

THE HEARTHSTONE.

is another man who looks as much like Cranston as his own brother could—only Cranston hasn't got a brother, so he don't know how he would look,—the only difference being that this other man's hair is black and he is considerably younger than Cranston; but a bottle of hairdye would soon make that all right, and Cranston says that if they were both dressed alike he would scarcely be able to tell which was himself and which was the other fellow. You see Cranston—who turns out to be a very respectable man, although not very well off—owns this Bill Gangle, as he calls himself, although I don't suppose that is his real name, a grudge on an old score, and wants to get square with him. It appears Cranston married a ballet dancer some six or seven years ago, and she turned out a bad one, they often do, and ran away from him, and took up with Gangle; Cranston did not care much about her, but it isn't pleasant for a man to have another man run away with his wife, and then steal his name and commit forgery under it, and so Cranston wants to get square.

"I hope he will," said Mr. Benson in an absent way, feeling rather bored at the story; "and I hope he will find his wife."

"Oh! he don't care much about her; it isn't likely he would be very anxious to find such a bad lot as Edith Barron."

"Who?" shouted Mr. Benson, now fully interested.

"Why, his wife, Edith Barron!"

"I've got it!" exclaimed Mr. Benson, throwing his arms in his excitement around the astonished Captain. "I've done something now, and no mistake. It's all right, hurrah!"

"You've got me, certainly," said Young considerably surprised, "but I don't see what else you have got."

"Why, don't you see?—Of course you can't see—you don't know—I didn't tell you—you understand?—No, I don't suppose you can."

"Most certainly I can't understand what you have just said; what does it mean?"

"Well; it first means this," said Mr. Benson making an effort to be calm, "that if Edith Barron married Cranston six or seven years ago, she was a married woman when she committed bigamy by marrying Arthur Austin, and Robert Brydon and Richard Cranston, No. 2, are one and the same person, and—and—and—I've done something, hurrah!"

"I wish," said Young, rather severely, you'd talk sense and not be a fool; "what do you mean anyway?"

Mr. Benson rapidly collected himself and told Captain Young the whole story so far as he knew of Arthur's marriage &c. The Captain sat very quietly listening attentively until Mr. Benson had finished; then he said:

"I can straighten this thing out."

"I'm sure you can," said Mr. Benson, rather too confidently.

"What's the reward?" asked practical Captain Young.

"You got \$1,000 for Benson's arrest, from the Richmond Bank," answered Mr. Benson, "and I will give the same amount if you can take Cranston out of Montreal and prove that he was married to Edith Barron before she married Arthur Austin!"

"Make it \$2,500 and expenses paid and I'll fix the thing all right in Montreal to-morrow," said practical Captain Young.

"All right," said Mr. Benson, "consider it a bargain."

"Put it there?" said Captain Young extending a large, hard, brawny hand and holding it palm upwards.

Mr. Benson "put it there" by bringing his right hand down heavily into the open palm of the Captain, and the two men shook hands on their agreement.

A very short while afterwards Mr. Benson sent to Mr. Chipleau in Montreal the telegram which closed my last chapter.

CHAPTER X.

OUT OF THE WORLD.

It was not a very difficult matter to get Arthur's trial postponed until the next morning, as asked for by Mr. Chipleau; and Mr. Brydon found himself out of heavy prison in the hands of High Constable Bissonette, who was exceedingly civil, polite and accommodating to him, but by his vigilance debarr'd Mr. Brydon's one great hope now, that of effecting a bolt. Finding there was no chance of escape Mr. Brydon became affable; he had plenty of money about him and he proposed a little supper and a cigar; Bissonette refused supper, as the bosom of his family was waiting for him to repose on it for the evening meal, but he did not mind taking a cigar to smoke after supper. Cigars were obtained and under the influence of a gentle whiff Mr. Brydon obtained permission to walk as far as his boarding house, accompanied by Constable Lafontaine, an obtuse, clean shirt, collar &c. which he declared he was greatly in need of. He was only a few minutes in his room and the Constable was with him all the time, yet he managed to take something out of the bureau and put it in his pocket, and he seemed greatly pleased at what he had done.

Mr. Benson and his witnesses arrived next morning, but by the very strenuous efforts of Messrs. Chipleau and Devlin the trial was postponed one day more, and during the day so gained numerous and voluminous affidavits were taken.

On the morning of the seventh the case was continued, and did not occupy a great deal of time. A gentling list of the bonds &c. was found in a private drawer of the safe, where no one had thought of looking for it—it being said that the list had been found in Arthur's desk—and the evidence of Mr. Parsons and the expert Judge Counsel instructed the jury to dismiss the complaint which was accordingly done. Mr. Devlin then formally moved for the discharge of the prisoner which was granted and Arthur Austin came from the prisoner's dock to the floor of the Court a free man and received the hearty congratulations of his friends. But there was one whose congratulations he valued more than all and that was the one he had always loved, and whom he now knew was really and truly his lawful wife. There was quite a pause when Arthur came out of the dock and his friends crowded around him, and the Judge good naturedly waited a few minutes for the excitement to subside before the next case was called.

There was one person who did not feel particularly elated at Arthur's acquittal, and he, of course, was Mr. Brydon. That gentleman had not as yet been formally arrested and was still a sort of honorary prisoner, seemingly not under control, but really watched constantly by two or three Constables, and as he had been brought up for close examination at the opening of the trial but dismissed to make way for more important witnesses, he was still in court and was standing in front of the reporter's desk when Mr. Austin was formally discharged. Arthur passed quite close to him as he crossed the court to speak to Jessie, and Mr. Brydon's lips twitched convulsively, and his right hand stole quietly into the breast pocket of his coat. He controlled himself, however, and while Jessie was still in Arthur's arms he advanced towards the pair and said:

"So glad, dear boy, to see you acquitted; al-

low me to congratulate you on your triumph—but it will not be for long," he continued sarcastically, suddenly changing his tone and manner, "not for long, Arthur Austin; you have won against me all the time, but I'll trump your last trick or my name is not Robert Brydon!"

Quick as thought he withdrew his right hand from his coat pocket, a bright shining barrel gleamed for one moment in the air, then came a sharp ringing report, a loud scream of agony, and Arthur Austin fell on the floor of the Court a dead man. There was scarcely a quiver of the flesh, hardly a movement of the muscles, the bullet went straight to the heart and death was instantaneous. Ere the horrified spectators could attempt to seize him Mr. Brydon had placed the barrel of the pistol in his own mouth and pulled the trigger.

My story is almost done. The report of Mr. Brydon's pistol evoked an expression of terror from almost all the astonished spectators, but above all rose one scream, one outburst of heart agony, as Jessie threw herself on the lifeless form of her murdered husband. For a moment all was wild terror and confusion; but Judge Counsel quickly recovered his equanimity and restored order and quiet by his prompt and self-possessed action. It was at once discovered that Arthur was dead, there was no question about that; and it was feared that Jessie's spirit had followed that of the one she loved to the shadow land. Medical help was speedily obtained, and Jessie, in a state of unconsciousness, was removed to her home closely attended by Miss Frank, whose medical knowledge had proved of some account, in her quick and effective treatment of Jessie showed. No one seemed to consider Mr. Brydon, and he lay on the floor a mangled mass of humanity, until a carriage was obtained to take Jessie home; then Miss Frank turned to his Honor the Judge, as she was leaving the Court, and said:

"That wretch Brydon is not dead. Take good care of him and get him well, for I mean to see him hanged."

Miss Frank was right. Mr. Brydon was not dead; the bullet had meant to penetrate his brain had been misdirected, and had passed through the back of his neck, inflicting a dangerous, but not of necessity mortal, wound. He had ample medical attendance, and was conveyed as soon as practicable to the General Hospital, where he was well cared for. But Mr. Brydon had no desire to be hung—he knew that was inevitable, and as soon as he recovered strength sufficiently to lift his waistcoat from the chair by his side, on which it had been laid, he took a little rough-looking paper ball out of the sob pocket and deliberately chewed it up and swallowed it. It was a preparation which Mr. Brydon had carefully made up many months ago, and its efficacy was fully proved now, for the nurse who attended him reported about two hours after that he was conscious. The coroner, of course, held an inquest, and the medical testimony showed that Mr. Brydon had died from poison; the intelligent jury, after much deliberation, brought in a verdict of suicide, and Mr. Brydon's career was closed.

Jessie was taken home linsensible and lingered for a couple of days, and then she quietly and peacefully passed away to join the one she loved. The long strain on her nervous system, consequent on Arthur's arrest, and the sudden shock of his death, brought on premature childbirth, and she was too weak to survive its pangs. She remained unconscious, and knew not of the advent of a little girl, who only opened her eyes on this world a few days after her father's death; and in three days after Arthur's murder his body and his wife and child's were laid side by side in the cold earth.

There is little more left to tell. Of course, Frank married Mr. Benson, and they are living happily together. There are several little Franks, and their maternal parent takes good care of them as far as medical matters are concerned, and her first son, whom she called Arthur, after her brother-in-law, bids fair to become a travelling drug store; but he bears up bravely under it, and will not get to become some day a fluo man. Miss Frank and her husband are happy, and live tranquilly and pleasantly together, but there will sometimes come over them a feeling of sadness, and a spirit of gloom when they think of the two who were so suddenly snatched away from them, and how much brighter and happier they might have been if Arthur had possessed sufficient moral courage to grapple with his trouble like a man, and not give himself over to the demon of drink as he did, from which moment his course was downward to destruction.

THE END.

NATIONALITIES OF BRITISH REGIMENTS.—An interesting return has just been issued from the British War Office, showing the number of English, Scotch and Irish non-commissioned officers, corporals and privates in each regiment of Foot, Light and Horse Cavalry, Royal Engineers and Artillery; also of the cavalry of the line, and the infantry of the line and rifle brigade. This return confirms what has generally been well known, that many regiments have lost their original distinctive character, and are now composed of mixed nationalities, while in a few cases only a very small number of men are to be found in a regiment of the country where it was first raised. This is shown in the case of the 1st Foot (Royal Scots), the oldest standing regiment in the service, or indeed in the world. Raised originally in Scotland, it has entirely lost its national character, the 1st battalion being now composed of 443 English, 152 Irish, and 40 Scotchmen; while the 2nd battalion numbers 663 English, 277 Irish, and only 57 Scotch. The 1st battalion of the 21st Foot (Royal North British Fusiliers) consists of 488 English, 350 Irish, and 137 Scotch; and the 2nd battalion of 528, 246, and 132 respectively. The 26th Foot (Cameronians) still contains a fair representation of Scotchmen—328 against 345 English, 17 Irish. The purely Scotch Highland regiments, however, seem to have retained their national character in a wonderful degree. The 42nd (Black Watch), for instance, contains 611 Scotchmen, and only 90 Englishmen, and 13 Irishmen; the 71st (Highland Light Infantry), 633 Scotch, 25 English, and 18 Irish; the 72nd (Duke of Albany's Own Highlanders), 646 Scotch, 242 English, and 57 Irish; the 74th Highlanders, 576 Scotch, and 113 English; and the 78th Highlanders, 593 Scotch, 21 English, and 25 Irish; the 79th (Cameron Highlanders), 611 Scotch, 51 English, and 31 Irish; the 82nd (Gordon Highlanders), 610 Scotch, 105 English, and 45 Irish; and the 83rd (Sutherland Highlanders), 692 Scotch, 30 English, and 16 Irish. Some other Scotch regiments, however, have become more mixed, such as the 73rd Foot (Forfarshire), with 510 English, 95 Scotch, and 211 Irish; the 74th Foot (Strathmore), 512 English, 35 Scotch, and 322 Irish; 90th Light Infantry, (Portsmouth Volunteers), 440 English, 135 Scotch, and 91 Irish; 91st (Princess Louise's Argyllshire Highlanders), 218 English, 226 Scotch, and 113 Irish; and the 92nd (Lanarkshire), 362 English, 41 Scotch, and 229 Irish. The following are the total numbers, distinguishing their nationalities, in the various arms of the service:—Household Cavalry—410 English, 172 Scotch, 83 Irish; Cavalry of the Line—11,661 English, 1,101 Scotch, and 2,422 Irish; Royal Artillery—4,192 English, 380 Scotch, 899 Irish; Royal Engineers—18,710 English, 2,022 Scotch, and 5,589 Irish; Royal Engineers—3,024 English, 1,108 Scotch, 330 Irish; Foot Guards—5,000 English, 1,044 Scotch, and 108 Irish; Infantry of the Line—1,200,000 English, 10,232 Scotch, 33,812 Irish; Army Service Corps—1,327 English, 250 Scotch, 333 Irish; Army Hospital Corps—104 English, 38 Scotch, 196 Irish; General Posts—117,701 English, 15,585 Scotch, and 44,992 Irish.

THE ROSE.

Live like the rose. So bud, so bloom,—
In growing beauty live;
So sweeten life with the perfume
That gentle seasons give.

Die like the rose; that, when thou'rt gone,
Sweet happy thoughts of thee,
Like fragrant rose-leaves may be strewn
Upon thy memory.

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TO THE BITTER END.

By Miss M. E. Braddon.

AUTHOR OF 'LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued.)

The garden was as eccentric as the house, and arranged for the pleasure and accommodation of the animal creation rather than for the diversion of their masters. There was a grotto, or cave of rock-work overhanging a pool, in which a tame otter lolled about to the infinite delight of the Colonel, who loltered a minute or so to feed the beast with fragments of biscuit from the pocket of his Galignani morning coat. There were cages of birds, artfully placed among the ornamental timber, with a view to cheating those feathered creatures into the belief that they were the denizens of a primeval forest; there were miniature classic temples, and medieval fortresses, one with a bristling row of wine-bottles, neck-outwards, to represent cannon, inhabitable by various dogs, which sprang out to cross the Colonel as he passed. There was a portable Chinese pagoda, hung with bells, for the occupation of the Java monkey.

The stables were at the side of the house, and here the Colonel's eccentricity had exhibited itself in the conversion of a hay-loft into a billiard-room, accessible only by an external staircase in the Alpine chalet style. He kept a couple of saddle-horses for himself and his daughter, a pony and a basket-chair (which he called his palki); and his stable-yard was for the most part occupied by a pheasantry. Here they found the groom looking at the pheasants. His master dispatched him with a message for Miss Clevedon, and this being done, was free to accompany the Colonel over the Bungalow, and to listen to that officer's somewhat trophic histories of various curios and other prophecies which adorned the rooms.

Sir Francis was beginning to think they would never arrive at the apartment inhabited by Miss Crusoe, when Colonel Davenant opened an unexpected door in about as inconvenient a corner as a door could be placed in, and introduced his guest into the drawing-room, a small room with a wide window running along one side of it, and opening into a substantially built verandah, larger and loftier than the apartment itself, and paved with variously-coloured tiles. The room proper held only a piano, a few easy-chairs, and a coffee-table or two; but the verandah or annex, was large enough to accommodate plenty of chairs and ottomans, on one of which a young lady was seated, dressed in white muslin, reading a novel, with a couple of dogs at her feet.

This was Miss Crusoe, who put down her book and rose to greet her father with a charming smile—a smile which she extended in a modified degree to Sir Francis Clevedon upon his being presented to her. Seeing her for the first time unshadowed by the umbrella, Sir Francis decided that Miss Davenant was even prettier than he had supposed. The bright piquant face, with its gray eyes and dark lashes; the rippling brown hair, brushed loosely back from a broad white forehead, and breaking into maitinous curls here and there; the slim swan-like throat, and the lofty carriage of the head, seemed to him perfectly beautiful. He made a kind of breakneck plunge into some rather commonplace observations about the Bungalow, the Bungalow gardens, and the Bungalow zoological collection; but felt himself less at his ease than usual; and was relieved presently to find himself seated upon an ottoman, making friends with the youthful deerhound, who was of a gregarious temper, and getting on very tolerably with Miss Davenant.

George her father called her. What a pretty name, and one that suited her admirably! thought Sir Francis. She had a somewhat boyish frankness of manner, not harsh, or coarse, or masculine, but certainly boyish; the graceful case of a well-bred Etonian. She had never been at a boarding-school, or even under the milder sway of a governess at home; she had grown up like one of the flowering plants that masters had come to the Bungalow on certain days to teach her several arith, and for the rest, her father had educated her—or not educated her—as the case might be.

Sir Francis stayed to dinner, and stayed till eleven o'clock that night, by which hour he and Miss Davenant seemed to have known each other quite a long time. The Colonel told a few long stories of Indian warfare, gave a slight sketch of Lieutenant-general Davenant's (his father's) career in the Peninsula, which lasted an hour or so, and otherwise beguiled the evening with agreeable converse. Sir Francis was of course attentive to those narrations, but he contrived by whiles to find out a good deal about George's tastes and habits; when she rode, where she rode, whether she competed for prizes at local flower-shows, or visited the poor, or devoted herself exclusively to the brute creation.

He found that she did a little of everything, except exhibiting any specimens of her horticultural skill at the flower-shows.

"I give the prizes sometimes at the cottage flower shows," she said, "but things don't grow in our greenhouse quite as well as they might. Sometimes Tufto scratches them up—you know very well you do, you wicked Tufto!"—shaking her head at the deerhound—or Pedro—the monkey, you know—knocks over the pots with his tail. Grant, our gardener, is quite unhappy about it; but the fact is, flowers and animals do not get on very well together."

"My sister has a passion for flowers; goes in tremendously for ferns, and that kind of thing; and has studied her poor little head as full of their names as if she was a perambulating botanical dictionary. She had just begun building a fern-house, which is to be all dark-green glass, and she means to do wonders in that line. I hope you and she will be good friends."

"I have no doubt I shall like her very much."

"Will you call upon her, or shall she come to you?"

"Just as she pleases. I am not at all particular about forms and ceremonies."

"She shall come to-morrow, then, although you are the oldest inhabitant."

"Thanks. I shall be so pleased to see her. Is she fond of animals?"

"I hardly know. I think I ought to answer as the man did who was asked if he could play the fiddle. He didn't know, as he had never tried. Sibly has not had any opportunity of developing her taste for the brute species. She only finished her education a year or so ago, at a convent in Bruges; and since then she has been travelling with me. But I daresay she has a latent taste for dogs and monkeys."

"I don't think she can help liking Pedro," Miss Davenant replied natively, with an affectionate glance towards the warmest corner of the little drawing-room, where that luxurious animal, the Java monkey, was coiled up on a sheepskin rug.

Sir Francis rode homeward by moonlight, very well pleased with the eccentricities of the Bungalow.

"Sinclair was right," he said to himself. "The Colonel is a capital fellow. I wish his stories of the Punjab and the Peninsula were a trifle shorter. But that's a detail. What a lovely face it is! George—George—George Davenant!" The name repeated itself over again, in time with the tramp of his horse's hoofs, like an old rhyme.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"FOR LIFE, FOR DEATH."

Miss Clevedon drove over to the Bungalow on the following afternoon. She was one of those nice easy-tempered girls who are always ready to cultivate any one their brothers may happen to admire; not a girl to place stumbling-blocks across a brother's path to matrimony, from any selfish desire to preserve to herself the advantages of his bachelorhood. It was very nice to reign over such a mansion as Clevedon Hall; but Sibly had no genius for housekeeping, and she felt that as a country squire it was Francis's bounden duty to take unto himself a wife.

At breakfast Francis was full of his dinner at the Bungalow; the fountain; the cook looking out of the window; all the ins and outs, and ups and downs of the house, improved by the Colonel's architectural fancies; the zoological collection; the old soldier himself, with his long stories and vehement epithets; and finally Miss Davenant.

"Is she pretty?" Sibly asked curiously.

"I think her remarkably pretty. I don't know whether she has a classical profile, a Grecian nose coming straight down from her forehead, or anything of that kind; in fact, I rather think her nose has a slight upward tendency; or it may be the way she holds her head—as high as if she were a princess of the blood-royal. In short, you see, Sibly, I can't positively say whether she is regularly beautiful; but if you take into consideration her eyes—which are splendid—and her expression, and vivacity, and a kind of *je ne sais quoi*-ishness, you cannot fail to admit that she is a lovely girl."

"Good gracious, Francis, what a confused description! splendid eyes, and a turned-up nose, and her head stuck up in a conceited way!"

"No, Sibly, I didn't say in a conceited way. She has no more conceit than patient Grizzle."

"Both patient Grizzle!" Miss Clevedon exclaimed contemptuously; "I never had any patience with that ridiculous creature. Of course a man wrote the story—it was like him to do it, just to show what foolish sheep-like beings you would like us to be,—and it never was true. Does she dress well?"

"Patient Grizzle?"

"No, sir. This paragon of yours, who isn't pretty, and yet is."

"I really can't venture to express my opinion on such an important question as that. She had a white gown and a green umbrella, and looked nice."

"A white gown and a green umbrella! what an absurd young woman! I don't wonder Mr. Wort turned up his nose at these Davenants."

"Now, there's no use in trying to be disagreeable, Sibly; it isn't your *métier*. Miss Davenant is a charming girl, and I'm sure you'll like her as much as—"

"As much as what, sir?"

"As much as I do."

"What, Francis, again?"

"This 'again' had relation to certain passages in Sir Francis's past life. He had not reached his twenty-seventh year without falling in love a few times on the way; he had indeed, been in and out of love, as a rule, about once in a twelvemonth; and his sister, about whom he had been wont to confide, had no profound faith in the constancy of his fancies. A man who has a fair estate, the world all before him, and no particular occupation, is apt to be rather hard hit by any pretty face that may flit across his pathway."

"I think you ought to plead like those grotto-boys who besieged our carriage in London the other day, Francis, 'It's only once a year.' Pray, is Miss Davenant prettier than Euphrasia Lamont, the Spanish-looking beauty you fell in love with at the convent?"

"What! that little tawny dwarfish thing?"

"O, Francis! you raved about her."

"Did I? She was well enough, I daresay, for a little one; but this girl is as tall as—as Helen of Troy."

"How do you know that Helen was tall?"

"Teanyson says so—"

"divinely tall, And most divinely fair."

O, I'm sure of it. Of course Helen was tall; you can't fancy Clytemnestra a little woman; they were sisters, you know."

"What a horrid family!"

"Well, yes, they were rather a queer lot, answering to some of our English nobility—a taint in that blood, I suppose. I think I remember that little Lamont girl had fine eyes, but such a duodecimio-oh creature. Lady Clevedon must be tall."

"Lady Clevedon! Has it come to that?"

"It has come to nothing, except—another cup of tea, if you please. You are going to call upon Miss Davenant, and see the zoological collection this afternoon."

"But oughtn't she to call upon me first?"

"I don't know anything about the oughts of the case. But you are going this afternoon—I told her so."

Miss Clevedon submitted with a pretty little grimace, and drove off to the Bungalow directly after luncheon, enjoying not a little the novel splendour of her barouche and two mouservants.

The visit was altogether a success. Sibly admired all the eccentricities of house and garden, and the two girls were delighted with each other, swearing an unending friendship on the spot, as it were. After this call the Colonel and his daughter rode over to the Hall one morning; whereby Sir Francis had the opportunity of seeing Georgina Davenant in her habit, which became her above any other garment, and also of showing the old house and grounds to his new friends, the inventive Colonel suggesting an alteration in every room they entered.

"Invention—construction, perhaps I should say, is my forte, sir," he said. "If this house were mine, I'd make it the finest in England."

"But it is as already, papa—one of the finest, I should think," replied Georgie.

"Undoubtedly, my dear; but its capabilities of improvement are enormous. That oriel window over the hall-door, for instance. Very fine, no doubt; but why not have oriel windows along the whole range of your front, instead of those flat things? Then there's the groined roof in the dining-hall, sombre to the last degree; cut away all that antiquated woodwork, and paint your ceiling blue, picked out with gold stars. Then you have those open colonnades yonder; a mere waste of space; fill them in with violet-coloured plate-glass, and make one a smoking-divan and the other a billiard-room. That's what I call bringing modern enlightenment to bear upon Elizabethan incapacity!"

"I think I prefer Elizabethan shortcomings to Victorian improvements, Colonel," Sir Francis observed, smiling. "I should hardly care to change the character of the place."

"Prejudice, my good sir; the English mind all over. Your true-born Englishman will go on enduring any amount of inconvenience rather than infringe a set of arbitrary rules made by some dunder-headed architect. Character, indeed! Where's the character in my house? Yet I think you'll admit that's comfortable."

"I most freely admit that it is a delightful house," said Sir Francis, with a little stolen glance at Georgie.

"Of course everybody admits that it's comfortable; but you should have heard the opposition I had to encounter from officious asses who call themselves my friends while I was building. 'You mustn't have your kitchen in the middle of your house,' says one; 'you'll smell your dinner!' And I like to smell my dinner, I told the blockhead; I like to know what I'm going to have, and to prepare my mind for it. 'You can't have one bedroom upon one level, and another bedroom upon another level,' remarked an officious idiot. 'Can't I?' said I; 'I'll show you whether I can or not. If I want my dining-room loftier than my drawing-room, it shall be loftier; and I'll have every one of my bedrooms upon different levels, to spite you.' You mustn't have one side of your house higher than another," said that prince of fools, the builder's foreman; "for if you do, your chimneys shall smoke."

"Then my chimneys shall smoke," said I; and they do—when the wind's in the west; but I've got a German stove or two to remedy that; and I've had my own way."

After this came many interchanges of civility between Clevedon Hall and the Bungalow. Sir Francis organised drives and excursions to various points of attraction in the picturesque line, in which the Colonel and his daughter consented to join, with pleasant returns in the sunset to the Hall or the Bungalow for a half-past-eight o'clock dinner. The two girls, Sibly and Georgie, were sworn friends; English country-house life was new to Miss Clevedon, and Miss Davenant was able to advise and enlighten her upon many questions. She wanted to do some small amount of good among the poor round Clevedon; and Georgie, who with her dogs was a familiar visitor in many humble households about the Wells, and had a wonderful knack for getting on with poor people, volunteered to set her in the way of being useful.

If Sibly began by protesting against Francis's subjugation, she ended by almost worshipping the girl he admired. There was no such thing as opposition, therefore, to what the keen eye of Sir Francis's passion. The course of this, his latest, love ran on velvet, and little by little the fact came home to him that this last-born passion was something serious. He had been doubtful of himself at first, remembering those former episodes in his life, and how he had gone there once seemed to be very far gone. But no, this was the real thing; he had admired a good many pretty women in his time, but mind, heart, and soul had never been held in bondage as they were now by Georgie Davenant. The bright frank face with its innocent young beauty, the proud generous nature which unconsciously revealed itself in trifles, what more need he desire in the woman who was to share and brighten his existence? He watched Sibly and Georgie's growing affection for each other with delight. His only sister was very dear to him, and it would have distressed him if his choice of a wife had brought about any lessening of the bond between them. It would have seemed a hard thing to him if he had brought a wife home to Clevedon Hall who would have made the place anything less than a home to his sister.

He looked back upon those bygone flirtations so many glorious escapades. What if he had flung himself away matrimonially upon one of those fallen idols, and come home to Clevedon bound by the fetters of an injudicious marriage—come home to behold his "fate" in Georgie Davenant? "She would have been fatal to me, let me meet her when I might," he said to himself. O, the anguish of meeting that radiant creature too late!

For a man so completely his own master, the process of wooing is apt to go swiftly. There was no ground for hesitation or delay; and before these two young people had known each other a fortnight, it might have been tolerably clear to the eye of a competent observer, that the admiration was mutual. In their confidential discourse Sibly now and then ventured on a leading question, and had contrived thus to discover the state of her friend's affections. Georgie was not engaged, that she admitted without hesitation.

"I am so glad, dear," cried Sibly.

"But why?" Miss Davenant inquired, blushing a little.

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"For a man so completely his own master, the process of wooing is apt to go swiftly. There was no ground for hesitation or delay; and before these two young people had known each other a fortnight, it might have been tolerably clear to the eye of a competent observer, that the admiration was mutual. In their confidential discourse Sibly now and then ventured on a leading question, and had contrived thus to discover the state of her friend's affections. Georgie was not engaged, that she admitted without hesitation."

"I am so glad, dear," cried Sibly.

"But why?" Miss Davenant inquired, blushing a little.