Mr. Pole had been assisted to discover him likewise, his attention alternated between Braintop and the stage, and he expressed annoyance from time to time at the extreme composure of Braintop's countenance. "Why don't the fellow laugh? Does he think he's listening to a sermon?" Poor Braintop, on his part, sat in mortal fear lest his admiration of Emilia was perceived. Divided? between this alarming suspicion, and a doubt that the hair on his forehead was not properly regulated, he became uneasy and fitful in his deportment. His imagination plagued him with a sense of guilt, which his master's watchfulness of him increased. He took an opportunity to furtively to eye himself in a pocket-mirror, and was subsequently haunted by an additional dread that Emilia might have discovered the instrument; and set him down as a vain foolish dog. When he saw her laugh he was sure of it. Instead of responding to Mr. Pole's encouragement, he assumed a taciturn aspect worthy of a youthful anchorite, and continued to be the spectator of a scene to which his soul was dead.

"I believe that fellow's thinking of nothing but his supper," said Mr. Pole.

"I dare say he dined early in the day," returned Emilia, remembering how hungry she used to be in the evenings of the potatoe-days.

"Yes, but he might laugh, all the same." And Mr. Pole gave Emilia the sound advice: "Mind you never marry a fellow who can't laugh."

Braintop saw Emilia smile. Then, in an instant, her face changed its expression to one of wonder and alarm, and her hands clasped together tightly. What on earth was the matter with her? His agitated fancy, centred in himself, now decided that some manifestation of most shocking absurdity had settled on his forehead, or his hair, for he was certain of his neck-tie. Braintop had recourse to his pocket-mirror once more. It afforded him a rapid interchange of glances with a face which he at all events could distinguish from the mass, though we need not.

The youth was in the act of conveying the instrument to its retreat, when conscience sent his eyes toward Emilia, who, to his horror, beckoned to him, and touched Mr. Pole, entreating him to do the same. Mr. Pole gesticulated imperiously, whereat Braintop rose, and requested his neighbour to keep his seat for ten minutes, as he was going into that particular box; and "If I don't come back in ten minutes, I shall stop there," said Braintop, a little grandly, through the confusion of his ideas, as he guessed at the possible reasons for the summons.

Emilia had seen her father in the orchestra. There he sat, under the leader, sullenly fiddling the prelude to the second play, like a man ashamed, and one of the beaten in this world. Flight had been her first thought. She had cause to dread him. The more she lived and the dawning knowledge of what it is to be a woman in the world grew with her, the more she shrank from his guidance, and from reliance on him. Not that she conceived him designedly base; but he outraged her now conscious delicacy, and what she had to endure as a girl seemed unbearable to her now. Besides, she felt a secret shuddering at nameless things, which made her sick of the thought of returning to him and his Jew friends. But, alas! he looked so miserable—a child of harmony among the sons of discord! He kept his head down, fiddling like a machine. The old potatoe-days became pathetically edged with dead light to Emilia. She could not be cruel. "When I am safe," she laid stress on the word in her mind, to awaken blessed images, "I will see him often, and make him happy; but I will let him know that all is well with me now, and that I love him always."

So she said to Mr. Pole, "I know one of those in the orchestra. May I write a word to him on a piece of paper before we go? I wish to."

Mr. Pole reflected, and seeing her earnest in her desire to do this, replied: "Well, yes; if you must—the girls are not here."

Emilia borrowed his pencil-case, and wrote:—

"Sandra is well, and always loves her caro papa, and is improving, and will see him soon. Her heart is full of love for him and for her mama; and if they leave their lodgings they are to leave word where they go. Sandra never forgets Italy, and reads the papers. She has a copy of the score of an unknown opera by our Andronizetti, and studies it, and anatomy, English, French, and pure Italian, and can ride a horse. She has made rich friends, who love her. It will not be long, and you will see her."

The hasty scrawl concluded with numerous little caressing exclamations in Italian diminutives. This done, Emilia thought: "But he will look up and see me!" She resolved not to send it till they were about to quit the theatre. Consequently, Braintop, on his arrival, was told to sit down. "You don't look cheerful in the pit," said Mr. Pole. "You're above it?—eh? You're all alike in that. None of you do what your dads did. Up-up-up? You may get too high, eh?—Gallery?" and Mr. Pole winked knowingly and laughed.

Braintop, thus elevated, tried his best to talk to Emilia, who sat half fascinated with the fear of seeing her father lift his eyes and recognize her suddenly. She sat boldly in the front, as before; not being a young woman to hide her head where there was danger, and having perhaps a certain amount of the fatalism which is often youth's philosophy in the affairs of life. "If this is to be, can I avert it?"

Mr. Pole began to nod at the actors, heavily. He said to Emilia, "If there is any fun going on, give me a nudge." Emilia kept her eyes on her father in the orchestra, full of pity for his deplorable wig, in which she read his later domestic history, and sad tales of the family dinners.

"Do you see one of those"—she pointed him out to Braintop; "he is next to the leader, with his back to us. Are you sure? I want you to give him this note before he goes; when we go. Will you do it? I shall always be thankful to you."

Considering what Braintop was ready to do that he might be remembered for a day and no more, the request was so very moderate as to be painful to him.

"You will leave him when you have given it into his hand. You are not to answer any questions," said Emilia.

With a reassuring glance at the musician's wig, Braintop bent his head.

"Do see," she pursued, "how differently he bows from the other men, though it is only dance music. Oh, how his ears are torn by that violoncello! He wants to shriek:—he bears it!"

She threw a piteous glance across the agitated instruments, and Braintop was led to inquire: "Is he anything particular?"

"He can bring out notes that are more like honey—if you can fancy a thread of honey drawn through your heart as if it would never end! He is Italian."

Braintop modestly surveyed her hair and brows and cheeks, and taking the print of her eyes on his brain to dream over, smelt at a relationship with the wry black wig, which cast a halo about it.

The musicians laid down their instruments, and trooped out, one by one. Emilia perceived a man brush against her father's elbow. Her father flicked at his offended elbow with the opposite hand, and sat crumpled up till all had passed him: then went out alone. That little action of disgust showed her that he had not lost spirit, albeit condemned to serve amongst an inferior race, promoters of discord.

Just as the third play was opening, some commotion was seen in the pit, rising from near Braintop's vacated seat; and presently a thing that shone flashing to the lights, came on from hand to hand, each hand signalling subsequently toward Mr. Pole's box. It approached. Braintop's eyes were in waiting on Emilia, who looked sadly at the empty orchestra. A gentleman in the stalls, a head beneath her, bowed, and holding up a singular article, gravely said that he had been requested to pass it. She touched Mr. Pole's shoulder. "Eh? anything funny?" said he, and glanced around. He was in time to see Braintop lean hurriedly over the box, and snatch his pocket-mirror from the gentleman's hand. "Ha! ha!" he laughed, as if a comic gleam had illumined him. A portion of the pit and stalls laughed too. Emilia smiled merrily. "What was it?" said she; and perceiving many faces beneath her red among handkerchiefs, she was eager to see the thing that the unhappy Braintop had speedily secreted.

"Come, sir, let's see it!" quoth Mr. Pole, itching for a fresh laugh; and in spite of Braintop's protest, and in defiance of his burning blush, he compelled the wretched youth to draw it forth, and be manifestly convicted of vanity.

A shout of laughter burst from Mr. Pole. "No wonder these young sparks cut us all out. Lord, what cunning dogs they are! They ain't satisfied with seeing themselves in their boots, but they—ha! ha! By George! We've got the best fun in our box. I say, Braintop! you ought to have two, my boy. Then you'd see how you looked behind. Ha-ha-hah! Never enjoyed an evening so much in my life! A looking-glass for their pockets! ha! ha!—hooh!"

Luckily the farce demanded laughter, or those parts of the pit which had not known Braintop would have been indignant. Mr. Pole became more and more possessed by the fun, as the contrast of Braintop's abject humiliation with this glaring testimony to his conceit tickled him. He laughed till he complained of hunger. Emilia, though she thought it natural that Braintop should carry a pocket-mirror if he pleased, laughed from sympathy; until Braintop, reduced to the verge of forbearance, stood up and remarked that, to perform the mission entrusted to him, he must depart immediately. Mr. Pole was loth to let him go, but finally commending him to a good supper, he sighed, and declared himself a new man.

"Oh! what a jolly laugh! The very thing I wanted! It's worth hundreds to me. I was queer before: no doubt about that!"

Again the ebbing convulsion of laughter seized him. "I feel as clear as day," he said; and immediately asked Emilia whether she thought he would have strength to get down to the cab. She took his hand, trying to assist him from the seat. He rose, and staggered an instant. "A sort of reddish cloud," he murmured, feeling over his forehead. "Ha! I know what it is. I want a chop. A chop and a song. But, I couldn't take you, and I like you by me. Good little woman!" He patted Emilia's shoulder, preparatory to leaning on it with considerable weight, and so descended to the cab, chuckling ever and anon at the reminiscence of Braintop.

There was a disturbance in the street. A man with a foreign accent was shouting by the door of a neighbouring public-house, that he would not yield his hold of the collar of a struggling gentleman, till the villain had surrendered his child, whom he scandalously concealed from her parents. A scuffle ensued, and the foreign voice was heard again:

"Wat! wat you have de shame, you have de pluck, ah! to tell me you know not where she is, and you bring me a letter? Ho!—you have de cheeks to tell me!"

This highly effective pluralizing of their peculiar slang, brought a roar of applause from the crowd of Britons.

"Only a street row," said Mr. Pole, to calm Emilia.

"Will he be hurt?" she cried.

"I see a couple of policemen handy," said Mr. Pole, and Emilia cowered down and clung to his hand as they drove from the place.

THE END OF VOLUME-3

***Free*editorial** 