

when I found you in Queer-street yonder. But you were drinking something stronger. Aha! you were having Soda-and-B. Take my advice, young sir, and avoid aerated waters qualified with spirits in the morning. *There's no hope for a brandy-and-soda man.*"

He uttered these words in a tone of deep earnestness, approaching solemnity, and that is why I have put them in italics. On Charley asking him why the case of a person imbibing the stimulant he had denounced must be considered hopeless, the little old gentleman went on,

"Because brandy-and-soda-water men die. Your Tommy wants his friends—bless 'em all!—to live. If you only knew the agonies of mind I've suffered through the prevalence of 'pegg-ing' with Soda-and-B. in the Bengal Squadron and the Eighteenth Rifles, you'd pity your Tommy, you would indeed."

"Well," answered Charley good-humoredly, "I'll promise to live, and not 'peg' any more before noon, if that will suit you."

"It will indeed, Charles Saxon," the little old gentleman replied, as he produced a box of exquisitely odorous havanas. "I suppose you smoke. All you army gentlemen do; and I rather encourage it, as I am led, from observation, to the conviction that smoking rather discourages 'pegg-ing' than otherwise. Now, light up your cigar, and listen to me; and, if I'm rude, you mustn't be angry with your Tommy. Nobody's angry with their Tommy; he's such a Duck."

A duck in a curly brown wig and gold-rimmed spectacles—a duck with false teeth, and deeply pitted with the smallpox—is somewhat, it must be admitted, of a *rara avis*; but "my Tommy" was evidently a character, and Charley promised that he would not be angry with him, whatever he might say.

What did he say? That, for the present, must remain a mystery; but all will be duly explained in the sequel.

Charley Saxon turned very steady shortly after the period of his first interview with Mr. Bantam Cox in Good-Gracious-street. He wrote a series of the most beautifully penitent letters home to his papa, the Rector of Rawley-cum-Crew, stating that he had at last awakened to the errors of his past life, and that he was inflexibly determined for the future to lead a new one. Furthermore he conveyed to his parents the gratifying intelligence that he had obtained "something to do in the City," and that the something was of a nature to secure him, if sedulously pursued, a reasonable competence; nay, that eventually perhaps it might lead to the acquisition on his part of a handsome fortune. What the "something" in the City was, and whether he had gone on the Stock Exchange, or had become a shipbroker, or had received the appointment of Chamberlain to the Corporation of London, the repentant prodigal omitted to state; but that his civic avocations were of a remunerative kind became speedily and gratifyingly apparent to his affectionate relatives at Rawley-cum-Crew, by his sending his mother, as a birthday present, a fifty-pound note of the crispest texture and the newest impression. Soon afterwards he made his papa even a larger remittance, in a letter in which he told his parent that it was a shame that his clerical duties should be longer interfered with, and his well-deserved leisure by having to attend to the education of his brother Jack; and that, as things in the City were now going very well with him, he was delighted to enclose the wherewithal for the dispatch of Jack to Cheam School, and his maintenance at that celebrated place of education, for two years. To the four tall young women, his sisters, he was in degree equally munificent. At least, they were no longer forced to wear turned gowns, to don coloured hose in default of being able to afford white stockings, or to mend their gloves until scarcely any of the original fabric remained. Everybody rejoiced over this thorough reformation of the black sheep. Who does not, indeed, to see the black sheep washed white, especially when it is not we who have had to pay for the carbolic-acid soap and the scrubbing-brushes?

In London, Charley Saxon eschewed the ornate and irreverent regions of the West-end, and dwelt in the peaceful shades of Clapham, occupying indeed a tranquil first floor furnished, not a hundred miles from this blissful thoroughfare known as Philomel-lane, and where the landlady—her husband was an elder of Pisgah Chapel—Original Mumpers'—connection in Good-Gracious-street—declared him to be for morality, decorum, sweetness of temper, and earliness of hours, a model to all single gentlemen present and to come. In his payments he was as punctual as the Bank of England; an establishment which has, I believe, earned some renown for its promptitude and accuracy in monetary matters; and he drank milk-and-water and ate hard-boiled eggs for breakfast on Sunday, in order to avoid wounding the theological scruples of the worthy folks with whom he dwelt. Ah! he was indeed a pattern—this erst careless and profligate subaltern, late of the Hundred and Fiftieth Foot. He still kept up his subscription at his club, but rarely entered that haunt of dissipation and emporium of idle and frivolous conversation. The billiard-rooms and the Burlington-arcade, the Alhambra and the Argyle, the Grand Stand at Epsom and the stalls of the Royal Enormity Theatre, knew him no more. Ah! he had become a changed, a very changed young man. The fellows in Pall Mall laughed, and said that Charley Saxon had turned Methodist parson. When, by chance, the convert met any of the fellows in the street, he

would cast his eyes down, and cross over to the other side.

You will remember that Pisgah Chapel was on the side opposite to that which was the side of Happy Villa, flanked by a handsome mansion in the suburban style of florid gothic architecture. This residence was styled Chalcedon Lodge, and at Chalcedon Lodge lived the two Miss Murryams, ancient ladies of independent means, with whom resided their orphan niece, Miss Ruth Clodestowe, a buxom young person with brown hair and pretty gray eyes, and who was now verging upon two-and-twenty years of age. She had been a ward in Chancery, and the Lord Chancellor for the time being might well be proud of being guardian to such a ward, seeing that she was as good as she was pretty, and was now absolute mistress of a hundred and fifty thousand pounds. This comfortable peculium had been bequeathed to his only daughter by her papa deceased, who was—well, something in the City. I should be wantonly and wickedly deceiving you if I were to assert that, in addition to being good, pretty, and wealthy, Miss Ruth Clodestowe was clever. Quite the contrary. She was a fool: a fact which did not in the slightest degree militate against her having the heart that could feel for another—against her being an excellent housekeeper, and altogether a very companionable little body. My calm conviction has long been that, in the vast majority of happy marriages, the wife has been a fool. From my point of view, I mean: there are fools and fools. Still, it would never do for the husband to be a fool as well as his spouse.

Mr. T. Bantam Cox was on very friendly terms with the ladies of Chalcedon Lodge. Indeed, he was the landlord of the Miss Murryams, and had built Chalcedon Lodge at his own cost and charges years before, and, unless I am very much mistaken, the freehold of Pisgah Chapel was also his property. His relations with his tenants being of a friendly as well as of a business nature, what could be more natural than that this Tommy should have the honor to introduce to them his particular and estimable friend, Mr. Charles Saxon? "Once in the army—Captain Saxon—connected with the very first families and that sort of thing," Mr. Bantam Cox whispered to the ancient maiden ladies, while Charley was talking genteel platitudes to Miss Ruth Clodestowe about Pisgah Chapel, Exeter Hall, and the last meeting of the branch Society for establishing Missions among the Fantail Indians. The old ladies did not mind the fact of Mr. Saxon's having been in the army; since to that information Mr. Bantam Cox added the hint that he was now engaged in the City, and doing remarkably well. They looked upon him, now that he had done with a mundane and sinful career, as a brand snatched from the burning, and rejoiced exceedingly. As for Ruth, she rather liked the notion of the young gentleman, whose moustaches had been so cleanly shaved off, having been once a captain. She liked his eyes, his teeth, the color of his hair, his mild and caressing—albeit strictly respectful—conversation. She liked his very hands and fliberty-shaped finger-nails, the way he had of pinning his scarf, and toying with his watch-chain. She liked him, and everything that was his; and being a fool, she fell over head and ears, there and then, in love with Charley Saxon.

They were married, not at Pisgah Chapel, but, as was sufficiently customary with the denizens of Good-Gracious-street, at old St. Jumpus's parish church, Newington. There were no less than eighteen clarences, two glass-coaches, and a miniature brougham in the marriage procession; and several young ladies fainted away in the gallery previous to the final tying of the nuptial knot. The grandest of wedding breakfasts took place at Chalcedon Lodge, but prior to the commencement of the banquet Mr. T. Bantam Cox took Charley Saxon aside into the back drawing-room, and thus bespoke him:

"Young sir, I think your Tommy has now done the right thing in this matter. He's made you the husband of a pretty girl—never mind her being a fool—with a hundred and fifty thousand pounds for her fortune, every shilling of which is settled on herself; but which, invested in the elegant simplicity of the Three per cents, will yield interest to the amount of some four thousand five hundred a year: quite enough, I should say, to enable you to keep house, and to have a pretty large balance over for pocket-money. Now, young sir, do you know what you've got to do?"

"Why," replied Charley with a loud laugh, "I've got to return you the shilling you paid for the Soda-and-B. at the refreshment room at Charing-cross, and which, 'pon my word, has never entered my head from that morning to this."

"You owe me a great deal more than that," retorted the little old gentleman sternly. "Vain and inconsequential youth, do you know who I am?"

"Why, my Tommy, and a very capital fellow," the bridegroom replied with another laugh, and slapping his benefactor heartily on the back.

"Don't do that," the little old gentleman rejoined. "I'm asthmatical, and I don't like it. Of course I'm your Tommy, and you're very fond of me. Everybody's fond of their Tommy. But I'm something more than that. I'm a wolf, I'm a vampire, I'm a devouring lion."

"A what?" cried Charley.

"I'm your only and most Rapacious Creditor, and I want from you the sum of three thousand five hundred and seventeen pounds sixteen shillings and eleven-pence three-farthings, with

interest at the rate of five per centum per annum. I've paid all your executions; I've settled with all your tradespeople; I've bought up all your bills, unknown to you; and if you don't pay me, I'll have out a Debtor's Summons in Bankruptcy against you before you're twenty-four hours older. And that's what's for breakfast."

"So this is why the old gentleman paid! Of course Charley had to pay him, interest and all; but there was a very comfortable balance remaining on the right side.

TIRED MOTHERS.

A little elbow leans upon your knee,
Your tired knee, that has so much to bear;
A child's dear eyes are looking lovingly
From underneath a thatch of tangled hair.
Perhaps you do not heed the velvet touch
Of warm moist fingers, folding yours so tight:
You do not prize this blessing over much,
You almost are too tired to pray to-night.

But it is blessedness! A year ago
I did not see it as I do to-day—
We are so dull and thankless, and so slow
To catch the sunshine till it slips away.
And now it seems surpassing strange to me,
That, while I wore the badge of motherhood,
I did not kiss more oft and tenderly,
The little child that brought me only good.

And if, some night, when you sit down to rest,
You miss this elbow from your tired knee;
This restless, curling head from off your breast,
This lisping tongue that chatters constantly;
If from your own the dimpled hands had slipped,
And ne'er would nestle in your palm again;
If the white feet into their grave had tripped
I could not blame you for your heartache then!

I wonder so that mothers ever fret
At little children clinging to their gown;
Or that the footprints when the days are wet,
Are ever black enough to make them frown.
If I could find a little muddy boot,
Or cap, or jacket on my chamber floor:
If I could kiss a rosy, restless foot,
And hear its patter in my home once more;

If I could mend a broken cart to-day,
To-morrow make a kite to reach the sky—
There is no woman in God's world could say
She was more blissfully content than I.
But ah! the dainty pillow next my own
Is never rumpled by a shining head;
My singing birdling from its nest is flown;
The little boy I used to kiss is dead!

MY GREATEST FRIGHT.

AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF ANTHONY
ALDRED, ESQ., B.A.

I do not think I am naturally timid. Certainly as a baby I was not, and it is, I imagine, at that age that the native disposition, unaltered by educational influences, is at its best and purest. In fact, at that age I was positively rash. So little fear had I—taking fear in the old Greek sense as 'the expectation of evil'—that I actually on one occasion put my finger into the candle. Even at a later age I was so little of a coward, that I more than once was known to play with matches.

It is true that by the time I went to school this foolish temerity had in some measure worn off. I was no longer like a bull, ready with shut eyes to charge at everything; but those who were with me at Dr. Tickletoy's Academy will remember that I there gave evidence of a courage above, rather than below, the average. If in the two or three fights in which I was engaged in the interest of school discipline, my opponents were somewhat smaller than myself, this was the result, not of any timidity on my part, but of Dr. Tickletoy's system of education, which was deliberately calculated to develop the intellectual at the expense of the physical side of a boy's nature. And if, as I hear has been actually done more than once, my enemies—for, alas, I have some!—should point in a depreciatory manner to the occurrence in farmer Turmut's orchard, when I led the gallant band of juvenile apple-hunters in swift retreat before the face of the awakened farmer, I would simply answer that this was in itself an evidence of no common presence of mind. At least 'three other courses' were open to me. I might, as other boys have been known to do on similar occasions, have fallen flat upon my face and howled. Or I might, like an Irish patriot, have crept into the nearest cabbage-bed. Or, finally, clinging to the knees of the enraged agriculturist, I might have humiliated myself to implore his forgiveness. As it was, however, I conducted to a successful issue a sudden and masterly retreat; thereby proving myself to possess, not only a presence of mind which is and can be allied only with the highest courage, but also qualities for the conduct of irregular warfare, which would have made my fame amongst the ancient Parthians or the modern guerillas.

It, of course, followed naturally, in the devel-

opment of what I must be permitted to call a singularly harmonious nature, that, on attaining to years of discretion, I restrained my courage within discreet limits. In fact, this quality then matured into that true manliness which is rash neither from ignorance nor from the confidence of experience, nor, again, from mere physical exuberance, but is calm to meet any crisis which it becomes a man to meet; whilst at the same time fully appreciating their danger. Thus, at Oxford, I never shirked a compulsory examination. When put down for the college eight, I never attempted to evade my duty. And yet, in both cases, I was intimately penetrated with a just sense of the danger before me—in the one instance of a 'pluck,' in the other of a 'crab.' And so on in all the various concerns of University life.

And here is, perhaps, the place to make a confession which, though to a certain extent humiliating, will, I think, convince the reader of my literal honesty, and induce him to believe that in all I write about myself, I err rather on the side of a defective than of an excessive self-appreciation. I must with shame and sorrow own, that in one important respect—moral, it is true, rather than physical—I have been, and I am afraid always shall be, something of a poltroon; I mean in my relations to the gentler sex. Whether it is that my admiration for these beings, partaking, as it does, of the nature of worship, begets something in my mind of the dread of the devotee, I do not know. The fact remains that I have never been introduced to a lady without at the same instant becoming aware of a sudden failure of strength in my knees, and a corresponding faltering of my voice. I am told that I blush. I know that I feel very hot. Simultaneously I have a general sensation that I should rather like to be a blot upon a tablecloth instead of a human being.

It may be in some measure due to this constitutional weakness that, though now past forty, possessed of a good income, and certainly not uglier than most men, I still remain unmarried. It is true I have had my flirtations, each one of which I meant seriously enough. But, somehow, before I could ever bring myself to the point of a declaration, some more active and less emotional rival has always stepped before me and carried off the prize. Of course I have my consolation in thinking, or rather knowing, that the fair one never could have loved me, in the true sense of the word, or she would have preferred to pine away into the palest and most shadowy old-maidhood before accepting any one but myself. This consolation however, it must be acknowledged, is after all, as Admetus expresses himself, 'a cold delight;' and, as far as I am concerned, I should, on the whole, be content with less love and more matrimony.

I think I ought now to tell you how I came to go to Ireland, where the incidents I am about to relate occurred. The fact is, my poor father, who had suffered for many years from 'hereditary hip-joint'—this is what I understood the doctor to call his disease, but I may be mistaken—died almost immediately after I took my degree at Oxford—a matter of six good years, as I was always weak in divinity. Some said it was the shock of so unexpected and joyful an event that killed him. I hope not, as if I had anticipated such a result, it would have been no trouble in the world to me to have postponed taking my degree indefinitely. The consequence was, that at the age of twenty-five I succeeded to the family property, which was situated partly in England and partly in Ireland. The English part of it, on which my poor father resided, was in good-enough order—ring-fence, sub-soil drainage, and all that. Not so, however, the Irish. The fact is, no one had been near it for some years. My father's 'hereditary hip-joint' incapacitated him for much motion, especially in the direction of Irish bogs. So the Irish estate had been quite neglected. Its nominal rental was nearly a thousand a year; but as the man who used to collect the rents had been 'potted' from behind a hedge, no money had reached us for some years before my father's death. When, however, this event took place, my nearest relative, General Fersfelle—my uncle—had decided in solemn family conclave (of two) that I must go to Ireland, "in order," as he expressed himself, "to put matters on a sound footing. They are a set of rascals over there," he said, getting very red in the face, as was his wont when excited. "They'd as soon stick a knife into you as look at you, the scoundrels! You must, therefore, go over there, go Anthony."

I confess that, though I had studied logic at Oxford, I hardly saw the *sequitur* which seemed so convincing to my uncle. Why, because "the scoundrels would as soon stick a knife into you as look at you," I was necessarily to "go over there," I confess was not at the first blush so evident to me as I could have desired. It is true that, as my Scotch cousin, old Mrs. McCallum Nye, suggested, my uncle is my heir presumptive; but the idea thus conjured up is altogether too shocking, and could only have originated over very strong green tea. For my part, I have long since come to the conclusion that what my good uncle, who, as a military man, cannot be expected to talk with as much precision as he acts, really meant was: "These Irish are troublesome fellows, and it requires a man of your energy and courage, my dear Anthony, to keep them in proper order." At least, this is how I should have expressed myself under similar circumstances.

The upshot of this conversation was that, to keep up my reputation with my uncle, I determined to visit my Irish property. I resolved, however, to go armed to the teeth—that is to