

# THE STORY OF A STORY.

BY EDWARD D. CUMING.

## CHAPTER III.

As Mr. Wegwood rightly guessed that the terms on which he had secured publication of Mrs. Malden's book would not be gratifying to her pride, he considered it prudent to omit all mention of the part his purse was to play in the transaction. And the young lady was given to understand that Mr. Twinkleby, after glancing through the manuscript, had been so impressed with it that he consented to push on its production without loss of time. She was, we need hardly say, absolutely ignorant of such matters, and saw nothing singular in the apparent quickness with which the publisher had formed his opinion; his trained eye had, of course, detected the excellence of the story in a function of the time required by an amateur critic.

The thought that her novel had been thus accepted upon its merits restored all Alicia's natural amiability, and dissipated her resentment against the purblind Arthur Meadows. Prospective fame made her generous; and now that her own views had been so irrefragably confirmed, she could spare time to remember that she had begged hard for his candid opinion, and that it had been given with manifest reluctance. Her wrath, never very lasting, died away, and the only feeling that now qualified her old liking for the young man was of slightly contemptuous pity for his lack of discernment. She was tempted to write and tell him how completely wrong his judgment had been; but desisted. She intended to bestow forgiveness with reproof, and decided that the best way of doing this would be to send a copy of "At Eden's Gate" "with the kindest regards of the authoress," when the book burst upon the world six weeks hence.

To Mr. Wegwood's self-indulgent eye, it appeared that his master-stroke had produced all the results anticipated; and it was undeniable that, from the day of his visit to Paternoster Row, Miss Malden's bearing towards him was more friendly. Had he only known it, he was receiving neither more nor less than the measure of gratitude his services had earned. It was a pleasant delusion, and it led him to imagine himself very much nearer the goal than he was. He considered his engagement to Miss Malden as good as accomplished, and spared the young lady the task of enlightening him by once more adopting his old attitude of pursued instead of pursuer. He had resolved to put the momentous question on the day that saw the great novel make its debut; that occasion would be peculiarly appropriate; and he had no inclination to cut short the present sweet dallings, which derived their least attraction from the undisguised interest with which they were watched by his friends.

For Rumour, coupling his name with that of Alicia Malden, had risen from her lair in the Unknown, and was spreading the news with the certainty of infection. There were lamentably few "affairs" that season, and this one was real boon to afternoon tea-tables. The knowledge that his name was in every one's mouth as the future husband of the beautiful Miss Malden was nectar to Mr. Wegwood; and if he did not actually encourage the rumour, he did nothing to allay it.

Had the brewer's cerebral cavity been large enough to contain more than one idea at a time, a conversation he held with Mr. Twinkleby about a week after his visit to Paternoster Row, would have aroused some misgivings as to the farsightedness of his policy in respect to Miss Malden's novel, and made him less serenely confident of success. He was strolling in St. James Street one evening, on his way to his chambers, to dress for dinner, when the publisher suddenly appeared from a side street and buttonholed him with obvious purpose.

"I'm glad to meet you, Wegwood," he said. "I intended to write, but was called out of town and quite forgot it. I wanted to communicate with you about that manuscript you brought me."

"Manuscript? queried Mr. Wegwood, wrinkling his brows and frowning into vacancy. "Ah yes—remember—lady asked me to give it to you. Dining with her to-night by the way. Suppose I may tell her it's all right?"

"Well, I'm sorry to say that is just what it is."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Wegwood, startled into temporary sanity.

"The plain truth is that I can't publish it. I wouldn't put the firm's name on such a production."

The last remnant of Mr. Wegwood's languor vanished, and his rubicund countenance grew pale. "Can't publish it?" he echoed incredulously. "You said you would."

"I did. But I never for a moment suspected what the contents would prove to be. I gave it to one of my people to estimate length and so on, and didn't think any more about it. Well, the next day the reader to whom I'd given it burst into my private room without knocking, almost in a fit, and asked if I had looked at the stuff. When I inquired what he meant, he made me read a few specimen passages. I've had to wade through some badish books in my time but—Mr. Twinkleby recollected that the novel under discussion was the work of a friend of Mr. Wegwood, and considerably refrained from further criticism. "The upshot of it was," he concluded, "that I resolved to decline your commission; and I'll send the package and your cheque back to-morrow."

Mr. Wegwood wiped the perspiration from his brow, and seized the publisher by the arm, unconscious that his tightly rolled umbrella had fallen from his grasp and was lying in the turbid riuilet of the gutter.

"Twinkleby!" he exclaimed in a hollow whisper, "you don't know what depends on that book!" All my happiness in life hangs upon its being published. Twinkleby for any sake—don't refuse to print it; don't send back. Name your own figure, make your own terms: do anything; but oh I don't say you won't publish it."

Mr. Twinkleby stared, as well he might; his petitioner's anguish was so very real and intense, that it piqued his curiosity. When Mr. Wegwood brought him the manuscript he had let fall nothing that could lead any one to suppose he possessed any interest in it; and now the information that it was unworthy the honors of print threw him into a fever of agitation. The publisher was before all things an obliging man, and he began to waver in his decision.

"Really, Wegwood," he answered reassuringly, "I had no idea you attached any

importance to the publication of the book. I understood that you were executing an errand for a lady, when you brought it to me. I don't want to pry into your private affairs, of course; but if you have any sound reason for wishing me to do the business, I'll consider it."

"I can't tell you—exact reason, Twinkleby," gasped the unhappy lover; "very private indeed, but most important. Just name your price for doing it; I'll pay you anything in reason."

"I don't want to take advantage of you, my dear sir. The thing that puzzles me is, how on earth to make a book of it. If you remember, you said the lady particularly wished no alterations made."

"No," said Mr. Wegwood, beginning to recover himself; "you must not mutilate it on any account."

Mr. Twinkleby could not repress a smile at the thought of "mutilation;" but, recollecting his "reader's" assertion that no manipulation would improve the story, let the matter pass.

"Well, Wegwood," he said after a little consideration, "I'll have the book set up as it stands, after correcting the English and spelling. I must do that; I don't think it need distress you, for the authoress is not likely to recognise the changes in print."

"Correct the spelling," assented Mr. Wegwood dubiously, so profound was his respect for Alicia's commands.

"And if you must, the English as well."

—But, Twinkleby, I can't consent to your cutting out a line of it. She would throw me over in a minute if I let you spoil her book, and I'd rather—rather—Imagination failed to suggest an alternative; he fell back a pace and gazed at the publisher in eloquent silence.

"All right, Wegwood; don't alarm yourself. I'll stretch a point, and do the job in your own way. But I warn you that I shall charge pretty heavily for it; a rising house like ours has a reputation to make."

"I've given you a hundred, Twinkleby. How much more do you ask?"

"Another hundred and fifty. It's a lot of money, I know, but—"

"My dear fellow," interposed Mr. Wegwood, in tones tremulous with grateful emotion, "it's nothing compared to the end in view. I'll send you a cheque this evening."

He pressed the publisher's hand warmly, and continued his walk to Dover Street. Never in the whole course of his life had he passed through so agonising a quarter of an hour. "At Eden's Gate" was leading him like the ignis fatuus; he was blind to the dangers of the chase, and the thought that the guiding light had been so nearly blown out made him shiver.

"Merciful powers!" he exclaimed as he sank into the deepest armchair in his luxurious rooms and drank off a glass of sherry to steady his nerves, "supposing Twinkleby had stuck to his refusal and sent it back. What should I have done? There was no one to suggest that London contained many publishers less scrupulous than his friend and this simple solution of the hypothetical difficulty did not occur to him. He therefore enjoyed a grateful sense of having escaped by the only possible road—namely, paying up."

"It's costing me a good deal, one way and another," he said to himself as he went to his dressing-room. "But I was prepared for that. And after all," he continued with a thrill of devotion, "What is the money but road-metal to pave the way to Her?" After which flight of poetic feeling, Mr. Wegwood applied himself to the serious task of choosing sleeve-links to wear that night.

The effects of his interview with Mr. Twinkleby had not entirely worn off when he appeared in Brook Street. He was grave and preoccupied, and less aggressively languid than usual; more sparing of personal reminiscence, and altogether a more companionable person than when he essayed to make himself agreeable. Mrs. Malden's party was a large one that evening; but he contrived to snatch a few minutes with Alicia after dinner, and repeated as much of the conversation with Mr. Twinkleby as he thought judicious. In brief, without distinctly intending it, he impressed her with the opinion that he was keeping jealous watch over the publisher to ensure her wishes being carried out; and he went away, having raised himself several degrees in her estimation.

"Mr. Wegwood was very nice this evening," she observed to her mother, when the last guest had driven away.

"Don't you always find him so?" inquired Mrs. Malden with a shade of reproach in her tone.

"Well, no, mamma; I can't say I do."

"He admires you very much," said her mother, as though appealing to Alicia's sense of justice to reciprocate the admiration.

"So I believe," returned Miss Malden calmly.

"You know what Mrs. Brotwig told me the other day, Alicia," said Mrs. Malden more gravely. "People are beginning to chatter."

The young lady rose from her seat on the fender stool with a gesture of impatience. She knew her neighbor's propensity for gossip, and cordially disliked being the subject of it.

"Mamma, I can't help that," she protested. "I can't prevent Mr. Wegwood's coming here six times a week; and so long as he does that, we can't be surprised if people talk."

Mrs. Malden put the last touches to the flowers she had been rearranging, and sat down on a low chair near the hearthrug, on which her daughter was standing in an attitude of unstudied grace, with one arm on the mantel-piece.

"Alicia," she began, entreatingly, "don't keep your mother out of your confidence. I implore you. Tell me plainly, dear; what are you going to say when Mr. Wegwood speaks to you?"

"He hasn't spoken yet mamma," answered Alicia evasively.

"I know that dear; but it would be false modesty on your part to doubt the meaning of his attentions. I shall not live ever, and the wish of my life is to see you happily settled before I go. Will you not confide in me Alicia?"

"Really, mamma, I am keeping nothing from you—about Mr. Wegwood, at all events," she added, thinking of the weighty

secret now within measurable distance of disclosure. "I like him, and I confess, better now than I did a month ago; but I haven't even thought what I should say if he asked me to marry him."

"Keeping nothing from you—about Mr. Wegwood, at all events," repeated Mrs. Malden to herself with a sharp twinge of anxiety. The reservation pointed directly to some other man, and who should he be but the absent Arthur Meadows? To that gentleman himself, she had, as we have heard, no objection—quite the reverse. But when his existence raised an obstacle to the union upon which she had set her heart, he was a very odious person indeed.

Mrs. Malden had not been born in Mayfair, but in the more industrious neighbourhood of Clerkenwell. Her late husband had commenced at the lowest rung of the ladder, and had fought his way up to the top by sheer hard work and shrewdness. Late in life, he had taken a fancy to marry from amongst his own kindred, raising her at a step from poverty to affluence. And thanks to the husband's acknowledged abilities and the wife's unflinching discretion, the pair had gathered a large circle of friends round them long before Death laid his hand on Mr. Malden.

It was therefore not wonderful that the widow should regard this heir to a peerage with peculiar favour as a desirable husband for her only daughter. There was much to recommend him, and the worst any one could urge against him was his indolence and conceit. "Facts of youth," Mrs. Malden had often said to herself ere now, "due to his training and want of good advisers. They will disappear in time. And from the day he allowed her to see his ambition, the marriage had been the dream of her life. Since Arthur Meadows's departure, she had never mentioned that gentleman's name to Alicia; hoping, as she admitted to the more suitable candidate, that her supposed regard for him was merely a passing caprice.

"Well, Alicia," she said, rising from her chair after a long and thoughtful silence, "I won't press you about it. If you have not the feeling for Mr. Wegwood which a girl must have for the man she marries, there's nothing more to be said. Position is not everything, of course, and I would not have you buy it at a price. But at the same time, you should remember that there are very few men with Mr. Wegwood's advantages. And don't gauge his character by his manner, which I grant has some defects."

"It has," assented Alicia, glad to be able to agree with her mother on some point; but he is improving, mamma—with gracious condescension.

Mrs. Malden smiled approval, and ventured a step on the ground she had heretofore so carefully avoided. "I know no young man I would sooner see your husband, Alicia; and I only trust you will not throw away a substance for shadow."

"I am in no hurry to marry any one," said Alicia, returning her mother's good-night kiss with more than ordinary warmth; "I am very happy at home with you."

"She means," said Mrs. Malden, sorrowfully, to herself as she went upstairs, "that she is willing to wait for young Meadows. Well, what must be, must be; but I did hope things would have gone otherwise."

So the mother, accepting the imaginary inevitable, turned for solace to the thought that her child was at least no disciple of the present school; that having given her love, she would not withdraw it, though it were almost hopeless, and the shadow of a coronet arose to tempt her constancy.

While Mrs. Malden mused upon these things in the privacy of her own room, Alicia, sitting in her favorite place on the drawing-room fender stool, was honouring Mr. Wegwood with more sober thought than she had ever spent upon him before. He was unquestionably a great man; but she could not discover that his wealth and prospects weighed much in his favour; indeed, she thought, he would be a much nicer man without them, for then he might perhaps think a little less of himself. But he was good-natured, and had really been very kind about her book; he seemed to have taken a great deal of trouble over it. He was improving without a doubt; at one time he had always treated her as a child, upon whom intelligent conversation would be thrown away; and if there was one thing Alicia Malden thoroughly hated, it was to be treated as a child, whose proper mental diet was frivolity and nonsense. However Mr. Wegwood had given up that method lately.

From Mr. Wegwood, her thoughts flew to the novel and Mr. Meadows. It was odd that a man whose literary tastes were acknowledged to be sound should have dealt so severely with "At Eden's Gate." He must have told what he really believed to be the truth about it, for one of the nicest traits in his character was, that he never said an unkind word when he could possibly say a kind one; moreover, his affection for her would have made him lenient. By the way, it was a little curious that Mr. Twinkleby should have snapped so eagerly at the novel, and have said nothing at all of his intentions regarding payment. Probably he would send the cheque when the book came out; not that she cared about the money itself; but it would add greatly to the éclat of the occasion to be able to exhibit the cheque as the earnings of her own pen.

I wonder how the papers will criticise it?" speculated the authoress as she rose to retire to her room. I must not forget to ask Mr. Wegwood to tell Twinkleby to send me all the critiques as they appear."

And Miss Malden went to sleep, picturing the Saturday Review in throes of respectful laudation.

While these events were passing in London, Arthur Meadows, at B—, was settling down with the adaptability to circumstances peculiar to him. Ever since his induction to the Secretaryship he had lived in a state of chronic wonderment at the trivial nature of the duties required of him in return for the liberal salary he drew. He had hoped to find in his new sphere opportunity for proving his mettle, and perhaps of opening connections with people who would be able to assist his advancement; but he soon realised that his office was little better than a sinecure. It was a disappointment. Although he left town weighed down with the thought that Alicia Malden was hopelessly estranged, it was not long before he persuaded himself that his offence would be condoned; he was too good-hearted and sincere to bear malice, and he lived on in the desperate hope that something unlooked for might occur to restore him to her side and to her good graces.

He continued to employ his many leisure hours with literary work, and thus maintained correspondence with his publishing friends in London. Among these, Mr.

Twinkleby, as proprietor and editor of the *Ludgate Hill Magazine*, was the one with whom he held the most frequent and familiar communication, for his business connection with the *Ludgate Hill* had laid the foundation of close personal friendship with the editor.

He had been in B—for a little more than a month, when he received one morning a letter from Mr. Twinkleby which contained among other items of intelligence, of no interest to us, one that cast a black shadow over his life, and threw him into that condition of blighted misery which darkens existence while it lasts.

"Our friend, Gussy Wegwood, is going to be married," wrote Mr. Twinkleby. "He brought me a novel for publication the other day, and I have since learned that he is engaged to the lady who wrote it. I should never have suspected Wegwood of rushing into matrimony; but the unexpected is always happening."

Arthur Meadows read this over twice, and then laid down the letter with a sick feeling of despair. There could be no doubt of the identity of the lady to whom Mr. Wegwood was engaged, and he felt that Alicia was now lost to him for ever. Arthur felt that he had himself to thank for his position, and the knowledge did nothing to make it less miserable.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## The Irish Leadership.

"One would have to search far back into English Parliamentary history to find an event which caused so much interest and so much political excitement as the present division of the Irish part. This is the only topic that has been discussed for these ten days. Lord Salisbury's speech, the Parliamentary programme, General Booth's social panacea, professor Koch's discoveries, the conflict between the English and Portuguese in South Africa, Mrs. Pearcey's murder trial, and even the possibilities of an early general election as a consequence of the present crisis, have been forgotten, or little thought of, in view of the all-absorbing question, Will Mr. Parnell remain leader of the Irish party?"

So wrote G. W. Smalley under a recent date. Since then the split in the Nationalist party has assumed more definite shape, two-thirds of Mr. Parnell's party having discarded him as leader and having chosen Justin McCarthy for their chief. The scene of the conflict, too, has changed from Westminster to Ireland where each faction is at present seeking to win the Irish people over to its side. What the issue will be is still uncertain; although the preponderance of probability is against Mr. Parnell. Of 319 Members of Town Commissioners, National League branches, trade and labor societies, etc., which have expressed an opinion, 206 were in favor of Mr. Parnell, and 113 were opposed. But against these organizations must be placed the Catholic bishops who in their manifesto declare that after the revelation of the Divorce Court they are unable to regard Parnell in any other light than convicted of one of the gravest offences known to religion and society, which is aggravated in his case by almost every circumstance possible to give it scandalous prominence in guilt and shame. They state, moreover, their conviction that the continuance of Mr. Parnell as leader, will disorganize the forces of the country, ensure inevitable defeat at the general election, postpone Home Rule indefinitely, perpetuate coercion, strengthen the hands of the evictor, and leave the evicted without the shadow of a hope of being reinstated. These utterances so clear and unmistakable are exerting a manifest influence already. Latest reports indicate that Mr. Parnell's star is declining. His progress through Ireland is not proving a continual triumphal march, notwithstanding the desperate efforts of his friends to make it appear so. This out-spokenness on the moral question involved does the clergy infinite credit. It is a question, however, which Mr. Parnell's sympathizers would fain keep in the background. They declare that it is an irrelevant issue, and ask defiantly, What has a man's private life to do with his public career? They point to former English leaders, notably the Duke of Wellington, Lord Melbourne and Lord Palmerston whose scandalous liaisons did not prevent them from continuing in their high positions. Very true; but it is equally true that the times have changed, and that the moral sense of Christian peoples has become clearer and more discriminating. The sentiment that now prevails is that a good cause requires a man who is both good and great to lead it. The conviction is strengthening that the man who is false in his private life is not the person to be trusted with great political powers; in other words, the moral law and not political expediency is the test which is beginning to be applied to public men. In this change all lovers of true and abiding progress will rejoice.

## Individual Knowledge.

As a rule the amount of absolutely original knowledge which any single individual contributes to the fund already existing is not very large, though oftentimes very important. That which predecessors have slowly acquired presents itself to the successor in a new light, or suggests a new application. And so the fund of knowledge is increased, and the sphere of usefulness enlarged. This fact, if remembered, would serve to temper the feelings of those, who, upon discovering any new feature in respect to any object or subject, boast as though the whole idea originated with themselves. A particular instance of this unseemly boasting is furnished by those Americans, who because the United States was the first to ascertain the fact that an alloy of nickel with steel materially increases the strength and resisting power of armor plates, are exulting as though the result of mixing nickel with steel was altogether a new discovery. If indeed it were so, the credit would hardly belong to the Americans, seeing that it was an English engineer who suggested the mixture of metals to an English firm of manufacturers, who made the plates. The fact is, however, that of late a great deal of attention has been devoted to alloys of iron, and nickel steel is among the best results which a great many years of experimenting has produced. But after all it is not a matter of great consequence to Canada who claims the credit for the discovery; the important consideration being that the boom in nickel, which has resulted from the recent experiments, will give added value to our vast nickel deposits and make it a comparatively easy matter to get capital for their development.

## Discoveries in Medical Science.

Great discoveries never come singly. They are new points of view usually, and when the new light is seen distinctly, it is soon found that a good many related matters are affected by it. Electric lighting was a wonderful discovery, but the bearings of electric lighting upon different applications of science to life are such that electricity in its manifold relations to the practical arts has opened to us almost a new world. So it looks as if we were at the point of great discoveries in medical science, of which the recent discovery of Prof. Koch is but the forerunner. The moment it was reasonably certain that he had discovered a specific for destroying the bacillus in tuberculosis, the suggestion came that the bacillus for all specific diseases could be so treated by scientific experts that the disease in question could be effectually destroyed. If Sir Morell Mackenzie is right in his anticipations on this point, which are undoubtedly the same as those entertained by all physicians who have watched with the keenest interest the investigations made by M. Pasteur and Prof. Koch, we are on the eve of extended discoveries in medical science, within the range of diseases derivable from different workings of the bacillus. What Prof. Koch has accomplished may be really but the earnest of the results in experimental researches which leading medical scientists have been engaged in making during the last twenty years.

## The Debt of France.

The recent exhibit of the vastness of the debt of France is something of a surprise to the general mind, although probably known to the financiers of that country. The figures given take the incommensurable proportions of \$6,000,000,000 in round numbers. This is about double the indebtedness of the United States at the close of the war, and one third more than England's gigantic debt. The interest on the French debt averages 3.48 per cent, but as the bonds brought in \$1,500,000,000 less than their face, the actual interest on the money received makes the rate 4.62 per cent. The debt is greater than that of any other country, and beyond any that has been recorded as carried and met by any people. If those financial philosophers are correct who hold that a debt is a blessing, and a promoter of thrift and prosperity, France should be the most flourishing nation on earth. The French people are remarkable for their industry and frugality, and the fruits of toil and economy are perhaps more generally diffused among them than among any other country in the old world. They have more than once shown the strength of the nation by hastening to the aid of the government in financial crises. Their patriotism and integrity have been exhibited in their fidelity to the financial honor of the country. They have never thought of repudiation. The national credit has been kept so high that the government can borrow all that it needs now at 3 per cent. But the burden must become exceedingly irksome as it grows, with no corresponding development of resources. Financial prophets foresee a period when the French will not be able to carry the burden.

## The Jews in Russia.

The persecution of the Jews in Russia is attracting attention in England as well as in America. A great meeting was held at the Guildhall, London, Wednesday evening at which Chief Rabbi Alder gave some information concerning the matter. It was stated that many Jews had recently turned to save themselves and their business interests by becoming converts to Christianity; but by a recent decree it is provided that no Jew shall be accepted as a convert unless his wife and children, brothers, sisters and parents become Christians with him. Neither can a Jew become either a Catholic or Protestant. He must join the Greek orthodox church. This will prevent him from protecting his business by putting his affairs into the hands of his family while he takes advantage of shelter in the Russian community. This outrageous treatment of a people on account of their race and religion naturally excites the indignation of liberal minded people everywhere. Nothing but the concerted and strongly expressed sentiments of the civilized world outside of Russia can lead the Russian authorities to see the meanness and folly of their course in this matter.