

perably, and then blew his nose inaudibly.

Grace looked up with a flush that matched and outdid his, and, laying her hand on his arm eagerly, said excitedly, imploringly—

"Do you think I've done him any good, taking care of him? I know you will say so, but do you *think* so?"

"You've saved his life, my dear young lady," said the surgeon, curtly. "A man who has—has gone the pace, as we call it, like Capt in Lennox, finds it a hard matter to pull through such a fever, as, rest assured, he has now pulled through. Yes, you have saved his life."

"Then I deserve a little reward?" she said, eagerly.

The doctor nodded, with a puzzled look.

"I will take it," she said. "Promise me, doctor, that you will never tell him or any one that I have ever been in this room, and I shall be more than repaid for any little trouble."

Here she broke off, and turned aside.

"Trouble! Had it not been the sweetest joy her young life had known?"

The doctor promised, of course, and enjoining Tom to carefully guard the secret, Grace watched the thin face as long as she dared, and then stole home. So that when Captain Lennox awoke, he found his faithful servant, Tom, by the bedside, and when, further on, he became sufficiently in possession of his senses to discover that he had been lying there three weeks, he pressed Tom's hand, and, in accents that trembled, for the first time in his life, stammered out his gratitude to his supposed nurse, thereby putting Tom to so much misery and impatience, that he felt inclined to cry, and would have given three years' salary to be able to tell the facts of the case.

A week afterwards, as Tom was dressing him for his first ride since his illness, he said, as calmly as possible—

"Lots of people called, I suppose, Tom? Give me the vinegar."

"Yes, sir, lots; most of the sergeants, and all the captains. I was obliged to tell Captain Derry as the doctor had ordered no one to see yer, and that it was torturing to death to call so often, as you may say, ser, Lord save us, and he was here three times a-day askin' for ye, and once or twice swore at me hard and fast, because I wouldn't let him in, the blaggard—I beg yer pardon, captain."

"Poor Derry," muttered Bertie. "You sent word that I was better."

"Sure and I did, sir, and mightily delighted he was to hear it, for he gave the bluy half a sovereign."

"Any one else, Tom?" said Bertie, flushing slightly.

"W—oll," hesitated Tom, "there was the squire, and madam, and of course, Miss Grace. God bless her heart—shure! They come every day, ser, to ask after you, and mightier sorrowed they were."

"Miss Grace came, did you say, Tom?" repeated Bertie, "is she looking well?"

"Well, not so hale and hearty as she might, God bless her," replied Tom. "Shure and there's more of the lily than the rose about her, but she'll pick up, ser, she'll pick up."

Bertie looked troubled.

"When the brougham comes round, drive to the squire's first, Tom, will you?" he said, then falling back languidly, he asked if there were any others.

"Another bustel, if yo please, but no one of any particular consequence. There was the man who worried your honor's life out of its moind, to get a place in the city for his boy. He called every day, and said it was a matter of life and death," he repeated. "He didn't care a brass image for your honor's life and death. But I think I've packed him off, shure, for good."

It was some man, pretty well down in the world, for whose son Bertie had

promised to procure some employment.

"You shouldn't have sent him away, Tom, so sharply," he said, wearily; "I'll go down to Pilcher, in the city and ask him to make room for the lad. Drive there after you have been to Mr. Wilson's."

"Very good, yer honor; but won't it be too much for you, as one may say? I remember, it's the first day yer honor has been out!"

"All right, Tom, my good fellow," said Bertie, languidly; "we won't overdo it. Confound it, I can't be too weak to drive down into the city; besides, the poor devil is anxious about his boy."

When the carriage drew up at the door of the house which the Wilsons had taken, Bertie saw, with a sudden twinge of pain, that the blinds were closed, and, a minute after, Tom came to the carriage door to say that the family had returned to Ireland only two days before.

Bertie merely lifted his eyebrows, but the pang of pain was as intense as the man suffers who starts and wakes.

"Ireland!" he said, quietly; "drive, then, to the city, Tom."

Bertie leaned back with that pang of disappointment which every man feels when he expects to see the woman he loves, and finds her not; and the bitter reflection—"If it had been poor Rod who had been seedy, she would have died rather than start for Ireland without seeing him. Somebody says there's a divinity that shades our ends, rough hew them as we will." Confound it! I must be rough hewing mine to some extent, or the shaping can't be going on very satisfactorily."

And he felt very miserable and weak as the carriage rolled on. Poor man! How was he to know that the woman he was thinking of was feeling just as miserable, because she had not dared to see him, lest her tell-tale face should proclaim the love that had grown into a passion during the days she had sat watching his face?

"Mr. Pilcher's, sir," said Tom, as the carriage stopped, and Bertie, alighting, entered the office.

"Good morning, sir," said Mr. Pilcher, coming forward, as usual, with his hands passing over one another slowly.

"Good morning, Mr. Pilcher," said Bertie, dropping into a chair languidly; and, without peroration, he commenced his errand by asking the shipping agent to make room for the lad he was interested in. He had known Mr. Pilcher for some years, and had employed him in various business matters; indeed, besides his solicitor, he was the only man of business he knew sufficiently to ask a favor of.

"Well, we are rather full in the office now," said Mr. Pilcher; "but still I will make room for him."

"Thanks," said Bertie, "you are very kind."

"Oh, don't mention it, sir," said Mr. Pilcher; "I am only glad to be of any service to you, have you been ill, you are looking so extremely unwell."

"Yes," said Bertie, "I have been on my back a little while, but have pulled round now."

"May I suggest a run in the country?" said Mr. Pilcher.

"I have not long returned from Hampshire."

"Hampshire?" said Mr. Pilcher. "Oh, yes, I remember, I heard you were staying at Sir Robert Valor's."

"Did you?" said Bertie, carelessly. "Whom from?" not caring a bit, and wishing himself back in the carriage.

"Mr. Arthur Thussington," said Mr. Pilcher.

"Oh, do you do business with him?" said Bertie.

"Well, yes and no," was the reply.

He was transacting business for his uncle, Sir Robert Valor, at least I suppose

so: he buys and sells in Sir Robert's name."

"Indeed," said Bertie, with a slight appearance of interest.

"Yes," said Mr. Pilcher, "I don't quite understand the arrangements, but he certainly has the command of a tolerably large sum of Sir Robert's money."

He has bought and shipped several thousand pounds' worth of goods to a foreign market, and, here Mr. Pilcher lowered his voice, and bent forward confidentially, "he hasn't ensured them."

Bertie sank into the chair again. Together with the old dislike which had sprung up afresh at the mention of the man's name, there came a hazy feeling of distrust, and his mind was filled with a thousand forebodings, though for whom and for what he could not say.

"Hasn't ensured them," he said; "that is a very risky thing, is it not?"

"Well, it is, very," said Mr. Pilcher.

"And he is trading with Sir Robert Valor's money, you say?" said Bertie.

Mr. Pilcher confined himself to nodding his head and elevating his eyebrows.

There was a minute's silence.

Bertie felt assure as that he was sitting there, that something was wrong, and his old stoical, cui bono creed was fighting against the impulse to see farther into the matter. "What the deuce," he asked himself, "has this to do with me? If Sir Robert chooses to play fool to Arthur Thussington's knave, why should I interfere? But his true, good-natured heart got the better of his false philosophy, as usual, and, looking up, he said—

"Let us go into your private room for a few minutes."

"Certainly," said Mr. Pilcher, and he led the way into his sanctum sanctorum.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### TOO GREAT A JOY.

"This sudden good doth move me more Than half a hundred too familiar ills."

Arthur Thussington's spy lost no time in communicating with his master; so that almost before the village of Edgecombe had recovered from the shock of the news of Sir Harry Edgecombe's death, Arthur Thussington was dashing down by express.

At the Hall, however, Ida, who was staying with her aunt, Lady Mary, refused to see him, and Startel, the steward, insulted him by declining, most emphatically, to give up the keys, which Sir Robert had asked Arthur Thussington to bring over to the Vale.

Maddened by the steward's insult and Ida Valor's cold refusal to see him, Arthur Thussington returned to the Vale, and mastering his passion as best he could, told Sir Robert what had passed at the Hall, and hinting that Startel had been playing the scoundrel with the estate, hurried back to town to meditate upon fresh plans not, however, before he had paid a visit to the post-master and re-bribed him to intercept any letters that might arrive, and admonishing his spy in the village to fresh vigilance. Immediately he got to London he set about tracing the footsteps of the lost heir, and filled with a spirit of unrest, that at one moment tormented him with the hope that Roderick was dead, and at another maddened him by a fancy picture of the lost man turning up and snatching the title and estate which he almost fancied he had got from his grasp, he hunted night and day for some clue to the wanderer.

At last he found one. Amongst the shipping list at Lloyds he found Roderick Edgecombe's name entered as passenger in the brig "Annie," bound for Melbourne.

Instantly he inserted an advertisement in a small Melbourne paper, through the agent in London, and telegraphed down to the Vale the news of his discovery.

Not for one instant did the thought occur to him that something might have happened to the ship, for the very magnitude of such good fortune prevented him from thinking of it, and he sat down for two or three weeks, consumed with impatience, and not knowing what to do next.

In the sudden turn affairs had taken, he was so absorbed that he neglected the web he was weaving round the fortunes of Sir Robert, and, consequently, was not aware of the sudden turn in the affairs of the Wheel Bang Mining shares which Mr. Pilcher, by the judicious use of a large sum of money, had brought about; and, believing that all was going well—or, rather, badly—he gave himself for the time to the feverish watching and waiting for news of the man that stood between him and sixty thousand a year.

One morning, as he sat at breakfast in his silent chambers, with his eyes fixed upon the fire and his thoughts busy with his plots and schemes, his eye fell upon a pile of old papers, and half in hopes that he might for a time distract his thoughts, he threw them on the table and commenced turning them over, reading a line here and a line there.

As he did so, his eye caught, in one of them, a list of lost vessels, and with the leaf raised in his hand to turn over, he read, heading the dread catalogue, the name "Annie."

His heart gave a sudden leap, and his eyes closed. He dared not hope. There were hundreds of "Annies;" this could not—could not—be the right one.

He looked again.

"Annie," bound for Melbourne, August, 18—, wrecked, and all hands lost."

With a cry of suffocation he leaped from his chair, to fall, face downwards, upon the paper.

One hour—two hours passed before he moved; then, when he did so, his face was hueless and set, and his lips rigid.

The sudden shock had nearly killed him.

He went to the cupboard, and, with trembling hands, poured out some brandy into a tumbler, spilling it over the floor.

He felt stunned and bewildered.

He dared not even yet attempt to grasp the stupendous fact that he was Lord of Edgecombe! Lord of Edgecombe! Sir Arthur Thussington! Sir Arthur Thussington! The words rang in his ears, beat at the doors of his heart, and swam before his eyes in blood red capitals! Standing before the fire, he saw them glittering amongst the red coals; gazing vacantly at the shadowed part of the room, he saw them starting from the dimness. In the fading of the cinders, in the sough of the wind, in the chirping of the London sparrows on the window-sill, he heard the refrain that was gradually sending him mad with joy—that numbed him with its intensity.

Lord of Edgecombe! Sir Arthur Thussington! Suddenly his face blanched. A fear had stricken his heart cold. The newspaper was old; the ship might have been found! Roderick Edgecombe might still be living. He seized his hat and dashed down the stairs.

"Drive to Lloyds, for your life!" he said, hoarsely, jumping into a cab, that was passing at the moment, and then crouched down into the back, with his nails at his teeth, and his eyes fixed like whips upon the glandered horse.

Arrived at Lloyds, his old calmness somewhat returned, and with a less hasty step he stole, still swiftly, but noiselessly, up the hall, and wetting his lips with feverish tongue, he in