They Come.

Ye wilds, wrapped in primeval sleep,
They come, who'll break your dreaming,
Your forests fell, your harvests reap,
And build their cities teeming!
They come, the God born heroes come!
No herald voice before them,
No shrieking fife nor whirring drum,
No flag of battle o'er them.

Ye forests, ye have waited long,
Sounds ravage in you breaking,
To catch the note of Freedom's song,
Man's better hopes awaking.
The same, whom God himself has owned,
Called out from court and prison,
In His eternal plan enthroned,
His glory on them risen.

Ye rivers, ye have wantoned wild,
Unchecked by wheel or spindle,
Upon your bosom nature's child,
Before your star to dwindle.
They come, your forces to enchain,
And give your currents gulding,
As grandly downward to the main
Past thrifty towns they're gliding.

Ye mines of silver, iron and gold,
Within earth's vaults secreted;
Ye heaps of hoarded wealth untold,
No mortal eye have greeted—
They come, whose toil shall fret you out,
And in their furnace blast you,
Shall shape you with creative shout,
Shall mould you, mint you, cast you.

Ye wintry waters, where no bark,
Her storm-torn sail unfurling,
Has anchored in your bosom dark,
The ice her beak impearling—
They come, whose symbol round the earth
Shall tell all tribes the story
That man must stand in native worth,
Not in transmitted glory.

—Dr. J. E. Rankin in Christian Register.

ESTELLE'S INFATUATION:

A NOVEL.

BOOK ONE—CHAPTER I.

THE "SACRA FAMES."

Preaching down a daughter's heart was not a difficult task to a mother like Mrs. Clanricarde. Circumstances compelled her conduct and character strengthened her resolve; and when conditions and feelings are in accord, there we have that triple wall of brass which no human power can break down.

We will enumerate the conditions and circumstances which made the mother preach down her daughter's heart. These were an unbusinesslike husband, who never realized a security but he lost, never moved an investment but he lessened it, yet who, believing in his commercial "flair," was always dabbling in the stock and share market, for the benefit of every one but himself; the love of luxury and the enforced privations of genteel penury; the pride of ambition and the consciousness of gradual social decline; the irritation, coupled with contempt, natural to a clever woman keenly alive to the mistakes of her partner, yet powerless to prevent and doomed only to suffer; the mother's natural desire that her daughter's rare gift of supreme beauty should be utilized as her dowry, and should be the means of placing her beyond the reach of that grim wolf so closely investing her own homestead. All these created that "auri sacra fames" which made Mrs. Clanricarde as hard as iron, as cold as ice, and as cruel as death in the matter of Estelle's present love and potential marriage. It made her as one stone-deaf to the alternate hymns and threnodies of love poured forth by Charlie Osborne—as handsome as a Greek god, and as penniless as a church mouse. It made her as one stone-blind to Estelle's tears and sighs and loss of appetite and slightly faded bloom—save that this last, indeed, aroused in her a certain secret anger, which was the sworn foe of pity. For this depreciation of her capital was as heinous an offence in Estelle, according to the mother's way of looking at things, as were Mr. Clanricarde's speculations in the House, whereby a thousand became five hundred, and percentage was the "peau de chagrin" which every touch made smaller. In this momentous question of her marriage Mrs. Clanricarde assumed to know better than her daughter; and perhaps she was not far wrong in her assumption. Charlie Osborne had everything that a romantic girl adores, but that a far-seeing mother despises as the foundation of the home and family; and with Mrs. Clanricarde the mother's outlook overlapped the daughter's romance.

It made no difference in the ordering of things that no eligible *parti* was at hand to take up the silver thread, which she was resolved Charlie Osborne should not hold. The few moneyless curates, the one scantily endowed vicar, and the one rosy-gilled doctor, who made up the bachelordom of Kingshouse, were not a whit more desirable than this impecunious Eudemon, and not half so taking. And Caleb Stagg, the only son and heir of old Miles Stagg, the wealthy owner of Redhill and a former coal-miner, was impossible—at least to Estelle, if Mrs. Clanricarde would have shut her eyes and swallowed the gilded sausage whole. But the chapter of accidents has a long coda; and the chapter of accidents in the life-story of a lovely girl of twenty has only just begun.

"It is of no use, Estelle," Mrs. Clanricarde would say, with her high-pitched tone and petulant French intonation—"it is of no use to cry and make a miserable face. If you marry Charlie Osborne you will marry into misery; and I would rather see you dead than go through what I have done."

"If only you would believe in his future, and let us wait!" pleaded Estelle, tears in her large soft eyes, which were like big brown moths lying within a white sea-shell.

"His future! What of it? Child! how fatally touched you are with these stupid English notions!" said Mrs. Clanricarde, warmly. "What is this young man's future?"

"Fame," said Estelle; "and fame is always fortune."

"Fame from what? A picture hung by the Royal Academy?—a drama accepted by a theatrical manager?—a poem published by an enterprising publisher?—and none of the three strong enough for that success which includes a banker's book! That is the future of your handsome Joconde, who aims at eagles and does not bring down even sparrows. And out of these, where, I ask you, is the pot au feu?"

"You misjudge him, mother; you do not give him credit for what he is or has," said Estelle, doing battle for her beloved with gentle persistency rather than over spirit. "He can be great in anything he undertakes. He is great already; only the world has not yet recognized his genius, as it will later, as it must."

"My dear Estelle, you speak like an ignorant child as you are. Real genius is concentrated, and does not go squandering itself all abroad on everything alike," returned Mrs. Clanricarde, sensibly enough. "A universal genius is a fated failure, and never rises beyond mediocrity. He is always close on to, but never actually touches, excellence or success. He is always just the line short. The golden water which is to fill a dry trench must run through a broad pipe in one flow, and not filter through a dozen little pinholes like a watering-pot. And we want our dry trench filled, Estelle; your poor miserable father has taken care of that!"

Mrs. Clanricarde never lost an opportunity of impressing on Estelle the contemptible delinquencies of her father. To the jealous French mother, the daughter ought to belong to her exclusively, and she did not approve of divided sympathies. Besides, that patriotism which means opposition to the present condition of things counted for something in her jealousy; and the French woman born and bred and never sincerely naturalized, for all that she was as English in speech and manner as any one else, did her best to prevent her daughter from becoming too Britannic in her ideas. She had already imbibed that fatal poison of belief in love and romance which ruined half the English girls and shamed the common-sense of half the mothers; and Mrs. Clanricarde's one great desire was to root out these pernicious weeds from Estelle's mind, and plant in their stead wise views of social life and a just estimate of the creature comforts to be got by money.

"Girls are so silly," she used to say, curling her thin mobile lips into that expressive line of illimitable contempt which only such lips can take. "As if love can pay the rent, or kisses feed the children!—as if the husband matters one jot so long as he has money and knows how to use it!—as if I would not rather have married a veritable gnome than this wretched creature of mine with his six feet of folly and his barber's block of vanity!"

It did not mend matters that Mr. Clanricarde was secretly on his daughter's side in this matter of her young love, seeing that for peace's sake he was compelled to be openly on his wife's. Taking his own disastrous way as he did in the manipulation of his funds, he made a point of following her lead in all else; and while he was ruining her fortunes and alienating her affections by refusing to listen to her advice, he made himself so supple, sweet, and tender in the home that, although she despised and disliked him heartily enough, she had no more power to find cause against him—outside opposition for its own sake only—than she would have had to crush an India-rubber ball. His prompt acquiescence in her repudiation of Charlie Osborne as a husband for Estelle almost made her waver in her own decision. If George could see good reasons why it should not be, the chances were those reasons were bad, and the other side might have something to say for itself.

Despite the opposition and the vigilance of Mrs. Clanricarde, the lovers met in secret as well as openly in society; for it would have been impossible to keep Estelle shut up in the house, or to demand the social ostracism of Charlie Osborne. And as people with gardens will give tennis parties and strawberry feasts, the Clanricardes were forced to go to them with the rest, and take the consequences accruing. The alternative of leaving Kingshouse was also an impossibility. The domestic money market was too tight, and these last investments had restricted it yet more. Hence, the matter was one of those problems which even the most skilful diplomatist among matrons finds it hard to solve; and in the game of chess between love and prudence for the possession of the fair Estelle no one could as yet foresee which would be the winner.

And indeed she was fair—taking the word as beauty, not color. Somewhat above the middle height, straight as a palm-tree but supple and slender as a willow branch, graceful as a fawn and almost as shy, she was one of those women to whom poets write sonnets and musicians dedicate nocturnes; one of the women who make brave men braver still, and weak ones yet more self-indulgent. In her character the two main streams of womanly feeling ran side by side—the gentlest and most captivating reliance on those who were her superiors by age, sex, or condition; and the power of self-sacrifice for love. With these would be the maternal instinct when the time and occasion should come. She was woman—pure womanly throughout. Body, heart, and mind were essentially feminine—feminine with all the strength and all the weakness of her sex and type. Weak to the strong and strong only for love, her love was of the kind which justifies itself and redeems its own excess—whole-hearted, passionate, unselfish, and pure as flame is pure. Pliant before a firm will, quivering beneath a brutal hand, she yet had that kind of courage which could brave the world, the law, and the commandments should things so fall out, and he who needed her, and whom she loved, be on the outside of virtuous convention. Submissive as another Lucy Ashton to authority, she had that power of revolt for the sake of another which belongs to certain kind of gentle and tenacious nature—that power which not even the mother who bore her suspected, and which would be shown only when called forth by circumstances.

Meanwhile, as things were, she was to all appearance just a shy, gentle-mannered, pretty English girl with a foreign name and face; tightly held by her mother; neglected by her father; secretly worshipped by the one scantily endowed vicar and the two impecunious curates; frankly admired by the rosy-gilled doctor; and frantically adored by Charlie Osborne, who saw in her his tenth Muse, his Egeria, his good angel, and the one absolute necessity of his life. And, save that she met her handsome adorer in secret and let him say things which would have made her mother furious had she heard them—more furious still had she heard the girl's replies—she obeyed that mother in all things; especially in the one grand essential of not marrying a man who could not keep even a servant not to speak of a wife, and whose sole possessions were beauty, love, poetry, art, that delicacy of mind which belongs to the artistic temperament, and a constitution which, as yet free from disease, was decidedly fragile and on the line of something worse. Just so much grace of common-sense had this young man, and no more—he did not urge Estelle to run away with him and begin life and house-keeping on that one hundred a year which was all his fixed income. Of course in the future he would be a rich man, because a famous one. That was as certain as the rising of to-morrow's sun to him as well as to Estelle. Pending that certainty, however, he was forced to hold his hand and hope for the best. No one else was to the fore at Kingshouse—Caleb Stagg being impossible; and with this negative comfort he and she must be content.

Kingshouse was not a rich field for the adventures of life or the vagaries of fortune. The scenery was beautiful in a quiet, sleepy, rural way; the old-fashioned country town was quaint and stagnant, the society was restricted, and the income-tax collector did not cover much ground. Save Annie Aspline, whose mother had been a successfully married cook, not a girl had two-pence-halfpenny for dower-money; and, save Caleb Stagg, whose father had been a miner, not a man had more. Charlie Osborne, the son of the late vicar, stood a head and shoulders above them all for personal charms; and the bachelordom of the district so sparsely represented on the tennis-ground did not touch him in all that makes a young man desirable and dangerous. So that Mrs. Clanricarde, while she repudiated the handsome genius, sent back to his native place because his constitution could not bear the exhaustion and bad air of London, had no other string to her slack bow. And if the love that could be had was undeniably suppressed, the love that was wanted was as undeniably bodiless.

So matters stood in the pretty village town of Kingshouse when this story opens and the serious play was about to begin.

CHAPTER II.

THE CYMON OF KINGSHOUSE.

Nothing, to the high-nosed, blue blooded gentry of Kingshouse seemed so contrary to the providential ordering of things—as men have ruled that ordering should be—as that the heir *par excellence* of the district should be a man like Caleb Stagg, the heiress a girl like Annie Aspline; though, indeed, in this latter case, the girl was well enough, taken by herself. It was the mother who was the stumbling-block—yet not a stumbling-block of a formidable kind. With Caleb, on the contrary, the disabilities went all the way, like a rope coiled round him; crushing the social vitality out of his elsewise vigorous condition, and reducing what should have been beauty of circumstance to a mere shapeless mass of inert uselessness.

As good as the proverbial gold in his essential nature, and with a really fine, if limited, tract of intelligence, young Caleb was as heavy as lead in his bearing, and as dull as so much pudding-stone in his conversation. He had inherited his physique, but not her blunted intellect from his mother. She had transmitted herself to Caleb; and like mother, like son, in all things save the absolute quality of the brain. For Caleb was as heavy built and as round-limbed as she; with the same light gray eyes, coarse sandy hair, fresh red and white complexion, small snubby nose, and large, full, fleshy, unpoetic lips. And what kind of social credentials can be got out of such an inventory?

To add to this heavy handicap of nature, the strong character and close grip of old Stagg had wrought on both wife and child the usual effect of will and domination over comparative flaccidity. It had crushed out of them all such initiative, all such spirit, as might have been developed, at least in Caleb, had he been under a more elastic rule and allowed a freer seaboard.

A man of character and shrewd intelligence, but utterly untaught, Miles Stagg was what the country people were wont to call a queer fish and a rough customer, or, perhaps, a regular rowdy when he got drunk—which was oftener than should have been, but not so often as might have been expected. As a set-off, however, he had that comprehensive quality known as a good heart—that is, if he broke a man's head, he gave him a golden plaster wherewith to mend it. And to be free with his fist and open with his hand seemed to the former miner as fair a division of things as a reasonable man could expect.

Having come to his abundant wealth by the lucky chance of a fine seam of coal in the bankrupt co-operative mine which he had doggedly taken on his own square shoulders, he came to it unprepared by training or even by anticipation; and now, with his hundreds of thousands, he was never more than the miner in his Sunday clothes, well brushed up, and with all the grime washed off, but with his heart in the skip and his interests on the bank. Naturally, however, he thought his money would do, if but little for himself, much for his son—more, indeed than it would. Seeing where it had landed this, and that, and t'other, he thought that he, too, had but to command, and the social forces would obey. But he did not take into consideration the difference between himself as represented by his son and those others who had brushed themselves up into passable imitations, if no art nor science ever yet discovered could make them the real thing. Miles was but Sly the tinker in my lord's best bed; and the freaks of fortune are no more really metamorphic than those of great men.

Unfortunately—or, perhaps, fortunately—who knows yet?—young Caleb had none of his father's not unnatural social ambition. Specially did he no wise share the old man's wishes about marrying blood and founding a family. Lady Elizabeth Inchbold, the all but dowerless daughter of the all but ruined Earl of Kingshouse, was the mark at which old Miles aimed the shaft of his desire. If Caleb could accomplish that, his father would settle well-nigh all his fortune on the young people, and would withdraw with his wife forever from the neighborhood. He would content himself with the knowledge of the fact. He would not seek to share in its glory, nor even to see the splendor of its rays. In the midst of the coarse-materialism of his nature lay this one little flower of love, this purest pearl of unselfishness. If Caleb would make himself the man he should be, and go in and win as he ought, he, and not Miles, should then be the millionaire—he, and not Miles, should be the great man of the county and the commander of the future.

But Caleb would as soon have gone into a lion's den as into the Dower House, where the earl and countess and her family lived in secret penance and public pride. The castle was let to one Mr. Hermann Schmidt, a stock-broker who knew both how to spend his money like a prince and make a bargain like Shylock, and who was at once a generous friend and a dangerous man with whom to do business. Old Miles never made the smallest doubt but that Lady Elizabeth would accept the golden bait as eagerly as a hungry trout would take a May-fly. It was money that ruled the world, so far as he could see; and without being personally purse-proud, he had an exaggerated sense of its value.

He was a man of a coarse, ripe, Rabelaisian kind of humor, to whom nothing in the whole world was sacred or forbidden. He had no more faith in humanity than the most gloomy pessimist who thinks he saves his own soul by calling those of others—well—not saved. To him life was a jolly kind of comedy, where the fools were tricked and the wise men held their own and got more. He laughed, and was not offended at this lapse and that stumble. It was human nature when all was said and done, he would say; and that the "furred pussy-cats" should scramble for the gold pieces—the stronger punching the heads of the weaker, and the weaker scratching slyly when they could not fight openly—that, too, he confessed and laughed at with the rest.

For himself, he knew what he wanted, and he meant to have it if he could get it. As he walked about the house and grounds, loud of voice, sturdy of limb, direct of intent, he was wont, as he expressed it, to make the feathers fly.

With his stolid, silent, and of late years, when she could no longer keep herself awake by active work, somnolent wife, old Miles was not so much roughly brutal as oppressive—coercing rather than tormenting, and not wishing in the least to torment. On the contrary, he meant to be kindly, and he was in truth as kindly as he knew how to be.

"She has been a good wife to me," he used to say when a little in his cups; "and what the [expletive] if I cannot make a lady of her, I'll not let her feel the differ."

It was the same with his son, whom he loved better than his life, but whom he now rated like a hound for his want of character and energy, and now cursed for a rebel if he dared to say his soul was his own and he thought he had the best right to it. But how can you get a free-spirited, high-mettled youth out of a creature belabored and bethrashed with words and whips as Caleb Stagg had ever been? From the day when he was a ten months' old baby in his mother's arms and made a wry face at his daddy's beer, up to now, when he was a