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CHAPTER XXIV. AN ANGEL FROM THE WEST.

Rufus Mortimer lay stretched at full length on the heather clad dome of a Surrey He was turning lazily over the pages of a weekly paper. He passed from the politics to the social "middles" and from the middles again to the reviews and the literary column. It was dull, deadly dull, the self laudatory communiques of second rate amateurs. His eye ran carelessly through the items of news and the hints forthcoming works. "We understand that the article on 'Richelieu and His Contemporaries' in the current number of the South British Quarterly, which is attracting so much attention in well informed ciroles at the present moment, is from the facile yet learned pen of Mr. J. Anstruther Maclaren, the well known authority on the age of the Bourbons." "Mrs. Rotherham's new novel, 'My Heart and His,' will shortly be published by Messrs. Rigby, Short & Co. will deal with the vicissitudes of an Italian gypsy girl, who studies medicine at Girton and afterward becomes convinced of the truths of theosophy, the principles of which are eloquently defended at some length by the accomplished authoress," "Mr. Edmund Wilkes, Q. C., denies the report that he is the author of that clever society sketch, 'An Archbishop's Daughterin-law," which has caused so much amusement and so many searchings of heart in high ecclesiastical and legal quarters during the present season. We are also assured there is no good ground for attributing the work to the wife of the veteran Dean of Northborough, whose finished literary handicraft does not in any way resemble the crude and unformed style of that now famous story. The work bears, on the contrary, internal traces of being due to the sprightly wit of a very young lady acquainted with the clerical society of a northern cathedral town, but little at home in the great world of London." Rufus Mortimer almost laid down the paper in disgust. Better surely the fellowship of the eternal hills, the myriad buzz of the bees, the purple heather, than the solicitous echoes of this provincial gossip.

But just as he was going to fling the journal down in his distaste his eye chanced to light upon a single belated paragraph wedged in between two others near the end of the column. "Messrs. Stanley & Lockhart will publish almost immediately a new and stirring romance of the armada period, entitled 'An Elizabethan Seadog,' purporting to be written by one John Collingham, a Norfolk sailor, who was imprisoned in Spain by the inquisition for refusing to abjure the 'damnable doctrine of her grace's supremacy.' It is announced as translated and edited by Arnold Willoughby' and is described in their circular as being one of the most thrilling works of adventure published since the beginning of the present revived taste for the literature of romantic exploits."

In a moment Rufus Mortimer had jumped up from his seat on the overblown heather. In accordance with his promise to Kathleen, he had been hunting for weeks to find Arnold Willoughby, and now by pure chance he had lighted unawares on a singular clew to his rival's whereabouts.

fus Mortimer was a man of his word. Moreover, like all the higher natures, he was raised far above above the petty meanness of jealousy. If he loved Kathleen, he could not help desiring to do whatever would please her, even though it were that hard task to find for her sake the lover who was to supplant him. As soon as he read those words he had but one thought in his mind-he must go up to town at once and see whether Stanley and Lockhart could supply him with the address of their new

In five minutes more he was back at his lodgings, whither he had come down partly for rest and change after his fresh disappointment, partly to paint a little purple gem of English moorland landscape for an American exhibition. He turned to his Bradshaw eagerly. An up train would be due in 20 minutes. It was sharp work to catch it, for his rooms on the hilltop lay more than a mile from the station, but off he set at a run, so eager was he to find out the truth about Arnold Willoughby. At the station he had just time to dispatch a hasty telegram up to town to Kathleen: "Am on the track of the missing man. Will wire again tonight. Have good hopes of finding him," when the train steamed in, and he jumped impetuously into a first

class carriage. At Waterloo he hailed a hansom and drove straight to Stanley & Lockhart's. He sent up his card and asked if he might see one of the partners. The American millionaire's name was well enough known in London to secure him at once a favora ble reception. Mr. Stanley received him with the respect justly due to so many hard dollars. He came provided with the universal passport. Rufus Mortimer went straight to the business in hand. Could Mr. Stanley inform him of the present address of Mr. Arnold Willoughby, the editor of this new book, "An Elizabethan Seadog?"

Mr. Stanley hesitated. Are you a friend of Mr. Willoughby's? he asked, looking out over his spectacle For you know he poses as a sort of dark horse. He's reticent about himself, and we don't even know whether Arnold Willoughby's his real name or a pseudonym. He dresses like and pretends to be a common sailor.'

"Oh, yes," Mortimer answered, smiling. Willoughby's his own name, right enough and he is what he seems to be, an able bodied mariner. But he's a very remarkable man in his way for all that-a painter. a reader, extremely well informed and in every sense a gentleman. There are no flies on Willoughby.

'No what?" Mr. Stanley asked, opening his eyes.

"No flies," Rufus answered, with a compassionate smile for English dullness. mean he's fresh and clever and original." "So we gathered," the head of the firm "Well, to anybody but you, Mr. Mortimer, we would refuse the address but I suppose we may take it for granted in your case you want it for none but purposes which Mr. Willoughby himself would approve of." And he smiled all benignity.
"I hope so," Rufus answered good hu

moreary. 1 want it, first, for myself, and, secondly, for a person in whom, I may venture to say, Mr. Willoughby is deeply interested."

The publisher raised his eyebrows. That was the very worst plea Rufus Mortimer could have put in, for when a man's clearly skulking from the eyes of the world the person (presumably a lady) who is most deeply interested in him is oftener than not the one creature on earth he's most anxious to hide from. So the wise man hesitated.

"Well, I don't know whether I ought to tell you," he said at last, shading his eyes with his hand. "But, to be quite frank with you, we don't exactly know whether we've got his real address or not ourselves. He has his proofs posted to him at a small seafaring coffee house somewhere right away down in the far east end, and that's hardly the sort of place where a man of letters such as he evidently is would be likely to be lodging."

Rufus Mortimer smiled once more. "I expect it's where he lodges," he answered. "At Venice he used to board in He doesn't trouble himself much about the upholsteries and the fripperies."

The publisher, still half unconvinced, wrote down the address on a slip of paper, and Mortimer, just thanking him for it, rushed off to another cab and hurried away at full speed to the East End coffee house. Fortunately Arnold Willoughby was in. He had little to go out for. Mortimer went up to his room—a plain small bedroom on the second floor, very simply furnished, but clean and comfortable. He was taken aback at the first look of the man. Arnold seemed thinner than at Venice, very worn and ill looking. But he started up at the sound of Mortimer's cheery voice, which he recognized at once, with its scarcely perceptible tinge of pleasant and cultivated Pennsylvania accent. Then he held out his left hand. Mortimer saw for himself that the right hung half idle by his side as if paralyzed. "Why, what does this mean?" he asked

quickly. Arnold smiled in reply and grasped his friend's hand warmly, though to say the truth he felt not quite at ease with the man who was to marry Kathleen Hesslegrave. He would have been glad in some ways to be spared this visit, though, now it was thrust upon him, he was really thankful in others that he was to know the truth and to put himself once more en rapport

with Kathleen. "Oh, nothing much," he answered, forcing a difficult smile. "I got crushed in an iceberg accident, Worse calamities hap pen at sea, though it's maimed my paint ing hand, which is always a misfortune." "Is it serious?" Mortimer asked, with in-

"Well, the doctors tell me it'll never be good for anything much again," Arnold answered bravely. "I can learn to write with my left of course, but I must give up painting, I'm afraid, altogether."

They sat and talked for some time about the accident and how it had happened, but neither of them said a word for many minutes together of the subject that was nearest both their hearts that moment. Arnold shy and reserved, while as for Rufus Mortimer, he felt under the circumstances he had no right to betray Kathleen Hesslegrave's confidence. At last, how ever, Arnold mustered up courage to make the doubtful plunge.

"I believe I have to congratulate you," he said, with a rather feeble smile, looking bard at Mortimer. The American winced.

"To congratulate me?" he answered. "I don't quite understand. On what and why,

Arnold gazed at him and hesitated. Ought he to go on or hold his peace? It would be more discreet, perhaps even more honorable, to say nothing further; but, having once begun, he must get to the bottom of it. "Well, about Miss Hesslegrave," he re-"I heard—that is to say—I understood you were going to be married to her. And I'm sure I don't know any man in the world more altogether worthy of her."

Rufus Mortimer stared at him. "Married to her!" he exclaimed. "Why, who on earth told you that? My dear fellow, you are mistaken. I'm sorry to say there isn't one word of truth in it. "But her own brother told me so," Ar-

sold persisted, unable to disentangle this raveled skein. "Her own brother!" Mortimer exclaimed. 'What-that wretched little monkey! He told you this lie? Why, whenever did you see him?" "About six or eight weeks ago," Arnold

nswered, growing hot, "up here in London. And he certainly gave me to understand it was a foregone conclusion." "What—he saw you six or eight weeks ago, and he never told Miss Hesslegrave!' Mortimer cried, justly angry and forgetting in his surprise all about Kathleen's

"I see what he did that for. The selfish little wretch! How mean, how dis-"Why should he tell Miss Hesslegrave?" Arnold answered, looking hard at him. Surely under the circumstances it would best she should see and hear nothing

nore of me." Rufus Mortimer hesitated. He loved Kathleen too well not to desire to serve her, and he felt sure Arnold was laboring under some profound delusion. But h made up his mind that under the circumstances it was best to be frank.

"You're mistaken," he replied. "Miss Hes legrave is anxious to see you again in orler to clear up a most serious misappre nension. To tell you the plain truth, Wiloughby, that's why I'm here today.] don't know what the misapprehension itself may be," he added hastily, for he saw from a faint shade which flitted on Arnold's face that that quick and sensitive nature had again jumped at a conclusion adverse to Kathleen. "She hasn't betrayed your confidence, whatever it may be, and if I'm betraying hers now it's only because I see there's no other way out of it." He d a moment and wiped his brow Then the real man came out in one of thos rare bursts of unadulterated nature which seldom permit themselves. "You den't know what it costs me," he said earnestly; "you don't know what it costs me." He spoke with such transparent sincerity

help sympathizing with him. And yet, even so, after all his bitter experience, he couldn't help letting the thought fiit through his mind all the same, Was Kathleen still trying to catch the earl, but keeping a second string to her bow all the while in the rich American? He laid his hand gently on Rufus Mortimer's shoulder.

"My dear fellow," he said, with real feeling, "I can see how much it means to you. I'm sorry indeed if I stand between you and her. I never wished to do so. There has indeed been an error, a very serious error, but it has been on her part, not on mine. She would have married me once, I know, but under a misapprehension. If she knew the whole truth now, she wouldn't want to see me again. And even if she did." he added, holding up his maimed hand pa thetically, "even if it was the painter she wanted and not-ah, no! I forgot-but even if it was the painter, how could she take him now, and how could he burden her with himself in this mangled condition? It

was always a wild dream, but now it's an impossible one."
"That's for her to judge, Willoughby," Rufus Mortimer answered, with earnest-ness. "Ah, man, how can you talk so? To think you might make her yours with a turn of your hand, and won't, while I-oh, I'd give every penny I possess if only I dare hope for her. And here I am pleading with you on her behalf against myself, and not even knowing whether I'm not derogating from her dignity and honor by condescending on her behalf to say so much as I do to you."

He leaned back in his easy chair and held his hand to his forehead. For a moment neither spoke. Then Arnold began slowly: "I love her very much, Mortimer," he said. "Once I loved her distractedly. I the house of a sort of inferior marine stores dealer. He's a live man, is Willoughby. any other man; certainly not to any Engin her little drawing room waiting anxany fellow countryman. Now this is what I feel: She could be happy with you. I can do nothing for her now. I must just live out my own life the best way I can with what limbs remain to me. It would be useless-my seeing her. It would only mean a painful explanation, and when it was over we must go our own ways, and in the end she would marry you."

"I think you owe her that explanation, though," Mortimer answered slowly. "Mind, I'm pleading her cause with you



Arnold Willoughby, deeply stirred, read it through in profound silence.

against myself because I promised her to do all I could to find you, and I interpret that promise according to the spirit and not according to the letter. But you owe it thinks it was on yours. Very well, then; that shows there is something to be cleared up. You must see her and clear it, for needn't accept them. I could make them over to her before her marriage. I know that's not the way things are usually done, but you and I and she are not usual people. Why shouldn't we cast overboard conventions for once and act like three rational human beings?"

Arnold Willoughby grasped his hand. He couldn't speak for a minute. Something rose in his throat and choked him. Here at least was one man whom he could trust, one man to whom earl or sailor made no difference. He was almost tempted in the heat of the moment to confess and explain everything.

"Mortimer," he said at last, holding his friend's hand in his, "you have always been kindness itself to me. I will answer you one thing-if I could accept that offer from any man I could accept it from you. But I couldn't, I couldn't. For the sake of my own independence I once gave up everything. How could I go back upon it now in order to"-

But before he could finish his sentence Rufus Mortimer stared at him in one of those strange flashes of intuition which come over women often, and men some times, at critical moments of profound emo-

"Then you are Lord Axminster?" he cried. "Did she tell you so?" Arnold burst out, drawing his hand away suddenly.

"No, never. Not a word. Not a breath Not a hint of it," Mortimer answered firmy. "She kept your secret well, as I will keep it. I see it all now. It comes home to me in a moment. You thought it was the earl she had fallen in love with, not the sailor and painter. You thought she would only care for you if you assumed your title. My dear Willoughby, you're mistaken, if ever a man was." He drew a letter case from his pocket. "Read that," he said "The circumstances justify me in breaking her confidence so far. I do it for her own sake. Heaven knows it costs me dear enough to do it."

Arnold Willoughby, deeply stirred, read t through in profound silence. It was the etter Kathleen had written in answer to Rufus Mortimer's last proposal. He read it through, every line, with the intensest motion. It was a good woman's letter, if ever he had seen one. It stung him like remorse. "If I had never met him, I might erhaps have loved you dearly. But I have loved one man too well in my time ever to ove a second, and whether I find him again or not my mind is quite made up. I cannot give myself to any other. I speak to you frankly, because from the very first you have known my secret, and because can trust and respect and like you. But if ever I meet him again, I shall be his, and his only, and his only I must be if I never

Arnold Willoughby handed the letter back to Mortimer, with tears in his eyes. He felt he had wronged her. Whether she knew he was an earl from the beginning or not, he believed now she really loved him for his own sake alone and could never love any other man. She was not mercenary. If she were, she would surely have accepted so brilliant an offer as Rufus Mortimer's, She was not fickle. If she were, she would

and depth of feeling that Arnold couldn't about a man who had apparently disaphimself, "and I thought it was through

she now, Mortimer?"

"Pil go with you," Mortimer answered quickly. "No, don't be afraid," he added with a bitter smile. "As far as the door, I mean. Don't suppose I want to hamper you in such an interview."

For it occurred to him that if they went together to the door in a cab he might be allowed to pay for it, and that otherwise Arnold wouldn't be able to afford one. But Kathleen's heart must not be kept on the stretch for 10 minutes longer than was absolutely necessary.

> CHAPTER XXV. THE MEETING.

Arnold Willoughby arrived at Kathleen Hesslegrave's door in a tremor of delight, excitement and ecstasy. During all those long months that he had been parted from her he had loved her with his whole soulloved the memory of the girl he had once believed her-even though that girl, as he fancied, never really existed. And now that her letter to Rufus Mortimer had once more reinstated her image in his mind as he first imagined her his love came back to him with a rush even more vividly than ever. For had he not now in her own very handwriting the assurance that she loved him-the assurance that she was his, be he present or absent?

He could approach her at last without any doubts on that subject. He could be sure of her answering love, her real affection for himself, whatever might be the explanation of those strange expressions Mrs. Hesslegrave had attributed to her that afternoon in Venice.

He mounted the stairs in a fever of joy don't think I could speak about her so to and suppressed expectation. Kathleen sat iously for the promised second telegram from Rufus Mortimer. A knock at the say to you what I couldn't possibly say to outer portal of the flat aroused her, all tremulous. Could that be the telegraph boy? She held her room door half ajar and listened for the voice. When it came, it down her spine like a cold wave. "Is Miss Hesslegrave in?" it said, but the tone-the tone was surely Arnold Willoughby's.

"Miss Hesslegrave is engaged this afternoon, sir, and can't see anybody," the maid answered demurely. For Kathleen felt too agitated, with hope and suspense, for receiving visitors.

"I think she'll see me," Arnold replied, with a confident smile, and while the girl still hesitated Kathleen's own voice broke out from within in very clear tones, "Let the gentleman come in, Mary."

At the sound of her voice a strange thrill passed through Arnold Willoughby in turn. He rushed along the passage and burst into the sitting room. There stood Kathleen, pale and panting, with one hand on a chair nd one on her throbbing heart, much thinner and whiter than he had known her of old-much thinner and whiter, but not one whit less beautiful. In that first tu-mult of wild delight at his love restored Arnold Willoughby darted forward, and for the first time in his life would have clasped her in his arms and kissed her as she stood there. But Kathleen, looking hard at him and recognizing in a second how ill and wasted he was, with his maimed arm hanging loose by his side in its helplessness, yet waved him back from her at once with an imperious gesture.

"No, no," she said proudly, conquering her love with an effort, "not now, not now, Arnold Once I would have let you if you wished. And still, even today—oh, my heart, my poor heart!-I could willingly let to her to see her. You think the misun-derstanding was on her side alone. She the barrier is there even now, and until you understand everything - until you know I was never what you have thought me so long-I can't possibly allow you. I to your hand-no, Willoughby, you must to know and understand. I want you to let me say it—if you can't support her yourself, what are a few thousands to me? You

Arnold's face was all penitence. As she Arnold's face was all penitence. As she spoke, so fearlessly and so proudly, yet

with such an undercurrent of tenderness, he wondered to himself how he could ever have doubted her.
"Oh, Kathleen," he cried, standing back a pace and stretching out his hands and calling her for the first time to her face by the name she had always borne in his

thoughts and his day dreams, "don't say that to me, please. Don't crush me so utterly. I know how wrong I nave been; I



There stood Kathleen, pale and panting know how much I have misjudged you. But don't visit it too heavily upon me. have suffered for it myself-see, see how I have suffered for it! And you don't know yet how difficult it was for me to resist the conclusion. After what I was told, my darling, my heart's love, I could hardly think otherwise."

"I know that," Kathleen answered standing opposite him and trembling, with a flerce desire to throw nelsell the her lover's arms, only just restrained by a her lover's arms, only just restrained by a a flerce desire to throw herself at once into due sense of her womanly dignity. "If I didn't know it, Mr. Willoughby—or Arnold if you will-I wouldn't allow you to come here. I wouldn't allow you to speak to me. would guard my pride better. It's be cause I know it that I'm going to explain all now to you. It's because I know it that I'm going to lay my heart bare like an open book in front of you. Before I hear any thing else-before I even ask what that means," and she glanced at his useless hand with unspoken distress, "we must clear up this mystery. Till the misunderstanding's cleared we can't talk about anything else as ve ought to one another. And in order to clear it up I shall tell you just everything. shall open my whole soul. I shall tear my heart out for you. There's no room for reserve between us two today. We must understand one another, once for all. Oh, Arnold, my Arnold, now I've found you, I've found you!"

Arnold gazed at her and melted with shame and remorse. Her passion overcame him. How could he ever for one moment have doubted that pure, that queenly soul? But, then, Mrs. Hesslegrave's words—that dark saying about the earldom - those mysterious hints of a deliberate conspiracy You thought I knew from the first who you were?" Kathleen began, drawing breath

and facing him boldly. "I thought you believed from the first I was Lord Axminster." Arnold answered never have written such a letter as that quite trankly, but still refusing to commit

peared from her horizon. Arnold's heart that belief alone that you first permitted a dark shadow pass over Kathleen's sweet common sailor to win his way as far as he face. "I mean, I am afraid I am mislead "I must go to her," he said instantly. "I did, if he did, into your affections. But, must see her and set this right. Where is Kathleen, I won't think so now. If you Kathleen, the man who has come home to tell me you didn't, I'll believe you at once, and if you tell me you did, but that you loved me for myself, though you took me for ten thousand times over an earl, oh, the merest bare wreck of one. Here, a sheer Kathleen, I will believe you! I will believe you and love you with all my heart and soul, if only you'll allow me."

It was a great deal for Arnold Willough by, with his past behind him, to say, but it wasn't enough for Kathleen. She was still unsatisfied. She stood before him, trembling and quivering all over with love, yet just waving him back with one imperious hand when he strove to draw nearer to her. "No, no," she answered, holding him off with her queenly gesture. "That's not what I want. I want plainly to clear myself. I want you to know, to be sure and to understand the whole real truth. I want you to see for yourself what I thought gan to love you—for I did love you, Ar-nold, and I do love you still—and how and when I first discovered your real name and personality."

She moved across the room from where she stood to a desk in the corner. "Read this," she said simply, taking out a diary and handing it to him. "Begin there, on the day I first met you in London. Then turn on to these pages, where I put this mark, and read straight through till you Venice—the end of everything for me till you came again this evening."

and read. Meanwhile Kathleen sank into eagerly as he turned over the pages.

He read on and on in a fever of delight. He read how she had come upon him in to have you here again with me." Venice in Mortimer's gondola. He read how she had begun to like him in spite of doubts and hesitations; how she had wondered whether a lady ought to let herself heart, a gentleman of the truest in feelings and manners. Then he saw how the evidences of her liking grew thicker and thicker from page to page till they deepened at last into shamefaced self confessions of maiden love and culminated in the end inlove him with all my heart, and if he asks side to talk to." me I shall accept him."

When he came to that page, Kathleen saw by the moisture rising thick in his eyes what point he had reached. He looked across at her imploringly. "Oh, Kathleen, tent voice. "And now I hear you speak I may?" he cried, trying to seize her hand. But still Kathleen waved him back. "No, not yet," she said in a tone half relenting, half stern. "Not yet. You must read it all through. You must let me prove myself innocent."

She said it proudly, yet tenderly, for she knew the proof was there. And after all she had suffered she did not shrink for a moment from letting Arnold so read her heart's inmost secret.

He read on and on. Then came at last that day when the canon recognized him in the side canal by San Giovanni e Paolo. Arnold drew a deep breath, "It was he who found me out, then?" he said, for the first time admitting his long nidden iden-

Yes, it was he who found you out, Kathleen answered, leaning forward. "And suspected it myself, of course from those words of yours he quoted. And, Arnold, prejudices—the first thought was this: 'Oh, how glad I am to think I should have singled him out for myself out of pure, pure Yet that he should turn out in the end to be so great a gentleman of so ancient a lineage!' And the second thing that struck me was this: 'Oh, how sorry I am, after all I should have surprised his secret, for he wished to keep it from me. He wished perhaps to surprise me, and it may grieve him that I should have learned it like this prematurely.' But I never knew then what misery it was to bring upon me."

"Kathleen," the young man cried imploringly, "I must-I must this time!" And he

stretched his arms out to her. "No," Kathleen cried, waving him back, but flushing rosy red, "I am not yet absolved. You must read to the very end. You must know the whole truth of it."

Again Arnold read on, for Kathleen had written at great length the history of that day-that terrible day-much blotted with tears, on the pages of her diary, when the canon went away and her mother "spoiled all" with Arnold Willoughby. When he came to that heartbroken cry of a wounded spirit, Arnold rose from his place; he could contain himself no longer. With livelihood. What Arnold wanted, now the tears in his eyes, he sprang toward her eagerly. This time at last Kathleen did not prevent him. "Am I absolved?" she

And Arnold, clasping her tight, made answer through his tears: "My darling, my darling, it's I, not you, who stand in need of absolution. I have cruelly wronged you. I can never forgive myself for it." "But I can forgive you," Kathleen mur-

mured, nestling close to him. For some minutes they sat there, hand in and, supremely happy. They had no need for words in that more eloquent silence. Then Arnold spoke again, very sadly, with a sudden reminder of all that had happened meanwhile. "But, Kathleen, even now l ought never to have spoken to you. This is only to ease our souls. Things are still where they were for every other purpose. My darling, how am I to tell you of it? I can never marry you now. I have only just ecovered you to lose you again instantly." Kathleen held his hand in hers still. Why so, dear?" she asked, too serenely joyous now (as is a woman's wont) at her ove recovered to trouble her mind much

about such enigmatic sayings.
"Because," Arnold cried, "I have nothing to marry you with, and this maimed hand -it was crushed in an iceberg accident this summer, I'll tell you all about it by and by makes it more impossible than ever for me to earn a livelihood. Oh, Kathleen, if I hadn't been carried away by my feelings, and by what that dear, good fellow Mortimer told me—he showed me your letter—I would never have come back like this to see you without some previous explanation. would have written to tell you beforehand how hopeless it all was, how helpless a

creature was coming home to claim you." "Then I'm glad they did carry you away," Kathleen answered, smiling, "for I'd ten housand times rather see you yourself, Arnold, now everything's cleared up, than any number of letters."

But everything's not cleared up; that's what gloomily, "at least as far as I'm con- nication with his firm in America he sent

cerned," he went on in haste, for he saw a ing you myself now. You think, dear you is an English peer. Practically and financially he's nothing of the sort. He's hulk, stands Arnold Willoughby.

"You probably imagine I got rid of my position and masqueraded in seaman's clothes out of pure, pure fun, only just to try you. I did nothing of the sort, my darling. I renounced my birthright, once and forever, partly on conscientious grounds and partly on grounds of personal dignity. I may have done right; I may have done wrong, but at any rate all that's long since irrevocable. It's passed and gone now and can never be reconsidered. It's a closed chapter. I was once an earl. I am an earl no longer. The man who asks you-who certain beyond the shadow of a doubt, I dare hardly ask you—for your love today was not what you took me for. I want you is to all intents and purposes mere Arnold Willoughby, a common sailor, unfit for work, and an artist too hopelessly maimed of you first. I want you to see when I be- for any further painting-in short, a man without fixed occupation or means of livelihood."

Kathleen clung to his hand. "I knew as much already," she answered bravely, smoothing it with her own. "That is to say, at least, I knew from the day you went away from Venice, and still more from the day when your cousin's claim was allowed to hold good by the house of lords, that you had relinquished once for all your right to the peerage. I knew a man so just come to the end, when you went away from and good as you are would never allow your cousin to assume the title as his own and then rob him of it again. I knew that It was no time for protestations. Arnold if you ever came back to me it would be as saw she was in earnest. He took the book plain Arnold Willoughby, fighting your own battle on equal terms against the an easy chair opposite and watched his face world, and, Arnold, now you're here, I don't care a pin on what terms or under what name you come; it's enough for me

"Thank you, Kathleen," Arnold said. very low, with a thrill of deep joy. "My darling, your're too good for me.

"But that's not all," Kathleen went on, grow so fond of a man so far beneath her with swimming eyes. "Do you know, Arin rank and station; how she had stifled her | nold, while you were away what I wanted doubts by saying to herself he had genius you to come back for most was that I might and refinement and a poet's nature; he was set myself right with you; might make you a gentleman, after all, a true gentleman at admit I wasn't ever what you thought me; might justify my womanhood to you; might be myself once more to you. But see what a woman I am after all! Now you are here, oh, my darling, it isn't that that I think about, nor even whether or not you'll ever be able to marry me! All I think of is simto that one passionate avowal: "Sailor or no sailor, oh, I love him. I love hi

She gazed at him with pure love in those earnest big eyes of hers, Arnold melted with joy. "You speak like a true, good woman, darling," he answered in a peniso I wonder to myself how on earth I could ever have had the heart to doubt you." So they sat and talked. One hour like that was well worth those two years of solitude and misery.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP. And now that all was over, and her Arnold had come home to her, Kathleen Hesslegrave felt as if the rest mattered little. He was back; he knew all; he saw all; he understood all; he loved her once again far more dearly than ever. Womanlike, she was more than satisfied to have her lover by her side—all else was to her a mere question of detail.

And yet the problem for Arnold was by no means solved. He had no way as yet of earning his own living; still less had he I saw at once he was right, for I had half any way of earning a living for Kathleen. Kathleen herself indeed, happy enough to have found her sailor again, would have been glad to marry him as he stood, maimed hand and all, and to have worked at hernever have dreamed of. It would have been love, without knowing anything of him. grotesque to give up the Axminster revenues on conscientious grounds and then allow himself to be supported by a woman's

> Rufus Mortimer, too, ever generous and ever chivalrous, would willingly have done anything in his power to help them, but such help as that also Arnold felt to be impossible. He must fight out the battle of life on his own account to the bitter end, and though this last misfortune of his crushed hand was an accident that misat have happened to any sailor any day it made him feel none the less that painful consciousness he had often felt before of his own inferiority and comparative inability to do for himself what he saw so many of his kind doing round him on every side without apparent effort. He did not care to acknowledge himself a human failure. Of course he had the £50 he had received

for his translation of the Italian manuscript, but even Arnold Willoughby couldn't live on £50 forever, though no doubt he could make it go at least as far as any one else of his class could. And it sea was shut against him and painting most difficult, was some alternative way of murmured low as he caught her in his arms for Kathleen. As to how he could do that earning money for himself and if possible he had for the moment no idea. He merely struggled on upon his £50, spreading it out as thin as £50 can be made to spread nowadays in this crowded Britain of ours.

But if this problem caused anxiety to Arnold Willoughby it caused at least as much more to Rufus Mortimer. As a rule, people who have never known want themelves realize but vaguely the struggles and hardships of others who stand face to face with it. They have an easy formula-'lazy beggar''-which covers minds all possible grounds of failure or misfortune in other people, though they are not themselves always so remarkable for their industry. But Rufus Mortimer, with his delicately sensitive American nature, as sensitive in its way as Arnold's own, understood to the full the difficulties of the case, and having made himself responsible to some extent for Arnold's and Kathleen's happiness, by bringing them together again, gave himself no little trouble, now that matter was arranged, to seek some suitable work in life for Arnold. This, however, as it turned out, was no easy matter.

Even backed up by Rufus Mortimer's influence, Arnold found there were few posts in life he could now adequately fill, while the same moral scruples that had made him in the first instance renounce altogether the Axminster property continued to prevent his accepting any post that he did not consider an honest and useful one. It occurred to Mortimer, therefore, one day when he met Reggie on Kathleen's doorstep, and entering found Kathleen herself with every sign of recent tears, that one of the first ways of helping the young couple would be the indirect one of getting rid of Reggie. He suspected that young gentleman of being a perpetual drain upor Kath-"But everything's not cleared up; that's certainly no such conscientious scruples, the worst of it," Arnold answered some So after a little brief telegraphic commuleen's resources, and he knew him to have