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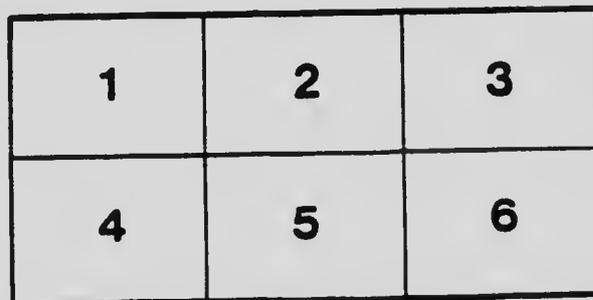
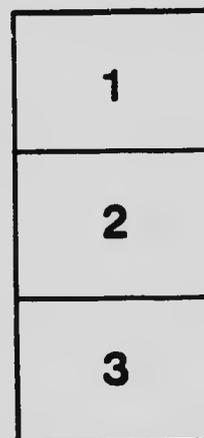
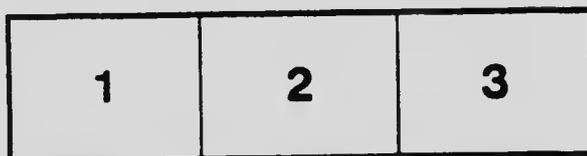
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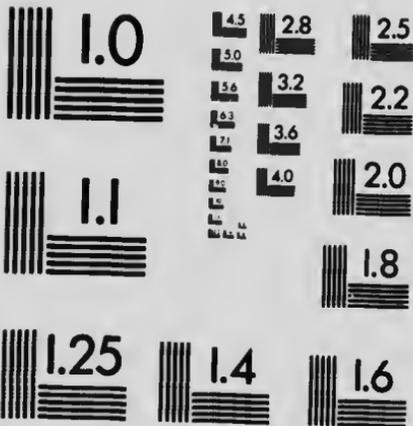
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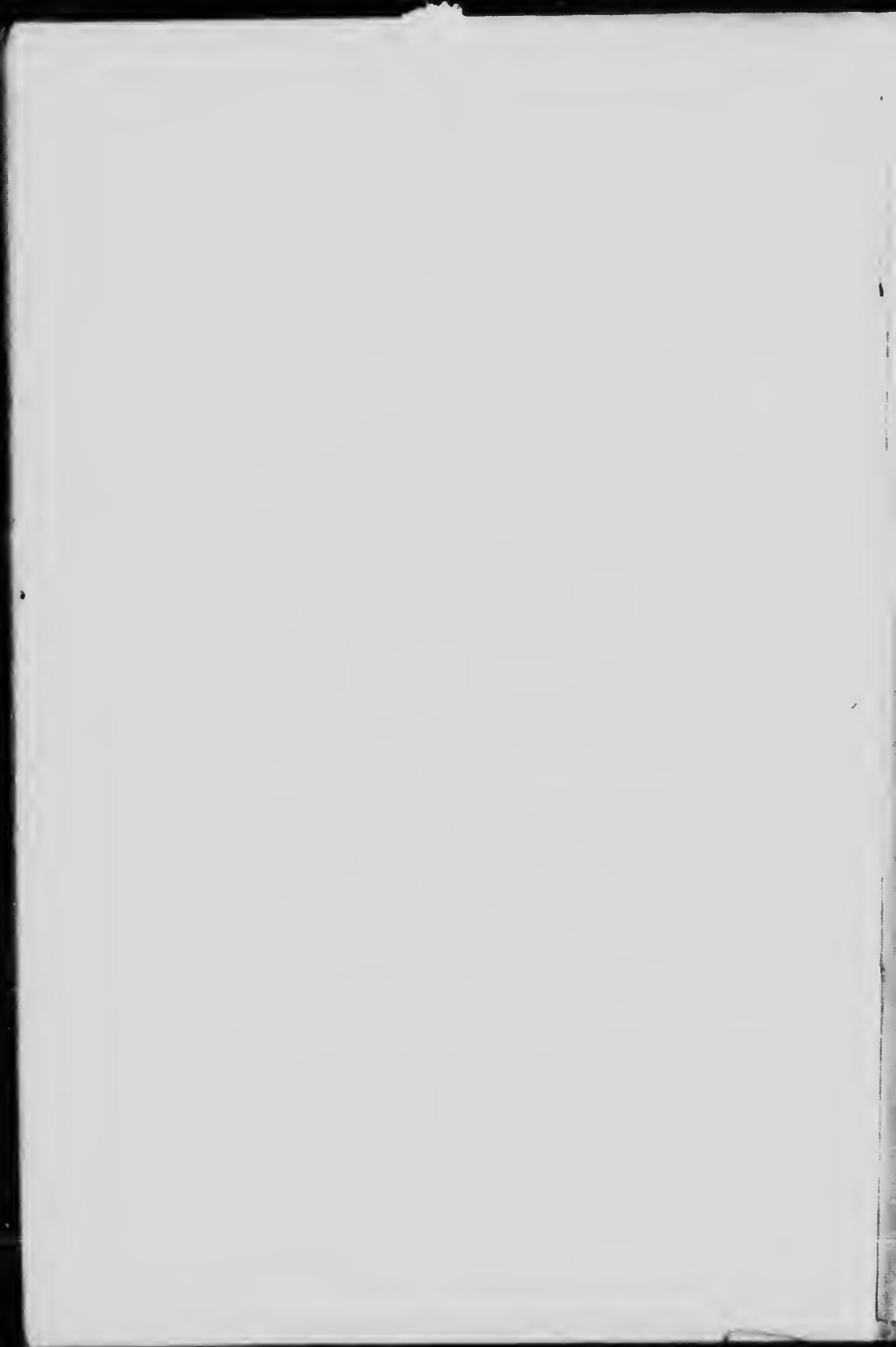
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RODDLES



# RODDLES

By B. PAUL NEUMAN

AUTHOR OF "THE GAZATNEE OF JOSIAH PORLICK" ETC.

TORONTO:  
BELL & COCKBURN

1912

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TO  
ROBERT CLARKE EDWARDS

"The old friendships are the best."



# RODDLES

## BOOK I

### I

"THERE," said Mr. Roddles, as he folded his strap and put it back in the drawer, "'ave your cry out, both of you, and call me all the names you can think of. It won't 'urt me, and it'll be a sort o' relief to your feelings. Many's the time I've done the same to my old man, though, mind you, I'd a precious sight better reason than you 'ave. 'E used to skin us when the east wind tickled 'is rheumatism or when 'e got the sack."

One of the boys lifted a red and angry face from the arm on which it had been cushioned.

"And you do it for nothing," he said.

"Ah," remarked his father pleasantly, "I'm glad I 'aven't broken your spirit. I don't 'old with that, no matter 'ow troublesome a boy is. You'll want all the spirit I've given you, the pair of you, before you come to making your wills. All the same, my lad, you're telling a lie and you know it. A silly lie too, because it don't do you a scrap of good. I've licked you for not doing that 'ome-work, and I've licked 'im"—

he pointed to the horsehair sofa on which the other boy lay—"because I owed 'im a licking, and I pay my debts when it's convenient—no sooner and no later."

"You didn't owe me anything of that sort," muttered the second boy, showing a face paler, but as wrathful as his brother's. You've owed me a penny, though, for ever so long, for getting the bird's chickweed."

Mr. Roddles laughed.

"Quite right, Jim," he said genially, "I was wondering when you'd ask me for it—never ask, never get, is a good motto. There it is," he added, taking out a coin and throwing it on to the sofa. "You don't deserve it, though, because you too went and told a silly lie. I've owed you what for, since your Sunday-school treat. That ginger teacher complained of you, and I told you you should have it. Now I'm off. Mind you get your school-work done, or I'll skin you in earnest, and mind you're both in bed before I come back."

As soon as he was out of the room the boys sat up and listened intently.

"What's he making that row for, Dick?" said Jim. Mr. Roddles' descent to the hall door had certainly been noisy.

"Sounds as if he were up to some of his larks," answered Dick. "Ah, there goes the door!"

"Yes, that's the door, right enough, but which side of it is he?"

"Can't see from the window, can we?"

"Not if he keeps this side, as he's safe to; but I don't believe he's gone at all."

"Let's get out our books. We've got to do the home-work. If he's kidding, he'll soon be up again."

It was good advice. Two or three minutes later, Jim kicked his brother under the table, and pointed to the door.

"I can hear him," he whispered.

Dick nodded. "Thought so. Here he comes!"

The door was opened sharply, and Mr. Roddles came bustling in, apparently in a great hurry.

"Where did I put my knife?" he exclaimed, a little too theatrically, perhaps. He went across to the fireplace and rummaged on the mantelpiece. Then he came to the table, dug his hand into his pocket, and fished up a rare collection of keys, tools, and odds and ends.

"'Eaven and 'ell!" he exclaimed, "there it is, after all! Well, I *am* a mug. Glad to see you looking better, dearies. '*Though painful at present, 'twill cease before long.*' That's an 'ymn we used to learn at Sunday school when I was a kid. Get on with your work. Bye-bye."

This time he left the door ajar. Before he had reached the bottom of the stairs, Jim had slipped through the half-open door and disappeared. A few minutes later he walked in again.

"It's all right," he said, "he's safe enough in the King's Arms. What's up?"

Dick was grinning.

"Look!" he exclaimed, and held up a key.

"Did he drop it?" asked Jim quickly. "What key is it?"

Dick pointed to the drawer.

" Shall we burn the strap ? " suggested Jim.

Dick shook his head.

" No," he said, " he'd only find something worse. I'll show you. You're sure he's safe ? "

" Safe as glue," answered Jim.

" Then here goes ! " and, walking over to the cupboard, Dick unlocked the long drawer and pulled it out. There lay their enemy, dark and shiny. Dick cracked it in the air two or three times.

" I wonder how *he'd* like it," said Jim meditatively.

" Ah," Dick grinned, " it would be a lark. Put it away now, though. There's better fish here."

After a little rummaging he took out a small packet neatly wrapped up. Before opening it he put it on the table and looked at it carefully. Then, with equal care, he unfastened it. Inside were three or four ounces of tobacco. He took a good pinch between finger and thumb.

" That'll make a prime cigarette," he said.

Jim followed suit, and then looked round.

" That'll do fine for paper," and he snatched a thin red envelope from the mantelpiece ; " one of his acing tips."

" Ah," said Jim, who was methodically re-making the parcel and putting it back carefully in its exact place, " that's a mug's game, that is. The bookie has you every time ; it stands to reason. You make them while I put these away."

And, in a few minutes' time, the brothers stood near the open window, puffing gravely at their cigarettes, keeping, all the time, sharp eyes on the yard below.

## II

Mr. Roddles described himself on the census paper as a general jobbing and repairing tailor, and the description was as near the absolute truth as any one outside a lawyer's office was at all likely to reach. As a matter of fact, he was an unusually skilful workman, who seldom was, and never need have been, out of work. An unfortunate weakness, however, which he generally spoke of as constitutional, and of which he did not appear to be in the least ashamed, had lost him many a place. Another weakness was betting, and, between Boniface and the bookie, fully half of his earnings disappeared.

Occasionally, very occasionally, a tip did come off, and then Mr. Roddles, if in work, promptly gave it up, and, after due preparation, proceeded, deliberately and methodically, to indulge his constitution. The preparation, it should be added, usually involved sending the boys for a day or a week-end to Hampstead where his half-sister kept a small sweetstuff and tobacco shop. This plan he looked upon as an unusually happy idea even for his fertile brain. It paid a delicate compliment to a relative who was prosperous enough to be worth complimenting, while it gave him elbow-room for undisturbed enjoyment. It was also good for the boys' health, and, though it might dislocate their school-work momentarily, yet in the long run they would probably do all the better for it.

He was a clever man, and his cleverness showed itself in many ways. He was unusually quick at

figures and proud of his ability to do long and fairly complicated problems in his head. He had capital fingers, not only for his own special work but for almost any occupation which demanded manual dexterity. There were few odd jobs about a house that he could not deal with almost as satisfactorily as a trained workman. Then he was fond of reading, in a desultory way, and a ready tongue and boundless self-assurance made the very utmost of the little knowledge he possessed. He was, indeed, quite conscious that his acquirements were only superficial, and it must be set down to his credit that he had a genuine admiration for learning, though he honoured it chiefly as a means to an end.

"The world's a big oyster, and education is the knife to open it with," he often said to the boys when urging them to their lessons. "The stronger and sharper the knife, the sooner you get to the meat. If I'd 'ad 'alf your chances I'd 'ave been riding in my carriage by now. It won't be my fault if you 'ave to trot about on Shanks's pony all your days."

He and the boys lived in three rooms on the second floor of a large old house—one of a row between Chancery Lane and New Square, Lincoln's Inn. It was a queer, old-fashioned place that seemed as if it had been dropped down where it stood, by some accident, and had proceeded in course of time to burrow for itself strange and tortuous ways of access to the outside world. One of these led into the Lane, another into the Square, and a third into Carey Street. The accident must have been a Georgian affair, for the houses, dirty and decayed as they were, had nothing

about them of the Victorian jerry-builder. The rooms were large, the staircases wide, and the doors of the lower rooms were handsomely panelled.

The largest of the three rooms was Mr Roddles' own apartment. Here he slept and did the greater part of his work, and here he received the visitors who often looked in to discuss the political outlook or the chances of the favourite.

Only a little smaller was the kitchen and general sitting-room, where the three took their meals and where the boys learned their lessons. The third room just held two rickety beds, a wash-stand, and a big chest of drawers. This, of course, was the boys' bedroom.

Dick and Jim were twins. So much, Mr. Roddles, who prided himself on his gift of reticence, admitted, but when they asked questions as to their mother they were invariably met with a curt invitation to "dry up," in a tone which they recognised and respected. They had dim memories of living in the country when they were quite small, and among these memories the name of a certain Sarah came and went with provoking irregularity. At one time they talked a good deal to each other about those early days, but their joint recollections amounted to very little, the chief rallying-point being a big fruit tree—apple, according to Jim, but Dick said pear—under which they used to play. Once they had asked their father about the country home. For some time he pretended to misunderstand them and—knowing well how they detested it—turned the edge of their questions with only half-intelligible jests. It was the Garden of

Eden, he assured them, in which they had been brought up—didn't they remember the four puddles that met near their wond'ful tree? Was it an apple or a pear? Neither; but a pumpkin, and, for the first three years of their lives, they had lived on nothing but pumpkins and what they could get out of the puddles.

"Yes," he said, with a smile that the boys thought boded no good, "one was water, one was milk, one was treacle, and one was—ah, well, your poor dear Sarah fell in and was drowned, and if you ever ask me another question about the country or say a single word about it, I'll give you both a dose of med'cin that'll take all the curiosity out of you for some time."

It was a peculiarity of Mr. Roddles' manner that, on occasion, he would suddenly pass, with only the slightest warning, from his favourite tone of cynical banter to a savage seriousness which, in their earlier days, at any rate, terrified the twins.

In some ways he did a good part by them. As a rule they had good food and plenty of it. He saw that their clothes were neat, and in such matters as hands and nails and hair he exacted from them a standard far higher than he thought needful for himself. Indeed, any discrepancy between his precept and his practice never disconcerted him in the least.

"I'm dirty because I choose to be," he said one day, when Jim, smarting under rebuke, had dared to call attention to his father's hands, "and you've got to be clean because I choose you to be, and that's all there is to be said about

He laid a significant emphasis on the "said," and Jim was wise enough to hold his tongue and wash his hands.

## III

"Father," said Dick, "evening. When Mr. Roddles seemed in an unusual benignant frame of mind, 'can't I go to Jim's school?'"

"No," said his father. "What for?"

"Ours is such a hole. It collects and catechism. It's farther off too, and the prizes are no good."

Mr. Roddles chuckled.

"The more collect and catechism they ram into you now, the better pleased I am."

"It only makes me hate the stuff," the boy muttered sulkily.

His father positively beamed.

"'Ate it!' he said heartily. "Any other reason?"

"Well, I'd like to be with Jim. We could help each other a lot."

"And cut each other's throats? That's your idea of cleverness, is it? Where were you, last examination?"

"First," answered the boy promptly.

"And where were you, Jim, in yours?"

"First," said Jim.

"That's two first prizes. If you'd been together, it's long odds there'd only have been one. That's what I've got to think of, d'you see? I want you to get on, both of you, and I don't want you to cut each other's throats. Remember this: the world's just big enough for you, if you don't tread on each other's toes.

You're neither of you fools—I'd 'ave made tailors or parsons of you if you 'ad been. You'll both of you get on, if my strap lasts out and if you keep clear of one another. That's why Jim goes to Arran Street and Dick to St. Gabriel's. See? It was the spin of my lucky penny settled which should go to which."

"Your penny did me a bad turn," grumbled Dick. "St. Gabriel's don't get scholarships. Arran Street gets lots; don't it, Jim?"

Jim nodded.

"Rubbish," said Mr. Roddles. "'Aven't you heard the proverb—' Among the blind the one-eyed is king ' ? If you get a scholarship they'll think a lot more of you at St. Gabriel's than they will of Jim at Arran Street. If you play your cards well you'll 'ave your old vicar as proud as a turkey-cock of 'is scholarship boy. 'Im and the ginger curate ought to be two good steps for you to walk up."

"Mr. Hall said he'd give me a shilling if I got a scholarship," interposed Jim.

"There you are," cried Mr. Roddles triumphantly. "What did I tell you? See again, Dick goes to church, Jim to chapel. Dick sucks up to his clergy, Jim nails his Sunday-school boss. That's the way to work it."

"The vicar doesn't think much of chapels," said Dick; "he told us not to go to their services."

"Of course 'e did," answered his father. "'E's paid to talk like that, and jolly good pay too. At Jim's chapel they don't think much of the church. Their man's paid not to think much of it. See?"

The boys nodded.

"Mr. Trevenning's got a fine 'ouse," said Dick thoughtfully, and immediately uttered a sharp cry. Mr. Roddles' long arm had flashed out, and his fingers nipped Dick's ear.

"Yes, you know what it's for," he said, before the angry question could be uttered. "Every time you drop an aitch you'll 'ave it. I drop 'em because I choose to, and you can drop 'em too—if you think it worth while."

## IV

The Arran Street School was a mixed school, and, as it happened, Jim's chief rival in the Sixth Standard was a girl. Sometimes, indeed, Madge Carr was first and Jim second, though, on the whole, the balance was certainly in his favour. She was three months younger, but more than an inch taller, a strong, healthy-looking girl with an open, merry face, and eyes that, if not the poet's azure, were distinctly blue. She was a great contrast to Jim, who was slight and dark, with black, smooth hair, and eyes to match. The contrast went below the skin. Madge was a romo, and sometimes perilously near a tomboy, while Jim was curiously quiet and self-contained. In spite of their differences, if not as their result, the two had become great friends. Madge's father was in charge of a block of chambers in Chancery Lane, and sometimes on a Saturday afternoon Jim would go round, after the barristers and solicitors had left, and make believe to help in the cleaning and tidying-up.

It was characteristic of the relations between the brothers that Dick barely knew of Madge by name.

In fact, the boys seemed already, with a grave, unnatural precocity, to have fallen in with their father's idea of steering their courses as far apart as possible. Dick had his own friends as well as Jim, and as Mr. Roddles absolutely refused to let any strange boys or girls cross the threshold, the two sets had hardly any opportunity of mixing. Dick, perhaps, was the more communicative of the two. Jim had no athletic inclinations, but Dick was a bowler, and very proud of his achievements.

Mr. Roddles encouraged this.

"As long as you don't waste too much time over it, I've nothing to say against it," he remarked, when Dick was boasting of a St. Gabriel's victory. "It's good fun, and it's good for your 'ealth. It's useful too," he added, after a pause; "a sportsman's always popular and it pays to be popular—if your 'ead's screwed on the right way."

"I got six wickets for ten runs," said Dick, not much impressed by his father's aphorisms. "A chap in the park put me up to some fine tips. I take a sort of side run and pop out from just behind the umpire—it puts the batsman out a lot. And I keep the cuff of my shirt loose so that it flaps about as I send the ball down—it catches his eye and puts him off."

Mr. Roddles frowned.

"The chap in the park was a fool," he said. "That sort of 'ankey panky don't matter in such a school as St. Gabriel's, but if you get a scholarship and go to a public school you'll 'ave to drop those tricks. They'll do you more 'arm than your wickets will do you good."

"It's fair enough," put in Jim, "if it weren't, the umpire would interfere."

"'Tisn't a question of fair, silly," said his father impatiently, "it's a question of what's *thought* fair. Corduroy's got one set of things it calls fair and broadcloth's got another. Now I want you to be in the broadcloth lot, so you'd better begin to pick up their ideas."

"I suppose they're right," said Jim, who liked to think things out.

"Everything's right that pays," replied his father, "but it's not that they're any better than their neighbours. There are more blackguards in Park Lane than in Whitechapel; but if you want to live there you must do as Park Lane does. See?"

"I'll let my shirt sleeve hang down, though, till I get a scholarship," said Dick.

"That's sense, lad," said Mr. Roddles approvingly, "only when you do, mind what I've told you."

## V

The sun beat down on the stone-flagged pavement of Peacock Passage as Jim strolled through it and under the archway into Chancery Lane. It was the last week in August, and on the following Monday school would begin again. He was not sorry. A month's holiday was quite enough. The week he had spent at Hampstead had been very pleasant, but Mr. Roddles had, on this occasion, allowed his weakness to interfere with his health and, indirectly, with his temper. The consequence was that home, for the last week or two,

had been almost intolerable. One compensation Jim had had. His Sunday-school teacher, Mr. Hall, was the chief salesman in a large law bookshop at the Fleet Street end of the Lane. He had offered Jim two or three little jobs—copying out and checking lists for a catalogue, dusting and rearranging books on the shelves, and so on. The payments were small, but Jim liked the company of books, and managed to find scraps of interesting, if not always edifying, information between the brown calf covers. And even if small, the sums of money were very welcome. This afternoon, for instance, at the end of the week, he still had threepence jingling in his pocket. As he turned into the Lane he pulled up at the baker's shop. The weather was hot and stuffy, and on the counter he could see a jug of home-made lemonade with big lumps of ice floating in it. A large glass was threepence, and he felt that it would be very grateful. But the money in his pocket was already dedicated to another object. Madge was inordinately fond of fruit, and at Goodrich's, in Holborn, he could buy half a pound of fine black plums for the threepence. Madge was a generous girl, and, in the matter of sweets, gave a good deal more than she received. Jim knew exactly how the account between them stood, but he also felt sure that she had no such knowledge. Still, he had come out fully intending to buy the plums. It would not be all loss—the thought had forced itself on his attention—for she would be sure to share them with him.

But it was frightfully hot, and he was as fond of lemonade as she of plums.

He looked at the clock. He was due at Montague Chambers by four o'clock, and it was twenty minutes to the hour. He would walk up to Goodrich's. Perhaps they might not have any plums, and then the problem would solve itself. But he had forgotten the little chemist's shop near the top of the Lane, on the other side of the way. As he passed it, he caught sight of a marble structure at the end of the shop, with a row of shining nickel taps. There was a large card on which he read with fatal distinctness—"American Ice Cream Soda Fountain—Delicious and Refreshing." Then followed a list: Lemon and Ginger, at 2d. a glass, and several others at 3d.

As he stood there, a gentleman walked into the shop and went up to the Fountain. Jim watched the process with eager eyes. The clean glass tumbler was slipped into a handsome frame with a handle that looked like silver. Then one of the taps was turned on, and a thick red syrup came out. Next, the tumbler was held under a larger tap and the chemist turned a wheel. There was a grinding, hissing noise, and, in a moment, the glass was full of a white foam beautifully tinted with pink. The customer was a red-faced man. He took off his hat and wiped his forehead. The chemist handed him a thin, hollow straw. He put it into the tumbler and began sucking. Fascinated, the boy watched the crown of froth give way and fall deeper into the glass. The red-faced man sucked like a leech, and just as Jim was wondering whether the straw would follow the soda down his throat, he dropped it, set down the empty tumbler,

put some money on the counter, and came out, wiping his moustache.

By this time Jim had quite made up his mind. He walked in. The chemist was putting out a fresh glass.

"Lemon, please," said Jim.

The chemist, an old man with a white waistcoat and a twinkling eye, looked his new customer up and down.

Jim took out two pennies from his pocket.

The chemist drew some syrup from the lemon tap, and filled up the glass with the ice cream. Then he handed the tumbler to his customer.

"May I have it in that thing?" asked Jim, pointing to the frame.

The chemist laughed.

"Oh, certainly," he answered; "is there anything else?"

"Yes," said Jim, in a low voice, "one of those things to suck with, please."

The chemist shook his head and frowned.

"No, no," he said, "not for small boys. They're for grown-up people."

Jim looked from the man to the tumbler. The foam was breaking in a snowy avalanche over the side of the glass. He looked again at the chemist.

"Then I think I won't have any, this afternoon," he said very gravely, and turned on his heel.

The man burst out laughing, and held out a straw.

"You're a cool customer," he said, as he took the wopence.

Jim's pale face flushed with triumph, but it was short-lived. Do what he would, not a drop could he

coax through the straw. The chemist watched him with friendly interest.

"It's quite an art, sucking," he said, "I should hardly have thought you'd had time to forget it."

Jim turned still redder and made a terrific effort—with no result. He threw the straw down and lifted the glass to his lips.

But the chemist was a good-natured old fellow. He handed the boy another straw.

"There, there," he said, "don't cry. You're the sort to get on in the world. You won't lose things for want of asking."

As he walked back, Jim was very busy justifying himself to himself. After all, he had resisted the temptation of the threepenny glass. There was still a penny left for Madge, and she wouldn't be expecting anything. Besides, he could easily earn some more money and make it up to her. And she wasn't the sort of girl to care very much about it, one way or the other.

At the baker's shop he stopped again and bought a penny bar of chocolate. It wasn't very big, certainly, but it was better than nothing. A great deal better, it seemed, to judge from Madge's reception of the gift, when he reached Montague Chambers.

"Thanks, awf'ly, jim," she exclaimed, when he handed it to her with a shamefaced air that he could not quite disguise; "it is good of you. That chocolate is splendid. How did you know I was so fond of it?"

As she spoke, she broke it in halves and held out one—not the smaller.

The action, natural as it was, stung Jim and made him feel mean. He shook his head.

"No—it's all for you."

She laughed.

"Rubbish—you must think me a greedy pig. Take yours or I won't touch mine."

Fond as he was of sweets, he would rather have gone without this, but she insisted.

"Come up to the second floor," she said, "I've got eight and nine to tidy up."

Jim liked going into the deserted rooms. Madge had almost always something interesting to say about the occupiers.

"Eight's a poet as well as a lawyer," she remarked, as she opened the outer door with a big key from her bunch.

"How do you know?" asked Jim, looking round, as if he expected to see some evidence on the pedestal table.

"Dad told me. He hasn't got much work, this one. Look at the papers on that table, how old and dirty they are. I expect he got tired of waiting for more, and took to writing poetry, poor man."

"He doesn't make much out of that, I know," said Jim contemptuously. "It isn't a bad room, though," he added, "he's got a fine arm-chair. Look at his reading-lamp too. You needn't pity him."

"I don't know," answered Madge, "he looks sad. I've taken things up to him once or twice. He's a big, tall man and his eyes look nice and kind. I like Mr. Eight."

"What about Mr. Nine?" asked the boy, as they went next door.

"Oh, he's quite different. He's a young man, very sharp and brisk. Dad says he's getting a lot of work and won't be here long. Look at his table."

"Yes," said Jim, "there isn't much dust on these papers, is there? Look—" he read admiringly, "'Brief for Plaintiff, 5 guas. and 1 gua.' What does 'guas.' mean?"

"Guineas," answered Madge, with a touch of pride; "five for him and one for his clerk."

"The 's another—' Case to advise, 2 guas.'; nothing for the clerk. Oh, look there—'Instructions to settle Dft. Release.' There are no guineas at all. That's hard luck."

"I suppose they have to take the rough with the smooth," suggested Madge. "He doesn't look as if he'd do much for nothing."

"I wonder whether it's difficult getting to be a lawyer?" said Jim.

"Costs a lot of money, dad says."

"But they make a lot."

She nodded, "Some of them do—thousands," she added, with vague importance.

"What shall we do now?" she asked, as they locked up number nine.

"Let's go to the Temple Gardens and watch them playing tennis," he suggested.

"Oh yes," she cried, "perhaps Mr. Nine will be there."

"It was good of you to bring me that chocolate," said Madge, catching sight of the baker's shop across the road.

Then Jim suddenly astonished himself. Cool and

reticent, he had blurted out his secret before he could stop himself.

"No, it wasn't," he said; "I was a pig. I had saved threepence to buy you some black plums with, and I spent twopence on an ice-cream soda."

The moment the words were out he could have bitten his tongue with vexation. His face flushed scarlet and he turned his head away.

To his great relief Madge took it very lightly.

"The chocolate was fine," she said; "I don't care so very much about plums."

They enjoyed themselves in the gardens, and Jim looked with new interest at the tennis players. These were the lucky young barristers into whose pockets the guineas were pouring.

"They don't look so wonderfully clever, do they?" he asked his companion as they watched the game.

"They do, though, in their wigs and gowns," she answered.

Jim nodded.

"'Fine feathers make fine birds,' do you remember? We had to write an essay on that last Easter."

"Yes," she answered; "I wish I'd thought of the wigs."

As they said good-bye on the threshold of Montague Chambers, Madge called him back. She looked a little awkward, and hesitated in a very unusual way.

"Jim," she said abruptly, "it was fine your telling me that about the threepence. I should never have had the pluck to do it. Good-bye." And she ran in.

Jim's face brightened and then clouded.

"She thinks it pretty bad," he said to himself. "I wish I hadn't told her."

## VI

The scholarship examination was held in February, and the boys brought back their papers and submitted them to their father's inspection. The arithmetic he pronounced very easy, and worked out the problems himself.

Dick had attempted all the twelve questions, while Jim had left out one. On the other hand, if Mr. Roddles was right, one of Dick's answers was wrong. For the essay, a choice had been given among three subjects. Jim chose "A Bank Holiday," while Dick expatiated on "The Game I like best." On the whole, Mr. Roddles slightly favoured Jim's chances. Two months later the list appeared. Both the boys were successful, but Dick was twenty places higher up. Arran Street had done well, for, besides Jim, another boy and Madge had won scholarships. The Honours Board, however, was pretty well filled already, and Jim was in less danger of being spoiled by too much praise than his brother at St. Gabriel's, where a scholarship was something of a marvel. There, the success came at a very opportune moment, for the report of H.M. inspector had been anything but encouraging. Mr. Wright, the headmaster, made a speech in which he almost exhausted the polysyllables of praise, and wound up by giving the school a holiday and Dick a shilling, to which the vicar afterwards added half a crown.

Mr. Roddles made no secret of his satisfaction, and if he indulged in a rather excessive amount of self-praise, still his amiability was so pleasant that the boys

felt no inclination to be hypercritical. They were pleased, too, by the pride he evidently felt in them, though his reiteration of the assurance that their brains came from him was a little tiresome. They were more interested by an announcement of his intention to take them to Hampstead on the following Saturday.

"Your Aunt Susan's a sensible woman in some ways," he remarked, "though, like so many women, she's crazy about religion. But she's feathering a very cosy nest up there, so it's worth while being polite to her."

That Saturday lived long in the boys' memories. All things seemed to work together for their pleasure. It was an absolutely perfect day in the early spring. The sky was of a soft but lambent blue, the air warm with the first fervours of the sun, and yet fresh and crisp. The warmth of the season had tempted the buds from their sober sheaths, and everywhere, on tree and bush and hedge, the glory of virginal green seized and held the eye.

Mr. Roddles had written a card saying that he had Saturday free, and would bring the boys up in the afternoon. To this came an answer inviting the three to dinner at two o'clock. This was quite agreeable to Mr. Roddles, for Mrs. Check was a comfortable soul, with great faith in the value of good food well cooked. He had purposely omitted to say a word about the boys' success, as he wished to surprise their aunt, and he looked forward to enjoying a well-earned personal triumph.

Under the circumstances, he had for three or four days kept his weakness well in hand, so that not

only was his pocket comfortably full, but he looked unusually presentable. Meanness with regard to money was not by any means one of his faults, and on this occasion he was so unusually amiable that for some time the boys were uneasy and suspected that he was "kidding" again. These suspicions weakened when he bought them an apple and an orange apiece, and they died when out of the change he divided sixpence between them.

They walked to Tottenham Court Road and there boarded the Hampstead omnibus. As they passed University Street Mr. Roddles pointed to the college in Gower Street.

"Perhaps one of you may go there," he said; "it's a big school, and no parsons. Be a change for you, Dick, eh?"

He chuckled, and Dick, who thought it quite worth while making an effort to keep his father in his present mood, echoed the chuckle as nearly as he could.

They got down at Chalk Farm, thus saving three-pence, which Mr. Roddles immediately invested in liquid securities at the Adelaide tavern, and then walked up Haverstock Hill. At the foot of the hill, on the opposite side of the road was a large board with the name of an Orphan Working School. This caught Mr. Roddles' eye and furnished him with a text for a discourse that lasted till they reached their destination.

"It's lucky for you," he said, "that you're not orphans to be brought up by those who only want to make their living out of you. That's what an Institution means. Now, with a father it's the other way

about. It's you make your living out of me, and if you'd been fools I should 'ave sworn pretty freely, I can tell you. But then, being my boys, it wasn't likely that you *would* be fools. It's lucky it's turned out as it 'as, for a fool is what I can't put up with, and if you'd always been flopping at the bottom of your classes instead of swimming at the top, I'm afraid the Cruelty Society would 'ave been poking round in Green Yard."

"As it is," he went on, for the boys showed no inclination to turn the discourse into a conversation, "I reckon it's worth while spending money and time and thought on you. I wouldn't do it, mind you, if you weren't worth it. All that wish-wash about a father's feelings and a mother's prayers don't go down with me. I'm not that sort. I'm responsible for bringing you into the world, and the State says I've got to feed you and breech you and keep a roof over you, and I say that's fair enough. If I choose to do more, that's my own business. If I want to see the name of Roddles in the papers, and look at my own flesh and blood riding about in a carriage and pair, we', I can put my money on that, just as I might on a gee-gee. It's all a question of business, mind you. It'll pay me to 'ave you living in the Cromwell Road, and so I'm going to see that you get there. It'll pay you too, so we're in the same boat. Bless you, I could 'ave done it myself easy, if I'd 'ad 'alf a chance. That's it," he burst out, with a sudden vehemence that made the boys turn startled eyes on his frowning face; "Chance, Chance, Chance. That's what makes the world go round, and puts the fools on 'orseback, and

brains in the gutter. The man who can get the better of Chance—well, 'e is a man, and I'm going to 'ave a try, over you two little devils."

## VII

By the time they reached Temple Place, where Mrs. Check carried on her business, Mr. Roddles' unusual demonstration against Chance had given place to a somewhat moody silence. The boys, however, paid small attention to his vagaries. Their visits to their aunt had been among the most pleasing of their experiences, and the sight of the quaint old High Street woke in their minds a score of happy memories.

"There's old Ponto in front of the baker's!" cried Jim.

"I wonder whether that stuffed jackdaw is in Carter's window still," said Dick.

"Is that the flagstaff on the top?" Jim pointed to a pole that showed above the roofs.

"No, silly," answered Dick; "as though you could see that from here. Why, look; you can see that's only a telegraph pole."

Jim was inclined to argue, but was cut short by his father.

"Now then," said Mr. Roddles, "not so much jaw. Take out your 'andkerchiefs and dust your boots before we turn in 'ere."

Temple Place was a curious little paved passage, the entry to which from the High Street was through a row of painted wooden posts. On each side of the

passage were small shops. Over the fourth on the right hand was painted in large black lettering, "Check (late Gumble)." The shop windows were small, and so were the panes of which they were composed, and the door by which they were divided, and the shop itself that was lighted by them. The larger of the two windows was filled with buns, cakes, and sweets, with an alluring background of stone ginger-beer bottles grouped round a large glass vessel that in shape suggested a small font or a big aquarium. This was three parts filled with a greenish liquid, on the surface of which floated numerous pieces of lemon peel. In the other window was a collection of pipes—including the good old churchwarden—and several stacks of packet tobaccos and cigarettes.

"Here we are at last," said Mr. Roddles, but before the words were out of his mouth Dick had rushed into the shop and behind the counter, and was actually being embraced by a large and comely young lady with a wealth of brown hair and a face full of good nature and freckles.

Jim's greeting was less exuberant, but there was no mistaking its heartiness.

"I believe you've grown, both of you," she exclaimed, "and aren't you swells, too!"

"You measured us against the parlour door," said Dick; "we'll see when we go upstairs."

"I've got my new suit on," remarked Jim, acknowledging the compliment to their appearance.

"Well, Miss Nancy," said Mr. Roddles, "I suppose I'd better not come behind the counter, but I 'ope I see you well."

"Quite well, thank you," said the buxom damsel. "Will you please go straight upstairs. Mrs. Check is expecting you, I know."

"Aren't you going to have dinner with us?" asked Dick.

"No, of course not," she answered; "why, who do you think would look after the shop?"

"Dad will," said Jim boldly. He saw on his father's face the rare signs of resolute good-humour.

Mr. Roddles laughed.

"There's sauce!" he exclaimed. "All the same, I'll do it for a consideration. One little kiss from those ruby lips," and he leaned insinuatingly across the counter.

But Miss Nancy tossed her head.

"No, thank you, Mr. Roddles," she answered; "there's others, too, that are fond of rubies."

"And quite right too," said he; "but after all, dinner's dinner, and when a man gets to my age, 'e can't live on kisses."

"I'll stop down, and have dinner with you afterwards," volunteered Dick.

But his father wanted to have both boys together, and vetoed Dick's benevolent plan.

"Not you," he said peremptorily; "manners before fancies. Up you go, both of you."

In the parlour they found Mrs. Check waiting for them, red in the face from her work at the oven, but active and cheerful as usual.

"Glad to see you, Joe," was her greeting, as soon as the door opened. "You're like the Queen, God bless her, for bringing fine weather with you. Ah,

and the boys too! Well, to be sure, they do look little gentlemen. Dick, you ask me to put another thread into that waistcoat button—it'll be off before the day's out."

Argus-eyed was Mrs. Check, but so good-humoured and cheerful that her victims almost always took her criticisms and suggestions in good part.

There was a pleasant smell in the room, so at any rate Dick thought, and he gave an involuntary sniff of appreciation.

Mrs. Check laughed—a jolly laugh.

"Ah, Dick, you know what that smell means, don't you? It's Nan you've got to thank for that. I was thinking what I'd have, and she says, 'Roast shoulder and onion sauce—that's what the boys like

" sighed Mr. Roddles, "no one thinks about the father."

"Yes, they do," replied Mrs. Check, pointing to a big jug on the sideboard. "Good honest stuff there, that won't hurt man, woman, or child."

"You're a remarkably sensible woman, Susan—for a woman," said Mr. Roddles, his face brightening, "the dust has got into my throat. Where's Jim?" he added, looking round sharply.

"Gone to have a look in the kitchen, I expect," said Mrs. Check. "It's only at the end of the passage. They know a little too much, these young gentlemen, nowadays."

It was a shrewd guess, for when Polly, the "general," appeared carrying, under its shining cover, the roast shoulder, Jim followed with the precious

sauceboat in one hand and a vegetable dish in the other.

Mr. Roddles frowned.

"Now then, silly!" he exclaimed tartly, "where are your manners? Are you going to be a waiter?"

"He might do worse," said Mrs. Check; "Mrs. Middleton, next door, has a boy at the Junior Carlton, and doing well too. Looks as smart as they make them. Joe, you take the head of the table. Jim, you sit opposite Dick. Now who's going to say grace?"

Mr. Roddles' nose turned up, but he kept himself well in hand.

"Dick learns that sort of thing at his school," said Jim rather sulkily.

"No, I don't!" exclaimed Dick, "we don't have anything to say grace for."

"Jim!" said Mr. Roddles, in a voice that the boys knew meant business.

Jim flushed, bent his head, and said quickly—

"Thank God."

Dick giggled, and so did Polly, but Mr. Roddles looked black. Mrs. Check hastened to interpose.

"That's the shortest grace I've ever heard," she remarked; "but I don't know that it's any the worse for that."

"A waiter," said Mr. Roddles bitterly, "that's just about 'is form, I do believe. The Junior Carlton, did you say? When 'is scholarship runs out——"

"Scholarship!" ejaculated Aunt Susan.

Mr. Roddles poured out a glass from the big jug, and watched the creamy froth with a gentle eye.

"Scholarship, I said," he went on. "Didn't you know Jim 'ad got a scholarship? You wouldn't think it, but 'e 'as."

"Well I never!" cried Mrs. Check. "How much is it?"

"All his fees paid at a secondary school, including books, and a maintenance grant."

"Bless me!" cried Mrs. Check. "Well, just fancy that! Not that I'm surprised in one way, for it's easy to see Jim's a masterpiece at books. Nan was saying only last night that she'd never seen a boy so fond of reading. I congratulate you, Joe, I'm sure, and you too, Jim. And you, Dick, you'll have to get one next."

"'E'll never do that," said Mr. Roddles, "not if 'e lives to be a 'undred."

"Don't you be so sure," replied the good lady. "What Jim can do, that can Dick. That's my opinion, anyway. What are you all laughing at?"

"Why," said Mr. Roddles, "you can't eat the same chop twice over, can you? Once is good enough for most people."

"What do you mean?" inquired Mrs. Check sharply. "I thought you said it was Jim had got the scholarship."

"So I did," retorted Mr. Roddles, "but I never said that Dick 'adn't—not that I'm aware of."

"Do you mean to tell me that they've *both* won them?"

"Now you've got it," said Mr. Roddles; "I 'ad to break it gently."

Mrs. Check got up from her chair.

"Excuse me one moment, Joe," she said, "I've left my handkerchief in my bedroom."

"Why, she was using it a minute ago," exclaimed Dick, in an excited whisper.

"'Old your tongue, stupid," snapped his father, "and don't let your aunt see what a thick you are."

In a minute or two Aunt Susan returned, holding a lace-edged handkerchief in one hand. She put it on the table by her plate and sat down. "Have a bit more, Joe?" she asked.

"No, thank you, Susan."

"Oh, come, just a juicy little bit o' knuckle."

"Can't be done," said Mr. Roddles, "we've all 'ad double rations."

The boys took the hint and followed their father's lead when the invitation reached them.

"Then, will one of you boys ring the bell?" said Mrs. Check.

As she expected, they both jumped up and rushed to the bell.

Mrs. Check opened the handkerchief, took out two florins, and, with quite remarkable quickness and dexterity, placed one opposite each of the vacant chairs.

Dick was the first to see.

"Who put this here?" he cried. "Did you, Aunt Sue?"

"Oh, there's one here too," shouted Jim. "Thank you very much."

"Yes," added Dick, prompted by a kick under the table from his watchful father, "thank you very much."

"You ought to 'ave gone be'ind the footlights,

Susan," said Mr. Roddles. "I've seen many a worse bit of 'anky-panky at the 'alls."

After dinner Mr. Roddles was invited to smoke and take a nap while the boys went up to the Heath with Nan. To their great delight he accepted both the invitations. Nan was at least as ready for a romp as they were, and with an old tennis bat and ball they had a long game at rounders.

Tea was to be at five, and on their way back they met Mr. Roddles, still in his unusually benignant mood.

"I'm afraid they've been giving you a bad time," he said; "boys never know when to stop."

Indeed, Nan did look rather breezy, and the boys had a colour which made them almost unrecognisable.

"We've had a perfectly splendid time," she said. "I wish we could have it all over again."

"Ah," said Jim, "that's the worst of it!"

"What's the worst of what?" asked Mr. Roddles.

"Nice things are over so soon," answered Jim.

"Like cheesecakes—eh?" said his father, with a not unkindly smile.

"And they never come over again, just the same," added Dick.

"Thank goodness," said Mr. Roddles. "There are better things than cheesecakes for those that can afford to buy them, and you'll find that out for yourselves before you're many years older."

"Well," said Nan, with a laugh, "I'm afraid there'll be some cheesecakes on the table for tea. I'll tell Mrs. Check to give you something else, Mr. Roddles."

Whether it was the effect of his afternoon nap, or of the bracing air, Mr. Roddles waxed unusually

eloquent and discursive at, and after, tea. His central theme was the way in which he was performing his duties as a father.

"There are many subjects on which we don't see eye to eye together, Susan," he said, "and you think me a sad reprobate. All the same, I'd 'ave you see now for yourself that I'm doing a good part by those boys. I'm not one of the sloppy, come-and-give-daddy-a-kiss sort o' fathers. It's not the way I'm put together. But then, I'm not one of the devil-may-care sort o' fathers, either. Why, I tell you I've planned things out for those lads in a way that would surprise you. I've seen from the first that they've taken my brains between them, and I've kept them up to their work. Now you see the result. They've got their scholarships, as I knew they would, and, in a month or two, they'll be at secondary schools. Well, it's all in the plan, and a lot more as well. One's for Oxford, the other's for Cambridge. One's for law, the other—well, I hardly know what 'e's going to do. One's to be a kicker and the other a scraper."

Here Mrs. Check interrupted.

"Kicker? Scraper?" she repeated. "What ever are you talking about, Joseph?"

Mr. Roddles smiled tolerantly.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I expect it does sound a bit queer. I was talkin' of politics. There's some men that won't be put upon, and some that will; some that kick up their 'eels the moment you try to put a bridle on them, and some that wear it as if it was a crown. There's iron backs that won't bend to any one, and there are jelly backs that will bow and scrape to any

one or anything. Kickers and scrapers I call 'em. Many people call 'em Radicals and Tories."

"The Ironsides were iron backs, weren't they?" asked Dick, who looked interested.

The historical allusion was lost on Mr. Roddles.

"'Old your tongue, silly," he answered. "I'm talking to your aunt, not to you."

"But suppose we're both born kickers?" asked Jim.

"Then I'd 'ave to do what I did about the schools—toss up with my lucky penny. The one that lost would 'ave to be a scraper—that is, 'e'd 'ave to pretend to be one."

Mrs. Check shook her head.

"No, Joseph," she said firmly, "that's not right. I hope both the boys will grow up to be good Conservatives like their grandfather. But I trust there'll be no pretending about it."

"Ah, that's just what I was saying about our not seeing together," said Mr. Roddles airily. "You're all for sentiment, being a woman; I'm all for business, being a man. If a boy's got to make 'is own way in the world, 'e's got to stick to business, and think of one thing only and that is—what will pay the best? Now these two boys are beginning close together, and, if they don't look out, they'll be getting in each other's way. So I'm bringing them up to keep clear of each other, and the more they do it, the better, till they've got to the Cromwell Road. Then they can do what they please—be Mormons or Quakers if they like. A man with £500 a year can afford a few opinions. With £1500, he can indulge in convictions. Under £500, the fewer 'e 'as of cither, the better for 'im."

"Then you've got neither opinions nor convictions, I suppose," said Mrs. Check, her good-humoured face unusually grave.

"Not a blessed one that I'm not ready to change to-morrow if it suits my book," said Mr. Roddles cheerfully, and Dick laughed. Jim smiled, but he looked at Aunt Susan and the smile died away.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said she energetically, "talking like that in front of the boys. It's silly, too. What respect do you suppose they'll pay to your opinions about bringing them up?"

"None at all, to my opinions," replied the undaunted father, "but a good deal to my strap."

This time both the boys laughed, but a little sheepishly, as if the joke were not all a joke.

## VIII

"Jim," said Madge Carr, one Saturday afternoon, "is it true that you've got a brother at St. Gabriel's?"

"Yes; who told you?"

"Tom Hill. He's in the choir there. He said your brother got a scholarship as well as you."

Jim nodded. "So he did."

"Well," exclaimed Madge, "you *are* a funny boy, Jim! Fancy, all the time we've known each other, you never telling me you had a brother! I don't like it, Jim," she went on, after a pause.

"Why not?" said Jim; "what you don't know about, you don't miss."

She thought for a moment.

"No," she said, "but when you do find out, it seems

horrid. What's he like? Is he like you? Is he older or younger?"

"He's my twin," answered Jim. "I don't know about his being like me. He's not so dark as I am. I'm about an inch taller, but he's broader than me."

"Twins!" exclaimed Madge, "I've often thought I should like to know twins. Bring him with you next Saturday. Don't forget."

To Jim's surprise, Dick accepted the invitation at once. As it happened, there was no cricket match that week and he was rather glad of something to do. Except Nan at Hampstead he had no girl friends, and he felt a little piqued at Jim's having, as it were, stolen a march on him in this respect.

"Here he is," was Jim's introduction, as the boys met Madge on the first floor landing.

Madge held out her hand, and she and Dick shook hands with a gravity that was almost solemn.

"You go to St. Gabriel's?" she said. "You know Tom Hill, don't you?"

He nodded. "Ginger hair, he's got, hasn't he?"

"Not ginger," said Madge deprecatingly, "it's rather a nice brown, I think."

"They all call him Ginger," answered Dick.

"P'r'aps he's like young Simmons," interrupted Jim; "when he was in the Third you could have struck a match on his hair. In the Fourth it was turning brown. In the Fifth it was turned, and now, in the Sixth, it's nearly black."

"That's only because he soaks it in water—his sister told me," returned Madge. "Shall we go

upstairs? There's only number nine for us to do. Then we can go down to the Gardens."

Just as they reached number nine the door opened and a smart, brisk young man came out. He was going to shut the outer door when he caught sight of the three. He nodded to Madge.

"Ah, Miss Housekeeper," he said, "are you going to do my room? Three of you too? Well, mind you don't read my love-letters."

"He's not the sort to leave his love-letters about, and not the sort to write them or get them," remarked Madge, with a toss of her head, when they were well inside.

"Oh, he'll get them all right, if he's money enough," said Jim, "and you say he's getting on."

"Yes," she said, "look at the table. He'll be moving into the Inn, dad says, before long."

Dick, who was rather short-sighted, looked at the bookshelves and took out one or two books.

"They don't look very interesting," he remarked.

"They're all the same, lawyers' books," said Madge, "and most of them bound alike. Jim says he's going to be a lawyer; what are you going to be?"

Dick looked at her gravely.

"I think I'll be a doctor," he said.

Madge nodded her head.

"Yes, I'd like that. There are lots of lady doctors now," she added, anticipating a possible objection.

"They make a lot of money, doctors do," said Dick, "and sometimes they get made 'Sir.' I saw about Sir Richard Vaizey in *Reynolds'* the other day."

"Lawyers make more," put in Jim, "and they can be made judges. I'd like to be a judge."

"And then, when you're ill, I'll g'ive you some stuff to make you well," volunteered Dick.

"And when your patients try to bilk you, I'll send them to prison."

"I'll be a nurse," exclaimed Madge, "and Dick can send me to his patients, and when you're ill, Jim, he'll send me to nurse you."

"A nurse?" cried Jim contemptuously, "there's no money in that."

## IX

In due course Mr. Roddles tossed his lucky penny, and Jim was entered at University College School, while Dick was booked for the Colson Foundation School in Camden Town. Each had its advantages. The Gower Street school had the bigger reputation, but the Colson Foundation had several leaving scholarships. This school, too, had a more decided religious tone, and Mr. Roddles had an idea that, for Dick, taking "Holy Orders" might be, as he said, "good business."

"You know the ropes a bit already," he said, "and if you keep in with them, your vicar and the curates 'll give you a leg up. They'll like to make out it was all their doing. That's 'uman nature all over, and if you've got your wits about you, 'uman nature's about the best card in the pack."

As for Madge, Mr. and Mrs. Carr had just been appointed caretakers at a big block of buildings in Balham, and Madge was to go to a High School for

girls, in that neighbourhood. Both the boys were upset at losing her, Dick quite as much as Jim, for she had managed to develop the new friendship without weakening the old. She did not realise what an achievement it was. So successful had been Mr. Roddles' policy of isolation that the boys had already drifted strangely apart, just meeting in the evenings, and united in action only to resist or circumvent their father. To them, it seemed almost unnatural to be going out together on Saturday afternoons and spending them with Madge, but her liveliness and good humour made the meetings so pleasant that the strangeness soon wore off, and the boys became more brotherly than they had been since they were in the Infants.

And now, just as they were drawing together, there came the new break in their school lives and their separation from Madge.

The school terms were to begin in September, but the Carr family had moved to Balham at the half-quarter. Madge, however, found an opportunity of revisiting Chancery Lane, and the three had a good-bye meeting in the Temple Gardens. There were few tennis-players now, and the grass was baked and bare, though the flower beds were still a blaze of colour. Among the players was the indefatigable Mr. Nine, and Madge was pleased when he recognised her with a friendly nod.

"He doesn't believe in holidays, then?" said Jim.

"No," she answered, "not till he's made his fortune. He looks nicer, I think," she went on, "perhaps he really is in love. Do you remember what he said about his love-letters?"

Both the boys nodded. There were few things they forgot.

"Too busy," said Jim oracularly.

"Not the sort," added Dick.

"Shall I ask him?" said the audacious Madge.

"You daren't," answered Jim.

"I'd like to see you," said Dick.

There was a row of hurdles separating the tennis courts from the rest of the Gardens. Madge went up to one of them and leaned her arms on it. At the end of a game, while his opponent was collecting the balls, Mr. Nine came up to the hurdle.

"Look!" cried Jim, nudging his brother, "she's spoken to him."

"Or he to her," said Dick.

In a minute or two she came back to the boys, while Mr. Nine resumed his game.

"What did he say?" exclaimed both the boys in chorus.

Madge held out a bright new half-crown.

"He said we were to go and have tea and drink his health," she said.

"Good for Mr. Nine," cried Jim.

"Hope he wins his game," added Dick.

"Where shall we go?" asked Jim.

"Burton's," answered Madge, "it's the nearest, and the stuff's all right."

Burton's was in Essex Court. It was a dingy little shop with a room behind, furnished, if the two small tables and six cane-bottomed chairs entitled it to the adjective, as a tea-room. But Madge was quite right. The tea came from Twining's, close by, and

the bread and butter and cakes were well above the average.

When the meal was nearly over, Madge suddenly puckered her forehead and, assuming a tone of command, began—

“Now boys, take your pencils and begin. A, B, and C have half a crown to spend; they have tea at a shop. They each have a cup of tea at 2d. Between them, they eat two plates of bread and butter at 3d. each, five buns at 1d., one—two—three—four—five rock cakes at 1d. They give 2d. to the girl. How much have they left, and what do they do with it?”

Out flashed both the boys' hands together.

“Sixpence—sweets,” said Jim.

“Sixpence—you keep it,” said Dick.

“Both of you wrong,” was Madge's decision. “We must get something we can offer to Mr. Nine. I know. There are some big pears next door.”

Next door was a fruiterer's shop. Madge bought a huge, yellow pear for 3d, and a pound of golden nobs.

When she offered the apples to Dick he drew back.

“No,” he said, “it isn't fair. He gave *you* the money and you didn't have your share at tea. We had three to your two.”

“I expect he meant the money for all of us,” remarked Jim.

“Of course he did,” said Madge. “I had as much as I could eat, and you can't have more than that. If you don't take the apples, I won't.”

“How many are there?” asked Jim.

Dick looked over Madge's shoulder.

"Ten," he counted.

"You have six," said Jim to Madge, delivering judgment, "and we two each. That'll be fair."

"Nonsense!" cried Madge, "you want to give me stom—I mean collywobblers. We'll have three each and give the odd one to the first child we meet crying."

In Middle Temple Lane, to their great delight, they met a small girl with her fingers in her eyes.

"Don't cry," said Madge, offering her the biggest apple, a selection of which Jim secretly disapproved.

The child took the apple, staring up at the giver in amazement. Gradually a smile spread over her face.

"Like dissolving views, isn't it?" said Madge, stooping down to kiss the tear-stained face. Then she rubbed her lips.

"Rather dirty, but we've had a jolly tea," she remarked, with apparent inconsequence. But Dick nodded.

"Yes, I know what you mean," he said.

When they got back to the Gardens they found, to their dismay, that the courts were deserted.

"Oh, they've gone," exclaimed Madge, "we must have been an awful time."

"There's Mr. Nine coming out of the dressing-room," said Jim. "Look! he's smiling at us."

Madge ran up to him and held out the pear in its bag.

"We brought you this, sir," she began shyly, for her.

Mr. Nine stopped and looked hard at the girl. Then he shook his head.

"Oh no," he said, "you were to spend the half-crown on yourselves. That was the contract."

"Please break it then, sir," urged Madge, smiling, as the unusual shyness melted away. "We got it on purpose for you."

"Well, it looks very tempting. Look here, we'll go halves."

As he spoke he pulled out a silver fruit-knife.

"No," exclaimed Madge, "we want you to have it."

"Very well," he said, "but it isn't good business, you know. You should take all you can get, if you want to make way in the world."

The girl's cheek flushed and she looked down. His dark eyes were fixed on her face so intently that she felt disconcerted.

"You are very like some one I know," he went on, and his voice was gentler.

But she was anxious to get away.

"Good-bye," she said; "I must go now."

"Show me your hand first," he asked her. "I can read fortunes."

She held back.

"It isn't very clean—I've been playing about."

"Never mind," he answered, "it takes a lot of dirt to hide the lines."

He made a sudden dart and seized her hand. She struggled for a moment, but his grasp was too strong, and she submitted. He looked closely at her palm.

"Ah," he said at last, "I see. A long life and a happy one, if you make the right choice. But it's not clear that you will."

He let her hand fall.

Her lips were twitching, but she looked him in the face.

"It was kind of you—the half-crown," she said, "but I wish I hadn't taken it. You had no right to hold my hand like that."

"But might is right all the world over, isn't it?" he asked her.

"It was wrong, then," she answered doggedly.

"What a little spitfire!" he exclaimed, and turned on his heel with a laugh.

## X

In September the boys started at their new schools. The Colson Foundation began a week the earlier, so that Dick was well under weigh before Jim was launched at Gower Street. The Colson was an old school with an adventurous career, for it had originally opened its doors in the heart of the City. Thence the expiration of a long lease had driven it to Clapham, where it throve till the numbers exceeded the accommodation. As there was no land in the immediate neighbourhood available for building, the governors determined to divide the school, and two old-fashioned houses in Gray Street, Camden Town, were bought for the purposes of the experiment. Beginning in quite a small way, the new branch had thriven, and now had more than two hundred and fifty boys on the roll. A certain number of scholarships had been allocated by the governors to Camden Town, and one of the Court, who had been specially interested in the experiment, had bequeathed £4000 for prizes and exhibitions. The headmaster, the Rev. Robert Winfer, M.A., was a clergyman who had for many years been second master at Clapham. He was now nearly

sixty, but still full of energy. He was not a great scholar, but he had excellent organising capacity and a good deal of tact. He was, moreover, a man of kindly disposition, who took a real interest in the boys. From the first it had been his policy to secure really good masters for the upper forms, and to economise on lady teachers for the small boys. As the lady teachers were not only cheap but good, the school lost nothing by this arrangement. He also laid himself out to secure promising boys from the neighbouring elementary schools, with the result that the school Honours Boards soon began to fill and the school reputation to grow. Mr. Winfer was a strong churchman but a zealous evangelical, so that Dick found himself in an ecclesiastical atmosphere very different from that of St. Gabriel's. Not that this troubled him at all. His father's constant sneers and gibes had not been without effect, and his own experience of religious teaching had not been particularly happy. Of all his lessons it was the one he liked the least. The Sunday school was, if possible, a little worse, because the voluntary teacher was less competent than the professional. Mr. Winfer's Scripture class was a change and—at first at any rate—he welcomed it.

There was another reason, too, for tolerating the Scripture class—there was very little preparation involved. Dick was not a lazy boy, but he had been Cock of the Walk at St. Gabriel's and had won his scholarship without excessive application. Mr. Roddles' strap had, after all, been a good friend to both the boys. For years it had kept their noses to

the grindstone, so that the groundwork of their education was really sound. But they knew no Latin, and their French and algebra were very elementary. Mr. Winfer soon saw that here was a boy capable of bringing distinction to the school, and he made up his mind that he should do it. Accordingly Dick was placed in Class IV. with boys two years older than himself. It was hard work. At first it seemed impossibly hard. But there was plenty of grit in the boy, and before the term was half over he had fought his way up to the second place. The first place was filled by a boy, Willie Banker, who had been learning Latin and French for two years, if not more. At first he looked upon the newcomer as an interloper, and treated him with open contempt. When he found that in spite of his advantages he could only just hold his own with Dick, he changed his tactics, and in a few weeks the two boys were sworn chums. The friendship meant a good deal to Dick, for Banker was in both the Eleven and the Fifteen, and through his good offices Dick got a good trial at Rugger and actually played in two matches. At first he had held back, deterred by the subscription and the necessity for flannels. Mr. Roddles, however, came to the rescue as soon as he heard the difficulty.

"There's the five shillings," he said, handing the delighted Dick a couple of half-crowns, "and as for the shorts, they'll be ready as soon as you are. Football and cricket are good business, nowadays. I wish Jim had taken to them."

By this time Jim, too, had begun to settle down. The headmaster at the Gower Street School, Dr.

Locke, was a shrewd judge of a boy's capabilities, and he strongly advised him to take up classics in preference to mathematics or science. He was so much struck by Jim's promise that he wished to interview his father. Mr. Roddles, however, declined the honour.

"No," he said, when Jim delivered the invitation; "every cock on his own dung'ill. If 'e likes to come down to the Institute on a Sunday evening, I'll be pleased to talk to 'im."

"Shall I tell him?" asked Jim gravely.

Mr. Roddles gave a solemn wink.

"Not much good, I'm afraid. I've seen the old gent, and 'e don't look as if Advanced Thought was much in 'is line."

This was in reference to the fact that what Mr. Roddles called his dunghill was known to the outside world as the Fitzroy Institute of Advanced Thought. They were Radicals there in politics, with a strong leaning towards republicanism, while their religion was that of the *National Reformer*. Sunday evening was generally devoted to a lecture or debate, or both, and anything like a discussion was Mr. Roddles' opportunity. On these occasions he would resist manfully the suggestions of his weakness, at any rate until he had made his speech. If a Conservative or a champion of orthodoxy had been induced to visit the Institute, then Mr. Roddles was happy. His manner of speech was of the park, parky, and he was not sparing of expletives or personalities. But besides and beneath these, there was a clear vein of robust common sense which on a good many subjects made him a formidable opponent. Much as he

affected to despise popularity, his reputation in the dingy little hall was very dear to him. The applause that greeted him when he got up and sat down was in his ears the sweetest of music, and his pleasure was prolonged by description and repetition to the boys during the week. Curiously enough, however, he would never allow them to visit the Institute, though they often begged him to take them.

"No," he said, "the luck's been against me, and what I 'ave been, that I shall always be. That's why I can afford to please myself and play any dam tricks I choose to. But with you it's different. You're going to 'ave luck, both of you—my lot and your own as well, and you've got to mind your p's and q's. You can't afford Advanced Thought, my lads—not till you've made a fortune, or lost it."

## XI

Dr. Locke soon found his first impressions of Jim confirmed. As a rule he saw little of the work in forms below the Sixth, but in Jim's case he made an exception, and when the first term examination was held, he sent for the boys' papers. As he had hoped and expected, he found them far above the average. Only in Greek was he still behind the rest, and even in this new branch of learning, his progress was quite remarkable. His form master, Mr. Alleyne, was one of the oldest men on the staff, a school veteran of twenty-five years, who considered himself entitled to take things easily. Under him the boys had a soft time, though they had to pay for it when they went

up to the Fifth, where Mr. Paradine reigned—a man in the prime of life, buttressed by a long list of Oxford distinctions. Mr. Alleyne had no wish to drive, but Jim almost asked to be driven. Mr. Roddles' constant appeal to the boys' ambition, followed by their double success, had fallen on good soil. Of the two, Jim, perhaps, was at this time the more determined to get on. Or it may have been simply that in Greek he had a harder subject than any in Dick's syllabus. At any rate, whatever the reason, he certainly spent more time over his home-work, and sometimes, willing worker as he was, he almost wished himself back at Arran Street. There were nights when, after his long evening's work was finished, he would go to bed crying because his Xenophon was still only half prepared. On such occasions Dick would be in bed and asleep, for his work took him a good hour less than Jim's on the Greek preparation nights. It was one of Mr. Roddles' inflexible rules that the boys' light should be out by a quarter past eleven, and breach of this meant the introduction of the strap. Still, as they generally got to work soon after seven, they had—allowing a short supper interval—nearly four hours, which was just about double what they were supposed to spend on their home lessons. And as they were, both of them, willing and ambitious, not reluctant, workers, they soon began to make remarkable progress. By Easter, Jim was well up to the class average in Greek, while in the other subjects he was easily first. As for Dick, there was, by this time, very little to choose between him and Willie Baker; but those long evening hours were bound to

tell their tale, and already, on more than one occasion, the boy from St. Gabriel's had shown signs of superiority.

These early days at the new schools were marked by one feature that had in it, perhaps, a touch of the pathetic as well as of the humorous. Mr. Roddles, who by nature was a really clever man, was particularly proud of his readiness in mental arithmetic, and, while the boys were still in the lower standards, had enjoyed keeping an eye on their work and impressing them with his smartness. As they climbed the school ladder he found it needful to refurbish his rules, and often, after the boys had gone to bed, he would open their school-books and work out exercises, generally those just ahead of where they were. When these were reached he would bestow a casual glance at their work, and spur them on with such remarks as: "Now then, slow-coach," or, "Call yourself a scholarship boy, and can't do a simple sum in fractions?" Generally adding, "Why, I can see the answer as I stand here."

In the same way he had bought a second-hand *Algebra for Beginners*, and had spent a surprising amount of time on the first few chapters. At their new schools they began by revising the primary rules, and Mr. Roddles was able to keep up with them, but they soon began to leave him behind. He struggled hard for some weeks, but the theory of indices hit him hard, and surds knocked him over. His mortification was intensified when Jim showed that he, at any rate, appreciated the situation. Problems in simple equations were what Mr. Roddles called his "mark,"

and he was very quick in working them. The artful Jim would invoke his help to solve a tempting problem, and, just as his father was hot on the trail of  $x$  and  $y$ , would say: "Oh, yes, I see how to do it; now do show me this one." "This one" was almost always a surd, and Mr. Roddles would turn away with a rough, "I can't waste any more time on you," on his lips, and dismay and anger in his heart. He had often told himself that the time would come when the boys, in the upward career he had marked out for them, would leave him far behind. Then he would console himself partly by his improved material conditions, to which it would be only reasonable that the boys should minister, and partly by the thought that their progress was all his planning and arrangement. And now the first-fruits of success were inexpressibly bitter in his mouth. It vexed him all the more that it should be Jim who had found him out, because, of the two, he was decidedly his father's favourite. In Jim he thought he saw an incarnation of the Roddles that, but for his blasted luck, might have been. Jim's eyes, and certain occasional fleeting expressions on his face, were curiously like his father's, and at this stage his ability was more marked, or at any rate more obvious, than Dick's. Moreover, Dick was cast in a different mould, and, looking furtively at him, Mr. Roddles would sometimes turn away with a sudden oath that would make the lads look up in astonishment. And, sore and angry as he was at Jim's disillusion, he yet felt a certain contempt for Dick. "I'd 'ave found it out," he said to himself, "as quick as Jim did. 'E's the spit of me, Jim is."

## XII

In July came the prize-givings. Colson's led the way by a few days. Dick announced that he was second in his class, Banker being first.

"I believe I'll catch him next year," he said; "Mr. Wait said there were only five or six marks between us. I'm to have a second prize. Are you coming on Tuesday?" he asked his father.

"Coming to see you take Master Banker's leavings? No, certainly not. If you'd been first, perhaps I might 'ave done. Seconds are no good for getting on in the world."

Dick flushed, and the tears stood in his eyes.

"I tried hard enough," he said, "Mr. Wait told me I'd done wonderfully well. He said he never thought I'd get as high."

"That shows he thought you a mug," answered the relentless Mr. Roddles, "and it looks as if 'e was right. And as for that blarney about doing wonderfully well, that's the stuff they feed the second-raters with. It's their food, but it makes the first-raters sick."

The next day Jim came back with the news that he was first in his class.

"I was first in every subject but Greek, and second in that," he announced.

Mr. Roddles was secretly pleased, but it was easier to frown.

"Seconds seem the fashion in this family," he grunted.

"I'm first in the class, anyway, an easy first," said Jim.

"When's your show?" asked his father.

"Friday, at three," said Jim.

"Perhaps I may look in—I don't know, but I may," Mr. Roddles vouchsafed.

On the Tuesday Dick came back with a big parcel done up in a newspaper. He met his father at the door. Mr. Roddles was in an unusually benignant humour, having had half a crown on the Snowdrop filly, who had pulled off a 5 to 1 chance.

"What's that?" he asked facetiously, "New pair of boots?"

Dick, too, was in a good humour. He nodded.

"Strong calf," he said, and ran upstairs.

In the sitting-room he opened his parcel and showed four handsome volumes, gorgeously bound in blue leather, with a lot of gilt on the back and an elaborate device on the side.

"This one is the second prize," he said. "And those," he added, pointing to the other three, "are a special science prize."

Mr. Roddles was impressed. He had not expected anything so imposing. This was very different from the board-school prizes.

"You didn't tell me about the science prize," he said, "or perhaps I'd 'ave gone. They must be 'ard up to know what to do with their money. That thick one looks as though it might be worth reading," he added condescendingly.

It was a tribute to Madge's influence that Dick went to Jim's prize-giving. They still went their own ways, but they were less unbrotherly than they had been.

The distribution was held in the Botanical Theatre of the College, and the big amphitheatre was well filled. The prizes were being distributed by Sir Robert Montacute, and Jim received his fair share of applause when he went up to receive his prize. The chairman's speech was long, and not very interesting. Half-way through, Jim nudged his brother and whispered, "See him up there, near the door."

Dick looked up and saw his father standing just inside the door, looking very bored and impatient. A few minutes after, the boys looked again, but Mr. Roddles had disappeared.

When they reached home they found him at work in his room with the door wide open.

"Come in, you bloated young aristocrats," he cried, evidently in good humour again, "you shall 'ave a bloater each for supper. Well, Jim, I missed seeing you shake hands with Lord Tom Noddy, but I 'ope you'll make a better speaker than your noble friend."

"He *was* long and dry," Jim admitted.

"Long and dry and very thin," said Mr. Roddles; "but that wasn't your fault. What did 'is lordship give you? Let's see. *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*. Oh, lor! What a bloodthirsty lot your friends are! Never mind. Put some brown paper on 'im, and I'll have a look at 'im to-night. You'll be getting quite a libr'y at this rate."

"He does seem in a good humour," said Dick, when the boys were in the other room with the door shut. From force of habit they generally talked to each other in a whisper.

"Called at the King's Arms, I expect," said Jim.

## XIII

Jim's guess had been not only shrewd but perfectly correct, and Mr. Roddles' good humour had been partly due to a call he had paid on his way home from Gower Street. As a matter of fact, he had for some time put considerable restraint upon himself, and had treated his weakness with almost unexampled severity. The lads' scholarship successes and their transformation into public-school boys had had an effect on him of which he, himself, was only half conscious. While his plans and ambitions still lay, as it were, in their cradle, they coloured his dreams without having much effect on his conduct. Now, as he realised that the dreams were being translated into deed and fact, he felt sobered, uneasy, and sometimes almost frightened. He had often declaimed at the Institute against the hardships of the working-man's lot, and had declared that its one compensation was that, in his case, any change must be for the better. Now, the shadow of change had fallen on him, and he was afraid. The feeling shamed and irritated him, because he misinterpreted it. A smaller, weaker nature would have been simply elated at the earnest of future triumph, but the apprehension that larger powers and forces, mysterious and uncontrollable, had somehow got both him and the boys in their grasp, and were pushing them about like pieces on a board—this was the secret of his uneasiness, and it was an indication of unusual qualities in the drunken, cynical little tailor. One effect, however, of this frame of mind had been occasional discomfort for the boys. Mr. Roddles found

himself slipping into a new way of treating them—a mixture of solicitude and admiration, and then, afraid of losing his authority, he would suddenly assert himself in a fit of blustering violence. Still the boys—especially Jim—were sensible of a change which on the whole was favourable.

With the coming of the holidays Mr. Roddles saw an opportunity for relaxing the unnatural strain he had been putting upon himself. The boys deserved a holiday and needed one. A visit to Temple Place would almost certainly be followed by an invitation to stay for a week at least, and in a week he reckoned he could pay off most of the arrears he owed to his neglected weakness. Accordingly, he suggested to Jim and Dick that they should take their prizes up to Hampstead and show them to Mrs. Check and Nan.

Things fell out exactly as Mr. Roddles anticipated. Mrs. Check was impressed by the prizes, but sadly afraid that the boys had been overworking. A week on the Heath would make men of them, she declared. They, of course, were delighted at the prospect.

“But you’d rather come one at a time, wouldn’t you?” asked Nan, who remembered that two or three times their father had arranged matters that way.

The boys looked at each other. Then Dick said slowly—

“No; we’d just as soon come together now.”

“Well, that’s more brotherly,” exclaimed Mrs. Check, “and then you can have games together when Nan’s busy. Suppose we say next Wednesday. Perhaps your father will bring you up.”

Next Wednesday it was, but no Mr. Roddles.

Instead, there came a message to the effect that he was very much obliged, but couldn't spare the time just then.

"But isn't this his slack time?" asked Mrs. Check.

"That's what he said," answered Jim, referring to the message, and Aunt Susan discreetly dropped the subject.

"I don't like the look of Jim," said Mrs. Check to Nan that evening, after the boys had gone to bed.

"He's paler than ever, and he seems so languid!"

"Tired with that horrid school-work, I expect." Nan herself was not a Lady Jane Grey.

"Yes; we must feed him up and see that he has a good time. Poor boys," added Aunt Susan, with a sigh, "I'm afraid their bringing up isn't what it should be."

"And yet they're wonderfully tidy," said Nan, "do you notice their collars and cuffs and things?"

"Well, you see, Mr. Roddles is a tailor, and besides, he's a very handy man—he always was that, I must say. And of course he was a married man."

"Did his wife die long ago?"

"Eh—what?" asked Mrs. Check, in some confusion—"die, did you say? Ah well, it's a sad story, and it's no good raking over dead ashes."

The week passed very quickly, and Dick, at any rate, improved wonderfully, colouring under the sun—so Nan said—like a real meerschaum. Jim, too, seemed brighter, but he was less active than his brother, and the sprightly Nan rallied him smartly on his inability to catch her, in their scurries down the flagstaff hill.

Mrs. Check was a Wesleyan, and a regular "twicer." After the Sunday evening service she and Nan with the two boys walked up to the Heath. It had been a blazing day, and the cool breeze was very welcome. Dick and Nan walked on in front, talking and laughing in high spirits, while Jim followed at some little distance, his hand on Aunt Susan's comfortable arm.

"Well, Jim," she said, for he had been unusually quiet, "did you listen to the sermon to-night?"

"I listened to the beginning and to the end."

"And what about the middle?"

"I think I went to sleep. I know I was nodding."

"You shouldn't do that," said the good lady; "but I'm glad to see you tell the truth."

"That's because I'm not afraid of you."

"Oh, but that's a coward's reason, Jim. Tell the truth and shame the devil."

Jim chuckled.

"What are you laughing at?" asked his aunt.

"It seems funny. If he's the devil he'll take some shaming."

"Don't talk like that, my dear," said Mrs. Check earnestly, "we oughtn't to jest on such subjects."

"I'm sorry," said Jim, relapsing into gravity. "Aunt Susan," he began again, after a minute's pause, "do you think parsons believe what they say?"

"Of course they do, Jim,"—Mrs. Check was now seriously distressed—"whatever can have made you ask such a question?"

"Father always talks as if they didn't. He says they say what they're paid to say, and the one that says it best gets the most money."

Mrs. Check was silent so long that Jim looked up wondering. His wonder turned to consternation when she took out her handkerchief and made two hasty dabs at her eyes.

"Oh, auntie, I'm so sorry," he began eagerly, quite stirred out of his usual impassive demeanour.

"Never mind, my dear," she said, "it isn't your fault. Your father and I think very differently about such things, and it's a grief to me. But it isn't for me to be talking to you against your father."

"No, Aunt Sue," said Jim, "but I'm sure your Mr. Warren believes what he says."

#### XIV

On Tuesday afternoon the boys went up as usual to the Heath and were caught in a heavy thunderstorm. They both got nearly wet through, but after a bit the clouds cleared off and the sun came out again. Dick went back to one of the ponds to hunt for beetles, while Jim sat on the driest patch of grass he could find and read *Ivanhoe*. Perhaps the grass was not so very dry, after all, for when the boys turned their faces homewards he shivered once or twice.

"What's the matter?" asked Dick; "you aren't cold, are you?"

"No," answered Jim, "but I've got a bit of a headache."

"Get Nan to make you a cup of tea—her extra special."

"Ah yes, that's just what I should like."

It was an obstinate headache, though, which sur-

vived even Nan's extra special. At nine o'clock Jim was glad to adopt Aunt Sue's suggestion and go to bed early.

An hour later, Dick found him still awake.

"Give us a drink, Dick," he cried. "Oh, my head does ache. Thanks. That's first class. I feel as if that'll send me off to sleep."

Just as the sky was beginning to grow light with the coming of the dawn, Dick woke to hear Jim laughing and jabbering in the strangest way.

"What's the matter, Jim?" he asked sleepily. "It isn't time to get up yet, is it?"

"Please, sir, it wasn't my fault. I hadn't time to write it out. The Greek takes me so long, and we have to go to bed at eleven."

Dick shook his brother's arm, and Jim's voice grew shrill.

"No, father," he cried, "that's not fair. I did my best, and I got seven out of nine right. Nobody else in the class got more than five."

Dick still felt a little cross at being woke up at this unnatural time. He had an idea that Jim was "taking a rise" out of him.

"Don't play the fool," he said.

But the voice went on, now low and confused, now rising sharp and high, now half-sobbing, and then bursting into shrill laughter. It was the laughter decided Dick. He jumped out of bed, opened the door, and ran along the passage to the door of Nan's room.

Nan was not a light sleeper, and before he had evoked an answer Aunt Susan's door was unlocked.

“ Good gracious, Dick, what ever is the matter ? ” she said, showing her face through an opening a few inches wide.

“ I don’t know,” answered Dick eagerly. “ I think Jim’s ill. He’s talking and laughing and crying, and I can’t get any sense out of him.”

“ Wait a moment. I’ll come and see.”

The door was shut, but in a minute Dick saw a line of light under it. In another minute or two Mrs. Check appeared, very unlike herself, Dick thought, in a long grey dressing-gown, with a candle in her hand. She still looked sleepy, and gave first a yawn, and then a violent sneeze which made Dick jump.

At this she smiled and became Aunt Susan again.

“ Talking in his sleep, is he ? ” she said. “ What did he have for supper ? ”

Without waiting for an answer she hurried to the boys’ room. Jim was sitting up in bed, and, by the light of the candle, Dick could see that his face was very red and his eyes very bright. The moment Mrs. Check came in, he hailed her with a shout.

“ Hulloo, Sarah,” he cried. “ Got any apples ? Dick says they’re pears, but they’re not, are they ? Little red apples with grubs inside, most of them—they’re the sweetest, aren’t they ? ”

Mrs. Check looked very grave, every vestige of sleepiness gone.

“ All right, Jim,” she said, in her comfortable, cheerful voice ; “ you lie down like a good boy, and I’ll fetch you something nicer than apples. I shan’t be a minute.”

“ No, don’t go,” he whimpered, and then burst into a flood of tears.

"Very well, my dear boy, I won't go," she said. "Dick, light your candle and go into my room. On the mantelpiece you'll see a bottle with a label 'Pyretic Saline.' If you see a glass and the water bottle, bring them too. Put your jacket on. We mustn't have *you* talking in your sleep too."

Her voice and manner had its effect on both the boys. Dick whipped on his jacket, lighted his candle, and was on his errand in a moment. Jim let himself be laid down and covered with the bed-clothes again. There was some difficulty over taking the Saline, but this was surmounted by a little tact and perseverance, and after one or two attempts he closed his eyes and fell asleep.

Mrs. Check tiptoed out of the room, beckoning Dick to follow.

"He'll be all right now for a bit," she whispered. "I'll go and dress properly. Then I'll sit in his room till breakfast. You go down into the sitting-room and lie on the sofa and have your sleep out. I'll write a note to Dr. Good, and when I call you I'll get you to take it. His house is in Heath Street—No. 80A."

## XV

Wednesday was the day on which the boys were to have gone back, but there was now no talk of this. For Dr. Good's report was not reassuring. A feverish cold certainly, he said, but whether it would develop into something more serious he could not say at present. The boy seemed to have very little stamina or he must have been a good deal run down.

So Mrs. Check wrote a letter to her brother, telling him the doctor's verdict and suggesting that as Jim certainly could not return for another week at least, Dick also should stay. As a matter of fact she had intended sending Dick home, but he had looked so woebegone that she changed her mind, and with the letter which he was to take to his father she gave him his return fare if he were allowed to come back.

He found his father in a very bad humour, with all the familiar signs of weakness indulged. The state of the room, however, showed that he was not out of work, which was something to the good.

Mr. Roddles read the letter and gave a contemptuous sniff.

"Shamming," he said, and tossed it on to the floor.

"He isn't shamming," exclaimed Dick indignantly, and the tailor knew in a moment that he was speaking the truth. He changed his ground.

"Little fools. Want a nurse to look after them and see they don't get chills."

"I haven't got a chill," said Dick, stung by the taunt.

"Oh no, you do know how to look after yourself," said his father.

There was a long silence. Then Mr. Roddles spoke again—

"In bed?"

"Yes."

"Headache?"

"Yes."

"Bilious? Susan doesn't know what pigs boys are."

"Jim's been having very little. They've been going on about his appetite ever since we went up."

"Don't tell me. I know what boys are," his father snapped. "This'll spoil his holiday work."

"The doctor said——" Dick began.

"Damn the doctor," Mr. Roddles shouted furiously, "and get back to Hampstead. Two of you's bad enough, but one would drive me crazy. One fool's company for another. 'Ere, I'll write. Get out till I call you."

In half an hour he was summoned. A letter lay on the table.

"Take that to your aunt and be off," said his father.

Dick was overjoyed. When Mr. Roddles was in a really bad temper there was no knowing what he would say or do, and the boy had been terrified lest his return to Hampstead should be forbidden. The idea of being left alone with his father under such conditions had been dreadful, and now the relief was intense. He was not very anxious about Jim, but, after all, he was his brother and they were very good companions. Indeed, all the best in both the boys seemed to thrive in the Hampstead air. And then there were Aunt Susan and Nan.

Mr. Roddles' letter was short and to the point.

"DEAR SUSAN,—I am sorry you should be bothered by the boys. It will give you an idea of what I have to put up with. Jim is bilious, I expect. I hope he hasn't been laying hands on your goodies. If he has, mind you tell me and I'll talk to him in a way he

understands. As you seem to think Dick may be of use (though how, I can't imagine), I send him back. As soon as Jim is right pack them both off. It is very good of you to put up with them.—Your affectionate brother,  
JOSEPH RODDLES."

## XVI

Before long, the doctor's fears were fully justified. During the next few days all the bad symptoms became more acute. The temperature rose, the pulse was more rapid, the breathing more laboured, while a short, painful cough added to the boy's distress. Every evening, too, the periods of delirium seemed to last longer.

On Thursday Dr. Good spoke out.

"Pneumonia," he said, "not a very severe attack, so far, but quite well-defined. Did you see how his nostrils were working? It's come just at the wrong time—such things always do. He hasn't much of a constitution, and he looks as if he'd been overworking. It's running a perfectly normal course. We shall have to wait till Monday or Tuesday for the crisis."

The forecast proved correct. On Monday, about midnight, Jim woke up bathed in perspiration, his temperature down to normal, but weak as a baby. The doctor was delighted, and anticipated rapid progress.

The next day he was less confident, and on Wednesday he seemed distinctly worried.

"I don't like the look of the boy," he said to Mrs.

Check, "he isn't picking up his strength a bit. I'm afraid it's going to be one of those nasty touch-and-go cases. Has he got a father and mother?"

"He's got a father," answered Mrs. Check.

"Does he live handy?"

"In town—Lincoln's Inn way."

"I think he ought to be sent for, if the boy isn't better soon."

Those were dark days for Dick, and sometimes he even found himself wishing he were back at Green's Yard. Mrs. Check was constantly with Jim, so that Nan had to devote herself to the shop, and, though Dick was with her a good deal, she was so changed that she frightened rather than comforted him. Her plump, rosy face looked quite unnatural without the smile that had seemed inseparable from it. She was almost as quiet as Jim himself. Mrs. Check had more self-control, and she guessed that Dick must be feeling very miserable. Hence she generally managed to give him his meals herself, and on these occasions was resolutely cheerful. She contrived to send him on a number of errands, and she took pains to make him feel that he was of use. Jim often asked for him, and once or twice he had read aloud a page or two of *Ivanhoe*, though even listening seemed to tire the invalid.

Immediately after the doctor's announcement, Mrs. Check had written to Mr. Roddles telling him that the illness had developed into pneumonia, "which," she added, "is, as you know, a very serious matter. I shall write again to-night, but this morning, I am sorry to say, the doctor's report was not en-

couraging. I hope I may have better news tomorrow."

This letter reached Mr. Roddles late in the afternoon. He had taken advantage of the boys' extended absence to indulge a little longer and a little further than usual. Not having, himself, a very strong physique, he was paying the price. Blear-eyed, with aching head, jangled nerves, and empty pockets, he was cursing himself and his folly, when the postman's knock startled him. He recognised the writing. "Ah," he said to himself, "she's had enough of them. Well, I shan't be sorry to see them. After all, blood's thicker than water, and it's not poison like the other stuff."

Then he opened the envelope and read the letter. He read it first quickly, then very slowly. Finally he put it down on the table and leaned back to think. What did this mean? Was the boy going to die? No—the idea was preposterous. Why, *only* the other day he was sitting there, in that very room, as well as a boy could be. Pooh! It was only a scare. Women loved a scare. He read the letter over again. "This morning, I am sorry to say, the doctor's report was not encouraging." He didn't like that. If she and the doctor put it like that, they must think the case pretty bad. Well, suppose it was. Think what the boy had in his favour—youth, a wholesome training, and the best of nursing, with a good doctor thrown in. No. He was too old a bird to be caught with chaff. Jim was all right, and would soon be back, preparing his lessons and winning prizes. Meanwhile there was nothing to be done but wait. If a summons *did* come, he would be ready to answer it.

## XVII

On Thursday morning Jim seemed a little better, though the doctor still shook his head and declared that the improvement was, so far, only trifling. "Still," he added, "it's something not to be going downhill."

Mrs. Check nodded her head. "He certainly is terribly weak. He cries at nothing, and they're both . . . them the last boys to do that. Nan was saying yesterday that she'd never seen either of them cry before. It seems quite unnatural."

"I wonder whether anything's worrying him," said Dr. Good. "He seems very old for his years, and, anyway, children are very mysterious creatures. Has any one been talking to him about—about religion?"

"I read a chapter to him every night, and sometimes I say a word or two, but nothing to excite him in the least. I think he likes it."

"At any rate it doesn't make him cry, does it?"

"Oh dear. no. He just smiles and nods, and once he asked me to kiss him. They're not kissing boys," she added.

"Well, I should be very careful not to excite him. But I know you're the soul of discretion. You've done wonders, I'm sure."

While this conversation was going on in the sitting-room, another was taking place upstairs.

"Dick, they taught you a lot about the Prayer Book and things, didn't they?"

Dick nodded. "Rather," he said.

"Isn't there something in it about visiting the sick? I think I saw it once."

"Yes," said Dick importantly. "There's the 'Order for the Visitation of the Sick.'"

"Have you got your Prayer Book here?"

"No, but Nan's got one; I saw it in the sitting-room with her name on it."

"Get it, will you, Dick; don't say anything to any one. I'd like to hear it."

"All right," said Dick. "Aunt Sue's going out at twelve, and I'm to sit with you. I'll read it then."

"I've found it, Jim," said his brother, an hour or two later, when they were alone and quite free from the prospect of interruption. "Shall I read it all through?"

"Read until I stop you," said Jim, and Dick began reading in a low voice. When he reached, "Our Father," Jim spoke.

"Never mind that; I know it all."

Later on came the passage—

"'And for what cause soever this sickness is sent unto you; whether it be to try your patience for the example of others——'"

Here Jim lifted his hand.

"Wait a minute. What does that mean?"

Dick read it over again.

"Show other people how to behave, that's what it means, isn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Go on."

"'And that your faith may be found in the day of the Lord laudable, glorious, and honourable, to the increase of glory and endless felicity; or else it may

be sent unto you to correct and amend in you whatsoever doth offend the eyes of your heavenly Father; know you certainly, that if you truly repent you of your sins, and bear your sickness patiently, trusting in God's mercy, for His dear Son Jesus Christ's sake, and render unto him humble thanks for his fatherly visitation, submitting yourself wholly unto His will, it shall turn to your profit, and help you forward in the right way that leadeth unto everlasting life.' "

Again Jim stopped him.

" Read that over again; I like it. Doesn't it roll fine ? "

When the Creed was reached, and after it the direction—

" *' The sick person shall answer—*

" *' All this I stedfastly believe,' "*

the sick person shook his head.

" I don't understand half of it, so how can I stedfastly believe ? "

" No," said Dick, and read on.

" *' The Minister should not omit earnestly to move such sick persons as are of ability to be liberal to the poor.' "*

At this passage Jim smiled.

" There's fourpence left in my trousers' pocket. Take them—no, take two of them, and give them to the old sweeper at the bottom of the hill—you know."

Again Dick nodded, and getting up extracted the coppers. Then he resumed his reading.

" *' Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special Confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter.' "*

After the Absolution Jim yawned.

"Thanks. That'll do. I'm a bit tired."

Dick shut the book, not at all sorry that his task was finished, and sat watching his brother, who seemed to have dropped off to sleep.

Presently his eyes opened.

"Dick," he said, "there's one thing I should like awfully."

"What's that?"

"I'd like to see Madge. I think she'd come if she knew I was ill. I never answered her last letter."

"I did," said Dick. "I'm sure she'd come if she's at home."

"Ah yes," sighed Jim; "it's holidays, of course. I'd forgotten that."

"I tell you what, I'll walk over to Balham. I've got the address." Dick looked quite excited as he made the suggestion.

"No," said Jim; "write first. Aunt Susan will give you paper and a stamp—I'll ask her. And only give the sweeper one penny. With threepence you'll be able to ride the best part of the way, at any rate."

### XVIII

"DEAR MADGE,—We are staying here for a holiday with Aunt Susan, that is Mrs. Check, who has a sweetshop in Temple Passage, which is just off the High Street, nearly opposite where the omnibuses stop. You can't miss it, because it is the only sweetshop in Temple Passage, and Nan (who lives with Aunt Susan—Mrs. Check) is almost always in the shop. Jim sends his love. He looks better, but Nan is always

crying, and Aunt Susan does, too, when she thinks we don't see her. I do hope he will get better. He's as weak as a baby. He sends his love, and he would most awfully like to see you if you could come over soon. I don't know quite where Balham is, but I can find out, and I could come over and meet you. Do come if you can. Jim wants to see you awfully. I hope you are well, and Mr. and Mrs. Carr. Jim sends his love, and so do I.

DICK RODDLES."

This was the letter that Dick wrote on the Thursday afternoon. On Friday evening the answer came.

"DEAR DICK,—Of course I will come. I am so sorry Jim is ill. I do hope he will be better soon. I, too, have an aunt in Hampstead and I often see her, so I know my way there quite well. When I go to her I generally get to Hampstead about eleven, so I will come about that time on Saturday morning. Give my love to Jim, and tell him I hope he will make himself be better by to-morrow.—Yours sincerely,

MADGE."

There had been some discussion about her visit. The matter had been referred to the doctor for his decision.

"It is a risk," he said, "in his state, but then it would be a greater risk to disappoint him. I had a word with him, and he has evidently set his heart on it."

On Saturday morning from half-past ten Dick was doing sentry-go up and down Temple Passage, for Madge had given no indication how she was coming.

A minute or two before the hour, she turned into the Passage from the High Street. Dick rushed, and she rushed, so there was a collision just outside the sweet-shop. They drew back laughing, and looked hard at each other.

There was little change in Dick, but Madge had grown and looked years older, he thought. She still wore her hair in a long plait, and her frock was some way from her boots, but her voice was no longer that of a child, and her manners were quieter and more self-possessed. For a moment Dick felt afraid of her, but the feeling soon passed.

"How's Jim?" she asked.

"The doctor isn't coming till twelve," he answered, "and he's the only one who can say. We can't see any difference. He's been asking all the morning whether you have come."

They went through the shop, Nan greeting the visitor with a not very convincing smile.

"You'll find him looking a little brighter than he has been," she said.

Mrs. Check opened the bedroom door.

"So this is Madge, is it?" she said. "Well, my dear, I've been hearing a great deal about you. I'm very glad you've come, but I can't give you more than half an hour. Dick, you must come down at a quarter to twelve by the clock. And Jim, if you feel tired, mind you stop talking."

Jim smiled at Aunt Susan as she went out, and then again at Madge as she came in.

"Oh, Madge," he said, "it is nice to see you again. Here's a chair, come and sit down."

He looked very thin and small, she thought, as he lay in bed, but his face was flushed with the excitement of seeing her, and she had expected to find him looking worse.

For some little time they talked about their new schools. Then came a pause which Madge, thinking Jim was tired, made no attempt to break. He was lying on his back, with his eyes half closed. The colour had faded from his cheeks, and his true condition was more apparent.

At last he opened his eyes again, and fixed them on his visitor.

"Madge," he said, "if you were very ill and were going to die, wouldn't you rather be told?"

She thought for a minute, and then said,

"Yes, I think I would."

"But they won't tell me," he complained. "Dick says they don't tell him. The doctor puts me off with funny talk. Aunt Susan tells me to have faith in God. Do you believe there *is* a God?"

"Oh, Jim!" exclaimed Madge in distress, "of course there is. You know that, as well as I do."

Jim looked straight in front of him.

"Yes," he said; "I suppose there is. But lots of people don't believe it. You know"—he turned to Dick—"the way he talks sometimes."

Dick nodded.

"I don't think they believe much at the Institute," he said.

"I wonder what happens when you die."

It was Jim speaking in a quiet, persistent tone, as

if, Dick thought, he were reading out an algebra problem.

"You go to heaven—if you deserve to," said Madge confidently.

"And if you don't?"

"I don't know," answered Madge.

"There's hell," volunteered Dick, who at present was not overburdened with tact.

Jim gave a little shiver. But he had another question to ask.

"If you'd done something—not quite right, you know, and thought you were going to die, what would you do?"

Again she considered before answering.

"I think I should try and find some one to own up to," she said.

"Ah!" exclaimed Jim, and closed his eyes again.

"Do you feel tired, Jim?" asked Dick, after a minute or two.

He opened his eyes again.

"Yes, I do, rather."

"Then we must go," said Madge, getting up. "Good-bye, Jim. Oh," she exclaimed, feeling in her pocket, "I almost forgot. I brought you this. I made it myself."

It was a little silk bag filled with sweet lavender. Jim took it and smelt. He smiled up at her.

"How pretty!" he said, "and how sweet it smells! and how kind of you! Thanks for coming. I knew you would."

"Good-bye," she repeated. "And Dick will let me know how you are, won't you, Dick?"

He nodded, and just then Mrs. Check opened the door, too anxious about her patient to give them their full time.

## XIX

Jim's next visitor was Mr. Roddles himself. In spite of all his philosophy he could not put away a fear which he kept assuring himself was absolutely unreasonable. The strength and obstinacy of his feelings astonished him. For many years now, he had prided himself on his freedom from all sentimental tommy-rot. A man's brain—that was his heart and mind and soul. What his brain told him to do, that was his only wisdom. As for love, the very mention of the word was a red rag to him, goading him to a warmth of language and a breadth of illustration that had more than once shocked even the Institute itself.

In the case of his own boys he felt that he was perfectly consistent. There was a sort of contract between him and society. He had introduced them into society, and society, therefore, had a right to expect that he should see to their being brought up as healthy, industrious, and moral members of the community. Then, again, there was another contract—not so clear and precise in its terms, perhaps—between him and the boys. He was bound to feed and lodge and clothe them according to his means, and to see that they got a fair chance of making a decent living for themselves when the time came. That was his duty to them as a father. On the other hand, if, after performing this, he saw an opportunity of deriving any personal advantage

from the relationship, he would be acting perfectly within his rights by taking it. And as to all this, he held, there should be no concealment or pretence. For years, already, he had dinned into the boys' ears his theory of fatherhood, and they appeared to understand and accept it. Of course they did. Treat a reasonable creature in a reasonable way and he'd take it reasonably. As for love—pooh! petting—ugh! kissing—faugh!

But though he disclaimed and derided affection as a motive, he admitted interest. And the admission was the easier to make because, as the boys began to develop from early childhood, they showed evident signs of unusual ability. "My brains," said Mr. Roddles, and began to interpret his fatherly duties in a more liberal manner. As he marked their rapid progress at school and tested it at home, he evolved his great plan by which they were to be kept apart, proceeding on parallel but independent lines, pushing other people to the wall, but never interfering with each other. He was careful as to their health, saw that they were properly clothed and fed, and, on the rare occasions when he was out of work for any length of time, went short himself rather than stint them. Of all such sacrifices, however, he made a mental note as items in a long account, the balance of which would not be struck for many a day.

With the winning of the scholarships there had come a subtle change in his attitude towards the boys. Up to that time it had been—or at any rate had seemed to be—both simple and consistent. Thenceforward it became complex, an ever present, ever

baffling problem. He was immensely proud of this first tangible evidence of his wisdom and foresight. And with this personal, mingled a certain proprietary, pride in the boys themselves. Nor was the emotion only pride. A feeling, half gratitude, half some factor that he could not define, made him look on the lads with an eye less cold, less critical. Sometimes, if he had not been so resolutely on his guard against the faintest footfall of love, he might almost have suspected himself of the disgraceful weakness.

Of the two boys, Jim was his favourite, partly because he understood him better—Jim was very obviously his father's son—and partly because he considered him the cleverer. It was not, perhaps, a mere chance when Mr. Roddles' lucky penny sent Jim to a board, and Dick to a church, school.

And now it was Jim who was threatened by this wholly unexpected blow. Of course it was. For Mr. Roddles, firm believer though he was in the sway of pure reason, was inconsistent enough to spend a good deal of time and breath in denouncing the contrariety of fate. The slice of bread that was sure to fall on the buttered side, was a favourite illustration of his. And now his slice had fallen, and Jim was the buttered side.

At first he treated the illness as a trifle. But even before he realised its seriousness he found himself unaccountably worried. He could not settle down to anything. When he found that the boys were in any case going to stop some days longer in Hampstead, it occurred to him that a few more visits to the King's Arms, or another bottle or two of Irish or Scotch,

might be indulged in without a scandal, but somehow he let the opportunity pass almost, if not quite, unused. A foreboding that he would not put into words hung over him day and night like a black cloud. He realised for the first time how his hopes were fixed on the boys' success. The idea of one—especially Jim—being, as it were, suddenly struck out of the race, was intolerable. The brief occasional notes which Mrs. Check found time to scribble, only kept him on tenterhooks. He dreaded the postman's knock, yet hated to see him go by without knocking.

Friday passed without a letter, and then a new idea entered his mind. They were keeping something from him; he felt certain of it. In any case he could bear this state of suspense no longer. Knowledge of a disaster is better than vague and gloomy anticipations of it.

On Saturday afternoon, therefore, after an early dinner, he locked up the rooms and set out for Hampstead, determined to find out for himself the exact state of affairs.

Mrs. Check greeted him with effusion.

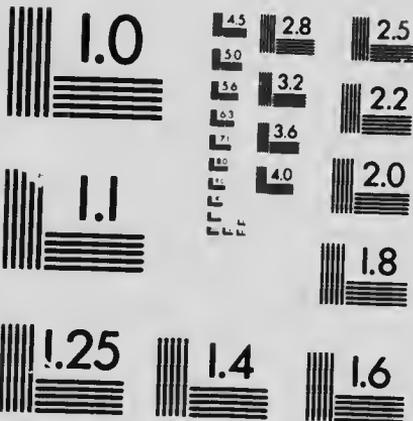
"Well now," she exclaimed, as she came into the sitting-room where he was waiting, "this is really providential. Jim has been talking about you all the morning, and asking whether you would be coming up soon to see him. I believe he's worrying about something, and the doctor thinks so, too. I'll go and tell him you're here."

Mr. Roddles winced at "providential," but anxiety had taken away all his taste for discussion. He even



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forgot to mask his feelings. "'Ow is 'e?" he snapped out eagerly.

"No better and no worse," answered Mrs. Check, "but the doctor isn't at all satisfied."

Though it was perfectly true that Jim had made many inquiries as to when his father was coming to Hampstead, yet it cannot be truthfully said that his face showed any signs of great joy when Mr. Roddles walked into the bedroom. Nor did that gentleman himself appear at his ease.

"Well," he exclaimed, in a tone which he vainly tried to make boisterously cheerful, "and 'ow are we to-day? Getting on fine, eh? Why, you look famous. Dick can put up your things in brown paper and we can all go back by the omnibus."

Jim's big eyes—looking now, his father thought, a size or two larger—were fixed on him, but not the shadow of a smile flickered across his face. Very slowly he lifted one hand from the bed-clothes, drew back the sleeve of his night-shirt, and showed the thin and wasted forearm.

Mr. Roddles refused to understand.

"Ah," he said, "wiry, isn't it? Little but good, as the cannibals said, when they put the drummer-boy in the pot."

"Have you come up because you think I'm going to die?" asked Jim, in a quiet, matter-of-fact tone that yet made an immediate end of Mr. Roddles' attempts to be facetious.

"No," he answered, almost as quietly, "I've come to make sure you're going to live."

" Ah," said the boy wearily, " no one tells me what they think."

" Yes, they do, my dear," said Mrs. Check from the door, which she was just shutting behind her. " By the blessing of God we hope to see you well and strong again."

But Mr. Roddles saw her eyes as the door closed, and his heart sank.

" You don't believe in Him, do you, father ? "

Mr. Roddles felt desperately uncomfortable. For the first time in many years he shrank from a theological debate. His voice and manner, as he answered, were curiously like the boy's.

" Never mind what I believe, my boy. You fix your mind upon getting well—that's the way to do it."

Jim shook his head — a weak, weary little gesture.

" I can't fix my mind on anything. But there's one thing worries me."

" What's that ? " asked his father.

" I don't want to die without telling you something, and I don't want to tell you if I'm not going to die."

Mr. Roddles rubbed his forehead with the back of his right hand.

" You can't eat your cake and 'ave it. You've got to choose."

There was a minute's pause, then Jim looked up at his father.

" Very well," he said, " then I'll tell you. You know the drawer where you keep the strap ? "

Mr. Roddles started, and an alert, business light came into his eyes.

"Yes," he said, "I should think I do."

"Weil, I found a key that fitted the lock."

"Oh, you did, did you?" said Mr. Roddles, his voice taking on its accustomed inflection. As he spoke, he pulled out a bunch of keys and gave a hasty look at them, "And 'ow did you get 'old of it?"

"I found it in the old tool-box. There are a lot of keys there, and I thought this one looked like your key of the drawer."

"You've got sharp eyes, Jim," said Mr. Roddles, always susceptible to what he thought cleverness.

"I used to open the drawer and get at the things."

"What things?" cried his father, his voice pitched almost to a scream. "You didn't go ferreting about among my papers?"

"Yes, I did," answered the boy, who had gone whiter than ever; "that brown paper with the tobacco inside. I used to open it and take a pinch for a cigarette."

A smile rose on Mr. Roddles' face, but held in check by an expression of doubt.

"I don't mean that sort of paper, silly; I mean papers with writing on them, letters—that sort of thing."

"I think we—I mean I—looked at some racing telegrams I found. I looked to see if they came off. Nothing else."

The smile spread.

"Did they come off?"

"I couldn't find them in the paper. I expect they were old ones."

"And so you did a lot of smoking—you and Dick?" asked the artful Mr. Roddles, reflecting that against Dick, at any rate, his hand was not shortened.

"Not a lot—I was afraid you'd miss the tobacco, but every now and then I made a cigarette. And then I let you pay me twice over for taking a parcel for you to Simpkins' and—oh, there *was* something else, but I can't remember it. Oh dear!"

And he rubbed his forehead very much as Mr. Roddles had done a few minutes before.

"Never mind, Jim," said his father, who was embarrassed by a complexity of feelings—satisfaction at having, after all, found out the delinquencies, admiration for the boy's cleverness, and mystification as to what could have forced or induced him to make these confessions, "don't worry yourself any more. What's done's done, and there's an end of it."

"Is there?" said Jim, his eye brightening.

"Ah," said Mr. Roddles to himself, "he thinks I mean no strap if he gets well; and so I do," was his conclusion. Then he added out loud,

"Yes, Jim, an end of it altogether."

"Thank you, father," said the boy; "and you won't ask Dick about it?"

"No," answered Mr. Roddles, amazed at his own clemency, but enjoying the pleasures of magnanimity.

"Thank you, father," repeated Jim. "I feel as if I could go to sleep now."

An hour or two after Mr. Roddles had gone, Dr. Good looked in.

"Why, what have you been doing to the boy?" he asked Mrs. Check. "His eyes look quite different."

"He says he has just had such a nice sleep," said the good woman.

"Well, anyway," remarked the doctor, "I do believe he's turned the corner at last."

## BOOK II

### I

"HULLOA, Roddles, where are you charging to? You nearly knocked me down."

"Sorry, old man—that I didn't quite, I mean. I'm going to the debate in the Botanical."

"Oh, yes, your brother's in it, isn't he?"

"In a sort of a way he is—he's opening."

"Something about women, isn't it?"

"Yes—should they enter the professions?"

"What does he say?"

"Keep 'em out as long as you can."

"Oh, good business! I'll come round and give him a cheer."

"He's got one. On the platform they've all got seats."

"Funny man, aren't you? That's Cambridge wit, I suppose. Good Heavens, what a squash! We'll have to stand all the time. There they are, filing in. Who's the chairman?"

Dick Roddles pulled a card out of his pocket.

"Sir Lewis Plummer," he said.

"That's the red-faced chump, I suppose, just sitting down. He's a judge, isn't he? He doesn't look a Demosthenes."

“ A Chancery judge, I think.”

“ He looks as though he'd have a fit if we don't open the windows. I say, see down there in the second row at the end. Those ladies have had enough of it already. They're going to move ; I swear they are. Let's get behind them. If we're nippy we can slip in. That's the style. There, what did I tell you ? The first requisite for a doctor is the power of observation. In you go. All right—you inside, then.”

Dick's observant friend was quite right. Sir Lewis was no Demosthenes. He held, however, one trump card, and he played it at once. He was an old U.C.S. man himself (loud cheers). He remembered taking part in similar contests more years ago than he cared to remember (laughter). He took part in them in what he might call prehistoric times (laughter), and with more or less success—less, he was afraid, on the whole (much laughter). However, he would not weary them (no ! no !) with his reminiscences, nor stand between his distinguished young friends, who were evidently panting for the fray (laughter), and the audience, who were as evidently anxious to know the fate of the ladies (laughter). Any remarks he might have to make, he would reserve till he had had the advantage of hearing what the gentlemen, whom it was his humble but useful function to keep apart for the time being, (laughter) had to say. He would now call upon Mr. James Roddles, M.A., to move the following resolution :—“ That the admission of women to the learned professions is unnecessary, undesirable, and inimical to the best interests of society at large.”

“ Pompous old bounder,” whispered the irreverent

Staniforth in Dick's ear, but Dick's attention was wholly fixed on his brother. As it happened, he had never heard Jim speak in public, and he was full of curiosity. He had no misgiving as to any fiasco; Jim always rose to an occasion, and, though it was difficult to imagine him really eloquent, he was sure to be clever and self-possessed.

Jim was certainly not an imposing or inspiring figure. Even in his academic gown, with its bright silk hood, he looked small and insignificant. His face, too, was small, and the features were thin and pinched. His complexion was sallow, his hair dark and straight. His redeeming points were the forehead, broad and high, and the black, piercing eyes.

He began in a low, clear tone, and was almost immediately invited by a stentorian voice from the upper circle to "speak up."

"I will try," said Jim, looking up with a smile, "to obey the precept of the gentleman whose musical tones I think I recognise, though I am afraid his practice is quite beyond me."

There was a shout of laughter followed by a round of clapping from the delighted friends of the "gentleman," and Jim was on good terms with the audience for the rest of the evening. As for his speech, it was an excellent specimen of the debating-society style—smart, yet not flippant, with just enough epigram to hold the attention of the listeners. Its merits were set off by the perfervid oratory of the replier—a young Hebrew of astonishing fluency—who outstayed his welcome and got fretful under the interruptions of the medical students at the top of the room. After these

two opening speeches came a spirited discussion which never flagged till, at a quarter to ten, Jim was called upon to reply on the whole debate. This he did in a speech that for a young man, and on such a subject, was masterly.

"Look how old Plum is listening," whispered Staniforth, and then started to find that he was addressing, not Dick, but a stranger—a small, shabby man who smelt strongly of spirits. Looking back, he soon perceived his friend standing at the top among the shouters.

"What did you say?" asked the shabby man in a surly voice.

"I thought I was speaking to a friend of mine," answered Staniforth, "he seems to have gone, and you seem to have taken his place." Whereupon the shabby one turned his back, nursed one leg, and leaned forward, his hand to his ear.

Without a note, Jim was dealing with speaker after speaker, analysing the hostile arguments, or poking fun at them. Not a single inaccuracy or fallacy seemed to have escaped him, and yet the whole reply was compressed into twelve minutes. It was incomparably better than the opening, and the applause at the end showed that it had been appreciated.

Then came Sir Lewis Plummer again—ponderous, powerful, but ill suited by such a theme. His congratulations to the Debating Society on the eloquence of the members sounded as perfunctory as such compliments usually are, till he glanced at Jim. Then his voice and manner changed—he evidently meant what he said.

"Especially, I must refer to the really admirable reply of the opener. It has been my fate to listen to a good many replies of one sort or another, and I can honestly say I have rarely listened to so admirable a specimen of a difficult kind of public speaking. I do not know what Mr. Roddles' plans for the future may be, but I certainly know of one profession at least, where such gifts as he has shown to-night find ample opportunity for exercise and display."

"I say, Roddles," said Staniforth, catching hold of Dick's arm in the corridor outside a few minutes later, "why ever did you make room for that awful little bounder? He smelt like a taproom, and he'd got the manners of a bargee."

In the darkness Dick flushed hotly.

"He'd been standing ever so long," he said, "and I wanted to stretch my legs."

## II

"You're late, Dick," said Dan, looking up from the side table where he was writing in a notebook, with a big volume propped up in front of him; "I was so hungry I couldn't wait. I told Polly she could go to bed and clear before breakfast to-morrow."

"Right!" exclaimed Dick, sitting down to cold meat and salad. "I hope there's something left in there." And he tapped a bottle of Bass.

"Half, exactly," said Jim, with a smile. Then he got up, went to the mantelpiece, took a piece of chocolate from a box, and began to nibble it.

"Well, old chap, I congratulate you on that reply

was quite first-class. I wish you'd gone to Oxford. You'd have been President of the Union for a certainty. I know what Union speaking is like, by our show at Cambridge."

"Never waste time in looking back," said Jim, in his cool, even voice. "I find that a fine rule. It would have been jolly, though," he added, breaking it promptly. "On the other hand, it would have been beastly skimping work, and I doubt whether it does you much good, unless you can do it pretty comfortably. You can't make friends—of the right sort, I mean."

Dick nodded. "No, I dare say you're quite right. But you'd have done well all round. I say, did you see the old man?"

"Rather. Did he say anything?"

"Not a syllable. Pretended not to know me. He's a queer one, isn't he?"

"Yes, he is. The last time I went round he told me he reckoned we were fairly on our feet, and he was free to drink himself to death if he pleased. If he lasted till we were living in Cromwell Road, then we'd have to keep him. Till then, the less he saw of us and we of him, the better for all."

"He's as hard as nails, isn't he?"

"Yes, but just once——"

"I know," Dick interrupted, "that time when you were ill at Hampstead."

"Yes, I've often thought of that. I never felt to him, before or since, as I did then, for five minutes or so. If things had been different I suppose we should have been different."

"Never waste time in looking back," said Dick briskly, and Jim laughed.

"Quite right. Did you see any one else you knew?"

"Yes, heaps of them."

"Ah, but I mean anybody special—out of the ordinary run."

"I saw the Grangers, and Parlow's uncle—I always forget his name—and——"

"No, no," exclaimed Jim impatiently, "I said any one special."

Dick shook his head.

"Well," said Jim, "I can't be absolutely sure, but there was somebody in the third row from the bottom, who looked uncommonly like Madge."

"Madge Carr," cried Dick, "really? I wish I'd seen her."

"I tell you I couldn't be perfectly sure, but I believe it was she. The eyes, the hair, and there was a way she had of tossing her head when she didn't agree with you—it was she, I do believe."

"I wish we'd kept up with her."

"It wasn't our fault. He wouldn't have it."

"I suppose they weren't rich enough. I fancy her people had something to say too. Perhaps they thought she was getting too big. What did she look like?"

"Very much like what she used to, only grown up, of course. A fine girl, with exactly the same smile—what people call sunny—that's the very word for it."

"I wonder what she's doing now."

"I'll have a try to find out," said Jim, "it can't be such a very difficult job."

### III

Ten years make comparatively little difference to a man in the prime of life: they work a transformation in a boy of fourteen. Jim, indeed, was still recognisable, but that was all that could be said of him, and it was more than could be said of Dick. He was now nearly a head taller than his brother, and of a broader, sturdier build altogether. His features were more strongly marked, his hair, lighter in colour, was more inclined to curl, and his eyes were grey instead of black.

So far, Dick had belied Mr. Roddles' forecast by distinguishing himself more than his brother. This was largely due to the famous lucky penny, which had sent Dick to a church school. The vicar had set his heart on enrolling in the ranks of the Church Militant, the most brilliant scholar they had ever had at St. Gabriel's. When, therefore, in his last year at the Colson Foundation, the question arose whether Dick should try for a scholarship at Trinity, or go as pupil-apprentice to one of the shipping-yards, he intervened, and promised, if the boy gained a scholarship, to make up the amount requisite to keep him at the University. The burden was lightened by a small scholarship from Colson's, and with each year it grew lighter still, as Dick added trophy to trophy. He finished his career as fifth Wrangler, and the following year was elected to a fellowship. For two years he

remained at Cambridge, lecturing and coaching, and getting through a good deal of elementary work in Natural Science, and all the time putting aside every penny he could possibly save. Then, having definitely made up his mind to adopt the medical profession, he came up to town and entered himself as a student at University College Hospital.

As for Jim, it could at any rate be said of him that he had made the best of his opportunities. He had not Dick's special gift for mathematics, but he was a fine specimen of the really good "all-rounder." Fortunately for him, there was no budding Wrangler in his classes, and in the Sixth Form at school he managed to annex both the classical and the mathematical prizes. Coming out first in Honours at the London Matriculation, he then secured an entrance scholarship at University College, and for three years raided prizes and scholarships in various subjects with cheerful impartiality. Though urged by teachers and professors to try for a classical scholarship at one of the Oxford colleges, he had decided to stay in London. It was all very well for Dick, with his vicar to back him. He stood alone, and he felt that his financial position would be too precarious. He had, even as a schoolboy, adopted the Law as his profession, and his best, if not his only, chance seemed to be to start work in a solicitor's office. Accordingly, after taking the gold medal for Classics at the M.A., he turned his attention to Roman Law and Jurisprudence, and in due course appropriated the scholarship at the First LL.B. Since then he had found a vacant seat in a solicitor's office, and was working diligently during the

day and reading hard at night. On Dick's return to London the brothers drew together again, and took rooms in Mornington Crescent.

As for Mr. Roddles, the years had not, on the whole, dealt unkindly with him. His hair was iron-grey and his complexion coarser than it used to be, but his voice was as truculent, and his manners as brusque, as of old. He had enjoyed the satisfaction, allowed to so few, of seeing his plans for his boys brilliantly successful, until at last he had come to look upon himself as a kind of secular providence, whom it would be little short of blasphemy to thwart or even to criticise. When Dick went to Cambridge his father announced that the time had come for a new departure, and bade Jim look out for a couple of rooms for himself.

"It's time you left the old nest and began to fly for yourself," he said. "If you get into a hole you can come and tell me, and I'll give you good advice, if nothing else. On the other hand, I shan't trouble you by inconvenient calls. For the next few years, the less we see of each other the better." Dick, he said, might still put up in Green Yard during the holidays, if he chose. In the absence of Jim, Dick didn't choose, but during his first year or two, at any rate, spent most of his vacations working at Cambridge. When he did come to town he put up at Jim's rooms.

During all these years Mr. Roddles watched the progress of the boys with surprising keenness, tenacity, and intelligence. After his first gallant attempt to keep up with their new learning had broken down, he still kept every term report, and insisted on knowing, every week, exactly how they stood in their classes.

Later, he never missed a prize-giving at University College, and periodically walked into the hall at Burlington Gardens to see the degree lists. Dick, on one of his rare visits to Green Yard, had to explain the system of examinations at Cambridge, so that his father could see the results for himself in the papers. Dick's fellowship impressed him most of all, though he resented the distinction falling to the lot of the boy he had thought the less able, but Jim's triumph at the public debate made some amends. He was never weary of congratulating himself on the wonderful success, not of the boys, but of his plan. It had all worked out like the plot of a tale, and so, he had no doubt, would it be till the finish.

## IV

The Rev. Basil Trevenning held very decided views as to the advantages, for Christian men and women, of occasional austerity. Fasting, for instance, was an admirable discipline. "We keep our bodies under," he would say, "it's like showing a whip to a dog."

"And giving him a cut with it," said Rosie, who had a healthy young appetite and detested the practice.

The ideal fast should be a secret one; but with an anxious and affectionate wife and a keen-eyed daughter there were serious stumbling-blocks across the path of perfection. Mr. Trevenning's favourite expedient was to take a day in town—the British Museum and the London Library were excellent stalking-horses. Even as a small girl Rosie had often wondered why poor dear papa came home from these expeditions so

obviously cross, and yet with such a resolute smile on his weary face. Before long she had put two and two together, and had shared her secret with her mother. All that excellent woman could do, however, was to see that if the vicar went to Great Russell Street on a Wednesday, the meals on Thursday should be unusually appetising. Mr. Trevenning, who had no idea whatever that his innocent deception failed to deceive, often said to himself that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy, when he saw, immediately following his fast, his favourite dishes appear at breakfast, luncheon, and dinner.

St. Gabriel's, in Great Charles Street, was a poor church, but its vicar was a wealthy man. All the Trevennings were well-to-do, and John Trevenning, the vicar's elder brother, was reputed to have an income that ran easily into five figures. He was a bachelor who lived in Portman Square, kept a select little stud at Newmarket, and was rarely absent from a big match at Lord's. Basil, though not so rich, still had an exceedingly comfortable fortune, which he managed with a good deal of sound business capacity.

He was a very liberal man in money matters, giving freely to any cause that appealed to him. To Church institutions, and to St. Gabriel's in particular, his gifts were lavish. The day school, the choir, a special choir school, guilds and societies—all dipped freely into his purse, and he was pleased that it should be so. In the early days of his connection with St. Gabriel's he had lived in South Kensington, but before long he bought and rebuilt a house in Great Charles

Street, only a few doors from the church. It was a handsome house with large rooms, handsomely furnished, with the exception of the vicar's study, which was plain almost to bareness. It was thus he compounded with his sensitive conscience for the rest of the house.

This morning he sat at the breakfast table, the *Times* still unfolded at his side, and four or five letters opened in front of him. At the other end of the table his wife, a stout, fair-complexioned woman, her brown hair shot with grey, comely and kindly-looking, was pouring out his third cup of tea, and adding the cream and crystals of sugar carefully, as one who knows the importance of such details. Between them, with her back to the fireplace, Rosie divided her attentions. She was just turned nineteen, fairer than her mother, her hair a golden brown, her face small, to match her beautiful little figure, her features delicately regular. Her eyes were that shade of grey which, in some lights and under some conditions, looks a clear blue. Her lips were soft, and tenderly moulded as a child's. In fact the only criticism of her personal appearance that could very well be made was that she looked too much the child for her years, and this effect was heightened by her voice, which was remarkably clear and fresh, and by the smile which constantly lit up her face.

"You look worried, my dear," said Mrs. Trevenning, as she passed the cup, "no bad news, I hope?"

"Well, it's disappointing news, at any rate," answered the Rev. Basil. "I've just had a letter from young Roddles—you know."

"The boy, you mean, that did so well at Cambridge?"

"Yes, more than well—brilliantly. Just fancy—a Fellow of Trinity; it seems almost incredible! I can see him now in the Sixth Standard at school, and in Packer's class on Sunday. He's a St. Gabriel's boy, body and soul, or ought to be. Well, now he's left the 'Varsity and come to study medicine and walk the hospitals. He's bound to get on too, with those brains of his and that power of application. I was talking to Wright about him the other day. He says Roddles is the school standard. Every clever boy is judged by reference to him, and the result is disappointing."

"They never have clever boys now, I expect," put in Rosie.

"No, that's just it. Well, he was confirmed here, and very regular, he was too in his attendances. He was a server at the early morning celebration, I remember. Of course I lost sight of him a bit when he was at the 'Varsity, but I wrote to him, and he wrote back—capital letters they were, but I'd no reason to feel anxious about him, and I didn't. When I found he'd come back to town I wrote and asked him to come and take up some church work. We want teachers in the Sunday school badly, or there's the Boys' Brigade. In fact, there are half a dozen things he could make himself useful in. And now I get this letter; it's very grievous and very disappointing."

"Why, what does he say? or are there any secrets?" asked Mrs. Trevenning.

"Secrets? Oh dear, no. I'll read it to you.

“ ‘56 MORNINGTON CRESCENT, N.W.

“ ‘DEAR MR. TREVENNING,—Many thanks for your kind letter. As you say, it is quite a long time since I have been near St. Gabriel's, and I feel very much ashamed of myself. I can assure you I do not forget the dear old school and all the kindness I received there as a boy. Nor am I ungrateful to you, but for whom my difficulties would have been ten times what they were. But since I came here, my time has been so taken up with settling in, and settling down to my new work, that I have literally had none to call my own.

“ ‘I feel very gratified that you would like me to take up work at St. Gabriel's, and I should be only too glad to do so if I could. But I can see quite clearly that if I am to qualify in the shortest possible time—and it is absolutely necessary that I should do so—I shall have to stick very closely indeed to my books for the next two or three years. Anything in the way of *regular* outside engagements, however tempting, I must renounce for the present. But if I may occasionally look in and see my old, kind friends and the new boys, it will be a very great pleasure.

“ ‘As to Sunday work, I think I ought to make a confession which will, I am afraid, pain you. My views on religious matters have, I am sorry to say, changed greatly during the last year or two. I say ‘sorry’ because, though I think it is one's first duty to be frank and sincere and true to one's own convictions, yet I feel I have lost a great deal. Perhaps I shall find it again; but till I do, I have no business to be teaching children at St. Gabriel's, and in this I am sure you will agree.



"Heaps of money—must have. They're a rich lot. I knew a man at Trinity whose father was a great friend of this man's brother, John Trevenning. He said he was simply rolling, wallowing in money."

"Well, if I were you I wouldn't quarrel with him. Can't you do what he wants?"

"No, I can't. I don't care about boys, and I can't manage them. Besides, if I once attach myself regularly to anything up there, they'll always be running me in for odd trifles. It plays the deuce with your work."

Jim nodded. "Yes, I see that. What about Sunday?"

"Ah, that's even worse. A few years makes a lot of difference in what we believe. Five years ago I could have taught just as I was taught, but now things are changed, or I am, or both."

"All of us are," answered Jim, "but it does no good to shout it in the street."

"Not a bit," assented Dick, "but when you're asked to teach what you don't believe it's rather thick."

"What shall you do?"

"Write and say I can't. I think I'd better tell him I've changed."

"Will it upset him much?"

"I'm sure it will. He thinks you can make yourself believe what you wish to. If you don't, it's pride of intellect, and you'll go to hell."

"I see. It won't be an easy letter. I should try to keep friends if you can."

"I shall. I'll read you what I say."

In half an hour the letter was drafted and the brothers discussed it again. The visit to St. Gabriel's, referred to in the concluding paragraph, was suggested by Jim.

"He'll want to reconvert you, and that'll probably keep him friendly," said that astute young man.

"He's welcome to try, as long as it doesn't take up too much time," said Dick.

## V

The clocks were striking midnight as Mr. Roddles let himself in at the front door and, a little unsteadily, made his way upstairs. On the landing he stopped and struck a match. Then he pulled from his pocket a bunch of keys and opened the door facing the head of the stairs. It was the door of the largest room, where he worked and cooked and ate his meals. The second room, in which the boys used to sit and prepare their lessons, was now sub-let to a law-writer, a thirsty gentleman who had seen better days, and on the strength of them was a sound Conservative. This was a recommendation in his landlord's eyes, for it gave rise to endless discussions, and afforded him constant opportunities of keeping his powers of sarcasm and repartee well employed. The little room where the boys used to sleep was now his own bedroom. By this arrangement he made a profit of five shillings a week, on paper, at any rate, and, as the boys were now keeping themselves, he ought to have been in much more comfortable circumstances than of old. As a matter of fact there was very little difference, except, perhaps, that he now indulged himself more frequently

in periods of idleness. The weekly five shillings he had, from the first, put into the savings bank to form a nucleus of a fund for the boys. He still felt responsible for them, and not quite sure of their ability to maintain themselves. By the time Dick left Cambridge this little fund was close upon £50. On the other hand, he was certainly more tender to his weakness, as he took very little exercise, his health suffered, and dyspepsia and neuralgia gave him many grievous hours.

On this particular evening he had enjoyed himself at the Institute, having taken the chair at a discussion on "Our Old Nobility." There had not been much difference of opinion, for he had failed in his efforts to persuade his lodger, Mr. Fitcher, to come and support the aristocracy. Still, he had managed to evoke a good deal of laughter and a great many cheers, and had received a very flattering vote of thanks. On his way home he had made one or two calls, and was earnestly hoping that Mr. Fitcher might be still at home. The hope was disappointed. No friendly line of light showed under the door. He lit the lamp and considered what he should do. He felt small inclination for bed, still less for work. He lit his pipe and walked about the room, recalling the laughter and cheers, and the compliments that had been paid him. As he paced the room, his eye fell on a square table set against the wall. It was the table that had stood in the boys' room. As he looked at it, a sudden impulse made him thrust his hand into his pocket and bring out his bunch of keys. He stooped down and, with a little difficulty, unlocked the table drawer and pulled it out. He chuckled as he saw a brown paper parcel.

"Artful little bounder!" he said to himself. "Fancy 'is nipping off bits for 'is cigarettes! Ay, and Dick 'ad 'is share too, I'll go bail. This key stopped their little games though."

At the very back of the drawer was a bundle of letters, some in envelopes, some not, tied round with a bit of pink ribbon. He took them out and laid them on the table. Then he drew up his chair, untied the ribbon, and began to finger the dusty papers.

He looked at the date of one. "Nearly thirty years," he muttered. "In one way it seems a 'undred, and in another only yesterday. Ah, I remember this—it was one of the first she ever wrote me.

" 'DEAR MR. RODDLES,—Mother will be pleased if you will come in to supper after church to morrow night.—E. B.'

"Good Lord, what a fine girl she was! Twist me round 'er little finger, she could. There was bad blood in 'er, though. That mother of 'ers was a cunning old witch if there ever was one. Ah"—he took up another—"we're getting on now.

" 'DEAREST JOE,—Thank you a hundred times for the sweet little ring. Is it real gold? Not that I care. It is because you gave it me that I shall always love it.—Your loving EM.'

"Yes, and look at those crosses—six of them—faugh!" The next he took up was on coarser paper.

" 'DEAR JOE,—The babies are fine, but no end of trouble. The Postal Order was all right, but I thought it would have been more. Mother says I shall kill

myself with work. She made me promise to have help, and she's sent in a girl she knows. She's to come two days a week. If you can't spare me any more money, mother will make it up for the present, she says.—Your loving EM.'

"Ah," he said, "seven kisses that time! The treacherous little slut! And I was slaving away for 'er in Manchester. All just the same," he went on, glancing at several sheets and throwing them aside, "wants more money and sends more kisses. What's this? 'Sarah is coming three days a week. She's a great help, a big, strong girl—picks up the babies like dolls. Mother will pay the extra money if you can't. I suppose your expenses are heavy, though Mr. Bligh says things are cheaper where you are.'"

He flung the letter down.

"Bligh! Damn 'im and damn 'er. The worst of it is, I'm afraid there's no damnation. There ought to be, then. I never thought of it that way before."

He glanced at three or four more letters and tossed them on one side before coming to one over which he paused, looking at it closely.

"Ah," he said, "'ow well I remember that one! I can smell the scent on it now.

"'DEAR JOE,—I'm afraid this letter will give you pain, but it's no good going on like this any longer. We are not really suited to one another. So it's better for both of us that we should part. I am going with a man I really love, and I believe he really loves me. The best thing you can do is to forget me as soon as ever you can. Look after the children

—but I know you will. I hate leaving them, but it's got to be. I can't go on living like this. I wasn't meant for a poor man's wife, and that's the whole truth of it. You wouldn't know me if you could see me now. We are going to live abroad. Good-bye, Joe. Forgive me if you can, and don't tell the boys about their mother. Say I died. I expect it's true.

EM.'

“Quite right, my girl,” Mr. Roddles reflected. “You left me for the sake of the yellow boys, and it was Yellow Jack did your business. I 'ope it did 'is too, smooth-spoken, black-coated beast! Yes, that's 'is billy-doo—I believe that's where the scent came from. No, I can't read it. I'll burn the lot of them.”

He got up and, after some searching, found an old tray which he put on the table. On this he threw all the letters he had been reading except the last one. Then, after another hunt, he took from a shelf a bottle labelled “Spirits of Wine.” He poured a few drops on the papers, lighted a match, and set fire to the spirits.

“There,” he said, as the last of the flame died away, “I wish I'd done it years ago. 'Oo says memory's a blessing? I say forget and be 'appy. As for you”—he addressed the letter he had left out—“you shall make yourself useful as you never did in your life before.”

Very slowly he took up his pipe from the table, shook out the contents against the bars of the grate, refilled it from his dirty old pouch, and rammed the tobacco hard down with a thumb not much cleaner. Then he took the letter, smelt it with a gesture of

disgust, and twisted it up into a spill. "I wish it was your scraggy neck," he said, as he gave it a final twist. He struck a match, set fire to the spill, and held it to the bowl of the pipe. He blew a cloud, took the pipe from his mouth, and watched the smouldering spill.

"Yes," he said, "I wish it was true, that old wheeze about 'ell fire. I'd love to see you burning, just like that—black coat and all. I don't care about 'eaven, but I'd give something if 'ell was true."

He emptied the ashes into the fireplace, rubbed the tray with his sleeve, and put it back in its place. Then he saw the rest of the bundle of papers lying on the table.

"Poor old Sarah!" he said, "you weren't much of a scholar, but you were a bouncing fine girl and rare good company till you took to the drink and couldn't 'old yourself in. At your worst you did a better part by the boys than their own mother. You taught me a lesson, too, poor old girl. I'd never 'ave 'eld myself in, if it 'adn't been for remembering you. If I'd 'ad the money, I'd 'ave 'ad a divorce and made you what the fools call an honest woman. *She* was an honest woman, but poor old Sarah wasn't. No, I won't burn these—not to-night, at any rate. I'm glad the others 'ave gone, though. The place'll smell a bit sweeter now."

## VI

A few days after the public debate at University College Jim came back to dinner quite excited, as

Dick, whose keen eyes few things escaped, noticed at once. Characteristically, the brothers, during the meal, discussed indifferent topics, and only when the things had been cleared away did Jim begin to talk about what was uppermost in his mind. Dick was a confirmed smoker, and would have been lost without his after-dinner pipe. Jim, on the other hand, rarely touched tobacco, but had a marked weakness for sweets, and generally had a paper bag or a box in his pocket. So, while he sucked a chocolate and Dick puffed at his briar, the conversation began.

"There was a queer thing happened to-day," said Jim. "I looked in at the college on my way back and found a letter waiting for me. It was from Sir Lewis Plummer—you know, the judge who took the chair the other night at that debate. It had been waiting for me there two or three days. It was very short, and just asked me if I would call one day this week between five and six-thirty at the United Universities Club. I was early to-day, and I found I could get there before six, so I went straight off and had a cup of tea with him."

"What did he want?"

"Well, he was extraordinarily civil, and he really doesn't quite look the part. He said he had been very much struck with my speaking, especially the reply, and he had found out about what I had done at college and at the B.A. and M.A. It seems he never went to Oxford or Cambridge, and perhaps that gave him a sort of fellow-feeling. When he found I was in a solicitor's office, he urged me very strongly to throw it up and go in for the Bar. He

said it wouldn't cost me a bit more in the long-run, and the position and prospects were far better. He said there are so many failures because men go to the Bar, who have no qualifications. But he was quite sure that I should succeed. 'I am quite certain about it,' those were his words. When I told him where I was, he said he knew Mr. Hartpoole and would speak to him—he didn't think he'd put any difficulty in the way. On the contrary, he said, he might be a most useful friend to me later on. Of course, he said, I might have to wait a bit at first, but I was one of the few young men he could confidently advise to take the risk. And he wound up by saying, 'If you make up your mind to do what I advise, let me know, and, if you want any further advice, write to me. I like helping men who are going to succeed.'"

"Sounds all right," said Dick; "what about £, s. d.?"

"Yes, that'll want thinking about. If I do it at all, I ought to do it at once, because it's a three-year business waiting to be called. The call means a couple of hundred, I believe, and then there's at least a year in chambers—that's another hundred."

"As bad as my billet."

"Just about the same. All the doors worth opening take about the same amount of grease."

"Why, that's just like the old man," said Dick, with a laugh; "talk about heredity!"

Jim laughed too.

"Well, even a son may resemble his father, I suppose," he said; "or perhaps it *is* one of his sayings."

It does sound like him, I admit. By the way, if I do make the change, I suppose I ought to let him know."

"Yes, I think I should," said Dick.

A few days later Jim called at the old house and found his father working industriously.

"Well," said Mr. Roddles, "what brings *you* here?"

"I'm thinking of making a change in my plans," said Jim, and told the story of Sir Lewis Plummer's intervention. His father listened patiently.

"What about the money?" he asked sharply.

"He seemed to think it wouldn't make much difference in the long-run."

"Never mind about the long-run. When should you have to pay the fees for being called?"

"Part of them, I believe, when I enter the Inn."

"How much?"

"I'm not sure—£100, I think."

"Have you got it?"

The short, sharp rattle of questions disconcerted Jim.

"I've got part of it," he said.

"What's the good of that?" asked his father, with a little snort of impatience.

"I've got about £80 at the bank, and I shall have another £60 scholarship money coming in at the New Year."

Mr. Roddles gave another snort.

"What's the good of that? They won't let you in on tick, will they?"

"I must wait till January."

"No," said Mr. Roddles, "that's a fool's way. You've got £80 now, you say, and more coming in by January. Now, then, you go and get entered as soon as you can. Come and tell me when you want to pay your £100, and I'll find £30 within twenty-four hours. You and Dick must rub along as well as you can till the end of the year—you've got a watch and chain to put up the spout, I see. Then when you get your scholarship money you may pay me back if you can. If not, I'll put it down to the account I've had against you since you were in the Infants. No, I'm not joking; you needn't look like that. You're not the only one with brains. If I'd 'ad 'alf your chances—you'd 'ave seen."

"I'm 'ad to be careful," said Jim. "Where should I be entered my name and then couldn't find the money?"

Mr. Roddles shook his head.

"I'm afraid you're a bit thick, Jim, in spite of your B.A. and M.A. and public debates, and all the rest of it. You've 'ad to do with me for close on twenty-five years, and yet you don't know me as I do you. Wait 'ere a minute."

He went out of the room, and came back with a post-office savings book in his hand. He opened it and showed £49, 15s. to the credit of Mr. Joseph Roddles.

"There, you infidel," he said, now in high good humour, "be off with you, and get yourself made a learned counsel as soon as you can. When you're made a Q.C. I shall 'ave some security for what I've spent on you."

## VII

Mr. John Trevenning was the senior and the wealthiest member of a large family, the poorest cadet of which enjoyed a very comfortable income. He had a horror of ostentation, but everything about him was eloquent of prosperity. His tranquil, cheerful face was still almost free from lines, notwithstanding his sixty years. His bearing, not assertive, but assured; his dress, so quiet, and yet so perfect in style and workmanship that you only noticed it to wonder why your own tailor was such a bungler; the house and its appointments, so supremely comfortable, so luxurious in detail, and yet in such admirable taste—all these told, not only of a very long purse, but of a certain distinction about the owner, which mere money cannot confer. The truth is, Mr. Trevenning, without any remarkable gifts of intellect or taste, was shrewd enough to be aware of his own deficiencies, and to take the most effectual measures for supplementing them. *Experto credite* was the family motto, and as he translated it into action, it ran, "Trust the expert." A man of his wealth and amiability naturally had an immense circle of friends, and any of them was proud to oblige him with an opinion. Rarely, indeed, was such a favour allowed to go unrequited. Hence, to look at his pictures you would say at once—"Here is a connoisseur." The few marbles and bronzes, the china, the Japanese and Chinese grotesques—all were of a quality that implied knowledge as well as wealth. In other directions, indeed, Mr. Trevenning was a

real connoisseur. He was a sportsman to the backbone, had played cricket in the Eton Eleven, and afterwards for Middlesex. He was devoted to the Turf, and his famous horse, Sir Rowland, had just carried off the Ascot and Goodwood Cups. In his time he had been an excellent shot, but his sight had begun to fail, and of late he had kept himself in condition by lawn-tennis and golf.

Besides these diversions, he had one strong interest of a more serious character. As a young man he had been sentenced by some of the heads of the medical profession to undergo a serious operation. An intimate friend, on whose judgment he placed great reliance, had strongly urged him to consult a distinguished homœopath before submitting to the surgeon's knife. He had done so, and had been impressed by the assurance that an operation was unnecessary. Placing himself under Dr. Neeld's treatment he was restored to perfect health, and from that time had been an ardent supporter of homœopathy. In fact his devotion to the cause was almost fanatical, and his gifts of money and, what was more remarkable, of time and effort, had been profuse. His sister, Mrs. Dukes, who kept house for him in Portman Square, was the widow of an eminent homœopathic physician, and was almost as enthusiastic as her brother.

"Agatha," said Mr. Trevenning, in the pause between soup and fish, on a sultry August evening, "I think I'll stroll round to Basil's after dinner. It's just occurred to me that there's a nurse at the hospital now who would be the very woman for his district. I'll offer to pay her salary, of course. I know he was wanting

a nurse for his poor people, and in time we might get a dispensary working there."

"Basil's very lukewarm about homœopathy, you know," remarked Mrs. Dukes; "but I don't suppose he'd refuse the offer."

"No, I don't think he will. He was groaning over the expenses the last time I saw him."

"Yes, but Basil enjoys groaning. Still, on your terms, I don't think he'll say no."

After dinner was over, Mr. Trevenning lit one of his famous cigars and sauntered along Orchard Street. By the time he reached Oxford Street he had made up his mind that it was too close for walking, so he hailed a hansom and was driven to Great Charles Street.

The vicar was out, but Mrs. Trevenning expected him in before long.

"It's a guild meeting," she said, "there seems no end to them. And Basil is so conscientious. I wish he'd leave them to the curates."

"I don't know how he does it," said Mr. Trevenning. "He's a real good chap, is Basil," he added heartily, "makes me feel a horrible slacker. Of course he's a boy compared to me, but still——"

"He's three years and seven months younger than you, Uncle John," interposed Rosie suddenly, "I worked it out from the big Bible."

"Oh, you did, did you? Send her to bed, Joyce, will you? She never treats her Uncle John with proper respect."

"There, Rosie," exclaimed Mrs. Trevenning, who was a very literal and matter-of-fact person, "I'm

always telling you you let your tongue run away with you."

"Wicked little tongue!" said Rosie, audaciously showing the unruly member to the extent of quite an eighth of an inch. "It's as fast as Sir Rowland, isn't it, uncle?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Uncle John, falling at once into the artful trap, "I was down at Newmarket on Tuesday and saw the dear old fellow. He looks simply magnificent. I'm going to keep him in training for the Jockey Club Cup in October. I went to the stud farm afterwards. Some of the foals are lovely. There's a little filly—a regular Scottish Chief—perfectly beautiful. I'm going to name her Rosie. She ought to win the One Thousand or the Oaks, or both of them."

Mrs. Trevenning was always distressed at any references to Uncle John's favourite diversion, but she knew well, from old experience, that it was useless to protest, especially when Rosie was present.

"What about the yearlings?" asked that young lady.

"Oh, a fine lot. There's a great strapping Stockwell colt that ought to do something, and a St. Albans filly that looks as if she could fly. You see, 'Follow Trevenning,' will be the cry next year."

Before Uncle John had had time to go through the rest of the yearlings, the door opened, and in walked the vicar, followed by a young man. He looked tired, but his face lit up as he saw his brother.

"Ah, John!" he exclaimed, "it's good to see you, old man. Joyce, may we have some tea? I'm as dry as—as——"

"As a sermon," suggested Uncle John, "not one of yours, of course."

"Oh no, of course not. Look, my dear"—the vicar turned to his wife—"you remember Dick Roddles, don't you? You'll hardly know him now. He's a Wrangler and a Fellow of his college, and I don't know what besides."

Mrs. Trevenning shook hands cordially with the young man, and looked at him with interest. He was a well-grown young fellow, good-looking, with clearly marked features and a great mop of curly brown hair which seemed to give him a good deal of trouble, to judge by the way in which he was constantly tossing it off his forehead. His eyes were clear and candid, and there was an air of strength and capacity about him that hardly ever failed to make an impression. His most attractive characteristic was his rare smile, which was as merry as a boy's, and the contrast with the grave, set expression his face usually wore, made it all the more winning. He was dressed in a well-fitting suit of light tweeds, and looked a typical young 'Varsity man.

"I remember you perfectly," she said, "when you were in the school. You used to win all the prizes, even then. Mr. Wright used to have a great deal to say about you."

"He was always very kind, and he took a great deal of trouble over my work," said Dick.

Then he was introduced to Miss Trevenning and to Uncle John.

"Are you going to join the choir, Mr. Roddles?" asked Rosie.

It was an awkward question, and Dick hesitated a moment before he answered.

"I've no voice now," he said, "and I know the St. Gabriel's standard."

"How do you like the hospital?" asked the Rev. Basil, as the tea came in.

Uncle John looked up quickly, and regarded Dick with new interest.

"It was a little strange at first," answered the young man, "but I think I shall enjoy the work."

"It must be a dreadful ordeal to begin with," remarked Mrs. Trevenning.

"It is a bit trying," Dick admitted, "but it wears off, and there's a lot that is tremendously interesting."

"Yes, I can understand that," said the vicar, leaning back in his easy-chair—"just a little more milk, my dear—yes, it must be absorbing. The human interest is so strong."

"You mean the poor things that have to suffer so," put in his wife. "Ah, yes. Don't you find the demand on your sympathy takes it out of you a great deal, Mr. Roddles?"

Dick wrinkled his forehead.

"I'm afraid I haven't thought of it much that way, though of course one's sorry to see people in pain. But I think one gets to look on people's bodies as something different from the people themselves."

"Quite right, my boy," said the vicar; "they are. I'm glad you see things the right way."

What Dick did see was that he had been misunderstood, but he did not feel called upon to discuss the point. Uncle John broached his nurse scheme to his

brother, Mrs. Tevenning talked what Dick, in describing the visit afterwards to Jim, called "vicar's-wife," while Rosie divided her attention between the couples.

About half-past nine Dick got up and declared he must go back to his work, whereupon Uncle John rose too.

"I didn't know it was so late," he said; "I must get a hansom. "I'm going to Portman Square. Can I drop you anywhere, Mr. Roddles?"

"Yes," said the vicar, before Dick could answer; "he's bound for Camden Town. Anywhere down Tottenham Court Road will do for him."

"So you're going to be a doctor," said John Tevenning, as they bowled along—"a very fine profession it is, too. I'm very much interested in medicine, but I'm a heretic."

"Indeed, sir, don't you believe in drugs?"

"Drugs? Oh yes, I believe in them right enough, when they're properly taken. It's the big doses I don't believe in, for one thing."

"You mean you're a homœopathist?"

"That's it. The murder's out. Do you want to get down?"

"No, indeed," said Dick, with a laugh; "I've heard of *similia similibus curantur*, and that's about all I know of homœopathy."

"Well, I'm not a scientific man, but I know when I'm cured, and I know what Loveridge and Sir Frederick Bale told me. Nothing but a drastic operation, they said, could save my life. That was thirty years ago, and here I am, with a whole skin, and a fair appetite for my dinner still, and all through a few bottles of

globules and tinctures. It isn't very wonderful that a man believes after an experience like that, is it ? ”

“ No, indeed,” answered Dick ; “ I suppose one ought to know something about it.”

“ I tell you what, my boy,” said Mr. Trevenning eagerly, “ give me your address and I'll send you a little literature ; it won't do you any harm to glance at it at odd moments. You'll find it worth while, you may depend upon it. By the way, which college did you say you were at ? ”

“ Trinity.”

“ Ah, I was at the Hall. Precious little work I did when I was up. Things are a bit better now, I fancy. I know a young fellow at Trinity now—young Lewens—his father and I are great cronies.”

“ I know Lewens quite well,” said Dick ; “ I coached him in maths. just before I came down. A very nice quiet man, with good abilities, too.”

“ I'm very glad to hear you say so,” exclaimed Mr. Trevenning. “ I thought he was one of the right sort, and I'm not often much out. You'll look at those things I send you, won't you ? ”

The evening after Dick's meeting with Mr. John Trevenning he was astonished to receive a huge parcel.

“ Hulloo ! ” exclaimed Jim, lifting it, “ what's this ? Too heavy for a skeleton, and not quite big enough for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.”

Dick opened it with some curiosity. It contained eight or nine large volumes, all handsomely bound. The first back he looked at explained the mystery.

“ Hahnemann's *Organon*,” he read, and broke into a hearty laugh.

"What's the joke?" asked Jim. "It doesn't look so wildly funny."

Whereupon Dick told the whole story.

"The worst of it is," he added, "I suppose I must dip into the things, because I might meet old Trevenning again any time, and I promised I'd read them. What's the matter? You look as grave as a judge."

"What *is* homœopathy?" asked Jim, ignoring his brother's question. "Is it pure quackery? Is a homœopath recognised as a doctor?"

"I don't know. They can take their M.D., I believe. They give you the ten-thousandth part of a grain of arsenic—that sort of thing. But I'll have a look at the books."

"Yes, I should," said Jim; "it looks to me as if you'd struck oil. Didn't you say he was rich?"

"Trevenning? Rolling in money, Lewens said. His brother, the vicar, is very well off, I know."

"Well," said Jim, speaking in his usual deliberate, clear-cut manner, "I should find out about the status of homœopaths, and I should approach the subject itself with a perfectly open mind."

"I see what you mean," said Dick, quite as seriously.

## VIII

Having once made up his mind to try his luck at the Bar, Jim went to work with characteristic promptitude and energy. As Sir Lewis Plummer had anticipated, Mr. Hartpole raised no objection, but on the contrary encouraged Jim, and warmly congratulated him on having made such an influential friend.

"I don't mind telling you," he said, "that Sir Lewis spoke very handsomely of you; you have evidently made a most favourable impression upon him."

With the help of Mr. Roddles' £30, Jim was duly admitted to the Inner Temple in October, and, a few months later, annexed a special prize at his Inn for Jurisprudence and Roman Law. This distinction brought him another letter from Sir Lewis, and again the letter was followed by an interview. This time the judge strongly advised him to begin reading in chambers at once. "Take a year with an equity draughtsman and conveyancer, and another year with a common law man," he said. "It's expensive, but in your case it'll save you both time and money in the end." Then, as he saw Jim's hesitation, and guessed at the reason, he suddenly said,

"Look here, Mr. Roddles, I'm not an impulsive nor a sentimental man—no one has ever accused me of being either—but I had a hard fight myself to get on, and when I see real merit I find a great pleasure in giving a helping hand. Now I have a fancy, which may be quite wrong, that you are in something like the position in which I found myself when I was a student—that money is, for the time being, a difficulty."

Jim nodded.

"Very well, then," Sir Lewis went on, "if you will let me, I will gladly advance you the £200 you will need to carry out my advice. It isn't a very great matter, and I hope you'll let me do it."

Jim was touched by the generous offer, and re-

membered with compunction certain criticisms he had passed on Sir Lewis's appearance and manners. So touched was he, that for once his deliberate self-possession forsook him and he uttered his thanks in broken sentences.

"Not a machine, after all, then," said the judge to himself as he interrupted Jim's thanks.

"That's settled then. Now have you thought of any equity man to read with?"

Jim shook his head and smiled.

"I'm afraid I don't know one from another."

"Well, then, I'll write to Weaver. He's a first-class man with just the sort of practice you want to see. He's dropping conveyancing, but there's still enough for a pupil, and for pleading and Court work you couldn't possibly do better. I'll let you know as soon as I hear from him."

This was on a Thursday, and on the following Monday the message came. It was simply a sheet of writing paper with an address

"W. J. WEAVER, ESQ.,  
1 New Square,  
Lincoln's Inn."

Underneath was written—

"I've told him about you. I think it will be all right. Go and see him as soon as you can. About five o'clock, I should say.  
L. P."

The next day, at five sharp, Jim walked up the staircase of No. 1 New Square, on to the second

floor landing. An outer door stood open, and on it were painted two or three names, at the head of them, "Mr. W. J. Weaver." On the inside door was a knocker. Jim gave a modest rap, and the door immediately opened automatically, it seemed, for no one was yet visible. Jim found himself in a dark passage, while the heavy door swung back on its hinges and closed with a bang. As soon as his eyes became accustomed to the light, such as it was, he noticed that a few feet down the passage there was a small glass-partitioned room, from which a voice now called, "Come in, please." In the room was a large table at which sat an old man, neat, and small, and florid, and—opposite him—a much younger man. At another table, in one corner of the room, a boy was occupied in cutting the pages of what looked like a pile of magazines.

"Yes, sir?" said the younger of the clerks when Jim opened the door.

"Is Mr. Weaver in, and can I see him?" asked Jim.

"He's engaged for a minute or two, but I'll take your name in. Is it on business?"

Jim wrote his name on a piece of paper.

"I think he'll see me," he said.

In a minute or two the clerk came back.

"Mr. Weaver will see you almost immediately, if you'll take a seat."

So Jim sat, and waited, and listened, while a low-toned conversation went on between the two clerks.

"Another scene in Malin's Court," said the old man, who was entering figures in a book.

"Oh, Stone and Carpenter, I suppose."

The old man nodded.

"Yes, of course. It's too bad, the way Carpenter goes for him. Why, Stone is old enough to be his father."

"He's old enough to retire and give other people a chance, if you ask me," said Mr. Weaver's clerk. "Besides, it's his own fault. He's been cock of the walk so long he can't bear to hear any one else crowing."

"Ah, that's all very well, but he's a fine old fellow is Stone, and to hear that Carpenter storming away—it's simple bullying, that's what it is."

"Six of one and half a dozen of the other, that's my opinion, and I've heard Mr. Weaver say as much."

"Mr. Weaver's a young man himself. I know Mr. Broadfoot holds a different opinion."

"Mr. Broadfoot's an old man, so he naturally would," retorted Mr. Weaver's clerk, with a scarcely concealed sneer, and then, looking up, saw the boy grinning in his corner.

Without raising his voice he turned instantly on the unfortunate youth.

"Now then, Tom, look at you again, with your elbow on the new book. I never saw such a boy. And look at your hands too. That's a nice pair of hands to cut a book with. No wonder there are black marks on the pages. I saw a horrid smudge the other day in one of the Equity numbers. Talk about schools! Why, the old dame-schools did teach the boys to keep themselves clean and not to

tell lies. What they teach at these precious board schools I don't know, if you're a specimen. Such writing I never saw, and as for spelling——"

"The worst boy we've had since I've been here," said the old man.

"And a lot of experience you must have had of them, too; I wonder they haven't worn you out."

"Oh, it's no good letting yourself be worried by such things. When they get too much of a nuisance, pack 'em off. That's the best way."

"Then I think it's very nearly time *he* went, don't you?" said the younger man, pointing to the boy, who appeared quite unabashed, and looked, Jim thought, as if he were thoroughly accustomed to the whole performance.

"Yes," said the old man, with a chuckle, "we might go farther and we couldn't very well fare worse."

At this moment a door lower down the passage opened, and a party of three came into the clerks' room.

"Just a moment, Mr. Roots," said the younger clerk, and then led Jim to one of two rooms which faced each other at the end of the passage.

It was a large, light room with double windows, the walls lined with law books. Over the mantelpiece hung the portraits of three judges. In front of them stood a large mahogany writing-table. At the side of this table a big leather arm-chair and two ordinary chairs were ranged side by side, and had evidently been occupied by the party Jim had just seen.

At the table, in a plain Windsor arm-chair, sat Mr.

Weaver, his head bent over a mass of papers, writing quickly. The table was covered with briefs, and cases to advise, and instructions of all kinds.

"One minute, please," said the barrister, without looking up. Indeed, his face was almost covered by his left hand, on which his forehead leaned as he wrote.

In less than a minute he laid down his pen, leaned back in his chair, and looked at his visitor.

"I beg your pardon, Mr.—Mr."—his eye caught the paper on which Jim had sent in his name—"oh yes, Mr. Roddles. Do sit down. I was just making a note of a matter while it was fresh in my mind—a very good rule that. By the way, what did I do with that letter?"

He opened a drawer and turned over its contents. It was a relief to Jim, for it gave him time to recover from the shock of surprise which he was afraid must have made him look foolish.

The moment his eyes met Mr. Weaver's, he recognised him. It was his former acquaintance, Mr. Nine. A little older-looking, the black hair scantier on the forehead, the keen eyes a little tired-looking, the figure a trifle stouter, but the veritable Mr. Nine beyond the shadow of a doubt.

"Here it is," exclaimed the lawyer, taking out a letter and glancing at it. "Yes, I see. Well, Mr. Roddles, you seem to have made a very auspicious start in the profession. Sir Lewis Plummer tells me you want to come here as my pupil, and he says some uncommonly nice things about you. Now, I'll tell you just how the matter stands, as far as I am con-

cerned. I *have* taken pupils—Sir Lewis evidently knows that—but he doesn't seem to know that I've practically given up taking them. I used to have a room in the basement below, and take three or four. I gave it up because it took too much time, and the last lot I had were of no use at all. Curiously enough, there happens to be a small room in this set vacant now, and when I got Sir Lewis's letter it occurred to me that if I could get a good man who would really work, it might be worth my while to have him. Now, from what I have heard, I have no doubt of your ability, the only question is, do you mean business? So many men get called with some ulterior object in view."

"I have no ulterior object," said Jim, smiling, "except to make money."

"A very laudable one," returned Mr. Weaver. "Well, then, on the distinct understanding that you mean work and will stick at it, I shall be pleased to receive you here as a pupil. Come in," he added, as a knock sounded.

The door opened and the younger clerk appeared. "Mr. Elberry would like to see you, sir, about these interrogatories in Daws and Banks."

"All right," said Mr. Weaver, "show him in. Look here, Roddles, I'll just let you see the room."

He opened a door which Jim had not noticed, just beyond the clerks' room.

"Here we are," he said, "it's not big, but with a table and a couple of chairs I think you'll find it all right. I suppose you'd like to come pretty soon?"

"The sooner the better," said Jim.

## IX

It was on the first of May that Jim entered Mr. Weaver's chambers as a pupil. The table and chairs, though not handsome pieces of furniture, made his little room look habitable, and Jim's few text-books relieved the bareness of the empty shelves. The only other occupant of the chambers besides Mr. Weaver, Jim, and the clerks, was Mr. Broadfoot, an old gentleman, close upon seventy, white-haired, and shaky on his legs, but with an extensive practice among high-class solicitors, who had great faith in the soundness of his law. He came of an old county family in Suffolk, and had aristocratic connections of which he was tenaciously, but not offensively, proud. An unfortunate impediment in his speech had interfered with his success as an advocate when he was a younger man, though now, in his old age, he had an excellent Court practice. It had, however, prevented him from taking silk, and had barred his way to the judicial bench, though he had been for many years a bencher of Lincoln's Inn. His clerk, Farrer, was only four or five years his master's junior, while Broome, who looked after Mr. Weaver's interests, was a solemn-faced young man of thirty. Tom, the junior, was a brown-haired, freckled boy of fourteen, with sharp, twinkling eyes, and clothes that always seemed a size too small for him.

Jim's knowledge of English law was very slight. He had read about half of Williams' *Real Property* and had skimmed the greater part of Broome's *Common Law*. The first set of papers given him involved a

simple question of construction under a will. Mr. Weaver explained the general principle, and showed him the statement of the law, in Jarman on *Wills*. He told him to look up the cases referred to, and make up his mind whether the questions asked were covered by the reported cases. It took Jim some time to hunt up the reports and weigh the judgments, but as soon as he had done this, the rest was easy. When Mr. Weaver came in from Court before lunch, he found the bundles of papers on his table again. He unfastened the tape and looked at the "Opinion." As he read it, his face brightened.

"Ah," he said, "Plummer is right. This boy's got the root of the matter in him. He's got the right sort of style, too, for this job." He glanced at the reports which Jim had placed ready beside his Opinion.

"I hope it isn't a case of the new broom," he said to himself, "but, really, this one is more like a carpet-sweeper than a broom."

When he had written his own Opinion he sent for Jim.

"This is a capital beginning, Roddles," he said, "I hope you'll be able to keep it up. It was rather an easy case, but you've handled it very well indeed. You didn't notice the effect of the residuary gift—I ought to have called your attention to it. Take my Opinion and you'll see the difference that makes. Now, look here. This is a draft mortgage to settle. It's rather heavy, I'm afraid, but it won't hurt you to have a go at it. Read over these pages I've marked in Davidson. Then read the instructions very carefully, and put down on paper what alterations you think will be necessary to carry

them into effect. As it stands, it's practically the common form, and you see they want something special. Don't do the draft till we've talked it over."

As Jim was leaving the room Mr. Weaver looked at him and said with a smile,

"Do you know, you look to me as if you were born for this job. When did you take a fancy to it?"

"Ever since I saw your table at number nine Montague Chambers," said Jim, with an answering smile.

"My table? Montague Chambers? What do you mean?"

"The housekeeper's daughter there went to the same school as I did, and I used to help her tidy up the rooms sometimes on Saturdays."

Mr. Weaver's face showed lively interest.

"Why," he exclaimed, "you don't mean to say you're one of those boys? I remember quite well. What was her name? Madge, was it? Yes; she and two boys used to come down to the Temple Gardens when I was playing tennis there."

"Yes, that's quite right," said Jim. "I was one of the boys."

"Well, that *is* queer," said the barrister. "I didn't notice you particularly then—at least, I didn't know that I did. And yet, several times, I've fancied I must have seen you before. I remember her perfectly—a very good-looking child. What's become of her?"

"I haven't seen her for a long time."

"And the other boy—was he a schoolfellow too?"

"He was my brother."

"*He* hasn't taken to the law, I suppose?"

"No," answered Jim, "he's at University College Hospital."

"Well, the world's a handbox, and no mistake," said Mr. Weaver.

Jim recalled the expression an hour or two afterwards. He had been working hard at his mortgage, when, fancying the room was growing stuffy, he got up and opened the window. It looked out across a flagged cour' and a public passage, and beyond commanded the backs of a row of three-storied houses. Some of the windows were open, and, gazing idly for a moment, Jim noticed at one, the figure of a man seated on a low table and stitching away industriously, his back turned towards the observer. Suddenly the listless air vanished from Jim's face; intense surprise and eager intentness took its place. He leaned forward and craned his head out of the window to take his bearings. Then he hastily drew his head back and closed the window. He had known, of course, that he was coming back to the neighbourhood where he had lived for so many years, but it had never occurred to him that he and his father would be spending their days within a stone's-throw of one another.

## X

One evening in June, Dick Roddles found himself anchored in Gower Street later than usual. There was a meeting of the Medical Society at which Staniforth was to read a paper on "Minute Diagnosis of Nervous Diseases," and Dick had promised to lend him

his moral support. The College refreshment-room was in great and well-deserved ill-favour, and, accordingly, they made their way for a cup of tea to Lange's at the corner of University Street. Lange's was not grand. There were no marble tables, or handsome mirrors, or velvet hangings. For these you had to walk along the New Road to Batti's, the Italian Restaurant. But at Lange's the food was good if plain, and, when you had become friendly with one of the Misses Lange, or with Fanny, the waitress, you found yourself treated with a certain friendly consideration which was not without its charm.

The shop—the University Bun House was its modest name—was small. There were two counters at right angles to each other, and, between them, an opening led to a tea-room behind. Close to the door was the fireplace, and here stood a small table with two or three chairs, and this, especially in winter, was the favourite place. In order to secure it, many a race has been run from the class-room to the Bun House. The tea-room was separated by swing doors from the dining-room, an apartment furnished with Spartan severity. The seats were arranged like the “knifeboard” omnibuses of the early Victorian period, the customers sitting back to back, with a partition the height of their shoulders between them. The shop was managed by Mrs. Lange with the help of assistants who seldom stayed long enough to be saluted by name. Fanny and the second Miss Lange managed the tea-room. In the dining-room, the eldest Miss Lange, a buxom, good-looking young woman, reigned supreme.

“What shall it be?” said Staniforth, as they entered

the shop. "Good evening, Mrs. Lange. What do you recommend to an overworked, starving, and poverty-stricken student?"

"There's a lovely ribs of beef and Yorkshire, or you can have a chop in five minutes."

The hungry student shook his head. "No, I know that five minutes. And the chop too," he added, under his breath.

"Have something cold then, Mr. Staniforth," said Fanny, small, soft-voiced, smiling, and alert. "Here's a nice tongue or a beautiful York ham."

"The difficulty isn't with me, Fanny," said the young man, "you know anything is good enough for me. It's my friend that's so particular. He's been to Cambridge, and there's really no pleasing him. He's sure to grumble, whatever we give him, so it doesn't much matter. Two teas, buttered toast, and ham, and put them on the table by the fireplace."

Fanny tiptoed so as to see over the ground-glass barrier of the tea-room.

"It's taken, Mr. Staniforth," she said. "I'll put them on the table at the other end. It's very comfortable there."

"I'm hanged if it is," grumbled Staniforth.

"And he talks about my being particular," said Dick. "Why, what could be nicer?"

When they went inside they saw that they had been forestalled by a party of girls, four in all, who were having tea at the table by the fireplace. They were a merry party, and evidently not in the least afraid of being overheard, for everything they said was plainly audible at the other end of the room.

"The best lectures I've ever listened to," said a very bright, clear voice.

"I don't think they're so very much good for the exam.," said another voice.

"Exams aren't everything," said Bright-voice, "though there's not much amiss as far as *they* are concerned."

"He makes you love the men, and the books, and the books about the men," another chimed in.

"He's a dear," said Bright-voice; "I often feel I should like to——" the voice sank to a whisper, and there was an outburst of laughter and O's.

"Well," her voice rose again, "he's old enough to be my father easily. He's a dear; I know he is."

"There," muttered Staniforth gloomily, "that's what we're coming to. Women students driving men out of their favourite haunts. They'll soon be coming to the Medical Society meetings."

"A good thing if they did," said Dick, "it wouldn't be as deadly dull as it is."

The bright voice had quite fascinated him, and he tried to see the face of its possessor. She, however, was sitting with her back to him, and he could not catch a glimpse of her face.

Just as he and Staniforth had finished, the girls got up, and after some adjusting of hats and putting on of gloves, and looking in the glass, went out into the shop to pay their reckoning. Then it was that Dick saw the face, and instantly he knew why the voice had arrested him. Beyond all possibility of mistake, both face and voice belonged to Madge.

"I believe I know one of those girls," he said to the

astonished Staniforth, and then, jumping up, without waiting to put on his hat hurried into the shop. The other three had gone on, leaving Madge to pay. As he came into the shop she looked round and their eyes met.

“ Why, Madge ! ”

“ Oh, Dick ! Fancy, meeting like this ! ”

“ I thought I knew your voice,” he said, “ and then I saw your hair and was certain.”

She laughed.

“ My poor hair. It’s as bad as a label. How’s Jim ? ”

“ He’s all right—we’re living together now, in rooms near here. I’m at the hospital and Jim’s reading for the Bar.”

“ I heard him at the public debate. He was splendid. Tell him I felt ever so proud of him. Is he strong and well ? ”

“ He’s never what you’d call very strong, but there’s nothing the matter with him, and he’s able to get through a rare lot of work. What are you doing now ? ”

“ I’m teaching in a High School in Streatham. I come here for a teachers’ class in English Literature—Professor Morley’s.”

“ Are you still living at Balham ? ” he asked.

“ No,” she replied, “ when I got this engagement we moved to Streatham. There are only mother and I now. Father died nearly two years ago.”

“ I’m sorry,” said Dick, “ I hadn’t heard.”

“ Look ! ” she exclaimed, “ they’re calling me ; I must go or I shall be late. I’ll write our address on

this bit of paper. You and Jim must come over some Saturday or Sunday to tea. Mother will be very pleased to see you both. Don't forget. Good-bye."

And, waving her hand, with a bright smile, she hurried after her friends.

## XI

For some reason that he did not stop to analyse, Dick, for two or three days, said nothing to his brother about the meeting with Madge, but it was constantly in his mind. When he did speak of it, Jim received the information very quietly, though he was evidently interested and pleased. He asked a good many questions about her appearance.

"I thought I couldn't be mistaken when I saw her at the debate," he said. "So she's a full-blown teacher, is she? She's got the start of us. Did she tell you where they are living?"

"Yes, I've got the address. She sent you a message. She was proud of you when she heard you speak at the debate."

"Very kind of her," said Jim.

"She asked a lot about you," Dick went on, after a pause. "She wants us to go there one Saturday or Sunday."

"Us?" asked Jim.

"Yes, 'us.'"

Jim turned to his newspaper and the subject dropped. But at dinner the next day he reverted to it.

"What about going to see Madge?" he asked.  
"Shall we both go?"

"I think so," answered Dick, "don't you? She asked us both."

"All right. We'd better say Sunday, hadn't we? I'm generally reading at the library on Saturdays."

"Yes, Sunday will be all right. Next Sunday I'm booked for St. Gabriel's in the evening, but the Sunday after would be all right. Will you send her a line?"

"No, you'd better. She asked you."

"Very well," said Dick, "I'll write."

On the appointed Sunday, accordingly, the brothers set out for Streatham soon after dinner. Grassdale Crescent, which was their goal, took some finding, and it was close upon four when they reached the row of unpretentious little houses with their tiny plots of front garden, divided from each other by wooden palings, and, most of them, gay with pansies, phlox, and hollyhocks. No. 17 was one of the gayest of the lot, and boasted some very creditable roses.

They walked up the steps to the hall door. "There she is!" cried Jim, as through the open drawing-room window they saw the flutter of a white dress and a waving hand. The next moment the door was opened and Madge greeted them with her old, well-remembered smile.

She shook hands warmly with Jim, then with Dick.

"Come in," she said, "it is nice to see you again. It takes years and years off my shoulders. But you rather frighten me, you look so solemn."

The brothers were indeed a very sedate pair in

appearance, especially Jim. The smile that now lit up his face made a wonderful difference.

The drawing-room into which she took them was a little box of a place, a large proportion of its area being taken up by a piano.

"There are four seats in this room," she said, "counting this as one," and she seated herself on the piano-stool. "The low chair is mother's; that leaves the little couch for you."

The young men sat down side by side, while Madge ran on,

"There are a lot of questions you'll want to ask, but perhaps you'll be too polite to. That was almost the only fault I used to find in you, Jim—you were too polite for a boy. Well now, I'll save you the trouble of fishing for information or waiting for it to ooze out. Mother and I are living here alone, at least we share this house with some people upstairs. Poor dad died two years ago next autumn; he'd been ill a long time. I was very lucky at school, and I managed to get a scholarship at Queen's College and took my B.A., no honours, only a poor little pass, and then I got here at the High School. On Sundays mother won't let me do a stroke of work if she can help it, and she's getting the tea now."

At this stage the tea came in, and Mrs. Carr with it, a good deal changed from the bustling, energetic woman the boys remembered. She was homely in speech and manners, perfectly unaffected, and evidently very fond and proud of Madge, but for whom, she declared, she would not stay a single day longer in London.

"I was a country girl when I married your father, Madge, and I'll never feel properly at home except in the country."

"Then you must find me a place as headmistress of a country school, though I believe I should feel like a fish out of water. What do you say, Jim?"

"Oh, we're regular town birds, both of us," said Jim, "though Dick could get along in the country all right, with his cricket and his science."

"Yes," said Dick, "and there are always people to be dosed."

Then Mrs. Carr asked after their father. "You're not living with him now, are you?" she said.

"No," answered Jim, "he wished us to strike out for ourselves, as he puts it. We see him, of course," he added.

"And you're reading for the Bar, Jim?" said Madge. "Just fancy! It does seem strange. Do you remember how we used to talk about it when we went to the Temple Gardens? There was that young barrister—what was his name? Mother dear, what was that young lawyer's name in Montague Chambers—the one next to the poor poet? You know. We used to joke about them."

Mrs. Carr had a reputation for remembering names. She thought for a moment.

"Mr. Nine, we used to call him. Oh, whatever was his name?" cried Madge.

"It began with a W or a V," said Mrs. Carr. "Weeks—no, that's not it. Weele—Weed—Veale——"

"I know," exclaimed Madge, "'Weaver'; I can see it written up on the door."

"Yes, of course," said Mrs. Carr, a little crestfallen at her failure. "Well, my dear, I did put you on the track."

"I ought to have helped," said Jim. "It was wicked of me."

"Why? Do you remember him?" asked Madge.

"I ought to—I see him every day."

"What do you mean? Has he got on so? Is he always in the Courts?"

"He's my boss," said Jim, "I'm his pupil. I sit all day in his chambers."

Madge looked quite grave.

"Oh, Jim," she said quietly, "what a wonderful place the world is! One's always stumbling over miracles."

Dick laughed.

"I tumbled over one in the Bun House, didn't I?" he said.

"And you're going to be a doctor?" she asked, turning to him. "You mustn't talk to mother about it; she has a very poor opinion of the profession."

"I don't say that, Madge"—Mrs. Carr accepted the challenge without any hesitation—"doctors are all very well; I believe some of them are very kind and pleasant. It's not doctors, but doctoring, I dislike. I assure you, Mr. Roddles, the sight of a doctor's prescription gives me quite a turn. Of course I know we all want physic sometimes—in the spring, and so on. Holloway's Pills, Lion Ointment, and Clarke's Blood

Mixture—there's never been anything the matter with me that one of the three wouldn't cure. The pills and the mixture would have saved poor Will's life if I could have got him to go on with them, but no, he must have a doctor, and you see the result."

Mrs. Carr showed signs of breaking down, and Madge came to the rescue.

"I'll tell you what, mother," she said, "we'll make Dick try them on his patients, or, better still, on himself. Have you got anything the matter with you now?"

"No, nothing whatever," said Dick hastily.

"Well, the very next time he's ailing, mind you write and tell me, Jim. We'll cure him, won't we, mother?"

Mrs. Carr shook her head.

"Ah, there you go again, Madge; you're always turning everything into a joke. All the same, Mr. Roddles, you might do worse than follow her advice."

"I'll be sure to remember it, Mrs. Carr," said Dick, who then had to endure a long account of the good woman's medical triumphs, while Madge and Jim talked of their old days at Arran Street, of their teachers and their schoolfellows, and, finally, of Mr. Nine, in whom she evidently felt very great interest.

"You must come over again soon," she said, as they parted at the gate, "it's a charity. Mother sees hardly any one nowadays, and she's very fond of familiar faces."

"And you must come and have tea at the Bun House," answered Dick. "It's our turn next. We'll fix one of your lecture nights."

## XII

Jim's prophecy that the vicar's friendliness would be ensured by his anxiety to reconvert Dick was speedily fulfilled. Naturally simple and sincere himself, he accepted Dick's occasional appearances at St. Gabriel's as obvious signs of repentance, and earnest of improvement. Religion, to him, was so largely a matter of observance and ceremonial, that appearance at a service covered a multitude of laxities if not of sins. If he could have coaxed the young man to an early celebration he would have felt no more anxiety. With intellectual difficulties he had small sympathy. They all sprang, he declared, from pride, and the only remedy was the habit of stooping before the altar. The truth for which long generations of saints and martyrs have lived and died, which they have enshrined in their creeds and sealed with their blood, this surely was good enough for the son of a jobbing tailor, even if he were a Wrangler and a Fellow of his college. That was something like what the Rev. Basil would have said if he had been challenged. As it was, he contented himself for the present with counting Dick's attendances at church, and dropping mysterious hints as to the importance and efficacy of the Holy Eucharist. To all these hints Dick appeared blandly impervious. But, as time went on, he certainly did come to church oftener, and though he still refused to take up any regular work, yet he often acted as a stop-gap for church helpers. On these occasions he was almost always invited to tea at the vicarage, and then, unless he had some unusually good excuse, evening service

followed as a matter of course. He found these visits to the vicarage increasingly pleasant. The Rev. Basil was always kind, and the friendliness of Mrs. Trevenning and Rosie flattered him. The vicar had said so much at home of his brilliant career at Cambridge and of his wonderful abilities that they naturally looked upon him with interest and admiration. Rosie was attending a course of University Extension Lectures on elementary science, and on one occasion, she appealed to Dick for an explanation of a difficulty in her notes. The explanation was so beautifully clear that she soon repeated the experiment, and before long it became a recognised thing that she should save up her difficulties for Dick's visits.

The Sunday before his visit to Madge, Dick had promised to go in the afternoon and do the work of the Sunday-school secretary. This consisted merely in marking and checking registers, and in distributing magazines among the children. The vicar had, as usual, invited him to tea. After tea, just as Rosie had brought her note-books and the paper on which she had written her difficulties, Mr. John Trevenning was announced. Dick had not seen him since their cab ride some months before. He had, of course, acknowledged the parcel of books, but he had not done more than glance at the contents. Uncle John, however, made no reference to them, or to homœopathy at all, except to inquire after the nurse he was providing. When assured that she had proved a great success, he could not refrain from the boast, "Well, you see, she's had the advantage of being trained under the new system."

At this, Rosie looked up.

"Uncle, you mustn't say such things when Mr. Roddles is here. It's rank heresy to him—almost as bad as being a Dissenter."

"Pooh!" said Mr. Trevenning. "Dissenters aren't so black as they're painted, and Sir William Jenner isn't the Pope, eh, Mr. Roddles?"

Dick smiled.

"I'm not sure that it isn't the other way about. Some of those books you were kind enough to send me are wonderfully cock-sure."

"Well, of course, when you see the truth very clearly it is difficult to mince words about it. So you've had a look at the books? I'm glad of that. What did you make of them?"

"I was rather unlucky. I began with the Lütze, and it's strong meat for babes. He actually says you can cure toothache by putting some globules in a bottle and taking a sniff. That *does* want some believing."

"Ah, my boy," said Uncle John, "I've seen more wonderful things than that, though, mind you, some of our foreign friends are apt to put things a little crudely sometimes. But then, Hahnemann himself was a German. Did you look at any of the others?"

"Oh yes," said Dick. "I think Grauvogel impressed me most." In one sense this was strictly true, for the book in question was a portly volume, handsomely bound in whole morocco.

"Did it? I'll make a note of that," said Uncle John, beaming. "I'm not a scientific man myself,

but I'm very glad to have the opinion of one. I tell you what. You shall have the *Homœopathic World* sent you. That gives a very good idea of what's going on."

"Thank you, sir," said Dick, "I should like to see it very much."

## XIII

Mr. Weaver found no reason to change the opinion he had so soon formed of his new pupil, or if there were any change, it was in the direction of further appreciation. As he had said, Jim really did seem born for the job. Keen, cold, clear, unimaginative, his mind was admirably adapted for solving elaborate intellectual conundrums. His mental, like his personal, habits were extremely tidy. Loose ends in reasoning worried him as much as an unsymmetrical parting in his hair. And, as a man generally enjoys doing what he does well, he soon began to take a real pleasure in the routine work of chambers. He was an admirable pupil—deferential but self-respecting, willing to take any trouble, put up with any inconvenience, or forgo any pleasure in order to be of use in a time of pressure. Punctual and regular as Greenwich itself, there was never any doubt of his keeping an engagement. Sometimes, of course, especially during his first months in chambers, he was baffled by legal puzzles, but even then his notes and opinions bore ample testimony to the time and pains he must have lavished on them. A large batch of Queen's Counsel had just been created, and a considerable accession of heavy junior

work came to Mr. Weaver. This was when Jim had been in Lincoln's Inn about four months. By that time, his quick apprehension and unflagging industry had made him a real help. When, from any reason, the pressure relaxed, he spent a good deal of time in the Courts, where he took notes and followed the arguments with as much zest as if he had been briefed himself. And then, when chambers were dark and silent, he went home to work till one or two in the morning, preparing for his LL.B. and the examinations of the Inns of Court.

In one respect, able as he was, Jim was inferior to his drunken old father—he had no clear vision of anything far ahead. His mind was of the short-sighted type. He could see with wonderful distinctness what lay close at hand, but, though he was very ambitious, long vistas blurred his vision. With all his grievous failings, old Roddles had done an even finer thing than he knew, when, long years before, he had marked out his plan of campaign for the boys, and had pursued it with such unflinching resolution. In detail the plan had been vitiated by a sordid, cynical view of life, which had been only too perfectly reproduced in the boys' outlook as they grew up. But in the conception itself, and in the persistency with which it had been slowly translated into fact, there was something which marked the little tailor as a man of very unusual qualities.

Another fact which pointed in the same direction was the way in which the boys had adopted as their

own ambitions, the careers he had marked out for them. Apart from him, Dick would have looked forward to earning a modest competence as a country doctor, and Jim would have been well satisfied with a quiet conveyancing practice. As it was, the Cromwell Road was always in their minds. To one it stood for a big, fashionable practice; to the other, for a silk gown, if not for a seat on the bench.

## XIV

At the beginning of the summer holidays it occurred to Dick that it was a long time since he had seen his father. The young men's feelings towards him were complex enough to defy their own powers of analysis, and at this stage they were not given to introspection. Love him they certainly did not. The contempt which he had always expressed for even the mildest demonstrations of affection had had its effect. On the other hand, he was the one strong link with their old life, he was closely associated with all their successes, and it was impossible not to respect a judgment which had been so fully justified. They were beginning to be actually ashamed of, and impatient with, his drunken, and what they thought his shiftless, ways. Then had come the surprise of his savings-bank store, and they had had to revise their estimate. Of his sharp tongue and shrewd, if cynical, worldly wisdom they still stood in awe.

It was about four in the afternoon when Dick paid his call.

Mr. Fitcher opened his door as Dick reached the

landing. He was dressed in a very tight and terribly shiny frock-coat.

"Do you wish to see Mr. Roddles?" said this gentleman, who prided himself on the correctness of his speech.

"Yes," answered Dick, "is he out?"

"Only temporarily, sir, very temporarily. Do you happen to have the time about you?"

Dick looked at his watch.

"It's ten minutes past four," he said.

"Ah, he expected to return at four o'clock. He has evidently been detained. Can I give him any message?"

"No, thank you," answered Dick; "I'll wait downstairs till he comes back."

"Won't you wait in here, sir?" said Mr. Fitcher, throwing open the door of the room in which Dick had lived for so many years. "I can at least offer you the convenience of a chair."

It was a long time since Dick had seen the room, and he was glad of the opportunity of renewing his acquaintance with it.

"Thank you very much, I *will* just wait for a minute or two, and then if he does not come I'll go, and come again in half an hour."

As he remembered it, the room had been barely furnished, but now it looked absolutely poverty-stricken. A small screen, covered with Christmas cards, and pictures from the illustrated papers, was stretched across one corner of the room. Near it, against the wall, stood a small camp bedstead. Against the opposite wall were set a couple of plain wooden-

seated chairs. In the middle of the room was a rickety table, one leg propped up with a book and several folds of newspaper. The only other article of furniture that was visible was a wooden shelf nailed to the wall, on which were ranged some twenty or thirty books.

With a fine flourish Mr. Fitcher brought forward a chair.

"Pray be seated, sir," he said.

"May I just look out of window?" asked Dick, and walked up to it, almost before Mr. Fitcher had given his consent.

As he stood looking out on the familiar scene below, absolutely unchanged, Cambridge and Mornington Crescent seemed a dream. After all, this was "home"—the squalid room, the row of houses below, the one sickly plane tree, the public-house just visible at the corner.

"The tree is a great feature in the outlook," said Mr. Fitcher, "it was that tree that induced me to come here. I can't tell you what a relief it is, after writing till one's eyes begin to water, to get up and look at the green leaves. It reminds me of the country." And a curious, wistful note came into the man's voice that made Dick turn and look at him.

Under this scrutiny Mr. Fitcher went to the table and began fingering the papers. Dick noted the trembling hands, and drew his own conclusions.

"The tree outside, and the books inside," the law-writer began again, after a moment's silence. "I was always fond of reading. Mr. Roddles and I have a great many discussions. He is more of a politician

than I am, and we are on opposite sides in politics. But he can talk on almost any subject—a very able man, and very generous,” he added as an afterthought.

This time Dick looked up in sharp surprise. Mr. Fitcher noticed the expression on his face.

“Ah,” he said, “perhaps you know Mr. Roddles in the way of business. He has a very decided way of expressing himself, and he is, perhaps, a little impatient of contradiction, but he is a man of great ability and he has a noble heart, a noble heart.”

At that moment Dick heard a well-known step mounting the stairs, and the next moment Mr. Roddles appeared, carrying a large parcel under one arm. He shot a quick, suspicious glance at Dick and Mr. Fitcher, but said nothing, and taking out his key proceeded to unlock the door.

“This gentleman, Mr. Roddles,” said Mr. Fitcher, “has called to see you. I told him you would be back very soon, and he has honoured me by waiting in my room.”

“All right,” said Mr. Roddles gruffly, and then, turning to Dick, added, “Come in 'ere, will you?” after which, when they were both inside, he shut the door.

“What did you palaver with that old fool for?” was his first question.

“It was just as he said,” answered Dick. “He opened his door and asked me to wait in there. I thought I'd like to see the old room again, so I went in. He seems to think a lot of you.”

“More than I do of 'im,” snapped Mr. Roddles; “'e's always spending 'is rent in the pub. I drink

because I choose to, and I can afford to. 'E drinks because 'e can't 'elp 'imself, and 'e can't afford to. Fools are bad enough, but a weak fool's the worst kind. 'E'll 'ave to fold 'is tents pretty soon, I can see. Now, what's brought you 'ere?"

"The summer holidays are just beginning," said Dick, "and it occurred to me that I hadn't been to see you for a long time."

"Oh," said Mr. Roddles, with a sneer, "filial affection and ail that, eh? Well, you know what I told you both. You go your way and I'll go mine. If you get into an 'ole, then you can come, and I'll see what I can do. And if you want a piece of advice, you might get worse than by coming 'ere."

"Well, I think I *do* want some advice. Do you know anything about homœopathy?"

"Of course I do. A little castor sugar in water three times a day, an hour after meals. Mind you, though, I know one long-'eaded chap who believes in it, sugar and all, but most men 'ave a weakness—like me," he added, with a frown. "But what do you ask for?"

"Why," said Dick, "my old vicar has a brother, Mr. John Trevenning, whom I have met once or twice at the vicarage. He's enormously rich, has a stud of racehorses, and all that sort of thing."

"I know 'im," put in Mr. Roddles, "'e's the owner of Sir Rowland—I lost a quid over the ugly beast. That's right enough, though; 'e's got plenty of oof. What's 'e got to do with 'omœopathy?"

"He's mad on it. Doesn't care what he does or how much he gives to help the 'good cause,' as he

calls it. He knows I'm studying medicine, and he's been trying to convert me. He sent me a big parcel of books a month or two back."

"What's 'is game?" asked Mr. Roddles.

"I suppose he wants to turn me into a sort of missionary for homœopathy."

Mr. Roddles frowned. The word took him off his balance for a moment.

"Missionary, eh? I'd sooner be called a flunkey than a missionary. A flunkey *does* earn 'is wages, while——"

Here he pulled himself up, looking a little foolish.

"There," he said, "you were only using it as a figure of speech, I know, but it's a word I 'ate the very sound of. Well, 'e wants you to be a 'omœopath, does 'e? And what would you get by it?"

Dick hesitated, and his father's keen little eyes immediately began to screw into him.

"I've no doubt," he said, "he'd help me to make a start—I know he's done it with other men."

"The regular ones—the ones in the ring—look upon them as quacks, don't they?"

"Oh yes—they say they take it up like the people that fake patent medicines—just for the money."

Mr. Roddles threw back his head and laughed—a loud, clear, hearty laugh, so unlike his usual sharp little cackle that Mr. Fitcher, standing with a bottle to his lips behind his screen, spilled a good spoonful in sheer astonishment.

"Oh lor!" exclaimed Mr. Roddles, as the laugh died away, "and what do *they* do it for? Just to 'elp the distresses of poor suffering 'umanity, don't they? Fees are only a sort of an accident—somebody 'appened

to think of them one day, and they took to the idea, and so now they just put them down for the fun of the thing. Oh, what an artful little 'ypocrite man is! Parson, doctor, lawyer—there's not so much to choose between them, after all."

"The thing is," said Dick, letting this tirade pass, "whether, if he does make me any offer of the kind, I should refuse it or not."

Mr. Roddles looked down for a minute or two, and drummed with his fingers on the table. Then he spoke again, this time in a quiet, sharp, business-like tone.

"I think you're quite right to put it like that. You're a longer-headed chap than I thought you'd ever make, I don't mind telling you that. I used to think Jim 'ad the best brains, but I'm not so sure now. Yes; the only thing you've got to think about is what'll pay you best. As for all that quackery bunkum, it takes a 'eap of people in, you've got to remember that. Can a 'omœopath get a fashionable practice?"

"I don't really know," said Dick, "I saw the report of the Homœopathic Hospital, and there were a lot of titled people among the subscribers."

"That's good," said Mr. Roddles; "the competition can't be what it is among the reg'lars, and you'd be bound to go to the top of the tree; pretty soon, too."

"I'll tell you what I thought would be the best plan—to wait and see what offer, if any, Trevenning makes. If it's really good, with good prospects ahead, take it, and snap my fingers at the reg'lars, as you call them."

But Mr. Roddles was still a vicarious purist in language.

"Don't talk like that, Dick," he said, with a frown, "you can't be too particular. I do it because I choose to, and I can afford to; you can't. But your plan's all right. You stick to your work, and keep your eyes open for every chance that drops in your way, and don't 'ave no weaknesses—not yet awhile—I dare say they'll come fast enough; and give all women—except patients—a wide berth. You 'ad the best of it in that way at your school—you weren't mixed up with a lot of girls as Jim was. There was that tow-headed girl, though, you both used to go about with. I was a bit uneasy about 'er, and I put a stopper on *that*—now then, what are you grinning in that silly way for? It doesn't suit your style of beauty, my boy. What's up? You aren't going about with 'er still, surely?"

"She was at that Public Debate," said Dick, "she takes a class at the college, and I met her a week or two back."

"Is that all?" snapped Mr. Roddles.

"She asked Jim and me to go to tea with them at Streatham."

"Did you go?"

"Yes."

"Both of you?"

"Yes."

"What's she?"

"A teacher in a High School."

Mr. Roddles threw up his hands.

"It's no good. I take back what I said just now about your being long-headed. You're just a pair of young fools, after all, like any Tom, Dick, or 'Arry of

the streets. I might 'ave known 'ow it would be, and 'ave saved my trouble."

"Oh, come, father," said Dick, with a smile; "we've only seen her twice—Jim only once—in eight or nine years; there's not much to be frightened of in that."

But Mr. Roddles refused to be comforted.

"You're talking like a fool now," he said, "and as if you take me for one. I've been right so far, 'aven't I? But never so much right as about this. Keep clear of womenfolk. The pretty ones are generally empty-headed, and always extravagant, before you've done with 'em. The clever ones are mostly bad, and the fools are the only good ones—but then they *are* fools. Your Aunt Susan's a good woman, but as for brains—oh lor! Of course you may 'ave to saddle yourself with a wife some day, but when you do, mind she pays a good price for 'er 'usband, or you'll find you've made a bad bargain. I know what I'm talking about, my boy. Let the baggages set their caps at those who 'aven't their own way to make. You tell Jim what I say. I don't suppose it'll do much good. I've always 'ad blasted bad luck, and I feel now as if this 'uzzey is going to spoil what I've been working for, twenty years or more."

"I'll tell him, but you needn't worry. We're both as keen as you are for us, after the main chance. We don't mean to let a pretty face come between us and it."

The gloom on Mr Roddles' face had lightened a little, but he still shook his head.

"You don't know them as I do," he said.

## XV

Dick duly passed on their father's advice to Jim, and both the young men agreed that on this subject he had a bee in his bonnet.

"I'll tell you what's rather funny, Jim," said Dick, "Madge is the only thing we've ever shared, as far as I can remember."

"'Thing,' indeed!" exclaimed Jim; "I must tell her that. But I'm not sure that I should admit the sharing. She was my friend long before you knew her."

"Oh yes, of course; but when I got to know her, she became my friend too."

"Yes," Jim admitted, but immediately added, in his quiet, tenacious way, "only I was the chum and you were the chum's brother."

"Well," said Dick, with a laugh, "we won't quarrel over her, or the old man will be certain he's right."

Jim made no reply, and the brothers settled down to their evening's work.

Yet, brief as it was, the conversation made a strong impression on both of them. Madge had been one of the very few pleasant memories of their boyhood. And they both felt now, more than at the time, that it was she who had first begun to draw them together into brotherly relationship, defeating to some small extent their father's policy of rigid isolation. But, though they had grown into good friends, they could still remember with singular distinctness the feelings of jealousy which had arisen out of their common friendship with her. Jim had felt that she belonged

to him, and he had been proud to show Dick his girl-friend. When he found that Dick paid small respect to the claims of prior and longer acquaintance, and that Madge herself seemed to make no distinction between him and Dick, he felt that he had been grievously ill-treated. Dick, on the other hand, resented Jim's attempts to relegate him to the second place. Even upon the occasion of Jim's illness Dick had managed to see more of Madge than did the invalid himself. Then had come Mr. Roddles' veto on the friendship, and the long breach which had been so recently repaired. And now, though they were both genuinely pleased to renew the old acquaintance, they were also conscious and ashamed of their reviving jealousies. They were conscious, too, of a feeling that in this case, at any rate, their father had, from his own standpoint, been perfectly right. There was nothing in marriage with an assistant-teacher to help them on their way to their respective tree-tops. Dick had yet another reason for drawing back. Rosie Trevenning's child-face and pretty, dainty ways, backed by the figure of her wealthy uncle, were now constantly in his mind. But—for the moment at any rate—Madge, with her bright good-humour, her sunny smile, her vivid sympathies, and the store of memories she shared with them, seemed almost irresistible. And of course they comforted themselves with the thought that there might be such a thing as a simple, straightforward friendship without any complications. Only, Jim sometimes had his doubts of Dick's firmness, and Dick of Jim's.

Neither of the brothers, however, allowed such distracting thoughts to interfere seriously with their work. That, to both of them, was the one thing needful in life—success in the work to which they had put their hands. And to both of them "success" now meant the attainment of a standard reached by very few. They had unconsciously adopted and assimilated one of their father's ideas—his intolerance and contempt for the second place. When Dick, though getting prize marks, was beaten in the botany examination by a man who was taking the class for the second year, he felt the "disgrace" bitterly. As it was, however, his second year was a blaze of triumph, and, in the famous figure of the Hebrew prophet, he carried off prizes and medals like a boy bird's-nesting.

To Jim, the long vacation was a weariness and vexation of spirit. Aunt Susan had, some years before, sold her Hampstead business, and had taken a lodging- and boarding-house at Ilfracombe, where, with the help of the faithful and capable Nan, she had soon secured a flourishing connection. Every year, at the beginning of the summer, she wrote to both of the boys, and asked them to go as her guests for a fortnight. This was an invitation they never refused, though sometimes the fortnight had to be cut down to a week. Generally, though not always, they went together. This year they had fixed the first fortnight in September. August they spent in hard work, Dick at the hospital, and Jim at his Inn library. Mr. Weaver was one of the few juniors in large practice who made it a rule to come to town

for the day on which the Vacation Court was open. He was a bachelor who lived with his aged mother, to whom he was devoted. She now considered herself past travelling, and he spent the long vacation in yachting round the English coast, running home on Tuesdays and rejoining his yacht on the Thursdays, after a Wednesday in Court. This arrangement suited Jim admirably. He would look in at chambers on Monday morning, see what briefs there were for Wednesday, and make any notes or look up any cases that might be useful. He grudged the fortnight at Ilfracombe, fond as he was of Aunt Susan, but he had had too many warnings from his body, to run the risk of provoking another. With Dick it was different. He had still kept up his cricket and tennis, and was always sure of more invitations during the holidays than he cared to accept. And now, half-way through August, there came a most friendly letter from Mr. John Trevenning, saying that he had taken a house for a few weeks near Scarborough, and inviting Dick for the first or second week in September. It did not take him long to make up his mind, and the second week was ruthlessly docked from the Ilfracombe visit. And when he went to Hampstead House—so Mrs. Check had named her establishment—he took the portly, handsome Grauvogel with him.

## XVI

At Ilfracombe, in the company of Mrs. Check and Nan, the young men were always their best selves. The kindness shown them in their boyhood had made

a very deep impression. Curiously undemonstrative as they had been trained to appear, this was the one direction in which they allowed themselves the luxury of a little natural self-expression. Especially was this the case with Jim, whose reserve had never recovered from the breaches made in it during his illness. It was not simply that he always remembered to write for Aunt Susan's birthday, and managed—however low his funds—to send her some little present. A far more remarkable symptom was the change in his voice when he spoke to her, and the occasional words of mild endearment that almost frightened him as he uttered them. Dick, too, though not quite to the same extent, was strongly bound by the old ties. To both Mrs. Check and Nan their "boys" had long ago suffered a sea-change. Clever they declared, they had always thought them, but not so clever as they had turned out to be. Now their hopes were as sanguine as once they had been modest. But Jim's health was a constant source of anxiety to Aunt Susan, who declared to Nan that she would never feel happy about him till he was safely married to a good woman who would look after both his body and his soul.

The season had been very satisfactory, but now the numbers were naturally falling off, and, even with the twins, the party was a small one. Jim and Dick had arrived on a Saturday, and on the following Tuesday, when they came in a few minutes late for dinner, they found, to their intense astonishment, a new arrival in the person of Miss Margaret Carr, her hair as bright and mutinous as ever, her eyes as full of mischief, and her smile as radiant. Jim was so taken

aback that he forgot his manners, and without any other greeting, cried out,

"Why, Madge! you said you were going to Tunbridge Wells."

A little titter recalled him to his usual staid self-possession, but his pale face flushed, and Madge knew that he was feeling desperately uncomfortable. She kept back the joking answer that hung upon her lips, and answered with a friendly smile,

"It isn't my fault. We *were* going, but they've got measles in the house, and we had to give up the idea."

"And then Madge, like a good girl, wrote to me," said Mrs. Check.

"Is your mother with you?" asked Dick.

"Yes," answered Madge, "but she's a bad traveller and has a train headache. A good night's rest will set her right."

By the time dinner was over, Mrs. Carr had fallen asleep, so Madge, with Jim and Dick, went out for a stroll by the sea.

"What an artful old woman Aunt Sue is!" said Dick; "she never whispered a word about your coming."

"I begged her not to," Madge confessed, "I wanted to begin the holidays with a little joke. It's very serious work teaching in a High School!"

"Is it?" said Dick. "Not more so than any other kind of teaching, I suppose."

"Then I'm afraid your supposition is wrong. We not only teach arithmetic and grammar and the usual extras, but we have an atmosphere, a tone, an *ethos*

to maintain. Our motto is, or ought to be—Education of ladies, by ladies, for ladies. In short, we might have walked straight out of the *Book of Snobs*."

Jim laughed. "I don't recognise the likeness."

"Well, you see, I'm not really one of 'us,' though my dreadful secret isn't known except, I suppose, to the Head, and she keeps it, in her own interest. I know I shall blurt out the fact one day that I'm a board-school girl, and then——"

"Are they as bad as all that?" asked Dick.

"They're not bad at all," Madge answered, "they've got a lot to put up with, and a little snobbishness helps them to keep their self-respect—at least they think it does. If I'd been to a sixpence-a-week school when I was a kiddie, and poor dad had been a stockbroker's clerk, I might have been as proud an aristocrat as any of them."

"I don't think I shall ever be a snob," said Jim gravely, "not when I get on, I mean."

Madge shot a quick glance of approval at him.

"No, Jim," she said heartily, "I don't think you will."

"Words, words," cried Dick; "'snob' is an ugly word, and it's easy to throw it about. But poverty is an ugly thing, and the sooner one forgets it the better. '*Never waste time in looking back.*' That's Jim's favourite motto."

"If I'd shot a tiger I wouldn't mind having his skin in the room," said Madge quickly.

"Neither would I," said Jim, "as long as he wasn't inside it. But I'm afraid we haven't shot our tigers dead yet."

"Suppose the tiger on the hearth brought other tigers prowling round," put in Dick.

"I'd take my gun down again," said Madge, so truculently that all three broke out into a hearty laugh.

Those were happy days for the three young people. They recalled the old visits to the Temple Gardens, and Mr. Nine often figured in their conversations, Madge showing great interest in him.

"He's asked about you several times," Jim told her.

"We parted in anger," she said, "at least, I did. Do you remember? He offended me terribly—held my hand and wouldn't let it go."

"That's characteristic, I should say," remarked Jim. "If he once takes hold, I shouldn't expect him to let go easily."

"What did he want with your hand?" asked Dick.

"He was pretending to read my fortune."

"What was it?"

"Oh, the usual thing about the line of life."

"Anything about the course of true love?"

"Oh yes, of course."

"What was that?"

"I was to have a long life and a happy one if I made the right choice, but it wasn't clear that I should."

"Any part of it come true?" asked Dick audaciously, and was instantly punished by a shower of pebbles, for the three were lying on the beach.

"I wonder if there are any little Nines," said Madge.

"Weaver's a bachelor. His mother lives with him—she's an old lady, and he never goes far away in the vacation because of her."

"That's nice of him," she said, "he didn't look quite that sort either."

"No, he doesn't, but it's very hard to tell. I was astonished to find the other day that the office boy simply worships him. He's a critical youth too; hates the clerks, is afraid of Broadfoot, the other man in chambers, looks on me with good-humoured contempt, but thinks no end of Weaver. He'd paid for the boy's small sister at a convalescent home and sent her fruit and things."

"Do you remember his giving us half a crown for tea?" said Dick.

"Rather," exclaimed Jim, "and a rare good tea we had, too."

"I'm afraid I misjudged him," said Madge, "my conscience pricks."

"It hasn't hurt him, he looks in very good condition," declared his pupil.

On Saturday Dick was due at Scarborough. When he accepted the invitation he had, of course, no idea of the sacrifice it would entail, but now he certainly felt it was a heavy one. The brightest page of their younger life had suddenly been rolled back, and in the company of Aunt Sue, Nan, Madge, and Jim, the last few days had simply flown. Now, too, as the hour of parting drew near, the old tormenting twinges of jealousy began to haunt him again. More than once he was on the point of making an excuse to Mr. Trevenning, but the thought of the material advantage

that might follow the visit restrained him. That, after all, was the great thing, and, in this case, the opportunity was not to be trifled with.

With him went three of the other boarders, so that, though two maiden ladies came the same evening, the numbers were steadily diminishing. Still, on the whole, it had been an excellent season, and Mrs. Check was more than satisfied.

As for Jim, except from Aunt Sue's point of view, the waning of the season and the vacant places at table did not distress him in the least. He felt he could survive even the disappearance of Mr. Vane Rigandon's famous company of entertainers. The weather was perfect, and Madge was a fine walker and practically always available. What more could any reasonable person want?

Jim, for the present, at any rate, wanted and asked nothing more. They walked along the cliffs, or down the beautiful dip into Lec, or farther still to Barracane or Woolacombe, talking all the while on the inexhaustible topic of the old days, beginning, generally, to touch the present just as the walk was coming to an end. It was only after Dick had gone that the future was allowed to show her mysterious face above the horizon.

"What are your ambitions now, Jim?" That was direct enough, in all conscience, and it sent him fumbling for words to express aspirations that were not any too clear to himself. She waited patiently, without a word more, till at last he broke an awkward pause.

"I believe the old man has made our ambitions for

us," he answered. "I'm to have a house in the Cromwell Road and to be made a judge—that's his little programme for me, I understand."

"Shall you do it, do you think?"

"If he were standing over me again with his strap I think I might," he replied.

Then Jim in his turn began to catechise.

"Do you like teaching?"

"Yes. The girls are so interesting."

"I should have thought they would bore you most horribly."

"Why should they? Every new child seems to bring something fresh, a new breath of life. And then, getting to know them is so exciting, and getting to love them, best of all."

"I suppose I've got what they call a contracted outlook," said Jim slowly; "other people—except you, and Dick, and Aunt Sue, and Nan, and the old man—worry me. Work's interesting—this law work is fine, and I like exams.—they're a kind of game between you and the examiners, with the odds on them. It's fun upsetting the odds. I think practice at the Bar must be very interesting too. I'm looking forward to it. I was in a moot—that's a debate on a law point—at Gray's Inn, a week or two back. I enjoyed that. It seemed just like the real thing, only there was no fee."

"Did you feel nervous?"

"Nervous! No. The man who acted as judge was Hilsden Young, who's got no work to speak of. I felt I knew as much about the point as he did. I got judgment, too, so perhaps he knew more than I

gave him credit for. Do you mean to go on with your teaching ? ”

“ Yes; it means that mother and I can keep together.”

“ If you had no ties and plenty of money, what would you do ? ” he persisted.

She flushed.

“ Be a missionary, I think.”

“ A missionary ! ” He was genuinely astonished.

“ Dreadful, isn't it ? ” she said, with a smile.

“ Not dreadful, but strange.”

“ Why ? I'm what the girls call ' pi,' so it's rather natural.”

“ I'm not, so it seems strange to me. The law interests me a great deal more than the gospel.”

“ Don't joke about it, Jim,” she said.

“ I'm sorry,” he answered. “ It sounded like it, but I didn't mean it that way. It's only the truth.”

## XVII

Clune House, where Mr. John Trevenning was holidaying, was a big, rambling old house, very comfortably furnished, and surrounded by a beautiful garden. It was far enough from the streets of Scarborough to be perfectly quiet, and yet near enough to make the sea-front easily accessible. Here Dick found Mr. Trevenning and Mrs. Dukes, and also Rosie, looking more than ever a child in her holiday frocks and hats. There was also Mrs. Mount, another married sister, with her three children, two boys and a girl, all in the preparatory-school stage. And, besides these family guests, he was introduced to a pair of learned-

looking individuals, a Mr. Samuel Heatly and Dr. Lawrence Main.

The garden contained a tennis lawn, a bowling green, a cricket net, and a tiny golf course, so that there was no lack of recreation. Dr. Main was easily the best of the party at tennis, and often he and Rosie would play Mr. Trevenning and Dick. At golf Dick was a tiro, and Rosie took him in hand and taught him the swing.

"You're a first-class pupil, Mr. Roddles," she said, after the third lesson. "You always do exactly what you're told."

"There's a character!" exclaimed Dick, looking at himself in the hall glass with new respect. "I suppose I must have been like that all these years and never suspected it."

"You're a great deal too shrewd not to have known it," she answered.

After dinner, the men sat and smoked over their coffee and wine.

"Well," said Mr. Trevenning, "how's the new wing going?"

"Slow but sure," answered Mr. Heatly. "Four thousand still wanted."

"That's not so bad, considering," said Uncle John.

I tell you what. I'll give the last four hundred if the lot's raised before the end of the year."

"Oh, that's very generous of you, Mr. Trevenning," said Mr. Heatly, looking at Dr. Main, who made an emphatic gesture of approval. "I don't know what we should do without you."

"Pooh!" said Uncle John, "there'll be lots more

soon. I'm sure we're making progress. What do you say, Main?"

Dr. Main, who was a very formal and precise person in appearance and manner, looked up at this direct challenge.

"It is difficult to estimate progress, Mr. Trevenning," he said; "but I should say there are many signs that prejudice is gradually weakening, and a more reasonable spirit is abroad."

"And that is all we want, eh? A fair field and no favour."

"That is all," assented Dr. Main, "and we must never rest till we have secured it for ourselves or for our children."

"Here's a young allopath who won't echo our pious wishes," said Mr. Trevenning, looking at Dick.

"Oh, indeed!" said Dr. Main, "I was not aware that Mr. Roddles belonged to the profession."

"I don't yet—I'm only in the student stage."

"At what hospital, may I ask?" said the doctor.

"University College."

"Really? I was there myself; in fact I was house-surgeon there. That was in Marshall's time. Well, as far as the general scientific work is concerned, you couldn't have done better."

"And that's essential in any case, isn't it?" asked Dick.

"Oh, most certainly. I should always advise a student, on whatever lines he means to practise, to take his M.D. A man really isn't qualified to discriminate between rival systems till he has mastered what is common to both."

"No," assented Dick; "I can see that. And there's a good lot that *is* common, isn't there?"

"There is, indeed. And if a man afterwards adopts the progressive views of medical science, it is more a question of adding the new than of unlearning the old. Our *Materia Medica*, for instance, is an armoury that our allopathic friends are constantly visiting on business, and you see the result in every new edition of Ringer."

"Mr. Trevenning was kind enough to send me some books," replied Dick, "and I've looked at most of them. I've read Grauvogel, and a good bit of Lütze."

"Grauvogel is good," said Dr. Main; "but Lütze—well, I don't think he's quite the man for a beginner. You see, he's writing for a German public, and every nation has its own characteristics. You should read some of our English school. Have you been over the hospital?"

"You mean the homœopathic? No, I haven't."

"Well, you must let me show you over. That's the fairest way to judge."

"And you'll let me know the English books you were speaking of. I'll see that Roddles has them," said Mr. Trevenning. And before he went to bed Dick found himself pledged to visit the hospital and to read Hughes' *Pharmacodynamics*.

## XVIII

Dick came back from Scarborough honestly convinced that the homœopaths had a good deal to say for

themselves, and that Rosie was a very charming girl. Each of these propositions had evidence in its favour. Dr. Main was an exceedingly able man, with a genuine enthusiasm for the new system, which was all the more impressive because his usual manner was so cold and impassive. As for Rosie, the evidence was abundant and, in its cumulative effect, overwhelming. Dick was the only young man of the party, and after the children had gone to bed, he and Rosie generally paired off together. She played—in a pretty, amateurish way—rather well, and she sang better than she played. Dick was really fond of music, and could sing a very fair drawing-room song. Hence a good part of the evening was spent by them over the grand piano, while the others were playing whist and bezique. Mrs. Dukes had taken such a fancy to Dick that Mr. Trevenning, who was secretly delighted, rallied her on her girlish impulsiveness.

“Ah,” she said, “you may laugh as much as you like, but I can see what that young man is going to be and do.”

“I wish *I* could,” he answered, in great good humour, “I can’t go further than hoping, at present.”

That week at Scarborough was an unmistakable milestone in Dick’s career. It gave him a new—an assured position in the Trevenning family. Mrs. Mount, indeed, was not particularly cordial. Her husband has just been unfortunate in business, and Uncle John’s help had been invoked. Perhaps the trouble made her querulous, but to Dick it seemed as though she were inclined to be jealous of the favour shown him. With Godfrey, Tom, and Joan, how-

ever, he got on capitally, and "Mr. Dick" was soon one of their heroes.

It was when they were all back in London that he fully appreciated the change the week in Scarborough had made. The faint touch of condescension which he had occasionally felt in Rosie's manner, had quite disappeared, while the Rev. Basil seemed to grow more cordial with every visit.

But, pleasant as his new position was, it brought with it its own embarrassments. Chief among these was the religious difficulty. It was quite obvious that the vicar looked upon Dick's confessed change of attitude as a merely temporary freak, or, at any rate, as a mild attack of spiritual measles, requiring no very heroic remedies, but only a little patience and common sense. His treatment consisted in ignoring the doubts, and in pressing on the young man attendance at church and what he considered a reasonable amount of church work. And Dick found it more and more difficult to refuse. With every attendance the vicar grew kinder and more genial, until sometimes his old pupil felt as though he were obtaining favour under false pretences.

The other drawback to his pleasure was the thought of Madge. His feeling to her was hard to define. He admired her greatly, and he was happy in her company. But every time he met her now, he was impressed by a feeling that not only baffled but irritated him, and it irritated him all the more because on so many sides they seemed in such thorough sympathy. His scientific interests appealed to her, he was certain, far more than Jim's musty law, and science was

Dick's one great enthusiasm. The application of the science—the practice of medicine—appealed to him far less. It was just a means of making money and getting to that big house in the Cromwell Road, which was his obvious destiny. Even the relief of human misery did not present itself as an overwhelming inducement. The doctor who prolonged life and, after a bitter struggle, wrung from the reluctant hands of Death a reprieve of weeks or months, really only added to the sum of man's pain, and as to the ultimate balance of gain or loss—when, and how, and by whom could it be struck? But research work—the delving in darkness for the jewel of abstract truth—that was happiness indeed, and success in it, the only glory worth the name. And Madge understood. He knew it, though she had never said so in words. And yet, for all that, there was some point, he felt, at which their sympathies diverged.

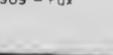
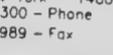
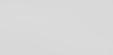
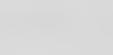
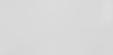
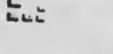
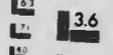
Then, too, there was the difficulty of Jim. In a way, he certainly had a prior claim, and a real, active quarrel with him would be a miserable affair. For Dick knew his brother's strong, quiet tenacity of purpose, and if he had set his heart on winning Madge for himself, it would be no light and easy undertaking to thwart him. But had he? For the life of him Dick could not tell. He sometimes thought of asking him point-blank. But, friendly as they now were, the brothers never dreamed of exchanging confidences on any but superficial matters, or where their interests were so far apart that they could not possibly clash.

Finally there was the consideration, never to be



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lost sight of, that Madge was more likely to be a hindrance than a help to a man ambitious of getting on quickly. Pitiably poor, she seemed totally unaware of her own unhappy circumstances. And, with all his zeal for scientific truth, Dick had not the least intention of sacrificing his chances of a large income and a comfortable establishment. Mr. Roddles had seen to that.

## XIX

"You do look smart," said Mr. Fitcher admiringly, "I've never seen you got up like that, Mr. Roddles."

The tailor laid down the brush with which he had been giving a final smooth to his rebellious locks, and turned quickly on his friend. Under the keen scrutiny, Mr. Fitcher was obviously ill at ease.

"Hands!" said the tailor, as if he were giving the word of command to a squad of recruits.

Mr. Fitcher, after a momentary hesitation, held out a pair of large eights.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Roddles pleasantly; "I've run out of Brown Windsor myself, but you'll find mottled will do just as well. And you might take off your coat; I've got the ammonia bottle on the table here."

When the law-writer returned, with hands red and fragrant of the wash-tub, he found his coat waiting for him, considerably improved in appearance, so that, though outshone by his friend's splendour, he was fairly presentable.

It was the opening meeting for the autumn session of the Institute of Advanced Thought, and Mr. Roddles

had his own reasons for the care he was bestowing on his personal appearance. He was in a particularly amiable frame of mind, and entertained his companion with many stories of his connection with the Institute.

"When I joined the place," he said, "there was only what you might call an 'andful of people at the meetings. I've seen less than a dozen even on a Sunday evening. And as for the look of the 'all, it was so dirty and disreputable it fairly gave you the 'ump to cross the threshold. It's nothing to boast of now, but it gets a little whitewash and plenty of soap and water, and it's fresh and 'olesome, like your 'ands, old chap. My committee," he added importantly, "have worked 'ard and seen to things themselves, which is the only way of getting them well done."

On the way to the Institute it was generally Mr. Roddles' custom to call at one public-house and no more, but on this occasion, to his friend's dismay, he neglected opportunity after opportunity, though—at the last chance—not without an obvious struggle. In fact, poor Mr. Fitcher, realising the seriousness of the situation, did stop outside the Goat and Compasses and murmur something to the effect that his throat was very dry. Mr. Roddles, however, seized him by the arm and swept him on towards Fitzroy Street.

"We'll be drier still when we're coming back," said the tailor, and Mr. Fitcher abandoned hope.

The Institute was not imposing as far as its exterior was concerned. It was just an ordinary house of the smaller Bloomsbury type—dingy and ill cared for. The fanlight was of ground glass and bore the inscription,

in fresh black lettering: "Institute of Advanced Thought—Secretary, J. Goodby, 74 Howland Street." The Institute occupied the ground floor and the basement. On the ground floor was a room furnished with a large table, on which lay a few papers and draught-boards and dominoes, a bookcase with some old directories and volumes of *Chambers's Journal* and the *National Reformer*, and some chairs. This was the library. Then there was a smaller room for the secretary and for committee meetings. Two back rooms were occupied by a caretaker. In the basement the rooms had been thrown into one and extended into a back-yard to form the hall, which, when not used for the purposes of Advanced Thought, was the scene of select dances.

When the tailor and his friend arrived, they found the door half open, a sign that the Advanced Thinkers were already active.

Mr. Roddles put his head into the library and exchanged greetings with several of the members: "Ah, Jones—all right, eh? Good evening, Wilson, 'ow's the Missis? Well, Blackburn, getting on all right?" "Good evening, Mr. Roddles." "A bit better, thank you, Mr. Roddles." "Fairly, fairly, considering everything." Then the committee-room door opened, and the secretary, a stout, florid man with a quick, fussy way of speaking, came in.

"Oh, there you are, Mr. Roddles!" he exclaimed; "the committee are waiting. Time's getting on, you know."

"So are you, I 'ope, Goodby," answered Mr. Roddles airily. "Fitcher, old chap, go downstairs,

will you, and 'elp with the crockery. Now then, I'm ready."

The deliberations of the committee took some time, and when they came downstairs, the long tables at one end of the room were set out with the preparations for a social tea. This was a special ladies' evening, and there was a fair proportion of the sex present. The tea was a great success. Mr. Roddles was in excellent spirits, and Mr. Fitcher, overcoming his native shyness, achieved quite a social triumph. When tea was over, the chairs were carried to the other end of the room, where a platform was erected. On this stood a table covered with red cloth, and a few chairs. By this time there must have been seventy or eighty present, and the chairs on the floor were soon occupied, while the six or seven committee-men made their way to the platform. An old man with a thin, high voice took the chair at the table, and, after a brief pause, said,

"My friends, I will ask our secretary and treasurer, Mr. Goodby, to read the draft report of the last session, and programme for the next."

Mr. Goodby rose, hot and uncomfortable, with a big sheaf of paper in his hands. As a bootmaker, which was his daily calling, Mr. Goodby was, no doubt, richly gifted, but as a secretary his failings were many and—on such an occasion as this—obvious. He was horribly nervous, and yet very fond of the sound of his own voice. His aspirates were in worse order than Mr. Roddles', for he not only left them out where he should have put them in, but, too often, put them in where he should have left them out. He had no

memory for names or figures, and as his loose papers soon got into hopeless confusion, the report was about as illuminating a document as if he had read it backwards. At last Mr. Roddles, who, as a member of the committee, was sitting close to him, could bear it no longer. "'Ere!" he whispered, so loudly that every one in the room must have heard, "give me those papers. I'll sort them for you."

As he spoke he laid hold of one corner of the bunch of papers. Mr. Goodby, however, was unwilling to give them up, and for a moment they tugged against each other. Some one chuckled, and immediately the whole meeting broke out into shouts of laughter. It was the best thing that could have happened. Mr. Goodby himself seemed to think that he had made a lucky hit, and, with a slow smile dawning on his crimson face, he resigned the papers to the eager little tailor, who had begun arranging them during the struggle, and turned to face the audience.

"While Mr. Roddles is putting those papers straight," he said, "I'll just finish what I was sayin'. As I say, our hall is invested in this 'all. That's what we've got to bear in mind. We've nothing but the 'all and what we can make out of it. That's the pint I want to bring before you, friends. If we are able to let the 'all on favourable terms, then we're hall right. In fact," continued Mr. Goodby, now quite fluent and approaching the sentence which appeared to have a fatal fascination for him, from a new quarter, "it hall depends on the 'all. We 'ave to pay heifty pounds a year, and by sub-letting we got in sixty-six pounds, I think it was; that leaves a deficit of—well, the

figures speak for themselves, and you'll find them in that report."

At this stage the chairman, prompted by Mr. Roddles, rose and, holding one of the sheets of the report on which the tailor had been scribbling, said,

"Mr. Roddles has just extracted from the very full and careful report drawn up by our worthy secretary, the following brief summary, which is really all we want to hear at this meeting."

He then read the figures off the balance-sheet, showing that they started the new session with just ten shillings to their credit. He also read a list of the meetings already arranged for.

The report was duly adopted, and Mr. Goodby was thanked for his valuable services, and was hastily assured that it was quite unnecessary for him to return thanks. Then the chairman rose again.

"I do not propose," he said, "to weary you with anything like a speech. But I must congratulate you on finding yourselves at the end of the session with a balance on the right side. I think, too, you ought to know that it is to the generosity of our friend, Mr. Roddles, that we owe our good fortune. But for his timely help we should have been in a very different position this evening, and it would probably have been necessary to look to you for subscriptions to wipe off a deficit of four or five pounds."

At this there was a good deal of clapping, after which the speaker went on,

"There is one other matter of a personal character. For two years, as many of you know, I have been acting as chairman of your committee. I am, un-

fortunately, not as young as I should like to be, and I feel I cannot any longer undertake such regular duties. Happily, there need be no difficulty in finding an efficient substitute, and I have great pleasure in proposing as chairman for the new session our friend, Mr. Roddles. His energy, his eloquence, and his generosity, all mark him out as the man for the post."

There was quite a rush to second the proposal, and on being put to the vote it was carried unanimously. The chairman then retired from the chair, and Mr. Roddles took his place. His face showed very plainly the pride and pleasure he felt. He stood looking round, and when silence was restored, and even Mr. Fitcher had ceased clapping and stamping, he returned thanks very briefly.

"Friends," he said, "men and women, I 'ave always been glad to be of any use down 'ere. This place 'as been a sort of 'ome to me, and some of the pleasantest hours I 'ave known during the last few years 'ave been spent in this 'ail. Mr. Corney said something about my 'aving 'elped with the money. Well, I look upon it as paying a debt, and very glad I am to pay it. I've seen the Institute double and nearly treble the number of its members. I 'ope to see it go on increasing still more, and 'olding up the lamp of reason and Advanced Thought in this benighted neighbour'ood."

It was striking twelve when Mr. Roddles and Mr. Fitcher—very tired, very happy, but, alas! a little unsteady on their legs—made their way back to Green Yard.

"A proud night, Mr. Roddles—a proud night!" exclaimed Mr. Fitcher for the twentieth time.

The tailor smiled benignantly.

"Silly old fool," he purred, "and I was a nobody when I joined!"

## XX

The opening of the Michaelmas term was a red-letter day to Jim. Once more there was animation in chambers. The table was blue again with tape-tied papers, the Courts opened their hospitable doors, and consultations filled up every odd moment. This was something like life, and Mr. Weaver fell a little in his esteem when he failed to echo his enthusiasm.

"You look quite bucked up by your holiday," said the barrister.

"I don't think it's the holiday," Jim answered, "it's coming back to work."

Mr. Weaver laughed.

"Well, I've known a good many hard workers—I've been something of one myself—but I never came across any one who loved work as you seem to. Have you got any interests besides work?"

Jim considered, with his usual quiet gravity.

"Nothing to compare with it," he replied.

"You don't play games much, do you?"

Jim shook his head.

"No; except a rubber once in a way. My brother and I have a game of chess occasionally, but it takes such a time."

"Have you got a dog or a canary?"

Jim shook his head so emphatically that Mr. Weaver laughed again.

"Excuse my asking, but you're not engaged to be married, are you?"

Jim flushed. "No," he said, "I'm not."

"How's your brother getting on with *his* work? Is he as fond of it, as you of yours?"

"No, I don't think he is quite; but he works just as hard, only he has more what you call interests. He's fond of games. He plays cricket and tennis."

"Ah, I wish I could have kept up my tennis. I used to enjoy those sets in the Temple. How's that girl—I never can remember her name—getting on?"

"Madge—Miss Carr, you mean. She's still teaching at a High School. She's very curious to see the Courts, and I've promised to show her over."

Mr. Weaver looked interested.

"When?" he asked.

"Saturday is her only day; I think she'll come down next Saturday."

The barrister opened his diary.

"Look here, Roddles," he said. "can't you arrange to take her round just before the Courts close? Then you could bring her in here for a little lunch. Tell her we have to live like anchorites, but we can get a tongue and some salad and a bottle of claret."

"She's a teetotaller, I know," put in Jim.

"Lemonade, then; that's simpler. I wonder whether she'd come. I'd like to see her again. Do you think she would?"

"Yes," answered Jim; "I've no doubt she will."

"Ask her, then," said Mr. Weaver.

Next Saturday, according to instructions from Jim, Madge met him outside Vice-Chancellor Hall's Court soon after one o'clock. There was a big witness action in progress in that Court, with Sir Henry James to cross-examine, and the Solicitor-General leading on the other side. Jim took her into a back seat, and they sat there for ten minutes while the cross-examination was going on. Madge was keenly interested and quite reluctant to leave, but Jim insisted on her seeing the Court of Appeal and Sir Lewis Plummer. As they came out of his Court they met Mr. Weaver. He nodded to Jim, and then turned to Madge.

"I wonder whether you remember me, Miss Carr?" he said. "Perhaps Mr. Roddles has told you who I am."

Madge smiled.

"I shouldn't have needed any telling. I should have known you anywhere, even in your wig. You have hardly altered at all."

"I can't say the same of you," he said. "I remember you a child, now you're a young lady. I must go in here because I've got an application to make, but I shall see you in chambers soon, shan't I?"

She nodded and smiled.

"Thank you so much for asking me," she said.

Mr. Weaver had gone to the trouble of bringing with him from home some silver plate and table linen. Broome and the boy laid the table, and, with a few flowers, made it look quite pretty.

At two o'clock punctually, Jim brought Madge in, and the party of three sat down to their lunch. Mr.

Broadfoot had gone, so that his room was available for clients, and twice during the hour of Madge's visit Mr. Weaver was called out.

Naturally, the conversation turned on the days of their former acquaintance.

"I often used to think of you, and wonder what had become of you all," remarked Mr. Weaver.

"After Jim's illness we hardly saw anything of each other," said Madge.

"I didn't know you had had a bad illness." And Mr. Weaver looked at his pupil.

"It was pneumonia—rather a nasty attack," said Jim, "when I was fourteen or fifteen."

"So we lost touch of each other, and had to begin all over again," went on Madge.

"And *we've* had to begin all over again," said the barrister, laying emphasis on the pronoun.

"There isn't very much to pick up, is there?" asked Madge, with a smile.

"Well, it's a funny thing," answered Mr. Weaver, "you *were* only a child, and I *did* know very little of you, and yet I missed you quite absurdly. I used to fancy you were like a young sister of mine who died a great many years ago. Do you know, I can still see the likeness."

He had lowered his voice, and both Madge and Jim were struck by the change of tone. She wanted to express sympathy, but felt at a loss.

"I see. Thank you," she said, and immediately was furious with herself for the inanity of the words.

There was a consultation fixed for three o'clock.

Just as Madge was leaving, Mr. Weaver reverted to the likeness.

"I wonder, Miss Carr," he said, "whether you would be charitable enough to do a real kindness to a dear old lady of over seventy. It is my mother, I mean. She lives with me, and she was devoted to my sister, of whom I told you just now. She would see the likeness, and I'm sure it would give her the greatest possible pleasure. Now, look here, we've had a pleasant little luncheon-party—at least it has been so to me. Why shouldn't we have dinner in St. John's Wood, and let me introduce you both to my mother?"

Madge showed her pleasure in her face.

"I should like to come very much indeed."

"And can you manage it, Roddles?"

"I should like to," Jim began, "but my work——"

Mr. Weaver laughed.

"Oh, hang work for once!" he cried. "What do you say to this day fortnight? Cherril Lodge, Finchley Road, close to Marlborough Road Station. Seven o'clock. Don't forget."

## XXI

The dinner-party took place on the Saturday fortnight. Cherril Lodge was a low, two-storied house with curious little gothic windows and an exterior quaint rather than beautiful. Inside, the rooms were not lofty, but well shaped and comfortable. They were furnished expensively and in excellent taste. At the back was a large garden with two or three green-

houses. There was stabling, and over the stables a neat little house for the coachman.

As far as the dining-table was concerned, the meal was a repetition of the lunch at New Square. Now, as then, Mr. Weaver sat at the head and carved, while Madge and Jim faced each other. Old Mrs. Weaver sat in an arm-chair by the fire, with her own little table at her side. She was very small, with beautiful silvery-white hair and a wonderfully fresh complexion. Her face and manner showed that she was keenly alive to all that passed, but it was quite obvious that her son was the chief object of her thoughts. Her eyes constantly sought his, and, when they met, a smile lit up her face that made it look years younger. She was very gracious to Madge, who promptly fell in love with her at first sight. Jim, too, she received cordially, as Will's favourite pupil, but later on, her manner towards him grew a little more reserved.

After dinner they went into the drawing-room, and Mr. Weaver asked Madge to play or sing. At first she refused.

"I would, with pleasure, but I'm not good enough at either playing or singing except for my own amusement. Besides, I haven't any music with me."

"What do you sing, when it is for your own amusement?" asked Mrs. Weaver.

"Only a few of the old songs: *The Banks of Allan Water*, *The Oak and the Ash*, *The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington*—you know the kind."

"Oh, my dear," said the old lady, "they are the very songs I love. I haven't heard them for years.

Do you remember, Will, Jennie used to sing *On the Banks of Allan Water*?"

Madge looked up quickly.

"If you would like me to," she said, "I'll try and sing it. I think I can remember it."

Mrs. Weaver laid her hand lightly, with a little caressing movement, on the girl's arm, as she answered, "It will be very kind of you."

Madge smiled, got up at once, sat down at the piano, and began to sing.

Jim was dismayed at her yielding. With his ingrained contempt for the second-rate, he thought it a sad mistake to give herself away, and he felt sure that Mrs. Weaver, if not her son, would be a good judge. He felt, too, as though Madge's failure would be a reflection on him.

But as he watched the faces of mother and son he soon saw that the mistake had been his. The pleasure on both was quite unmistakable. The simple accompaniment was no difficulty to the singer, her voice, though untrained, was fresh and sweet, and she sang with a graceful and sincere expression. When the song was over and Madge went back to the sofa where she had been sitting, the old lady put out her hands, drew the girl gently to her, and kissed her on the cheek.

"There, my dear," she said, "that is my thanks. I won't ask you to sing again now, because I want to keep that song in my ears for to-night. But if you are the girl I take you for, you will come again before long and sing to an old woman who loves the old songs."

Jim was immensely relieved, and felt a new respect for Madge. "She knew what she was about," he said to himself; "she's a cleverer girl than I thought her."

And Madge answered, with shining eyes,  
"Yes, indeed I will, if it really gives you pleasure."

## XXII

During the next three years, the fortunes of the brothers advanced steadily but quietly. Jim's time in Mr. Weaver's chambers was over in May, but he stayed on by invitation till August, and in the following October went for six months to read with a Common Law barrister in Paper Buildings. By this time he had definitively made up his mind to try for Chancery work, but both Mr. Weaver and Sir Lewis Plummer strongly advised him to see something of Common Law practice. In the following January he won the scholarship at the London LL.B., and in April had finished his work in Paper Buildings. The next few months he devoted to working for his Bar examination, in which he gained first-class honours with a studentship, and in Michaelmas term he was called to the Bar.

During all this time he kept up his friendship with Mr. Weaver, and often called and carried off particularly interesting cases or knotty points, to look up and write on. His little room had been occupied, since he left the chambers, by Mr. Broadfoot's son. This young man had recently received an appointment, and now the room was vacant again. Thereupon, Mr. Weaver sent for Jim and asked him his plans.

"I suppose I must try and get a room in some one's

chambers, so as to have the use of a clerk," Jim answered. "I've been looking at the Inns, and have got one or two addresses. I expect it will have to be Chancery Lane."

"I think I know a better plan than that," said Mr. Weaver. "Your old room is empty again. Why shouldn't you take it? I can give you work to do for me that will certainly more than pay your rent, and I think you may very likely get some more from Broadfoot."

Jim shook his head.

"I don't think Mr. Broadfoot would go out of his way to help me."

"He is a little eccentric in some ways," replied Mr. Weaver, "but he is a fine lawyer. I think he had an idea that you might stand in the way of his son. Now that Anthony Broadfoot is provided for, I shouldn't wonder if you get some work from his father. I know he thought very highly of some of your opinions that I showed him."

Mr. Weaver's forecast proved quite correct. Mr. Broadfoot seemed a good deal feebler than of old, and before Jim had been back in chambers a fortnight he came into his room with a formidable-looking set of papers.

"Look here, R-r-r-rod-dles," he said, "I've bitten off more than I can chew this week—at least Farrer has, for me. I've got a confounded cold that's threatening my chest, and there's only one cure, and that's B-b-b-b-bournemouth. This case is really an Ecclesiastical Law business, and it wants a lot of looking up. Do you think you could take it up for me?"

"I don't know anything about Ecclesiastical Law, I'm afraid," remarked Jim dubiously.

"Of c-c-c-course not—none of us do, any more than the judges. But you can look it up. I've had the papers too long to send them back."

"I'll do my best," said Jim.

"Thank you very much. Are you very busy just now?"

"No, not at all."

"Well, then, I'll ask Farrer to bring some tea, and we'll have a few minutes' gossip. There are one or two little things it'll do you no harm to be told by an old stager. You had to speak to me the other day in Court, and you called me 'Mr.' Broadfoot. Don't do that again. Now you're called, I'm Broadfoot to you, just as you are Roddles to me. I dare say you thought I was short with you. When we get old fogeys we think a lot of little things. I remember once Knight Bruce and Turner having a discussion on etiquette—they went at it hammer and tongs. Fine fellows they were, both of them, but in such different ways. They talk about Macaulay and his reading and his memory and all the rest of it—he wasn't a patch on old Knight Bruce. He was one of the few men who can really read a b-b-b-b-b-book diagonally. Give him anything you like from the *Pandects* to the *Telegraph*, and he'd gallop through it in half the time it would take an ordinary man. Southgate told me—did you ever see *him*?—"

So the old man went on, while Jim listened, and wondered whether any one else devilled for him.

## XXIII

While Jim was thus making a start in his profession, Dick was still in the preparatory stages of his. He had come to the hospital before Jim joined his Inn, but the course was longer, and when Jim was earning his first guineas by devilling for Weaver and Broadfoot, Dick was entering the last lap for his final examinations. His career had been one of exceptional brilliance, and though some doubted whether he would ever capture the true Harley Street air of dignified and impressive urbanity—that inimitable blend of the headmaster's omniscience with the suavity of the fashionable tailor—yet all allowed him an unusual scientific equipment.

“That's your rock ahead, old chap,” said the admiring but outspoken Staniforth, who had just struggled through the M.B. at the second try. “You're so beastly fond of the ologies that you'll never be happy prescribing quinine and bromide and cod-liver oil. Your heart will be with Pasteur and his ferments, when your starving patients are crying out for syrup of hypophosphites.”

“Pooh!” answered Dick, with a careless laugh, “I'm a poor man, and the ologies don't pay. If they did, it might be different. I want money, and I mean to get it.”

Staniforth shook his head, only half convinced, but Dick meant what he said. His object was clear enough, how to attain it, was the difficulty. With the strictest economy he had only just been able to keep himself and pay the expenses of his medical training. It would certainly be a long time

before he was in a position to buy himself into a practice. A hospital appointment might be honourable; it would certainly not be lucrative. He might make a beginning with *locum* work, or start as an assistant, but neither prospect was exhilarating.

There was, however, an alternative, and, more and more, he felt it was one that he must seriously consider.

Since his visit to Scarborough, his friendship with the Trevenning family had made steady progress. The next year he had spent part of his holiday with the Rev. Basil at Grasmere. The year after, he had accompanied Mr. John Trevenning on a yachting cruise. On both these occasions Rosie had been one of the party, and they had become quite intimate. The vicar's way of dealing with Dick's heterodoxy seemed to have been eminently successful. Gradually he had fallen into the habit of attending at St. Gabriel's with something like regularity, and he often sang in the choir. He still, indeed, drew the line at the Eucharist, but that, the vicar felt sure, would come in good time. Meanwhile, Uncle John's great partiality for Dick, as well as the young man's own abilities, seemed to foreshadow for him a successful and probably a brilliant career.

"Partiality" was really too weak a word for Uncle John's feeling towards Dick. He had, as he put it himself, "taken to" the young fellow from the first. Then the feeling broadened into admiration, and finally deepened into affection. And, as it happened, these feelings were fully shared by his sister, Mrs. Dukes. The consequence was that whenever Dick

paid a visit in Portman Square, he was received with extreme cordiality. With all his deliberate worldly prudence and cool intellectual temper, he was neither heartless nor ungrateful. It was some time before he understood that the pleasant words and thoughtful kindnesses were more than the general expression of a genial disposition, and had any special reference to himself. When he did understand, he was astonished and almost frightened at the warmth of his own feelings in return. To give these kind friends pleasure, afforded him, he found, a new and most delightful sensation. To do anything that would be likely to give them pain had become to him almost unthinkable.

Now he knew perfectly well that Mr. John had set his heart on his becoming a homœopathic doctor. Indeed, he had said almost as much in plain words. It was when Dick, at Mrs. Dukes' request, had brought the medals and prizes he had just won—a dazzling array. Uncle John carried him off to the billiard-room, but instead of going to the cue-rack, took a chair and motioned to Dick to do the same.

"Dick, my lad," he said, "you're going to be a big gun."

Dick shook his head.

"You mustn't judge by those medals and things," he said. "There's a knack about it. I happen to have it, and so has my brother. It's only a good memory and a cool head. It takes more than them to make a big gun."

"Then you've got the 'more.' You're going to be a big gun, and I'd like you to be one of the best sort.

You know what I mean. It's no good beating about the bush. I've taken a great fancy to you, Dick, and I've got great faith in you. So has my sister here, and so has Basil. It's a family weakness. I've helped a good many young men to make a start, and I like doing it. You know how keen I am on the yearlings and the two-year-olds. Well, to give *you* a good send-off will be an extra pleasure, and I'm looking forward to it. And I'll do it whether you start as an allopath or a homœopath. Only I'd like you to look into homœopathy properly before you decide. I'd like you to go to the hospital and see what they've got to say for themselves. I'm not going to try and bribe you. All I say is this—if you make a start as a homœo you shan't be the loser by it."

And Dick had answered discreetly,

"Thank you very much indeed; I can't imagine why you are so kind to me. But I must get my qualifications first, and that means real hard grind for the next six months."

During those six months the matter was constantly in his mind. On the one hand, he felt that by going to the Homœopathic Hospital and attending a course of lectures there, he would be compromising himself with the orthodox, for, sooner or later, the fact of his attendance would be sure to leak out, and he already realised the sacrosanctity of professional etiquette and the strength of professional prejudice. On the other hand, he could hardly accept any help from Mr. Trevenning without agreeing to what, if not exactly a condition, was very much like one.

And, in any case, he had no doubt that, with Mr. Trevenning at his side, homœopathy would be for some years the more lucrative branch of the profession. Moreover, he felt a strong desire to fall in with the wishes of friends who had been so uniformly kind to him.

As to the scientific aspects of the case he kept an open mind. This was due entirely to the influence of Dr. Main. But for him, Dick would almost certainly have accepted the view that homœopathy was simple quackery, and homœopaths deliberate impostors for the sake of filthy lucre. But Main was a man of rare ability, highly trained, and well abreast of the latest developments of science. And of his genuine enthusiasm for homœopathy Dick, at any rate, had no doubt at all. A month or two before this, there had been a long and strenuous controversy in the *Times* between the old and the new school, and Dick had followed every stage with the keenest interest. Main had taken an active part, and his letters had seemed to Dick like rapier thrusts amid a forest of bludgeons. Still, Lütze and his miracles demanded a good deal more faith than Dick possessed, though, as he reminded himself, there were plenty of allopathic cranks. On the whole, he felt quite ready to investigate, if he were not committing himself too deeply.

## XXIV

While Jim and Dick were making steady progress in and towards their professional careers, Madge had suddenly come to a halt in hers. For the Easter

holidays that followed her first visit to Cherril Lodge, she and her mother accepted a long-standing invitation to Mrs. Carr's sister, who lived near Mayfield in Sussex. While there, Mrs. Carr had what seemed very like a paralytic seizure, and the local doctor declared that she must on no account be moved for some considerable time, and he added that in any case it would be very unwise for her to return to London.

Apart from the anxiety, this placed Madge in a very awkward position. Their rooms were held on a monthly tenancy, and she felt that as she would have to pay something for her mother's board, she must economise on herself. She had been quietly working for her M.A., and it now seemed as though she must give up the attempt for the present, and try to get some teaching work in the evenings. By this time she had become a regular visitor at Cherril Lodge. Her bright face and merry laugh, and her happy outlook on life, were like spring sunshine to old Mrs. Weaver, who was always trying to contrive crafty excuses for fresh invitations. Now, the positions were reversed. Madge, though she strove her hardest to be brave, could not altogether hide the traces of her anxiety and worries. The old lady, on the other hand, exerted herself to cheer and comfort her guest, and in doing so, found a new and delightful experience, or, at any rate, one that she had not enjoyed for many years.

At last, after a long talk with her beloved Will, Mrs. Weaver made an astounding suggestion to the girl.

"Madge, my love," she said—it had come to that—

"there is not much prospect of getting on at your school, is there?"

"No," answered Madge, "except in a very small way. If I could have got my M.A.—but it's no use thinking of that, now. Besides," she added, with a smile, "I dare say I should have failed ignominiously."

"That I am quite sure you would not have done," exclaimed Mrs. Weaver indignantly; "but you are not so desperately happy there, are you?"

Madge laughed at the strange expression.

"No, I'm afraid I'm not, but it's much better than it used to be."

"Is it?" said the old lady, as if she were not particularly glad to hear it. Then after a pause she suddenly broke out: "Oh, Madge, my dear child, I have such a lovely plan in my head, and I am afraid—simply afraid—of telling it, lest you should turn proud and snub me, and put your foot down and say 'no!'"

Madge's expressive face showed wonder and a little apprehension, but she answered without the least hesitation.

"If I turn proud, box my ears; if I put my foot down, tread on my toes. If I ever say 'no' to you, it will only be because I can't help it."

"I believe you, my dear," said Mrs. Weaver simply. "Well, this is the plan. Will has been begging me for a long time to try and find a companion—some one who would be patient with an old woman's tantrums, and fuss over her just enough and not too much, and cheer her up when she is in the dumps, and get her pretty caps, and make her take her medicine when the

doctor is coming, and so on, and so on. But the old woman is very sceptical, and she did not believe there was such a companion to be found in all the world. And now she knows there is, and—O Madge, dear child, do come! It will be almost like having Jennie back again. Stop!" she went on, as Madge opened her lips; "we must be business-like, and Will and I talked it all over from the business point of view. You will get here just what you get at the school, so you will save your board and lodging, and you will have lots of time if you want to study, and I will promise to try my very hardest to live till the M.A. That is all, I think, but O do come to me, Jennie!"

It was a slip of the tongue, but it settled the business. Madge took the trembling hands, still pretty and delicate, in her own strong young hands, and kissed them.

"Yes," she said; "I'll come and try to be like Jennie."

## XXV

Before Jim had been back many minutes in his old room at 1 New Square he looked out at the back. In a moment he saw there had been changes. There was a row of flower-pots outside the window in which he was interested, a frivolity which Mr. Roddles would never have countenanced, though he had once tolerated a canary. Looking more carefully, he could distinguish female figures in the room—one with a baby in her arms. Still it might only mean that the tailor had sub-let this particular room and taken one of the others for his own.

Next Saturday Jim stopped in chambers till after

the clerks had gone. Then he went out, had tea at an Aerated Bread Shop in Chancery Lane, and finally visited Green Yard. He soon reached the old house. It was as he had suspected—his father had gone.

The woman who opened the door was inclined to be communicative. They had only been in a week last Tuesday, she said. No, she couldn't remember the address of the gentleman who had the rooms before them, but there was a piece of paper rolled up on the mantelshelf—perhaps that had got it on—she fancied 'er 'usband said something about it. Leaving the door open, she came back studying a strip of blue draft paper.

"There you are," she said, holding it out for Jim's inspection.

On the paper were two names—Mr. Roddles and Mr. Fitcher. Underneath was written in a clerkly hand—"Removed to 115 Fetter Lane." Thanking her for the information, Jim walked down the familiar stairs and into the Yard. It was a long time since he had seen his father, and he felt doubtful what the change really meant. Of Mr. Fitcher he knew nothing, but guessed he must be a lodger.

After a little consideration he determined to follow "the old man" to his new quarters. No. 115 Fetter Lane was, in its lower parts, an oil and colour shop. There was a side entrance, with four black bell-handles that might once have been brass. To the second from the bottom, a card was fastened by a piece of string. The inscription was already only just decipherable. "Sec. Floor—Roddles—Fitcher." Jim tried to ring

the bell, but found it absolutely immovable. The only course was to mount and explore. The staircase was narrow and dark, and the landings small. On the second floor a skylight relieved the gloom a little. There were three doors, and one of them stood half open. As Jim came to a halt on the landing, a familiar voice shouted,

“ ‘Oom do you want, and what ? ”

And Jim walked in.

It was a very unattractive apartment—small, dirty, squalid, with no signs of ancient dignity like those which redeemed the decay of Green Yard. It was so crowded with furniture that movement had to be wary, as Jim found when he barked his shin against an obscure projection from an old bureau. His sharp exclamation brought a gleam of humour into Mr. Roddles' eye.

“ Now then, silly ! ” he cried, quite in his old style. “ can't you look where you're going ? Getting so accustomed to big rooms and gilt furniture, eh ? And what brings you 'ere ? ”

Jim's sharp eyes, with years of experience to prompt them, had seen at once that Mr. Roddles' humour was not a benignant one, and he had little difficulty in diagnosing the cause. When the little tailor had been indulging his weakness and was returning to normal conditions, he disliked being subjected to the observation of those who knew him, and at the same time he despised himself for paying such deference to their opinion. Hence, upon such occasions his tongue was bitter and his manners truculent. Recognising the symptoms, Jim was sorry that he had come.

He had, however, to answer the question, and accordingly he said,

"I hadn't seen anything of you for a long time, so I went round to the old place. There I found you had left, and I got this address."

"I see," answered Mr. Roddles; "it's pure affection—couldn't keep away from dear old dad. Nothing to do with money, eh?"

As Jim had repaid the savings-bank advance some time back, he felt the sneer to be undeserved.

"No," he said; "I thought I'd tell you how I was getting on. If you don't care to hear, I shall know better another time."

It was the first, or very nearly the first, time he could ever remember fairly standing up to the formidable old man, who also recognised the fact. There was a distinct and significant pause. The father looked at the son. The one was shabby and dirty and unshaven: the other spruce and neat, with the whitest of linen and a suit that might just have come from Bond Street. The contrast was exactly in accordance with Mr. Roddles' own plan; it was the most convincing evidence of his triumph. Yet the taste of it was very bitter in his mouth.

"Jack o' dandy!" he said to himself; "every bit of cotton and cloth on 'is carcass 'e owes to me, and now 'e gives 'imself the grand airs. 'E'll be lecturing me soon on the evils of intemperance! 'E's got my brains, but 'e's got 'is mother's false, bad 'eart too."

He took a draw at his pipe; it was out. With an angry oath he flung it into the fireplace, but with dis-

cretion, so that it lay safe in one corner. Then he looked up.

"Be off with you, and do as you please!" he snapped.

Jim would have liked to make peace. He felt curiously uneasy at his own act of self-assertion. But he dreaded a scene. Twice he tried to frame a conciliatory sentence; but, glib as he generally was, the words would not come, and his father's face was black as thunder. At last he turned on his heel and left the room, with a muttered "Good-bye."

## BOOK III

### I

"RODDLES," said Mr. Weaver, walking into his former pupil's room early one morning, "have you heard the news? Miss Farr has got her M.A. Medal marks, too! We're going to have a dinner to celebrate the occasion, and I'm asking your brother and his wife. Are you free Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday in next week?"

Jim took from his pocket a pretty little morocco diary. He was fond of pretty little things.

"I've got a man coming to dinner," he said, after consulting the pages, "on Wednesday. Tuesday or Thursday I'm free."

"Thursday, then, at seven-thirty—put it down. By the way, there's a brief coming for you in that Bangor Traction Arbitration. You remember—I advised the Corporation two or three months ago. They wanted me to do it for them, but it'll be a long affair and I told them I really couldn't. *Entwhistle* and *Lord Mecch* may be in the paper any day now, and I *must* be free for that; so I got Comptons to send you the brief. I told them you'd do it as well as I should." He paused and smiled. "I expect I should have said 'better' if I hadn't been afraid it would be true."

Four years had made a great difference in Jim's

position and prospects. Two years after his call Mr. Broadfoot had died, and many of his best clients had brought their work to Mr. Weaver. For the last year and a half of his life Jim had devilled almost all the old man's conveyancing and a large part of his pleading, besides doing a great deal of work for Mr. Weaver. On Mr. Broadfoot's death an appreciable proportion of his conveyancing practice came to Jim direct, as Mr. Weaver had almost entirely given up that class of work. Mr. Weaver had now one of the largest junior practices at the Chancery Bar, and it excited no surprise when, about a year later, he applied for and obtained silk. By this time Jim was well known to most of Mr. Weaver's good clients, and two or three of them definitively adopted him as their Chancery junior. Acting on his senior's advice, Jim now took, for himself, the room that had been occupied by Mr. Broadfoot, while his own little room accommodated his first pupil, who came to him from Cambridge through Dick. The year in which Mr. Weaver took silk, Jim made between £700 and £800.

To Dick, also, the years had brought change, and change of a more intimate and personal character. He duly passed his examinations as M.R.C.S. and L.R.C.P. and took his M.B. Then he had to make up his mind with regard to homœopathy. By this time his relations with the Trevennings had become still more intimate, and the unconcealed anxiety with which Uncle John awaited his decision, without taking any steps to force it, weighed heavily with him. Ultimately he announced his intention of attending lectures at the Homœopathic Hospital. His kind patron was

delighted, and declared himself perfectly satisfied. Six months later, Dick made a further announcement. He believed, he said, that there was truth in both the schools of thought, but that neither had a monopoly of it. He was not prepared to label himself Allopath or Homœopath. He meant to try and keep abreast of medical science in both directions, and in the interests of his patients he should hold himself free to follow either Galen or Hahnemann. Mr. Trevenning was certainly disappointed, but by this time his attachment to the young man was so strong that he allowed no sign of his feelings to appear. Even in conversation with Mrs. Dukes, the point he chiefly dwelt upon was Dick's independence and intellectual honesty.

Under the circumstances, the best thing seemed to be to buy a general practice within a reasonable distance of Portman Square, so that the Trevennings might, perhaps, be able to send an occasional patient from their circle. An opportunity soon offered, and a snug little house in Acacia Road was bought, where a certain Dr. Belchamber had carried on a good and a growing practice. His health had broken down, and he was leaving England for South Australia.

Curiously enough, in going over the books, Dr. Belchamber pointed to one or two names.

"They are really homœopaths," he said; "if you want to keep them you'll have to humour them. Give them half or quarter doses, unless there's anything seriously wrong with them. That's how I managed."

How much he paid for the practice, Uncle John insisted on keeping a secret but Dick felt sure it must have been a good return, for the connectio:

was an uncommonly good one. Nor did it fall off in Dick's hands. Regular, punctual, methodical, he found the work more interesting than he had expected. At first his reserve and a certain natural coldness of manner stood in his way, but when these defects were pointed out to him, he set himself, with quiet deliberation, to remedy them as far as he possibly could. And if his patients missed the warmth and geniality and quick sympathies of the born healer of men, they soon learned to value the services of one who never broke an engagement, was rarely a minute late, and who thought no time too long and no trouble too great to solve the difficulties they brought him. It was noticeable, however, that among his patients he found his chief admirers in the men and the children.

When he was comfortably settled and the practice had been satisfactorily tested, the question of marriage was brought forward. And here, again, it was Uncle John who took the lead. One Sunday afternoon, in the early spring, he drove over to Acacia Road and asked for a cup of tea. Jim's elderly housekeeper—recommended by Mrs. Dukes—brought in a dainty meal. Everything in the drawing-room looked bright and fresh and attractive.

"A very pleasant little crib, Dick; there's only one thing it wants."

"What's that?" asked Dick. "The rug by the fireplace, do you mean? There was something wrong with the backing; it'll be down again tomorrow."

Mr. Trevenning laughed.

"It's something more important than a rug that

this house wants. It's a mistress. Hulloo! my boy, you're blushing."

Dick looked up with a smile on his face. It was a smile not of merriment but of self-defence. He guessed what was coming, and he was hardly prepared with the answer which he would have to give.

Mr. Trevenning watched him closely as he lowered his eyes and looked across the room, out of the window.

"Dick," said the elder man, "you ought to know me by this time. I'm a plain-spoken man, because I'm not clever enough to be anything else. If I'd got your brains I'd do this job in a very different way, I've no doubt. Look here. Do you and Rosie mean business?"

Again Dick looked up with a smile. The instinct to gain time was too strong to be resisted, though he knew the delay would not help him.

"That's too wide a question, sir, isn't it?" he said. "I can only speak for myself."

"Do it then, dear boy."

"Well," said Dick slowly, "no one could help loving her."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Trevenning, dropping a big lump of sugar in his tea.

"But there are so many things to think of."

"That's the curse of brains," cried Uncle John, with something like a groan. "Well, let's have them. The first four or five, at any rate."

"There's my position, for one thing," said Dick. "My father is a jobbing tailor, and he's not in the least what people call a gentleman. He drops his 'h's,' and he sometimes takes more than is good for

him. It doesn't sound nice for a son to say this, but I've no choice, now you've asked me the question."

Mr. Trevenning nodded.

"It's quite right to tell me, but, as a matter of fact, I knew something about it before. Basil told me, years ago. Does your father keep in touch with you?"

"No. The last year or two, especially, he's seemed to want to quarrel with both of us. He and Jim have had more than one regular break, I believe. He never comes to us, and he certainly doesn't welcome me when I go to him. He's always told us to cut ourselves off from him as we get on."

"I think your father must be a remarkable man," said Uncle John.

"He is, very," said Dick.

"Have you many other relatives?"

"As far as I know, only a dear old aunt who has a boarding-house at Ilfracombe."

"Well," said Mr. Trevenning, "I don't see anything very dreadful so far."

"There's another thing," Dick went on. "Mr. and Mrs. Trevenning have always been so good to me, that I should hate to seem ungrateful. It has occurred to me that the possibility of my presuming to fall in love with their daughter may never have struck them."

"Oh come!" cried Uncle John, "Basil's not such a fool as all that, Dick. I think the possibility must have crossed his mind. He's almost as fond of you as I am. You know what I always say—it's a family weakness."

"It's the only explanation," and Dick looked at Uncle John with a troubled face. "I'm often afraid you all think me much better than you ought to. I'm sure the vicar thinks me more orthodox than I really am, and yet I've tried not to play the hypocrite."

Mr. Trevenning looked grave.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "those miserable brains again! I see how thankful I ought to be to have been spared them. I'll have a talk to Basil myself about that. We understand each other. Don't say anything to shock him, and don't be too cock-sure yourself. There may be more in religion than even you can see, Master Richard."

"I quite admit that. But I oughtn't to pretend to see what I can't see, ought I?"

"No, certainly not. But suppose all these matters can be arranged, what about Rosic? Do you love her, Dick?"

That was the crucial question, and Dick had been expecting it. It was a question, too, that did not admit of delay. If he had stated the absolute truth he would have said that he did not know, but that would seem too feeble and too foolish an answer. But did he really love her as a wife should be loved by her husband? She was pretty, and sweet, and good-tempered, she was a lady, and she would bring with her, he was pretty sure, affluence and the opportunity to devote himself, if he wished, to pure research work. Why, it was the chance of a lifetime!

And then, as he reached this conclusion, there rose before his eyes the picture of another girl, with brighter eyes, and sunnier hair, and an incomparable

smile—merriment, and mischief, and sympathy, and the joy of living, all blended together. Just for a moment there opened before him, as at some enchanter's wand, a vision of life glorified by the continual presence of such a personality—such a heart, such an intelligence, such a disposition. The next, he heard himself speaking in his grave, measured tones—

“Yes, indeed I do, though I know I'm not one of the impulsive, demonstrative lovers.”

“You're none the worse for that, my lad. Now, look here. Take my advice; ask her the question straight away. It's no good beating about the bush. Settle it, one way or the other. I tell you what. Rosie's coming to Portman Square on Wednesday to arrange with Agatha about a bazaar they're getting up at St. Gabriel's. What's your time for seeing patients in the evening?”

“Seven to nine.”

“Well, take a hansom, and you ought to get down by twenty past. The carriage will take her back soon after ten. You shall have your chance before then.”

And Dick had gone, had found his chance, had asked his question, and had received an answer which pleased him and delighted Uncle John.

## II

Mr. Roddles detested Fetter Lane, and, of all the houses in that mean and dirty thoroughfare, No. 115 was, he declared, the meanest and dirtiest. He had become really attached to the old house in Green Yard where he had spent so many years. It had

been associated with the two gleams of success that had, so far, lightened the gloom of what he generally spoke of as his "blasted luck." It was while he was living there that he had discovered the Institute, and, from a mere casual visitor, had become one of its chief ornaments. The great Bradlaugh had lectured there, and Mr. Roddles had occupied the chair and had proposed the vote of thanks to the lecturer. He had been president of the society which met there, and chairman of the committee that managed its business affairs. These honours, which had come to him not long before he moved from Green Yard, he owed partly to the regularity of his attendance, still more to his readiness of tongue and his acuteness in debate, and, most of all, to the unexpected generosity of his gifts, once or twice, when the society was in the throes of a financial crisis.

The other gleam had been, of course, the extraordinary success of his plans for the boys' education. Even now, he sometimes stood almost aghast at the completeness of that success. In the earlier stages, their progress had seemed nothing very remarkable. It was after their first scholarships that he began to feel a touch of something strange and startling in the fulfilment of his dreams and ambitions. He wrestled vehemently against the feeling. Their progress was only what might have been expected. He had been sharp enough to see that the boys had the ability. He had managed them with common sense, and success was a foregone conclusion. Then had come their later triumphs, and with these the renewal of his vague

misgivings. Still, on the whole, he had derived immense gratification from the gradual fulfilment of his hopes, and it was all associated with the old house in Green Yard.

It was Jim who had been the innocent cause of his leaving. On one of his visits to the "old man," as the brothers still called their father in their private conversation, he had referred to the fact that the tailor's room was commanded by his window in New Square. The idea of being spied upon by his own son was intolerable to Mr. Roddles. He would never be safe from observation, he told himself, even when indulging his weakness or recovering from the effects of the indulgence. Besides, there was the rule he had laid down some time ago now—that he and the boys should keep apart, as they began to make their way in the world. Move he must, and move he did, but, unreasonable as it was, he held Jim accountable for all the discomfort the move entailed. He half hoped, half feared, that Mr. Fitcher would stop on without him, but before he could decide which was the predominant feeling, Mr. Fitcher announced, very much in the language of Ruth to Naomi, that where Roddles went there would Fitcher go.

And now, settled in their detested Fetter Lane, the two men found a new and never-failing subject for conversation, in comparisons between their former paradise and this dreary place of exile. Mr. Roddles missed the associations, and swore at the noise. Mr. Fitcher bewailed the loss of the plane tree. And both of them, unhappily, turned for comfort to the same treacherous consoler.

Dick, of course, had heard from Jim an account of Mr. Roddles' move and of his truculent behaviour.

"I believe he's really jealous of the way we've got on," said the young barrister, "and the sight of us touches him on the raw. If we were in corduroys he'd be all right again."

"No," said Dick emphatically, "he'd never overlook a failure, but he can't forgive success. It's a hopeless sort of position as far as keeping friends is concerned."

This conversation took place in Jim's rooms, a month or two before Dick's marriage.

"What on earth am I to do?" exclaimed Dick. "I must let him know—either write or go to see him—and I suppose I ought to ask him. I don't expect he'll want to come, but he may—you never can tell. What ever should I do?"

"I don't envy you the job of telling him, but I don't think you need be afraid of his coming, unless you manage to put his back up very badly. He's kept to that idea of his, about our standing apart from him."

A few days after this conversation, Dick went down to Fetter Lane. The bell had been repaired, and when he reached the second floor Mr. Roddles' challenge rang out, "'Oo's that?"

"May I come in?" asked Dick, and received a very gruff—

"Oh, it's you again, is it?"

He had determined not to lose his temper, and he walked in with a cordial, "How are you, father?" The response was not encouraging.

"'Old your tongue, silly! 'Oo wants you shouting endearments at the top of your voice? That old fool Fitcher 'll 'ear you, and the next thing you know he'll be calling on you to get some globules for D.T."

"I'll give them to him with pleasure if he'll pay my fee."

Mr. Roddles smiled faintly.

"You're safe enough," he said, "if that's a condition."

"It's a long time since I've been to see you," said Dick. "I've got all my diplomas."

Mr. Roddles opened a drawer and took out a couple of newspaper cuttings.

"There," he remarked, "you needn't have come from Camden Town to tell me that."

Dick laughed.

"Well," he exclaimed, "you ought to have been a detective by the way you find things out. I can't imagine how you do it."

With all his roughness, Mr. Roddles was as susceptible to praise as a child.

"Ah, my boy," he said, "that's my little secret, that is."

"I haven't come from Camden Town, though," Dick went on. "I've got a little place of my own."

"Oh! and where's that?"

"In St. John's Wood—Acacia Road."

"'Ow did you manage that? 'Aven't been to the moneylenders, 'ave you?"

Dick shook his head.

"Not yet. That Mr. John Trevenning I told you

about, the vicar's brother, he bought me the practice and the little house."

Mr. Roddles looked up quickly.

"Good," he said. "You've played your cards uncommonly well. I believe you're the clever one, after all."

The praise grated, but Dick knew better than to disclaim it.

"I'm going to marry the vicar's daughter. She's a very pretty girl."

Mr. Roddles groaned.

"What did I tell you?" he cried. "You've done for yourself!"

"Her uncle's settling ten thousand on her, and he's going to make us an allowance of four hundred a year."

His father looked doubtful, and shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a good price," he said, "but you don't know yet what *you'll* 'ave to pay."

Dick knew the strength of his father's prejudice against the sex, though he did not understand it.

"The marriage," he said, "is to be at St. Gabriel's on the 25th of next month. Will you come as one of the guests?"

"I've a great mind to," answered Mr. Roddles, "just to see your face and Jim's. But I'm not going out much in Society just now, and I'm afraid you'll 'ave to do without me. If I do look in, it'll be on my own."

"Anyway, you must come and see my place, father. Can't you come one Sunday?"

"I won't, which is more to the purpose," replied the tailor. "You go your way, and I go mine, and then p'raps we shan't quarrel. I don't want to quarrel with you, Dick, because I'm sorry for you. And you're a clever lad. I've known another clever lad who 'ad blasted luck, and I don't want to see it again. And you don't give yourself airs like Jim. 'E's going to have the good luck, I believe, unless that tow-headed girl gets 'old of 'im. If she does, I'll be sorry for 'im. Is 'e in Camden Town still?"

"No," answered Dick, "he's got rooms in the Temple for the present, in Crown Office Row."

"Well," said Mr. Roddles, in a tone of grim satisfaction, "'e came 'ere, playing the grand gentleman, and I sent 'im off with a flea in 'is ear. I don't think 'e'll come again in a 'urry. Good-bye, Dick."

### III

Jim and Mr. Weaver drove in a hansom from Lincoln's Inn, discussing with gusto the defence in *Gandylick v. Creslow*, a fascinating injunction case. The time passed so quickly that Jim was astounded when the cab stopped at the door of Cherril Lodge.

"I believe you'd make a dinner any day off a fat brief and a fillet of red tape," said Mr. Weaver, as he opened the hall door.

Jim laughed, his own quiet laugh.

"There's worse fare," he confessed, "but you must admit it's an extremely interesting point. If Mellish is right——"

"No, no," said the other; "the smell of dinner

has driven all the law out of my head. Come on, bring your bag up with you. Five minutes for changing—not a second more. We shall catch it, as it is.”

Jim's five minutes ran nearly to ten, for his tie was refractory, and he would no more have gone into the drawing-room with an unsatisfactory bow, than into Court with a brief unmastered. When he did appear, the little party was assembled, all except old Mrs. Weaver, who was waiting in the dining-room. Madge was in mourning, for Mrs. Carr had died some six or seven months before. The black dress showed off her shining hair to admiration, and Jim thought he had never seen her looking so beautiful. Rosie, though a very charming little matron, and very prettily dressed, was quite eclipsed. As for Dick, he was, after all, getting the genuine Harley + manners, and prosperity sat heavy on his shirt.

After the first greetings, and as they were pairing to go in to dinner, Jim slipped a little box into Madge's hand.

“My congratulations,” he said.

She opened it quickly, and saw a pretty little gold brooch, with the monogram M.A. in small diamonds and sapphires.

“Oh, Jim,” she cried, “how good of you to think of it! Thank you ever so much.”

Jim smiled and looked pleased, but really felt ashamed of himself, for the thought had not been his. On the way up, Mr. Weaver had stopped the cab at a Holborn jeweller's to get a bracelet watch for Madge. “What are you going to take her?” he had

asked, and the monogram brooches had caught Jim's eye.

Madge, however, knew nothing of this, and though Jim for one moment felt an impulse to tell her, the moment passed and the impulse died. For the rest of the evening he basked in the sunshine of her gratitude.

She was, of course, the heroine of the evening, and the conversation was very academic in character.

"Fancy!" exclaimed Rosie, "I'm the only one of the party that hasn't a degree!"

"You forget me, my dear," said Mrs. Weaver, from her arm-chair; "but Madge is going to coach me for—what do you call it?—Matriculation."

Mr. Weaver shook his head.

"It's no good, mother. You have to get a certificate of good conduct, and you know what time you went to bed last night."

"Pooh!" said the old lady, "Madge will give me one any day. It's the arithmetic I'm afraid of. Those horrid tables!"

Mr. Weaver shook his head again.

"Ah," he said, "that looks as if your coach wasn't up to her work. Miss Carr, what's thirteen times nine?"

"A hundred and seventeen," answered Rosie quickly.

"Oh, dear," cried Madge, "I was just going to say a hundred and seven."

"What are your terms, Mrs. Roddles, for coaching?" asked Mr. Weaver.

"All communications to be addressed to me,"

put in Dick. "I am her business manager. Five pounds a dozen, paid in advance."

After this little episode, Rosie, who had been very quiet, brightened up and entered into a spirited controversy with Mr. Weaver on politics. She was a vehement Tory, a Primrose Dame, and a staunch Imperialist. Mr. Weaver, on the other hand, was a strong Radical. Dick and Jim were cool, scientific politicians, the former on the Tory, the latter on the Liberal side. Madge had been brought up on the *Daily Telegraph*, but was gradually swinging round towards the *Daily News*. As for Mrs. Weaver, she was a stronger Radical than her son, and far more strenuous in her language.

When they went into the drawing-room, Rosie enjoyed another little triumph. Madge had a cold and could not sing, so Dick gave them "Nancy Lee," and then Rosie, who had been taking lessons, played a showy Thalberg piece quite brilliantly.

"She improves upon acquaintance, that Miss Carr," said Rosie as she and Dick walked home together. "I didn't take to her much at first, but to-night I saw why you like her so."

"She's as good as gold!" exclaimed Dick heartily.

"Yes, I'm sure she is; good and clever, clever and good. Is she quite—quite what people call a lady?"

Dick laughed.

"I don't know, I'm sure," he answered. "I never thought about it. She's just Madge."

"Yes," said Rosie softly, "she's just Madge, and I'm just Rosie. I wish I'd got her brains, though."

" I don't know that you'd profit by the exchange."

" Oh, Dick, that's rubbish, and you know it."

But she smiled, and pressed his arm.

## IV

" Will," said Mrs. Weaver, " I wish you'd give me your arm, my dear ; I want to take a turn in the garden."

" Then we'll have your chair put out in the shade, so that you can sit down the moment you feel the least bit tired. I'll tell Jephson."

They walked slowly round the borders, looking carefully at the flowers.

" There's the good old *Gloire*," he said, " I declare it's looking better than ever."

" Madge cut out the dead wood and nailed the new growth against the wall. She does it better than Scott. He told me so himself."

" Wonderful Madge !" He smiled down on the upturned eyes still lit by a spark of mischief. " What should we do without her ? "

" I haven't the least idea," she answered, " unless," she added quickly, " you were to retire and come to live at home."

" Then you wouldn't miss Madge a bit, would you ? "

" Not so much as you would, I believe," retorted the old lady with spirit. " Let us sit down here for a minute or two."

He arranged the cushions and the foot-rest for her as carefully as Madge herself could have done. The last thrust had been a shrewd one, and he was not sorry for the distraction.

But as soon as they were comfortably settled, Mrs. Weaver began again.

"Where do you say they have gone?"

"Into Regent's Park."

"What for?"

"I was telling Madge the other day about the preachers and lecturers and debaters in the parks on Sunday afternoons, and she said she'd like to hear them."

"Why did you not take her yourself?"

"Because I had a prior engagement."

She took one of his hands in hers.

"Will," she said, "you are a ——"

"'Fool!' Out with it, ma'am. Am I?"

"If any one else said so——" She made quite a creditable fist.

"We'd ask them why they said so, wouldn't we?"

"And they would answer, 'Because he loves the best girl in the world, and he will not give himself a chance to win her.'"

"And we should say, 'That shows how little you know about it.'"

"A poor answer!"

"No, little mother—the truth. Madge isn't for me, no matter what my feelings may be. It's a case of prior engagement again."

"To that dumb dwarf, do you mean?" she asked hotly. "I tell you there is no engagement."

He laughed—a real, genuine laugh.

"Mrs. Weaver, ma'am, I wouldn't have thought it of you! He's barely two inches shorter than this Goliath, and he can talk my head off already. You

get him on the Statute of Uses! No, there mayn't be any actual engagement, but he was in the field long before me, and there's a very strong feeling between them; I'm certain of it."

"I do not believe it," she said obstinately, "but it is easy to put it to the test. If it is as you think, you will not have done him the least harm."

"I believe she would be happy with him, and I'm sure she would be the making of him. And as long as she's happy I shan't be miserable—haven't I got you, little mother?"

"Not for long, Will," she whispered, the rare tears glistening in her eyes, "not for long. And I don't want to go till I have seen you with your heart's desire."

"Here they are!" he cried, springing up. "Get a couple of chairs, will you, Roddles, from the summer-house. Of course you'll stop to tea."

## V

Looking back in after years, Jim always pointed to the Bangor Traction Arbitration as one of the milestones in his career. The arbitrator was a well-known civil engineer, Sir Theodore Manning, the hearing was at the Surveyors' Institute, and there was a big array of various interests hostile to the Corporation. This body was represented by Jim, who had against him six learned counsel, every one of them a good many years his senior in age as well as in standing at the Bar. Messrs. Compton & Compton, the Corporation solicitors, were alarmed at

the apparent disparity, and implored Mr. Weaver to come and save the situation. He laughed at their fears.

"Don't you be afraid," he said. "You've got about the best man at the Chancery Bar for such a case. Mind you come and tell me what you think of Mr. Roddles, as soon as the hearing is over."

Before the end of the first day the solicitors freely admitted that Mr. Weaver was right, and that his deputy was a wonder. In spite of his quiet, deliberate manner, he soon showed that he was quite able to take care of himself. Imperturbably self-possessed, absolutely master of all the facts and figures involved, he quickly won the ear of the arbitrator. In cross-examining a hostile witness he was, perhaps, a little overshadowed by the robust methods of one of the leaders of the Common Law bar, yet even here the weakness was more apparent than real, and when he brought the proceedings to a close with a two-hour reply, in which, without a superfluous word or an unnecessary reference, he pulverised his opponents' case, there was little doubt as to what the result would be. As a matter of fact, the Corporation won all along the line, and Mr. Compton, senior, was not the only solicitor who made a mental note of the brilliant young advocate.

From that time his practice grew quickly and steadily. Known at first among his brethren at the Bar as "that man of Weaver's," his own name was, before very long, almost as well known as that of the Q.C. It was one of his great advantages that the work was so congenial to him. The more intricate

the legal knot, the more subtle the point, the more pleasure he derived from it. Mr. Weaver had been right in his first impressions. As far as the law was concerned, the young man certainly had the root of the matter in him.

## VI

There were the roots of other matters, too, as he was soon to find out with great surprise and discomposure. He still kept up his annual visits to Mrs. Check at Ilfracombe. Dick generally spent his holidays with Uncle John, or took Rosie on the Continent. Madge, of course, accompanied the Weavers, for, since her advent, Mrs. Weaver had become quite adventurous, and went to Brighton, or Hastings, or Eastbourne, where they could keep in touch with the *Exquisite*, as Mr. Weaver's yacht was named. But Jim clung to the old associations, and he was genuinely fond of Aunt Susan. Besides that, there was another reason that drew him to Hampstead House. It was in Aunt Susan's presence that a side of his nature seemed to wake into life which at other times was dormant. He had never forgotten the weeks of his illness, and the strange thoughts and feelings that had taken possession of him then. The Bible readings and the occasional few words of prayer; the thoughts of death and the impulse to confess his sins; the curious feeling, which he could so well remember, that school, and work, and prizes had become matters of absolute insignificance, in which he had ceased to feel the smallest interest;

all these things invested that episode of his childhood with undying interest.

In the long vacation that followed the Bangor Arbitration, he went down as usual to Hampstead House. As usual, too, he timed his visit late in September, when the holiday rush was well over. The end of the vacation always found him eager for the reopening of the Courts. Acting upon Dick's strong advice, he had tried golf, but he had no aptitude for games of the athletic kind, and this particular game seemed to him extremely childish and inane. In spite of his classical successes, his literary tastes were not pronounced, and though he enjoyed a good detective story, he was not a great novel reader.

His usual way of spending the time was to climb one of the hills and lie on the grass, reading the papers or revolving points of law, smoking an occasional cigarette, or sucking sweets. The only alternative was a long, aimless walk, in the neighbourhood of bricks and mortar by preference, for he was profoundly indifferent to the beauties of nature.

While taking one of these strolls, he found himself on the outskirts of the town, where the long rows of small houses were broken by gaps of highway and hedge. The sun was hot, and he was tired and very thirsty. A few yards farther on, he saw a country inn, half transformed into a suburban public-house. There was the old, black thatched roof with dormer windows, but below, the front had been renovated with stucco and plate-glass, and there was a display of bright brass and incandescent gas lights. He pushed open the swing doors and walked into the

bar. It was empty on both sides of the counter, but almost immediately a door at the back opened and a girl came forward. She was tall and stout, large-framed as well as plump. Her hair was red, and, like everything else about her, ample in quantity. Her skin was very white, but thickly freckled, the features large and inclined to coarseness, the eyes, light grey in colour, were prominent, and looked out on the world with a bold and challenging gaze. Her dress, of cheap and flimsy material, was showy, and seemed to go well with her luxuriant figure. She had a thimble on her finger and a piece of fancy-work in her hand.

"Good afternoon," said Jim politely. "A bottle of lemonade, please."

She acknowledged the greeting with a nod and a smile, looked him up and down, and then produced the bottle. Just as she was going to open it, she paused.

"I'd 'ave a soda if I were you," she said, "a soda with a drop of Scotch in it. That's a man's drink."

Jim's eyes and judgment told him she was coarse and vulgar, yet, to his own astonishment, there was something about her that attracted him. He smiled.

"Very good. I'll have the man's drink, then. It doesn't matter much, as long as it is a drink, this weather."

"Doesn't it?" she said. "You wait a minute, and taste my little brew, and then tell me if it doesn't matter."

The "little brew" was so strong that it made Jim cough. But, with her derisive eye on him, he finished it. And really it wasn't half bad.

"Well?" she asked. "What do you say?"

"First-class," said Jim.

"'Ave another. I'll mix it differently this time."

"No, thank you." He put down a half-crown.

She rang it, as though from force of habit. Then she smiled, a leer, he thought it, and the next moment wondered why.

"How much do you want out of it?" she asked.

"Nothing," he answered, and again wondered why.

She beamed on him.

"I knew you were a gentleman the moment I saw you. We don't get many of your sort here. But I know the difference. It's like the lemonade and the soda. I've seen some life, I 'ave, in London—at the West End."

And she winked.

"Odious creature!" Jim thought, but he lingered.

She picked up the piece of work she had laid down on the table, and spread it out.

"What do you think of that?" she asked.

"Very pretty indeed," he answered. It was.

"What's it for? There's a puzzle for you." Again she winked.

"It looks like a small table-centre—isn't that what you call it?" he suggested.

She burst into a shriek of high-pitched laughter.

"Table-centre! table-centre! Oh lor', that's a good one! You're one of the artful sort, I can see. Table-centre!"

At that moment the swing doors opened again, and two men and a woman came in. The girl folded her piece of work, and Jim slipped out.

## VII

Perhaps it was the effect of the whisky-and-soda, but certainly Jim felt uncommonly brisk and bright as he made his way back to Hampstead House. Yet he was angry with himself. The girl was horribly vulgar if not vicious, abominably familiar, too, with her winks and her leer. And yet he had stood talking and laughing with her, and had given her two shillings for nothing. He took himself severely to task, and congratulated himself on the chance that had set him free.

And yet, before he had reached the house, he found himself beginning to recall the incident with a curiously vivid interest. The feeling that it was painful and repulsive was already passing away, though he reiterated to himself his conviction that it was so.

Next morning the impression seemed weaker. The whole affair had sunk into insignificance. It was not till the afternoon that it emerged again into prominence. Then, as he sat on the hill, about equally bored by the paper in his hand and the expanse of water below him, the face and figure of the red-haired girl rose between them and him. Suddenly, the whole occurrence appeared invested with a new importance. It was as though for the first time, perhaps, he had really come face to face with actual life. With her coarse, full, abounding vitality, her bold eye, her free tongue, her loud, fearless laughter, what a change she was from the finicking proprieties and shallow conventions of middle-class respectability! It had been an experience, he told himself, and he

might well have learned more by it. She was so utterly different from the types he knew. He could think of a dozen questions he might have asked her. She, at any rate, was not ashamed of her point of view. She had no cunning reticence. The very boldness of her speech, the audacity of her big eyes—these spoke of courage, and high spirit, and overflowing vitality. It all came back to that ; it was that which attracted him. His own physique was thin and poor—there was nothing of him but nerve and brain. She—he smiled as he thought of her ample proportions, her large but shapely hand and wrist, the poise of her head on the strong neck. A splendid animal ; and after all, whatever else man may be, he is animal first.

He got up, made his way down the hill, and set out for a saunter. He knew perfectly well where he was bound for. As a matter of fact, he was not sure of the way, but it was as if he were following a thread. He walked slowly and stopped often, to satisfy himself that he was impelled by no undue eagerness. And about five o'clock, he saw the thatched roof of the Turk's Head.

He walked in. A short, square-shouldered young man, in a loud check jacket and tight knee-breeches, was just draining a pot of beer. Opposite him, with her elbows on the bar and her face bent forward so as almost to touch him, was the red-haired girl. To-day she wore a black and white blouse which Jim immediately decided was a great improvement.

She greeted him with a broad smile and a loud "Good afternoon." Almost in the same breath she dropped a word, Jim fancied, to the young man, who

turned on his heel and went out, honouring the newcomer with a scowl as he passed him.

The girl laughed.

"He's jealous of you," she said; "he's fair gone on me, but *he's* no good." (Jim noticed that her aspirates were in better order.) "Still, in a beastly hole like this, one has to take what one can find. I wondered whether you'd come again. I thought you would. Most men seem to like me, and most women don't—I can't imagine why. Can you?" And she winked broadly.

"I suppose the men admire, and the women are afraid."

She stretched out her arm and gave him the faintest little chuck under the chin. He started back, then smiled.

"That's right," she said, with one of her great, hearty laughs. "I go too far sometimes, when I take a fancy. There's a compliment for you! Now what's it to be—a half-crown soda, or a five-shilling cocktail?"

"Let's try the cocktail," he said. He took out a half-sovereign, then put it back and laid down the five shillings in silver.

She was mixing the cocktail, but she saw, and gave another of her bursts of laughter.

"Liberal, but got your head screwed on the right way," she said. "You're a lawyer or a writer—a lawyer, I should say—you look to 'ave too much sense for a writer. Yes, you're a lawyer; you know how to keep your face straight. Bless you, *we* get to know. I was at a big restaurant just opposite the Law

Courts in town, and I used to have dozens of lawyer chaps 'anging about the bar. Good sort they were, too," she added. "Now see what you think of this. Shall I sip it first, for luck?"

"Yes, by all means," said Jim.

She put it to her lips and drank it off. Then she leaned back against the wall, pointing at him, and shouting with laughter.

"Ah," she cried, "you couldn't keep your face straight that time. Never mind; don't cry. He shall 'ave another, that he shall."

Jim found the cocktail strong but decidedly agreeable. He also found no difficulty in asking his questions, and gained a lot of information as to the trials and compensations of a barmaid's life. And when he said good-bye, it was with a promise that he would repeat his visit the next day.

This was on Wednesday, and on Thursday morning he woke with a thundering headache which he rightly attributed to the cocktails. Mrs. Check deplored his looks and declared he must be worrying over those horrid law-cases. He told himself that this folly must cease, and was lost in amazement at his own infatuation. But already his attitude had changed. There *was* a fascination about that girl—explain it he couldn't; he had given up trying to. Yes, the fascination was a fact to be reckoned with, but it must be resisted. And those drinks—he was astonished at the enjoyment he found in the cunning mixtures, and the delightful exhilaration they produced. But surely he had had warning enough at home—they, too, must be resisted.

And that evening the drinks, which had increased to

three, were cut down to one, but the red-haired girl was as fascinating as ever.

Yet there was a change. He admired her more, but he liked her less. He was more wary in parrying her questions and evading her advances. The price of her concoctions rose steadily, and he paid and she received the money with a smile. But beneath the smiles he felt the presence of a certain veiled hostility. In her friendliest speeches there was something forced and mechanical. He was afraid of her, afraid of her insolent eyes and reckless tongue; worse still, he felt pretty sure that she knew he was afraid. But in spite of all this, something in her personality, something partly, and only partly, expressed by the big frame, the ample proportions, and the scarlet lips, drew him like a magnet.

On Thursday evening, as he walked home from the Turk's Head, he determined to make up some plausible pretext for leaving Ilfracombe and returning to town at once. When, however, it came to the point, the plausible pretext was used to justify himself, in his own eyes, for staying. It would be unkind, he assured his conscience, to leave Aunt Susan at a moment's notice. So he stayed on, and by Friday night was faster than ever in the toils. He was furious with himself for his weakness. It seemed to him that if he could only free himself for a single day, the power of the spell would be broken. As it was, he began to wonder how he would bring himself to leave Ilfracombe, or what excuse he would find for stopping on.

And then at breakfast on Saturday, Mrs. Check, after reading her letters, looked up and said,

"Jim, Madge Carr is coming down this morning for the week-end."

"Madge!" exclaimed Jim, in great astonishment. "Why, I thought she was with the Weavers at Brighton."

"No; they're back in town, and it seems a niece of Mrs. Weaver's is staying with them for a day or two, so they thought it a good opportunity for Madge to have a little change."

When her train was due, Jim walked to the station to meet her.

She did not seem very surprised to see him.

"Mr. Weaver thought you were down here," she said.

"I wonder the old lady could let you out of her sight," he remarked.

"I'm afraid she didn't really like my coming, but she is so sweet and unselfish, and Mr. Weaver urged it so strongly."

Jim was always glad to see Madge, but on this occasion another feeling mingled with the pleasure, a strong feeling that she had brought him deliverance. As he looked into her clear, honest, friendly eyes, the thought of the Turk's Head was loathsome to him.

"You aren't looking well, Jim," she said. "What have you been doing to yourself? Mugging away at that horrid law, I expect, when you ought to have been doing nothing, gloriously. Have you got a headache now?"

"No," answered Jim, "but I had a rather bad one. This is its débris."

"It *must* have been a bad one indeed, then," she

insisted, and he had some difficulty in changing the subject.

That was a day which lived long in his memory. Madge, in spite of her journey, was eager for a long walk, and after lunch they set out for Woolacombe. It was a lovely autumn day, and even Jim was touched and impressed by the serene beauty of sky and hill and sea. When they got back, the stars were just beginning to show. As they came within sight of Hampstead House he suddenly remembered that his bondage to the Turk's Head had been interrupted. He turned to her with an expression on his face that she could not read.

"Thank you, Madge, for this walk," he said, "it's done me more good than you can imagine."

"There!" she exclaimed, "what did I tell you? You've been moping and working, and now the sweet, fresh air has swept away the cobwebs."

"I hope so," he answered, "and I think it has."

On Sunday evening, Mrs. Check sat radiant in her pew at chapel, for on one side of her was Madge and on the other, Jim. After chapel the good lady went home to see about supper, while Madge and Jim went for a stroll by the sea. This service had been a short one, and, as yet, not very many people were parading. They stopped for a minute or two, looking seaward at the twinkling lights of a ship. As they turned to resume their stroll, Jim heard, close at hand, a loud, shrill laugh that sent the blood leaping to his pale face. Right in front, just coming face to face with them, was the girl from the Turk's Head, accompanied by

the horsy young man he had seen on his second visit. She was gay with all the colours of the rainbow, her hair and her lips looked redder than ever, her great staring eyes raked Madge with one swift glance, then fastened on the unhappy Jim. The light in them was mischievous rather than malicious. For one second, and sorely against his own will, his eyes met hers. She gave a broad wink and he looked straight in front of him. She said a word or two—loud but indistinct—to her companion, and immediately there followed a huge burst of laughter, the girl's scream high above the man's guffaw.

Madge looked at Jim in horror, though a smile quivered on her lips.

"What a terrible person!" she exclaimed.

"Horrible!" whispered Jim, shuddering, and with all his soul he meant it.

### VIII

"Fitcher, old cripple," said Mr. Roddles, "the world's a beastly 'ole."

"I'm with you, Mr. Roddles," answered the law-writer, "though sometimes you can see the sky out of it."

"And feel it," snarled the tailor, "I'm none so fond of being drenched. And most men are rats, and almost all women are cats, and life's a great, big swindle."

"No, no, Mr. Roddles, you're too strong and too sweeping. There are plenty of good men and women, and, on the whole, life plays the game quite fair."

"Fitcher, you're a fool; a soft-earted, soft-eaded, soft-willed fool that never dares to look a fact in the face. You're as bad as the parsons that swear black's white, till they're blue in the face. They come to believe it at last, too, which shows what their brains are like. And life *doesn't* play fair. She's the worst thimble-rigger there is, and luck's 'er thimbles, and man's the little, dry, withered pea. Three thimbles she 'as. There's luck, and there's no luck, and there's blasted luck."

"That last is *your* luck, I've heard you say," put in Mr. Fitcher.

"Never mind me," said the tailor roughly. "There are plenty of 'oles to pick, without 'olding up your own coat to the light. Look 'ere, I knew a man 'oo 'ad blasted luck from the start. 'E was as sharp as a needle, but all 'e could make was mistakes, and 'e made *them* by the dozen. 'E 'ad a wife, and of course she was a cat. 'E 'ad children, and they were almost as clever as 'e was. But they 'ad luck. One of them was a—a soldier, and 'e became colonel of a crack regiment. Another took to writing, and 'All Caine isn't in it with 'im—scoops in money with a shovel. The third's a painter, and he won't paint any one that 'asn't got a 'andle to 'is name. Well, now, this father of theirs 'ad saved and slaved and sweated to get them on, and when they were riding in their carriages, what do you think they did?"

"Took him to live with them," suggested Mr. Fitcher.

"*With them!*" repeated Mr. Roddles scornfully. "Do you think they all pigged together in one room?"

The colonel 'ad rooms in St. James's, and the others 'ad 'ouses in the Cromwell Road. No; but they met together. ' 'E's a back number,' said the author. ' Even if we give 'im another coat,' says the painter, ' we must keep 'im in the background.' ' Yes,' says the colonel, twiddling 'is sword, ' I'm afraid we really must cut 'im.' "

" And what did the father say ? " asked the law-writer.

" " My blasted luck, " ' e says, " " to ' ave such sons.' It was from 'im I got the expression. "

The conversation took place in the tailor's room, and as he talked he stitched away busily. Mr. Fitcher, on the other hand, appeared to have nothing to do but to smoke his clay and listen with deference to his friend's outbursts.

For some little time there was silence, but Mr. Fitcher made no movement to go. He knew the signs of more to come, and waited.

" Fitcher, " said Mr. Roddles suddenly, " do you know the meaning of the word ' cabal ' ? "

He pronounced it ' cable, ' and Mr. Fitcher immediately defined it as a strong rope.

Mr. Roddles shook his head impatiently.

" No, no, silly, " he said, " not that word, though it sounds like it. The word I'm thinking of, means a conspiracy. "

Mr. Fitcher reflected for a moment. Then he exclaimed—

" Oh, I know—it's spelt differently, and the accent's on the last syllable. "

" Damn the accent ! " Mr. Roddles exploded, for

at this moment his thread broke. "It's the meaning, not the accent, I was talking about."

"Wait a moment," said Mr. Fitcher eagerly, taking his pipe out of his mouth and making strange passes in the air with it. "It's coming back to me—Clifford—Ashley—let's see—B—now what begins with B?"

"Barmy does," answered Mr. Roddles promptly, "and that's what you are, if you're not drunk. 'Oo's Clifford and Ashby?"

"Ashley," corrected the law-writer, a new note of hurt but patient dignity in his voice. "I may have come down in the world, Mr. Roddles—I have. It may have been my own fault—it has been. But I had the advantage of a good education, and I was recalling something that I was taught at school. The Cabal was a ministry in the reign of Charles the First or Charles the Second, and it was so called after the initials of the ministers—Clifford, Ashley—B—B——"

"Let it be," exclaimed Mr. Roddles, almost restored to good humour by his very primitive joke, "till we've got time to go to school again. I want to tell you about a cable——"

"Cabál," Mr. Fitcher suggested timidly.

"A cable against me," Mr. Roddles went on firmly. "It's at the Institute. You know 'ow regular I've been there since you've known me, and before then it was just the same for years and years. I couldn't tell 'ow long, and never once be'ind with my subscription. There isn't a bit of work I 'aven't done or an office I 'aven't 'eld for them. Time after time I've put my 'and in my pocket to 'elp them

over a scile. For the last three years I've been chairman of the Managing Committee, and, though I say it myself, a better chairman it wouldn't be easy to find. Well, now, I've known for some time that there was mischief brewing, and last night the murder was out. They're running another man against me for chairman, the ungrateful 'ounds !"

There was something almost like a sob in Mr. Roddles' voice.

"But you'll beat them, Mr. Roddles," said the law-writer confidently. "You're just the one to fight a hard battle and win it."

The tailor's face brightened for a moment, then fell.

"If I'd 'alf a chance—" he began, "but my blasted luck's sure to let me down. Besides, it isn't only the winning or the losing. It's the ingratitude of the beggars. They're cowards, too. They daren't speak out, but I could 'ear what they were mumbling and whispering."

"I wish I had a vote. I don't go the full length of all your views on religion, nor in politics either, though I must admit that, except as to the landed interest, you've shaken me more than I thought any one ever would. But I wish I'd been able to keep up my subscription. I couldn't manage it."

"Oh, as far as that goes," said Mr. Roddles, "the secretary spoke to me about it two or three months ago, and I squared up for you. You're still on the list."

"And you never said a word to me about it. Oh, Mr. Roddles, that was noble of you ! I will repay you when——"

"When you pay up the back rent, eh? Ah, well, never mind about that, now. We'll put our 'eads together and defeat this meany cove."

But Mr. Fitcher, though "big in great matters, was obstinate in small.

"I'll back you against any cove," he declared.

Mr. Roddles threw down his work and laughed—a clear, hearty, jolly laugh.

"We're just a pair of bald-headed coves, Fitcher!" he exclaimed. "Come downstairs with me for a drink. I'll stand."

## IX

While Mr. Roddles was denouncing the ingratitude of his sons, they were progressing steadily and serenely in the course on which he had started them.

So far, Dick had certainly made the more rapid advance, though his actual professional career had begun later. But in his case, external circumstances in the shape of Uncle John, had helped materially. Including the allowance, and Rosie's settlement, his income was well over twelve hundred a year. The practice was slowly improving, for, though Dick was not enthusiastic over his work, he never neglected it. He had, since he entered upon his practice, taken his M.D. at London, and was now directing his medical studies with a view to specialising on diseases of the nervous system. What leisure he had, was devoted to research work, and the direction which this took was, like so much else in Dick's career, due to the influence of Uncle John. Mr. Trevenning had taken a house at Newmarket, and often, during summer and

autumn, Dick and Rosie would go down on Saturday night, spend the day with him, and come back in time for the evening patients. The afternoons of these visits were generally devoted to Mr. Trevenning's training stables and stud farm, and to his delight Dick soon began to manifest a very keen interest in the pedigrees and the young stock. In those days, when the name of Mendel was practically unknown, certain rumours of his investigations had reached Dick through one of his college friends who was studying abroad. These difficult but fascinating questions of heredity had for Dick a profound interest, and he never wearied of discussing with the trainer and stud groom, as well as with Uncle John himself, such details as the colours, markings, and other peculiarities of the horses.

By this time Rosie and her father and mother had recognised and deplored and accepted Dick's attitude towards religion. He still occasionally accompanied Rosie to church, but it was understood that he had unfortunate views which made his attendance little more than a tribute to the conventions. As a matter of fact, it was hardly this. Steadfastly fixed as his mind was on success in this present life, there was in him a clear vein of intellectual honesty that would have made his judgment on such a subject as religion the very last sacrifice he would have paid to the God of Getting On. His church attendances before his marriage had cost him many heart-searchings, but he had slipped into them gradually, influenced mainly by a desire to please the vicar, to whom he felt he owed a deep debt of gratitude. And now it was still a personal feeling that drew him to the church doors.

Rosie, he supposed, he believed, was sincerely religious. If she changed in this respect it would be, he felt sure, a terrible blow to her father and mother. Yet if he definitely and altogether broke away from Christian observances, it would involve explanations and arguments which at any rate might unsettle her faith. And, illogical as he knew it to be, and apart altogether from any question of gratitude to the vicar, he felt that faith was becoming in a woman. Then a distinction occurred to him. If it had been Madge he would have argued with her—he would have *had* to. But with Rosie it was different.

And Rosie certainly did not seem to take the matter much to heart. But then, he sometimes asked himself, what was there that she did take to heart? She was, indeed, a great puzzle to him. The more he knew about her, the less he understood her. She was clever, with a light, bright, surface cleverness; she was sweet-tempered, unruffled by little annoyances that sometimes turn philosophic sweetness very sour. She had excellent taste—under her rule the "little crib" was prettier than ever—and she was generous and free-handed. But while all was so fair and attractive on the surface, the question he had begun to put to himself was—Is this all? Is there nothing but surface? Are we going through life knowing nothing more of each other than what we think about wall-papers, and tennis, and our neighbours' foibles?

It was a great disappointment to him that their marriage had been, so far, childless. Motherhood, he had told himself, would reveal the true woman. But no word or hint or sign showed that she was dis-

appointed. She seemed perfectly cheerful, and serenely contented.

Again, he had hoped that some of those deeper experiences of life, which inevitably meet the doctor on his rounds or in his consulting-room, might prove the touchstone of revelation. But here, too, he was disappointed. When people were in trouble, she had plenty of kind and tactful ideas. She could write a very sweet little note of condolence, and she could make up a wreath or a cross with any florist. She did not shrink from the mourners as if they were plague-stricken, nor had she any horror of funerals. On the contrary, she almost seemed to enjoy them.

One more hope he had formed. He had such faith in Madge that her friendship might, he thought, work wonders. She, too, had cleverness and charm as well as beauty, but she also had those deeper, stronger, more enduring qualities, evidence of which he would fain have seen in Rosie. He took great pains to bring them together; perhaps in his anxiety he sang the praises of Madge a little too loudly. His plan, at any rate, shared the fate of most pre-arranged friendships. Madge was laboriously cordial, and Rosie was the least bit supercilious.

Where Dick himself, and where Madge failed, it was Uncle John who came nearest success. He was not at all clever, but he had a big heart, and he was so genuinely fond of both Rosie and Dick that in his presence their affection for him seemed to fuse the film of coldness or reserve between them. And as they were constantly brought into contact with him, there was one factor at least in their lives

which made for a better understanding and deeper sympathy.

As for Rosie herself, she was quite satisfied—satisfied with her marriage, with her pretty home, and with her clever husband. Of course, there were flies in the ointment, but they were little ones. She could have wished that Dick's origins had been more reputable. She thought it "a great pity" that he had such queer views about religion, and she had an uneasy feeling that in this matter he was treating her too much as a child. She would not admit, even to herself, that she was jealous of Madge, but she certainly did think Dick was a little crazy about her. But Rosie never did admire that very yellow hair which always looks as if it had something done to it. Then there was just a something wanting in Miss Carr's manners, but, curiously enough, it was when she remembered this that she felt most friendly to her. She had her hopes and ambitions. Uncle John often spoke of Dick's future distinctions, and he had let her know plainly that, as far as money was concerned, their future was quite secure. Through Portman Square she had access to Society in the most important and restricted sense of the word. Yes, on the whole, she often told herself, she was a very fortunate, and ought to be a very happy, girl.

## X

"Mr. Roddles, allow me to congratulate you."

"Which 'ave you been 'aving, Fitcher—Irish or Scotch?"

"Neither," answered Mr. Fitcher, with dignity; "and,

considering the state of my pockets, the question is a cruel one."

"Well, per'aps it is a bit unnecessary," said Mr. Roddles, "but when you talk silly it's natural to think you've been acting silly."

"I am not aware that I have talked silly. One friend may surely congratulate another on seeing his name in a public print."

"What about the *Police News*?" asked Mr. Roddles.

"What about the *Echo*?" answered Mr. Fitcher, producing a copy of the paper he named.

"Oh, do get it out and 'ave done with it, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed the tailor, with a sudden burst of irritability. "If it's a joke, crack it, and if it's *you* that's cracked, well, Colney 'Atch is on the Great Northern and it's not very far out."

The law-writer, a little flustered, and most of his dignity scattered, opened the paper, and after a brief search read out with strong emphasis the following paragraph:—

#### "THE ELECTION

"GLOUCESTER.—*We understand that the Council of the Liberal Association have invited Mr. J. Roddles to address them with a view to standing in the Liberal interest.*"

"There," cried Mr. Fitcher, his faith in the excellence of his little joke quite restored by the sound of the paragraph as he read it, "my dear old friend, I do congratulate you most heartily. Perhaps some of the—what do they call it?—Liberal Council have dropped

in at the Institute and heard you when you were in form. One never knows how these things start."

"Dear old fool," retorted Mr. Roddles, laying down his work and manifesting signs of strong interest, "give me that paper, unless"—he added, with a sudden access of sharp suspicion—"you've been making all that stuff up."

"No, no!" exclaimed the law-writer eagerly, "here it is." And he handed over the paper, pointing to the important passage.

Mr. Roddles took the paper and read out the whole of the paragraph.

After the words read by Mr. Fitcher, it went on—

*"Mr. Roddles is a Chancery barrister in large practice, and is, we believe, a very cogent, and at the same time persuasive, speaker. The seat, it will be remembered, is one that was held for many years by Mr. Lewis Plummer, as he then was, as a Liberal. On his appointment to the Bench, the seat was captured by Captain Maidstone and has since remained in the hands of the Conservatives. The new register, however, will show, we understand, a large addition to the working-class vote, and the prospects of a Liberal victory are exceedingly bright."*

"Capital joke, isn't it?" he asked, as he threw the paper across the table. "Ah, Fitcher," he exclaimed, in a voice that was almost tragic, "if only I'd 'ad 'alf a chance! Fancy!—'J. Roddles, Esq., M.P., Q.C.'"

"Q.C.!" exclaimed Mr. Fitcher, "is he that, too? It didn't say so, did it?"

"If 'e isn't now, 'e very soon will be," declared Mr. Roddles.

"Why, how do you know that?" asked Mr. Fitcher,

astonished at the variety and extent of his friend's information.

"The name'll do it," grunted Mr. Roddles.

It was through Sir Lewis that the offer had come to Jim. This time he had asked the young barrister to dinner and had broached the subject to him.

"I was down at Gloucester this vacation," he said, "and I met a lot of my old supporters. They were in difficulties about a candidate. There have been two before them, and there was a split. One party wanted one man, the other the other. Finally, they agreed to give up both, and try to agree on a third. They came to me. My first idea was Weaver. I knew he was a strong Liberal, and, of course, he could stand the racket well enough. But when I sounded him, he wouldn't entertain the idea for a moment. He said he had home ties that would make parliamentary life an impossibility for him. Then I thought of you. You must be doing pretty well now, and the expense at Gloucester would not be ruinous. Of course, there are many things to consider, but, if you can manage it, I think you would be wise to take the opportunity—it may be long before another as good offers."

Jim took time to consider. His practice was now increasing rapidly, and the class of work was improving too. Every six months made an appreciable difference. And, hitherto, there had been no set-back. He took counsel also with Mr. Weaver, who strongly advised him to accept the invitation. "Ask your brother about your health," he said, "that's the only difficulty I can see. In many ways I think it will be

better to go into Parliament before your work at the Bar gets too heavy. You'll be able to fit your neck into the collar gradually. If you find the double job is more than you can manage, you can drop out of Parliament before you have seriously overtaxed yourself. But I don't believe you will. You'll never rest till you get to the Bench, so the sooner you get there, the better. Then you'll be able to take it easy. And you're just the sort of man to make a stepping-stone of a seat in the House."

"I don't know," said Jim doubtfully, "I'm not cut out for success in the House. I've no enthusiasms, and I'm not really well up in political matters. If I'm heckled I shall be lost."

"Not you," answered his friend, "Get the last volume of the *Liberal Magazine*, and read it up on the way to Gloucester. That'll give you powder and shot enough to blow the hecklers out of the field. As for enthusiasms, what use are they to an Attorney-General? What you'll have to do will be to make yourself indispensable to your party. You can count on your fingers the men who can really master a big Bill. That's where the lawyer comes in, and that's where you can score, if you choose to."

"I can't imagine why you don't go in yourself," said Jim.

"I don't think imagination's your strong point. But I'm not sure that I'm clear about it myself. I don't think I'm naturally very ambitious. Nine or ten years ago I was as keen as pepper on getting on, but that was because I had my mother and sister to think of. Now the sister is gone"—here his voice

changed, as it always did, when he mentioned her—  
“and there’s plenty for the mother’s comfort. The work’s right enough, but why should I make myself a slave to it? If promotion came my way, I should take it like a shot, because the pay’s good, it’s an easier job than this, and it would please the old lady. But it wouldn’t please her if Saturday and Sunday were the only nights she saw me, and if, when she did see me, she found a used-up wreck. No; ambition is all very well, but a reasonably healthy, comfortable life, and time to read and think and talk with those we love, is a great deal better. In a few years’ time, if you don’t take all my work away, I shall be able to retire in comfort if I want to. You are different. The spur’s in your flanks, and on you’ll go till you find your stall, or drop on the road. But I don’t think you’ll drop.”

Nor, it may be presumed did Jim himself, for he accepted the invitation, addressed the Council, and was duly chosen as Liberal candidate for Gloucester.

## XI

The “cable” had succeeded in its nefarious designs, and, after a fierce and envenomed struggle, Mr. Roddles had been ousted from his position as chairman of the Managing Committee. He had fought, as he himself expressed it, for all he was worth. As acting chairman, till the moment of the election, he had used his power ruthlessly. With the help of *The Chairman’s Manual*, he had ruled his opponents out of order on every possible occasion.

Considerations of etiquette and good form he had flung to the winds. He was out to win, he said, by hook or by crook. It was all in vain. A new element had been gradually leavening the Institute—foreigners, most of them, who looked with amusement and scorn on what Mr. Roddles and his friends had taken for Advanced Thought. These new men were not so much Radicals with a leaning towards Socialism, as Socialists with a leaning towards Anarchism. Mr. Roddles had a strong prejudice against foreigners, and it was gall and wormwood to him that when he was ousted from the chair by a majority of three votes, his successor should be a dark-complexioned, beetle-browed alien named Sidnowitz. To make the cup more bitter, he had, as the last of his official duties, to announce his own deposition. Till the very end he had hoped against hope. Even when the paper was handed to him by the grinning teller, he could hardly credit the figures. Only the tears in his own eyes warned him that his day was really over. Mr. Fitcher, white and miserable, hardly recognised his friend's voice as he rose, and read from the paper shaking in his fingers,

“The figures are—Sid—”—on this first syllable he paused, and then carefully divided the last two—  
“no—witz forty-three, Roddles forty. Sid—no—witz is elected, and I 'ope you'll find 'im worthy of 'is name and of you.”

Thereupon he threw down the paper on the table, clapped his cap on his head, and, with scowling face and a bursting heart, flung out of the room, followed at a respectful distance by the unhappy Fitcher.

As he crossed Tottenham Court Road, the rejected of the Institute stopped at a public-house and went in. Mr. Fitcher felt in his pockets, shook his head sadly, and waited a little way off. Before long, Mr. Roddles came out and went at a brisk pace across Gower Street, down Tavistock Place, and through the squares into Holborn. At the corner of Chancery Lane he stopped again for refreshment. This time an idea seemed to have struck Mr. Fitcher, for instead of stopping behind, he hurried on almost at a run, till he reached Fetter Lane and 115.

Mounting the stairs, he opened his own door and lighted the gas. Then he tried the other door and, to his evident satisfaction, found that it was unlocked. He fetched in a kettle, a brown stone teapot, and a pinch of tea in a paper twist. On the old bureau was a gas-ring, and in a couple of minutes the kettle was singing cheerfully. Revisiting his own room, he returned with a couple of cups and saucers, a blue paper packet of sugar, and an old newspaper. This last he spread on a corner of the tailor's work-table.

Just as the tea was made and the gas extinguished, the sound of boots on the stairs told of Mr. Roddles' arrival. Softly closing the door Mr. Fitcher rushed back to his room again and awaited developments. He heard the opposite door open, and then, after a brief silence, a well-known voice called "Fitcher!"

He crossed the landing, and went into Mr. Roddles' room. The little tailor was sitting in a chair by the table. He had poured out two cups of tea, and one was in his hand, steaming hot. He looked dog-tired, but his eyes were unusually bright.

"You're a silly old fool, Fitcher," he said, looking up at the law-writer, "but you've got a rare good 'cart. You might 'ave done a dozen things to show your friendliness that wouldn't 'ave given me 'alf the pleasure of this cup of tea. Shake 'ands, old buck."

Nothing loth, Mr. Fitcher held out his hand, and they shook with great solemnity.

"I used to think everything of brains," remarked Mr. Roddles when his hand was free to refill his cup, "but I'm changing. That No-wits chap, in spite of 'is name, e's got brains, but isn't 'e a beast? You 'aven't got much to boast of in the matter of brains, but you're a fine old chap. You've stood by me like a man, and I shan't forget it."

Mr. Fitcher's face reflected the conflicting emotions by which he was agitated—grief for his patron's troubles, and pleasure at the encomiums on his own loyalty.

"Mr. Roddles," he said, with a gulp, "we both of us did our best, and if it was no good, it was not so much fault as luck."

"Yes," exclaimed the tailor, jumping at the familiar word, "my blasted luck! Quite right, Fitcher."

"And what," continued the law-writer, "what do you intend to do?"

"To do?" repeated Mr. Roddles testily. "What the deuce do you mean by *that*, Fitcher? Go to bed, I suppose, and dream of Christmas trees and 'ot cross buns."

"I meant with regard to the Institute."

Mr. Roddles pondered.

"I won't commit myself at present," he said at last. "Speaking as man to man, Fitcher, I'm not in a condition to. My weakness—*our* weakness, eh, old man?—has got the better of me on the way 'ome, and my 'ead's muzzy. The first pub made me feel like fighting; the second like caving in; now your tea has worked me up again and I feel like 'aving another go at old No-wits. But there's no 'urry. We'll see what we feel like to-morrow."

## XII

Soon after his recognition as Liberal candidate for Gloucester, Jim moved from the Temple to a very comfortable flat in Wigmore Street. He was now making a large income for a comparatively young man, and his prospects were, as he could not help knowing, exceedingly bright. Indeed, in that cool, deliberate way, characteristic of the brothers, he had already begun to think of the judicial bench as a legitimate object of ambition. Far more quickly than most men, even with influence behind them, he had reached the stage when he looked askance at conveyancing work, and though he still devilled for Weaver, it was not so much the guineas that formed the inducement, as friendship and his insatiable appetite for work. His feelings towards Weaver were—for one of his temperament—curiously strong. He admired him as a keen, sound lawyer, and an honest worker, though in both these respects he now knew himself to be in no degree inferior. He had also a strong feeling of gratitude for all the kindness

the elder man had shown him from the time he had first entered the chambers. In fact, these feelings were so strong that they almost amounted to affection though of quite a different kind from that which he felt towards Aunt Susan. His strongly analytic mind, coupled with his strange upbringing, had made him severely introspective, and he had long ago found himself wanting on the emotional side of his nature. His lack of filial affection was not, he felt wholly to be accounted for by his father's eccentricities. Then his feelings towards Dick were not as warm as they should have been, though they were perfectly good friends. It was this consciousness of a coldness in his nature, that made him welcome any warmth of feeling in his heart. And, by a subtle process of thought and emotion, he was so grateful to those who evoked his affection that because he loved them a little he straightway loved them more.

But in this connection there was one problem that pursued and fascinated and tormented him. That problem was his feeling for Madge. It was a very strong feeling, rooted in the old boy and girl friendship of their schooldays. He thought her the most beautiful, the cleverest, and the best girl he had ever seen. Indeed, his faith in her goodness was absolute. He was always glad to meet her, and to her he talked with more freedom and frankness than to any one else. If this was really affection, he was sure she returned it in kind, though her feeling for him might be compounded of elements different, or mingled in different proportions. He had been powerfully affected by her unconscious interposition in the

episode of the Turk's Head. That incident had been a revelation, but only in the sense that it had drawn aside a mysterious veil to show a greater mystery beneath it. The whole affair had been so sudden, so swift, so horribly intense, so vividly real, while it lasted, and then—in a moment, it seemed—had come the collapse, complete, permanent. But he could still recall with shame and amazement, his utter powerlessness in the presence of that vulgar, tawdry temptation. The more he thought of it, the more inexplicable it seemed. And almost equally inexplicable was the manner of his deliverance. It argued, he thought, some strange power in Madge that her mere presence could forthwith free him from so tyrannous a spell. In spite of his gratitude to her, which was very real, the mystery of her influence repelled him. He hated whatever he could not understand, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that he feared it intensely. In the presence of mystery he was like the timid swimmer who drops his feet to find no bottom, and immediately begins to struggle for dear life. And it seemed to him passing strange that, with all his admiration for Madge, she never, even for a moment, kindled in him one single spark of that flame which had glowed so fiercely in his heart before the squalid altar of his drink-shop divinity.

It was Dick who brought the matter to an issue. One Sunday evening, when Mr. John Trevenning was away in the North, Jim had come to supper at Acacia Road. Only one patient disturbed them, and that was a trifling case—a servant-girl who came to have a

needle cut out of her finger. The brothers did not meet very often now, and when they did, they had plenty to say, and the last pipe was a long one.

"You *have* got a nice little place here," said Jim, looking round.

Dick nodded.

"Yes, there's not much the matter with it. I wish there were a cradle in it; but one can't have everything."

"No," said Jim, "and you're better off than I am—you've got Rosie."

"You could get a Rosie to-morrow, if you chose," answered Dick.

Jim's pale face flushed, but he made no pretence of misunderstanding.

"You mean Madge?" he said. "I'm not so sure."

"I am. You were always her favourite. It used to make me mad, but I knew it was so, all the time. Don't leave it too long, Jim. Your man Weaver has his eye on her, I feel sure."

"I think he'd make her a better husband than I should," said Jim slowly.

"Oh, nonsense, Jim," answered his brother, "that's not like you. Go in and win. Marriage is a much more prosaic business than you bachelors think."

"Is that your experience?" asked Jim, with a smile.

"Yes, it is. When I married, I was troubled by a lot of scruples just like yours. But I soon found there was nothing in them. I was afraid I might be taking Rosie in—that she thought me much better than I was. But I found she was a very sensible, long

headed young woman, who had sized me up to the fraction of an inch. You may depend upon it, Madge knows you a little better than you know yourself, and if she says 'Yes' to your question, it'll mean that she's thought things out, and is satisfied that you'll make each other happy. If she says 'No,' you may be sure that Weaver has been trying his luck; but you won't be any the worse off, that I can see, for having put the question."

Jim looked down for a few moments. Then he spoke with a certain effort.

"Don't you ever feel something strange in Madge?"

"How do you mean? Strange in what way?"

"Well, it seems very stupid to have a feeling—a strong feeling—and not to be able to put it into words. And yet I don't know that I can. She's very bright, and jolly, and friendly, and all that, and yet it always seems to me as though she's not made of the same clay as I am. If there were such things as angels, and one of them was friendly, could you ever fall in love with an angel? That sounds rubbish, because there's nothing of the wings and nightgown business about Madge, but——"

"I know just what you mean," Dick interjected. "I've had the feeling myself. She's on another plane."

"That's it!" exclaimed Jim eagerly; "that's just it. It can't be lower; it's probably much higher, but it's a different plane. And that seems to put us miles apart. Sometimes I've thought it must be religion that makes the difference."

"*Tantum religio potuit,*" said Dick, whose capacious

memory still harboured quite a number of classical tags.

Jim smiled.

"Ah," he said, "Lucretius was more cock-sure than I am. It's a funny thing, though. I believe I'm afraid of religion very much as I am of Madge. It attracts me, and yet it seems to have nothing to do with me."

"I've no use for the unknowable," said Dick, "but Madge isn't that. It's only a case of getting to know."

But Jim shook his head.

### XIII

Over this conversation Jim brooded for months. Had it not been for Mr. Weaver, his opportunities of meeting Madge would have been very few, so devoted was she to old Mrs. Weaver. Even as it was, weeks often passed without their seeing each other, though this was Jim's own doing, for he had a standing invitation to Cherril Lodge for Sunday dinner, tea, or supper. When they did meet they were always perfectly cordial and in her presence Jim's reserve quickly melted away. But he almost always went from these meetings perplexed, baffled, and troubled. The clear eyes that looked into his with such perfect friendliness held them no suggestion of any warmer or different feeling. The very frankness with which she seemed to say to him whatever was uppermost in her mind was, he thought himself, an indication that she considered their relationship to be exactly the same as they had been ever since the old Arran Street days. Watching very carefully,

fancied he could detect a difference in her manner when she was brought into contact with Weaver. There was sometimes a touch of hesitancy and restraint, now and then even a momentary appearance of embarrassment. A stranger would certainly have inferred that Jim was the favourite, but he himself thought otherwise.

Of Weaver's feelings he had now no doubt. That he loved Madge, was perfectly plain. How was it, then, that in spite of the opportunities he had, they were still friends and nothing more? Of course it was possible that he might have asked her to be his wife, and that she had refused, but his bearing towards her, free and unconstrained, repelled the suggestion. Why, then, had he been silent, and why was he constantly making opportunities for Jim to meet her? Over these questions he pondered long and earnestly, and he could find no reason except a quixotic generosity, or a belief that she would be happier with his rival. Upon either hypothesis, he must be a man in ten thousand.

With this recognition of his friend's chivalry, came a desire on Jim's part to make some return, for this last instance was only the climax to a series of generous deeds, spread now over many years. He would stand aside, he told himself, and let Weaver know that he had definitely determined not to marry. But hardly had he formed the resolve before it began to waver. There was no one else like Madge for him—how often had he said and thought that. From boyhood he had always looked upon her as bound to him by some special tie. It was over this claim

that he and Dick had, more than once, nearly quarrelled. The mere notion of that claim passing into the hands of another, tormented him. Fancy, he thought, Madge receiving him as a visitor, a stranger, in her husband's house! Fancy Weaver looking on with a friendly smile, allowing and regulating their friendship! It would be absolutely intolerable! Then there was Madge herself to be considered. Perhaps, after all, Dick might be right. It might, as he had said, be only a matter of getting to know. She might be waiting for him to put the question, and with the answer might come the revelation of a new Madge. In justice to himself, to Madge, and—yes—to Weaver too, he must learn the future of his life from her own lips.

So he reasoned, and doubted, and determined, and hesitated, and made up his mind, only to change it again, till his sleep was broken and his nerves shaken, and even his work, he fancied, his beloved work, began to suffer. And then, after six months of this torturing irresolution, the end of it all came in half an hour.

#### XIV

It was the Sunday before Christmas, which that year fell upon a Thursday. Jim had come to early dinner at Cherril Lodge. After dinner Mrs. Weaver settled herself down in her big arm-chair by the dining-room fire, with the *Record* on her table, for her afternoon nap which generally lasted till close upon the five o'clock tea. Mr. Weaver had some letters to write in his study, so Madge and Jim were left to keep each other company in the drawing-room.

"You don't seem at all well, Jim," she said, looking up from the pages of a book she had been cutting. "I've got to page 256, and you haven't said a word all the time. What's the matter?"

"You are, Madge," he answered, taking the resolution and the first step at the same moment.

She closed the book and laid it on the floor. Then she folded her hands and leaned forward.

"I, Jim?" she said. "What have I been doing?"

He took no notice of the question. Her tone had been playful, and he was in no mood for trifling.

"Madge," he said, "for months I've been trying to make up my mind whether to say something to you or not, whether to ask you a question or to hold my tongue. It's been eating my life out, because I hate irresolution. Just a minute ago I made up my mind. Your question seemed to pull the trigger. And don't be afraid of hurting me, whatever you answer. Anything will be better than what I've been going through."

She lifted one hand.

"Stop a minute, Jim," she said softly, "don't you think——"

"No," he answered, "I don't. I can't help it now, Madge; it's got to come, and it's best. I'm not frank by nature, I know, but there's something in you that drags the truth out of me. Do you remember the chocolate and the plums?"

She smiled—a tender little smile.

"I always liked you. That was when I began to admire you."

He smiled too.

“There was nothing to admire. I couldn't help myself then, and I can't now. You know what my question is. Can you love me? Will you marry me? As far as money goes, I can keep you in comfort. As far as position goes, I think most men who know, will tell you that my prospects are bright. But I don't expect these things to weigh heavily with you. I love you. I think I always have loved you. I love you, but whether I'm in love with you I don't know. You see what I mean, don't you? There's something about my feeling towards you that I don't understand, myself. You don't seem on my plane. There's something that seems to set us apart. I don't know what it is, but I can feel it. Sometimes I think it's religion. I can't make myself believe as you do; I wish I could. But that might come in time. You might show me the way. Or perhaps it is that I feel you can't go farther than a friendship born in the old days. And that's not enough to marry on, is it? There, Madge, I've put the truth on the table. You do the same—I know you will.”

“I'll try to,” she said, looking at him with troubled eyes, “but I can't do it as well as you can, because I'm not so sure of it. But that's only as to the reasons. But one thing I do know—I can't say ‘Yes.’ Dear Jim”—her voice quickened and trembled as he cast down his eyes—“I do so hate to give you pain. A woman, if she is true to herself, can only make that surrender of herself when her heart bids her. It would be the worst kind of sacrilege without that. I would risk poverty, I'm not ambitious for position, even theology shouldn't stand in the way, because

we both want to find the truth. But against that inner voice I dare not rebel. The end would only be misery for us both."

He lifted his eyes. His face looked less haggard, and his voice was quiet and even.

"I'm glad I asked, though I never wanted you so much as I do now. But I thought it would not be, and I see now that it could not. I've got a *daimon*, and it told me so. But we'll still be friends, Madge? This won't make any difference, will it?"

"Yes, it will," she answered. "It has forged a new bond between us. I should be wretched indeed, if I thought I had lost you as a friend."

"That you never will," he said, "and look here, Madge, there's one other thing I want to say. I'm a selfish beast, I know, but I don't feel so selfish just now. If I can't have you, I hope somebody else will—some one who will make you very happy. I want to see you very happy—I want it more even, I think, than I want to be a judge. Good-bye, now, for the present. I don't feel like small talk. Tell Weaver his claret has given me a bad headache and I'm going to sleep it off. Good-bye, Madge."

He took her hand, kissed it gently, almost timidly, and walked out of the room, closing the door quietly behind him.

## XV

"We shall have a very quiet Christmas this year, Mother," said Mr. Weaver, after dinner the next day. "Roddles is a bit seedy, and is going to Brighton for a week or ten days."

"That will spoil our rubber, otherwise I cannot say we shall lose much in the way of festivity. You say, Will, that he can talk in public, but in private life he is a most funereal guest. I always think he ought to be kept for Lent."

Generally, Mr. Weaver took up the cudgels for his friend, but on this occasion he let them lie. "You shall have your rubber, ma'am," he said, "I've asked the brother and his wife for Saturday."

"Ah, that is better," said the old lady, "the doctor knows how to use a tongue as well as to look at one. And the little wife we can set down at the piano while we have our game."

"There's a hostess, eh, Miss Carr?" exclaimed Mr. Weaver.

"Oh, I'm used to it," declared Madge, who looked pale and tired, though she spoke brightly enough. "When Mrs. Weaver wants to read the last new novel, she asks me to play Clementi's Sonatinas or Schumann's Album."

"For a very different reason, though," said Mrs. Weaver.

The old lady, in defiance of the doctors, was extremely fond of late hours, and almost the only way in which she could be coaxed upstairs before eleven, was by her son's promising to look in for a good long gossip as soon as she was safely in bed.

On this particular night she conducted the negotiations with great spirit, declaring in the first place that she felt absolutely disinclined for sleep, and intended to sit up till midnight. Thereupon, without any beating about the bush, Mr. Weaver announced that

he had several matters of great importance to discuss with her.

"How long will they take to discuss?" she asked.

"A quarter of an hour at least," he assured her, with great gravity.

"I mean to finish *The Wages of Sin*, before I leave this room," she said firmly.

"Of course there may be points that arise," he remarked, "perhaps it would be safer to say half an hour."

"I am not sure, but I do not think there are many pages left."

"Suppose we say ten to half-past?"

"Half-past ten to eleven," she cried eagerly.

"Done!" he slapped his hand on the table. "Write it down, Miss Carr, please, and put a penny stamp on."

"Will," said his mother, as soon as they were alone in her bedroom, "I am sure Madge is not well. Did you notice how pale she looked? I hope there is nothing the matter with her."

"Nothing that a doctor can cure," he said.

"What do you mean by that?"

"She has had a trying experience and is feeling the effects of it."

"You are not very sympathetic, Will. You look unusually cheerful."

"I'm very sorry, Mother dear. You know what selfish creatures men are."

"I know nothing of the kind," she exclaimed indignantly, "a more unselfish man than you, never lived, unless it was your father."

"It doesn't look like it," he answered. "She has been in trouble, and you say I look unusually cheerful."

"What is the matter, Will? Tell me, and do not tease."

"The gossip's got to last half an hour, you know," he reminded her, with a twinkle in his eye.

"So it will, and longer, if you make me cross."

"All right, ma'am, I won't do that. Miss Carr had a proposal yesterday afternoon while you were taking your nap."

The old lady sat up in bed.

"A proposal?" she cried. "Oh, Will, and you look happy! And yet, Madge—no, I do not understand."

"It wasn't my proposal. It was Jim who asked her."

"Jim—that Mr. Roddles? What assurance!"

Mr. Weaver laughed.

"I really don't see it, ma'am. I only wonder he didn't do it long ago."

"And what did she say?"

"She told him she could not love him in that way. But they parted better friends than ever."

"I hope she'll never see him again."

"You wouldn't say so if you heard him speak about it."

"Did he tell you?"

"Yes, he did, and he did what not one man in a thousand would do. He told me that now he'd had his try and his answer, he hoped I'd have a try. 'You'll make her a better husband than I should have done,'—those were his words. And then he thanked me for what I've been able to do for him—I didn't think he'd got it in him to speak as he did. He's the

strangest mixture I've ever seen. He's hard hit, and yet he looks better than he has done for months, and he says he feels better. It was the uncertainty, the irresolution, that was killing him. I thought it was the work, but I ought to have known better. He thrives on work, as an ostrich does on nails."

"And so the field is left clear for you. Oh, Will, my dear boy, I *am* glad. But do not let the grass grow under your feet."

He shook his head.

"No, little mother," he said, "I shan't speak for a long time. It's only fair to her, and it's only fair to him."

The gossip went on, long after the church clock had struck twelve. When at last he stood up to go, Mrs. Weaver, holding his hand and stroking it, looked up at him with a very serious expression on her face.

"Will," she said, "your mother is an uncharitable, spiteful, evil-speaking old woman. I feel very sorry for that poor Mr. Roddles now. You set me against him by pretending that he is better than you are at your work, which is absurd. But he seems to have behaved extremely well, and if you and Madge make me happy I will let him be made a judge."

"Ah," he exclaimed, "I wish the two things did hang together! I should be sure of Madge, then."

## XVI

It was in the following May that Dr. Richard Roddles became a public character. The *Fortnightly Review* for that month contained an article by him, entitled



# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



1.45

1.50

1.56

1.63

1.71

1.80

1.90

2.00

2.11

2.25

2.35

2.50

2.67

2.80

3.00

3.15

3.33

3.50

3.75

4.00

4.50

5.00

5.62

6.30

7.12

8.00

9.00

10.00

11.25

12.60

14.14

15.85

17.72

19.75

22.00

24.50

27.28

30.37

33.75

37.50

41.67

46.25

51.34

56.94

63.14

70.00

77.64

86.12

95.49

105.84

117.28

129.84

143.54

158.49

174.72

192.34

211.44

232.04

254.28

278.14

303.72

331.14

360.44

391.72

425.04

460.44

498.04

537.84

580.04

624.64

671.74

721.44

773.74

828.74

886.44

946.84

1010.04

1076.14

1145.24

1217.44

1292.74

1371.24

1452.94

1537.84

1626.04

1717.54

1812.44

1910.74

2012.44

2117.54

2226.14

2338.24

2453.84

2573.04

2695.84

2822.24

2952.24

3085.84

3223.04

3363.84

3508.24

3656.24

3807.84

3963.04

4121.84

4284.24

4450.24

4619.84

4793.04

4969.84

5150.24

5334.24

5521.84

5713.04

5907.84

6106.24

6308.24

6513.84

6723.04

6935.84

7152.24

7372.24

7595.84

7823.04

8053.84

8288.24

8526.24

8767.84

9013.04

9261.84

9514.24

9770.24

10029.84

10293.04

10559.84

10830.24

11104.24

11381.84

11663.04

11947.84

12236.24

12528.24

12823.84

13123.04

13425.84

13732.24

14042.24

14355.84

14673.04

14993.84

15318.24

15646.24

15977.84

16313.04

16651.84

16994.24

17340.24

17689.84

18043.04

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23000.24

23412.24

23829.84

24252.24

24679.44

25111.44

25548.24

25990.24

26437.44

26889.84

27347.44

27810.24

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29229.84

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36473.44

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38158.24

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39307.44

39889.84

40477.44

41070.24

41668.24

42271.44

42879.84

43493.44

44112.24

44736.24

45365.44

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46639.44

47284.24

47934.24

48589.44

49249.84

49915.44

50586.24

51262.24

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69046.24

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70663.44

71479.84

72291.44

73108.24

73930.24

74757.44

75589.84

76427.44

77270.24

78118.24

78971.44

79829.84

80693.44

81562.24

82436.24

83315.44

84199.84

85089.44

85984.24

86884.24

87789.44

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93329.84

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105976.24

106985.44

107999.84

109019.44

110044.24

111074.24

112109.44

113149.84

114195.44

115246.24

116292.24

117343.44

118399.84

119461.44

120528.24

121590.24

“New Aspects of Heredity,” which embodied the results of his investigations at Newmarket and elsewhere on the transmission among horses, of colour, markings, and respiratory troubles. The hints and rumours—for they did not amount to much more—he had received as to Mendel’s experiments, had borne remarkable fruit. The article was mainly a record of his actual observations, and was written with scientific accuracy and caution. But in the last page or two the writer had allowed himself a little license, and had suggested—though still with reserve—some startling results which might follow if his observations were extended and confirmed. The whole article showed a very striking power of making an abstruse subject not only intelligible but interesting to people of average endowments, and it created what might fairly be called a sensation. It was freely discussed in many and very different quarters. The orthodox scientific doves were fluttered, for here was a gospel not strictly according to Darwin. The theologians managed to detect an attack on individual responsibility. In sporting circles the old question of breeding from roasters was revived, and discussed from a new standpoint.

Uncle John was delighted. Sir Rowland and his foals and yearlings had been the starting-point of Dick’s observations, and, next to Dick, Sir Rowland was the pride and joy of Mr. Trevenning’s heart. That particular number of the *Fortnightly* went into a second edition. There was a political article in it by Lord Dallingham, but Uncle John had no doubt as to why the number was such a success.

"He's cleverer even than I thought him, and that's saying a good deal," he remarked to Mrs. Dukes, who, never very strong, was now a confirmed invalid.

"I'm afraid he's not very enthusiastic about homœopathy," she said.

Mr. Trevenning rubbed his head and frowned.

"No," he said, "he's not as strong as I should like to see him, but it's partly my fault. I tried to rush him, and with a man of his ability it's a bad mistake. He'll plough his way to the truth before he's done. *You've* not much reason to complain, though; he gave you *Coffea*, 30, the other day, so he told me."

"Yes, and beautifully I slept after it. Edwin had always great faith in *Coffea*."

"Dick's distinctly interested in the high potency question—he told me so himself the other day. I shouldn't wonder if it's through that, he finds salvation after all."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Dukes doubtfully. "I can't imagine him a real enthusiast, like Edwin."

"Ah well, we're made in different moulds. Your husband was a wonder in his way, and I believe Dick will be another in his. But they mayn't be the same ways. Still, I believe you'll find him out-and-out on the right side before he's done."

But, as far, at any rate, as poor Mrs. Dukes was concerned, Mr. Trevenning's prophecy was not fulfilled. Only a few days after it was uttered, her little store of strength seemed suddenly to give out. Dick, who was in attendance, tried the usual remedies, but with small effect. He looked very grave.

"It's very serious, I'm afraid," he said to Mr. Trevenning.

"We must have Main; I know Agatha wanted him a week ago, only she was afraid you wouldn't like it. But you're not like that, are you, Dick? You'll meet him, won't you?"

"Of course I will," answered Dick; "he's a very able man, he's fully qualified, he's ever so much my senior, and it's your wish. Four good reasons, and the last is the best."

"Good boy!" exclaimed Uncle John, a momentary smile lighting up his troubled face. "I'm glad Rosie's upstairs. You're both of you the greatest comfort. I'll go over to Seymour Street now and get Main. It's nearly the end of his sitting time. I dare say he'll come back with me. I tell you what I wish you'd do. Send a full telegram to Basil. If I'm not back in twenty minutes, don't wait. I shall expect you early to-morrow in any case. Of course, if there's any change, I shall wire at once."

"I shall be round again before ten to-night," said Dick.

In less than the twenty minutes Mr. Trevenning returned with Dr. Main. He and Dick discussed the case for a little time, and then went up to the patient's room together. When they came down Dr. Main shook his head.

"I'm sorry to say we agree that there's practically nothing to be done. It's really a case of a weak heart that is worn out. It's almost beyond stimulation, though we're trying Digitalis. Mr. Roddles has used Lachesis, which is sometimes indicated in cardiac

weakness. But no medicine can give a new heart, and that is what Mrs. Dukes really needs."

Then Rosie came down, fresh and sweet as a child, but cool and self-possessed as a lady of the Court. She went up to Mr. Trevenning.

"I am so sorry for you, dear Uncle John," she said. "Aunt Agatha seems just a little tiny bit better. She would like to see you, I'm sure."

As they drove off, Rosie laid her hand on her husband's arm.

"Is there no hope, Dick?" she said.

"None whatever," he answered.

"How sad!" she said, as though to herself. "Poor Aunt Agatha! Will it be soon, Dick?"

"A day or two possibly, or it might be any moment."

"Do you mind waiting for me, not more than two or three minutes certainly?" she said, as they passed Crawford Street.

"Waiting?" he repeated, his mind still absorbed in the case, "no, of course not, if you want anything. Shall I stop the cab?"

"In a minute, please—yes, here. Thanks."

The minute or two stretched to ten or fifteen. But when she did appear Rosie was so penitent that Dick's momentary irritation died away.

"I am so very sorry, dear," she said. "I never dreamt I should find Miss Briand herself at this time. I thought I should just have to leave a message. It is good of you not to be angry."

"New frocks?" asked Dick, later in the evening, smiling at the child-face lifted to his with a very serious

expression in the grey eyes. It was after dinner, and she had been renewing her apologies.

"Oh, don't laugh, Dick; it's for poor Aunt Agatha, you know."

"Mourning?" exclaimed Dick, to whom such promptitude seemed a little ghoulis; "while she's still alive?"

"Yes. Is it very dreadful? I know they're frightfully busy just now, and I should hate to wear anything in memory of dear auntie that was slovenly—you know how very particular she always was."

"'Is,' you mean, my dear."

"Oh yes, 'is,' of course. How very careless of me. Besides, I couldn't bear to have the work-girls driven. We used to have some of the tailor girls at St. Gabriel's. You don't think me heartless, do you, Dick?"

"Anything but that," he answered, with a kiss.

## XVII

The death of Mrs. Dukes, and Dick's sudden leap into fame as the author of the *Fortnightly* article, soon had important consequences. Mr. Trevenning had been very strongly attached to his sister, and her death was a heavy blow to him. He found his chief comfort in the society of Dick and Rosie, who were, both of them, genuinely fond of him. Their visits to Newmarket were frequent, for Dick was still busy with his studies of heredity. These visits were now often returned, and Mr. Trevenning's carriage waited by the hour outside "the little crib."

One evening, just as supper was over and pipes—by

special permission—lighted in the drawing-room, Uncle John, in the coolest and most matter-of-fact way, broached a startling proposition.

“My babes in the wood,” he said, “I’ve been palavering to-day with the lawyers over poor Aggie’s will, and an idea has occurred to me—I don’t know what you’ll think of it, but you must talk it over together and tell me the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—isn’t that what they make you say in court? It seems the poor dear has divided all her property between me and Helen—that’s Mrs. Mount, you know. Well, in my share there’s a house in South Kensington which is empty just now. It’s in the Cromwell Road and, from the valuation, I think it must be a pretty big place. Now I simply can’t go on living in the Square. The rooms are hateful without Aggie.

“This is what has occurred to me—it’s rather revolutionary, you know. You’ve stuck to your little practice here, Dick, uncommonly well, and you were saying the other day that it’s better now than when you took it. But your heart’s not really in the work—all the more credit to you for pegging away as you have done—and I’m not so very keen about it—well, you know why. Pure science, as you call it, is what you hanker after, and since that article of yours, it really looks as if pure science is your game. Now here’s my little plan—I told you it was revolutionary. I’ll go and live at that Cromwell Road house. You sell this practice and come and live with me. Put a plate on the door or don’t, whichever you like. Keep on practising, or give yourself entirely to your pure

science—just as you please. You know I look upon you as my children, and I have provided for you already. When I die, the bulk of my belongings will go between you. As far as that is concerned it won't, of course, make the least difference whether you fall in with this notion of mine or prefer to go on here. But I'd like you to think it over. I fancy we should get on all right, and you know we're not a very long-lived family. I think I'm getting near the end of my tether. There's a long speech, and my pipe's out."

Rosie jumped up, walked across the room, threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him.

"Dear Uncle John," she said, "there aren't many girls that have two fathers, but I'm one of them, and two *such* fathers! Dick must speak for himself, of course, but as for me, there's nothing I should love better than to be with you. I know I couldn't take dear Aunt Aggie's place, but I would try my best, and so would Dick, though I oughtn't to speak for him."

"Yes, indeed—" Dick began, but Mr. Trevenning stopped him.

"No," he said, "I won't take an answer now. It's a serious matter. You two talk it over carefully and then tell me next Saturday—you're coming as usual, aren't you?"

"Yes, we hope so," said Dick.

"How do you feel about giving up the practice?" Rosie asked, when they were discussing the momentous question.

"Oh, I've no special feeling about this particular

practice, but I think I should have a plate, in any case. I went to be earning something on my own."

"I suppose there's not much to be made out of pure science, is there?" she asked.

"No," he answered, "unless, perhaps, a man has a special gift for popular writing or lecturing."

"I believe you have that. I never forget how beautifully clear you made those lectures even to poor stupid me."

"Don't fish, Rosie," he said, with a smile. "You know you're tons better than the ordinary student."

"Miss Carr, for instance?" As she said this, her innocent, childlike expression changed just enough to attract his attention.

"I never saw much of her work," he said, "but I shouldn't think there was much to choose between you."

She smiled, and the old expression came back.

"Good boy," she said, "it was naughty of me to tempt you. Very kind people are pleasanter to live with than very truthful ones."

"And very clever ones the pleasantest of all." He laughed, and caught her round the waist.

She disengaged herself gently.

"What answer are we to give, Dick dear?" she asked.

"You've given yours," he said. "Unless I want to be deserted, I suppose I must say ditto."

"Oh, Dick," she cried, "was I too hasty? I am sorry. I spoke on the impulse of the moment. You know what an impetuous little thing I am."

For a moment he looked hard at her, and her eyes

fell under the scrutiny. Then a smile relaxed his features.

"Anyway," he said, "I follow your lead."

"You mean you'll go?"

"I mean the firm will."

"What a funny way you have of putting things. Do you know, Dick, I sometimes feel quite afraid of you."

"What a lucky thing, my dear! When you look as you did just now, I feel afraid of you."

"Afraid of me! Oh, Dick! Why, how did I look?"

"Shall I tell you?"

"Yes, of course; I'm dying to know."

"You looked like a little angel who's just been found out telling stories."

This time she flushed scarlet and turned away busying herself with some flowers in a vase. He went to the piano and stumbled through a tune from *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, which stood open on the music-rest. As he began it again, she came and stood behind him.

"*Lead, kindly Light*," he read; "doesn't that remind you of St. Gabriel's?"

She nodded.

"Yes. Let's sing it together, shall we?"

"All right."

When they had finished, she patted his shoulder.

"You *have* got a nice voice" she said.

"That's the very identical remark I was going to make to you."

"Thank you, dear. I declare I'm yawning. Dick, there was nothing in what Uncle John said about his being near the end of his tether, was there?"

"No, I hope not."

"Can't a doctor go further than 'hope not'?"

"No, I'm afraid not, not without a proper examination, at any rate."

"He looks strong enough, doesn't he?" she persisted—"a good deal stronger than father."

"You can't always judge by looks," he said.

"What can you judge by, then?"

"'The totality of symptoms' is the phrase, I believe."

"Well, it makes one anxious when people talk like that. Should you feel anxious if you were treating him?"

"I should go over him pretty carefully, no doubt."

"I wish he'd let you examine him," she said.

"It would only worry, if it didn't frighten him. The less he thinks about his health the better. You'll do him more good than medicine."

"Thank you, sir, for a very pretty little speech." And she paid him with a very pretty little curtsy.

## XVIII

Mr. Weaver was as good as his word. For weeks and months after Jim's proposal there was little or no change apparent at Cherril Lodge. Even Jim's visits continued, though the intervals between them grew longer. His relations with Madge appeared absolutely unchanged. They greeted each other with the same smile of comradeship, and talked as eagerly as ever of the old days. If anything, their intercourse seemed more free and unrestrained than before.

shrewd as she was, sometimes felt a little dismayed. In this instance, at any rate, her son was wiser, because he was not so impatient. Where so much was at stake he could well afford to wait.

One evening, a few days before the Easter holidays, during a pause in the conversation at dinner, he looked across at his mother and said very quietly--

"I've done it, ma'am."

"Done it? Done what?" asked.

"I've bought a very nice little piece of freehold land at Pinner."

Mrs. Weaver and Madge looked up quickly and eagerly. In spite of his effort to keep his voice perfectly natural, they both felt the announcement was momentous.

"What are you going to do with it?" asked the old lady.

"Shall you have a kitchen garden and an orchard?" inquired Madge.

He laughed.

"A few apples and pears and a little wall fruit—vegetables, of course."

"But, my dear boy," said his mother anxiously, "you know you always said you preferred the town to the country, and when I talked about loving the country it was more than half mischief, and to hear you praise the town. What sort of a house is it?"

"There's an old thatched barn—very picturesque, but not waterproof, I'm afraid—that's all."

"Are you going to be your own architect?" asked Madge.

"Oh, Madge, how horridly quick you are!" ex-

claimed Mrs. Weaver. "You seem to know what he means before he speaks."

"Then I mustn't risk my reputation by any more guesses," she declared.

"Ernie's going to do the little job for me," he said. "Small country houses are supposed to be his stro. point, though I shouldn't think he often does anything as small as this. He's to send some rough drawings next week."

"But, Will, do you think you will ever be really happy in the country? I should be perfectly miserable if I thought you were sacrificing yourself in that way to the whims of an old woman who can't have many more days in town or country."

"Don't talk like that, Mother dear," he said quickly. "I'm as eager for the change as you can be. What about Miss Carr?"

"Oh, I'm a Cockney, of course, but I like the green fields almost as much as Fleet Street," was Madge's reply.

In a few days the drawings came, and Mrs. Weaver and Madge pored over them by day, to discuss them with Mr. Weaver in the evening. It was certainly curious how many of Madge's suggestions were adopted.

Then, as spring made way for summer, the interest deepened, for the actual building began. And soon it came to be a regular thing for Madge and Mr. Weaver to go over to Pinner on Saturday or Sunday afternoon for an hour or two and bring back news of the progress that was being made. Nothing delighted the old lady more than to see them set out on these expeditions

together, and after they had gone she would sit smiling in her chair till she dropped off into a pleasant little nap, from which she generally woke with another smile on her face.

As for the building committee—so they called themselves—they had a thoroughly good time. Mr. Easton lived at Harrow, and would often come over to meet them. Every week there was some new point to be decided, and almost always it was Madge's opinion that was adopted. Would another window make the room pleasanter? How far should the verandah extend? Was that passage light enough?

"It's for you to say," she would protest.

"Yes, I know," he would answer, "but I want to hear what you think." And what Madge thought was generally done.

By the middle of July the house was finished, and the choice of carpets and papers and additional furniture kept three people busily amused during the long vacation. Old Mrs. Weaver was the most excited of the three. Indeed, her vivacity became so great as to astonish Madge, and sometimes to disconcert her son.

The house had been dried by a patent process, and the move was to take place about the middle of October. The Sunday before, the committee went down for a final inspection. The gardens had been laid out. The first brightness of the red brick and white paint seemed already to have toned down a little, but everything looked beautifully fresh and clean. Already, too, there was quite a show of flowers.

"Won't the mother be pleased with those Michael-

mas daisies?" said Mr. Weaver. They were standing on the verandah, looking out over the lawn and borders.

"Yes, indeed she will," answered Madge, "and how she will love sitting here! Look at those trees on the hill over there. One might be in the very heart of the country. Isn't it still? You'll have to get an omnibus or two, or we shan't be able to sleep."

He smiled, but it might have been at his own thoughts, for he said nothing.

"Another thing she'll love," Madge went on, "will be her room with that window looking on the garden. She can see the flowers as she lies in bed."

"Yes," he chimed in, "and the greenhouse just close by, where her chair will stand. We'll have one of those wheeled chairs—some of them are quite light—and perhaps she'll be able to wheel herself in."

She looked up at him, and then at the house.

"Yes," he said, answering what he took to be her thought, "it is a pretty little place, isn't it?"

"It's more than that," she said softly, "it's beautiful; it's love translated into bricks and mortar."

He flushed like a boy.

"I know what you mean," he said, "and it is quite true. But it's truer even than you think. O Madge, you don't know how much love this house stands for!"

In a moment her cheeks hung out the tell-tale signal too. It was the first time he had ever addressed her by her Christian name, and a thrill of joy was her involuntary answer. She made no other, and after a long pause he spoke again.

"I've said too little or too much: I can't leave it

there. Madge—I won't call you that again unless you tell me to—I have loved you so long, I don't know how I have kept it from my lips. I looked on you and Jim as meant for each other, and I thought I could be happy in seeing your happiness. Then Jim told me it was not to be, and ever since, I have been waiting and watching. I think I must have begun loving you when you were a child, for you reminded me then of my sister Jennie. This house would be another place to me if you were going to share it with us. Is it impossible?"

She shook her head.

"No, not impossible, but——"

"But what?" he cried, a flood of hope and joy suddenly rising in his heart.

"It seems like treachery to Jim," she murmured.

"I felt like that," he said, "but he urged me to try. 'Whatever answer she gives you,' he said, 'she will tell you the truth.'"

"Yes, I will!" she exclaimed, and held out her hand.

He caught it to his lips.

"Oh, M——" he began, and stopped, though his eyes and lips were laughing with pure gladness.

She too flung the windows wide open.

"Yes," she said, with a little nod and a smile, in which love and mischief strove for mastery.

But he clasped her in his arms, and the word died on his lips as they met hers.

## BOOK IV

### I

MR. RODDLES had fallen on evil days. By his irregularity and unpunctuality he had, for years, sorely tried the patience of his employers. For years, however, his skill as a craftsman and his power of working quickly and well, and under pressure, had offset these failings, till he had come to look upon warnings, and even notices of dismissal, with indifference, if not with contempt. The thought of the good fish that remained in the sea, had sustained him under many such trials. And the amazing thing was the way in which those accommodating creatures had justified his faith in them. But a time came when even their complaisance showed signs of exhaustion.

Until he considered the success of the boys perfectly assured, the little tailor kept his constitutional weakness well in hand. At first, the presence of Mr. Fitcher, and the necessity of maintaining a superior attitude to one so deplorably lacking in self-control, stiffened his will, and helped him to accumulate those savings which had so astonished Jim and Dick. When, however, it became quite clear that both the lawyer and the doctor were beyond the need of any help that he could afford them, he judged it time to take stock of the situation.

The great plan which at one time had seemed only a faint, far-away, visionary idea had been practically realised, and that fact afforded him an enormous amount of pleasure, though even here, he affirmed, his blasted luck had managed to deprive him of the full reward to which he was entitled for his astuteness, self-denial, and tenacity of purpose. He had always declared that the plan involved a complete separation between him and the boys as they got on, though he had impressed upon them that it was a business transaction, and that when they could afford it, he should expect them to keep him in reasonable comfort. Soured and hardened by the domestic tragedy of his early manhood, he had vowed never again to expose himself to the pangs of outraged love. He was not naturally fond of children, and while the boys were still in the first stages of their school life he found little difficulty in maintaining that attitude of cynical detachment which harmonised with his philosophy of life. It was at a later stage, when their successes had begun, that he was disconcerted by a feeling which he recognised with dismay and strove hard to repress. He had detected it during Jim's attack of pneumonia, but he comforted himself with the reflection that the circumstances were certainly exceptional, and that few men, even of the most advanced type, could always be quite equal to their philosophy. But again and again that disgraceful infirmity had recurred, always to be fought, and finally—so he believed—to be overcome.

But there was one factor, the importance of which he had grievously underestimated. It had certainly occurred to him that it would seem strange when the

boys began to leave him behind both in learning and in social position, but *how* strange he had not realised. His struggle to keep up with them in their school work, had proved the first-fruits of a bitter harvest. He had so diligently dammed up all the channels of free expression between himself and them that a frank and kindly readjustment of their relations towards each other was impossible. And now the affection, repressed and disowned, avenged itself upon him. In his intercourse with them he developed an exquisite sensitiveness which plunged him into agonies of wrath and humiliation. A black coat or a tall hat was insufferable arrogance. A careless reference that he could not follow, was a deliberate trap set for his ignorance. An inquiry after his health, was a sneer at his weakness. An offer of financial help was a studied insult, an attempt to buy the right of reproaching and lecturing him.

It was, indeed, over this offer of help that the final quarrel arose. The offer may not have been made in the most tactful way, for on this occasion the brothers, feeling the difficulty, came together, and found that, for once, union was certainly not strength. In their father's presence they always felt awkward, uncomfortable, and as they themselves put it—stupid. They—through Jim—suggested that he should give up work and go to live in the country.

"In the country, eh?" Mr. Roddies began, with dangerous suavity, and then, unable to contain himself, broke out with a savage question, repeated again and again in a crescendo of snarling fury.

"Why in the country? Why in the country? Why

in the country? Why, why, why, in the stinking rotten, damnable country?"

To this outburst Dick could only answer, "For your health's sake."

This remark, immediately interpreted by Mr. Roddles as an allusion to his weakness, brought down the curtain with a run. Laying his hand on every verbal missile with which a pretty extensive vocabulary could supply him, he told the young men that they were monsters of ingratitude; a pair of snivelling 'ypocrites, no better than they should be, but a very great deal worse, if the truth were known; insolent puppies; beggars on 'orseback; purse-proud young snobs; and a number of other unpleasant and undesirable characters. 'I 'ad put up with them and their brazen swagger, their bounce, and their bluster, quite long enough. Now 'I meant to 'ave an end of it all, then and there. If ever they came into 'is rooms again, they'd go downstairs a good deal quicker than they came up. As for their precious money, they might keep it till they were asked for it, which, as far as 'e was concerned, would be never! never!! never!!! And if they sent 'im a cheque or a bank-note—why, it would do to light 'is pipe with.

"And now," concluded Mr. Roddles, allowing himself the luxury of a shout, for Mr. Fitcher was out, and the first-floor rooms were empty, "be off with you, and don't let me see you any more—not till I send for you; and you needn't lie awake waiting for the message. P'raps it'll be when I feel like croaking and then you can put on your white ties and preach to father when 'e can't answer you. Till then I'

advise you to preach to each other, for you, both of you, want it more than most people."

"Whew!" exclaimed Dick, when they found themselves again in Fetter Lane, "I've known him pretty bad, but never like that. He *is* a Tartar, and no mistake. There's nothing that we can do, though, is there? He's quite impossible."

Jim looked very gloomy.

"I suppose he is," he said, "but I tell you what, Dick: he's a stronger man than you or I will ever be."

## II

So it was that Mr. Roddles acquired another and a very heavy grievance against life. The "blasted luck" to which he was so fond of referring, if it had not been able to frustrate his great plan, had robbed him of more than half the pleasure he ought to have had out of it. For—especially since that last great quarrel—though he watched, with the same care as before, every step in the boys' progress, yet that progress now excited in his heart feelings that were curiously mixed. The plan was not yet completely realised, and he was as keenly bent as ever on seeing it perfectly accomplished. But now, every new success achieved by either of the young men, though it was one more tribute to his foresight and practical ability, seemed, in another way, only a fresh point scored against him. The luck that frowned on him, had nothing but smiles for these insolent, ungrateful boys. And although this last quarrel and severance was his own doing and was fully intended by him to be final,

yet the thought of it was like an angry fester, irritating and poisoning his whole life.

He still studied the newspapers with the utmost care, and from time to time was rewarded by the sight of Jim's name as counsel in some heavy Chancery case, often as junior to Mr. Weaver, Q.C. Then, one day came a list of new Queen's Counsel, and among them was "Mr. James Roddles." Not long after this the general election was held, and Mr. Roddles, Q.C. was duly elected member for Gloucester, though only by a narrow majority.

The next item cut out, was a précis of Mr. John Trevenning's will—Mr. Roddles happened to miss the brief obituary notices in the *Times* and *Sportsman*. Uncle John had left a fortune not far off a quarter of a million, and the bulk of his property was to be divided between his niece, Rosa Roddles, and her husband, Dr. Richard Roddles, in equal shares. The little tailor opened his eyes wide as he noticed Mr. Trevenning's address—267 Cromwell Road. He knew that Dick lived with his friend, and he smiled as he thought that he had actually attained the goal set before him as a boy. Later still, came Jim's maiden speech in Parliament and the compliments evoked, and this was followed in due course by several other speeches. Then came a number of cutting remarks relating to a Trades Union Regulation Bill on which the member for Gloucester had spoken several times, finishing with a speech by Sir Henry Bradgate, the Prime Minister, in which he acknowledged the very great assistance the Government had received

from the honourable and learned member for Gloucester, who had shown a perfect mastery of the intricate clauses of the bill, and a power of clear exposition which he had never heard surpassed. After this, it seemed quite natural, when, twelve months later, on the retirement of Sir Lewis Plummer, and the appointment in his place of the Attorney-General, the post of Solicitor-General was offered to, and accepted by, Mr. James Roddles, Q.C., who thereupon became Sir James. The great plan was indeed developing fast now.

Rather more than a year passed before the culminating point was reached. Then the death of one of the Chancery judges, and the fact that the Attorney-General had his eye on the Woolsack, made plain the way for the junior law-officer, and Roddles, S.G., became Roddles, J.

But with all his ingenuity and persistence, the tailor in Fetter Lane missed one announcement which, indeed, he would not have appraised at its true value. This was the election of Dr. Richard Roddles as a Fellow of the Royal Society—a recognition of his most striking and valuable contributions to the infant science of heredity.

### III

And yet, in spite of these almost incredible successes, Mr. Roddles had fallen on evil days. The loss of his position at the Institute and his failure to recover it, and the final quarrel with his "boys," as he still called them, had made his outlook on life more savage and bitter than before. A new and coarser cynicism took

possession of him, and drove out the old self-respecting instinct to hide his shame. He gave up lecturing Mr. Fitcher on the infirmity of his will, placed himself frankly on the same level, and openly glozed in their mean and squalid excesses.

"What's in the locker, Fitch?" he would ask and when they had searched their pockets, if the results were satisfactory, he would slap his friend on the back and cry,

"Now, then, which shall it be—Vintners' Arms, White 'Art, White 'Orse, or White Swan? You pays your money, and you takes your choice."

Mr. Fitcher had a weakness for the White Hart till he found that the name awoke memories, and that with some such exordium as—"White 'Art, eh? Ah! but there's black 'earts too," the tailor would launch forth into vague but fierce maledictions on the insolent, the ungrateful, and the hypocritical, winding up with the peroration, "Never mind, Fitcher; we can drink ourselves 'appy, can't we?"

Sometimes, of course, they would go farther afield and their strangely contrasted figures and faces were familiar in most of the Clare Market and Drury Lane public-houses. The little tailor, his black hair now shot with grey, his dark eyes gleaming, led the way for he could not walk slowly, while Mr. Fitcher, tall, sandy-haired, and just a little vacant-eyed, followed a few paces in the rear. Curiously enough, their dress affected them very differently. It turned Mr. Fitcher into an ungainly Mercury, lending wings to his feet while on Mr. Roddles' impetuous gait it acted as a powerful drag. Hence, if you saw the two

pace together, even if their course were straight, you might be sure they were in their cups.

As Mr. Roddles relaxed his self-control, he soon found that his weakness was growing amazingly strong. Pound by pound, he drew from the savings bank his hoarded wealth, the last two or three being partly devoted to keeping Mr. Fitcher, when, by an unfortunate accident—after a visit to the Vintners' Arms—scalded his hand so badly that for three weeks he could not use a pen. Just then, too, the tailor experienced, almost for the first time, the inconvenience of being absolutely out of work for a fortnight.

"My blasted luck again!" he exclaimed, and hurried round to all the shops that had been in the habit of giving him work. From this round he returned in a very bad humour.

"You'll 'ave to learn to write with your left 'and," he said to Mr. Fitcher.

"I'm afraid I should never do that—not so as to satisfy my clients."

"You're fond of fine words," snapped Mr. Roddles; "I suppose the next time a copper runs you in, you'll ask 'im what station 'e takes 'is clients to. I've just been to see my clients, and not a mangy coat or vest to be 'ad among the lot of them. We'll 'ave to starve, that's all—but what about the tipples? That's a more serious matter, isn't it? Oh, lor!"—Mr. Roddles' expression grew more genial, and he gave a short, sharp laugh—"you do look blank, poor old cripple. Well, look 'ere. Things aren't quite so bad yet. I've got most of the last quid left. We'll go to 'Yde Park to-night for a treat, and we'll take eighteenpence with

us, and no more. You can *almost* get drunk on ninepence, if you know the way to set about it. Cheer up, old buck! We aren't dead yet!"

"I sometimes wish I were, Mr. Roddles," said the law-writer, though a wavering smile, half lost in its passage over the wide expanse of face, seemed to hint that this was not one of the occasions, "I'm only a weight on you when you can ill afford it. What I should have done——"

"Oh, for 'Eaven and 'ell's sake, stop that tune, do!" exclaimed Mr. Roddles hastily. "It's as bad as the Old 'Undredth on a piano-organ. You fix your silly old mind on the evening's programme—'Yde Park first and ninepenn'orth of milk and water afterwards."

Hyde Park was in these days Mr. Roddles' great resource. It was the only substitute he had been able to find for the Hall from which he had been evicted. It was, indeed, a poor substitute. In these constantly shifting crowds he was just a single, undistinguished individual. There was none of the organisation—the officers, the committee, the financial arrangements, the business meetings in which he had taken such pride and pleasure. Then he sadly missed the decencies of debate. The laughter here was much more apt to be at, than with, the speaker. The hoarse shouts and foul jokes of the larrikins, and the high-pitched screams of the girls, confused and irritated him. The stammering falling-off in his speaking, of which he was painfully conscious, he attributed at first entirely to the novelty of the surroundings, but, as time went on, he had to confess that his nerve was failing him, and there were plenty of physical symptoms to throw light on the

cause of that. Still, though they brought him many humiliations and cost him many a fit of wild anger, these nights in the Park did break the dull monotony of his life, and the rare occasions on which his old rindness and audacity asserted themselves, to the confusion of his opponents, afforded him a satisfaction which, for the moment, seemed to balance all his loss.

## IV

After a fortnight's idleness, Mr. Roddles found work again. Before the fortnight was over, Mr. Fitcher had been able once more to hold his pen, and by his earnings to pay off a small fraction of what he owed his landlord.

The experience gave Mr. Roddles a very unpleasant jar, and he determined to take the reins in his hand again, and keep his weakness well within bounds.

Thoughtful men, if they have any gifts of imagination, are sometimes haunted by a grim vision of what they may possibly become. Mr. Roddles, with all his faults and failings, was a thoughtful man and by no means lacking in imagination. Under the circumstances, therefore, it is not very wonderful that such a vision was the tailor's constant companion. He saw himself, a sodden, down-at-heels, out-at-elbows drunkard, pasty-faced, bloated, twitching, and trembling, standing, cap in hand, within the hall of a big house in the Cromwell Road. A thousand times he spurned the hateful figure and swore that, whatever happened, that last indignity he would not suffer.

And yet, clear-eyed and shrewd when sober, he knew well that he was heading straight for irretrievable

disaster. There was only one thing to be done—he must rein in.

Then came the discovery that he could hardly mount the box, that his arm was palsied, and that the team was quite beyond control.

At first he could not realise the awful change. What he had done for years, chiefly in the interests of the boys, he surely could do now, when it was a matter of vital importance for himself. But, unhappily for him, the conditions were widely different. In the old days his mind had been absorbed in the great plan, and the idea of doing anything that would mar or hinder it, was not to be entertained for a moment. Now, the plan was practically accomplished, and nothing that he could do or leave undone, would affect it. Then, besides the boys and their future, he had in the Institute, another source of interest, and another incentive towards keeping straight and making a fair show. Now, that interest had passed out of his life and Hyde Park was a sorry substitute, and a temptation rather than a help. Lastly, he had not allowed for the slow deterioration of his will and energy that had been going on for years.

Still, he did make a great effort, or rather a series of efforts. In these he found Mr. Fitcher a serious hand to cap. For, though the law-writer loyally struggled to follow the master mind, yet the effect of a few days total abstinence was a figure so limp and a face so woebegone that Mr. Roddles was generally moved first to laughter—though his own condition was no much better—and next to a sympathy which only too often resulted in a hasty visit to the Arms, the Swan

the Horse, or the Hart. Thence they would return with smiling faces, all their good resolutions scattered to the winds.

So the squalid little tragedy—type of ten thousand others—moved on to its final act, and the two figures, grotesque, yet not without a touch of pathos about them, went stumbling hand in hand down that "easy slope" of which the stately Roman poet sings. For them, black Dis had four doors open, evening and morning, and every one of the four gaped wide in Fetter Lane.

## V

"And what am I to call you, now?" asked Madge, as Sir James Roddles came into the room.

"'My Lord,' of course," said her husband, "that's what I have to call him, if I go into his Court."

"You'll call me what you always have called me," Jim began, "or——"

"Or what?"

"Or I'll call you Mrs. Weaver."

"That settles it!" she cried, with the old laugh and the old smile. "Come in to dinner, Jim."

In the dining-room he had to run the gauntlet of more congratulations. Old Mrs. Weaver—the dowager, as her son and daughter-in-law called her—had been very gracious to him since her son's marriage. His appointment as Solicitor-General had put a strain on her friendliness, for it was quite evident that Will had fallen behind his pupil in the race for promotion. Still, she had cherished a secret hope that a sensible Lord Chancellor would redress the balance when a

seat on the Bench fell vacant. The vacancy occurred in due course, but the Lord Chancellor was ill-advised and the prize went to the younger man. It was a bitter pill, and the old lady could hardly have swallowed it with a good grace had it not been for a certain sad and tired expression on Jim's face that touched her in spite of herself, and for the overwhelming pride and joy which she felt in the advent of the most wonderful and glorious of all babies—hardly a baby, though, by this time.

As it was, she made a very pretty speech, which Jim received with his usual tranquil smile.

"You'll have to go to church, now," said Weaver. "A barrister may do what he likes, but a judge does what he must."

Jim smiled.

"That's all right, then; I've been to the Temple Church this morning."

"What was the text?" asked Madge.

"Something about Nathan the prophet, I think—was there such a man?—I'm afraid I didn't listen much to the sermon, but the singing was fine."

"You were thinking about a judgment reserved," declared Weaver.

"No, I wasn't," Jim answered softly, "I was thinking about old times. That's what brought me up here."

Madge flashed upon him a quick glance of sympathy.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "the Temple Gardens and Mr. Nine—it does seem rather incredible, doesn't it?"

"It gave me a scare," he said, and the subject dropped.

But when the maids had left them alone, over their dessert, Madge reverted to it.

"Scared about what, Jim?" she asked, as if there had been no break.

"Just a mood, I suppose," he answered, "a feeling as though life were a great game played between—who knows whom?—in which we are only the poor, helpless wooden pieces."

She shook her head.

"I don't know that mood," she said, "but I sometimes tremble when I think what hostages I have given to life."

"Well," he said, "at any rate you are happier than those who have no hostages to give."

Just then the door opened and nurse came in, carrying the hostage-in-chief.

"Ah!" exclaimed Jim, his face lighting up, "here's our cloud-dispeller. What do you call her?"

"M," Madge answered, holding out her arms, "just M—Capital M, you know."

"Yes; a capital name, too," Jim answered, though he did not know that over that capital letter there was a little romance between the father and mother.

Jim never stopped late on Sundays, and an hour or two afterwards, Madge and Will walked down to the station with him.

"It is a pleasure to you, isn't it, Jim, your getting to the top, like this?" she asked, as they stood on the platform waiting for the train.

"Yes," he answered her, "it is, when I put my thoughts on the right lines. But they soon slip off

again. Nothing turns out quite what you expect it to be, does it? Do you remember"—he looked at Weaver—"how you used to laugh at me for being so fond of work, and points, and all that? Well, the laugh's with you, still. I'm getting sick of the stuff, and I'll have to go on munching it, till my teeth drop out."

He spoke with unusual bitterness, and Madge looked troubled.

"But you haven't finished yet," said Weaver. "there's the Court of Appeal."

"Yes!" exclaimed Jim scornfully; "fancy the delights of sitting all day on a perch with two owls like Emery and Cleeve! No, I tell you what I'd give up everything to-morrow—everything but the friendship of you two, and the chance of knowing Capital M—if I could begin over again at the Boarding School. I don't suppose I should do any better for myself, but I'd like to try."

As the husband and wife walked back from the station, Madge was unusually quiet.

"Don't worry about Jim," said Will at last, "he told you, he is subject to moods, and he was in one of these this afternoon."

She shook her head.

"I'm afraid it's a mood that lasts. Poor Jim! To work as he has worked, to succeed, and then to find that success is only another way of spelling failure!"

"While I am learning that failure may be only another way of spelling success. No; it doesn't seem fair, but he's right, so far; there are stronger hands than ours. You think we're too happy."

Madge? That's the thought that frightens me sometimes."

She looked up with her confident smile.

"If I feel like that, I take a dose of medicine," she said. Happiness can't last, but there's no end to it—that's my creed. There are no straight roads in life; only turning after turning, till we come to the river, and even that may have some twists and bends."

"But what about the hostages?" he reminded her. She pinched his arm.

"Ah," she said, "I forgot; one shouldn't argue with lawyers. It's true about the hostages, though. It's there the danger lies. A baby will shake any philosophy till she has lost one of her own. Oh, Will," she cried, with a sudden change of tone, "we'll try and give her a good time, won't we?"

"Yes, indeed we will," he answered fervently.

"If ye then, being evil," she whispered—"how does it go?"

"Ah yes," he answered, "that's better than any lawyer's argument."

"Poor Jim!" she sighed.

He answered her out of her own mouth.

"There are no straight roads in life," he said.

## VI

"Come in!"

The tone was rasping and eloquent of ill-temper. Mr. Fitcher fumbled with the handle of the door, nearly fell over an empty box, and showed other signs of mental perturbation.

Mr. Roddles watched him with a lowering face.

"'Eaven and 'Ell!" he exclaimed, "why can't you come into your own room without all that silliness and nonsense? Any one would think you were a kid playing with a doll's 'ouse."

"It is *your* room," said Mr. Fitcher mildly but firmly.

"Oh, well," said Mr. Roddles, recognising the tone. "'ave it your own idiotic way, then. What are you grinning like a Cheshire cat for?"

"Our luck has changed, Mr. Roddles!"

"'Ow many thousand times do you suppose you've cackled that?" asked Mr. Roddles scornfully.

"It is a long lane without a turning," answered the patient Fitcher, beaming upon Mr. Roddles, whose scowl only bit a little deeper into his forehead.

"If Fetter Lane 'adn't a turning, we shouldn't be mewed up in this mangy 'ole," he remarked bitterly.

This was a reference to the fact that the pair had been obliged to quit their former lodgings and take a single room—an attic—in Dean Street, which leads out of Fetter Lane. In such dire straits were they, that they had been glad to sell most of their furniture, and rather most of Mr. Roddles' furniture, for his partner's misfortune had already been reduced to a bed, a table and two chairs, and an ancient washstand. Of these, the table had gone, for the room was small and the tailor's work-table large. Even as it was, the room looked bare as well as extremely dirty.

Mr. Fitcher laid a roll of papers on the table.

"One of my clients"—he paused, for the word was a quiet challenge, but Mr. Roddles let it pass—

"in Cursitor Street sent me a message and has given me this job. It'll keep us going till you get something."

Mr. Roddles' lips drew together a little tighter, but he made no remark.

Then Mr. Fitcher played his last cards.

"One of the clerks—a very friendly young man—thought I looked, as he said, 'a bit down in the mouth,' and offered me a small advance. I made two purchases on my way back."

From one pocket he drew out an ounce of tobacco, which he opened and placed in front of his friend. From the other pocket he drew a *Penny Illustrated Paper*. Two shillings and a penny he held out.

"This is the balance," he said, "and wipes off a little bit more of the debt. Put it in the bank," he added facetiously, casting an anxious glance at Mr. Roddles' face.

To his intense horror and distress, Mr. Roddles put his sleeve across his eyes and began snivelling.

"I can't 'elp it, Fitch," he said, after a dreadful minute. "I wish you'd go out for 'alf an hour or so; I want to think."

All the light had gone from Mr. Fitcher's face. Without a word he took his rusty bowler from the table and walked out.

When he came back, after a much longer interval than Mr. Roddles had mentioned, his timid knock was answered by a voice he hardly recognised, so different was it from the accents that still lingered in his ears. The change in Mr. Roddles' face was just as marked. He looked alert, and the old masterful expression

seemed to have returned. Mr. Fitcher noticed with great satisfaction that his friend was smoking.

"'Ave a pipeful, Fitcher. After all, there's nothing to beat good shag."

Mr. Fitcher was pleased but puzzled. It seemed to him as though a mysterious change had taken place during his absence; as if the Roddles that he had known of late had been taken away, and a new one left in his room. But the change, he felt bound to admit, was for the better.

"I've been 'aving a clear out," said Mr. Roddles.

He pointed to the fireplace, and Mr. Fitcher saw that the grate and fender were littered with the ashes of burnt paper. Also he noticed that Mr. Roddles had evidently been writing a letter—a very unusual procedure for him. On the table lay a sealed envelope which Mr. Roddles hastily picked up and put in his pocket. At this moment Mr. Fitcher, looking round for a match with which to light his pipe, caught sight of the paper he had brought in. It had fallen to the ground and lay half under the table. He stooped and picked it up. He thought he might now venture on his ancient joke.

"Your family is to the fore again," he remarked genially.

"What are you up to now?" asked the tailor, without any signs of irritation.

Mr. Fitcher slowly unfolded the paper and turned the pages backwards and forwards till Mr. Roddles suddenly snapped out—"For goodness' sake do stop flapping that paper about. It isn't so warm that you want fanning, nor you either, I should think."

"Here it is!" exclaimed the law-writer, secretly relieved, as the impression of strangeness in Mr. Roddles' manner wore off. He put the paper down on the table and pointed to one of the illustrations.

The tailor gave a glance.

"'Eaven and 'Ell!" he ejaculated under his breath. Then he lifted the paper, and looked closely at the page. There were two portraits. Underneath, was a line of print. "Two Distinguished Brothers," it ran, "Sir James Roddles, and Dr. Richard Roddles, F.R.S."

"What's 'F.R.S.,' I wonder," said Mr. Roddles.

"Fellow of the Royal Society," answered the law-writer, with some importance. It was not very often he could instruct his friend. "It's the tip-top thing in science," he added.

"Then they're both tip-toppers," said Mr. Roddles, half in a whisper, as if he were talking to himself.

"It's a very curious thing," exclaimed Mr. Fitcher, pointing to the judge in wig and gown, "but there is distinctly a look in that man's eyes——"

"So there is in yours, old man," Mr. Roddles interrupted, and then, before Mr. Fitcher could recover, he went on:

"Yes, 'e's a clever man, that one; but if I'd 'ad 'alf 'is chances when I was a young 'un—— There, there," he left the first sentence unfinished, "when a man 'as blasted luck all 'is life, it's no good whining a'bout it. There's luck, there's no luck, and there's blasted luck. They've got luck, you've got no luck, and I've got the rest."

On the opposite page there happened to be a picture of a Garter investiture.

"Luck again!" exclaimed the tailor, pointing to his peers in their robes, "and luck for those who deserve it at least. Those two 'ave got brains, and they *do* know how to work; but these—faugh! it makes me ashamed to look at them in their peacock liveries. A Chamber of 'Orrers in Barnum's show would be the place for them. Fools, parasites, bloodsuckers, extortioners, sunk in folly and steeped in vice."

Mr. Fitcher had a profound admiration for his friend's eloquence, and under its influence had come round a long way towards Advanced Thought, but one stronghold he still kept intact—the last vestige of aristocracy.

If Mr. Roddles' tirade had been expressly designed to draw him, it certainly had that effect.

"No, Mr. Roddles," he said, "as you are aware I cannot agree with you there. The great landowners of the United Kingdom I believe to be as noble, as disinterested, as—as—as able a body of men, only a little less so, as can be found elsewhere. I can't express myself as you can, but I feel very strongly on the subject."

"Most people do when they know nothing about it," said Mr. Roddles, his eye lighting up once more with the joy of battle, and for the next half-hour the two were engaged in a spirited controversy, from which they emerged, unconvincing and unconvinced, flushed, and in excellent temper.

"There," said Mr. Roddles, who had got in at least ten words to his opponent's one, "that's been a breezy little talk. You'll give the rascals up, before you've done. You mark my words."

"You forget, Mr. Roddles," answered the law-

with patient dignity, "that on my mother's side I am descended from one of the rascals, as you are pleased to call them. She was one of the Fitz-Allens of County Clare, and was descended from Sir Thomas Fitz-Allen."

"If he was your ancestor, he was nothing worse than a fool; I'll wear that," declared Mr. Roddles, and added, "now you get to your work, I've got one or two little things to attend to."

The light was failing, so Mr. Fitcher got out the paraffin lamp—for in this room there was no gas—and after a good deal of juggling with an obstinate wick, coaxed out of it a smoky, yellow flame. Then he refilled his pipe, and was soon busy with pen and blue paper.

Mr. Roddles, meanwhile, after rummaging in obscure corners, produced a large brown-paper parcel, which he opened and laid on the other end of the table. It contained six or seven odd garments—relics, evidently, of vanished suits, and all of them past the stage of shabbiness when they would receive even the coldest welcome at the Three Balls. He held them up and scanned them with a professional eye, choosing a coat, vest, and a pair of trousers, all of surpassing seediness. With these he retired into the darkest corner, and soon reappeared, two or three degrees dingier and dirtier in appearance than before. The clothes which he had taken off he folded carefully, and packed in the brown paper with the other remains. Then he restored the parcel to its original hiding-place.

Mr. Fitcher looked up with mild curiosity in his eye.

"Hulloa!" he exclaimed, "going out to a dinner-party?"

"I'm going out," Mr. Roddles answered ve quietly.

"Shall you be back in time for the Park?"

"My movements," said Mr. Roddles, "are uncertain. I've got an appointment."

Mr. Fitcher understood from the tone that he w not to ask questions, so he only remarked,

"I shall wait for you till half-past seven."

"No, don't do that. I've no idea when I shall back."

"Good luck to you. I feel as if something w going to happen."

"Same 'ere," said Mr. Roddles shortly. "Good l to you, old chap, and lots of it."

As he spoke, he opened the door.

"You haven't taken any money," Mr. Fitcher ca after him, opening the lid of the box that served th for a bank. "Take a shilling."

A gleam shone for a moment in Mr. Roddles' e. But after a brief pause he answered firmly,

"No, that's the rent money."

"Well, the penny, anyway," urged Mr. Fite holding it out with a smile.

The tailor came back slowly, took the penny, loo at it, and opened his lips, but no word came. T he shifted his position, and looked over his frie shoulder.

"All right, the penny it shall be. You *do* wr fine 'and." He laid his hand on the law-writer's "Do you know, Fitcher, on the 'ole you're the best I've ever known. Good night."

And without waiting for an answer he hurried o

## VII

For November, the weather was unusually mild, and though the clothes into which Mr. Roddles had changed were very thin, he felt little inconvenience. Besides, his thoughts were too much absorbed in what lay before him, to trouble about trifles.

For a long time now, he had foreseen this end to everything. His blasted luck had been playing with him for more than thirty years—a good deal more—ever since he first set eyes on that pretty face which had been his ruin. It had been a regular cat-and-mouse game, he could see that now, looking back. Every single thing in life that had seemed good and pleasant—Em, Sarah, the boys and their successes, the Institute—all had been turned into cruel instruments of torture. Could it really be luck, chance, accident? That was the question he had asked himself a thousand times. Looking back now at his life, it seemed to him as though he could see some malevolent hand always thrusting him back and down, out of happiness and success into misery and failure. Well, even animals, he had read, will refuse life on such conditions.

And yet, within his heart, there had always been a voice asking, claiming, pleading with himself for one more opportunity. Was it simply the gambler's faith in the fall of the dice, or was it another expression of that tenacious purpose which had triumphed over every obstacle in the development of the plan? Some day, surely, the luck must turn, no matter how blasted!

The quarrel with the boys and the discovery of his own loss of self-control had fairly staggered him.

And then the long-drawn struggle against sordid squalid poverty, and the constantly increasing loss of self-respect, had dimmed the spark of hope and weakened his hold on life. "To be or not to be" became for him an intensely practical question, pondered incessantly through hateful days of unwilling idleness and still more hateful broken nights. All the time he loathed and despised himself for his hesitation. Like his son, the judge, he had no irresolution.

Then came the moment, only a few hours before when Fitcher—his butt, his laughing-stock, over whose head he had kept a roof for years, whom he had lectured, scolded, and patronised—suddenly appeared as the bread-winner for the pair of them. At that moment the last shreds of hope fell from him and his mind was made up. He would end it all.

And immediately, whatever was left in him of strength and mettle came hurrying to fortify his resolution. His mind seemed to recover a calmness, a poise, a reasonableness, it had not known for long. The physical pains of death did not terrify him, and he told himself, was the opportunity for showing that from superstitious fears he was equally free.

And yet as he walked along the crowded street he was conscious of a strange, uncanny feeling, though he had suddenly been marked off and separated from all his kind, a leper among the healthy, a dead man among the living. Stranger still, was a sudden yearning, such as he could not remember ever feeling before, for the world and the life and the men and women he was to leave behind him. "A little more

and I shall be blubbing again, like a kid," he said to himself with a smile in which there was more sadness than merriment.

He had been walking along Holborn, and close by Tottenham Court Road he passed a post office. He had thought out all the details of what he was about to do, though indeed they were simple enough. When he was tired of wandering about the streets he would go into the Park, visit for the last time his old haunts, and wait quietly till it was late enough. Then he would walk to one of the bridges—Waterloo, perhaps, he knew that best.

The letter he had written before he set out, was to Jim. It was very short, and contained no word of reconciliation or farewell. It ran:—

"MY LORD, If your Lordship considers you owe me anything at all, I ask you to pay it to Mr. James Fitcher, of 26 Dean Street, Fetter Lane. He has been a good friend to me, and is the only man I have ever known show a particle of gratitude.—JOSEPH RODDLES."

He had been afraid to address the envelope in his room, lest by any chance Mr. Fitcher might catch sight of the name, but he had taken the precaution to bring a pencil with him. The Directory had told where his lordship now lived, and he had smiled grimly to see the final and perfect accomplishment of his plan, in the fact that Jim had followed his brother to the Cromwell Road. He had nearly forgotten the necessary stamp, and it was only Mr. Fitcher's insistence that had reminded him. As it

was, he had slipped the penny with the pencil into his right-hand trouser pocket. Now, at the sight of the post-office clock, he pulled out his letter and then for the penny and the pencil. They were both gone and the pocket was empty. With feverish impatience he searched every other pocket, but in vain. Then he felt again, and soon detected the fatal hole.

Weak and hungry, his nerves high-strung, this mean blow of fate was too much for him. Trembling with passion, he tore the envelope across. One he thrust into the treacherous pocket, the other he flung into the road.

"My blasted luck to the end!" he growled, and men turned to look at the strange creature frowning and muttering as he hurried along almost at a run. The milder mood passed, Even Fitch was forgotten. Black anger filled his heart.

For a long time he roamed up and down, till at last tired out, he sought the Park, and turned in at the Marble Arch. The darkness and quiet, after the glare and tumult of the streets, soothed him, and the transport of passion began to die down. He found an empty seat on one of the broad paths, and sat there till he rested. Then he crossed over to the place where various meetings were held. There were four or five in progress, and he made for the Socialist platform that he knew so well.

There he stood listening, impressed, for the first time, with the utter futility and absurdity of the whole business. It seemed incredible that he could ever have taken a serious interest in all this pouring of meaningless words. What was the

of trying to alter and patch a world that was shoddy from head to heel? Luck, no luck, blasted luck, that was the only answer to the great riddle. Park Lane for luck, the Park itself for no luck, and for blasted luck—why, Waterloo Bridge.

He turned away, and with hands thrust deep into his empty pockets wandered idly from group to group. At the last of them, a little apart from the rest, a hymn was being sung. He recognised the Salvation Army caps in the centre of the crowd.

"Lor, what silly fools men are!" he said to himself, but something in the swing of the chorus tickled his ear, and he waited for verse after verse to catch the refrain—

"Sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem,  
Washed in the blood of the Lamb."

When the last chorus died away, a prayer began, and, with a gesture of impatience, he turned away towards the darkness of the unlighted spaces. Before he had gone far, he felt, rather than heard, that he was being followed. Turning round sharply, he came face to face with a young woman in the familiar poke bonnet and red ribbon of the Army. She was a tall, big-made girl with a very white face and very red hair—it almost matched the ribbon. An attempt had evidently been made to tuck it away, smooth and neat, under the bonnet, but nature was too strong for art, and little wisps and curls were breaking out all over her forehead. Her eyes were light, and full, and bold, but there was a friendly look in them that, in spite of himself, attracted Mr. Roddles. In her hand fluttered a *War Cry*.

"Well, my brother," she said, "what's the matter. You're down on your luck?"

Her voice was harsh, yet there was something liked in the ring of it. His first impulse had been to resent the "brother," but on second thoughts he let it pass. Instead, he fastened on the last word.

"What do *you* know about luck?" he asked. "If you'd 'ad mine, you'd know what you were talking about."

"I've 'ad all sorts," she answered, "only I've learned to call it by another name."

"What's that?"

"The will of God."

Mr. Roddles tried to sneer, but without much success. Alarmed at the failure, and disconcerted by those fearless yet friendly eyes, he began to bluster.

"What do they pay you to do the will of God?" he asked roughly.

She answered him in a flash,

"A tenth of what the Devil would pay me to do his."

He looked full at her.

"I believe you're about right there, my girl. Only there isn't a Devil, and nobody knows whether there's a God or not."

"*I* know," she answered, her eyes shining with new light.

"And you believe in miracles and all that stuff?"

She laughed in the most friendly way.

"Of course I do," she said.

"Have you ever seen a miracle?"

"Heaps—I'm a pretty big one, myself."

Mr. Roddles slapped his pockets.

"If I were to find any money here, it would be a bigger," he said.

"If He means you to find it, you will," she replied.

The tailor's eyes were still on her face.

"You're a woman," he said, "but you can't help it. I like you. Shake hands."

She held out a large, shapely hand, and her grasp was that of a strong man.

"Good-bye, my brother," she said. "I shall see you again."

"That you never will," he answered, with a queer little smile.

"Yes, I shall," she repeated confidently. "I always know."

She turned back to where the red flag was waving, and, after watching her for a minute, he plunged into the darkness. Before he had gone very far, he came to a seat.

"This'll do," he muttered; "it's too early yet."

## VIII

As he sat there, a light wind blew through the leafless trees, and he shivered.

"Never mind," he said grimly to himself, "I shall be colder still, soon."

His meeting with the Salvation lass had given a fresh turn to his thoughts which, ever since his resolve was taken, had been strangely variable. Once more his mood had swung round to regret at leaving this world of life and sense. That big, strong, capable

girl reminded him that there were fine men, and even women, if only you could get hold of them. A man could make a pal of a girl like that, he thought. No wonder some people loved life. It must be a fine thing to the people born to luck. Think of his own boys—his heart grew bitter at once—and their amazing luck. Yet, after all, what *was* their luck? Was it not simply this—that they had had him for their father? Had not all their successes, from their first scholarships to the very houses they now lived in, first existed as theirs, in his brain? They had done their part as soldiers, but he had been the commander-in-chief who had planned the whole campaign. And now, think of the contrast! They in luxury, rich and famous; he, a shivering, hungry outcast, on the very brink of a shameful death.

He paused on the word. Was it shameful? Wasn't it the pluckiest thing a man could do? Wouldn't ninety-nine men out of a hundred in his position simply levy toll upon the boys? No doubt he had intended that when they got on they should pay him back, but when they put on their cursed airs and began to lecture and patronise him and try to bundle him into the country, a family disgrace to be hidden away, why then, no man of spirit would touch a penny of their dirty money. No; in some ways, no doubt, he had been a fool, but not in this. He had acted like a man and he was proud of it.

“Got a light, Guv'nor?”

It was a husky voice close behind him, and it made him start violently. Involuntarily, he put his finger into the waistcoat pocket where he often used to carry

loose vestas. As it happened, there was one there now. But his fingers were numbed, and it was only after a good deal of fumbling that he could get it out.

"It's the only one I've got," he said.

The man, a shabby, red-faced night-bird, took the match without a word of thanks, struck it on his boot, and then flung it away.

"It's got no 'ead to it, you measly tyke," he growled, and vanished, rumbling horrid oaths.

But Mr. Roddles paid no heed, for in his fumbling, his fingers had struck against something thin, and small, and flat, and hard, and he was curious as to what it could be. It had evidently worked into the lining, but the stuff was rotten and he soon ripped it enough to get hold of the article.

It was a piece of paper neatly folded several times, and when he opened it, inside lay a sixpenny piece. The paper was very dirty, but even in the darkness he could just see that there were figures like the items of a bill. This was probably change that had been sent on payment of an account.

He put the coin on his knee where it showed up against the dark cloth. The words of the Salvation lass were in his ears—"If He means you to find it, you will," she had said.

"It's come a little late," said Mr. Roddles grimly. "I'll give it back to Him."

He walked back towards the lights and the sounds of the Park entrance, the sixpence tight-held in one hand. Just as he reached the open space opposite the Marble Arch, a sudden idea occurred to him. At the corner, a couple of turnings down Oxford Street,

was a big public-house. One last treat—suppose after all, his courage failed—one good glass—

“ I knew you'd come back, my brother.”

It was the big Salvation lass. There was something in the tone of her voice, unmusical as it was, that went straight to Mr. Roddles' heart. He caught her hand and pressed the sixpence into it.

“ There,” he said, with a poor attempt at a smile. “ I did find it, and I'll give it back to Him.”

“ Come out of this glare,” she said, and led the way into the shadows.

“ You dear man,” she said, “ what do you mean. Can you spare it ? ”

“ Spare it ? ” he repeated, his voice rough with his effort to control it, “ of course I can. I've no use for it, I tell you.”

She stooped and looked hard at him.

“ You're hungry, you're longing for a drink—don't I know the look ?—you're tired out, and your heart is bitter, and yet you give this sixpence to Him instead of to the publican. You're a brave man, my brother and a strong one. Won't you give Him your heart as well ? ”

Something was tugging hard at Mr. Roddles' heart-strings—something that he did not understand, that he could not put into words—a wild desire to end his long fight, to surrender at discretion, or on whatever terms this girl with the large grey eyes should dictate. Then he remembered that she was a chit, and he was a man.

“ You're a good girl,” he said, “ but you don't know what you're talking about. I came back

because I chose to, and I'm going away for the same reason."

"And because He chooses, you'll come back again."

Mr. Roddles tried hard to be angry at her persistence.

"Don't talk like a fool," he said, "because you're not one. Look 'ere; I'll tell you where I'm going, and why I'm not coming back, and why sixpence is no use to me. I'm going to throw myself into the river. Which shall it be—Waterloo or Charing Cross?"

She smiled, but the smile and the expression in her eyes baffled him.

"Waterloo's the straightest," she said, "along Piccadilly, through Leicester Square, and into the Strand. But there's no river for you to-night. His hand is upon you."

"Then I must try to slip out of it," he said, and before she could utter a word to detain him, he was gone.

## IX

Mr. Fitcher sat on, turning out page after page of the solemn jargon in which Jones the baker and Smith the candlestick-maker are supposed to talk to each other, when they buy or sell or lease or pledge their houses or their acres. He liked the long roll of the interminable, unpunctuated, unintelligible sentences, and when allowed the luxury of a pipe and not driven for time, he found his occupation positively agreeable. This evening, however, he felt restless and uneasy. Something unusual and mysterious in Mr. Roddles'

behaviour, his sudden and distressing breakdown, and his unnatural gentleness afterwards, all suggested disturbing problems that he could not solve. The little tailor was the sun round whom he, with his interests, hopes, and affections, meekly revolved. The better educated man of the two, he had, by his own weakness, drifted lower and lower, till he had cut himself off from family and friends. Then, by what seemed the merest accident, he had become Mr. Roddles' lodger, and for several years the drift was arrested and the dull apathy of despair gave way to a new outlook on life and a new dawn of self-respect. Mr. Roddles' brusque manners and masterful ways had a bracing effect on the amiable helplessness of the law-writer, while the fact, only too obvious, that they had, at least one temptation in common, brought a note of brotherhood into their relations with each other. The practical help in the matter of rent, and sometimes of food, which Mr. Roddles gave unstintingly, took most of the edge off his sharp tongue, and before long Mr. Fitcher, the tenant, was merged in Mr. Fitcher the slave and worshipper. He had, indeed, a real genius for gratitude, and, as he had not—in the latter years of his life, at any rate—received much kindness, the effect produced by the tailor's generosity was all the greater. Since the move to Dean Street, and the sad falling-off in Mr. Roddles' work, the copying had more than once, been their main support, and from this fact Mr. Fitcher had derived a new and exquisite pleasure, only marred by the growing gloom on his friend's face.

And now he felt as though a crisis had come, and

crisis was exactly the situation for which Mr. Fitcher was most unfit. The church clock, which was their timekeeper, had struck eight some time before, and he had been clinging to the hope that the tailor would, after all, come back in time for a walk to the Park and possibly a modest glass on the way home. But half-past eight struck and still there was no sign. The sense of something wrong, some trouble impending, and threatening his friend, made work impossible. He corked the ink bottle and put away the draft. He must go out and meet or find Mr. Roddles. He paced up and down Dean Street two or three times. Then he walked up Fetter Lane into Holborn. At the corner he waited irresolute for a little while, and at last made up his mind to try the Park.

It was nearly half-past nine when he reached the Marble Arch, but some of the discussion groups were still there. He made his way to where a Socialist was haranguing a circle rather thinner than usual. He moved round it eagerly but in vain. There was no sign of his friend. Just as he was about to turn away, a man whom he recognised as a frequent speaker came up to him.

"Hullo, Jonathan," he said, "have you lost your David? I saw him here not so long ago."

"You mean my friend with whom I often come to the Park?" said Mr. Fitcher eagerly. "Where did you see him? When was it? And where is he now?"

"That I can't tell you, but not half an hour ago I saw him speaking to the big Salvation girl over there."

He pointed to a tall, stout, young woman in familiar garb.

Their meeting had evidently finished some little time before. She was now talking to one of the men in the red and blue caps.

Mr. Fitcher went up to her and took off his hat.

"Excuse me, miss," he said, with a regular F. Allen bow, "but I am told that a friend of mine was talking to you a few minutes ago."

She looked at him for a moment with an almost defensive expression as if she thought he was trying to make game of her. Then suddenly a look of vivacious interest came into her eyes. She took a step forward.

"Do you mean a little dark man, down at the mill and down on his luck?"

Mr. Fitcher did not approve of the description, but he was eager for information.

"My friend," he said, with dignity, "is not a mill hand and I believe he came out in some old working clothes."

She nodded her head and smiled approvingly.

"Good man," she said, "to stick up for your friend. But I didn't mean anything against him. I expect I think as much of him as you do."

"Have you any idea where he is now?" he asked.

"I could guess, but I don't know. He told me he was going to throw himself into the river."

Mr. Fitcher uttered a low cry and dropped his head with a gesture of despair. The tears sprang into his eyes.

"Ah," she said, "I see. You are really fond of him. I didn't understand. Well, he's in stronger luck than yours or mine, and there's no river for him."

night. I told him so, and it's true. But I wouldn't have let him go, only he was too quick for me. And in this Park—it's a needle in a haystack, in the dark."

"Then you can't tell me which way he has gone?"

"Only this—he asked me which it should be—Charing Cross or Waterloo. I said Waterloo, because I thought it would take him longer. I should go there, if I were you. But don't you be afraid. The river won't get him. He's bought himself out of the Devil's army with this."

And she held up a sixpence.

Mr. Fitcher shook his head.

"He hadn't got it when he went out."

"No, but he found it. He'll tell you about it when you see him. He's coming back, and you're coming with him. There's joy in front of both of you."

"Thank you, miss," said Mr. Fitcher, with another bow. "I hope you're right. I think I'll go after him at once."

"Yes," she said, "try Wellington Street. And tell him big Lou—that's what they call me—says there's joy in front of him, here and now, and she says it because she knows."

"Yes, miss," answered Mr. Fitcher, shambling off along the path under the lights.

## X

Though his thoughts were fixed on Waterloo Bridge, the law-writer made but poor progress on his way thither. Every huddled figure on the seats, every

slouching figure moving softly on the grass in the darkness, brought his heart into his mouth. Tim after time he stopped to investigate; more than once he followed a shadowy form up and down dusky, dimly lighted avenues of trees, only to discover that his eyes had duped him. Then a light but steady drizzle began to fall, and he found himself close to the Achilles Statue, and the hands of the lodge-clock opposite pointed to twenty minutes past ten.

A sudden scare lest he might be too late, sent him out into Piccadilly almost at a run. He had brought a shilling with him, and he was sorely tempted to mount an omnibus, but he reflected that the money really belonged not to him but to Mr. Roddles, that he could get over the ground almost as fast as the omnibus, and that, on foot, he had a better chance of observing the people he passed.

"Mr. Roddles! Mr. Roddles!" Was it by some freak of fate, or by some touch of humour among Powers and Principalities, that the majestic concept of Love pursuing Sorrow had come to be represented by a poor, foolish, ungainly, perspiring law-writer and a drunken little jobbing tailor? Or is what we see humour only a mask woven by our dullness and blindness?

"Mr. Roddles! Mr. Roddles!" For poor Fitz the world had but one pearl of great price—the life of his friend. The thought of that life being extinguished in the black waters of the cruel river was the horror, the last outrage thinkable, conceivable, possible.

Every now and again, big Lou's message rose in

mind. If only he could find his friend and shout it in his ears, it would be easy to believe in the message itself—"There's joy in front of you here and now!"

He was hurrying along at a steady trot like a cab-runner, now on the pavement, now in the roadway, now taking the crossings at the peril of his own life, since his eyes were all for the men and not for the horses.

Across Piccadilly Circus, along Cranbourne Street, into Long Acre, down Bow Street—Wellington Street—the Strand.

By this time the roads were greasy, and more than once he slipped. At the corner of Wellington Street and the Strand he paused and looked round him.

Like Mr. Roddles, he had had little food that day, and he was beginning to feel worn out. Perhaps his slips had been due to this as much as to the treacherous mud.

But the lights of the bridge in front revived him, and the thought that Mr. Roddles might still be where he could touch, and speak to, and hear him, and, if persuasion failed, die with him, for on his way Mr. Fitcher had clearly realised that life without the companion of so many years would be absolutely intolerable. Alone, he mistrusted his courage; but, with his friend to nerve him, he was sure he could do it.

He crossed the Strand and walked on past Lancaster Place. The hustle and bustle of the great thoroughfare were soon left behind, with the blazing lamps and the thronging crowds. The thin line of lights on the bridge looked blue and spectral. On the right-

hand side the pathway was almost deserted, though on the other side a few umbrellas could be seen. He walked slowly along, pausing at each recess, but the were all empty. He crossed over, and walked back and still found no trace of the man he was seeking. Again and again he repeated the manoeuvre, but always with the same result. He often paused to look down at the river that had suddenly acquired for him a poignant and so sinister a significance. At first it repelled him. The dark, huddled buildings on the Surrey side, the smooth, wide mudflats over which a black, oily stream was spreading stealthily, a score of anchored barges that looked to him like a row of coffins, and, farther out, the great, murky, restless swirling tide that caught the light of the lamps and tore it into shreds and tossed it from ripple to ripple and from eddy to eddy—all these features of the scene looked to him ominous if not terrifying. But his attention turned to the long, slow, majestic curve of the Embankment, to the twinkling fairy lights above it, and to the white face of Big Ben towering aloft and keeping watch over his great palace. For the moment he forgot his grim purpose, his anxieties, and his fears. The words of the message sounded again in his ears: "There's joy in front of him here and now."

Cold, and wet, and half-numbed, he walked back to the Strand. He could not believe that the worst had happened. It seemed to him now that he could almost feel his friend coming to meet him.

The great thoroughfare was fuller and noisier than ever, for the theatres were just beginning to turn out their patrons. He crossed over and walked up

as Bow Street. Then he turned and came back slowly. At the Lyceum he paused, for the doors were opened and a gaily dressed crowd was pouring forth. As he stood there, he noticed that, a yard or so to the left, the stream had been dammed for a moment. A man had darted across and was now almost at the bottom of the street. A man? It was *the* man—the one he was in search of—Mr. Roddles, and no other. Without a moment's hesitation he, too, dashed athwart the stream. A smart push and a shower of language were his rewards, but he rushed on, unheeding. Mr. Roddles had just stepped from the kerb to the roadway, and was dodging a couple of hansoms racing citywards, and a carriage and pair coming in the opposite direction. At that very moment the law-writer flung himself forward, missing the first hansom by an inch or two, and shouting his war-cry, "Mr. Roddles! Mr. Roddles!" The tailor stopped, and turned his head. It was only for the fraction of a second, but it was enough. The off-wheel of the second hansom caught the pursuer, and he and his friend went down in a heap under the feet of the carriage horses. But, as he went down, Mr. Fitcher heard a sound that was music in his ears—the familiar voice rasping out, but not in anger, "Silly old fool!"

## XI

"You're not kidding me, nurse?" asked Mr. Roddles.

"No, certainly not. You had a nasty concussion and you've got a broken rib. But you'll be out and

about again in a week or two. The doctor said you must be very tough."

"I ought to be," said Mr. Roddles, "I'm not a chicken. What about 'im?"

"You mean the man who was hurt with you?"

"Yes, Fitcher 'is name is. Where is the poor old chap?"

"He's right at the other end of the ward. You mustn't talk now. I oughtn't to have answered you."

"Will 'e pull round?"

"He came off worse than you, and he's not got your constitution, but the doctors think he's on the mend."

"And you're sure you're not kidding?"

She smiled.

"I would if I could, but I couldn't if I tried."

"Then you're the first woman I've known who couldn't," murmured Mr. Roddles dreamily. He felt very sleepy and ridiculously weak.

"'Ow's poor old Fitcher?"

"Getting on famously. You'll be able to go across and see him before long."

"Good. I'd like to see the old chap. 'As 'e be off 'is 'ead at all?"

"Oh yes; he wandered a lot—not excited or violent. I suppose he's a politician. They say he talked a lot about the landed aristocracy, and your name kept coming in, and some one he calls big Lou—at least that's what it sounded like."

Mr. Roddles laughed.

"'E 'asn't many ideas, but what 'e 'as, 'e 'olds. The landed aristocracy's one of them. But big L

that must be some one 'e knew before we got to know each other."

"Well, old chap, 'ow's the symptoms this morning?"

Mr. Fitcher turned his head, and a great, broad smile shone over all his face.

"Oh, Mr. Roddles!" he exclaimed, "it does me a lot of good to see you again. To think that I should have let you in for all this!"

"It's nothing to what you let me out of," answered the tailor significantly. "All the same," he added, "I shan't take you with me to the next Coronation."

At this speech the smile, which had died away, returned to Mr. Fitcher's face.

"No," he said; "you wouldn't want to be saddled with a cripple."

For once, Mr. Roddles' readiness deserted him. He had been told that such was to be the law-writer's fate, but he had quite forgotten it when he made his thoughtless speech. He actually turned very red, and contradicted himself as fluently as Mr. Fitcher in his most muddle-headed moments had ever done.

"Oh, Fitcher!" he exclaimed, "I didn't know—at least, yes, I did—but I never meant—that is to say, I *did* mean, but not in that way, you understand. I was referring, or rather, I should say, I wasn't referring. Oh, whatever's the matter with me, and what are you grinning at, you silly old fool?"

"I'm smiling because I'm happy. They told me it would be necessary to take my foot off, and now they find it needn't be done, after all. It'll only be a

matter of a stiff ankle. It's a singular thing Mr. Roddles. I know I haven't got a beautiful body and yet I don't like the idea of losing any of it."

"I know I've got an ugly carcass," said Mr. Roddles looking down upon his inches with scorn, "but such as it is, you saved me from losing the 'ole of it—you Fitcher, or some one else?"

Mr. Roddles' accent showed that this was meant as a question, but Mr. Fitcher was apprehensive of a trap, and declined to commit himself. Instead, he exclaimed,

"Oh, I forgot! I had a message to give you."

"A message? From 'oom?"

"From a young lady."

"Fitch, old boy," said Mr. Roddles, getting up hastily, "I'll fetch nurse. You're off again."

"No, I'm not," replied Mr. Fitcher firmly. "A young lady who said she was called big Lou."

"Poor old fellow!" exclaimed Mr. Roddles soothingly. "They told me about it. Does your 'ear ache?"

"She belongs to the Salvation Army."

"Eh?" cried Mr. Roddles very sharply. "Ginger 'air?"

"Auburn, I should call it," said Mr. Fitcher politely.

"Ginger," Mr. Roddles repeated loudly—" 'ot ginger 'Ow the"—he paused—"dickens, did you come across 'er?"

"I went to look for you in the Park, and a gentleman told me he'd seen you talking to her, so I took the liberty of speaking to her myself."

"And what was 'er message?"

"Tell him,"—Mr. Fitcher wrinkled his forehead badly and ticked the words off on the counterpane, in his anxiety to be correct—"big Lou—'that's what I'm called,' she said—says there's joy in front of him here and now, and she says it because she knows."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Roddles. "And 'er eyes went right down to your marrow, didn't they?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Fitcher, "they did."

"I'll never be able to rest till I've seen that girl again," said Mr. Roddles.

Through the good offices of the ward sister, Mr. Roddles was able to rest sooner than he had anticipated. The very next Sunday big Lou came into the ward, looking bigger and stronger than ever. Perhaps on account of the day, her hair had been treated with water and extra rigour, so that it was hardly in evidence at all.

Mr. Fitcher was sitting up in bed and Mr. Roddles in an arm-chair, while another chair was waiting for the visitor.

She walked up to them, her eyes beaming, shook hands, and sat down.

"Well, my brothers," she said, "what did I tell you?"

Mr. Roddles answered:

"You said there was no river for me that night, and you were quite right. This old wreck,"—he pointed to his friend—"saw to that."

"And who saw to *you*?" She looked at Mr. Fitcher.

His eyes fell under her scrutiny, but he managed to

steal an apprehensive glance at Mr. Roddles. But the oracle was dumb. His eyes were on the ground.

"You did, I think, miss," he ventured.

She laughed—a good, hearty laugh.

"Ah," she said, "you're shy, both of you, but you know, and I know, and we all know. I told you His hand was upon you. It isn't so easy to shake it out, is it?"

Mr. Roddles cleared his throat and tried to assume his Institute manner.

"The facts," he began, "are, I admit, remarkable——"

"So are you," she interrupted quite in his own manner. "Look here,"—she took a purse from her pocket, opened it, and drew out a small brooch. "Do you see what's in the centre?"

Mr. Roddles looked. It was a sixpenny piece.

"There," she said, "I paid in sixpence, and kept this. It's what bought you out of the Devil's army and paid your footing in God's army. You are waiting for you. And when you come, he comes too. There's no hurry. The Lord's never in a hurry, but He never lets go. It may be one day or a thousand years—it's all the same to Him. To-morrow, or a thousand years hence, you'll have to do His will, because it's your salvation, but I'd rather it was to-morrow—I'd love to see it."

"One of the first things I do," said Mr. Roddles very deliberately, "when I get out of this place, will be to call on your old General."

Again her shining eyes went right down to the marrow. She held out her man's hand,

"Shake hands on that," she answered, "it's a square bargain. I know you'll keep your word."

## XII

Dr. Richard Roddles sat before his open dining-room window and looked out on the dull propriety of Cromwell Road. The room was large and very handsomely furnished. The pictures on the walls were a really remarkable collection, for Rosie—it was she who spent the money—had adopted Uncle John's principle, and bought on the advice of friends who knew. Over the fireplace was Sant's portrait of Uncle John himself, in the prime of life, looking kind, and prosperous, and happy—an excellent likeness. As Dick turned round from the window, the picture caught his eye and he came opposite it and, sitting on the edge of the table, looked up at the well-remembered face.

A real good sort, if ever there was one, he thought, and what a friend! It was really like a fairy tale. Here was he, Dick Roddles, son of a little jobbing tailor, already wealthy, and in his own chosen pursuits famous, at a time of life when most men were fighting hard for a bare living, or for comfort, or for luxury. What would he have been and done without that helping hand?

What indeed? He had often asked himself that question, and of late it had seemed to have become invested with a new and intense interest for him. At one time he would have answered it in a moment, without the slightest hesitation—apart from such help

he would have been nowhere. Now, he was not so sure.

He did not, indeed, underestimate the value of what he had. It was good to live well, in a big house surrounded by beauty and luxury. It was good to have more money than he cared to spend, to be able to indulge every taste, to feel himself absolutely free from those anxieties which wear out the strength and poison the happiness of so many men. It was very good to have been able to concentrate his energy and his powers on the work that he loved the best, and in and through it to have won, first recognition, and then fame. All this was very good indeed—so good that it puzzled him to divine why it was not still better.

For there were times, especially of late, when his life seemed to him, after all, a failure. Or perhaps he told himself, it was not his life in particular, but life itself, the whole sum of existences in their relation to each other, that was at fault. In either case the result was the same—a long and often pleasant journey to a waste and barren desert. He had felt the interest and excitement of the journey, but now he saw and felt all round him, dull, flat, unending leagues of sand. Life, then, consisted not in attainment, but in the effort to attain; not in success, but in the struggle to succeed.

But in the pursuit of knowledge there is no arrival; it is all journeying; there is no attainment, it is all effort; there is no success, it is all struggle.

That might be so, he admitted, but what if, after a while, the journey itself becomes a weariness, if you feel no joy in effort, no zest in struggle?

Two factors, indeed, men had dreamed into life to relieve it from its intolerable monotony—Love, and God.

Just as he had reached this point, the door opened and Rosie walked in. She seemed taller, and certainly was stouter, than of old. Her face, however, still wore the childish expression that had been charming in the slim girl of two- or three-and-twenty, but was not quite so attractive now. Her dressmaker had done the very utmost for her, and it would have been bare justice to call her a very pretty woman beautifully frocked.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"I'm going to see poor Lady Marriner."

"Has she lost her money?"

"No, far worse. Her favourite sister, Sybil, is in consumption. It's a regular Sunday visit."

"I see," said Dick, with the faintest smile. "Shall you be back to tea?"

"Yes, certainly. I dare say she'll give me a cup, but I'm always ready for another—with you. And then, Dick, dear, I want you to be specially nice and take me to Chelsea—the carriage can wait."

"Not to that beast Wolston's?"

"Yes—how clever of you to guess! To tell the honest truth, Dick, I don't like him much better than you do, though I mayn't be quite so frank about it. It's the people one meets there, who are so interesting."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, dear," Rosie continued smoothly, for, on principle, she never lost her temper—"men like Mr. Joslin."

"He's a worse beast than Wolston, if possible," interjected Dick, but she let the interruption pass.

"Margary's often there, and Champlain so many times."

"Ah, I wouldn't mind meeting *him*," said Dick.

"And there's some Swede or Norwegian going there to-night—a man who writes in four languages, think they said, and is equally unintelligible in all."

"You don't mean Erikson?" he asked, with quiet interest.

"It *was* some name like that, only you know what a scatterbrain I am."

"Can't say I've noticed it," said Dick drily.

"Ah, that's because you're prejudiced—lucky for me. Well, if that's the man, he'll be there, and a good many more. I practically promised I'd go, and I don't intend going to that crowd alone."

"I should think not, indeed. Why shouldn't you go to church together for once?"

For one fraction of a second, to Dick's delight, her face fell. The next, she recovered bravely.

"Oh, Dick, I should love it. That's worth half a dozen old Eriksons. Only, I wish the vicar had been preaching."

"Who is?" he asked suspiciously.

"I expect it'll be Mr. Waylett—it will be his turn."

"Which one's that?"

"The short one, with very fair hair and a wonderful flow of words."

"I know!" he exclaimed hastily. "I heard of it once. All right. What time shall we be back at Wolston's?"

This time the little smile was on Rosie's face, but it passed like a shadow, as she held up her face for a kiss.

"Thank you ever so much, dearest," she said.

Dick watched her as she walked down the steps and into the carriage. She saw his grave face at the window, and, with a radiant smile, waved her hand to him.

After the carriage had driven off, he remained standing there, while his mind resumed the train of thought Rosie had interrupted.

Weary of life's dullness, sick of its disappointments, and yet frightened by the shortness of its span, men had invented two visionary ideals—Love, and God: one for life itself, the other to outlast it—marvellous inventions, both of them.

As for God, he had been brought up at school and in church to believe, and at home to disbelieve. And, after all, his father had triumphed. "It's the old man who's done it," he said to himself; "Jim's quite right. He was a real strong man—pity he was so cantankerous, and had that one fatal weakness."

As for Love, well, of course, there was more in that—there was a physical basis to go upon. But the superstructure! He thought of Rosie and laughed bitterly—not much of the ideal about her.

And yet—who could have been the inventor?—there were times when both the inventions seemed to hold him fast, and lay hold upon him together, as if they were one. He thought of Madge, and immediately, just for the moment, he seemed to look on Love and God with other eyes.

"Hulloa, Dick!" said a well-known voice.

He had been facing the Earl's Court end of the road and Jim had come from Number 48, at the other end.

Dick let his brother in and led the way to the dining-room.

"Is Rosie at home?" Jim asked.

"No," answered his brother; "she's just gone out but she won't be very long. Sit down and wait."

"I mustn't stop long. I've got the Weavers coming to tea, kiddies and all. Can't you and Rosie come round?"

"Ah, don't I wish I could? I've promised her to go to a place in Chelsea that I particularly loathe. Still, a promise is a promise. Shall I give a message if she doesn't come back in time?"

"It's the old story. I must give one of those awful dinner-parties, and I want her to do the honours. She'll be absolutely splendid for that. You'll come, won't you?"

"Yes, if you want me. When is it?"

"Give her this bit of paper. I've put down half a dozen dates if she'll choose the one that suits her best."

"All right. I'll tell her to let you know at once. How's Madge?"

"Oh, splendid. That's a happy marriage, if there ever was one. I'm glad now, that he got her. I should never have made her happy as he can. And friends with a woman like Madge goes a long way."

"Yes," said Dick; "I wish I saw more of her, but Rosie's got something against her. She wouldn't admit it, but I know she has. And when you

married it's got to be give and take. What are the children like?"

"The girl is just like Weaver, and the baby's another Madge."

They were silent for a minute. Then Dick spoke—

"It's funny, just when you came I was thinking of her. She's clever and she's good, but she's not a genius, and I don't suppose she's quite a saint. But she seems to feel things and see things that we—at least I—don't."

"Yes," said Jim; "I know what you mean."

"But what's so strange," Dick went on, "is that when I'm with her, or somethimes when I only think about her, I begin to look at things more as she does—at least it seems so."

"The personal equation," said Jim, "we ought to know what that means. That was our old man's secret. And after all, he made us, didn't he? I say, Dick, do you think we've treated him badly?"

"It does look like it," answered Dick, "but I don't see what else we could do. Do you remember that last time? If he really wanted anything, I think he'd let us know."

"I doubt it," said Jim; "but I shouldn't like to go to him again. The fact is, I'm afraid of him. Do you remember his sneer and his laugh?"

"Yes, he must have been born a cynic."

"I don't know," said Jim, "I fancy things must have gone hardly with him before our time. Aunt Sue has dropped hints. She knows more than she likes to tell. I'll try and find out how he's doing."

"Well, at any rate he'd be pleased to know that

we're not 'pi' as Madge used to call it. He'd claim the credit."

"He'd be right, too," said Jim, "it was he that bent the twigs."

"What's that noise?" exclaimed Dick.

"Why, it sounds like singing on the beach," suggested

Jim.

"Or the Salvation Army," said Dick.

### XIII

The Salvation Army it was, and very much out of place the little procession appeared, in the great, wide roadway with the towering houses on either side. A short, grey-haired man, quick in his movements, and emphatic in his gestures, led the way, followed by a tall young woman, a tambourine in one hand, and a *War Cry* in the other. Then came another Salvation lass and three or four men in the regulation caps, holding a red banner, the rear being brought up by a lanky, sandy-haired man whose limp excused his position, and whose whole mind and soul were evidently absorbed in the strains he was eliciting from a cornet. A certain which he waved up and down, and from side to side.

"Good Heavens!" Dick cried; "they're pitched just here. Well, that's cool. I wonder what the police are doing."

Even in the Cromwell Road a little circle of heads had gathered as though by magic. The short man gazed out the hymn—

"'Oo, 'oo are these beside the chilly wave,"

and read the verse through in a loud rasping tone that made Dick and Jim look at each other in the blankest astonishment and direst dismay. Then both drew back hastily from the open window.

"It can't be," said Dick.

"It must be," answered Jim. "There aren't two voices like that."

"Here comes the chorus," said Dick, as the leader's voice was heard singing, with terrific energy,

"Sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem,  
Washed in the blood of the Lamb."

When the hymn was finished, and the concertina-player was wiping his forehead, the little man opened a Bible and read the story of Saul's conversion, with occasional comments of his own.

"Saul—Paul," he shouted, "only the change of a letter, but what a difference! It's like changing 'bad' into 'sad,' which is 'alf-way t'wards making it 'glad,' isn't it? Yes, 'ere's Saul, more mad, p'raps, than bad, and the first thing to be done is to make 'im sad. Thank God, my brothers and sisters, for making Saul sad, though a good many of us are just clever enough to do it for ourselves.

"What was it changed 'im? The Lord met 'im. That was all. It doesn't sound much, does it? It *isn't* much, is it? Oh, dear no: only this, that, till the Lord 'as met 'im, a man is very little better than the poor brute beasts that perish.

"As 'E met *you*, my friends? If not, you may depend upon it 'E will; to-morrow it may be, or a thousand years 'ence, but, some time or other, 'E's sure to meet you, and if 'E 'as to smite you and to

blind you, it's your fault, not 'Is. That's 'ow 'E came to meet me. Yes; I was mad for years and years. Then 'E met me and made me sad. 'E smote me to the dust and to darkness, that in 'Is infinite mercy 'E might lift me up, and open my eyes, and make me glad 'Allelujah! 'Allelujah! Let us pray to 'Im."

Then followed the prayer—a long rambling utterance with many quotations from the Bible and constant iterations. He began quietly enough, but as he went on, his gestures grew more vehement, and his voice rose louder and harsher with the strength of his passion.

"O Lord!" he cried, "there are some of us 'oo 'ave been unjust stewards and wicked servants. Thou 'ast given us talents to use for Thee, and we 'ave 'idden them in a napkin, or, worse still, we 'ave used them against Thee. Some of us may be fathers to 'oom. Thou 'ast given children to bring to Thee, and instead of bringing, we 'ave kept them away from Thee. But Thou art the Father of all, of the good and of the bad too. In Thine own time, and in Thine own way, undo our wicked work and bring us all—fathers and mothers and children—mothers, Lord, as well as fathers and children—those 'oom we 'ave 'ated, as well as those 'oom we 'ave loved; those 'oom we 'ave injured and those 'oo 'ave injured us; let us all together come sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem washed in the blood of the Lamb. Amen and Amen."

He put his Bible in his pocket, the big girl held out her tambourine, the red flag was lifted, the circle of listeners melted away, and the little procession moved on.

Dick made an opening in the venetian blinds.

"They've crossed over," he said, "and they're going straight for your house. There's to be another meeting there, depend upon it."

Jim made no answer, and Dick stared out of the window for a minute or two. Then he turned and faced his brother.

"Talk of miracles!" he exclaimed. "I can't believe it, now. It's incredible——"

"But true," Jim finished the sentence, "that voice of his isn't pretty, but there's no humbug about it."

"I believe you're right," said Dick. "Well, then, think what it means. An invention that can do things like that—why, a God must have invented it."

Jim made no answer. His puckered forehead showed that he was puzzling over something.

"Did you notice that big girl in the bonnet and things?" he asked.

"No—yes—I think I did just see her. Why?"

"Well, it's very queer; she reminded me tremendously of some one or something, but of whom or what, I can't for the life of me think. It gave me quite an uncanny feeling."

"I couldn't take my eyes off the old man. An invention! And it's swept him through the gates. Is it going to sweep us, too?"

A peculiar smile lit up Jim's pale, tired-looking face—a smile reserved for very special people and very special occasions.

"I don't think I should be very sorry if it did," he said. "Life hasn't been such a big show after all, and Aunt Sue would die happy."

Half an hour later, the little company, with flag and concertina, marched back to Lechmere Hall.

"Thank you all, comrades," said Captain Roddles. "we won't go to Cromwell Road again—it's a miracle the police didn't stop us as it is—but I *had* to go once. It was laid upon me that I must say a word to each of the houses where we stopped."

"But wouldn't most of the servants be out?" asked Private Fitcher.

"'Oo said anything about servants, silly?" snapped Captain Roddles, quite in his old form.

Private Fitcher smiled rapturously at this lapse in ancient habits, but the captain himself frowned.

"Pray for me, all of you," he said, "an 'asty temp' seems the last of Legion to go. Go he shall, though, if the Lord pleases. Fitch, old man, and Lou, let's have that 'Sweeping through the gates,' once more."

The last chorus died away, and Captain Roddles seemed unable to contain himself.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "'Sweeping through the gates'—Em, and Sarah, and"—he made a gulp—"Bligh, and Dick, and Jim; and you, dear old Fitch, we can't do without you; and you, Lou, for it was you that put me on the road. All together, all washed 'appy. Glory! 'Allelujah!"

THE END

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