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"Last autuam."
"Then I wender we never met," the young man put in, with another sunshing smile. "I was working on that canal every day of my life from November to Jan-

CHAPTER I

AN ACCIDENTAL MEETING 'Twas a dejected, dispirited, sheepish looking throng that gathered one black Wednesday round the big back door in Burlington gardens, for it was taking away day at the Royal academy.

For weeks before that annual holocaust many anxious hearts have waited and watched in eager suspense for the final verdict of the hanging committee. To hang or not to hang-that is the question. But on taking away day the terrible flat at last arrives, the committee regret—on a lithographed form-that want of space compels them to decline Mr. So-and-so's oil painting, "The Fall of Babylon," or Miss Whatshername's water color, "By Leafy Thames," and politely inform them that they may remove them at their leisure and at their own expense from Burlington House by the back door aforesaid.

Then follows a sad ceremony. The rejected flock together to recover their slighted goods and keep one another company in their hour of humiliation. It is a community of grief, a fellowship in misery Each is only sustained from withering under the observant eyes of his neighbor by the inward consciousness that that neighbor himself, after all, is in the selfsame box and has been the recipient that day of an identical letter. Nevertheless, it was some consolation to Kathleen Hesslegrave in her disappointment to observe the varying moods and shifting humors of her fellow sufferers among the relected. She had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and it lightened her trouble somewhat to watch among the crowd the different funny ways in which other peo-ple bore or concealed their own disappoint ment for her edification. There were sun dry young men, for example, with long hair down their backs and loose collars of truly Byronic expansiveness, whom Kath leen at once recognized as unacclaimed geniuses belonging to the very newest and extremest school of modern impressionism.

They hailed from Newlyn. These lordly louls, budding Raphaels of the future,

strolled into the big room with a careless

air of absolute unconcern, as who should wonder they had ever deigned to submit their immortal works to the arbitramen of a mere everyday hanging committee, and they affected to feel very little surprise indeed at finding that a vulgar bourgeois world had disdained their efforts. They disdained the vulgar bourgeois world in return with contempt at compound in-terest visibly written on their sesthetic features. Others, older and shabbier, slunk in unobserved and shouldered their canvases, mostly unobtrusive landscapes, with every appearance of antique familiarity It was not the first time they had received that insult. Yet others, again—and these were chiefly young girls—advanced, blush-ing and giggling a: little from suppressed nervousness, to recover with shame their alued property. Here and there, too a big burly shouldered man elbowed his way through the crowd as though the place belonged to him and hauled off his magnum opus—generally a huge field of historical canvas, "King Edward at Calais" or "The Death of Attila"—with a defiant face which seemed to bode no good to the first academician he might chance to run against on his way down Bond street. A few, on the contrary, were anxious to explain, with unnecessary loudness of voice, that they hadn't sent in them-

distracted her attention for the time from her own poor picture. At last she found herself almost the only person remaining out of that jostling crowd, with a sailor looking man, brown

varied moods with quiet amusement. It

and bronzed, beside her.
"'In a Side Canal,' Kathleen Hesslegrave. Yes, this is yours, mum," the por-ter said gruffly. 'But you'll want a man to take it down to the cab for you."

Kathleen glanced at her little arms. They were not very strong, to be sure. though plump and shapely. Then she looked at the porter. But the porter stood tunnoved. With a struggling little effort Kathleen tried to lift it. "In a Side Canal" was a tolerably big picture, and she failed to manage it. The sailor looking body by her side raised his hat, with a smile. His face was brown and weather beaten, but he had beautiful teeth, very white and regular, and when he smiled he showed them. He looked like a gentleman, too, though he was so roughly dressed, with a sailor's roughness. "May I help with a sailor's roughness. "May I you?" he asked as he raised his hat.



"May I help you?" he asked. two seem to be the last. I suppose because we were more modestly retiring than the rest of them. This is a good big picture." "Yes," Kathleen answered regretfully.
"And it took me a long time to paint it." The sailor boking young man glanced at the subject carelessly. "Oh, Venetian!" he cried. "Why, how odd! We're neighbors. Mine's V netian too. The very next canal. I painted it quite close to San Gi-

"So did I," Kathleen exclaimed, brightening up, a little surprised at the coinci-When were you there?"

uary." He was carrying her picture as he spoke toward the door for a cab. "Oh, how funny!" Kathleen exclaimed, looking closer at his features. "It's queer we never happened to knock up against one another. And we knew so many peonle in Venice too. Used you ever to go to

the Martindales' palazzo? The young man smiled once more, this time a restrained smile of deprecatory modesty. If his teeth were good, he certainly lost no opportunity of showing them. No. I didn't know the Martindales," name. No respecter of persons. Ruthless, e answered very hastily, as if anxious to isclaim the social honor thus thrust upon No. I didn't know the Martindales," disclaim the social honor thus thrust upon by too! him, for the Martindales led Anglo-Venetian society.

"Then perhaps the Chericis?" Kathleen interposed once more, with that innate hu-man desire we all of us feel to find some common point with every stranger we run

"No," her new friend replied, looking graver now. "Nor Countess Cherici either. In point of fact, I may say—except one or two other painter fellows, if I can call myself a painter-I knew nobody in Venice. I was not in society."

"Oh," Kathleen answered, dropping her voice a little, for, though she was a sensible girl, in the circle she had been brought up in not to be in society was considered almost criminal.

The young man noted the sudden drop in her voice, and a curious little line developed itself for a second near the corners of his mouth—an upward line, curving sideways obliquely. It was clear he was made no reply. He only bore the picture gravely to the door of the academy and there tried to call the attention of some passing hansom. But it was clearly useless. They were all engaged already, and the crush at the door was still so great there could be no chance of hiring one for another 10 minutes. So the young man laid down the big picture near the door, with its face propped up against the entrance wall, and saying quietly, "I'll help you in with it by and by when I see any chance." went back to the inner room to recover his own Venetian canvas.

He was gone a minute, and when he returned Kathleen could see he almost osentatiously set his own picture down at some distance from hers, as though he was little anxious to continue the conversation. She was sorry for that. He had seemed so eager to help her with such genuine kindliness, and she was afraid he saw his last remark about not being in society had erected an instinctive class barrier between them. So after a moment's hesitation she left her own work to take care of itself and took a step or two forward toward her new acquiantance's ambitious canvas. 'You saw mine," she said apologetically, by way of reopening conversation. "May I see yours? One likes to sit in judgment on the hanging committee."

The young man seemed pleased. He nad a speaking face and was handsome withside. Yet he seems a gentleman:"
"Oh, he is a gentleman undoubtedly,"
"Oh, he is a gentleman undoubtedly,"

But why on earth didn't they take it?" I fancy." Kathleen cried spontaneously almost as "Who is he soon as she saw it. "What lovely light on dent interest. the surface of the water! And, oh, the

beautiful red sails of those Chioggia fish-"I'm glad you like it," the stranger replied, with evident pleasure, blushing like a girl. "I don't care for criticism as a rule, but I love sincerity, and the way you

selves at all this year—they had called for a picture by a friend, that was all, really. Kathleen stood aside and watched their spoke showed me at once you were really sincere about it. That's a very rare quality about the hardest thing to get in this world, I fancy." "Yes, I was quite sincere," Kathleen an-

wered with truth. "It's a beautiful pic ture. The thing I can't understand is why on earth they should have rejected it."

The young man shrugged his shoulders and made an impatient gesture. "They have so many pictures to judge in so short a time," he answered, with a tolerance which was evidently habitual to him. "It doesn't do to expect too much from buman nature. All men are fallible, with perhaps the trifling exception of the pope. We make mistakes ourselves sometimes, and in landscape especially they have such miles to choose from. Not," he went' on after a short pause, "that I mean to say I consider my own fishing boats good enough to demand success, or even to deserve it. I'm the merest beginner. I was thinking only of the general principle." 'I'm afraid you're a dreadful cynic," Kathleen put in, with a little wave of her pretty gloved hand, just to keep up the conversation. She was still engaged in ooking close into the details of his reject-

nique, it had marked imagination.

The stranger smiled a broader and more genial smile than ever. "Oh, no, not a cynic, I hope," he answered, with emphasis, in a way that left no doubt about his own sincerity. "It isn't cynical, surely, to recognize the plain facts of human nature. We're all of us prone to judge a good deal by the most superficial circumsta Suppose, now, you and I were on the hanging committee ourselves. Just at irst, of course, we'd be frightfully anxious to give every work the fullest and fairest o give every work the fullest and fairest tea this afternoon?" Kathleen suggested, ousideration. Responsibility would burhalf hesitating. "I think mamma sent day we'd be dazed and tired. We'd say: 'Whose is that?' Ah, by So and so's son, a brother R. A. I know his father. Well, it's not badly painted. We'll let it in, I think. What do you say, Jiggamaree!' And then with the next: 'Who's this by, porter? Oh, a fellow called Smith.
Not very distinctive, is it? H'm! We've rejected every bit as good already. Space is getting full. Well, put it away for the present, Jones. We'll mark it doubtful.' present, Jones. We'll mark it doubtell. That's human nature, after all, and what we each of us feel we would do ourselves

we can none of us fairly blame in others."
"But I call that cynicism," Kathleen rsisted, looking up at him. persisted, looking up at him.

If the stranger was a cynic, he had certainly caught the complaint in its most genial form, for he answered at once with perfect good humor: "Oh, no, I don't think so. It's mere acceptance of the facts of life. The cynic assumes a position of

sensure. He implies that human nature foces this, that or the other thing, which he with his higher and purer moral sense would never so much as dream of doing Knowledge of the world is not necessar m. The cynical touch is added to it by want of geniality and of human tol-scance. It is possible for us to know what men and women are like and yet to owe them no grudge for it—to recognize that, after all, we are all of as au fond very He spoke like a gentleman and a man of

culture. Kathleen was a little surprised, how she heard him talk, to find him so much more educated than she had at first fancied, for his rough exterior had rather prejudiced her against the sailor looking stranger. But his voice was so pleasant and his smile so frank that she really quite admired him in spite of his sentiments. She was just going to answer him in defense of human nature, against his supposed strictures, when a voice in the crowd close by distracted her attention. "Why, Miss Hesslegrave, there you are!" it cried. "I wondered if I should see you. Oh, yes, indeed, I also am among the killed and wounded. I've got no fewer than three of them. What, all my pretty ones! A perfect massacre of the innocents! But, there, the hanging committee is as bad as its

"We don't," Kathleen answered, taking the newcomer's hand. "We've only just met here. But your friend's been so kind. He's carried my poor rejected picture down for me, and we're waiting for a cab. It is such a crush, and all of us trying to pre-

I really didn't know you two knew each

tend we don't mind about it!" "Who's cynical now?" the stranger put in, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. 'I do mind very much. It's bread and butter to me, and I don't pretend to conceal it. But I'll leave you now. I see you've found a friend, and I can be of no further service to you." He raised his hat with more grace than Kathleen could have expected from these rough sailorlike clothes. "Goodby," he said. "Mortimer, you'll see

after the picture." The American, for he was one, nodded a polite assent. "How lucky I am, Miss Hesslegrave," he murmured, "to have met amused by her altered demeanor. But he you by accident! And talking to Willoughby too! You can't think what a conquest that is." He glanced with some amusement after the stranger's retreating figure. You know," he said, lowering his voice, "Willoughby's a professed misogynist, or next door to one anyhow. This is the very first time I've ever seen him speaking to a lady. As a rule, he runs away from them the moment he sees one. It was conjectured in Venice among the fellows who knew him he had been what schoolgirls describe as 'crossed in love,' he avoided them so carefully. I suppose the truth is

one of them must have jilted him.' "He was very kind to me," Kathleen interposed quietly. "He saw me struggling with this great big canvas, and he came up to help me and was so nice and polite about it."

"Ah, yes," the American answered, a little lower than before, with a meaning glance, "kind to you, Miss Hesslegrave. That doesn't prove much. Even a confirmed misogynist could hardly be less. We must allow for circumstances."

Kathleen colored a little, but didn't altogether dislike the compliment, for Mortimer was rich-very rich indeed-and the acknowledged catch of the artistic Ameri-"May can colony in Paris. But she turned the subject hastily. "Where did you meet tion, for she moved forward toward the caron and his wife at the door with the him?" she asked, locking down at her tweetest inclination of that white haired

yes, if you like," he answered, "though lim afraid you won't care for it." And he candor, "a born gentleman, though not turned the painted face of the picture to- quite the conventional one. He's as poor as a church mouse, and he's been a sailor, "Who is he?" Kathleen asked, with evi-

> "Ah, who is he? That's the question Mortimer answered mysteriously. "He's a dark horse, I imagine. I picked him up accidently last autumn in Venice. He used to lodge at a tiny Italian trattoria down a side canal, not far from my palazzo, and live off fritura-you know the sort of stuff -fish, flesh and fowl, three meals a pen-

> "How brave of him!" Kathleen said simply. "He looks very nice. And all for art's sake, I suppose, Mr. Mortimer?" The American laughed. "All for poverty's sake, I imagine," he answered, with candor. "So he told me himself. He didn't care so much about art, he said, as about earning a livelihood, and I really believe he starves in his den when he sells

> no pictures." "Why did he run away from us?" Kathleen asked, peering around into the crowd to see if she could discover him.

"Well, to tell you the truth," Mortimer replied. "I think it was mainly because he saw me come up, and also because of the faint intonation in your voice when you said, 'We don't know one another. Willoughby's a misogynist, as I told you, and he's also sensitive—absurdly sensitive -he might almost be one of my fellow countrymen. I don't doubt when you said that he took it as his dismissal. He understood you to mean: 'Now I've done, sir. with you. Here's somebody else I know. You may go about your business.' And being a person who always feels acutely when he's de trop he went about his busied handicraft. Though deficient in techness at once accordingly."
"I'm sorry," Kathleen put in, "for I

really rather liked him." "Oh, he's a thorough good sort," the American answered quickly. "He's sterling, Willoughby is. Not at all the sort of man that's given away with a pound of tea. None of your cotton backed gentlemen. You may test him all through, and you'll find from head to foot he's the genuine material."

"Couldn't you bring him with you to

den us. We would weigh each picture well and reject it only after due deliberation, "Oh, I'm coming," the American an-But human nature can't keep up such a swered, with prompt acquiescence. "I've strain as that for long together. We'd be not forgotten it, Miss Hesslegrave. Is it gin very fresh, but toward the end of the likely I should? Well, no, I don't think so. But as for Willoughby—ah, there, you know, that's quite a different matter. I don't suppose anything on earth would induce him to go to an at home of anybody's. He'd say it was hollow, and he despises hollowness. He'll never go in for anything but realities. To tell you the truth, I think the only reason he spoke to you at all at the academy here this morning was because he saw a chance of being of some practical service to you, and the moment the practical service was perform ed he took the very first opportunity that offered to slip off and leave you. That'

Willoughby all over. He cares for nothin at all in life, except its realities." CHAPTER IL. MRS. HESSLEGRAVE AT HOME. That same afternoon Mrs. Hesslegrave's little rooms in a side street in Kensington were inconveniently crowded. Mrs. Hes-

degrave would have been wounded to the sore had it been otherwise, for though she was poor she was still "in society." Ev-Evmy second Wednesday through the season Mrs. Hesslegrave received. Sooner would the have gone without breakfast and dinner than have failed to fill her rooms for afternoon tea with "the best people." Indeed Mrs. Hesslegrave was the exact andpodes of Arnold Willoughby. 'Twas for the appearances of life she lived, not for its realities. "It would look so well," "It would look so bad," those were the two hrases that rose oftenest to her lips, the

wo phrases that summed up in antithetical simplicity her philosophy of conduct. Therefore it was a small matter to Mrs. lesslegrave that her friends were jostling and hustling each other to their mutual convenience in her tiny lodgings. Their discomfort counted to her for less than othing. It looks se well to have your "at omes" attended. It looks so bad to see them empty, or, worse still, filled by the wrong sort of people.

"Oh, here's that dear Mr. Mortimer," Mrs. Hesslegrave gushed forth, rising with pressement as the young American en-red. "How do you do, Mr. Mortimer? How good of you to come! Kathleen, will you take Mr. Mortimer into the other room o have a cup of tea? I'll introduce you to him, Lady Barnard, as soon as ever he in the vineries, or helping the stable boys, comes back. Such a charming young man!" Mrs. Hesslegrave had smoothed her path in life by the judicious use of that one word "charming." "He's an American, you know, of course, but not the least like most of them. So cultivated and nice and belongs, I'm told, to a first rate old Phila-delphia family. Really, it's quite surprising what charming Americans one meets about nowadays—the best sort, I mean the ladies and gentlemen. You wouldn't believe it, but this young man hasn't the slightest Yankee accent. He speaks like an English officer." Mrs. Hesslegrave's late lamented husband had been a general of artillery, and she looked upon an English officer accordingly as the one recognized model of deportment and character in the two hemispheres. "Besides, he's very well off indeed, they tell me. He's iron in the States and an artist in Paris,

but he practices art for art's sake only, and not as a means of livelihood, like my poor, dear Kathleen. Such a delightful young man! You really must know him. Lady Barnard smiled and in less than 10 minutes was deep in conversation with the "charming" American. And charming he was, to say the truth. For once in its life Mrs. Hesslegrave's overworked adjective of social appreciation was judiciousy applied to a proper object. The rich young American had all the piquant rankness and cordiality of his nation, with all the grace and tact of Parisian society. Moreover, he was an artist, and artists must be surely poor creatures to start with if the mere accidents of their profession don't make them interesting. He was chatting away most brightly to Lady Barnard about the internal gossip of Parisian studios, when the door opened once more, and the neat capped maid with the long white apron announced in her clearest official voice, "Canon and Mrs. Valentine!" Their hostess rose once more quite effu-

sively from her place and advanced toward the newcomers with her best smile of welcome. Mrs. Hesslegrave had no fewer than seven distinct gradations of manner for receiving her guests, and you could gather at once their relative importance in the social scale by observing as they arrived with which of the seven Mrs. Hesslegrave greeted them. It was clear, therefore, that the Valentines were people of distinchead. "Oh, how good of you to come," she cried, clasping the lady's hand in both her own. "I know, Canon Valentine, how very much engaged you are! It is so sweet of you!" The canon was a fat, little, baldheaded man, rather waistless about the middle and with a self satisfied smirk on his smooth red countenance. He had the air of a judge of port and horses. In point of fact, he was a solitary survivor into our alien epoch of the almost extinct type of frankly worldly parson. "Well, we are rather driven, Mrs. Hesslegrave." he admitted, with a sigh-heartless critics might almost have called it a puff-pulling his white tie straight with ostentations scrupulosity. "The beginning of the season, you see torn by conflicting claims. All one's engagements before one! But I've heard such good news-such delight. ful news! I've come here straight, you know, from dear Lady Axminster's." "Ah, yes," Mrs. Hesslegrave echoed

glancing askance toward the American to see if he was listening. "She is so charming, isn't she, Lady Axminster?"
"Quite so," the canon answered. "A very dear old cousin of mine, as you know,

Lady Barnard, and so much cut up about this dreadful business of her scapegrace grandson. Well, we've got a clew of him at last. We really believe we've got a genuine clew to him." "No, you don't mean to say so!" Mrs.

Hesslegrave cried, deeply interested. You would have believed Lady Axminster was er dearest friend, instead of being merely a distant bowing acquaintance. "I thought he had gone off to South Africa or some

"What? A romance of the peerage? the young American asked, pricking up his ears. "A missing lord? A coronet going begging? Lost, stolen or strayed the heir to an earldom! Is that about the size of it?"

"Precisely," the canon answered, turn-ing toward him, half uncertain whether it was right to encourage so flippant a treat-ment of so serious a subject. "You've heard of it no doubt—this unfortunat young man's very awkward disappearance. It's not on his own account, or course, that the family mind. He might have gone off if he chose and nobody would have noticed it. He was always a strange. eccentric sort of person, and for my part, as I say often to dear Lady Axminster, the sooner they could get rid of him the better. But it's for Algy she minds. Poor

Algy Redburn, who meanwhile is being kept out of the family property." "Well, but this is very interesting, you know," Rufus Mortimer interjected as the canon paused. "I haven't heard about this. Tell me how it all happened and why you want a clew. A missing link or a missing earl is always so romantic.'

The canon leaned back luxuriously in his easy chair and sipped at the cup of tea Kathleen Hessiegrave had brought him. "Thank you, my dear," he said, rolling it critically on his palate. "One more lump, if you please. I always had a sweet tooth, though Sir Everard has just out off my sugar. Says I must take saccharin, but there isn't any flavor in it. I'm thankful to say, however, he hasn't cut me off my port, which is always something. Said he to me: 'I'll tell you what it is, canon, if you drink port, you'll have the gout, but if you don't drink port the gout'll have you. So that's highly satisfactory." And the baldheaded old gentleman took another sip at the sweet sirup in his cup, of which the tea itself only formed the me-

dium.

"But how about Lord Axminster?" the imerican persisted, with the insistence of is countrymen.

"Oh, ah, poor Axminster," the canon went on reflectively, stirring the liquid in his cup with his gilt bowled apostle spoon -Mrs. Hesslegrave was by no means rich, and she lived in lodgings, to her shame, during her annual visit to London, but she flattered herself she knew the proper way to provide afternoon tea for the best "I was coming to that. It's a society. sad, bad story. To begin with, you know, every romance of the peerage involves a pedigree. Well, old Lady Axminster —that's my cousin, the dowager—had two sons. The eldest was the late earlnad Axminster, they called him-who married a gypsy girl and was the father sent man, if he is the present of the pre nan—that is to say, if he's still living." "The missing lord, in fact?" Rufus Mor-

timer put in interrogatively. "Quite so," the canon assented, "the missing lord, who is therefore, you will see, my cousin Maria's grandchild. But Maria never cared for the lad. From his childhood upward that boy Bertie had ry. What we want to do is really to prove ideas and habits sadly unbefitting that station in life, etc. He had always a mania for doing some definite work in the ashore on her way out in the Indian ocean world, as he called it—soiling his hands or mending broken chairs, or pottering about the grounds with an ax or a shovel He had the soul of an undergardener. His father was just as bad-picked up wonderful notions about equality and Christian brotherhood and self help, and so forth. But it came out worse in Bertlehis name was Albert. I suppose the gypsy mother had something or other to do with it. I'm a great believer in heredity, you know, Lady Barnard-heredity's everything. If once you let any inferior blood like that into a good old family, there's no knowing what trouble you may be laying in store for yourself.'

"But Galton says," the young American was bold enough to interpose, "that all the vigor and energy of the British aristocracy—when they happen to have anycomes really from their mesalliances, from the handsome, strong and often clever young women of the lower orders-actresses and so forth—whom they occasion-

ally marry." The canon stared hard at him. These might be scientific truths indeed, not unworthy of discussion at the British association, but they ought not to be unex pectedly flung down like bombshells in an nnocent drawing room of aristocratic Kensington. "That may be so," he answered chillily. "I have not read Mr. Galton's argument on the subject with the care nd attention which no doubt it merits But gypsies are gypsies, and monomania omania, with all due respect to scia mor entific authority. So at an early age, as I was about to observe, these bad ancestral raits began to come out in Bertie. He insisted upon it that he ought to do some good work in the world, which was very ight and proper of course. I hope we all of us share his opinion on that score," the canon continued, checking himself and dropping for a moment into his professional manner. "But, then, his unfortunate limitation of view to what I will venture to call the gypsy horizon made him fail to see that the proper work in the world of an English nobleman is—is"—

"To behave as "sich," the irreverent

young American suggested parenthetical-Canon Valentine regarded him with a had a vague suspicion that this bold young man was really trying to chaff him, and ficed clergyman of the Church of England. But he thought it on the whole wisest and most dignified to treat the remark as a serious contribution to a serious conversation. "Quite so," he answered, with a forced smile. "You put it briefly, but succinctly. To fulfill, as far as in him lies, the natural duties and functions of hisahem-exalted position. Bertie didn't see that. He was always stupidly wishing he was a shoemaker or a carpenter. If you make a pair of shoes, he used to say, you do an undoubted and indubitable service to the community at large. A man goes dryshod for a year in your handiwork. If you give a vote in parliament or develop e resources of your own estate, the value of your work for the world, he used often to tell me, was more open to question." "Precisely," the American answered, with a most annoying tone of complete ac

The canon stared at him once more. He expected such singular views as his unfortunate kinsman's to rouse at once every sensible person's reprobation, for he had not yet discovered that the world at large is beginning to demand of every man, be he high or low, that he should justify his presence in a civilized nation by doing some useful work, in one capacity or another, for the community that feeds and clothes and supports him. "Very odd no-tions indeed," he murmured half to himself as a rebuke to the young American "But, then, his father was mad, and his

mother was a gypsy girl."
"So at last Lord Axminster disappear ed?" the American continued, anxious to learn the end of this curious story. "At-last he disappeared," the canon went on somewhat dryly. "He disappeared into space in the most determined fashion Twas like the burnting of a soap bubble He wasn't spirited away. He took good care nobody should ever fancy that. He left a letter behind, saying he was going forth to do some good in the world, and a power of attorney for his grandmother to

Bertie had been engaged to a girl of whom he was passionately fond, but she threw him overboard. I must say myself, though I never cared for the boy, she threw him overboard most cruelly and unjustifiably. In point of fact, between ourselves, she had a better offer—an offer from a marquis—a wealthy marquis. Axminster was poor, for a man in his position, you unstand. These things are relative. And the girl threw him overboard. I won't mention her name, because this is all a family matter, but she is a marchioness now and universally admired, though I must admit she behaved badly to Bertie." 'Shook his faith in women, I expect?'

"Shook his faith in women, I expect?" to his changed position the contrast could not fail to strike him forcibly. Ladies he had once known dashed past him in smart just what he wrote in his last letter. It gave him a distaste for society, he said. He preferred to live henceforth in a wider world, where a man's personal qualities counted for more than his wealth, his

family or his artificial position. I suppos e meant America. "If he did," Mortimer put in, with a neaning smile, "I should reckon he knew

very little about our country.' "And you say you've got a clew?" Mrs. Hesslegrave interposed.

The canon wagged his head. "Ah, that's it," he echoed. "That's just it. What is it? Well, Maria has found out—clever oman, Maria—that he sailed from London three years ago under the assume name of Douglas Overton in a ship whose exact title I don't remember—the Saucy Something-or-other - for Melbourne or Sydney. And now we're in hopes we may ally track him."

"But if you don't care about him and the family's well quit of him," the American interjected, "why on earth do you

want to? Canon Valentine turned to him with an almost shocked expression of counte-nance. "Oh, we don't want to find him," he said in a deprecatory voice. "We don't want to find him. Very much the contraother, from London to Melbourne, went somewhere, we're very much in hopesthat is to say, we fear, or rather we think it possible—that every soul on board her

"Excellent material for a second Tichborne case," Mrs. Hesslegrave suggested.
The canon pursed his lips. "We'll hope not," he answered, "for poor Algy's sake; we'll hope not, Mrs. Hesslegrava. Algy's his cousin. Mad Axminster had one brother, the Honorable Algernon, who was Algy's father. You see, the trouble of it is by going away like this and leaving no address Bertie made it impossible for us to settle his affairs and behave rightly to the family. He's keeping poor Algy out of his own, don't you see? That's just where the trouble is.

"If he's dead," Rufus Mortimer suggested, with American common sense,

'but not if he's living."
"But we'll hope," the canon began, then he checked himself suddenly-"we'll hope," he went on with a dexterous afterthought, "this clew Maria has got will settle the question at last, one way or the

"Oh, here's Mrs. Burleigh!" the hostess exclaimed, rising once more from her seat with the manner suitable for receiving a distinguished visitor. "So glad to see you at last. When did you come up from that ovely Norchester? And how's the dear

"I knew Axminster at Oxford," a very quiet young man in the corner, who had been silent till then, observed in a low voice to Rufus Mortimer. "I mean the present man-the missing earl-the gypsy's son, as Canon Valentine calls him. I can't say I ever thought him the least bit mad, except in the way of being very conscientious, if that's to be taken as a sign of madness. He hated wine parties, which was not unnatural, considering his grandfather had drunk himself to death, and one of his uncles had to be confined as an habitual inebriate, and he liked manual labor, which was not unnatural either, for he was a splendidly athletic fellow, as fine built a man as ever I saw and able to do a good day's work with any navvy in Britain. But he was perfectly sane and a martyr to conscience. He felt this girl's treatment of him very much, I believe you know who it was, Lady Sark, the celepeering look of his small black eyes. He brated beauty—and he also felt that people treated him very differently when they knew he was Lord Axminster from the the coast as a common sailor in a little tub fishing yacht, which he was fond of doing. And that made him long to live a life as a man, not as an earl, in order that he might see what there really was in

him. "A very odd taste," the young Philadelphian replied. "Now, I for my part like best to live among people who know all about me and my grandfather, the vice president, who made the family pile, because when I go outside my own proper circle I see people only value me at my worth as a man, which I suppose must be ust about 12 shillings a week and no alowance for beer money."

At the very same moment, in the oppo-site corner of the room, Canon Valentine was saying under his breath to Mrs. Hes-Who is that young man-the legrave:



power of attorney for his grandmother to manage the Axminster property. His father and mother were dead, and Maria was the nearest relative he had left him. But he disappeared into space, drawing no funds from the estate and living apparently upon whatever he earned as a gardener or a shoemaker. And from that day to this nothing has since been heard of him."

"Wasn't there a lady in the case though?" Mrs. Hesslegrave suggested, just to show her familiarity with the small talk of society.

The canon recollected himself. "Oh, are celebrated, and when you ge to Paris The canon recollected himself. "Oh, yes. I forgot to say that," he answered. "You're quite right, Mrs. Hesslegrave. It was cherchez la femme of course, as usual.

Bestle had been recommend to the same of course, as usual. embassy."
American? Yes. But what a match he would make, after all, for dear Kathleen!

CHAPTER III. MILLIONAIRE AND SALLOR. While these things were being said of him in the side street in Kensington Albert Ogilvie Redburn, seventh earl of Axminster, alias Arnold Willoughby, alias Douglas Overton, was walking quietly by himself down Piccadilly, and act a soul

of all he met was taking the slightest notice of him. It was many years since he had last been in town, and accustomed as he was to his changed position the contrast could