

laddie!" said the Squire, "if it wad mak him blither, I could stan' a hail foolscap sheet o' them. I'm feard the city's no' agreein' wi' him." Before noon on Friday there came a hard rider to the Bridesdale gate, a special telegraph messenger from Collingwood, with a telegram for Mrs. Carruthers. She took it hastily from Timotheus, and, breaking the seal, read to the group gathered about her: "If agreeable, Douglas and I will be with you by Saturday's stage. Please answer by bearer. Eugene Coristine." The Squire, home a little sooner than usual, said: "Let me answer that, Honoria," and retired to his office. When he came out, it was with a written paper in his hand, which he read for approval. "You and Douglas heartily welcome—will meet you at station, so do not disappoint." This was accepted by a unanimous vote; after which the messenger partook of a hasty meal, as did his horse, and then galloped back to town. "The waggonette will hold six," said the Squire; "that's Coristine, Mr. Douglas and me. Who are the other three? Will you no come, Marjorie? The ride'll dae ye guid, lass."

No, Miss Carmichael declined, and the Squire was inwardly wroth. Mrs. Carmichael took the place offered to her daughter, and Marjorie Thomas and Mr. Terry volunteered to make up the required number. It seemed such a long time till Saturday morning, but Marjorie tried to shorten it, by running everywhere and telling everybody that Eugene was coming. The whole house caught the infection. Tryphena and Tryphosa were kept busy, preparing already for a late six o'clock dinner on the morrow. There was a putting of rooms in order for the coming guests, during which Miss Carmichael, conscience stricken, returned the lawyer's verses to the leaves of Browning. She dreaded meeting the author of them, and found comfort in the fact that he was not coming alone. If she had not been, in her own estimation, such a coward, she would have gone on a visit to Fanny, but she dared not thus offend her uncle and aunt, and desert her mother and Cecile. What was he coming for? She had not sent for him. Why did she not want him to come? She did not know, and it was the right of nobody to question her on the subject. She only knew that she was very unhappy, and hoped she would not act stupidly before the stranger from Edinburgh.

That night the Squire received a letter from Coristine, written on Thursday, saying that Mr. Douglas had arrived, and was a very fine fellow; and that, as soon as he had made up his mind to go to Bridesdale, a telegram would be sent. He also requested Mr. Carruthers, if it was not trespassing too far upon his kindness, to secure the rooms, which the postmistress had told him she had to let, for Miss Graves, a young lady in his firm's offices, who needed complete rest and change of scene, and who would either go up by the stage on Saturday or accompany Mr. Douglas and him at a later date. The letter was read at the tea table, and Miss Du Plessis said she knew Marion Graves very well, and was glad to think she would be so near, as she was a lovely girl; but what a strange thing for Mr. Coristine to recommend her to come to Flanders! "O'm thinkin'," remarked Mr. Terry, "that av the young lady is dilikit loike, it 'ud be a marcy to kape her aff that rough stage; so, iv yer willin', Squire, I'll shay at home an' lave my place to put the poor lady in inshtid av me." Mrs. Carruthers would not hear of the veteran's losing the drive, and resigned her seat. Honoria would probably want her at any rate, so it was very foolish and selfish in her to have thought of going. "There maun be some one o' the female persuasion, as good old Newberry calls it, to invite Miss Graves and to keep her company, especially if she's an invalid," said the Squire. "I will go, uncle," said Miss Carmichael, quietly. The uncle was amazed at this new turn things were taking, and arranged in his mind to have Miss Graves and Mr. Douglas with him in the front seat, and Coristine between the two Marjories behind. After tea, Timotheus and Maguffin were sent to invite Miss Halbert and the two clergymen to the Saturday evening dinner, but, by Mrs. Carruthers' directions, the postmistress was not notified that her rooms were wanted. If Miss Graves were all that Cecile said of her, she had remarked, she would be better at Bridesdale, and would also be an acceptable addition to the number of their guests.

Saturday morning was a time of wild excitement for Marjorie. She went to the brook by anticipation, to look at the sportive fish, and turned up a flat stone or two, to be sure the crawfish, which the ignorant Timotheus called crabs, were still there. She was prepared to report favourably on the creek. Then she journeyed along the banks, looking for new flowers, and over the stepping stones to the opposite shore, and up the hill to the strip of brush, returning with a handful of showy wild blossoms. Next, she visited the stable yard, and watched Timotheus and Maguffin polishing up the waggonette and the harness of the horses. The colonel was there, and, in answer to Marjorie's enquiry regarding his interest in the scene, said: "You are not going to leave me behind, you little puss, although you did not invite me. I have invited myself, and am going to accompany you on hohseback."

"Are you going to take Guff too, colonel?"

"Who is Guff, my deah?"

"Don't you know Guff?"

"No; I am not awate that I do."

"Oh Cuffee am de niggah

Wif de tah on his heel;

He done trabble roun' so libely

Dat he's wuff a mighty deal."

"You do not shubly mean Maguffin?"

"Of course I do; who else could be Guff?"

"No, I shall not take Maguffin, seeing we come right back. Had we been going to put up anyweeah, of counse, he would have been indispensable."

"What a funny name! Do you mean the waggonette?"

"By what, Mahjohie?"

"By this fencepail?"

"Silly child, I did not say that. I said indispensable, which means, cannot be done without."

"Oh!" answered Marjorie; "it's a long word, is it?"

There was no necessity for starting before ten, at which hour Timotheus brought round the waggonette, and Maguffin the colonel's horse. The Squire assisted the two Marjories to the front seat, and took his place beside the younger. The colonel chivalrously bowed to the ladies while on foot; then, he mounted his horse with a bound, and the transport and escort trotted away. Mr. Terry, alone and neglected, betook himself to the Carruthers children, who soon found many uses to which a good-natured grandfather could be put, to the advantage and pleasure of his grandchildren.

CHAPTER XX.

The Collingwood Arrivals—Coristine Goes to the Post Office—Mr. Perrowne is Funny—Bang's Note and the Lawyer's Fall—Coristine in Hospital—Miss Carmichael Relents—Bangs on the Hunt—The Barber—Mr. Rigby on Wounds—Berry-Picking with the New Arrivals—The Lawyer's Crisis—Matilda's—Miss Carmichael in Charge.

THE train had just come in when Squire Carruthers' party arrived at the station, so nicely had he timed his driving. As there was nobody to hold the horses, he kept his seat, while Coristine, looking faultlessly neat in his town dress, came forward and assisted Miss Carmichael and Marjorie to alight. Having asked the former's permission, the lawyer introduced Miss Graves, a young lady not unlike Miss Du Plessis in stature and carriage, but with larger, though handsome, features and lighter complexion. Then, Mr. Douglas, a fine-looking-blond man of masculine Scottish type, was made acquainted with his fair client, and with her nominal guardian on the box. Finally, the colonel, standing by his horse's head, bowed with genial dignity to the new arrivals, and warmly pressed the hand of his dear boy's friend. The Squire's little scheme was frustrated. His niece, without asking advice or permission from anybody, placed Miss Graves beside the driver, and established herself on the same seat, leaving Marjorie between the two gentlemen on the one behind, after they had bestowed their valises and Miss Graves' portmanteau in their rear. Beyond a ceremonious handshake, Miss Carmichael gave Coristine no recognition, although she could not have failed to perceive his delight at once more meeting her. To Miss Graves, however, she was all that could be desired, cheerful, even animated, and full of pleasant conversation. Marjorie kept her Eugene and the new gentleman busy. She reported on the creek, and presented her faded bouquet of wild flowers, which Eugene received with all the semblance of lively satisfaction. She made many enquiries regarding the big girl in front, and insisted especially on knowing if she was nice. Then she turned to Mr. Douglas and asked his name.

"My name is Douglas," he answered.

"Oh, I know that, even Timotheus himself knows that. I mean what's your real name, your very own, the name your mamma calls you?"

"She used to call me James."

"Oh; have you got a brother called John?"

"Yes; how did you know that?"

"Oh, I know. Then your papa's name is Zebedee, and your mamma's is Salome."

"No, we are not those two James and Johns; they are dead."

"They are the only James and John I know."

"I don't think so. Your uncle, Dr. Carmichael, was called James Douglas, like me."

"Marjorie's dead papa?"

"Yes; your cousin is a sort of far-away cousin of mine; so you must be one of my cousins, too. What do you think of that?"

"I think it's nice to have a grown-up man cousin. I'll call you Jim."

"Marjorie!" said a reproving voice from the front seat; "you must not talk to Mr. Douglas in that pert way."

"If my cousin lets me call him Jim, it's none of your business, cousin Marjorie. You will let me, won't you, cousin Jim?"

"To be sure, if Miss Carmichael will allow me."

"I don't think it's fair to let her boss the whole show."

Mr. Douglas laughed loud and long over this expression, so novel to his British ears.

"Where did you learn that, Marjorie?" asked Coristine.

"Oh, from Guff; there's heaps of fun in Guff."

Her companions occasionally took advantage of silent intervals to discuss the scenery, and the Canadian lawyer pointed out spots, memorable in the great pedestrian tour, to his Scottish compeer. Miss Carmichael never turned, nor did she give Miss Graves a chance to do so; but the Squire managed to sit sideways, without at all incommoding the ladies, and, keeping one eye on his horses, at the same time engaged in conversation with Marjorie's captives. The colonel also kept close to the vehicle, and furnished Coristine with new information concerning his wounded friend. Miss Graves was informed that she was

not to be allowed to go to the post office, and her protests were imperiously silenced by Marjorie's "boss of the whole show." The horses, having come out quietly, went home at a rattling pace, and, a good hour before dinner time, the party arrived at Bridesdale, there to be greeted by Miss Halbert and the parsons, in addition to the occupants of the house. Wilkinson and Mr. Terry received Coristine with enthusiasm, but all the ladies bore down upon the latest arrival of their sex and carried her away, leaving the man, in whom they had expressed so much interest, to feel as if there were a plot on foot to ignore him.

"It must be very pleasant for you, Corry, to find all the ladies so attentive to your lady friend," remarked the Dominie.

"Very pleasant for Miss Graves, no doubt; I can't say the same about myself."

"I should have thought you would have regarded a compliment to her as more gratifying than one to yourself."

"Haven't reached that heavenly stage of Christian self-abnegation yet, Wilks."

"Perhaps I am mistaken in supposing you take a great interest in the lady?"

"Interest, yes; great, more than doubtful. She's the third girl I've had to send away for the good of her health. The other two knew where to go, and went. She didn't; so I thought of establishing her at the post office. I never dreamt the Squire would come for us till I got his message. I meant to accompany her in the stage, and land her in the arms of Mrs. Tibbs; but here we are, like a bridal party, with Marjorie for bridesmaid and Douglas for best man."

"Thank you, Corry; you have relieved me from a great anxiety. Miss Du Plessis thinks very highly of your travelling companion."

"Douglas, do you mean?"

"No, the lady."

"Oh, bother the lady! Wilks, it's a doubly grave situation. If it wasn't for Mr. Terry and Marjorie, I'd cut my stick. As it is, I'll run and engage that post-office room for myself, and be back in time for dinner or whatever else is up. Au revoir." With a bound he was off the verandah, valise in hand, and away on to the road.

When Coristine returned, he was just in time for dinner. He had not been missed; the entire interest of the feminine part of the community was centred in Miss Graves. The Squire took her in, as the latest lady arrival, while Mr. Douglas escorted the hostess. To his infinite annoyance, Coristine, who had brought in Mrs. Du Plessis, was ostentatiously set down by the side of his invalided type-writer, to whom he was the next thing to uncivil. Miss Carmichael, between Mr. Douglas and Mr. Errol, was more than usually animated and conversational, to the worthy minister's great delight. The amusing man of the table was Mr. Perrowne. His people were building him a house, which Miss Halbert and he had inspected in the morning, with a view to the addition of many cupboards, which the lady deemed indispensable to proper house-keeping. Mr. Perrowne thought he would call the place Cubbyholes; but Miss Du Plessis asked what it would really be, the rectory, the vicarage or the parsonage? Miss Halbert suggested the basilica, to which he replied that, while a good Catholic, he was neither Fannytic nor a Franciscan. He derided his intended bride's taste in architecture, and maintained that the income of a bishop would be insufficient to stock half the storerooms and wardrobes, leaving all the rest of the house unfurnished. As it was, he feared that the charming Fanny would be in the predicament of old Mother Hubbard, while he, unfortunately, would be in that of the dog. "In that case, Basil," said Miss Halbert, "you would be like an inclined plane."

"How so?" enquired Mr. Perrowne.

"An inclined plane is a slope up, you know," answered the mischievous bride elect.

"Talking about dawgs," remarked the victim of the terrible conundrum, "I asked a little girl belonging to one of my parishoners what kind her dawg was. She said it had been given to her as a spanuel, but she thought it was only a currier."

"When I was at the school," said the Edinburgh gentleman, "a boy, whom I had offended some way, offered to make the like of me with a street cur and an old gun. He said he could make 'one dowg less' in the time it took to fire the gun."

"What did you do to that boy, Mr. Douglas?" asked Miss Carmichael.

"I left him alone, for he was a good deal bigger than me."

"You were not a Boanerges then?"

"No, I was James the Less."

"What are you dreaming about, Mr. Coristine," called the Squire, "to let all this wild talk go on without a word?"

"I am sorry to say I did not hear it, Squire," replied the moody lawyer, whose little conversation had been wholly devoted to Mrs. Du Plessis.

After dinner, the lawyer repaired to the Squire's office, and briefly informed him, that the fortune in funds and property to which his niece had fallen heir was valued at 80,000 pounds sterling, and that, fortunately, there was no sign of any contest or opposition in the matter. He also explained that, under the circumstances, he felt constrained to take a brief lodging at the post office, and begged Mr.