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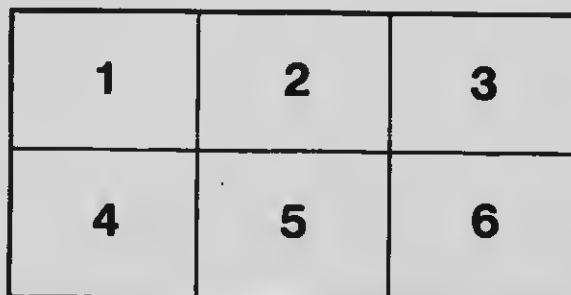
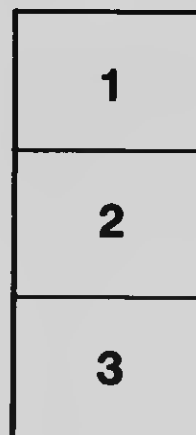
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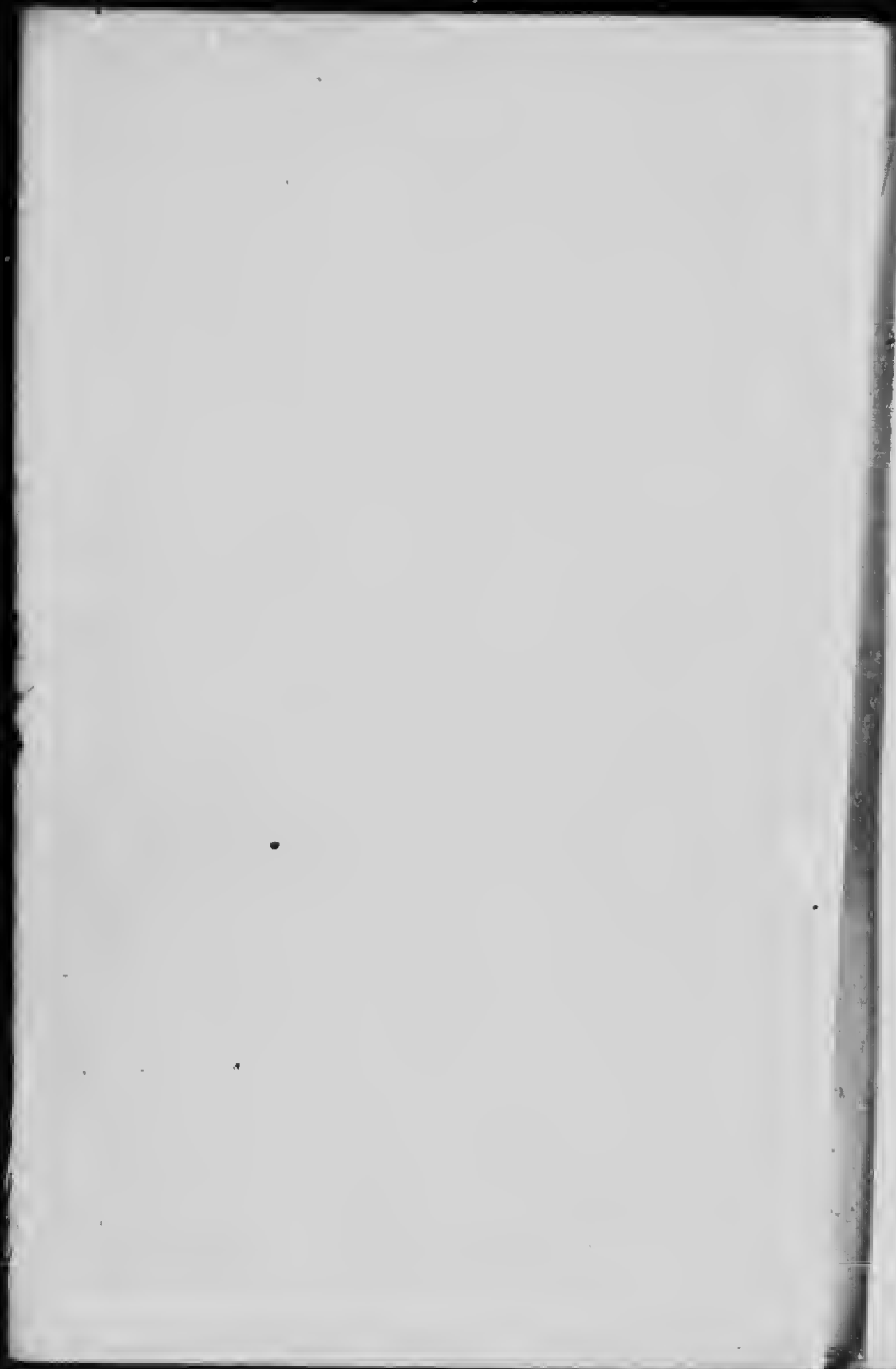
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THE HEALERS

BY

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THE HEALERS

CHAPTER I

WE live, nowadays, so fast, and so flabbily, that even many of his contemporaries have probably forgotten the famous Leyden Professor Lisse. Thirty years ago Thomas Borculo, Baron Lisse of Bardwyk, was known to every charwoman and to every charwoman's child in the somnolent old city—the famous, eccentric old Professor of Bacteriology, whom everybody laughed at, and whom everybody respected, by his queer name of 'Baron Semicolon.' That honorary title had been bestowed on him by the silly world of Philistines, in ignorant recognition of the wonderful Semicolon Bacillus, the Professor's own especial variety of the Comma; the Semicolon Bacillus, which, whenever you came near enough, was certain to leap from his lips—metaphorically.

It is only natural that his own peculiar poison—his private property, so to speak, in death—became the central interest of Thomas Lisse's life. He slew many hundreds of rabbits in demonstrating how certain his microbe would be to murder a human being, if only it could once get inside. It never did. For there dwell, it appears, in the mouth of every living creature that possesses one, myriads of other bacteria which destroy the Semicolon the moment it comes into contact with the saliva. It has therefore to be injected direct into the blood of rabbits and frogs. During fifty long years—he, aged to be nearly ninety—the Professor begged, bought, and stole every more or less available corpse, in the steadily increasing expectation of finding his microbe

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somewhere. He would shake his head, with a twist that grew pathetic, as the hair turned a silvery white.

'Better luck,' he would say, wiping his dark-stained knife, 'next time!'

'Oh, Jane!' he insisted to his wife, 'if only it *once* could get past the tonsils!'

'I wonder,' mused the lady, pressing her hand to her breast, 'would it be wrong to pray that it might?'

Their only son, Edward, grew up in the persistent, all-pervading atmosphere of the Semicolon. The three girls did not, being early sent to boarding-school. Their mother was in the habit of remarking, very justly, that she could not educate ordinary girls. 'Had my girls,' she said, 'been out of the common——!' She knew nothing of what her girls were, little enough about her son.

But a son, being masculine, is an immense possibility of achievement, unlike girls. Of herself Jane Borculo would have said, had the form of expression occurred to her: 'Give me pantaloons to stand in, and I will stir the world!'

Meanwhile, she was but a feeble woman, with a taste for higher things. A bit of a character in her way, though perhaps not so much so as she looked to herself and her local surroundings. Of an ancient provincial family, high-born and high-church, she had been intended, by circumstance, to behave exactly like her cousins and her aunts. Instead of which, she had soon amazed everybody, as she intended, by the heights and depths of her divergences. A little Greek—the New Testament in the original; a little Hebrew—Hosea with a crib. Hosea—because the text is so corrupt, you know. The intellectual fad of the moment: Were the Hebrews Aryas? Was man once a monkey? Renan and Strauss, inside out. Plato and Spinoza, rather wrong side up. Yet the whole of it not nearly so silly as it sounds thus summarily set down, really rather respectable compared with the life which is a giggle between two balls. And an excellent preparation, anyway, for a plain woman, close on thirty, who is going to send off a sudden letter to that

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'unusual' bachelor, Lisse, the head of a historic house and a scientist (and as such a mocked member of her own uncongenial set), to tell him how splendid it is of him to devote his great intellect to unrewarded work. Lisse laughed at the effusion, but he asked the writer of it to become his wife.

'By Jove!' says the Baron's younger brother, the Colonel. 'Yes, science, by Jove! The doctors used to cut up people to see how they were made. But Thomas cuts 'em up to see how the worms are made inside 'em! Yes, by Jove, Baron Lisse cuts up pauper corpses to see if there's worms inside!' On the Colonel's repeating this remark, defiantly, and expectantly, the Baron mildly answered the soldier, that, indeed, the scientist preferred to do his cutting after death.

Every one having prophesied that the two 'intellectuals' would early sicken of mutual discomfort, a regretful world had to follow their leisurely and contented progress to a very distant grave. They lived in placid contemplation of their work and of each other. True, Jane at once confessed, in the midst of her multifarious poetry-writing, that she had never been able to take an intelligent interest in signs of punctuation. 'They have always seemed to me,' she said, 'dead, un-vital things.' 'The Semicolon,' replied the Professor, smiling, 'is very much alive!' And, living with the creature daily, in her rather disordered household (disordered until Eliza entered it and put everything in its place with a bump), the Baroness got to be on speaking terms with even the Semicolon. She felt she could accustom herself to almost anything but household duties. She would sit for hours in her husband's study, at her own bureau, scribbling '*Balaam*, a religious epic in thirteen cantos,' which she was incessantly rewriting, while he occupied himself with his investigations behind her back. Behind her back—that was the chief stipulation of their matrimonial contract. The whole long chamber was arranged for it. Near the door, her littered writing-table placed crossways, screened, sat the Baroness: she felt her way to her elbow-chair, with closed eyes. If a danger arose

that some painful sound might penetrate to the lady, the Professor cried: 'Mind!' and immediately she covered her ears. With true womanly heroism she had decided, that she did not object to the smells. She, who as a child, at grandmamma's, in the 'blue' room, had lain awake crying because of the naphthaline.

'My dear Thomas, listen to this!'

The Professor, suppressing a movement not of impatience, but of suspense, would pause, a quivering frog in one hand:

'I am all attention, dear Jane.'

For their courtesy to each other was of this old-fashioned kind, a pretty punctiliousness of flourishes and bows. The lady, her fussy cap thrust awry on her fuzzy brown ringlets, held up the big sheet over which her handwriting sprawled huge:

'Serene, the ass her gentle head downbent.
They suffer not who suffer innocent!'

'I like that!' declared the lady, her eyes lovingly resting on the page.

'It is indeed,' said the Professor, 'a beautiful thought.' He musingly repeated the last line. The frog jerked its wounded leg.

'Well expressed?' persisted the lady, with some apprehension.

'Most admirably,' assented the Professor. 'Does that end your fourth canto, my love?'

'No. Why, my dear? Why? Do you think the fourth canto too long? Why?'

'Oh, only because you rhymed, my dear.'

'I often rhyme in the middle.'

'And what is to hinder you?' answered the Professor humbly. 'Mind!' The Baroness closed herself up at once. From out her deafness and darkness she repeated: 'I often rhyme in the middle,' and dropped a blot. She frequently dropped blots. Even when her short-sighted eyes were open, she did not always perceive where they fell.

Thus they sat, day by day, in long spells of silent sympathy, with the hush of the quiet back-room ('he

'garden-chamber' they call it) around them, and the lilacs and chestnuts close against the window-panes, and a contemplative cat, in the quiet garden, on the quiet Leyden canal. The house was very stately and silent. The girls were happy in their foreign 'seminary.' The summer holidays all spent together at the family seat of Bardwyk. The Baroness tried vainly to take a proper interest in the villagers there: the Baron succeeded better. Once he endeavoured to inoculate them, in an epidemic, but the heads of the commune called on him, and appealed to his generosity to desist. They understood him as their feudal lord, who talked about their crops and rents (quite incorrectly), but not as a 'perfecter.' The property, however, outside the house and park was small. The Professor and his wife were always glad to get back to the Leyden study. The children enjoyed Bardwyk, but the company of their parents bored them, because the concern of those parents about their likes and dislikes was so manifestly conscientious. The Baroness would ask after pets by their wrong names, and what mother could get over that?

Edward, the son, was not unhappy at the Leyden Grammar School. He was a quiet, healthy boy, unassuming, fond of books of adventure, of games and of pets. His great friend was the gardener at Bardwyk, who looked after such of the dumb creatures as could not be taken to Leyden. But certain lop-eared rabbits and many fancy pigeons and a couple of dogs were allowed to live at the back of the garden in town. The Baroness took an irregular interest in Edward: she did her very best. The Professor loved him, from day to day, in a fatherly manner, without much contact of any kind. Eliza, the maid, looked admirably after his clothes. And during the too brief summer-months he found much companionship in the gardener.

At meal-times Edward came into touch with the Semicolon. And his mother would take him into corners, and tell him what a wonderful man his father was. Edward had an immense veneration for both parents. He loathed the Semicolon. Once—at last, being fifteen

—he burst out at dinner, and, choking, cried that the disgusting thing had got into his soup! 'It's gone down my throat!' cried Edward passionately. For one incredible moment the Professor almost wished it had. However, he said nothing, but only carefully recorked the little bottle he had been holding out for inspection, as he thought, to his admiring son.

'Oh, Eddy!' exclaimed the Baroness, lifting her inky hands. She thought the ceiling must drop on her poor Professor's grizzly head.

'I can't help it,' persisted the desperate Edward, 'I'm sick of the Semicolon!'

'That,' replied his father gently, 'is precisely what no one has ever been.' He saw no humour of any kind in this simple statement, but fortunately for Edward, Edward did. He returned to his repast with fresh courage and tried hard to be polite. In his own room, preparing his lessons for the morrow, all through the Spanish War of Succession he thought regretfully of his father and longed to go down to him. As he flung his books together, he became aware that his mother was standing behind him. Her eyes were red, a sight he had never seen before. For no woman's life can be tearful that believes in her permanent bore. 'I can't help it,' said the red-cheeked Edward, near crying himself. Has any man of us ever forgotten the first tears in the eyes of a woman he loves?

'That I should live to hear *you* speak rudely of the bacillus!' said the Baroness.

'I wish the beastly thing,' retorted her son, 'were undiscovered sti'!

'And your father an unknown searcher? Child, never say such a wicked thing to him!'

'Of course not, mother! Besides, where'd be the good? God himself couldn't undiscover the bacillus.'

'Edward, do not be atheistical. If you do not even love science, you can have no excuse for profanity!' Edward gazed apologetically at his mother, the odd little figure in brown silk and lace cap: his mother gazed at her finger-tips, as she often did, surely without observing

them. 'My son,' said the Baroness, in her stateliest manner, 'your father owes to the Semicolon his position as the foremost Scientist of the day!'

'Yes,' said Edward humbly. But he added, as if speaking to himself: 'They cut you open, and they look at the worms inside.'

'Your uncle!' screamed the Baroness. 'Your poor uncle, the Colonel! Your poor dear uncle Frank!'

'But, mother——'

'You quote him!' The excited Baroness dropped her voice to a whisper and came quite close to Edward. 'Your uncle Frank is a fool,' she said. She walked away rapidly down Edward's little room, but she soon had to stop and turn. '*That* secret is out, then,' she said. 'I had made up my mind never to tell you. But, of course, you might have found out some day for yourself. He is in *Balaam*, Edward. A fool-warrior, all bluster and babble, that the Queen *never* listens to. You'll find him there, when you're old enough. His name is Imphi-Boshek.'

'When shall I be old enough?' asked Edward adroitly. But he was immensely proud of, and immensely inquisitive about, *Balaam*. No other boy at the Grammar School had a mother who composed epics. 'Now, mother, you always say "next year," and I'm nearly sixteen. If I had *Balaam* to keep me going, I daresay I could bear the bacillus all right.'

'When you give proofs of ripe judgment, and discretion,' replied the Baroness stiffly. But she looked uncomfortable, and her manner betokened evasion. 'It isn't finished,' she added, as a palpable afterthought.

'Nor is the bacillus. Nor ever will be,' protested Edward.

'My son, this is an evening of confessions,' replied the Baroness. 'I can't let you read *Balaam*, because I've put in all our relations.' She sat down on Edward's bed and covered her face with her hands. 'You'd find them there and betray me,' she said.

'Won't they find themselves?' demanded Edward.

'Nobody ever recognises his own literary portrait,'

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answered the Baroness, still in the same position. 'And they don't see each other as we see them, you know.'

'Mother,' suggested Edward, not sure whether he oughtn't to feel a little mean, 'If you'll read me *Balaam* of Sunday evenings, I'll do my very best to get on with the bacillus.'

But the Baroness rose from the bed, every inch the little great lady she could be when she chose. Her son quailed before her. 'Edward,' she said, 'I have lost no opportunity of showing you what a giant your father is. I taught you to read from the article on him, written by myself, in *Who's Who?* Of the Semicolon, as you will have noticed, I never spoke. I was withheld by a—can one say "an awe"?' The Semicolon is your enormous father's enormous life-work, Edward! He, and he only, is fit to discuss it with his son.'

As she spake thus magnificently, the old clock in the passage boomed ten long strokes: at the tenth the room door flung open, and a female figure appeared in the aperture, a figure such as would have struck terror to the heart of the boldest mistress on earth. A prim maid-servant of the old-fashioned, immaculate type, in stiff dress and huge cap.

'The Professor's bath!' vociferated this apparition, in the querulous tone of protest so habitual to the indispensable Abigail.

'Eliza!' exclaimed the Baroness, whisking round, her very attitude apologetic, 'his bath—oh, of course—yes, his bath! Go, Edward, go, tell him immediately! And remember the Prodigal Son!'

Edward lingered, shamefaced. 'I forgot about father's cold,' he said. 'Is it better?'—in the boyish, booby way.

'Were your father an ordinary man, Edward, a cold with him would be—a cold. There would be only ourselves to consider. But now! A sneeze of your father's may mean an eruption—'

'Yes, measles begin that way,' said Eliza.

'A volcanic eruption in the whole world of science!' continued the Baroness, raising her voice. 'That whole

world is watching him. He is on the eve of his most important discovery! My responsibility is greater than I can bear!

'The water'll get cold,' said the maid.

'You are right, Eliza. It was Providence sent you into this family twelve years ago. I never was a nurse——'

'No,' said the maid.

'I am not even a housekeeper. You are our Pivot, Eliza. I have taught all my friends to call you our Pivot. You cannot deny that I properly appreciate you.'

'Humph!' said the maid.

Spake Edward, in the dimness of his father's doorway: 'Mother sends me to say your bath is getting cold, father, and I oughtn't to have been your son.' In the excess of his emotion he realised that the prodigal had gone dreadfully astray. With a lurch he tried to right him. 'I ain't worthy,' he said, 'to be your son!'

From the distant halo of shaded lamp-light, in the deep recess of studious silence, the Professor lifted a thoughtful head. 'Mind!' he cried. 'Oh, is it you, Edward?' He hastily flung a cloth across the heap of fluffiness, over which his tall figure had been bending, and came down the book-clad study. 'What nonsense are you talking, boy? Why, you've never even asked for more pocket-money!' His voice altered. 'You are only young, only young,' he said. 'A time will come, when you will share my struggles, and my triumphs. Strange that you should have spoken so on this night of all others. It is an important night for me. But I cannot let your mother's bath get cold.'

'Eliza says——' began Edward, but the Professor did not listen. 'Your mother is the Pivot on which this household turns. It is like her to award that honour to Eliza. Your mother is a marvellous woman, ch'ld. You can trust her judgment on all matters, excepting myself. And even there her error is pleasing.' The Professor, with his hand on Edward's shoulder, gently pushed the boy across the threshold. 'Hot water applied to the feet can have no effect on the chest,' he said, 'it is a popular fallacy. Like almost all medical treatment. Strange

that the wife of Professor Lisse should still talk of catching cold.' The domestic tyrant here thrust her cap over the banisters, and the master of the house hastened upstairs.

Edward had barely thrown off his own upper clothing, when he heard his father calling him. He found the illustrious invalid sitting half-buried beneath a heterogeneous mountain of many-coloured wraps, under which presumably fumed the hot-water tub. The vast apartment was illumined by a solitary candle. Before the funereal hangings of the pillared bedstead steamed the Professor, like a sacrifice in front of some mysterious sanctuary.

'My son,' began the Professor, somewhat in the tones of a hierophant, 'I would not have the sun go down upon my wrath. I am speaking figuratively, for I never lost my temper in my life, and the sun went down before you said your silly little say. But I mean, before you go to sleep, child, I would assure you I am not angry with you at all. Your mother fears you would not sleep a wink, unless I told you. Don't agitate yourself, Edward. You are young still, very young. By the time you are a medical student, you will love the Semicolon almost more than you love me!'

'I am nearly sixteen,' said the goaded Edward.

'Exactly. When I was nearly sixteen, the dream of my life was to be a cavalry officer. Now, can you imagine me a cavalry officer, prancing about like a circus monkey? Look at me! Can you imagine me a cavalry officer, prancing about in crimson and gold?'

'No,' said Edward.

'Nor can I.' The Professor caught at a falling shawl. 'Thus, in our youth, do we misunderstand our vocations. We imagine ourselves masters of our fate. 'So passed the unconscious Balaam on his road!'

'Way,' said a voice behind the green hangings.

'Way. When you are a man, you will *thirst* to devote your days and nights to the Semicolon.'

'Never,' said Edward, in sheer eager anxiety not to mislead his parents. A cry broke from the Professor.

For the woman, Ellza, had inserted a spout under the pile of shawls and blankets. The night-capped Baroness tore aside the bed-curtains. 'All men are butter-fingers!' cried the injured hand-maid, 'Butter-toes!'

'Monster!' exclaimed her mistress, trembling, 'to scald the Professor!' 'It was Edward scalded me,' said the invalid. The Baroness burst into tears.

'Not that I really mind, Edward,' continued the Professor soothingly, 'because some day you will be a greater scientist than myself.' 'Impossible!' sobbed the Baroness. 'Impossible!' echoed Edward. The maid tucked in the blankets, loyal to all three.

'If I die to-night,' cried the Professor, 'the whole work of my life is wasted!' He half rose in his excitement, amid shrill shrieks from the women. Ellza dug in draperies all about him. 'My son will complete it,' said the Baron, subsiding.

'You will li-li-ll-live to see Edward a grandfather,' gasped the Baroness. Her husband shook his shaggy head. 'The work of my life,' he said, 'may be completed to-morrow. I can have no secrets from you, Jane. Please leave off crying. If the rabbit I have left in my study survives till to-morrow morning, then Edward may become a cavalry officer whenever he likes.' 'I don't want to be a cavalry officer,' protested Edward. 'In blue and crimson,' continued his father sorrowfully, 'like your uncle Francis Lisse.'

'Who is a fool!' said the voice from the bed. The Professor started. 'My dear, surely there were truths we had decided to ignore?'

'I told Edward. I told him about Imphi-Boshek,' confessed the Baroness. Her drooped head, in the big night-cap, hung a picture of guilty regret.

Edward went back to his own room much depressed. He had no particular desire to prance about with an unused sword between his legs; too modest, or perhaps as yet too young, for parade, and already over-sensitive as regards killing or causing pain. He wanted to do like his cousins and school-comrades, take a degree at the university, go into the civil service, work his way

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up. The Professor always spoke of Edward as the impecunious heir to a great name. 'I am a poor man,' said the Professor. 'My enormous scientific outlay is the only luxury I allow myself. *Pro bono publico.*' Thomas Borculo, thirteenth Baron Lisse of Bardwyk, drank water (tepid rain-water, too, it was in those days), and smoked halfpenny cigars. His clothes looked as if they had been bestowed on him, after considerable wear and tear, by the much shorter man they had originally been made for. It is a palpable calumny, however, that he once went to a dinner with his coat on inside out. Smart his outfit was not. Fierce struggles with Eliza about chemical stains had resulted in a compromise of cuffless flannel shirts. But his appearance, somehow, was as dignified as it was shabby: it impressed you—the spare figure, the shaven jaws, the eagle beak—in spite of your smiles. And the woman, who had once exchanged a few words with him, if she met him afterwards sailing along the still Leyden streets, his top-hat tilted backwards (such a hat!) and his gaze fixed on cloud-land, was certain, whatever might be her social position, of refined recognition and appropriate salute. In his huge, exceedingly untidy study nothing looked as if it had ever been anywhere else. As for the dust that accumulated all over it—for Eliza had distinctly stated that she must either stop outside or come in—like many a wise man, he beheld it gladly, not for its own stupid sake, but for all it bespoke of danger averted, of vexation that might have been.

The scientific Baron and his letters-loving spouse enjoyed universal esteem in their expansive circle. They had stooped without losing caste, always a difficult and an exceedingly popular feat. Nor was the Baron a mere academic dreamer. In those days of incipient sanitation he had done something as regards filtering the water the poor people drank. His grateful townspeople elected him to their queer little Council. He regularly attended its meetings from a sense of duty, and, from a sense of dulness, as regularly spoke on subjects with which he was frequently acquainted.

Edward was proud of his father's pump. He liked passing it on his way to the Grammar School. Nowadays its construction is said to meet every requirement for the propagation of infection, but then, that will be affirmed ten years hence of all our sanitary marvels of to-day.

'If only the dear old chap wouldn't talk about the microbes at meals!' reflected Edward, as he clambered into his bed. 'There oughtn't to be such creatures at all, and, if there are, we'd be much happier without knowing about them!' On this reflection he fancied he was going to sail away into oblivion: to his astonishment he found his brain wide-awake, all over commas and dots! He did not know, how, by the sudden utterance of his thought—the pent-up oppression of years—he had lifted, as it were, the sealed lid off the casket, whence wide fumes now overspread his future sky. But he did know—or at least dimly realised—that what he turned away from with such vehemence, was not really the talk about the microbes, nor even the microbes themselves, but the enormous mass of suffering their discovery represented—the horror of the experiments newly beginning all over the world. He had heard something—as little as possible—of the ceaseless, measureless tortures of the modern laboratory—the 'serum' business. The thing was just starting in those days. Edward thought of his pets.

One of his rabbits—the brown bunny with the white star on its forehead—was ill. He felt anxious about it. He wished Jan could see it, the gardener at Bardwyk. Rabbits were jolly beasts to rub up against your cheek, feeling warm. How quiet the house was! He lay staring open-eyed.

Suddenly he sat up in bed, listening with bated breath. He had heard that sound for some time. The house had not been so quiet as he thought.

There, it came again. Yes, the house must be very quiet to hear it! Almost inaudible, madly persistent, from the room underneath, through the boarded ceiling, faint, irresistibly reiterant, the feeblest of tremors, a soft, barely possible squeak. He heard it again, and again,

and again. He hid away under the bed-clothes, but it was worse there, when he couldn't hear it. And now he stood on the floor in his night-shirt. There it was again. It was going to stop. He would never get away from it. The timidest, gently imploring cry! It would go on all night.

He had never before, in his life, heard the continuous expression of conscious pain. It seemed almost incredible to him that so weak a note should penetrate so far: he was unaware that no sound carries like the utterance of sentient suffering. What the sound meant he of course understood at once. He remembered his father's farewell words: 'If the rabbit in my study survives till to-morrow morning—then Edward may become whatever he likes!'

He lay with his head under the bed-clothes. He threw them off again. The clock outside tolled midnight. Seven hours—eight hours—more? Escape was impossible.

He was half-way down the staircase, shrinking, trembling with cold. In the doorway of the big, dark room he stood still. A dead hush—no, that long quivering gasp of pain. He struck a light.

By the window he found it, strapped down in the usual way upon a board. A tiny white rabbit, shivering, squeaking, as it drew its painful breath. It lifted its pink eyes and looked at him, thrilling, throbbing from head to foot. Perhaps, if it hadn't looked at him! If it hadn't squeaked, as it looked. He seized up a heavy book and struck at it, struck again and again, till the head fell back and the eyes glazed over and the little body sank motionless—inert. Then he fled upstairs again, back into bed, and lay listening in the blessed unbroken silence.

As he lay listening, his own thoughts began to speak. Even while he struck he had felt what he was doing to his father, to himself. But now his thoughts talked about it very plainly. No, of course he wasn't going to blubber. He was only fifteen. He lay awake with those thoughts till near dawn.

Next morning the Professor strolled in to breakfast,

THE HEALERS

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with his usual mild air of preoccupied repose. 'No,' he said, as he chipped an egg, 'the rabbit was dead.'

'Poor little beast,' replied the Baroness. 'Oh, Thomas, I know it's only right and a fine thing to sacrifice one's life on the altar of science! As you have done.'

'And as Edward will do after me,' said the Professor.

Edward's eyes were fixed upon his tasteless bread and butter. He lifted them. An immense power of subjectivity seemed to come over him from a hitherto unknown source. 'The rabbit didn't sacrifice itself!' he said.

'It had not the intellect,' replied the Professor, gazing earnestly at his son. 'Like you and me.'

CHAPTER II

FROM that night of his great independent utterance and his great independent action Edward Lisse became a separate self. It is easy enough to commit a crime, especially if that crime have a semblance of virtue, but we all know how difficult it is to get away from the consequences. The boy was far too conscientious not to see that he had killed the rabbit because its squeak had come in his way. He forgot more and more that, in striking, he had abandoned his own chance of freedom: he realised with increasing acuity the possible damage he had done to his father's scientific career. Confess he dared not, for fear, not of anger, but of scorn. What would his mother say, who had endured, all these years, the vague horror of vivisection?

'The criminal baby!' the Baroness had exclaimed, two years ago, of a young practitioner who had, fatally, stopped an operation. Edward could not have endured that his mother should think such a thought of him.

The Professor, having once proclaimed his failure, henceforth dropped the microbe entirely out of all conversation with his son. What this resolve must have cost him can hardly be imagined. The subject was tabooed. Moments arose when Edward longed to cry out: 'Tell me about your researches! Has everything gone wrong through my killing of the rabbit?' After the first months of silence all explanation became impossible. Once or twice Edward tried to begin, but his father somehow stopped him dead. These years of Edward's youth, despite the daily round of work and play (both equally successful), are heavy with remembered misery. But perhaps he now remembers more

than he really suffered. For, all his life long, he has had a gift for turning sharp corners and going straight ahead. So, once his mind was made up that he couldn't tell, that his father didn't want to listen, he did his work as brightly, and played his game as briskly, as any other boy. But he gave away his rabbits, and went in for a pecking raven instead.

The Baron, meanwhile, talked about politics at dinner, politics at breakfast. He became immersed in politics. At that time, as ever in Holland, believers and free-thinkers were fighting their pseudo-political religious war: at that time, as usual, the freethinkers had the gurgling believers by the throat. The Baron's mighty intellect unbent itself to politics. He spoke in the Town Council, and presently at public meetings, on the questions of the day, with all his well-known fluency and grasp of other subjects than the one on hand.

There is a well-known story in Leyden of a student who, having to be examined by Lisse in zoology, read up the elephant only, and when asked: How many legs has the centipede? How many tusks has the rhinoceros? made answer: The elephant has four. The elephant has two, and so on. Thus, not having missed a single question (How many wings has the dragon-fly? The elephant has none), he is said to have passed with honours. Whether the story be historical or not, it well describes the Professor's attitude towards the wide fields of human knowledge. He ballooned all over them in his bacteriological car.

So he was naturally successful in present-day politics, where profound knowledge of any subject is always the one thing that an electoral audience will not stand. His own world was certainly surprised to see him rise up a High-Church Tory. There spoke the baronial blood. In the lecture-room the origin of species, the ascent of man, the whole monkey-business, if you please; on the platform the first chapter of Genesis in the original Dutch. The crowd cared nothing for the lecture-room, as long as it got the hustings. In Parliament the Baron's easy babblings were not so well received. For he used

to get up in the middle of all the theological squabbles and talk sanitation, and nobody cared about sanitating anything, in Parliament, or wanted to see it done. Three-quarters of the Baron's political activity must be assigned to the Baroness, who stopped *Balaam* to read and excerpt all sorts of wearisome reports. She had an unhappy knack, amid her yawnings and poetic musings, of copying wrong figures and leaving out 'nots,' but she wrote on earnestly, her cap more than ever awry, her precious manuscript locked away in a drawer of the writing-table—and, really, as far as the welfare of the nation is concerned, what matter the nots and the figures of parliamentary reports? A completed *Balaam* would have been a far greater boon.

Edward also became a High-Church Tory, prouder than ever of his father, and eagerly working in his cause. He even fought a great hulking Socialist for saying openly in the village, at election-time, that God was no respecter of persons. He was most dreadfully distressed afterwards, when he found the text was in the Bible. The girls, when they came home for their brief holidays, were all High-Church Tories too. The whole family rejoiced in this common bond of interest and sympathy.

At eighteen Edward passed from the Grammar School to the University. His final examination was a great success. The Latin Oration—the highest honour—fell to his share. On the evening of that auspicious day a big dinner-party, of all the relations, assembled to make much of him. Eliza's arrangements were excellent. The Baroness (in a new plum-coloured silk, with a crooked bodice) read a poem: the Professor made a speech. He toasted, in glowing periods, the 'Spes Patriæ,' comparing the University to a filter, and the rising tide of youth to a drain! When the last guest had wished Edward a brilliant career, in the service of his country, the Professor called his son into his study and ceremoniously locked the door.

'Edward,' he said, 'I am fifty-seven, and this moment is the most important of my life.'

Edward, a favourable type of fair-haired, fresh-coloured,

young Dutchman, well-groomed and properly clothed, wished the dear old father wouldn't put things quite so dramatically. The expression reminded him of that unfortunate evening nearly three years ago. He looked down at the neat points of his patent leather shoes.

'Unless I except that of my birth,' said the accurate Professor. *His* eyes sank to his shirt-front. It was horribly crumpled, but that he would have considered the normal condition of shirt-fronts.

'And of my death,' he added thoughtfully. Edward's growing discomfort found relief in a (strictly internal) smile. For either of two incompatible qualities will carry a poor human soul through life's storms without utter shipwreck: a sense of the ridiculous or a veneration for the absurd. Edward possessed the former: the latter brightened his mother's path.

'My son!' The Professor fidgeted his worsted-stockinged feet into the brilliant slippers waiting for them, the Baroness's annual birthday gift, worked in stitches alternately too loose or too tight. 'I have been preparing for this evening, more or less, all your life!'

'Preparing beastly microbic preparations,' thought Edward, with a shudder, but he only said, in an interested voice: 'Yes, father.'

The Professor appeared grateful for this faint encouragement. He pulled down his unwonted wrist-bands and examined the wine-stains upon them. 'But especially,' he continued, 'since that evening, three years ago,—you remember!—when my great experiment failed!'

'Yes,' said Edward in a low voice. He drew the rosebud from his button-hole and flung it in the fire. It was faded, yet, immediately afterwards, he plucked it off again, and, while his father was speaking, he walked across the room and found a vase for it.

'After that evening I devoted myself to politics'—the Professor stood lighting his long Gouda pipe—'at least, in my spare moments. I fear I have not been able to take sufficient interest in Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Their place-hunting is so temporary: my Semicolon is eternal.' The Professor gazed thoughtfully into the

glowing bowl of the pipe: then he drew the mouthpiece slowly from his lips, and, pointing it at Edward: 'As you didn't want to become a soldier—and I can't say I regret it, for a soldier's life seems to me either actively noxious or positively inane (like a microbe's, doing nothing or doing harm), you must try and be a statesman, Edward!'

Edward's heart gave a leap. 'Tis a poor career,' said the Professor.

There he stood, the dear old untidy father, the man with the crusading blood in him, that had gained a name for himself throughout Europe in the fight with deadlier than any pagan foes.

'It's no use putting the flower into that vase: I've had carbolic in it. There are two requirements only. They are negative. No conscience: no nerves. Physiologically the two are probably one. I fear you have more than the average of both.' The Professor settled down again to his chair, his pipe, his slippers, his solemn gaze into the flame. 'You don't care for history?' he asked suddenly.

'N-not much.'

'I cannot blame you. The study of history is little more than the gradual unravelling of lies about crimes. There is nothing certain but science, my boy: all the mistakes must be ours.'

'I admire science,' replied Edward beautifully. He stood opposite his father, awkwardly holding his rose.

'And the science which alleviates suffering is the one above all others,' continued the Professor, not heeding this last remark. 'Social science! Pooh! A conflict of interests! In the laboratory there is peace.'

'Peace—oh, father!'

The Professor fixed his keen gaze on his distressful young son and heir. 'Say it all!' he prompted.

'I was thinking of the howls of the victims.'

'Ah! I am punished for having married a poetess. You mustn't mind victims in politics, Eddie. Your path lies over them.' The Professor's gaze returned to the fire. 'That point being quite settled, my future Prime Minister,' he said, 'we now come to number two. When

my experiment failed, child, I never repeated it. You will wonder why. It was decisive. And, besides, I was uncomfortable about it—afraid. There was something strange about that rabbit's death.'

'I killed it!' cried Edward. 'Oh, I'm so glad I've told you.'

The Professor drew forth two slow puffs of his pipe. 'You,' he said. 'I concluded as much when I saw the creature's battered head. So I saw you would never do for the laboratory.'

'I couldn't stand its cries,' pleaded Edward.

'Quite so. That is why I entered Parliament.'

Edward fell back for one long moment. Then he flung himself forward and caught his father's hand in both his own.

'There! there!' said the Professor, very red about the nose. 'It wasn't really so much of a nuisance. The spread of the microbe of folly in a crowd is ever interesting. But it's terribly monotonous. My Semicolon shows variations.'

'You did it to help me on,' said Edward.

'And to study the thing, and to find out all about it. There's nothing left for you but that or the army, when you're Baron Lisse. For we all must do something, Edward.'

'Don't, father.'

'But, before you turn your back on all my old plans for you, Edward, I've one condition—in fact it is a *sine qua non*. It's an enormous one; I don't deny that—Is the door locked? Very well. I said this was the most important evening of my life. You have noticed my little cough?' Edward nodded.

'I tell your mother it is a bad habit. But my eminent colleague Longman calls it by another name.' The Professor, very agitated, drew a small box from his pocket. 'Sit down, Edward: swallow one of these. I couldn't have lived without them. I suppose you never thought of me as "nervous"? Sons don't. Jenkins' "pills." The Paris man's. A quack's.' The Professor sighed heavily. 'Yes, a quack's. Every doctor pre-

scribes his own medicines and swallows a quack's!' He extracted a pill. 'Thank heaven,' he added devoutly, 'no deaths lie at *my* door—at those of dumb beasts.'

Edward had disposed, not too willingly, of his rather dingy pill.

'Please tell me, father'—he steadied his voice—'what Professor Longman says about your cough.'

'He says—now, Edward, you mustn't mind too much—these are simple physiological events of frequent occurrence—he says that he doesn't think I can live six months!'

'Father!' The agony in the cry painfully rewarded Baron Lisse for many a weary hour of the Babble-shop.

'Now, take another pill, Edward, and mind, your mother mustn't know. Why, I haven't even told Eliza. You must look after your sisters. It'll be all right. There'll be money enough. I had to tell you this brusquely to-night, Edward, because—why, bless me, don't look like that! All men die. I don't think I looked like that when my father died. True, I was forty-five. But, Edward, you must be a man to-night and help me!' The Professor had risen and placed both his hands on his son's shoulders. 'When that experiment failed—well, I won't allude to it again, but I've always made up my mind to use my own body, when the time came. It has come: I've got Longman's verdict here in writing,' he tapped his breast-pocket. 'I went and got it this morning; I can't do anything without your help, Edward. It's worth while.' These last words he added, as if speaking to himself. 'Oh, more than worth while!'

The long room, with its sombre bookshelves, its many arcana of investigation and of torture, seemed listening for more. Edward's troubled eyes were fixed on his mother's writing-table. The Professor, having got over the worst, proceeded briskly. 'I shall lie down on that sofa. I shall inject the antidote. Then you will administer the chloroform. Ten minutes later you must inject the virus. Now, you see why it was absolutely necessary for me to tell you everything. Then you must

leave me and go to bed. I shall wake up to-morrow morning. I am sure of it.'

'None the worse?' cried Edward. His father hesitated one moment, and in that moment Edward said, 'No.'

'Hush, silly boy. We must hurry, or your mother will be sending Ellza. This experiment, Edward, crowns my life. There isn't much left of it anyway. If I survive, just time enough to publish my discovery. If I die, I deserve no better, for the muddle-headed old fool I must have been.'

'If—if——!' sobbed Edward.

The Professor lifted his mighty head; the grey hairs spread around it like a halo. 'To-night,' he cried, 'we touch the greatest discovery, in medicine that the world has ever seen. If I do not achieve it to-night, some one else will to-morrow: it is in the air! Soon all disease will be prevented by inoculation—the homeopathy of the microbe! I have worked for this discovery all my life long: it *shall* be mine!'

'Father!'

'This one thing, at least, you can do for me, to—undo all the harm that you have done.'

Edward cowered in his corner. 'But, father, if you were to——'

'Die! You would bury me next Saturday, instead of next spring!'

'Kill yourself,' whispered Edward.

'I should no more have killed myself,' explained the Professor calmly, 'than you would, when you risk your life over a hurdle or in a boat. Be reasonable, Edward. The risk is infinitesimal; the probable gain to the world untold.' As he spoke, he had already taken off his coat and busied himself with his simple preparations. He turned to where his son was sitting, dumbly watching. 'Edward, I don't like mentioning these things,' he said, 'but, surely, there are considerations a Baron Lisse may value more highly than six months of a waning life.' Then he lay down and inserted the needle into his skinny arm and showed Edward how to work the chloroform. 'Tell your mother I shall be busy here all night. Good-bye till

to-morrow morning. I am sorry I had to fluster you like this, child. It couldn't be helped. Serum S., mind, the little bottle to the left. Good-night, Edward. Work hard and die easy.' His eyes closed.

Edward stood with the little bottle in his hand, the little bottle to the left. Serum S. He lifted his eyes to the clock. Two minutes gone already. 'Father!' No reply.

Somebody was knocking at the door. He started, nearly dropping the precious bottle, and went to see. Eliza stood in the passage. 'Time to put out the gas,' she said, rude and loud, 'unless the Professor intends to stay messing here all night!'

'He does,' replied Edward. 'I shall go upstairs in ten minutes.'

The maid peered through the chink. 'After the dinner-party!' she protested. 'It's very bad for him. You should look to your cough, Professor!' she called into the silent room.

Edward closed the door on her: his finger clung round the bottle in his hand. He lifted his eyes again to the clock, very slowly. How long was it since he had last ventured to look in that direction? The ten minutes were over. The minute-hand was hurrying round the dial. It no longer mattered how it ran.

His father would awaken now for certain. That was Edward's only prominent idea. The experiment must take some other shape. His father would awaken!

Up till this evening Edward had never bestowed a serious thought upon death: and now suddenly it stood plain, in the middle of his heart, beside his father. He waited, watching the unconscious figure, the useless bottle in his hand. Then he went and put it back in its place and sat down by the wreck of the fire.

He cowered there, a hopeless huddle, asking himself wearily, again and again: had he acted wrongly or rightly? And at last, from sheer emotion and exhaustion, he sank into uneasy sleep.

When he woke the room was grey and bitterly cold. The dull morning had come, and the first thing his eyes

beheld was the Professor, hanging, slightly lifted up, against the side of the sofa, his face ashen, his look dazed.

'Edward!' gasped the Professor.

'Yes, father!'

The Professor uttered such a cry as Edward, in all his later intercourse with men distraught, has never heard again. 'It has succeeded!' screamed the Professor. 'I'm dead-sick, but that's only the chloroform! It has succeeded! 'Oh, my God!' He lay muttering: 'The thing's certain. Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace. Thy salvation: yes, it's Thy salvation, for a suffering humanity.'

Edward had risen, trembling from head to foot. 'Father, I didn't do it!' he gasped in the twilight. 'I couldn't. Oh, I couldn't kill you, father!'

The Professor lay quite still. 'Oh, father, speak to me.'

'Yes, Edward. Go away now, child. Go to bed. Go sleep,' came in feeblest accents from the sofa. 'Go, child! You meant well, boy. I understand, child. Go!'

'Father, surely in some other manner——'

'No, one does not do this sort of thing twice. As for me I could not, now the anti-toxin has got into my blood. Never mind, child. Let me sleep! I am dead tired and sick. Send me Eliza, if she is already up. Go, child!'

'Father!' Edward flung himself down by the sofa. 'I will carry on your work, whatever happens! I will devote my life to it, father! God helping me. Oh father, I will!'

'Yes, child, yes,' murmured the Professor. 'We can talk about it to-morrow. Now send me Eliza, child.'

Edward went out. On the stairs he met his mother coming down. The Baroness, as we know, was not the sort of woman to be much troubled by disorder in her home circle, and besides, she had long been accustomed to her husband's irregular night-work. But at sight of Edward, in creased dress-clothes and manifest distress, she exclaimed aloud.

'My father was busy. I stayed to help him.'

'Quite right!' said the Baroness; 'once in a way. Now go and lie down. Yes, yes, you must help your father.'

'We had a long talk about my future. I am to study medicine,' continued Edward, burning his ships.

'Of course,' said the Baroness placidly. 'I have never doubted that.'

She brought her boy a cup of tea, as soon as Eliza had found leisure to make it (for the Baroness could not make tea). On the tray lay a tall pile of papers, which the lady, having established herself by the bedside, solemnly removed to her lap.

'You remember my promise!' she cried triumphantly. 'Edward, you are ripe! Drink your tea, while I read you *Balaam!*'

With much rustling of pages, coughing and a heightened colour, she began:

'Sing, Muse, the Seer, the Angel and the Ass!'

She looked over the pages at him. 'Now, how do you like that?'

He was so weary, the room went round with him. 'Very much,' he said.

'When I wrote that opening line, Edward, you were a curly darling of five! Your father was working at his wonderful discoveries behind my back. And it struck me the four nouns were an excellent description of our family. The Ass being your poor uncle Francis, who, for instance, has always said you'd never do for a scientist!'

'You forget my sisters,' said Edward, trying to steady his brain.

'Oh, well—yes!' replied their mother, and returned to her reading.

CHAPTER III

IN this manner did Edward become a medical student at Leyden University. 'We are puppets,' remarked the Professor, and he resigned his seat in Parliament. 'But Providence,' objected the Baroness, 'pulls our strings.' 'Undoubtedly,' assented her husband. 'Mind!' It is not proven that he ever deliberately employed this closure to arrest theological discussion. He had felt no compunction about accepting Edward's sacrifice: on the contrary, he deemed the boy very lucky to have seen his mistake in time. 'A unique opportunity!' he said, 'to become my successor! Edward very nearly missed it!' For preliminary studies in botany and chemistry Edward showed plenty of aptitude. He had always liked flowers, and messing about with electrical machines and experiments. 'He is not at all my idea of a jurist,' said the Professor. 'Nor mine of a poet,' declared the Baroness with a sigh. Presently Thomasine, the eldest daughter, came home from her finishing school at Geneva, presumably 'finished,' and that was a great satisfaction to Edward, who had always considered her his—rather far-away—'chum.'

The wickedest action of the Baroness's half-century of existence had been the bestowal of so absurd an appellation on her second child. Her son she had been compelled to call after his grandfather. 'I shall never have another boy!' had been her cry, amid abundance of tears. Did Providence resent this querulous prophecy? Had she been granted a succession of male children, she would probably have called one of them Balaam, for some parents will shrink from no cruelty in matters of this

kind. The Professor concentrated all his attention on nourishment and vaccination, the cow and the calf.

Out of oppression of the sweet, however, cometh forth sweetness. We know that the name of a rose—and nothing on earth is so habitually misnomered—does not injure its fragrance; moreover, it gains by being crushed. From earliest infancy Thomasine Lisse bore the weight of her mother's fond freak. She got to accept perpetual teasing as if she rather liked it. At school she early became a bit of a mother to her younger sisters. On her return from Geneva she settled into a vacant corner as her brother's special counsellor and friend.

He stood in need of such a confederate. At home he was as much alone as ever: at college his studies naturally threw him among rather a rough lot of class-fellows, away from his own set of friends, whom he only met at their play. To the Professor, naturally, such a blending of two social milieux had ever seemed a thing of beauty. 'A name,' he would exclaim, 'as great in science as if it belonged to a cow-herd! As noble as if it were borne by a fool!' Needless to say, the Professor was well and busy. After six months he again consulted the eminent Longman, who said he could hardly live a year.

Before that year was out, Pasteur gave his great discovery to the world. When the Professor read of it, in the common little provincial paper, he turned whiter than the sheet in his hand, but he instantly forgave his son. He waited for a moment, with his back to the desk at which the Baroness sat scribbling: then, sure of his voice, he turned in his chair and made a clean breast of the whole business to his wife. 'So Edward has saved his father's life!' said the Baroness, weeping. Her tears fell in stains on the wet page of *Balaam*, but there need be no rewriting of the untidy manuscript on that account.

'I should have survived!' cried the Professor, and struck the newspaper. 'This discovery of Pasteur's proves I could not but survive! I knew it,' he added.

'Edward did not,' replied the Baroness, 'so he saved his father's life.'

'As a woman's, your reasoning is correct, my dear,' said the Professor, and he went and kissed her forehead, 'but it wouldn't do for me and Pasteur.' He corrected himself, with an odd little bow in the direction of the newspaper. 'For Pasteur and me,' he said. 'Ah, Jane—Jane—the whole world may thank God for Pasteur.'

The Baroness dropped her penholder: it rolled in a long blue smear down her soiled mauve skirt. She cried out:

'Am I to understand, Professor, that this man, Pasteur, has run away with your discovery?'

'No; you are not,' replied the Baron, quite shortly, for him.

'Then who, pray, is going to be thanked for it, you or he?'

'He,' said the Baron, looking splendid.

The lady's lips twitched. With a big wrench, however, she controlled her feelings, and the words that slowly fell from her, like drops of vitriol, also belied in nothing the dignified little Baroness Jane. 'I might as well let Eliza publish *Balaam*,' she said. But the next moment a contented smile stole over her clever countenance. 'I knew I could trust our son to behave just right,' she said; 'he has saved his father's life.'

'Exactly,' said the Baron, resigned.

'And——' continued the lady. She rose. She flourished her pen. 'Oh, Thomas! I see my opportunity! Oh, what an opportunity! I am in my eleventh canto, but *this*'—she flung down the open sheet—'must *wait*! I shall write a drama, of which you will be the centre, you, my husband, my hero! Your great self-surrender, Edward's sublime dilemma! What a theme!' She sat down again. 'Meanwhile Thomasine can copy out the ten completed cantos. Not a letter that she makes is like anything I was taught in my youth, but people nowadays seem to read them all the more readily on that account.'

'Poor Thomasine!' said the Professor reflectively. But at this the Baroness not unnaturally bridled. 'Surely copying poetry is as good an occupation for any young

girl,' she protested, 'as examining the human body under the skin! Faugh!'

'It's the more interesting side,' said the Professor.

'A woman has no business with it,' replied the Baroness incisively. For it was a sore point with her that Thomasine had plunged into Edward's anatomical studies of mornings, on condition that he should accompany her to dances of nights. This close collaboration could not but render the Baroness jealous, as she sat at her writing-table with her back to her husband's beasts.

But you don't get to the beasts in the first year of your medical studies. There dawned a day, however, a dark, winter day, on which Edward burst into his sister's little boudoir, his face all broken up in blotches, white and red. He tramped about the narrow floor: then he went and stood by the window, gazing into the cloudy sky. To whom should he go but to Thomasine? His father never alluded to his studies, from some curious idea that Edward's scientific personality must develop independently, not as a reflection of paternal eminence.

'We had our first vivisection this morning,' said Edward, his back to his sister. 'You can't imagine what it's like, till you've seen it done.' She was silent.

'Do you know, I liked the work well enough! Father's right: 'tis the finest vocation on earth: I was quite happy in it. Of course I knew this must come, but I thought it can't be much crueller than shooting or angling, and I go in for those as much as ever I can. What hypocrites we are, Tommy!'

Still she was silent, with the silence that is sympathy expressed.

'But oh, this bit's too awful!' he burst out. 'At the laboratory—only think!—they keep a whole herd of small dogs, on purpose, for us to break their bones and set them, over and over again. You should see the poor wretches driven in, wheedling and whining, and trying to lick the white-aproned people's hands. They know well enough what's going to happen. And, then, to hear them howling afterwards!' He pressed his cheeks

against the chilly window-pane. 'I can hear them howling now!'

Still Thomasine did not reply. She was one of those few women whose silence, when a man's fresh sorrow comes to him, seems but its congenial accompaniment, as a hedgerow, unseen but felt, that we reach in a gale of wind. She sat there, motionless, in the quiet little blue and white chamber, with the many little bits of herself all around her—the books and the ferns, and the luminous cross overhead. And before the soothing stillness had grown oppressive, she got up and came behind her brother and stood there, with the winter sadness against her sunshiny girl-face and the glow of her golden hair. 'I will do your frogs for you,' she said.

'Nonsense,' he answered, and put his arm around her with a brotherly hug. 'You'll make a man of me yet.' he added, laughing. She kissed him, indignantly.

'You're a man every inch of you,' she protested, 'or you wouldn't have done it at all.' She did not say what 'it' was, but every one knew in that household, excepting the Baroness, blissfully unconscious, to Edward's supreme satisfaction, of her children's mental struggles. The Baroness, in fact, was prevented by her own cast of mind from realising the existence of any great 'mentality' in a young man, even her own son, who brought back silver prize cups from rowing matches and athletic sports. It required all her husband's powers of persuasion to make her remember that Edward had left the Grammar School as 'Primus' of his class. 'The boy does his best,' she said, after various readings of *Balaam*, 'but I cannot think he possesses "intellectuality." Not like you, Thomas. He lacks fine feeling. But he is a dear boy. Some of us must have muscles and some of us must have brains.' Her mind was at rest about Edward.

The Professor's soul however, would occasionally jigger and wriggle like any small beast at the farther end of his own dissecting pins. For the Baron would awake in it and point out to the Scientist that Pasteur's discovery had left no task for Edward to complete. The Scientist would reply to the Baron, that other wide fields

of bacteriology awaited the coming explorer. The Professor never doubted for a moment that Edward was a genius, nor could he see the use of being a genius, unless you devoted your gifts to bacteriology. Besides, Edward never complained, and that proved him to be altogether happy, for, if anything annoyed him, he told you so, witness his frank outburst at the mature age of fifteen. And how can any human being, possessed of brains, feel otherwise than jubilant, once he had escaped from ancestral inanity and was sailing away over new seas of philosophic research? The Professor wished he had had such a father as himself: his life would have been very much easier. The thought is not an uncommon one.

But the problem of Edward's future development was unexpectedly solved by the arrival of Laura. She was introduced by Uncle Francis, in a manner distinctly his own.

On a snowy winter evening, an evening of dirt and dulness, Uncle Francis drove up in a fly to the dark old house on the dark canal. He walked straight into the sitting-room, unannounced, and Eliza, as she slowly closed the door behind him, shouted through the aperture: 'The Colonel! You know his way!'

The Baron's younger brother was a bachelor, a brave soldier who had volunteered for India, a brusquemannered man of the world. He had a bachelor's selfishness and a soldier's generosity: had you written to beg for a charity, he would perhaps not have troubled to answer you, but he would certainly have bidden his orderly send you a P.O.O. He had an idea that he could manage most things better than the people who looked after them, and, especially, he read out of his daily paper the daily renewed conviction that his dearly loved country was hastening to the dogs. For his wise brother he possessed a boundless admiration, as you and I, from our understandable earth, appreciate the unnecessary stars. He could not but regret that such an intellect should be wasted on 'worms': what satisfaction he had at first derived from the Baron's excursion into Parliament had been much dulled by the discovery

that his brother's speeches, as read in the papers, were so manifestly inferior to the orations he, the Colonel, concocted every morning, while shaving. 'Sanitation, by Jove! While this country is cascading to the dogs!' 'The men who made this country great, sir,' says the Colonel, slapping his red and blue breast, 'drained their—cups! They crossed the ocean in tubs that were—faugh! and they brought back all the perfumes of the Indies!' His sister-in-law Colonel Lisse did not properly appreciate: her poetry he condemned unread. The word he used was 'silly.'

'All well?' He planted himself on the hearth-rug and looked round. Yes, all were in health, even the Professor, whom his eminent colleague had recently assured that the hole in his only remaining lung had, unconscionably, healed. When the Professor's dead body was opened thirty years later, the missing lung was found to have, apparently, regrown.

'Girls well too?' asked the Colonel. The Baroness appeared to be aware that the two dear girls at boarding-school wanted for nothing.

'Girls should be educated at home!' said the Colonel. He buttoned his long frock-coat, like a glove. His untidy brother, limp in an easy-chair, gazed at him with kindest interest. The Baroness became engrossed in her knitting.

'And exceptions prove the rule,' added the Colonel, as Thomasine rose up before him. 'No tea, thanks!' Twenty years ago, at the christening, to which he had been bidden as a godfather, instead of the historic name he had expected, this ridiculous appellation, carefully kept secret, had struck the infuriated uncle, and knocked him over, like a bomb. He never called his niece by her name: on the mug which he sent her he left the shield intended for initials a blank.

'Tea,' said the Colonel, 'destroys the brain.'

'I take six cups a day,' remarked the Professor.

'Yours can stand the strain,' replied the Colonel. His cropped hair stood up, white, over his clean, red-brick face: the too-black moustaches flourished fiercely across

his cheeks. 'Dear me,' he said, 'I believe I am becoming a poet, in my old age, Jane, like you!'

The Baroness only coughed. To herself she said 'Imphi-Boshek,' and found the usual compensation in the secret thought.

'Home influence for girls,' persisted the Colonel, 'I was reading in the *Hague Courant* this morning——'

'So you still read the *Hague Courant*,' said the Professor, with a touch of irritation in his voice.

'My dear Thomas, you needn't talk politics to *me*. I simply look at the papers to see how things are getting wrong.'

'On?' The Professor lifted his hand, maliciously, to his ear.

'Wrong!' shouted the Colonel. 'And no politics, Thomas, are required for *that*! Moreover, as for my political principles, you all know them. The three P's!' The Colonel looked round defiantly. 'The three P's,' he repeated. 'Prinzel Parson! Police! Palace, Pulpit and Prison! The three pillars of the State, Thomas. The three P's. You remember my old comrade Baleyne?'

'We remember about him,' replied the Baroness, looking in all sorts of places for her ball of wool.

'He is dead,' said the Colonel solemnly.

'What did he die of?' replied the Baroness, while searching. She invariably propounded that question, like so many people, who seem to put it in a sort of sub-emotion, lest they also should die of a particular something some day.

'Of fever. At Palembang. He has left an only daughter, aged nineteen.'

'Poor thing!' exclaimed Thomasine.

'Where is she?' asked the Baroness perfunctorily, pleased to have recovered her wool.

'In a cab at the door,' said the Colonel.

'At this door!' demanded the Professor. Thomasine had sprung from her chair. The Baroness gave such a jump, that the ball ran away on to the floor.

The Colonel stood immovable, with his eyes on his

watch. 'I couldn't do it in less,' he said, 'I had to explain about home influence.'

'Fiddlesticks! What has home influence——' began the Baroness.

'I want you to take her in for a short time, Jane,' explained the Colonel: all the 'martiality' (the expression is Edward's) seemed to have gone out of him. 'He has sent her to me, you see. She arrived at my quarters last night.'

'Sent her to you! Arrived at your quarters! Outrageous!' The Baroness half rose, dropping all her odds and ends to right and left. 'Keep her!' The Baroness sat down upon her knitting needles.

'I can only do that in one possible way!' replied the Colonel, inspecting the chandelier.

'What way, pray?'

'Marry her,' answered the Colonel ruefully.

The Baroness's first far-away fears had been for Edward: they swept round at once to the peril nearer at hand. 'She can't stop in that cab,' said the Baroness.

Thomasine took this as a permission to go and fetch her.

'Is she white or black?' inquired Edward, looking up from an illustrated paper.

'Brown,' replied his uncle.

Thomasine was already half-way down the stairs; she found Eliza seated on a step.

'I've got a convert in the cupboard-room,' said Eliza.

'A what?'

'A convert. One of those black bonzes the missionaries bring over, to make believe they've got dozens more over there!'

'Let me pass to her at once, please, Eliza.'

'Oh, certainly, Miss; is she to go into the drawing-room? I shouldn't have thought converted niggers were quite in the Colonel's line, or perhaps she's only just enough converted for him!' There the prim, starched creature sniggered audibly, and complainingly commenced following her young mistress down the passage. 'I did wrong, I suppose, as usual, to let her in, but I couldn't

bear to leave a young female unprotected, sitting chatting, as amicable as possible, with a tipsy cabman at Baron Lisse's door.'

'Was she talking to him? Was he really tipsy?' Thomasine put the questions nervously, her hand on the door-handle.

'Pray, why should he not be?' replied the righteous Eliza. 'Don't you pry into the common people, Freule, but just leave the likes of me to know about the likes of them.' She checked the Freule. 'Now what can the Colonel want with native Christians?' she demanded. 'He certainly hasn't dressed this one correct.'

'You will know all about her to-morrow, Eliza!'

But that was not at all Eliza's idea of her position in the family. 'I dare say I did wrong,' she persisted, with the plaintive note that was always successful in the case of the Baroness. Consciously impeccable, she enjoyed suggesting illusory errors on her part. Her life was a long devotion to the 'quality' she imagined she despised, and a persistent disparagement of her own class, whom she would allow nobody but herself to condemn.

'I am frozen quite dead,' said Laura Baleyne. The two girls entered the drawing-room together, side by side, North and South, calm and storm.

The Professor rose and swept the stranger his very best court bow.

'Fortunately not quite,' said the Professor.

The young lady cast the poor old crumpled gentleman a glance which too plainly expressed contempt for such scientific exactitude. She sat down on a low settee by the fire and wrapped her cloak, in great swathings, all about her. It was a marvellous cloak, dark crimson cloth outside, but, inside, a magnificent tiger-skin, tawny and striped, with a head, goggle-eyed, in the hood. The two ladies Lisse contemplated it with attention.

'I like you,' said Laura, nodding to the Baroness, and loosening the furry folds about her slender neck. The Colonel smiled uncomfortable approval.

'Thank you,' replied, drily, Jane, Baroness Lisse.

'You don't look like as if you came out of a bandbox,

like the women over here,' continued the fair visitor. 'One can see that you move about and drop things and don't trouble to pick them up.'

'Oh, thank you!' said again Jane, Baroness Lisse. But she tried to hunt, unnoticed, for the wretched ball of worsted. The Colonel, stiffly stooping, dragged it from its hiding-place and ostentatiously deposited it on the tea-table.

'Yes, that's what men are good for,' said the youthful equatorian, nodding gravely. She threw back—with a sudden jerk that caused the poor Professor to start and cough—the whole splendour of the tiger-skin, and lay back against it in her sombre travelling-dress, under the full reflection of the leaping flames.

'Why, old gentleman, don't you agree with me?'

It was the Colonel's turn to jump, on the hearth-rug.

'This is my brother!' he said very loud, 'Baron Lisse!'

The lithe young creature against the tiger-skin opened wide a pair of great black eyes, like stars, in a clear-brown, oval face. 'Well, isn't he old?' she queried. 'Surely, nobody minds being called old, when they've got to be as old as he! Or she!' A sweep of a long thin hand in the direction of the Baroness, who smiled in the most friendly manner.

'I don't mind at all,' said the Baroness, 'I shall be fifty next June.'

'You don't look it,' flashed the Colonel.

'Old's old and young's young,' opined Laura, with a slow glance of intelligence at Thomasine and Edward. The latter was trying his hardest to keep his eyes away from everybody else's, especially from Thomasine's. But there was no mirth in the Colonel's answer.

'You won't say that, young lady, when you're between the two ages yourself——' The Colonel's eyes went searching, with but faint desire to see, for a looking-glass. He did not therefore immediately observe how Laura's pretty lips hung pouting.

'You always contradict me,' she protested. 'Nobody ever contradicted me in Sumatra. Does everybody always contradict everybody else in Holland?'

'They do,' said Edward, breaking his long silence with rather unnecessary energy. 'Tis our most marked national characteristic. In this country everybody persistently disapproves of everybody else.' The challenge in his look and his voice were for Thomasine, but, before she could fly to her customary defence of the fatherland, Laura disconcerted everybody by bursting into vehement tears.

'I don't want to be disapproved of,' she sobbed. 'I—I don't believe I'm all—disapprovable! It is so cold and uncomfortable, and I know I shall never do as they want me to! Oh, Colonel Lisse, why did poor father send me to Europe? Oh—oh—oh—oh, I want to go back to Palembang!' She flung herself back recklessly into the great tiger-skin: she dragged a paw of it across her face: the soft fur welled up all around her.

'My dear,' said the Colonel kindly, 'he sent you to me.'

The dark face flashed forth from behind the tiger-paw, in a ripple of laughter.

'My dear!' she echoed gaily. 'And we only met yesterday. Now *that* would be improper at Palembang!'

Again the two ladies Lisse exchanged glances. The Colonel's tanned skin does not easily show change of colour, but it can. To the gently nurtured womankind of his own family he was at that moment an object of unmixed commiseration. His niece came to his relief.

'Mother, shall I show Miss Baleyne to her room?' she said, and, without awaiting further parley, she carried the young stranger, tiger-skin and all, away. When the door had securely closed upon the two girls, the Professor's eyes flew round to Edward's, *via* the Colonel, and father and son laughed till the chandelier rang. The Baroness knitted. Edward desisted first.

'Poor little thing,' he said.

The grateful Colonel caught at the words.

'Yes, educated, you know,' he said, 'at Palembang.'

'Not "educated"?' The Baroness lifted her face to her brother-in-law. She had neither begun to laugh nor stopped smiling.

'Quite so, Jane. Not educated. Dragged up anyhow.'

Petted. Spoilt. Native servants. Mother dead. A great loss, that, Jane.' The Colonel shook his head. 'Father dead now. Brave man, father! So here she is. His legacy.'

'He has left her to you?' The Professor's mirth had gone suddenly grave, like an owl.

'He has, Thomas.'

'And what has he left to her?'

'Me.'

The Baroness's smile grew perceptibly thinner. 'Laugh, my dear!' she said, almost spitefully, to her husband.

Immediately Edward swept a stumbling curtsey to the Colonel.

'My dear!' he repeated, 'but that, you know, would be improper at Palembang!' And again he began to laugh, but his father spoke, annoyed.

'And what, pray, are you going to do with your legacy, Francis?'

'Not marry her, unless you compel me to. That's the one thing I feel clear about. And so I've brought her here.'

'School,' said the Baroness, knitting fast.

'My dear Jane, she's nineteen.'

'Family,' said the Baroness, knitting faster.

'Yes, but where? who? what? how?' cried the distracted soldier.

'Here, for the present,' said Baron Lisse.

CHAPTER IV

So, for the next few weeks, the exotic Laura blossomed on the sluggish Leyden canal. Meanwhile the Colonel advertised and inquired, in a restless search for 'refined comfortable homes.' 'I should like to stay here and amuse you all,' said Laura to the Baroness, 'but the Colonel says you're not refined and comfortable. And I'm so anxious to learn just what one ought to do. It's all so odd and difficult. Of course you're not what we should call comfortable at Palembang, but, then, everything's little and poor here, compared to the East.' Clever as the Baroness knew herself to be, she could not have told what intentions lay behind Laura's innocent smiles. 'The Colonel says you always say,' remarked Laura, 'that you cannot manage ordinary girls!' Now this was manifestly unfair to the Baroness, who never would have described the beautiful Sumatran as 'an ordinary girl.' On the contrary, she perceived in her magnificent material for a great Oriental figure to be worked with fine effect into *Balaam*, and, expressly abandoning *Edward, or the Crusader's Sacrifice*, she harked back to the eleventh canto of her epic, which is enlivened, as we are now all aware, by the appearance of the lurid Moabite Princess, Liriam. The daughter of the house still sat copying, copying, in that clear, firm hand of hers, for hours.

Laura Baleyne could not, for the life of her, have copied anything or anybody. Besides, her handwriting ran along, charmingly unreadable, in what may be described as arabesques. But she rarely troubled to write anything, except little pencil scrawls to Edward to come and amuse her at once. Such a summons the young gentleman found

frequent occasion to obey, leaving scraps of his work with Thomasine.

'I am cold, cold,' reiterated Laura, who seemed to have consumed in a fortnight the store of caloric which lasts so many old Indlans through their first two winters in the North. So she spent much of her time by the drawing-room fire, on the sofa, or better still, on the rug, in the tiger-skin. And this is the story of the tiger-skin. Had Major Baleyne become possessed of it, and its original occupant, two minutes sooner, there would not have been a little brown baby inside the occupant, as there was. Says Laura, puffing up the horrible thing and inserting her own shapely arm: 'With a little imagination you can see it there still.' Her own imagination was boundless. If she closed her eyes, she said, she could dream every perfume of the East. Then she opened them (sometimes a little moist) on the Leyden canal.

'Yours is the finest vocation on earth,' she said to Edward, 'I have wished, all my life, I could study medicine!'

'You?' He laughed.

'Yes. Aren't women beginning to, all over the world? But not at Palembang. I could have done it quite as well as Thomasine.'

'You would sicken at the sight of blood.' Her reply was unexpected. She drew a long pin from her hair and scratched across her arm. 'I love blood,' she said, watching the slow drops as they shaped themselves. 'Blood's life. The one thing you doctors know nothing about. The wonderful human life! If all this were to flow out, I should be a lump of clay. Why? Where did my soul go to? You can't see life come, but you can see it go! If only we knew what it is—life! I love to see it flow!' She crouched, amid the mass of the dead monster, and squeezed her arm. 'By George!' thought Edward, watching her. That thought was to him a new one. All the rest of his life he remembered all about it, and remembered that it took the form of 'By George!'

'Yes, I should like above all things to study as you do,' she continued. 'I envy you. Not because I want to find

out about the hideous diseases that we oughtn't to have and that nobody can cure! The horrible, stupid diseases that are all a mistake we make for ourselves by living wrong. But because I could get down deeper into the soul-body—oh, you know what I mean, though I can't express it technically—the force that makes the body, well or ill, what it is—the life that people are only just beginning to understand about and believe in!' She paused for a moment; then she turned and looked straight into his eyes. 'Are you happy in your choice?' she asked.

'Yes,' he answered quickly. 'You know I am not going to practise as a physician. My father says that means two-thirds humbug and one-third worry. My father is the greatest bacteriologist living. I shall hope to carry on his work.'

The reply was a long-drawn shake of the head. 'Why do you do that?' he demanded.

'Don't ask me,' she replied, and then added: 'But I want to tell you. Oh, I know what you mean by bac—what do you call it? Curing people by making them ill till they don't mind it! Filling them up with disease-germs, instead of strengthening their vital force!' He stared at her in amused amazement.

'Don't stare at me like that!' she cried irritably—steadyng him at once. 'You scientific men always think no one ought to talk that can't use your proper jargon! I wish you could have talked to my father: he'd have explained! The tropics are a hot-bed of microbes: fill a man up with all the fever-seeds till they're acclimated! 'Tis that what you bacte—oh you know—ologists say. Instead of providing him with the strength to weed his garden clean!'

'If we had the recipe for the universal weed-killer——' began Edward.

'You've never looked for it! Never! I tell you—oh, I care so much: I can't keep silence! I've been watching you these weeks—I know I'm stupid, and not properly educated and don't know how to behave—but I can see, I can see—you're starting on this splendid labour of your life all wrong! Leave your father's Semi-

colon to your father. He 's thirty years before him yet!

'I fear you are very much mistaken,' he replied, greatly hurt, in his filial affection, by her matter-of-fact tone. The tragi-comic Longman-episode, with its far-reaching effect on Edward's future, had certainly bred in his mind a general contempt for medical practice and practices, but it had left a vague conviction with him, nevertheless, that his father's days were numbered.

'I am not mistaken,' she answered, solemn as a judge. 'I know for certain.' She saw that her manner was causing him annoyance. 'I read it in his hand,' she added softly. 'Ah, now, mock me, if you want to. Mock!'

A moment's silence: then his lips were at her ear. 'Will you look at my hand?' he whispered. She hid her face deep down in the thick folds of the tiger-skin. 'No!' came from under it in tones of muffled vehemence. 'No! No!'

'Why, I believe you have looked at it already, on the sly, and discovered that I died in my teens.'

'Oh, mock!' she said again; 'mock! Had you lived where I come from, you would not laugh at superstition! Father used to laugh before he was converted. Do you know what converted father? I was not always his only child. I had an elder sister—ah, beautiful! One evening she was sitting in the verandah—she was sixteen—and an old Chinese pedlar came worrying her with his wares. She was angry with him—she was passionate as she was kind-hearted—and she bade him desist, and he would not, and she flung from her one of the toys he had placed in her lap and it broke. She threw him money, but it could not appease him; he turned at the compound-gate, and he cursed her. "This day week," he said, "I will come to you at this hour. I will fetch you. I shall not fail." She would not look at her watch, as she passed into the house, but the clock struck six, so she knew. My father laughed—ah!'—the girl shuddered—'and she laughed also, and I! Five days later she sickened with fierce fever: in her delirium she never ceased calling the

Chinaman! We told her the wrong date, hanging the calendar by the bedside, but she shook her head. On the fatal Saturday she was silent, and slept much: while she slept, I pushed forward, a full hour, the slow hands of the clock. As the shadows were falling—our swift eastern sunset—she woke. "What time is it?" she asked me. I said "Seven." She whispered: I bent over her: she whispered again: "Does the Chinaman forget me?" She whispered these words even fainter, till, as the clock struck seven, which was six, she died.'

'And the Chinaman?' questioned Edward, breathless in spite of himself. Laura slowly resumed control of her voice. 'The Chinaman was never seen again. The doctor explained everything to my father, all but the changed hour on the clock. Ah, yes, they explain! But at last even the doctor said—how well I remember it!—"There be things on this earth of ours, Horatio, that you and I know nothing about!" And he slapped on his helmet, and went off.' She had half lifted herself up, on the hearth-rug, in the earnestness of her narration: she now sank back, suddenly limp. 'I have never understood what he meant by calling father Horatio, for father's Christian name was John.'

This problem Edward left unsolved: when he opened his lips, it was merely to say: 'Strange!' She had covered her face with her hands, but at the serious tone of his voice, she dropped them gladly: 'Ah!' she cried, 'I am so pleased! You are not one of the idiots who snigger and pass on!' 'But what has this to do with my studying medicine?' he pleaded. 'What do you mean by my taking up the thing wrong?' She moved her lips: her colour came and went. 'Oh, what do I know?' she burst out; 'I am only a poor, ignorant girl. I don't even know how to behave!' She would talk no more. Resolutely turning her hot face to the congenial blaze, she begged him to get her the French novel he had promised, Daudet's pathetic *Jack*, the new book that every one was reading. The Baroness had cried over it. How dreadful to think a mother could thus neglect her child!

The Christmas holidays had just brought back the two younger girls, and, dear me, the house was so full and noisy you could hardly, sighed the Baroness, find time for a quiet read! She trusted Thomasine would marry ere Jane came home for good, next year. And the Colonel had shown his usual lack of consideration—but what, pray, could Imphi-Boshek consider *with?*—in foisting this unwholesome exotic upon them at Christmas time to corrupt with fantastic perfumes the lavender-kept hearts of the school-girls. To be sure, he now wrote that he expected soon to find a suitable home for her. Pray what would you call 'suitable'? The Zoo?

'Fie!' spake the Professor. For no human male can endure to be very rude about a pretty woman. Long centuries of experience have led us to defend her, instinctively, against her sex. And the chivalrous, enthusiastic Professor was far too simply human in all his impulses not to make kindest room for the brown waif that had dropped into his family as it were out of some far-distant cocoa-nut tree. 'Cocoa-nut,' indeed, the Baroness (a good woman, but feminine), had already dubbed her. Eliza never spoke of this dark-skinned creature otherwise than as 'The Witch,' and hinted at swarthiest reasons for doing so. Begged to be explicit, she replied, whilst the stream of her insinuations flowed on, that wild horses would not drag another word from her. The prophecy was a facile one in Leyden. One speculates what would have been the actual effect of a live wild horse prancing down the moss-grown streets in search of Eliza.

But in Eliza's little autocracy no one had the wish or the courage to exert influence of any kind. The Baroness, securely ensconced between screen and writing-table, would remark to her husband, with a shade of resentment in her voice:

'My dear, there's Eliza! I can hear her coming down the passage. Why can't she let us alone?' For the maid walked with an iambic step (how vexed would she have been to know this!) a lift, and a far-sounding bang.

'We're safe in the sanctum,' replied the Professor, applying his eye to his microscope. ('Sanctum, indeed,' says Eliza. '*Den!*' She unreasonably designates the Semicolon as 'Vermin!') She is mortally afraid of the unexplored side of the Professor's door. 'Full of creeping things,' she says, 'like Peter's blanket.' The Professor encourages this view.)

'I suppose she's in one of her rare paroxysms of self-distrust,' sighs the Baroness. 'The last was about dismissing the fat butcher, because he cried.'

'He was not only fat, but also good-looking,' replies the Professor.

'My dear!'

'My dear, I beg your pardon. And, also, he was a Primitive Calvinist, like Eliza herself.'

Meanwhile Eliza is heard fidgeting at the door and shrilly protesting that butter is up again a penny in the pound, and she daren't take the responsibility upon her! The Baroness, with poised pen, answers as shrilly that the kitchen might just as well eat 'Marjoram' (she means 'margarine'). Eliza screams disapproval. The Professor appears in the doorway.

'The rise of butter, Eliza, he begins, 'is an economic process—'

'If you call it economic!' snorts Eliza.

'Which passes absolutely beyond our control!'

'I deny it,' cries Eliza. 'I never let the key of the larder out of my sight.'

'You don't understand,' mildly retorts the Professor, and closes the door again.

The step of the murmuring maid is heard clanking away into silence, down the marble lobby. 'She has driven Imphi's reply right out of my poor head,' sorrows the Baroness, 'and it was so idiotically inane. Just the thing Frank was bound to have said! But it's impossible to compose really good poetry when you're crushed by the whole burden of a household like ours.'

The Professor steals behind her chair and kisses her on the forehead. 'Yes, dearest, you are our Pivot,' he says.

But at this the downright Baroness wipes her eyes.

'No, Eliza is that,' she replies cheerfully, and starts in fresh search of Imphi's response.

'I wonder,' she says presently, having reached the passage where Liriam gives Balaam, by mistake, the love-potion intended for Balak, 'I wonder if Eliza really has reasons for calling Laura a witch.' She lays down her pen and gazes contemplatively at the portrait of the Professor, in student costume, on her bit of wall. That is all she ever sees, for the screen is between her and the rest of the room and the garden.

'She always has reasons,' replies the Professor, moving his microscope.

'I mean reasonable reasons.'

'No woman ever has those for calling another woman a witch.'

'Why "woman," Professor?'

'A man may—if she have bewitched him.'

'Poor Laura!' says the scornfully tranquil Baroness.

Poor Laura lay, without any thought of bewitching anybody, on the tiger-skin by the biggest fire in the house, gracefully curved over her novel, her day-dreams and her chocolates. The chocolates were often provided by Edward, and sometimes by the Professor. In the day-dreams the Professor had no share. The young lady discovered a persistent liking for expensive sweets. 'So natural after all, mamma,' argued Thomasine. 'In an Oriental houri,' admitted the Baroness. 'I understand that in the harems they eat Salaam Aleikoum all day.' 'What is a houri, mamma?' The Baroness blushed, obliged to confess rather hastily that she did not know. 'But I am sorry that I called Miss Baleyne a houri,' she said, 'for I fear it is something improper.'

On New Year's Eve—Saint Sylvester, they call it in Holland—Laura appeared in such a low-backed scarlet glory as that simple Dutch household was quite unaccustomed to see. 'St. Sylvester' calls all the world, and his worldliest wife, to evening service, once in the year, if never before. 'Good gracious!' exclaimed the Baroness, 'you are not going to church like that!' No, Laura was not going to church. 'You are a heathen, then? A

Mohammedan? Your religion,' persisted the irate mother of three daughters, 'is that of the people in the tropics, the blacks?' 'Neither theirs nor yours,' replied Laura, with spirit, 'but I promised my father never to enter a church.' Her lips trembled: she burst into tears. Such a confession of course rendered further exhortation impossible, but the Baroness, seizing her gold-clasped 'Church Book,' did not stay to dry the tears.

Nor could Edward. He thought of them a good deal, however, during the long, long sermon, and he came to the conclusion that it is a mistake to say weeping disfigures all women. When a man has reached that stage, it is time he should reflect upon witchcraft.

At the traditional midnight supper of oysters and mulled wine, Laura was as vivacious as any of them, with that rather self-conscious gaiety which belongs to the change of the year. She betrayed a fascinating ignorance of all the best-known Dutch customs: the young people crowded around her with laughter and shrill little cries. Suddenly her own merriment died down, to a thrill of fervid interest. Into a bowl of water—the suggestion had been Edward's—they were dropping melted wax to read the future by. She waited to the last, shrinking back. Edward's fate had been a ring. She took the spoon, closed her eyes, turned it swiftly. 'A cross!' cried the second girl, Jane.

'But, surely, my dear Laura!' expostulated the Baroness, 'surely you, who are an atheist, attach no importance to portents?' The Baroness's own prognostic had been a (bay?) wreath. The beautiful Indian, without replying, rustled away in her trailing scarlet silk, to the farther end of the room. The quiet 'Freules' gazed after her.

'But atheists are always superstitious, my dears!' remarked the Baroness, smacking her lips to her three daughters. 'Dear Laura,' she added very kindly. 'You ought to read your Bible! Begin this year! I should like to give you one. I wish I could read a chapter with you every morning, if only I could find the time! We might go straight through. I read it in the original, you

know, so I could explain to you all the passages that other people don't understand.'

'Oh, how I wish they'd taught us that at school!' cried two of the three daughters. They all admired their gifted mother, as variously as Edward did.

'I never went to school,' the Baroness continued complacently, sticking her waxen wreath around her little finger, and breaking it. Oh, brittle glory! 'I had a governess who couldn't spell. But I remember when I was only seventeen, your uncle Francis came in one evening and asked me to join their dancing-class. "I couldn't," I said; "I spend my evenings with Phaedo." "Can't somebody else look after him?" asked your uncle Francis. He thought Phaedo was a little dog, Thomas—he thought he was a little dog!'

'And why shouldn't he?' replied the Professor. 'What business has a soldier with the immortality of the soul?' The Professor sat sipping his glass of mulled wine and considering his own little ball of wax. 'World-wide fame!' Thomasine had explained it to mean.

'Now, had you read the *Phaedo*, Laura,' said the Baroness, 'you would have known that atheism is nonsense, and that the soul survives after death!'

'I know it now!' exclaimed Laura. 'The Scarlet Sin' (Eliza's just-coined gibe) stood in front of the Professor, with tightly compressed hands. 'I am not a free-thinker,' she hurried on, at bay, in a fury her furtive indifference might long have foretold. 'Still less an atheist. I know as well as you,—better!—a hundred times better—that there exist all around us Powers of evil and of good. I fear them and love them and serve them and fight them! They are all around us! They are listening to me now!'

The youngest girl, Jacoba, screamed, as if she had seen a ghost. 'My poor child,' said the Baroness softly, sorrowfully (yet delighted with this new sort of 'Endor' light on Liriam), 'has nobody ever told you that all that is very wrong?' Laura turned on her. 'You let a donkey talk!' she exclaimed. 'Who was it, think you, talked in the donkey? A spirit or the donkey's soul?'

She opened her arms, spreading them forward. 'They are everywhere,' she said in a low voice. 'The invisible intelligences. They are all around us. If only we could see them!' Jacoba looked round swiftly, trying to peer behind her own back. Jane shut her eyes.

'Quite possibly!' said the Professor, and soothingly sipped his wine. 'Tra-la-la! You believe no such nonsense!' cried the Baroness. 'I believe,' said the Professor, 'wha'ever can be proved.' 'And the Protestant religion,' protested the Baroness. 'Of course,' said Baron Lisse.

Edward, proverbially politer than most of the brothers in Leyden, had dug Jacoba in the ribs with an audible 'Idiot!' when she screamed, thereby giving her a sudden foretaste of fraternal frenzies in the near future. He now frowned heavily, and quick Laura caught the frown.

'Proof?' she cried, 'you shall have your proof to-night! As much as you want of it! Before the year is out! That is how you all talk—give us proof! You ask for it and you hurry away! None of you ever comes for it! Proof! nothing is easier!' She glanced at the clock. 'Push that table here, Edward!'—the Baroness started—'Mr. Edward! The little round table will do admirably. Ah, you want proof that there are spirits around us, listening in this room? Now, all come here, girls! Hold your hands thus—let me teach you! Ah, you want to know the future, do you? I can show you a better way than dropping wax. Oh no, Mr. Edward, you need not turn the lamps down:—no—no—we can have the full light of the lamps!' The young people closed up round the table, fingers joining, in a tremble of expectation and pale-faced delight. 'Thomas, forbid this!' whispered the Baroness. He drew nearer to her. 'My dear, it's a joke—only table-turning! Far better let them do it, and explain the whole thing afterwards.' She felt that she could not, at her age, begin disagreeing with her husband, so she stood watching the excited group round the table. Presently—well, even under such favourable circumstances of course it takes a little time—the thing began to revolve: a few minutes later it

rapped. The Baroness sank into a corner, muttering an exorcism, a sudden memory of child-days, half a century ago, with a Catholic nurse, in Brabant. The five young people, their eyes flashing, quivered round the restless piece of furniture. The Professor sat smiling placidly. Explain it all presently. A purely physical effect.

'Hush!' said Laura imperiously, in the deepening silence. 'Listen, while I ask! Is my father dead?' The table answered: 'Yes.' 'When did he die?' The table spelt his age, forty-seven. 'Shall I live as long as that?' 'No,' replied the table. 'It never varies,' said Laura.

'Let us stop!' protested Edward. 'No! No!' cried the breathless girls. They were eager to ask a dozen momentous questions: the table stammered forth answers in its usual cumbersome way. The Baroness had drawn gradually nearer; she laid a slow hand upon Laura's bare arm. 'Ask it——,' she said, gazing across at her coughing husband; 'ask it——' She turned away and went back to her chair in the dark corner. Jacoba now wanted to know all about marriage, and 'who to?' 'what sort of a uniform?' The Baroness's murmur sounded distant between the rappings:

'In sorrow, and in sickness too,
Saints Thomas and Bartholomew!'

The Baron sat nodding his head over human foolishness. In the midst of all this perturbation the solemn clock struck twelve: they would hardly have been aware of it but for the sudden accompaniment of the clashing church bells outside. All halted and stared at each other. The table stood still. It had just announced that two misfortunes would befall the house of Lisse in the following year. The next moment it was flying round again, so that it might, if possible, particularise the approaching evils. The Professor alone saw the door glide slowly open and Eliza appear on the threshold, a flaming bowl in her anxious hands. 'You didn't ring,' she began in irritated protest, 'so I thought I had better come, and I wish you a——' Here she caught sight of the whisking, bumping table. Straight down, with a single crash—her

first and only time of dropping—the liquid fire ran all over the carpeted floor.

'Misfortune number one,' said the Baroness from her corner with almost a sigh of relief. Edward ran for the hearthrug to extinguish the flames. The girls grouped themselves in alarm round the guilty table. The Professor, with outstretched arm, addressed himself directly to Eliza. 'A purely physical phenomenon,' he was saying. 'Charcot has demonstrated on his patients that the muscles——' In his eagerness to point the truth at her he advanced into the burning puddle, and as he skipped back precipitately the grim Calvinism of Eliza caught at the proffered simile. She held her long bony finger inverted abysmally over the blue flames that separated them. 'The end,' she said, 'of all witches and sorcerers. H—e—double l.'

That night there was no more table-turning. Before the girls went up to their rooms the Professor explained everything. When he thought he had quite done, Laura, with lips she had bitten till they bled, told him, told them, all, her dreadful Chinaman story. He explained that to her also. At least, he told her why the army surgeon had called her father Horatio.

Next morning Eliza gave warning. She said she loved only one thing better than the Lisse family, and that was her immortal soul. The Baroness, little given to foolish weeping, sought her husband in tears. 'Misfortune number two,' she sobbed. 'If Eliza goes, I must bury my talent in a napkin. I have always called her the Pi—pi—pivot on which this entire household turns.'

'You wrong yourself,' said the Professor gravely. He sat sorting his numerous New Year's cards in two great heaps, one of those he must acknowledge and one of those he could ignore. But he had got them transposed in his mind, and was methodically tearing up the wrong ones.

'And this misfortune will not come off,' added the Professor gravely. As of course it did not. Eliza had never before been anywhere near giving notice, and she certainly cried a great deal and was very much in earnest. But Thomasine explained to her, that departure, by im-

mediately making true the table's prophecy of terrible misfortune, would irresistibly convert the Baroness to the certainties of spirit-rapping, and Eliza said: 'Let me think that out!' An hour or two later she called her young mistress, with much display of mystery, and led her, finger on lips and toes a-tiptoe, down the gloomy side-passage to the door of the guest-room at the further end. By that door, which was closed and locked, she sank prone, and, peeping through a chink in the lower panel, motioned to Thomasine to come and do the same. To her disgust and amazement the Freule refused, even when adjured by her mother's salvation! What Eliza saw, shuddering, was this. The brown Witch, in a loose Eastern garment, all yellow sunflowers and blue dragons, seated by a table, rigid, her eyes bandaged, seemingly asleep, while one hand, with a pencil, moved in nervous shakes and trembles on a great sheet of paper spread in front of her.

CHAPTER V

TERMS of the Peace: First, that the Baroness reject the housemaid's proposal to send the green carpet to the cleaner's. Secondly, that the Baroness promise solemnly to remove the Witch from the house at the earliest opportunity. 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,' quoted Eliza, standing, her arms akimbo. Literal execution is rendered impracticable by the laxity of Dutch law (which has abolished all forms of capital punishment): the passage must therefore be amended: 'in thine house.' The Baroness promised cheerfully. To her brother-in-law, who came to dinner on New Year's Day, she remarked that a promise is always a sacred thing.

'No' from a woman to a woman,' said the Colonel. 'Nor,' he added, slowly thinking it out, 'from a woman to a man.'

The Baroness contemplated him with her habitual expression of compassion. In her epic Imphi-Boshek ever babbled fatuity. She would punish him by marrying him to the sorceress Liriam. Woe betide him, if he tried on anything of the kind in real life.

'How's the poem progressing?' he demanded abruptly, anxious to divert her thoughts from the wrong-doings of Laura.

'The fool gets his deserts,' she replied grimly. He laughed, more uproariously, she fancied, than the occasion required. 'That's right,' he said, 'I hate a fool. Marriage, I presume?' His perspicuity alarmed her. 'What made you guess?' she demanded anxiously. 'Oh, marriage is the inevitable punishment of a fool.' She heaved a contented sigh. Through her mind passed, in still complacency, the thought of her own long union with this

man's elder brother, the wedlock of two so diversified, yet so strangely kindred, geniuses; she rose up, eager to find the Professor. At his study-door she knocked, as always. 'Have you got that frog,' she cried, 'skipping about, without its brain?'

The Professor opened the door wide. 'Half its brain,' he corrected her. 'No living creature can exist without any brain at all.'

'Indeed!' she replied, presumably thinking of the man she had just quitted.

'The frog's dead,' said the Professor, 'but there's a pigeon that—oh, it's got away!'

He ran to her writing-table. She closed her eyes tight immediately, standing well in the door. 'O Thomas, that's against the rules,' she cried, almost indignantly.

He skipped about: there were sounds of falling furniture, and flutterings, and the bang of a book. 'Escapes always are,' he gasped back at her. 'Open your eyes!' He stood at his end of the room, with heaving chest. The Baroness sat down hurriedly in her near corner: the distressed pigeon had made disastrous trouble on the rumpled sheets of *Balaam, an Epic*.

'Is it very bad?' asked the Professor nervously.

'Oh, I shouldn't mind,' she gave answer, 'but I'll copy the worst page at once, because Thomasine is so painfully neat.' Ten minutes later she looked up from her desk: "'The Princess spake: Is Imphi-Boshek here?" I forgot,' she said, 'your brother's in the drawing-room.'

Imphi-Boshek, meanwhile, was trying to convince the Princess that the staid old patrician mansion on the Leyden Canal was not the proper place for table-turning. The Princess listened demurely, but demureness with her was a very put-on trait.

'I'm sure to do wrong, whatever I do,' she flashed out unexpectedly at her fatherly adviser. 'So I may as well do what I like. What's the use, pray, of restricting your misbehaviour to the doing of things you don't like?'

'I beg your pardon!' said the amiable Colonel.

She shrugged her shoulders, a thing she could do grace-

fully, and turned away. 'The Professor is a dear old man,' she said, 'and the girls are sweet and kind, especially that poor angel, Thomasine. And the Baroness means well also—oh yes, I can quite understand about the Baroness—of course she is a *very* stupid woman, but she means well.'

'Then my nephew Edward is the only member of the family you don't like?' said the simple Colonel.

'I dislike the whole family,' she answered him pat.

'There is nothing more dreadful to live with than the people who you feel mean well.'

'Have patience but a few days longer,' he begged.

'I have probably found a suitable home for you.'

'Ah!' she gasped. The Colonel was not the man to fathom that cry. 'Meanwhile avoid, if possible, annoying my sister-in-law. I am surprised to hear you call her "stupid": we have always thought her too clever by half. She reads Plato: you can hardly be aware of that! She has a theory of her own about Balaam's ass, which she has published in a German review. She thinks the ass was the Prophet's wife—'

'A learned woman is always a stupid woman,' interrupted Laura pettishly, stretching her shapely figure in the light of the flames. 'I never learned anything at all, but I am not stupid, I! At least, not in her way of imagining one knows all things. I know I am ignorant, I. Like all such stupid people she can only believe the unreasonable. Now you!'—Laura turned those great stars of hers on the dapper little Colonel—'you have been in our Indian lands; you know of the mysteries that surround us there, the wonders that happen daily. You have seen how much nearer, in those climes, is the supernatural, the unearthly. You have heard the voices in the empty chamber, have watched the pebbles fall from the white-washed ceiling, have felt the siri-juice spirt from the stone wall—'

'Hush! hush!' he interrupted her, 'you shouldn't let your mind revert to these things, now you've got to a Christian country. They used to make me deuced

uncomfortable, I know. You try to believe in Balaam. It does one a lot of good. I am not learned like the Baroness, nor clever like you. I am a soldier, and, I trust, a gentleman. I believe in my three "K's," and always have. My King! my Kirk! my Country! That's enough for me, and you can emotion enough out of them, I promise you, for all three are going to the dogs. My paper was saying only this morning that the King has had his rheumatism very bad again.'

'Not that I care twopence about magic,' she resumed, 'no, nor about spirit-rapping. Such things are but squibs and crackers outside the temple, noises in the street. They do to attract the crowd of passers-by. Go, Colonel, and talk of the day's diversion to the girls.'

'I have already done so. I am arranging a distant excursion on skates. I am sorry that is an amusement in which you cannot participate.'

At this stage the Professor entered in search of Imphi-Boshek. 'And my brother is coming too,' said the Colonel.

'At his age!' exclaimed the Sumatran.

'Skaters have no age,' replied the Professor, vexed.

She lay back, looking at him, hesitating, gathering courage. 'Do not go,' she said.

'But, my dear young lady——'

'Do not go. Please don't!' Her eyes were pleading: her hands plucked at her dress. The two old men stood staring at her—the one, his tall figure flung forward, his dusty grey locks falling back like a mane from his keen, inquisitive face; the other erect, in an attitude of protest, at attention, his pale eyes wide open over the fierce curl of his moustache. She rose, in her shimmery, tight-fitting green gown. 'I entreat of you, for your own sake—I entreat of you not to go!' she said.

But even to this appeal the Professor, like any rational Dutchman who gets a rare chance of a spin on the ice, remained obdurate. The more so as Laura refused all explanation of her demand. Very unwillingly she made a final attempt to influence the Baroness. 'Oh, most certainly, he must go,' exclaimed the Baroness. 'I can

tell what will raise my husband's spirits, my dear Laura, though I don't know—and don't want to—about yours.' The Baroness laughed at her little joke, all by herself, for quibbles didn't lie in Laura's way. All the long, lovely day of the excursion the latter locked herself up in her bedroom, 'talking with the Devil all the time,' said Eliza, who tried, vainly, to catch scraps of the conversation through the keyhole.

The Professor came home in an ecstasy. To his last day he remained an enthusiastic enjoyer of small pleasures—an excellent recipe, amongst others, for keeping young. 'You see what a boy I am!' he exclaimed, coughing. All laughed at the Southerner's morbid terror of ice.

In the night, however, he gasped himself awake. In the morning his temperature was 100. The family doctor, hastily summoned, suggested pneumonia. This doctor's name was Postle—the man who invented Postle's Aerated Bibs. He was a little man with a sharp nose, a frown, and an air of knowing better than you. He rose from a careful auscultation, and fixed his wise eyes on the expectant Edward.

'Both lungs are affected,' he said.

'Impossible!' cried Edward indignantly.

'Sir!' cried the fat little doctor, more indignantly still. He had known Edward from a baby. He had taken an interest in him even earlier. Edward had worn the thirteenth—no, the fourteenth—aerated bib. The sale has now surpassed thirty thousand.

'Sir!' repeated Dr. Postle, swiftly defiant.

'He has only one,' explained Edward.

'Absurd!' said the doctor, tapping the stethoscope.

'So Longman has told him,' persisted Edward.

'Ah!' said Postle. He put his finger to his nose. 'The symptoms must be reflex,' he said. 'Yes, undoubtedly, the symptoms are reflex. A very common complication,' he said. 'Be sure that I shall take it into account.'

Whatever the symptoms were (and be sure they were not forgotten in Postle's account), they very nearly did

for the Professor. He got so dead-tired of coughing, there came a moment when he felt he would rather die than cough any more. He had to do a lot of coughing after that. When Laura walked into the room at last, and stilled his ceaseless shaking, he called her an angel from heaven. To herself, and to Edward, not to the Baroness.

The Professor had never had an acute illness before, and the household was immediately and hopelessly upset over him. Over his temperature, and his diet, and the doctor's face, and the heat (or the cold, or the smoke) of the sick-room, and all the hourly cackle and flutter which accompany everywhere birth, danger, and death.

In the universal confusion, and while the certified nurse was committing the usual errors—omitting to shake down the thermometer, and leaving the window open to close the door, or *vice versa*, and waking the patient (at the wrong hour) to give him his medicine, which she had forgotten, and then giving him the wrong one, or his lotion—while all was in the average state of turmoil and exhaustion, and Eliza sat weeping in her closet over failures to produce an unaccustomed calf's-foot jelly, the 'Exotic' picked herself off the drawing-room sofa, abandoning her French novel and half-emptied box of sweetmeats, and walked through the sick man's door (which the certified nurse had left open in her descent, after three vain ringings, to find out why her own afternoon tea was seven minutes late). She—Laura—unlocked that door to Edward, when he pressed through, as it were, to tell her that the hospital nurse was enjoying hysterical weepings and sal volatile downstairs. 'I know nothing about treatments,' said Laura, 'but I know about invalids.' The Professor declared gratefully next morning: 'I have slept. I have slept a couple of hours at a stretch.'

She moved about noiselessly, and her movements had none of the stealthy tremor of 'gliding': she gave the sick man what he wanted before he had asked for it: she rested sufficiently, when he did not need her, so that, as soon as he called for her, she could come to him without

drawn cheeks or tired eyes or checked gasps. Above all, she had none of that forced gaiety of tone which is taught to the profession. In a word, she was a model carer for the sick. The 'Sister,' creeping upstairs to take her place for the night, hung over the landing and informed Eliza in a stage whisper that 'some people'd a thousand times rather see their patients succumb than employ some means that some people employed to get them better by.' Eliza banged to her door, incapable of a righteous answer, but, having heard of a house where spirit-rapping failed because, as the spirit-rapper said, it contained too many Bibles, she dragged the prayer-books upstairs from their present disuse, and piled them up against the wall of the Professor's bedroom, in the passage, where they somehow toppled over in the silence of the small hours, nearly frightening the nurse, sound asleep over a comic paper, into 'fits.' Eliza did not sleep much, praying day and night that Providence might employ even the Witch to restore her Professor.

It was only two days later that Edward surprised Laura in the act of 'mesmerising' the patient, by means of magnetic passes down his face and limbs. 'She calms my cough, I tell you. She puts me to sleep,' wearily insisted the Professor. Edward, standing by, confounded, saw that it was true. In those days hypnotism was an infant science: Charcot was only just beginning to convince the world of its legitimacy. To Edward, dimly realising an undreamed and distant future, a whole new field of medical research, psychic, and therefore, to his bent of mind, unexpectedly attractive—to Edward the moment remains unforgettable, when he saw his father sink, under those simple passes, into slow but certain repose. 'Do I know how? No, I know nothing,' answered Laura. 'I know that it is the spirit which is ill, not the body. The light burns low, not the lamp. O Edward, leave your searchings into sickness, and study the health of the soul!'

The first use the Professor made of his incipient convalescence was to assure Laura, with many graceful utterances of gratitude, that the expression of the

Baroness's face meant worry, worry alone. Thereupon Laura noticed that expression, and told Edward she didn't mind. The Baroness, weeping herself ill during many long hours in the now deserted study, composed verses of prayer for her husband's recovery. They are by far the best things she ever wrote. When the patient was definitely mending, she also thanked Laura quite prettily. To her husband she said: '*non tali auxilio*,' but, dear me! he was very considerably mended before she said that.

He was so much mended that the Colonel had been allowed to come and see him. 'And you needn't tell *me*,' said the Colonel, 'that our skating excursion had anything to do with your illness. Pshaw! As if healthy bodily exercise could make a man ill! There are three causes of disease, three only: I call them the three "In's"—Intemperance, Inaction, and In—which is my third "In," Jane?' 'Incapacity,' answered the Baroness promptly. 'Possibly. I always enjoy excellent health myself.' The Baroness dropped a stitch.

'And I quite agree with the *Hague Courant* that the causes of our illnesses are never what we think. Oh no, it was speaking, I remember now, of our political ills. But if the skating *had* had anything to do with it (which it hadn't), the fault would have been yours, Laura! For it is you that would have—what is the new word?—hip—hip—'

'Hurrah!' said Laura.

'Hypotheked the Professor into believing he must fall ill.'

'The Professor would allow nobody to hypothek him, whatever that may mean,' interposed the Professor's wife severely.

'The whole thing is a mystery,' said the invalid himself in humble tones, 'a mystery I cannot at present pretend to fathom.' The Colonel rose from his chair. 'Well, well, it is time I was going,' he remarked. 'I—I have a little bit of news, Laura, which I fancy will not be altogether disagreeable. I have found an admirable home for you. A widow lady, who takes a couple of

paying guests, at Brussels.' He stood watching her face. They all watched her. She lifted her eyes. 'Indeed?' she said.

The Baroness flew after her brother-in-law. 'My dear Francis—now, *when?* Dr. Postle considers it most important she should be removed from the patient! She—she agitates him so, says Dr. Postle. Do you think, possibly, you could manage—an early day—next week?'

'To-morrow, if needs be,' replied the Colonel, looking up from below, outwardly calm.

'Oh certainly, if you prefer it so,' replied the Baroness. 'We shall expect you, then, in the forenoon.' She ran back to the others. The wicked spirit-business, and perhaps even more the curing of the Professor, now it was accomplished, filled her with not unreasonable wrath. 'My brother would wish you to leave for Brussels to-morrow,' she said. 'He finds that his military duties will take up all his time next week.'

'They are terribly engrossing!' said Laura. 'How he must regret the ease of active service in the East.'

'To-morrow!' exclaimed Edward, when, for a moment, that same evening, they were alone.

'To-morrow night at Brussels,' repeated Laura. 'With a widow lady who takes paying guests!'

'I should much like to ask you something, but I dare not.'

'Dare,' she said softly.

'It is: you—who seem to—foresee all sorts of things—did you not foresee this?'

He was startled by the vehemence with which she flashed round at him. 'Do you take me for a fortune-teller?' she asked. 'Do you think I spend my nights over the cards?' She dropped her voice to a whine: 'Cross your poor gipsy's hand with silver!'

'But you knew about my father's illness,' he persisted gently.

'Knew?—nay, I did not know. I had a presentiment of threatening disaster—no more!' She sat silent for several moments, struggling with her thoughts. 'There is a side to my life,' she said almost in a whisper, 'which

—which—I cannot speak of it to any one. Least of all to you. Good-night!

But immediately afterwards she once more stood before him, trembling, as was her manner when strongly agitated, from head to foot. 'Edward,' she said, 'oh, forgive me, but I cannot keep silent! Who knows if we shall ever meet again? No, I am not a fortune-teller, but—this one thing I can see—I can see it in your eyes—I have read it there long ago, plain—you, who were born to raise those eyes to the light, you are turning them, from a sense of filial duty, upon corruption, and you loathe, as I should loathe, the sight! You have no desire to investigate the causes of diseases: you are utterly ignorant of the joys of studying life! Oh, if I could but help you! But what do I know of science? Nothing, I tell you. I only know that these things exist.' She turned away, yet, over her shoulder:

'Promise me that you will not destroy your whole future! Promise me that you will examine these questions, will try to understand what they mean!'

'I promise,' he said.

'Promise me by something binding! Ah, no, I should not have said that. You are not an Oriental! Promise me by nothing at all.'

'I promise you,' he said, 'by my father's first sleep that night.'

CHAPTER VI

NEXT morning Edward's eyes were heavy with unaccustomed wakefulness. His mother gave him a kindly glance. 'He studies too hard,' thought the Baroness. 'How he enjoys his work!' A telegram came from the Colonel to say he would be in the train on its arrival at Leyden Station, whither Edward must therefore accompany Miss Baleyne. 'Please, no girls!' said the telegram. Uncle Francis disliked leave-takings around railway compartments, and 'weeping crowds.'

When Edward came back from the station, his mother met him in the hall. 'So that is over,' said the Baroness. 'Thank God.'

Edward, not so grateful, looked uncomfortable and remained silent.

'Your poor father—she excited him so, says Dr. Postle!'

'She put him to sleep!' cried Edward.

'Edward, you, a young student, will not pretend to know better than a university doctor!'

'She knows better than the whole lot of them!' cried Edward.

The Baroness smiled. 'You had better stop studying medicine,' she said, 'and go in for conjuring tricks.'

Then she repented. 'It is pleasant to see how devoted you are to your dear father. I understand both you and him perfectly. The Lisses were always chivalrous to women. But Dr. Postle says that is all nonsense and fancy about putting him to sleep. How clever Dr. Postle is, Edward! He always knew exactly what had happened the day before.'

'I have something to tell you,' said Edward.

'From your uncle? I dare say it is not worth hearing. I am very angry with your uncle for having brought the girl here. She was not a fit companion for my daughters.'

'O mother, don't say any more! Don't!' Edward's face had gone white. 'I want to tell you——'

'It would be like Imphi-Boshek to go and marry her, only, thank Heaven! he is far too poor and too honourable to think of such a thing!'

'He won't marry her!' cried Edward in an agony.

'I should think not, indeed: a little brown——'

'For I've asked her to wait for me, and she's said she will!'

There was a bench somewhere near, and the Baroness sat down on it.

'She'll have to wait a long time,' she said. Then, presently:

'Did this take place between the house and the railway-station?' she asked.

'I love her,' replied Edward.

'Well, well!' said the Baroness. 'Your father married his first love, and you will not. Your father was the exception, Edward, and you are the rule.'

'I shall never love any one else,' declared Edward.

'That is very beautiful, Edward, but not in connection with Miss Laura Baleyne.' Hereupon little Dr. Postle came slowly down the stairs.

'I am very pleased with my illustrious patient to-day. I find him much calmer,' he said. The Baroness looked at Edward, and Edward laughed rudely.

'Do you think he could bear a shock?' asked the Baroness. Edward turned to her in silent appeal. 'What sort of a shock?' said the doctor.

'The discovery that his own—brother is a fool!' replied the infuriated, yet still cautious, Baroness. Edward gave a sigh of relief.

Little Doctor Postle grinned. 'His son would be a different matter,' he answered, 'but he's safe there. I hear great praise of you as a student, Jonker. Some day you will equal your father, carry on his work! Heredi-

tary genius, Baroness! Last night, at the Medical Society, the Professor was saying no specimens were as neatly done as yours.'

Edward listened horror-struck. It had never occurred to him as thinkable, that these inevitable aids to his study would attract any one's attention—far less that they would command praise. 'Why, my sister did them!' he cried, instantly. The Baroness beat a tattoo on the arm of her wooden bench.

'So *that* secret's out!' said the Baroness.

'I never knew it was a secret,' replied the indignant Edward.

'And Thomasine,' added his mother, when the doctor had departed, 'must find a husband after *that* as best she can.'

'Thomasine says she likes it,' protested Edward, feeling guilty, his habitual attitude towards his parents.

'I thank Heaven,' replied the Baroness—and really, considering the misfortunes which had befallen her that morning, she was in a remarkably benedictory vein of mind—'I thank Heaven that *that* at least is absolutely untrue. Eliza has—I am unaware how—seen her shrinking and actually weeping over the loathsome work.'

'She shall never touch a specimen again,' said Edward in a shaky voice, and went into his father's room. The Baroness followed him.

The invalid was sitting up in an arm-chair, with many pillows, enjoying his convalescence. 'Dr. Postle has just been telling me something, Edward, that has caused me the liveliest satisfaction. It appears they were remarking at the Medical Society last night——'

'Yes, but Thomasine did those,' said Edward.

'And Edward intends to marry Laura,' put in the Baroness, taking her stand behind the invalid's chair, 'and to set up a Hall of Magic, like the one we saw in London—you remember—the Plymouth Brethren!'

'The Davenport Brothers was the name,' corrected the Professor sharply. 'Let us, my dear, be accurate first and then aggravating. Pardon me. But what is this nonsense about Laura?'

'I have asked her to wait till I can marry her,' said Edward doggedly. 'We are both young, and she says she will.'

The Professor solemnly extracted and swallowed one of Jenkins' pills. Then he said, looking straight in front of him: 'Edward, I think you will admit that I am one of the living bacteriologists—'

'The greatest!' cried the Baroness.

'By no means, Jane. You forget Pasteur.'

'And where, pray, would Pasteur's fame have been but for you, Edward?' cried the Baroness, who now, being very angry with her son, saw things differently. Edward winced.

'Certainly not the greatest,' continued the Professor quickly, 'but, all things considered, perhaps the safest authority as regards infection. Well, my boy, I can honestly assure you that, at this early stage of the disease, it is quite as impossible for you, as for any one, to foresee whether it is going to be chronic or acute.'

'Yours was chronic the first day!' cried the unwise Baroness. The Baron smiled: 'My dear, that again, is feminine logic. Son Edward, speaking as man to man, and as medicus to medicus, I must warn you that your diagnosis is premature.'

'You laugh at me!' exclaimed Edward in amazement.

'No indeed! Do you think, for a father, this is a laughing matter?'

'I shall never love any other girl!'

'That, Edward, is a symptom of the acutest attack.'

Edward stood away from his parents, gazing at them—the dear old father's thin grey face in its cloud of grizzly hair, against the pillows, the clear-eyed mother bending over it, a little more crumpled, if possible, than usual. 'I have sacrificed my own inclinations in everything, till now!' he burst out. 'You won't thwart me again—will you?—in this?'

'Sacrifice? Thwart him?' exclaimed the astonished Baroness; 'what does the poor child mean?'

'I am a child no longer,' answered Edward, 'I am a man, as willing as when I was a child, to please you. I

love you as much as I ever loved you.' He stopped, biting his lips.

A slow flush spread over the Professor's white cheeks: he lay back, playing gently with the tassels of his faded dressing-gown. 'Edward is right,' he said softly. 'I am glad that he speaks of his—sacrifice. Yes, let us speak of it. Had I died, Edward, I should have had a miserable death-bed confession to make. I may as well make it now. That great work of mine is ended. Pasteur has given my discovery to the world.'

'And how came Pasteur to be ready before you?' persisted the Baroness. Her husband checked her, but Edward said low: 'He had no son that hindered him.' In the silence that followed, the Professor's gaze sank to the roses upon his feet. The Baroness murmured: 'Ah!' But at that sound the Professor looked up swiftly, with an entire change of manner and tone. 'Absurd!' he exclaimed, 'Edward saved my life! When, trusting to Longman, I foolishly, wickedly risked it. Do you understand me, Jane? Do you hear me, son? You saved my life, Edward! And, what's more, I now know I still have both my lungs. No medical man could have my pneumonia, and not find out how many lungs he'd got. I may live for thirty years more! Why not? What fools these practising doctors be! There's only one hope for medical science and that's bacteriology!' For the first time his eyes sought the face of his son: he looked at him sadly: 'Believe me, I thought you had fully come round to my way of thinking. Why, all your professors praised you, and, only this morning'—he stopped dead. 'But don't waste your time on the other medical fal-de-lals,' he said. 'If there's anything this last illness would have taught me—only, I found it out thirty years ago—it's that all our so-called therapeutics are bosh!' Thereupon, the Professor, his fingers shaking somewhat, took another pill. 'Bosh,' he murmured. 'And Pasteur's discovery the *first step on the right road*. Ah, what a career! If I were young!'

'Laura prophesied before your illness that you would live to a great age!' said Edward.

'A Deborah!' remarked the Baroness. 'I really must compose a poem in which Laura, as Deborah, controls the courses of the stars.'

'She certainly controlled my cough somehow, better than Postle,' retorted the Professor thoughtfully. 'I do not pretend, as yet, to understand fully about Laura. But, Edward, if I live to a great age, I shall make some marvellous discoveries, and I shall see you doing—something—great—somewhere.' He held out his hand; his son took it reverently.

'And what, pray, is to be Edward's special vocation?' interposed the Baroness. 'Is he to be a great thinker? A great poet? Ah, I used to dream so! But his infant verses on which all my hopes were built, where are they? They seemed to drop from him, when we put him into pants? You were thirteen, Edward, when for my birthday you rhymed "child" and "joined"—and I said: No!'

'So be it,' said the Professor testily, much overwrought. 'We must accept the fact, that our son is himself. Tardily. Face right round, Edward: there's plenty of other work waiting! The fault's mine.' The Professor tightened his hands on the knobs of his old arm-chair and closed his tired eyes. Humble as he was, he could not but realise at that moment, that he was acting well, and wisely.

'I can't,' said Edward.

'Yes, you can. Don't make it harder for me than it is already. You are young, as you say, and Laura can wait—a couple of years.' He opened his eyes and saw the hesitation in Edward's. He lifted himself, trembling, on his feet, clinging to the arms of the chair. 'You believe,' he cried, in quivering tones, 'that I am acting thus—to put obstacles in your way—to keep back your marriage with Laura!—Jane!—Jane!—our son believes this of me—of me!'

Edward flung himself down on his father's chair. 'No! no! no!' he exclaimed; 'only I'm trying to think how to tell you! I want to go on now! I've promised her, and besides, I want to. She's cast a new light on the

whole thing for me, father! I want to find out, not what kills people, but what gives them new life!

'I trust you understand what he means?' asked the Baroness, a pink spot in the middle of each cheek.

'I do,' replied the Professor, and laid one hand on his son's head. 'You had better go to Paris for a year, then, Edward, and work under Charcot. We know nothing here as yet of these new influences in therapeutics, but Laura has at least proved to you and me, by a strange chance, that they exist. I presume they are capable of scientific treatment. Charcot is your man. We can't have a Doctor Lisse a quack, Edward. I admit that up till now all therapeutics were quackery. I would never have had you practise as a physician, but, still less can I have you going about as a mesmerist. You must spare me that!'

'But Charcot is as great a name, even, as Pasteur,' pleaded Edward, catching at this proffered straw.

'I admit it,' replied his father, almost in a whisper, 'but they are the two extremes of modern science. The whole field of medical research lies between them. I prefer our corner. You must go and look at the other end, my son!'

CHAPTER VII

IT was only last year that Vienna bestowed its great Gold Medal of Merit on the famous Dutch psychologist, Edward Lisse. The medal they award so rarely that medical men all the world over have come to look upon it as the highest recognition their genius can obtain. Laura was present at the ceremony. The Professor also undertook the journey (it killed him). He said that psychiatry was still in its infancy, but, so far, his son Edward seemed a very good nurse.

Edward, however, was a long way off from the Gold Medal of Merit, when he departed, amid widespread disapproval, to undertake that course of study in Paris on which his father felt regretfully bound to insist. His mother, being somewhat recovered from her first shock of disappointed fury, kissed him quite as tenderly as ever, but she requested him to sit down beside her, on the morning of his departure, and read him a long passage from *Balaam*, which set forth, how the ass (having deteriorated in its old age, as the prophet went on improving) refused to follow its master's instructions and ran down an incline and got killed. It may be seen from this catastrophe to one of the principal characters that the poem had reached its final canto. 'I shall not long survive my husband,' said the Baroness. Ever since she had heard of Laura's prediction, she persisted in declaring that the Professor would be numbered with his fathers 'comparatively young.' There were many known forefathers in the family: the comparison would certainly have exceeded the Baroness's very limited mathematical powers. Eliza, having heard the name 'Paris,' of course said her inevitable say about that city of sin. Thomasine,

after a first and last little dispute with her mother about delay in the copying of *Balaam*, sat hemming, occasionally red-eyed, a vast quantity of handkerchiefs. The girls wrote from Geneva that there were such excellent schools in Paris, and that Parisian French was much purer than Swiss. Their mother intended to reply judiciously, but forgot.

So Edward studied for a year, under Charcot, and with Bernheim at Nancy, all the latest developments of hypnotism, suggestion, double personality, etcetera, according to the awakening light of that day. He saw the strange sights of the Salpêtrière Hospital, psychic vagaries so fantastic that they require actual experience for belief. At that moment the Gascon peasant-girl, Barbette, who could speak only patois in her natural condition, but answered in her trance every foreigner that addressed her, was the wonder and vexation of the scientific world. Almost immediately after Edward's arrival the famous doctor sent for him, to the hospital. To his dying day he will never forget that morning, the cold grey light of a sunless March, the straight lines of tall white building, the courtyard and railings, the clank of keys. Strange noises everywhere, muffled and shrill, the incongruous noises of many hundreds of female voices, all more or less crazy, amid meaningless thumpings, foolish falls. Then the long, bare dormitory, deserted at that hour, and by the girl's bed, with only one assistant, in a respectful attitude behind him, the great man.

Charcot was in the zenith of his fame and his achievement. The fine Napoleonic head, of which he grew to be so vain, proclaimed in its classical outlines and self-conscious but penetrating gaze the calm force of this masterful manipulator of weak minds.

'Ask her, in your own language, how she feels!' he said. Edward, bending over the cataleptic form on the white bed, repeated the question in Dutch.

'Again!' said the great man impatiently. Edward obeyed.

The girl's bloodless face contracted: she gasped and

struggled for some minutes: then, over her lips, in the same language, one word came haltingly: 'P-p-pain.' The Professor, recognising it by its likeness to German, turned to his assistant. 'You see!' he said. 'We will repeat this in the lecture-room. Good-day, Mr. Lisse.' Edward followed the assistant in such manifest amazement, that the young French doctor smiled. 'It is a case,' he said, 'of hypnotic communication. Very remarkable, certainly, but you will see more remarkable sights here, if you remain.' As, indeed, Edward did, in the hospital wards and in the class-rooms immortalised by Gervex's famous picture. But none of them could approach, in intensity, the revelation of this his first glimpse into an intangible world. From the hospital itself he wrote home to his father: 'Tell my mother, that Laura's extravaganzas are scientifically ascertainable facts!' 'If Edward read his Bible as I do,' retorted the Baroness, 'he would know that the Egyptian doctors could change sticks into snakes. The Hebrew word is—'

'Mind!' cried the Professor, who had just semicoloned a cat.

All *that* sort of scientific investigation—the serum torture—was now definitely over for Edward. He could restrict himself to the experiments on the patients, which, being mental gymnastics, were often perhaps unpleasant or even injurious, but practically caused no pain. The lobe-extracting, and all the paralytic pigeon business he could surely take for granted. He grew daily more interested in this wonderful study of the human mind distraught, and therefore more grateful—and therefore more devoted—to Laura, who in delivering him from his nightmare of fleshly putrefaction, had shown him where his real vocation lay. Laura, therein a true woman, wrote her exiled love all she could find to sound bright about Brussels. She also entreated him to convert Charcot to spiritism. 'As soon convince an engineer,' said Edward, 'that a breeze drives the train.'

The great machinist of minds soon picked out the promising young Dutchman. 'Your name,' he said

once, in his rather pontifical manner, 'is a vast responsibility, of which you seem to be aware. I must afford you opportunities to distinguish yourself. You will avail yourself of them.' Edward bowed to the ground. Men bowed low to Charcot, and he liked it. Not many days later he again addressed Edward: 'I have an interesting case,' he said, 'a rather unusual one, I should like to place under your most careful observation. It is a young English boy of position. I require a gentleman, a man of the world, for these people, one who is it and looks it.' His cold gaze rested on Edward. 'I shall come out every Saturday. My secretary will give you the address.'

That same afternoon Edward, in a new top-hat, inquired at the Etablissement Ducrot for the Villa des Peupliers. He had come out by the Ceinture railway to this unknown corner of Paris. 'Ducrot' was, and doubtless is, one of the largest and best of the Auteuil Maisons de Santé. The buildings stand in three acres of heavily timbered grounds behind a grey stone wall. A couple of separate villas lie away from the central part, hidden away among their own trees. To one of these a blue-shaven, white-aproned French servant conducted Edward along a neat pathway of flowering shrubs. Here and there as they went, amid the ripe October foliage, shone the red and white squares of modern French masonry, the red and white stripes of corresponding 'Marquises,' the glitter of a parasol or a gaily coloured hat. The whole place wore an air of reposeful luxury which contrasted curiously, in Edward's mind, with the crowded order of the public hospital.

At a locked side-gate, in a hedge, another man-servant, manifestly an Englishman, received him. 'The new doctor from Mushoo Psha-koh?' said the man: 'I don't think Sir James can see you at present. But I'll ask Mr. Graye.' Here, therefore, begins, indirectly, the story of Thomasine.

'My name is Graye,' said the pleasant-faced young Englishman, scrambling off the sofa. His hair and eyes were dark against a clear Southern complexion, but his

build and get-up and general appearance were Saxon, and of the best. 'I am not your patient,' he added quickly: a shadow flitted over his face.

'I am only starting as a doctor, but I could have told you as much as that,' replied Edward.

'You don't think I look crazy?'

'No,' replied Edward, somewhat taken aback.

'So much the better. Your patient is my nephew, poor chap! Are you a Frenchman? Pardon me, but my French is so beastly bad' (*si bêtement mauvais* was the way he put it)—'Dutch?—oh, then, I am sure you understand English—the Dutch are such linguists!' (*les Zollandais sont de si bongs langoustes*).

'My sisters had an English nurse,' replied Edward—and so the young men's conversations became less arduous to record.

'What a blessing! For me, I mean. I had a French nurse, but all the French I could remember after she was gone was *Ciel!* I said it a hundred times a day, so as not to forget it, I suppose, but my mother somehow didn't take to it.' Edward laughed, and Kenneth Graye stopped to look at him. 'Look here, you are the new doctor, and no mistake?' said Graye. 'All right. I beg your pardon, only you don't look a bit like the first one. Sir James didn't care for the first one—poor chap, that don't prove much—still! So, after the second visit I had to ask Professor Charcot for some one else. I hope he'll be nice about you—he ought to be. You—you won't mind if he isn't, will you? You see, he's so—so—quite——'

'He is a patient, and I am a doctor,' replied the future Baron Lisse, with his head just a trifle thrown back.

'Quite so. Still, when a fellow's a decent sort of chap himself, he likes to be treated decently. As a rule, however, I can rather trust my poor nephew to feel the difference. I'm sorry to say he flung a cup of hot milk over the former doctor, so, you see, I had to prepare you a bit, but really, honestly, it was rather the man's own fault. He——'

'Don't tell me!' interrupted Edward. 'If I am cap-

able of producing such an effect as that, I had much better not try to avoid it!' The other gazed at him in astonishment. 'You will never be a mad-doctor, Sir Graye,' said Edward. Again the shadow fell over the Englishman's face. 'No,' he answered. 'By the bye, my name is simply Mr. Kenneth Graye.' The man-servant appeared in an inner doorway. 'Sir James is quite ready, is he, Barton? Well, shall we go in?' Kenneth paused, with his hand on the door-handle. 'May I ask you to remember that, although he cannot speak, he hears every word, and understands a great many. We don't know exactly what, or how much he understands.'

The inner room, to which the *banal* little French drawing-room formed an antechamber, was heavily curtained and almost entirely dark. It occupied, with two windows on one side, and one on the other, a whole corner of the low, grey-walled, grey-shuttered villa, whose line of six tall windows (one of them the front door) opened out on a long French *perron*. After all the clear autumn brightness and whiteness outside, this black cavity, outlined by many streaks of sunshine against crevices, struck chill with its impression of intentional gloom. The lucent world seemed violently shuttered out from the horror within.

'This is my nephew,' said Kenneth's voice, hushed, in the shadows, 'Sir James Graye. James, this is the new doctor, much nicer than the old one.' There was no sound in reply.

As his eyes got accustomed, Edward saw what there was to be seen. In an enormous arm-chair, behind which the man-servant stood, watchful, lay huddled up a little figure that might have belonged to a boy of ten. In reality, however, Sir James Graye was several years older. Shape he had none to speak of, being a shrunken mass of unformed limbs, like a bag with some dead beast in it; only his head emerged, sunk on one side, expressionless, long-drawn, as a fox-terrier's, without the dog's intelligent eye.

'Say something to the doctor, James,' prompted his uncle. 'He has come a long way to see you.' This time

a grunt issued somewhere from the bundle. Edward recognised in it the tone of dissatisfaction. 'If you like,' he said, 'I will come again some other day.' No reply.

'But perhaps I can first do something to make you more comfortable,' continued Edward; 'you are very uncomfortable, aren't you?' The same grunt, twice as loud as before.

'If you please, Mr. Graye,' put in the servant, 'I can see as Sir James feels cold, but when I light the wood-fire, he cries out, sir. I suppose he don't like the flicker of the flames.'

Kenneth motioned the man aside. 'How often must I tell you,' he said sharply, 'not to speak about Sir James in his presence? It always puts him out.'

'It's almost impossible to avoid it, sir,' muttered the man, patiently creeping back to his place. Edward had stood looking down, with unquenchable pity, on the bundle of wretchedness before him. 'If I bring you a nice little stove from Paris,' he said, 'you can make the room as warm as you like and yet keep it quite dark.' After a pause another grunt broke the silence, a grunt of satisfaction this time. Both the servant and Kenneth, almost simultaneously, gave a gasp of relief. After that, not much more was attainable. The three men stood for some minutes, quite still, around the inert mass in the corner of the big chair. Once more it uttered its dull note of discontent. Then Kenneth Graye led Edward out of the room.

'Well, now you have seen him,' said Graye as soon as they were alone together. 'And so now you know.'

The light was all around them. The foliage swung golden against the verandah outside.

'It is not an unusual case,' replied Edward.

'It is our case,' said Kenneth Graye.

There was a moment's silence, then Kenneth resumed:

'He has three notes—only. You heard two. You were fortunate: we rarely hear the second, excepting when he likes his meals. The third is one of fear.'

'Does he always sit in the dark?' asked Edward.

'Yes, always. As soon as we take him out, he closes his eyes. Things seem to frighten him.'

'Has it ever occurred to you that the light might possibly hurt his brain?'

'His——? I beg your pardon,' the young Englishman recovered himself, the dark cheeks suffused with sudden confusion. 'His eyes have often been examined and pronounced all right.' Edward did not point out that he had not spoken of the eyes.

'I may as well tell you,' continued Graye, 'that we have consulted any number of doctors all over Europe. We have been doing hardly anything else since his birth.'

'Was it necessary to consult so many?'

'You mean that he is hopelessly incurable?'

'I have no right to say that.'

Kenneth Graye took a cigar from the mantelpiece—a French mantelpiece with a window over it and ormolu ornaments against the glass. 'I will tell you about it, if you have leisure,' he said; 'I think we may feel pretty safe that he will like you now.' And, after he had settled himself and his visitor in unsuitable gilt *bergères* beside the cheerful wood-fire: 'My nephew is a posthumous child. He is nearly sixteen years old. You would never have thought that? Well, I suppose you have seen similar cases. My brother died a couple of months before his birth. He was a good deal older than I.'

'Yes?' said Edward, politely interrogative, puffing at his cigar.

'My sister-in-law had been quite crushed by her husband's death—stupefied, so to speak. Her child was born prematurely after weeks of anxiety, during which she did not seem to care. When she discovered what sort of a child it was, a great remorse seemed to seize her—poor thing! as if she had been to blame, and she devoted the rest of her life to him, day and night. She had an idea that doctors would cure him—poor thing!' He stopped, stared into the fire smoking.

'She is dead, I presume?' questioned Edward.

'Yes, she died three years ago.'

Edward hesitated. Then: 'But if you are so certain that doctors can do nothing—'

'I did not say anything of the kind,' interrupted Kenneth.

'Forgive me if I read your thoughts wrongly.'

'No, you read them right enough; you are evidently accustomed to looking people through, though you can't be much older than I am. I'll tell you the rest. She made me promise, on her death-bed, to look after James, and to go on consulting doctors till I got him better. Somewhat better, at any rate. I don't suppose she thought we'd ever get him like you and me. Yet, I don't know.' Again he waited: the words seemed to come from him, as if drawn forth against his will. 'She was a very religious woman. She said God had given him his soul. I can't tell you about it, but—but, yes, she thought he would be a great deal better—more conscious—before he died.' He looked anxiously askance at Edward, waiting for that horrible expression, the sort of hidden contemptuousness, which comes so frequently, when religion is mentioned, into the smileless eyes of the medical man.

'Thanks,' he said suddenly. 'I mean, I'm glad you take it like that. You see he is quite unconscious. Or rather, I should say, we can't get at him: we can't find out what he thinks—what he knows and what he doesn't. Isn't it awful? He hears us, of course, but we can't half say when he understands and when he doesn't. Usually, I fancy, he doesn't. He can only make one of those three noises in reply, and most times he doesn't do that. I trust I needn't tell you about his habits?—they are those of idiots.'

'I know,' said Edward very quickly. 'His food interests him, I suppose.'

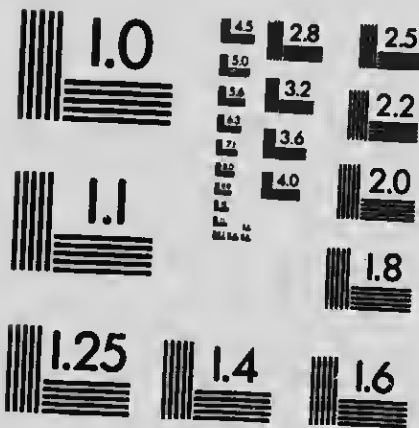
'Yes, his food interests him, and heat and cold, and he wants to sit in the dark. I think that is about all. Oh, and I fear I must add, he likes the doctor to come—daily.'

Edward's face changed. 'That is the most remarkable fact you have told me as yet!'



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'Why?'

'You are sure he wants the doctor—as doctor?'

'Oh yes—he won't see strangers, screams—but he cries, if the doctor hasn't been. It's—it's even very trying for the doctor.'

'Then why, if I may ask, do not you, who are doubtless rich, have a doctor living with him?'

'Because, if we do, he won't see him after a time. I fancy he then confuses him—excuse me—with a strange servant.'

Edward sat thinking.

'Why do you consider that so important?' asked Kenneth, watching his face.

'I am hardly able yet to discuss the case,' replied Edward.

'Yes, you are! Look here; I've been discussing a lot of it. You must make allowances for me. I've got it on the brain, rather. We've been to all sorts of places and—well, now, here we are with Charcot. He's a big man, isn't he, Charcot?'

'The biggest living,' answered Edward fervently, 'for this sort of thing.'

'But it's—it's—I don't want to complain, but you can understand what it means being boxed up here in this Maison de Santé all day. And here you are, after the last man, speaking English and—and—well, you're a God-send. The word's out, and you'll forgive a man who—I say, why does it matter so much, that James cares to see the doctor?'

'If it means anything, don't you think it might mean that he—wants to get well?'

'By Jove!' cried Kenneth. 'Poor chappie! Oh, I don't think that's possible! Do you think he could possibly have sense enough for that! Poor chappie!'

'I don't know. I can't say at all. He must feel conscious of being different from others.'

'That is a subject we have of course always avoided. When we ask him if he is happy or unhappy, his replies are invariably dependent on some creature-comfort or discomfort of the hour.'

'You have never noticed any indication of a mental mood?'

'Never.'

'Nor his mother?'

'Nor his mother. She always tried to make him understand about—religion. God, you know. I cannot tell you how much she tried.'

Edward laid down the remnant of his cigar. 'There is no hereditary taint? You know we always ask that question now?'

The other started. His answer came very slow. 'Yes, you always ask that question now. Why? Heredity can't help James.'

'It is for our sakes, the sake of science. You see, we are beginning to grope after great truths, we doctors. It was about time we began. Was the taint on the mother's side?'

'I did not say there was any at all.' The young Englishman's voice shook.

'No; I was only wondering if it had been on the mother's side?' The question seemed to hang in the air awaiting reply.

'I cannot tell you.' Kenneth Graye got up. 'I have been keeping you too long. Thanks for coming. Good-night.'

CHAPTER VIII

'THIS latest case you describe to me, my dear boy,' writes the Professor, 'I must honestly confess does not attract me very much. I have never been able to take an interest in those abnormal conditions which are merely the result of anatomical defects. All disease finds its source either in misconstruction or in microbic infection—if I live as long as Laura has promised me, I am confident I shall see this novel truth recognised by the whole world. For me there exists no doubt that a microbe of madness will be discovered in the not very distant future—may you be its discoverer!—but idiocy is simply bad building, and it seems to me there remains no more to be said.' To this letter the Baroness added a postscript, admonishing Edward to be sure and tell her whether the idiot's head went up at the back in a peak. The postscript caused Edward to shout with laughter in his little Paris bedroom, for uncle Frank's bald cranium arose at once before his mental view.

But his father's verdict depressed him greatly, for it coincided too painfully with his own. He could do nothing for James Graye. Every afternoon, unwillingly, he now took the train out to Auteuil, and by doing so earned, presumably, twenty-five francs. It was the first money he had ever earned, and the thought of it made him flush up, at night, in bed, as if he were a swindler. Only, swindlers don't blush. When he definitely resolved to stick to his father's profession, he had also decided to follow it in his father's way. Scientific research was to be his object only. 'I nowise object,' said the Professor, drawing a deep breath with both his lungs, 'to the money-

making of a Postle or a Longman. Their trade is as strictly honourable as any other man's. But it is not the lifework of a Baron Lisse.' Edward, hot and cold, had at last ventured to tell his chief that he felt he was doing nothing for the patient. 'When you are as old as I am,' replied the illustrious doctor, smiling, 'you will wait till the patient discovers that!'

Kenneth implored him not to discontinue his visits.

'Good heavens!' he cried, 'can't you consider *me*? I hadn't a soul to speak to till you came along. I'm locked up here with—with James——' He broke off. 'Yes, I've been to the Embassy, and I know one or two people slightly, but I don't care, as a matter of fact, to leave James so long alone, and I can't ask any one *here*! The only one that comes is Miss MacClachlin.'

'Miss——?'

'MacClachlin. She's Scotch, you know, like us. We're Scotch. Miss MacClachlin's an enormously rich old spinster, with a beautiful place in Aberdeenshire, which she's left to come and work among the butcher-boys at La Villette. Kindness to animals is her especial fad. She's got a Guild of Mercy at the Abattoirs. She don't know any French, but she does a lot of good. Fact is, she's overworked herself among her butchers, and so she's come out here to Auteuil for a few douches. You're bound to meet her in this room some day.'

As Edward did, shortly after. Miss MacClachlin could only have been called 'old' by unthinkingly cruel young bachelordom. She was probably little over thirty-five, but then Kenneth was under thirty. 'My dear young friend,' she had called him at first, and in so far she herself was to blame for his estimate. More recently she had dropped the 'young.'

She was stout, brisk, and pleasant-looking, with cheerful black eyes that said 'I want to help somebody,' and a double chin that said 'I can.'

'I am worn out with getting up my Sheep-feast,' she was saying to Kenneth, 'my *Fate de Moo-tongs*!' Both young men expressed courteous interest.

'Oh, I can't tell you all about it. And, besides, of

course, you wouldn't really care. But it's my League, you know'—she nodded to Edward—'I call them the *Chevaliers de Bétail*, instead of *Bataille*: it's pronounced just the same, and the French are so chivalrous: they like that! Our motto is "*Miséricorde aux Moutons*," "Mercy to the Muttons," you know,' she laughed. 'But, oh, you can't think how cruel they are to the poor dumb beasties. Well, not exactly dumb: I wish they were.' She stopped abruptly and turned her quick eyes on Edward. 'Have you ever gone into the question of the Siegmund mask?'

'I fear not,' said Edward.

She flung up her eyebrows. 'There's a lot for you to learn yet, I can see. I wonder if you ever knew——' She faced round to Kenneth. 'Do *you* know, my dear friend, that our Congress on International Cattle-Transport is to come off, in this city, next month?'

'Don't ask me,' answered Kenneth.

She now threw up her hands. 'Nothing astonishes me so much as to realise constantly in what separate circles we all trot our little day! Mine at least is a wide one, I am glad to say.'

'And mine is a very narrow one,' said Kenneth.

His tone made her veer round hastily to Edward, and begin speaking faster than ever.

'You must let me send you a few numbers of our paper, *The Cry of the Cow*. I dare say you think it sounds silly, but we are doing a good work: I can assure you it is a good work. In our parliament—and, really, this must be said for our nation, that we *are* foremost in philanthropic effort abroad—a question is to be asked next week about the freezing of live sheep from Australia. It appears that, *en route*, some of the sheep came unfrozen, and——' She shuddered. 'But, I forgot: you are a doctor, and a foreign doctor. Forgive my speaking plainly, but how can I ask pity for animals from a man who approves of, who practises vivisection!' She repeated in genuine horror, 'who practises vivisection,' and she tried to draw back her skirt, unnoticed, from contact with Edward's boot.

'Oh, come now,' put in Kenneth, 'I'm sure he don't like more vivisection than he can help.'

'What do you mean by that, my dear friend? If you had studied the subject at all, you would know that vivisection is not a help of any kind, but a positive hindrance to research. That has been demonstrated a hundred times. I was reading only the other day in the *Anti-Vivisectionist* a most awful account—oh, too dreadful!—of horrible experiments by some fearful Dutch professor, to determine the influence of the water drunk by cows on their milk.'

Edward gazed at the ceiling.

'But that's very important, surely,' said Kenneth.

'Of course it is,' replied the lady sarcastically. 'That's how all you men speak when you don't take in the *Anti-Vivisectionist*. Unfortunately we don't drink the milk of the vivisected rabbits as a rule. I suppose the professor does.'

Edward stared at the ceiling.

'That accounts for his brains, the idiot.'

'Do you know about his experiments?' asked Kenneth of Edward.

'The world-renowned idiot,' persisted Miss MacClachlin.

'You are speaking of my father,' said Edward. He had turned rather green, but he had been telling himself for the last minute that a woman cannot insult a man in matters of this kind.

'I am sorry,' said Miss MacClachlin promptly, 'that I was speaking of your father. I cannot say I am sorry I spoke. When I used that word, I used it theoretically, seeing the gentleman is unknown to me.'

'Yes,' said Edward, 'a practical idiot is a very different thing from my father.'

'Good Lord!' said Kenneth Graye.

'You must forgive me. I have a warm heart, and I see a lot of torture, and—no, I cannot say a good word for vivisection.'

'I wish to God it were not necessary,' answered Edward with fervour. 'My father is one of the gentlest, and kindest, and humblest of men.'

'And a great noble in his own country, according to

the newspaper,' remarked Miss MacClachlin, in eager search of something pleasant to say. 'I remember it struck me as so odd, and the editor also, that a great noble should vivisectionise rabbits! I forget his title.'

Edward nearly laughed. 'My father's name is Baron Lisse.'

'Hereditary, I presume?' said Miss MacClachlin.

Edward kept back his laughter no longer. 'I'm afraid we look upon these matters from a very different point of view. In my country we *never* reward intellect with a title of nobility. It seems so incongruous.'

'We do,' said incisive Miss MacClachlin, 'but we like the hereditary ones best.' She took out her watch and whisked round again to Kenneth. 'And how is Sir James?'

'You promised last week not to ask me that question again,' replied Graye. 'There's nothing to tell about James.'

'I promised, and, like the sensible woman I am, I break my promise. I have reflected a great deal on the subject, and I now feel sure you are quite wrong in your treatment of your poor nephew. I am glad to be able to say so in the presence of his doctor. Yes, yes, my dear Mr. Graye, you must not mind my speaking out. What Sir James needs—what every sentient creature needs—is an interest. A human interest. Human sympathy with something. It isn't in him, you say? It's in every living creature. As a child, I had a toad—'

At this moment a tall female figure appeared on the *perron* in front of the closed French window. It was lean and bony under its flaring garments, and its long swarthy countenance sported a moustache. In its arms it hugged, awkwardly battling against its bosom, a sprawling, kicking, very nearly victorious lamb. Miss MacClachlin motioned it eagerly away, but the figure fell forward, lamb and all, in a loud thump against the casement.

'It's my maid,' said the Scotch lady coolly to Edward. 'She's never punctual except when I shouldn't mind her being late. I timed her exactly to follow me in ten

minutes, but I lost five talking to you. My life, as Mr. Graye knows, is a railway time-table, and I fine myself, like they do the engine-drivers, if I am two minutes late. I recommend the system to you: it lengthens your life out wonderfully.'

'It must make you feel like a live Bradshaw,' said Kenneth.

'Order, my dear friend, is Heaven's first law.' Another fall against the window.

'Or like Clapham Junction with the signalman gone mad,' continued Kenneth, lifting the latch and letting in, with a certain precipitation, the maid and the lamb. The former immediately dropped the latter, and Kenneth flung-to the window with a precipitancy greater still.

'You are a full minute too early, Hortense,' said Miss MacClachlin; 'but never mind!'

'The dear lamb—it has eaten all my ribbons,' replied the maid. And indeed a white and pink ruche she wore, very showy, presented a piteously bedraggled appearance.

'I will give you new ones, and—nicer.' (The maid pulled a face.) 'Could you catch it, Mr. Graye? I have brought it for poor dear Sir James. No; now listen to me—listen now, doctor: it is such a touching story.—The lamb was located on the hearthrug, where Kenneth held it down: it wore a white and blue sash round its neck, whereon glittered golden the letters 'M. M.' It looked nervous.—'A couple of weeks ago I told my butcher-boys at La Villette about your nephew, and how rich he was, and how lonesome, and how sad—*tout seul*, eh, Hortense?—and none of them laughed, though Hortense says I told them poor Sir James was always drunk. And yesterday three of the very nicest—there are nearly two hundred, and there ought to be ten times as many—brought me this little lamb, that they'd spent their own sous on buying for the *pover milor anglais qui est toujours—seul*. There, I said it right this time, did I not, Hortense?'

'*Oui, Mademoiselle*,' said the maid, with a sneer in her eyes.

'And I told them I would bring it myself. You see

the "M. M." on the sash, doctor—it doesn't mean Marla MacClachlin, it's the badge of our League. And now, Mr. Graye, you must let me present the little dear to Sir James myself, so that I may tell my *bushays* all about it. You will see what a wonderful effect it'll have on him—probably—the having something to love.'

'Impossible!' cried Kenneth, from the floor. He held the animal firmly, but his voice shook with excitement.

'Doctor, do please explain to this lady how absolutely impossible it is that she should see Sir James Graye.'

'Doctor, he is surely mistaken! He must be mistaken!' Miss MacClachlin appealed to Edward. 'Human sympathy——' The lamb squeaked, under Kenneth's pressure: he loosened his hold suddenly, with the compunction of a kind-hearted man, lost his balance, half-kneeling on the hearthrug, caught at the escaping quadruped, and banged, with it in his arms, against the door to the inner chamber, as Edward stood explaining to Miss MacClachlin that, really, her request was ungrantable.

'And what am I to say to my *garsongs*?' demanded the lady indignantly.

The man Barton had opened the door.

'Did you knock, Mr. Graye?' he asked.

The lamb leaped, for escape, between his legs, almost tumbling him over, and disappeared into the darkness beyond.

The yells that arose in the unseen distance were so appalling that they struck terror to even Miss MacClachlin's sturdy soul. The idiot's cries were not like those of a human being: they resembled more the shriek of animals in distress, of horses, for instance, caught in a fire. His uncle and the doctor now simultaneously rushed to his assistance. The maid backed to the closed window with '*Jesus, Maria's!*' The light flooding in through the still open door showed the two indistinct figures in the background: the vague mass of the frightened animal, a dull grey against the curtains, shaking and leaping, the other terrible shape in a corner, immovable, undistinguishable, screaming its inhuman note.

The entrance of its pursuers sent the trembling beast off wildly towards the corner. The idiot, who could use his arms with less difficulty than his legs, flung, shrieking yet more shrilly as it came towards him, a cushion, which brought it to its knees. It tried to rise, caught its legs in the ribbons, fell heavily, and rose with a foreleg hanging broken.

'Yes, the joint is broken, said Edward, with the throbbing little beast on his lap. 'We had better show Sir James,' he added, 'what it was that frightened him. For in spite of all his uncle's soothing, the idiot continued to scream. The doctor had already obtained a certain influence over the lad. He ordered the curtains to be drawn aside for the nonce.

'It is a lamb—look!' he said. 'Its leg is broken. It can't walk, well—like you.'

Sir James stopped screaming, and began to cry.

'Should you like me to try and mend its leg?'

The boy gave his satisfied grunt.

Kenneth Graye began assuring Miss MacClachlin that numberless attempts had already been made to interest his nephew in pets.

'The result has invariably been the same,' he said: 'he won't have them near him at any price. He cries till we take them away.'

'Perhaps you should have persevered,' said Miss MacClachlin, but she added contritely, 'I think I could help Dr. Lisse about the splints.' And indeed she did, deftly.

When she took her leave, the lamb, beautifully bandaged, was slumbering on Sir James's big chair. He had managed to explain that he wanted it. No one, as yet, understood why.

CHAPTER IX

'AHA!' said Miss MacClachlin, promenading about her chamber in the main pavilion of the 'Etablissement Ducrot.' 'Aha! and aha! and aha! So he sits all day with the lamb in his lap, does he? We shall see who is right, Hortense—we shall see!'

'Mademoiselle has always right,' said the waiting-woman.

Miss MacClachlin checked her walk and eyed her maid. The Scotch lady was a person of commanding and substantial presence, distinguished-looking and ever admirably apparelled. 'I come to Paris,' she used to say, 'for two things I can never get at home, clothes and converts. At home every one is pious and ill-dressed.' Now she looked at her flaunting tire-woman, the lean, long figure, all black frizzlé and red furbelow, and the tire-woman quailed beneath her glance. For the glance spake: 'You would mock me,' and the woman's eyes unwillingly confessed: 'I cry grace.'

Aloud Miss MacClachlin remarked: 'In English we say "is right." When I engaged you at the Bureau de Placement, Hortense, you were warranted to speak English like a native.'

'A native; it is English for an oyster,' replied Hortense demurely, 'and to speak like an oyster, in French, it means to speak like a fool.'

Miss MacClachlin laughed grimly. 'You are far from a fool,' she said, 'that is what I esteem in you. So you needn't always make the same mistakes over and over again.'

The maid dropped her eyes to the floor. 'To make the same mistakes,' she said, 'is so much easier than to

make new ones. Mistakes are like sins. Mademoiselle also will commit the same. Mistakes, I mean, of course.'

'You are quite unreasonable!' cried Miss MacClachlin angrily. 'When the Bureau replied to my advertisement, they knew I had expressly asked for a female who could speak both languages fluently. These were my very words: "A respectable French female acquainted with colloquial English and the *argot* and habits of the Paris slums."'

'Mademoiselle demanded a good deal,' said Hortense. 'It is all obtainable—but the "respectable"; *there* was the *accroc*. However, Mademoiselle got even her. Even the "habits of the slums" did Mademoiselle get. These I know. From my poor sister, who did *mal tourner*.' Hortense produced a pocket-handkerchief, and, behind it, winked her eye.

Miss MacClachlin felt the wink. She felt it all along, all day; and, as an entirely new experience of maid-servants, or of women, it was a terrible trial to her. Nobody winked near Miss MacClachlin at Rowangowan Hall.

'As you allude to the subject, let us speak of it, once for all,' she said nervously—and really, no other subject could have made Miss MacClachlin nervous. 'You were to know about my butcher-boys, so you could translate between me and them: you were very expensive on that account. "But," I said, "under no circumstances may she flirt with them." "That will be ten francs extra, then," said the Madame of the Bureau. I agreed to the ten francs.'

'Surely I have kept to my part of the engagement,' cried the maid, offended.

'I am by no means certain about the ten francs,' said Miss MacClachlin.

'Twice a week I translate for Mademoiselle at the preachings.'

'They are not preachings—lectures, Hortense.'

'Lectures?' repeated Hortense, translating into her own language. 'Would they were. Mademoiselle is of a fluency in her colloquials! Often my brain reels, as I

seek for the *argot*! Only last night when Mademoiselle exclaimed, "Marry, come up!"—how was I, a poor Frenchwoman, to know that it did not mean, "*Venez m'épouser!*"

'It was part of a quotation! you might have guessed

'But there is no cause to feel annoyed! Mademoiselle obtained what we call a *succès fou*! All the three hundred of her audience, like a man, they cried back: "*Volontiers!*"'

'Hortense,' said Miss MacClachlin, turning in desperation, 'I believe you are simply *canaille!*'

'Ah, Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle has no idea of the French words she uses! It is good she has a wise one to control her slang. Mademoiselle would say I am faithful as a dog!' The woman's face expressed no feeling, for the berth was an incredibly good one, and she intended to stick to it.

'I don't believe you're respectable a bit.' Miss MacClachlin sat down, square, in her handsome tea-gown, her cheeks a faint pink.

'Did a French mistress so speak toward the end of the month,' replied Hortense, with sudden asperity, 'I should say it was done to deprive me of my extra. But the English, I know, are not like that; they are not *regardant.*'

'How often must I tell you I am Scotch?'

'The distinction, Mademoiselle, whatever it may mean, does not cross the Channel. It is, I doubt not, to the advantage of the Scots.' Miss MacClachlin smiled, despite herself, and, feeling her hopeless dependence on this red-ribboned, black-souled creature for her charitable work at La Villette, she proceeded to pay, in full, the month's wages, and even added a golden Napoleon, because Hortense was teaching a brute of a shock-headed young butcher to read.

As the maid gathered up her money, furtively clicking the gold pieces on the table to make sure they were genuine, Edward Lisse was announced. 'You sent for me, Mademoiselle?' he began.

'Yes, I ventured to do so. We have a friend in common in this great city; that must be my excuse.'

'She is charming,' thought Edward. After all, a man always thinks a woman charming, when she is kindly, and pleasant-looking, and well-dressed.

'I mean Mr. Graye,' she continued. 'Of course you like him? Everybody must.'

'I wish Sir James did,' said Edward. 'But, as far as we can make out, he cares for nobody.'

'Except you.'

'That is one of those sudden imbecile fancies which don't count. He seems to have got some sort of idea into his head that I shall do him good. But it is almost impossible to know what he thinks.' Miss MacClachlin shuddered. 'Don't let's talk about Sir James,' she said. 'My nerves are the best in Scotland (which is saying a good deal), but I shall never forget those yells! However, it is nonsense my saying this'—she braced herself—'for Sir James is what I asked you to come and talk about, unless professional etiquette forbids.'

'That depends,' said Edward. He cast a glance round the room: prominent, on a stand, was a photograph of a great house among woods, against a river-bank. Quick Miss MacClachlin followed the glance. 'This is my little holiday,' she said, 'with Dr. Ducrot. I believe in his douches. To-morrow I go back to Belleville: you must come and see me there some day among my butchers. But now, as for this professional etiquette, you must forgive me if I sin against it. It is a mystery of the priesthood, a code all to itself. No outside mortals can fathom it.'

'I'm afraid I've never learned it, then,' said Edward.

She laughed; then, suddenly grave: 'I ought to know about it,' she said, 'for it killed my nearest relation.' Edward looked polite inquiry. 'I lived with an old aunt, yonder!' she nodded her head in the direction of the photograph. 'She was seized with a hemorrhage, and we sent telegrams for a professor both to Edinburgh and to Aberdeen. Two arrived by the same train, but one of them treats hemorrhage with cold water and the other

foments, so they couldn't both undertake the case. The question of professional etiquette was, which had been called in first, the Edinburgh man who had first got his telegram or the Aberdeen man to whom the first telegram had been sent. While they were bowing to each other over it in the drawing-room, my aunt bled to death.'

Edward expressed proper sympathy.

'I was deeply thankful to be assured afterwards,' said Miss MacClachlin, 'that the cold water man would have had the first claim.'

'Why, may I ask?'

'My aunt was of the old school. She had a rooted aversion to cold water.' This communication was followed by a pause of solemn reflection. Then the lady resumed: 'I am very anxious to know whether you think that poor idiot will ever recover the use of his reason?'

'You put me the very question I am unable to answer,' replied Edward in a suddenly agitated voice. His tone caused Miss MacClachlin also to lose control over herself.

'What!' she exclaimed. 'Do you mean to say that that—that—'

'I am studying Sir James Graye. I imagine—I am beginning to think—Miss MacClachlin, you must give me leave to say no more.'

'Incredible!' said Miss MacClachlin, drawing a deep breath. 'I have one other question to which you will hardly object. Independently of his mental condition, is there anything in his constitution which would preclude his living to be an old man?'

'In his physical constitution, no.'

'No?' she turned to him excitedly. 'I had thought all such idiots as *that* were—were constitutionally defective and died young?'

'You were mistaken.' A wonder crossed Edward's mind whether Maria MacClachlin had hoped to marry 'Sir Kenneth.' For he had found out about these British rules of inheritance now.

'Merciful God!' said Miss MacClachlin under her

breath. 'Poor Kenneth Graye! You will tell me next,' she added presently, 'that this thing will marry and get children.'

'Even that is not unthinkable,' replied Edward bitterly, 'in an age of shameless adoration of the dollar!' He checked himself. 'I know only one rule of professional etiquette,' he said, 'but that is discretion.' He rose to depart.

Miss MacClachlin rose also.

'You have done me a very great service,' she said. 'You have given me exactly the information I required. One word more. You have never noticed anything peculiar about Mr. Graye?'

'Peculiar? No. What do you mean?'

'You have seen a great deal of him lately, and under these trying circumstances. He has never struck you as in any way abnormal?'

'Abnormal? No, of course not. No, indeed. Except that he is an abnormally nice man.'

'I thoroughly agree with you,' said Maria MacClachlin heartily.

CHAPTER X

'I HAVE brought the Christmas parcel for Mademoiselle,' said Hortense.

Miss MacClachlin, who had sat in a reverie since Edward's departure, turned a far-away look towards the corded box.

'It is from Scotland,' added Hortense.

'From home!' cried Maria MacClachlin.

'Ah! that is the note I heard in Mademoiselle's voice when the butcher-boy asked whether she would much love him to become a Protestant.'

'But you know that I asked you to tell him that I would still much rather have him not tie the calves' legs so tight. I wonder who could send me anything from home.'

'At the douane they nearly stopped it, for it appears that it is forbidden. Almost everything, as Mademoiselle knows, is forbidden at the douane. It is terrible there. No foreigners should send parcels to Paris.' Meanwhile the maid was busy unfastening, while her mistress watched with irresistible curiosity.

'I said that Mademoiselle was connected with the Embassy,' remarked the maid.

'Hortense!'

'Not that they believed me!' She lifted out, from many wrappings, a dirty discoloured linen bag, and, untying it, disclosed an enormous black ball.

'They said it was a bomb,' announced Hortense, standing away from it.

'A plum-pudding!' cried Miss MacClachlin, her eyes moistening. 'A plum-pudding from home!'

'They wanted to cut it open!' continued Hortense,

'but the Brigadier was afraid of breaking his sword. They passed it at last as *Matériel de construction*—how say you in English?—building material!' Hortense possessed a positive genius for the enjoyment of freshly made lies. In fact it was her great life-happiness. It possessed her, to speak more correctly, like dram-drinking.

'Nannie must have made it,' said Maria MacClachlin, still in the same thrilled voice. 'My old nurse. And sent it over here, just in time for Christmas Eve, from Rowangowan.'

'And Mademoiselle's butcher-boys, that have their entertainment to-morrow, they can eat it—they will not die!'

'No—no foreigner shall touch that pudding!' Miss MacClachlin stretched out her hand as if to protect it. 'Not even you, Hortense!'

'I thank Heaven, I love life,' replied the maid; 'yet, presumably, if Mademoiselle eat it all herself, it will first need cooking—a little less—hard?'

'It is boiled; it only wants warming,' said Miss MacClachlin humbly. 'Poor old Nannie! Dear thing!'

'I will ask the chef then here, and Mademoiselle can have it all by herself for her supper—'

Maria MacClachlin rose and motioned this strange handmaiden away. With her own hands she packed the ball into the box again, and, lifting it on high as a symbol or an offertory, carried it downstairs, through the cold December night, across the gardens.

'Let me in, Barton,' she said on the steps of the v. . . 'This isn't British soil, but it's as near to it as I can get.'

'God bless my soul, Miss!' said Barton.

'We all need that, Barton,' replied Maria MacClachlin.

'And never more than on Christmas Eve.'

Kenneth Graye rose in astonishment as the little pudding procession entered the sitting-room.

'You're not over-cheerful here,' said Maria, glancing round, 'not a sprig of holly, or—'

'H'm,' said Barton.

'Mistletoe,' continued Miss MacClachlin stoutly. She placed the pudding on the table.

'Whom should I have it for?' asked Kenneth. 'We have never been able to make my nephew see the difference between his mother and—God.'

'Begging your pardon, Mr. Graye,' put in Barton, who was a loquacious servant, 'perhaps there wasn't so very much.'

'My old nurse has sent me this, made with her own hands. You've got a kitchen in this house, haven't you? It seemed like an insult to Nannie to let it go down into that French basement with a woman like Hortense.' She gazed down upon her pudding. 'It's choke full of love,' she said.

A few moments later she was busy, with her mauve satin sleeves tucked up, in the dirty and disused little kitchen, under a flaring gas-lamp. Barton had been sent back to his charge, with many 'Really, Mr. Graye, you must allow me's.'

Kenneth was down on the moist flags, blowing with a bellows at the range. When the pudding had been lifted smoking on its platter she turned to her helpmate, hot and triumphant.

'I am a teetotaller,' she said, 'but I fear you have brandy in the house.'

'I fear I have.'

'I should like to light up my pudding, please.'

It flamed gloriously in the little sitting-room. 'For auld lang syne,' said Maria MacClachlin, nibbling a piece of the non-brandied inside, and bestowing a plentiful helping on Kenneth.

'He'd eat the whole of it, if we'd let him,' replied the latter to her question anent his nephew. 'James's appetite is voracious.'

She leant back in her chair, looking at the young man opposite.

'Dr. Lisse says there is no reason,' she said slowly, 'why he shouldn't live to be quite an old man.'

He laid down the fork he had been toying with. She

had no idea how hard she had hit him with the one truth into which he had, purposely, never inquired.

'How odd that we should be sitting here together, like this, on Christmas Eve, eating Nannie's plum-pudding! It makes old friends of us. I wish, Mr. Graye, I could help you with—with the heavier side of your life.'

'There are few heavier things in life than plum-pudding,' said Kenneth, laying down his fork again.

'How cruel of you to say that! But your digestion is good: you are young: you can bear trouble. You can bear even your existence, which must be such an awful thing!'

'Please don't,' said Kenneth.

She bent forward, her clear eyes close to him. He sat, looking back at her, uncomfortable. When she next spoke, she said quite abruptly:

'I am thirty-five.'

He resolved to eat more plum-pudding rather than sit staring thus.

'It is the bigger part of a life,' she added.

'Half way, says Dante,' was his reply.

'My dear friend, let me share your burden. You can't possibly go on like this, through the coming years, alone!'

He wondered was the pudding choking him—does plum-pudding turn a dark skin red?

'To hear Dr. Lisse talk, Sir James will survive you!' Maria hastened on. 'Only think what that means! Had he told me there was any chance of deliverance I should never—believe me, dear friend—I should never have dared to speak! But now—now! Let me share your work, and you mine! There are moments when my butcher-boys certainly need a man: there must be moments when your nephew would be all the better for a woman's help! I have been more successful than you had expected, already, with the lamb!'

'True,' said Kenneth.

'Who knows what I might do for him? And you, you could teach my bushays golf!'

'But I hardly understand——'

'Yes, you do. I am asking you to marry me. I realise

that you cannot offer yourself to any woman. You have nothing to give. You cannot propose to a girl to share your lifelong watch over this idiot. But a woman, if she have no false shame, can say: I am willing. And I do! She stood up before him, handsome in her enthusiasm. 'Let me help you! A life of trouble is so terrible to bear alone!'

'You are far too good, far too kind,' he answered, much distressed. 'I could not accept such a sacrifice.'

'No sacrifice, but a very real pleasure,' she said.

'You have no idea of James's condition.'

'More, perhaps, than you think. Dr. Lisse tells me that possibly in the future—perhaps twenty years hence—he may recover—and marry!'

'Impossible!' Kenneth clutched at the table—the room seemed to go round.

'Surely he has told you these things, sooner than me? Am I doing wrong in repeating them? Oh, dear Mr. Graye, I am only trying to convince you! It isn't pleasant for a woman, nor easy, even when she speaks because she knows the man can't. Why should your whole, whole life be ruined? You've only one. It was cruel and selfish of your sister-in-law——'

'Hush! Hush!'

'You're to live on like this till you're an old man, and then, perhaps, the idiot——'

'For God's sake, hush!'

'I don't want to mention it.' Her voice had grown calm again. 'But—there's Rowangowan. It's far too much for a woman. It wants a man to look after it quite as much as my bushays——'

'You do me far too much honour. Any man would be more than proud. But—I shall never marry.'

'I know even why you say that.'

He stuttered in the greatest agitation.

'No, you don't. No, you don't.'

She looked at him serenely.

'I do. And because I knew, I came here to you thus, on this last day before my return to Belleville, and—offered myself to be your wife.'

'You do not know You cannot mean what you are saying. I——'

'I know.'

'If you knew, you would be aware that you are proposing to me to do a wicked thing.'

'A wicked thing? No, my friend. Ah, the folly of these doctors! God does not require us to be wise beyond our strength.' He had covered his face with one hand. There was silence between them till she said: 'You are right not to do this thing because I proposed it. Quite right. But if ever, at any time, in the future, it should be possible for you—or you should wish to—to ask a woman to—a younger girl, a girl you love—if I am anywhere near, come to me, and we, we will talk it over. Wicked! Ah, no! Then God were wicked! Ah, what fools these doctors are! Good night!'

And, leaving her big pudding in the middle of the table, she turned to go softly from the room. But, half-way, she looked at him and came back. 'No, no,' she said, as if answering him, 'I am to blame, I only. I am a meddlesome, pretentious old maid. I can't see misery anywhere without fancying that I am specially deputed by Providence to cure it. *Miséricorde aux moutons!* And you are by no means a "mouton," far from it, my dear friend. You must still allow me to call you that.'

'I never had a better friend; but I cannot marry.'

'It is that wicked, well-meant talk of yours which has led me astray. Better you, Maria, than nobody, I said to myself. But now mark my words—when you love a young girl who loves you, you will marry her, or you will be a wickeder man than I gave you credit for.'

A cry resounded from the inner room.

'That!' he said passionately. 'That!—and myself.'

'It isn't much to offer,' she answered with a woe-begone smile, 'and so, I suppose, the circumstances emboldened me. But, little as it is, never mind——' She closed the door. 'It was too good,' she continued aloud to herself in the hall, 'for—don't talk about sacrificing your life, you silly fool!—for you, Maria MacClachlin!'

CHAPTER XI

NEXT day being Christmas day, Edward brought his patient a box of dried fruits. The patient grunted approval.

'It does seem a pity, poor wretch,' says Barton, the servant, 'that he ain't allowed to eat hisself to death in one day, and have done with it!'

'One of my troubles,' says Kenneth, 'is that I have to let Barton talk, or he couldn't stand the strain.'

'I wish you the blessings of Christmas, as we say in my country,' remarked Edward to Kenneth. The young men, in their daily intercourse, had conceived a sincere liking for one another. To Kenneth, especially, the new doctor's personality was an ever-increasing relief.

'Thanks. I don't understand you're not there,' replied Kenneth. 'What made you stay here?'

'The lamb's splints have got to be taken off to-day,' said Edward, smiling.

'Look here, Lisse, you're beginning to devote yourself too entirely to James. One man's enough for that sort of thing.'

'It isn't that only,' said honest Edward at once. 'I'm engaged to be married, and my parents don't approve.'

'Not an unusual state of affairs in any country, even when the lady is quite eligible.'

'She isn't so particularly eligible from their point of view,' answered Edward, delighted to talk on, now the subject had at last been started, 'rather outside their ideas, you know. No money and no name to speak of. But apart from that, Graye, she's—oh, she's the loveliest creature in the world!'

'Show me her portrait,' said the sympathetic Graye. Edward eagerly complied.

'Yes,' said Graye, giving it back to him. Then, as Edward waited for a little more, 'Well, I think that one word says a good deal, doesn't it? When a man carries a portrait like that in his breast-pocket, he's done for, Edward Lisse.'

'We correspond,' said Edward, satisfied, 'but I have practically undertaken not to see her during this twelve-month of study. My father hasn't exacted a promise—that wouldn't be like him—but it's a sort of tacit understanding between us.'

'She's in Holland?'

'No, at Brussels. But, under the circumstances, our family party would hardly feel as united as of yore.'

'You've known her for years?'

'Seven weeks on the day I proposed,' answered Edward, laughing.

'Well,' remarked Kenneth Graye, 'my mother always used to say the happiest matches were those between first cousins or utter strangers. I suppose a man should either marry a woman because he knows her thoroughly, or because he don't know her at all.'

'What a philosopher you are!' It was Kenneth's turn to laugh.

'The very thing I am not, of course!' he said. 'I am the—what d'ye call it?—impressionist, and you are the philosopher, but I never saw such a fellow as you are for discovering imaginary virtues in your friends!'

'Is philosophy a virtue?' asked Edward, rather sadly, 'or is it a compromise?'

However that momentous question may be answered, it is certain that Kenneth's estimate was correct. From his cramped and clouded boyhood, with its consistent admiration of the parents he loved, as it were, over a stone wall, Edward's nature, fundamentally so reserved, and yet so downright honest, had brought away an eager though unconscious appreciation of the good qualities in people widely different from himself. In how far does that most rare objectivity of sympathy account for his

early success with the mentally miserable, the morally misbegotten? Most of us are drawn to others by reflections of what is best or worst in our own natures. Edward's upgrowing must have led him either to ignore goodness altogether, or to see it wherever it lay hid.

No, no: you are a philosopher,' persisted Edward, 'I am simply a scientist. Shall we go and take off the splints?'

'One moment!' Kenneth barred the door. 'Did you really tell Miss MacClachlin that James might marry some day?'

'I said the thing was not unthinkable. In our age, as the last years have shown us, there are women would marry a hog, if the law would allow them, provided the sty was paved with gold.'

'But, speaking seriously, you told her he might get better? What made you speak like that? No one has ever made him better, in any way, before!' Kenneth Graye's voice was low with intensity: it demanded a reply.

'I believe—I have a faint hope—I think there is just a chance of doing him a great deal of good.' Lisse walked away to the window and spoke fast, looking out. 'It looks like fate, your insisting on my speaking to-day. Do you believe in fate? I don't. I don't know. But I know that I had come here wanting to broach the subject—not daring. Your compatriot must take the blame. And Laura—*her* name is Laura—wrote me yesterday to begin on this day. She has what you would call superstitions—presentiments. They would not do in medicine, but they do very well in the poetry of life. See here!'—he drew a letter from his pocket—"Why not take this day," she writes, "rather than another, this Feast of the New Birth for the whole world? Tell your friend of your projects. I feel confident of success."

'What do you propose?' asked Kenneth, still in the same voice.

Edward came and sat down by the table, on which stood all that Sir James had left of Maria MacClachlin's present.

'During these months,' he said, 'of close observation the Impression has daily deepened upon me which I received when we first met. I am certain that, with your nephew, it is not the brain which is defective so much as the way it is placed.'

'But what does that mean?' cried Kenneth.

'It means that the brain is there, but he cannot use it. In the commonest forms of idiocy the brain is not developed at all—as if you had a stump instead of a hand, you know. But here the complete hand is tied up, as it were, compressed by the cranium, but the hand is there. Not like scissors with the rivet out, so to speak, but like scissors in a sheath.'

'But the result is the same.'

'Hitherto the result has been considered the same, but—'

'Well?'

'But I do not see why the cranium, which is visibly too small, should not be enlarged, so as to make room for the brain to expand.'

'Has anything of the kind ever been attempted before?'

'No.' On that word followed a moment's silence: then Edward said: 'But it will be attempted some day by some one else, if not by me.'

'And not on my nephew?'

'That does not depend on me. I believe it can be done. And the first idiot to whom it is done with success will thank God that he is a thinking man!'

'"With success"—there you speak the word! And the risk?'

'Is tremendous. I should have spoken much sooner but for that. The operation involves trepanning. It is a matter of life and death.'

Kenneth Graye came towards Edward with such suddenness, that the latter involuntarily fell back.

'You do not know what you are doing or saying,' cried Kenneth: 'you tell me my nephew will live to be an old man, and then you bid me—*me*—imperil his days!'

'Live like this—if you call it life—in this state!'

'Say what you will, but not *me*—me! If you had spoken thus to his mother!—but I—don't you understand? Sir James Graye is rich: he is a great landed proprietor. I am his guardian, and I am also his heir!' Kenneth stood close to Edward, with wide-open eyes. 'I can't do it,' he said, 'I can't. I can't.'

'There is no hurry,' replied Edward, 'we can consult others first. Of my theory I am certain. It struck me as soon as you told me that your nephew could not bear the light. I believe, moreover, he suffers, mentally, beyond our conception. It is not a question of operating on him or leaving him in peace. It is a choice between attempting to deliver him or abandoning him to his torture.'

'You think he suffers torture?' cried Kenneth, in a hoarse voice.

'I think he realises, however dimly, his condition. I expect fresh proof of that to-night. Let us go to him.'

The two young men passed into the inner room. Sir James lay dozing in his chair, with the lamb beside him.

'If you please, Mr. Graye,' says Barton, 'I have to watch that lamb most particular.'

Edward carried the animal, in its straw-filled tank, to the far side of the room and began undoing its bandages. Presently he turned and called to Kenneth.

'Tell James that the leg is mended, and the lamb can skip again.'

'James,' said Kenneth, 'the leg is mended. The lamb can skip again.' No reply at first, then, very slowly, a faint little noise of approval.

'James, would you like to have it stay with you always now, and skip about the room?'

Again no answer at first. Then a very distinct note of refusal.

'O James, you ought to keep it. Who else will look after it! It can't skip as well as it used to do. Its leg will always be stiff.' Edward had drawn nearer, leading the lamb, which stumbled and fell forward, in its painful gait. As it dragged itself close to the accustomed arm-

chair, the idiot slowly stretched down his long arms towards it and gathered it up into his lap.

'You understand now,' said Edward passionately to Kenneth, 'why he has never wanted pets? They were always in first-rate condition when you brought them—dogs, of course, that scampered about the room. Chance has given him this wounded beast, and he'll keep him—as long as he doesn't skip too well.' Kenneth was silent. 'In plainer words,' continued Edward, 'he knows he is not like other creatures, and the thought is a constant agony to him.'

'Here is Dr. Ducrot,' said Kenneth; 'you don't mind talking it over with him?'

'I want to talk it over with half the faculty,' replied Edward. 'Think what it means to me! I am planning to inflict all this suffering on a dumb, sentient creature. He can't defend himself: he can't know what I am going to do to him, and I ask you to let me torture him like this?'

The head of the Etablissement, Ducrot, entered his wealthy patron's presence with many complimentary bows. He liked people who took the little villas. He would come to congratulate them on Christmas Day, if they were English, and again, as a Frenchman, on the *jour de l'an*.

'A merry Grease-mess,' he said, and his inquisitive director's gaze wandered to the dish on the table. He was a tall, stout man, with a frockcoat buttoned tight and bulging out downwards. The glassy eyes in his red, grizzle-fringed countenance seemed always squinting to get a better view of his huge rosette of the Legion of Honour.

For reply Edward told him almost immediately of the subject that occupied their thoughts. With brief technicalities he described his great operation, an absolutely new undertaking then, although of late years it has of course been repeated with such signal success by Cremoni. Ducrot, who was a bit of an hotel-manager, but an excellent doctor all the same, listened with discriminating attention. Kenneth meanwhile proffered

him the unknown delicacy, of which, being a greedy man, he partook.

'I like to examine,' he said, 'whatever is novel to me.'

At the present hour his admiration for Edward is almost unbounded, and he has long ago forgiven Kenneth Graye.

'If only it were possible,' said Dr. Ducrot, 'to look inside.' He sat down, contemplating regretfully the black crumbs on his plate. 'A thing has happened to me this last week, *mon cher collègue*, of which I should hardly dare to speak, but that it bubbles up in my thoughts. A patient here, a bad case of neurasthenia, sent, at the repeated instigation of a friend, a curl of hair cut from the neck to a clairvoyante living at Geneva. I cut it off myself and forwarded it, to convince her of her folly. At the time she was suffering from a temporary inflammation of the throat. She knew not the name of the clairvoyante, nor the clairvoyante hers. Yesterday comes back the reply. I read it myself. "The person to whom the hair belongs has a bad throat which will soon be better. She is very weak: that will persist." Incredible!' He threw up one podgy hand—'I read it myself. And drugs are prescribed, harmless herbs, for the throat alleviative, for the neurasthenia absurd. And the charge is ten francs!' Again that movement of the hand, with a heavy, despondent drop. '*Cher collègue*, what are we doctors to answer? We believe in none of these things, of course, yet when they befall us? This marvellous diagnosis is a fact.'

'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,' began Kenneth. He caught Edward's eye: it twinkled. 'I beg your pardon,' cried Kenneth, 'I oughtn't to have said that. Any fool would have said that.'

'No, no!' protested Edward. A dear figure rose up before him in a flaming tiger-skin. 'Only we ought to have got on a bit since Shakespeare's time,' he said, 'but we haven't.'

Ducrot, who didn't like being dragged out of his depth, waved his hand.

'One such strange thing happened here before,' he continued, 'one only. Some years ago a patient was taken suddenly dangerously ill. While we were deliberating how we could send for his wife to the other end of Paris, she knocked at the door. She said afterwards she had heard him calling her, by a pet name known to him only, thrice, half an hour ago, in her room.'

'Oh, that's telepathy,' said Kenneth. 'Everybody nowadays believes in telepathy.'

'I told Charcot of it,' said the doctor, not heeding him, but addressing Edward, 'I told Charcot myself!' He struck his breast and the rosette. 'I, Ducrot, I vouch for the truth of it! The great man said: "*Un jour la science parlera.*"'

'It is time,' said Edward. 'The worst is that, like any infallible religion, she always has to admit tomorrow what she laughed at the day before. Do you know what we have had at the Salpêtrière this last week, for all the world to see? A woman who, in her magnetic trance, reads the contents of a sealed envelope placed on her brow.'

'I wish such things did not happen,' said Kenneth.

'Why? Because we do not understand them.'

'It makes one feel as if all the world were mad.' He shook himself together. 'As if the sanest might be mad to-morrow.'

Ducrot rose. He understood English though he did not speak it. '*Mais non, mais non,*' he said, 'madness is a pathological condition of the body. It is an illness that few contract, like ataxy.' He walked out, repeating this favourite sentence aloud: 'It is an illness that few contract, like ataxy.'

On the *perron* he made way, with a great sweep of his hat, for an unknown lady. It was a rule with him never to interfere with visitors to the villas. It amused him now to think, as he ambled off, that so beautiful a young creature should call on Kenneth Graye.

'*Faut que le docteur Lisse s'en aille,*' he said to himself.

'Yes; it is I—Laura: I came,' said the visitor, in the drawing-room doorway.

The next thing Kenneth saw was a true lovers' embrace. Explanations followed afterwards.

'Yes, I came. After I had written my letter last night, I could not stay still. So I took this morning's train. I am come.'

'But you shouldn't——'

'Fie! Do you want me to go away again?'

'No; oh no!'

'Well, then, be logical.' So he kissed her again.

For Kenneth had softly closed the door on them and stood in the half-dark, gazing at his nephew. Sir James lay in the chair, as always, with the lamb cuddled close against him, his eyes staring downwards at nothing, dead-alive.

This, then, was Kenneth Graye's existence since he had been called away from the university to the dying woman's side. He had promised. 'I cannot die,' she had gasped in her physical agony, 'until you have promised. Help me to die!' With a man of his temperament it hardly required such pressure. He leaped at the idea of succouring this most pitiable head of his race. During three years he had wandered with him from doctor to doctor, hardly letting him out of his sight. He believed that James knew him. It was certain that the boy had grieved for his mother's death—her absence, at any rate.

Kenneth did not regret or complain. He could not but comprehend that his life was one of self-sacrifice, and to some natures such subconscious conviction is a permanent happiness and reward. He had therefore gone on unthinking, content to know that his daily task had a worthy object, not self-chosen. And who of us, still burdened by consciences, would ask more of their fate?

But now, for the first time, the dilemma of possible deliverance rose straight in his path. He could pass by it and continue as heretofore, yet never without recalling that he might have turned aside. And the turning meant, to this ward of his, certain danger, probable death. And if death, then for himself wealth and rank.

It were easy enough for him, says the healthy man, to let the consensus of doctors decide. But when you have travelled all over Europe with your hopeless and wealthy incurable, the labyrinthine opinions of the doctors leave you seeking, under the search, for your own.

Kenneth stood gazing at this human object, this sentient thing. To speak with it, reasonably, on this or any other matter, was impossible. There it lay, as it had lain for years. Possibly mournful: certainly discontented: glad of good food. A ray of late sunshine, slanting through the curtains, struck its sunken face. It moved peevishly, and grunted its irritated note. Kenneth went over and pulled the curtain.

The lamb looked up, bleated, and, falling from the knees by which it lay, ran, with its clumsy skipplings, to the disappearing light. The idiot's dull gaze seemed to follow it; then suddenly Sir James broke into loud, discordant weeping. In a moment Kenneth was beside him, with words of soothing and endearment; the crying but redoubled, bearing down every attempt to reach the weeper: the man Barton came hurrying in from the passage as Kenneth put his arm round the idiot's neck.

'Oh, Sir James! Sir James!' shouted Barton. 'Oh, Mr. Graye, what's the matter? I've never seen him cry like this!'

'Heaven knows what's the matter,' said Kenneth Graye. 'I have, once before, three days after his mother died.'

The idiot filled the house with his hysterical lamentations, terrible to hear. They brought Lisse from the adjoining room, while Laura hung trembling in the doorway.

'Don't! Don't!' murmured the doctor in a strain of supplication, and, after some moments, 'Silence!' in stern snaps of command. The idiot heard nothing, shrieking miserably, on and on. It was then that the girl knelt, shrinking beside him, and passed her hands softly, persistently over his face. He flung it away from her at first, weeping as a human dog might weep in the

utter abandonment of a howling sorrow, but, as her own hands steadied, by a mighty effort of self-control she drew him gently against the cushions and lulled him there very, very slowly, in rhythmic rise and fall of recurrent movement, till his shrieks died, brokenly, down to sobs, and his eyelids drooped, with the great tears oozing under them, and gradually, in lessening switches and gasps, he sank to a silent rest. Then she rose, and all four stood looking at him. He was asleep.

'He very seldom cries at all,' said Kenneth, 'and never like this. Except several days after his mother's death, when he realised, I have always supposed, that she was gone.'

'If you please, Mr. Graye,' suggested Barton, 'I fancy the lamb makes Sir James unhappy.'

'He loves it because it is lame,' said Edward, 'and he cries because he has lamed it.'

'By Jove, I believe you are right. If only, as Ducrot said, you could look inside him,' cried Kenneth, 'and find out whether he ought to be operated on!'

'Shall I try to look inside him?' said Laura.

The men stared at her.

'Cut off some of his hair?' stammered Kenneth, 'like Dr. Ducrot.'

'Edward,'—she spoke to her lover only,—'you haven't told me what this operation is: don't! I wanted to come this morning. Call it a fancy, a feeling: I don't claim a higher name. I don't understand about these things, myself. But one thing I have discovered since I was at Brussels—by accident—I am what they call a clairvoyante, not a very good one, but still you might try. Put me to sleep, Edward! Hypnotise me, as they do at the Salpêtrière!' In her voice was such a mingling of entreaty and counsel that he could not resist her. He drew her to the bright lamp outside, and a few moments later he laid her, in her trance, beside the sleeping boy. Then, with a shudder he will never forget, he drew the idiot's fingers within her slender hands.

Then Kenneth and he waited in silence. Barton tried in vain to peep through the keyhole.

'It may be—it may be God's answer,' whispered Edward under his breath.

As if she had heard him, the sleeping woman began to speak. In slow stammering, at first, then, almost imperceptibly, with increasing assurance: 'Oh, the pain—the pain,' she said. Her own eyebrows contracted over the fast closed eyes. 'The pain!' She moved restlessly, and lapsed into silence. Edward bent over her; with all the experience he had acquired at the great hospital he deepened the sleep from which she was manifestly striving to awake. 'Don't! you hurt me!' The lover's heart stood still. 'Take away the light!' she resumed immediately, in the same constrained voice, 'it hurts my eyes. Such a heavy, pressing pain! My head! The back of the head! It presses, presses, presses! Do you want me to speak, Edward? How can I speak, or think, when it presses so? If it would leave off pressing I think I could—oh don't!—don't any more!—it hurts me so!' She fetched a deep sigh, and lay struggling spasmodically—then she grew utterly still. In the darkness Kenneth put out his hand and clutched Edward's, dropped it, and turned away.

In the darkness Edward remained seated, motionless, by the two softly breathing forms. A faint grey mist of light spread through the chink of the door which Kenneth had left ajar, as he wandered away into the early December night. The silvery shadow lay, indistinct, about the sleepers, wrapt in gloom. When, at last, Edward stirred, it was to unclosethe touch of those folded hands. He sat gazing at them, as they lay there together, his beautiful Laura and—he.

To Edward Lisse, having the medical instinct grown strong within him and increasingly blended with his earliest passion of pity, to Edward Lisse this creature was, primarily, not an object of repulsion, but of resolute hope. The weariness, and worse, of daily tending fell to others: ere the doctor made his appearance the patient had always been more or less tidied, pulled together, and set up. And to this doctor the sad-faced, irresponsive unfortunate had taken, as far as in him seemed to be—less

ostentatiously than any dog would, that opens attentive eyes and wags a welcoming tail. But Barton, who somehow divined intangible phases by intuitions that he could not enucleate, maintained that Edward's personality, as distinguishable from his 'doctordom,' was agreeable to Sir James. 'Sir James allus likes a doctor,' said Barton, 'but it's not the doctor he likes most in Mr. Lisse.' It might have been noticeable that Barton always spoke of Edward as Mr. not Dr. Lisse.

That he likes doctors and craves for them daily, in his solitude, in his silence—my God, what a thought! I can't get away from it, day or night! You can't realise what it means, of dark, pent-up suffering, of hope against hope, semi-conscious, grown sick! It is that set me yearning, and striving and planning to help him. As men strike, without rest, at a wall, in a mine, behind which they know human creatures are gasping for relief. And I'll help him yet!

Yes, Laura, I'll help him now! These words were uppermost in Edward's mind. There was no triumph in them, and little self-confidence. He set his teeth hard. Immense rose before him, as ever in his later career, the certainty of suffering, the inevitable risk. These have always been its subjective weakness, and, possibly, part of its objective strength. As for the prizes of the profession—success, fame, requital, and, surely to some natures the greatest, gratitude—these have appeared, so to speak, round the corner, when all was over, an ever new surprise.

'Heaven help me, I believe I can help him,' thought Edward. Not that he actually expected, or could have elucidated, the possible intervention of 'Heaven.' But the thought was as sincere as the words that had just fallen from him, when he spoke to Kenneth of God's reply. Such thought fitted into Edward's religious attitude which may be defined as that unwilling certainty we like to dub, semi-scientifically, agnosticism. From youth he had striven, with honest endeavour, to assimilate his father's distinction between *credo quia probatum* in science, and *credo quia absurdum* in religion. He had

failed, to his sincere regret, for he could not but see how this pellucid discrimination provided the Professor with two soft yet solid pillows, whereon his unconscious soul slept serene. 'Your father,' protested the Baroness, quite petulantly, 'is the greatest man of science and the most simple-hearted believer in this city. I don't ask of you to rival him in either field, but surely, Edward, your science isn't so overwhelming, compared with his' (a fine twist of the voice here) 'that it need keep a little minimum of religion out!' To such reasoning only one reply was possible: Edward went to church.

Church—the Calvinistic predication—afforded him little satisfaction. But to the blatant irreligion of his medical fellow-students his wistful mind felt still less attuned. The University-tone of that day was flatly materialistic: miracles don't happen; spirits are nonsense; corpses are dead; and all that sort of tawdry truth. The Professor's unique church-going was regarded by all his colleagues as an atavistic survival, till it took the quite unexpected shape of a political programme. Then it disgusted them all. Edward, painfully conscious of his share in his father's incongruous parliamentary developments, quivered under his class-mates' coarse allusions to the Baron's time-serving religiosity. They quoted to him the well-known words of a famous seventeenth-century poet:

'What cat would lick the candlestick,
Did grease not to its handle stick?'

'It's my fault,' thought poor Edward, loving his father the more. And of course it was his fault, like so many of the innocent things we do. From that night, when he crept down and secretly slew the rabbit, he had never got clear of the confusion between right and wrong. The two certainly were not distinguishable, and, probably, his university teachers were right, who said that neither existed. More reasonable, surely, than his Calvinistic social surroundings which only looked for them, on Sundays, in church.

As an immense relief from the numbed discomfort of such thinkings, came, like the flinging open of a padlocked door, the sudden realisation of a world intangible, not beyond, but within, the world of immediate sense. So much he owed to Laura. Whether his father's abstract divinity were correct or not, his professors' finite materialism was false. The tricks of the spiritists were doubtless largely a delusion, but the five senses as yet hardly explained the new phenomena of animal magnetism, of telepathy and second-sight. These easily provable incredibilities, at whose vague rumour he had sneered in company with the whole university, suddenly happened before his eyes. There existed, then, in this world which for the last twelve years had been only microbe and matter (with angels, quite unconnected, behind the clouds), there existed vast spiritual forces, as yet only vaguely comprehended. Miracles were possible, for the miracle of to-day is the scientific truth of to-morrow. There, indeed, was a whole new field of congenial study, a wide scope of possible psychic ascent. The dull mass of microbe and matter was become no longer an all-important self-object, but the commonplace garment of the wondrous human soul.

All the rest, that occupied these men, that occupied his own father, entirely, was secondary, transitory, auxiliary, limitable—suddenly dwarfed; the one central fact of the universe, the permanent reality was the psychic personality of man. The Spirit that informs the shapeless material, the essence of all things, the light in the lamp. And that Spirit, in its marvellous transcendental developments, was an object not only of *credo's*, to be accepted, *quia absurda*, but of strictly scientific studies, like Charcot's, to be pursued, into the unseen. Whither such study will lead us, who can say? Hardly nearer his mother's God, but at least away from the purblind assertion that the soul of man or animal is no more than an attribute of its flesh.

Edward stood looking down at 'the idiot.' 'If the religion of my youth be correct,' he said, 'your soul has

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nothing to do with your body, and if the teaching of my professors be true, you haven't a soul beyond your body at all, but I believe you have a sort of soul, James Graye, and such soul as you have, more or less, I'll deliver from your body, by God!

CHAPTER XII

A FEW days later the Professor, sailing in his wonted manner, with flying coat and tilted hat, and a load of books, down the long *Leyden Gracht*, met the postman, and, stopping short, acknowledged the man's salute with a half-circle sweep of the arm. Whereupon the postman, who, like everybody, was on conversational terms with Baron Lisse, proffered the daily pile of rubbish with which the penny-post has endowed the householder, and also a remark on the seasonable character of the snow: the Professor selecting the remark (with unscientific disapproval of the snow as 'rheumatic') and a letter from Edward, sailed rhythmically on.

The letter from Edward he managed to open and read, as he went along, in spite of the people and carts that he met, and his loosely held cargo of volumes. It told how the operation of which Edward had repeatedly written, was now fixed for the second of January, the novel experiment (hitherto restricted to cases of hydrocephalus in infants) having encountered the sympathetic concurrence of the faculty. 'Before this consensus that the thing should be tried,' wrote Edward, 'the uncle has at last given way! I pity him from the bottom of my heart. His anxiety and uncertainty are worse than mine.'

'Pity will be his downfall!' said the Professor sternly. 'A doctor may perhaps pity his patient—though it's unscientific—but certainly not his patient's friends.' The Professor stood still at a street corner, and held the letter away from him. 'The day after to-morrow!' he exclaimed.

'Pardon me,' said a voice at his elbow, 'but I am surely

correct in the impression that I am speaking to the great Baron Lisse?’

‘My name is Lisse, sir,’ replied the Professor, dropping a volume. The stranger picked it up so eagerly that the Professor, in the flurry of mutual compliment, dropped a couple more.

‘The difference between you and me, Professor,’ remarked the stranger, walking away with the Professor’s biggest folio under his arm, ‘is that everybody knows of your greatness, and nobody, as yet, knows of mine.’ He continued his road reflectively digesting his own statement, and, as the Professor made no attempt to dispute it, ‘There is an undeniable distinction,’ added the stranger.

‘I think I could carry that book myself,’ timidly suggested the Professor. But the other hugged the volume more closely. ‘You are proceeding homewards?’ he said. ‘Evidently. They told me at the door you were not in. I have waited ten minutes before the doorstep. A—a not very—ah—conciliatory domestic, if I may be allowed to say as much!’

The Professor smiled in spite of himself. ‘I trust nobody was rude to you at my house,’ he began courteously. The other interrupted him. ‘Rudeness is a subjective thing. Nobody can be rude to me, for I never feel it. My name, sir, though you do not inquire after it, is Bitterbol. May I ask, Professor Lisse: do you know what this object is?’ And with surprising celerity, on the Leyden Canal, he produced, from his tail-pocket, a big hairy brown ball.

‘A cocoa-nut,’ replied the Professor, bowing low to his washerwoman.

‘*Cocos butiracea*,’ announced Mr. Bitterbol, standing on the Professor’s doorstep, and producing from the other pocket a similar fruit. At imminent risk of dropping the folio, he held both brown balls aloft in the wintry face of heaven. The fat washerwoman turned, interested, and the picturesque fishwife stopped scraping the live flounders on the step.

The Professor shuddering at sight of the fishwife’s

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occupation, mounted hastily to his own front-door. 'My—my time is much taken,' he muttered as he went! 'I—I never eat cocoa-nuts. Eliza!'—with a sudden cry of relief—'please take the book from the gentleman! Good-day!' The Baroness stood in the hall, greatly agitated. 'Laura is with Edward!' she said. 'She went off to Paris. He has just written to say she is there!' 'The operation is the day after to-morrow,' replied the Professor. 'A much more important matter.'

'I advise you to listen to me,' cried the stranger, trying to dodge round Eliza. 'I assure you there is no one more competent to speak on the subject.'

'Of hydrocephalus?' exclaimed the Professor, in amazement, coming back. 'Of cocoa-nuts,' replied the stranger, abashed.

'There is a similarity,' said the Professor, in his most amiable manner, as he attentively inspected the object Mr. Bitterbol had put into his hand. Then he softly deposited it on a box he had not before noticed in the hall. 'Although this, of course, my dear,' he added apologetically, 'is not a case of hydrocephalus.'

'It is a case of cocoa-nuts,' explained the stranger, 'which I ventured to leave here——'

'Though I tried to prevent him,' put in Eliza, who was quarrelling with the washerwoman.

'I suppose the man wants money!' suggested the Baroness, whispering—loud. 'A natural want, and a pardonable!' mildly responded the Professor.

'I have come, not to ask for money, but to bring it,' said the stranger, in a shrill voice. And he walked uninvited into the little waiting-room, which is a feature of most Dutch houses, heedless of Eliza's cap—a back view of protest—and the Baroness's 'Your brother is waiting to see you!'—a broad, but apparently ineffective, hint.

Now, a disregarded hint is a distinct expression of opinion. The stranger, therefore, took a seat without more ado, in the little room, and, again addressing the Professor in the same far-reaching voice 'You are the first authority in Europe,' he announced, 'on microbic infection.'

'That,' spake the Baroness, 'is certainly true'; and she paused in the passage.

'It is outrageous!' cried Eliza; but she meant the price of the flounders.

The Baron delicately closed the door.

'Right!' said Mr. Bitterbol. 'Eliminate the women, and come to business!' The Baron smiled his quiet smile, a little frightened, like a mouse, with the cat opposite.

'It is not the slightest good using that word to me,' he said. 'My brother does all my business. Shall I call him?' And he leaped to the door.

'No!' shouted the stranger, striking his remaining cocoa-nut down in the middle of the table and leaving it there. He sat back from it, with his hands stretched between, big, burly, red, sailor-like, bluff. His voice rose over tempests: his whole manner betokened steering against contrary streams.

'Yonder lies,' he said, pointing, 'what is going to make your fortune and mine!' The Professor waited.

'*Cocos butiracea!*' continued Mr. Butterbol, lingering lovingly over the words, '*lactitans frugifera Linnaei.*'

'I am no botanist,' said the Professor.

'In these days when the whole world demands with one voice the sterilisation of its chief source of nutriment for the new-born, the old and ailing——'

'And quite right too,' put in the Professor.

'Which you, and such as you, have declared to be its chief source of infection!' cried the stranger.

'We could not help that,' said the Professor, turning red.

Mr. Bitterbol lifted the cocoa-nut on the tips of two fingers and a thumb.

'The sole milk,' he said solemnly, 'which is absolutely guaranteed by nature free of possible contact with microbes of any kind.'

'Allow me——' began the Professor, immediately argumentative, with finger upraised. But Mr. Bitterbol bore him down: 'I will not allow you. Let me explain first. The anxious mothers of Christendom, sir, have a right—they have a right, I say—to demand restitution of

this thing you have taken from them! And what have you taken away? Milk, sir! Milk! The food of their puling infants, that cry vainly for nourishment! Their own milk, sir, is contaminated by hereditary disease! The cows of the country are laden with tuberculosis, typhus, scarlatina, whooping-cough!

'Not whooping-cough!' protested the Professor.

'They will be to-morrow, then,' said Mr. Bitterbol coolly. 'The asses—the she-asses that, in our youth, we used to see tinkling along the streets at sunset—we now know they carried death from door to door. The world, sir, disturbed in its inmost bosom—I speak accurately—the distressed maternity of the whole civilised—all too civilised!—human race demands milk—untainted milk! You can't give it.' Mr. Bitterbol rose in his excitement and flung his billycock on the floor. The courteous Professor picked it up. 'We shall sterilise satisfactorily in time,' said the Professor.

'In time!' cried Mr. Bitterbol indignantly; 'what time? If you, at this moment, had a babe on your knee'—the Professor looked down hastily—'what would you reply to it, when it cried: "Give me milk"? "Two years hence, my dear, when we have learned to sterilise satisfactorily!" Psha!'

'True,' admitted the Professor sadly. 'But what would you do?'

'I? I should say: "Take away all yonder contaminated fluids!"' Mr. Bitterbol swept the empty table with a magnificent gesture. 'I should say'—he held his cocoa-nut on high—"Here is nature's sterilisation! Unspoilt by any contact with animal disease!"' He sat down suddenly, and, in a matter-of-fact tone: 'This variety'—tapping the brown, hairy thing—'from Sumatra——'

'Ah, Sumatra!' ejaculated the Professor.

'You object?'

'By no means. I was only thinking.'

'Is especially rich in milk. That milk, sir, is enclosed by nature in an absolutely impenetrable case.' Hereupon he split it open with a jack-knife, and the Professor smiled at human logic. 'Taste it!' said Mr. Bitterbol.

The Professor, whose chief dread at all times was to hurt other people's feelings, laboriously sucked up the liquid from the proffered cup. 'That milk, sir, that delicious beverage, that boon, that ambrosia——'

'Nectar,' said the Professor. He couldn't help it.

'Nectar, indeed, as you say. That nectar, that ambrosia, we intend to supply to every mother in Christendom, soldered in tin envelopes, as imported, with patent apparatus—patent, mark you: that's the point—with patent apparatus for conveying the fluid direct from the inside of the fruit to the lips of the child, without opening it, and possibly infecting it, as I have done!' He gazed triumphantly at the Professor, who was endeavouring to forget the taste in his mouth.

'All that we now need,' said Mr. Bitterbol, 'is your name.'

'You have the apparatus?' said the Professor incredulously. The other looked him in the face.

'I am a practical man,' said Bitterbol, 'and an honest one. I won't waste time. I have the apparatus, and, what's more to the point, the patents. The apparatus, of course—you see, I'm frank, and, besides, I couldn't take you in, if I wanted to—is bosh, like all the rest of 'em—filters, sterilisators, the whole blessed lot—you agree to that?'

'Not absolutely,' said the Professor uncomfortably.

'Well, then, relatively, which, in this matter, comes to the same thing. But the milk's pure, and the idea's first-rate. What we want is enormous scientific authority. Overwhelming, sir, and conclusive authority. A name, sir, such as Lisse!' Mr. Bitterbol flung up the hand that held the other half of the *Butiracea*—a great splash of white liquid made straight for the Professor.

'You see the abundance of it?' Mr. Bitterbol said coolly. '*Lactitans Linnaei*. Nature's Coco-mother! Or, more simply, Lisse's Mother's Milk!' He checked the Professor. 'Not "sterilised," which can be easily proved a sham, but sterile by nature, incorruptible, un-bacteriable! immicrobable! we will coin the new words for the new thing! It will be easiest in German, but we

will do it in all languages of Europe and Asia! We will take your portrait (on every cocoa-nut—see you get it—none genuine without) and your little dissertation—not too short—on the dangers of cow's milk and condensed milk—especially our dangerous rivals, the tins—and your name, sir, your name! Lisse's Milk, Professor. The simpler the better. With all the explanatory titles underneath, in small caps! Liebig's Meat Extract! Lisse's Milk!

'Your proposition is absurd,' said the Professor.

'You have not yet heard,' replied Mr. Bitterbol. 'We fully realise your most important share in the undertaking, and we offer you a small royalty on every patent coco-mother sold. The result, sir, will be immense, beyond anything you expect!'

'And who finances this concern?' demanded the Professor, red in the face, but feeling very business-like.

'Your question is a legitimate one,' answered Bitterbol, smiling. 'Be sure I did not venture to approach you, before I prepared my reply. As a matter of fact, the idea only is mine. I am quite a poor man. But here'—he hurriedly drew a letter from his breast-pocket—'you will see how the scheme appeals to our great financiers!' He spread out the letter. 'Read the name at the bottom of that page, sir, the name only! Mechanically the Professor did so, and could not conceal a jerk. Bitterbol laughed aloud. 'Aha, you may well jump, Baron! That man guarantees you and me, sir, three hundred thousand francs for advertisement, annually, during five years.'

'Incredible!' cried the Professor, who had flushed scarlet at the 'you and me.'

'Not at all. We shall want quite that. Every quackery—not that this is a quackery—is entirely a matter of advertisement. My idea, your authority, his advertisements: the thing's done.'

'You have used the right word there,' stuttered the Professor, no paler. 'Quack—quack—quackery.'

'I have,' asserted Mr. Bitterbol. 'Quackery—medicine—whichever you like. Is there a difference?'

'Yes.'

'Which?' The Professor searched for a reply.

'Medicine is quackery with a university stamp,' said Mr. Bitterbol.

'Then you shall not have mine,' retorted the Professor.

'You cannot be speaking seriously. The patent medicines of to-day are as harmless as the old ones, but, what with this silly progress of science (I beg your pardon), people are beginning to prefer a doctor's name attached. Doctor So-and-so's quackery, *i.e.* medicine. I may warn you that the sterilised-milk business is being seriously considered by your great rival—'

'I have no rival: I have only fellow-workers,' said the Professor.

'The Colonel asks: do you think he should wait?' cried Eliza at the keyhole. Mr. Bitterbol buttoned his coat. 'My proposition,' he said, 'means many thousands a year to you. Look round at all the great cocoas and patent foods, and the whole gigantic swindle that makes the world go round! And this isn't a swindle. It's an incontrovertible fact that the nuts in the hall contain no microbes. Examine them. Examine the patent hermetoids, as we have called the cases. Examine the patent sucker—see, what an ingenious thing it is! 'These ideas, sir'—he tapped his expanding chest—'are mine! Yonder letter I leave with you—!'

'I must beg of you not to do that,' squeaked the Professor. 'Whatever people leave with me I always lose.'

Mr. Bitterbol hastily regained possession of the letter and substituted a visiting-card. 'I will allow you a fortnight,' he said. 'The proposal is a magnificent one. I say you have no idea what it means. At the expiration of that fortnight I take our scheme to—'

'Don't tell me his name!' cried the Professor. 'I shall hear it too soon, if he accepts.'

The stranger stood still in the doorway: 'I am a poor man. My future is in your hands,' he said, rather cleverly. Then he went out, and Eliza slammed the front-door after him.

'Did he want to sell cocoa-nuts?' asked the Baroness, in the drawing-room.

'Yes, thousands of them,' replied the Professor.

'You could never eat so many,' remarked the Colonel.

The Baroness arched her eyebrows. But she did that, whatever Imphi-Boshek said.

'This being the last day of the year,' continued the Colonel, 'I thought I should like to come over and tell you about your affairs. I have good news for you brother: these last investments have been very successful.'

'The Professor rubbed his hands gleefully. 'Aha!' he said. 'Very right! very right!'

'What investments are they?' asked the Baroness nervously.

'My dear sister-in-law, what can women understand about such matters? Investments! Financial investments, dear Jane!'

'I see,' said the Baroness ironically. 'I thought they were other.'

'City investments.'

'I see,' said the Baroness again. 'Naturally, the investment of a city is the only sort of investment a soldier would know about.' She walked away from them, her feelings being too much for her.

'Ha! Ha! Excellent! First-rate!' shouted the Colonel. 'My dear Thomas, what grip! what intellectual attainments! But as I was saying, I am sure the paraffin is going to be very satisfactory.'

'Paraffin! I thought it was rubber!' said the Professor.

'Oh, the rubber is going to be very satisfactory, too. We are going to make money, Thomas, money!'

'I thank Heaven,' said the Professor fervently.

'And so you may in these days, when everything is going to the dogs. Only this morning, the paper was full of commercial depression. I don't like commercial depression, Thomas. It isn't good for a country. Wealth in a country is a desirable thing, Thomas, if only the right people own it. This polity of ours, as I understand it, rests on three Walls: William, Wisdom (whereby I mean the Intellectuals), and Wealth. We need all three,

Thomas!' And the dapper little Colonel twirled round on his patent leather boots and flung up, across his red cheeks, his bellicose moustaches.

'Then where do you come in?' asked the Baroness, by the window.

'I am not one of the Powers: I am only one of the People,' he answered sweetly, 'Prince, Powers and People! My brother, Baron Lisse, should be one of the Powers.'

'He is more than that,' replied the Baroness with promptitude. 'He is more even than the Prince. He is a Principle!' She struck the window-pane. 'He's a Principle!' she said.

'My dear,' remarked the Baron very gently, 'I trust you know what that means.' Then he turned to his brother. 'I am glad, very glad, there will be more money,' he said. 'I have always fancied there would be enough, until last year, when you proved to me that there ought to be more. I detest everything connected with money, especially the want of it.' He repeated this sentiment, which struck him as remarkably correct.

'Nobody should speculate unless they know all about it,' replied the Colonel. 'My friend Abrahams is a Prop of the Stock Exchange, a Positive Prop. As a Port I understand Amsterdam is doomed, but as a financial centre it is daily increasing in importance. I admit that is a bad sign, but, what will you have?—the whole country is going to the dogs. Meanwhile Abrahams will make our fortunes. When the impending explosion comes, I, as a soldier, hope to die on the Palace steps. You, not being a fighting man, can cut your coupons abroad.'

'We will see,' said the Baron, his keen eye kindling.

'So I wish you a happy new year,' concluded the Colonel, taking up his smartly polished hat. 'I understand from Jane that the two girls remain at Geneva, on account of an outbreak of measles in the school?'

'The incubation of measles,' replied the Professor, 'is a subject on which we are singularly ignorant. But it is certain that travel increases the virulence of a possible attack.'

'It is astonishing to me how little you really discover by dissecting the worms out of people's insides.' Having said this, the Colonel took his departure. In the doorway, however, he aimed a last thrust at his sister-in-law. 'Here is Eliza! I always think of you three as a trio: the Professor, the Poet, and the Pivot!'

'A better trio, perhaps,' said the Baroness bitterly, 'than the Professor, the Politician, and the Prop.' She came close to her husband, motioning the woman away. 'These money-makers!' she said in French. 'This Abrahams! your brother!'

'Francis has been remarkably successful. My dear Jane, you are really mistaken in thinking a man must be a fool because he doesn't understand poetry.' The Professor spoke testily: he was glad that Thomasine entered the room; she held a number of hats in her hands.

'I had quite forgotten!' cried the Baroness, pushing her cap away. 'The cares of a household are beyond me! When I ought to be composing—well, well, Thomasine has completed the tenth canto, so, although she says she doesn't need a reward, and of course she's enjoyed it, I thought I would give her a new hat.'

'A new hat!' exclaimed the Professor, in surprise. 'Do you care about a new hat, Thomasine?' He added: 'Well, well, I suppose it is natural. I don't remember that you, Jane, ever cared about a new hat.'

'I don't care so very much,' said Thomasine, blushing, 'but my best is very old, father: there's a dreadful dent in the brim.'

'Is there? I'm sure you always look very nice, child. But 'tis very natural, dear girl, very natural! I wonder, Jane, has my hat got a dent in it?'

'It has,' said Eliza.

'Then why don't you take it out?' cried the Professor, more than testy now, cross.

'Pray where am I to begin?' retorted Eliza. 'Your hat, Professor, looks like the crumply paper they make lamp-shades of!'

'Eliza, go away! You can't really want me,' interposed the poor Baroness.

'Oh, certainly, if I am em—power—ed,' replied the maid, 'to tel' the cheesemonger exactly what I think of him.'

'I'll come,' said her mistress, sighing heavily. 'We can't change our cheesemonger again. Wait a minute with those hats, Thomasine. Ah me, I wrote only yesterday evening:

'Too few the hours that sum our little day,
And yet we fritter, flitter them away!'

Thomasine remained standing in the middle of the room, hung about with ribbons and feathers, like a May-pole.

'Eliza,' said the Professor meditatively, 'is an admirable servant, but it is a pity that the number of tradespeople in Leyden is limited.'

'You have a letter from Edward?' replied Thomasine.

'Yes: poor fellow! The operation is fixed for the day after to-morrow. It is an immensely interesting event. I understand absolutely nothing of psychiatry—we are miles apart—but I can see this is an event of overwhelming interest, Thomasine!'

'I always knew Edward would find his work,' said Thomasine.

The Professor looked at her affectionately. 'We men are what our women make us,' he said. Thomasine hid suddenly behind the biggest hat. Sometimes the reward of half a lifetime drops quite unexpectedly, from nowhere, at our feet.

'Those hats,' said the Professor timidly, 'do not look to me quite the latest fashion. Do you feel sure they are?'

'Dear papa, I suppose so,' said the troubled Thomasine.

'I fancy I saw quite different ones at the Hague the other day,' the Professor persisted knowingly. 'Leyden is hardly the place, I should think, to buy a fashionable hat in. Paris, Paris is the place for hats, Thomasine!' The Professor, flinging back his dusty mane, gazed argumentatively at his daughter.

'Yes, papa. I suppose so!' said Thomasine.

'What would you say to our starting for Paris to-

gether, and buying a hat?' cried the Professor. 'Buying a couple of hats?'

'Papa, you are joking!'

'I never joke, child. People who deal in microbes don't. Life becomes too serious for a joke. But they can enjoy themselves.'

'You would in Paris!'

'I don't know. I enjoyed myself when I developed the Pseudo-Semicolon Cryptophyllus Comma 2 out of the Comma Communis Henshuysii. That was a great discovery, Thomasine.'

'It was,' said his daughter.

'And you were a dear girl to read up all about it. I really have sometimes believed that, in the end, you almost understood?' The Professor paused. 'Yes, you shall go to Paris. I shall be delighted to see Edward's operation. And your mother, of course, will accompany us. Laura is in Paris. Your mother does not approve.'

'But will all that not cost a great deal of money?' questioned Thomasine.

'Your uncle Frank says we may spend more money,' replied the Professor, rubbing his hands. 'We are going to have more money!'

'Oh, how delicious.' cried the girl. 'O papa, a great man like you ought to get thousands from the state!'

'That is what I always say,' remarked the Baroness, 'What on earth does it matter whether cheese costs threepence or threepence-halfpenny? Contemptible! Souls like Eliza's consider the price of cheese the end of existence. There ought to be no cheese in your father's life.'

'There is not. I never touch it,' said the Professor.

'You are so literal, Thomas: how did you ever come to marry a poetess? Your cheese is Bardwyk—the up-keep of that big place where we only spend the summer holidays.'

'My home,' said the Baron.

His wife shrugged her shoulders. 'Certainly, and I would not sell an oak of it! But what I regret is that your enormous science does not bring you in a proper

reward! Other—dabblers run off with ten thousand dollar pieces, or they lend their names to patent screws or foods or pots' (the Professor tingled to his toes), 'but you—what do they give you? Gold medals! Cupboards full.'

'And orders!' said Thomasine.

'And which of his orders does your father care for?' cried the Baroness.

'St. John of Jerusalem,' said the Baron, 'The Succour of the Wounded, and the Cross I gained at Gravelotte.' For this subject, to which allusions were forbidden in the family circle, thus suddenly crops up here. In 1870 the Baron (though 'not a fighting man,' as the Colonel says) had insisted on accompanying the Dutch ambulance; and good fortune, as he put it, had enabled him to save a wounded Bavarian General, under heavy artillery fire—but never mind that!

'I must be off to my lecture,' exclaimed the Baron. 'Good heavens! I forgot about Paris. We shall start to-morrow morning. Tell your mother, Thomasine!'

Thomasine had expected this sudden decision to agitate the Baroness, but not to the degree, nor in the manner, it did. That lady refused, however, to afford any other explanation of her eager approval than could be found in the natural desire to see Edward. 'Laura's presence in Paris!' she said. 'Pooh! Nonsense! Miss Laura must look after herself. Besides, Edward writes that she is staying with a charitable Scotch lady, whose work among butchers would interest me greatly. I shall certainly go and have a look at it, though I don't see the use of converting butchers. The most converted butcher that ever was born wouldn't be honest about bones. It isn't in nature. Our last butcher was an Elder, and you should hear the way Eliza says he behaved about the fat.'

'Not that I care tuppence about bones and fat—the disgusting things,' adds the Baroness peevishly. 'I shall be heartily glad to get rid of it all in Paris, where they cut up their dead cattle small. There are no tiresome joints in a French cow, Thomasine, and what isn't beef-steak in its body is chiefly trotters and tripe!'

CHAPTER XII.

ON the morning of the operation the four ladies sat, avoiding each other's glances, in the silent sitting-room, at the hotel, left behind, as women are, with their prayers, when the men are gone forth to act. The presence of the stranger, Miss MacClachlin, made it easier for the Baroness to sit there with Laura. Each lady was endeavouring to divert her own thoughts in a congenial manner. Laura, at a side-table, was spreading out playing-cards, entirely incredulous, as she truthfully averred, yet absorbed. Maria MacClachlin sat labouring to make sense of her Scottish agent's account-sheets, the one thing on earth she felt certain she couldn't do. The Baroness, with much writing-paper all about her, composed yards (hardly metres) of ode to Hygiea, almost too nervous for rhyme and far too nervous for reason. Thomasine sorted her brother's notes and correspondence anent the great matter in hand. There was a good deal to sort: he had indeed not skated, as the Dutch say, 'over the ice of a single night.'

'I hope you don't object to this sort of thing!' said Laura, suddenly, to the Baroness. She swept all her cards together and began laying them out again. 'I don't believe in it, of course!'

'Daughter of Gods and nurse of men—Oh no, I don't object,' replied the Baroness, with pen uplifted.

'I think it is sinful,' remarked Maria MacClachlin, looking away from her lines of figures. 'I dislike the word "sin," but I think that is sinful.'

'Oh no, it can't be sinful,' answered Laura quickly, 'for sinful is doing what you like.'

'Throw your cards into the fire!'

'That's what you would like to do with those papers of yours, and *that* would be sinful,' said Laura mischievously.

Miss MacClachlin had advanced to the little card-table. 'Come!' she said, and swept half the pack off in one fell swoop. Laura rose in agitation. 'No! No! I don't believe in it, but you needn't tempt the Fates!'

'The Fates!' cried Maria MacClachlin in horror.

'The powers of evil, whatever you like to call them! The malign Forces that influence our lives!'

'Were you ever baptized?' cried Maria MacClachlin.

'No,' said Laura. All the other women uttered exclamations. 'My father,' added the girl hastily, 'said it was a mockery, if nobody intended to keep the promises they made.'

'Surely, mother, that is true,' put in Thomasine, whose exclamation had been pity only. 'Don't burn those cards!' was the Baroness's sole reply. She spoke peremptorily. She also had risen. 'I agree with Laura,' she said. 'I don't know about Cartomancy, and I should enjoy a game of whist, if I could remember trumps, but there *is* some connection between the Devil's picture-book and the Devil, and, as Laura says, though we don't want his assistance, we—we needn't insult him at this moment'—she glanced at the clock—'we may as well have him neutral, if we can, Miss MacClachlin.'

'Amazing!' said Maria, and laid the cards down. 'It is as if I heard my old nurse Nannie, who believes in Kelpies, and all sorts of monsters, that damage your harvests and sprain your wrists.'

'And has the second-sight!' exclaimed Laura, 'and could see perhaps this very moment what is happening at Auteuil!' She began pacing up and down the room. 'If I only had that! If I only had that!' she said.

'It's as uncertain with her as it is with you!' answered Miss MacClachlin, but with less aplomb.

'You cannot deny that she has it? That she saw, at your home in Scotland, when you were ill here in bed!'

'N-n-no,' said Miss MacClachlin.

'With a bandage round your head, mind you!'

'I admit the bandage.'

'It proves there are spirits,' said Laura.

'O Laura!' cried Thomasine. 'Surely it only proves that we don't know all about our souls that the doctors think they do!'

Before Laura could answer, the Baroness, who had retired into the adjoining bedroom, called to her daughter in a voice which caused the latter to hasten to her side.

'Thomasine!' said the Baroness, 'a terrible thing has happened!'

The Baroness was quite pale: she steadied herself, trembling, against the mantelpiece.

'Mamma!' cried Thomasine, alarmed.

'Hush, don't let the others hear us! My daughter, I will tell you all.' And, hoarse with agitation, trembling there, she hurried on: 'You may laugh at me, if you like—of course, you will laugh at me. Laura is right: there are powers of evil. And—and protecting spirits. The Bible says so. That Scotchwoman talks about her Nannie: my old nurse in Brabant—well, yes, she was a Papist, as you know, a pious Papist. We call them Papists, Thomasine, but Catholics is the right word. They are the oldest Church: there must be things they know better than we. Never mind that, now, but my old nurse—she was a very pious woman—very pious and wise, and we never get quite away from our childish associations. She—she taught me my grace, that I still say, mechanically, I fear, before meals. Well, of course, I taught you Protestant ones—but, but I certainly never suffered from indigestion, as your father does. And she taught me a charm I say, and things have often come right, I can assure you. And I have so many troubles in my household, and I've said that charm in my own room, crying, when Eliza's been contrary, and she's come and said she was sorry, and, you know, Thomasine, it's only a miracle could make Eliza say that! And, when she was dying—nurse, I mean—she sent for me, and she gave me the little image of the Virgin and Child off her poor old wasted neck, and she bade me wear it and give it to

my son, if ever I had one, when he started on his career. I knew what it had done for her: she'd often told me about it, when I was a baby. And I didn't wear it, though I'd promised, you see—being a Protestant. But I didn't like not keeping my promise, and the day I put it on at last, I wrote my letter to your father. And, and he married me, as you know, and all my happiness dates from then. And though you can't reason about it, and I know it sounds absurd, it has often helped me and protected me: I can't reason about it, but I've proof, heaps of proof! I sewed it into your father's coat—he never noticed—when he made his great speech in Parliament on Sanitation, that would have been such a success, if they'd only known what Sanitation meant. And—and, oh, lots of times! When I heard about this operation, I wanted so to give Edward my little image, and I couldn't—and then came suddenly this wonderful idea of your father's: it seemed like a voice from heaven, and I packed it up this morning with a note for Edward, and I gave it to your father, most particularly, to take to him—and, oh, Thomasine, there it lies!' She pointed to a small parcel on the toilet-table, and burst into tears.

'Did papa know?' asked Thomasine, seeking for something to say.

'No—oh no! He wouldn't understand. Your father is very religious, but it's a man's religion. No—no *hors d'œuvres*. The solid meat, plain, and as little as possible of that. I am a woman, Thomasine, only a womanly woman. If I had been a man, I should have been so different from what I am! I must have my religious kickshaws, and my poetry. When I read all my Strauss and Plato, I soon saw I must have my poetry as well. But—oh, it's no use talking!'—she stamped her foot in her anxiety—'I've had proof all my life, that my Virgin and Child brings us good fortune—that's not cards and tricks, like Laura's, but it's religion, our Christian religion—and now at the decisive moment of Edward's career—we've left them lying neglected there!'

'Oh, don't cry, mamma!' faltered Thomasine, still seeking.

The Baroness looked at her quickly.

'Do you want your mother to be wiser,' she said, 'than the greatest king France ever had?'

'He—he was some—time ago,' answered Thomasine.

'But not before the Christian religion! And he was as pious as he was wise. Or do you think the Christian religion has gone on improving since Christ? I have written a poem on Louis XI. Oh, why do we stand arguing here—and time flying—and Edward hasn't got it! We've insulted it!—we've neglected it!—oh—oh—oh——!'

Thomasine glanced at the clock.

'It is ten minutes past eleven,' she said. 'They can hardly have begun yet.'

'But Auteuil is miles from here! And we don't know the way.'

'I will try,' said Thomasine. 'I can find the way. And, oh, at any rate,' she rigidly checked a smile, 'the Virgin will see, even if I am too late, that we are treating her with proper respect.'

'You might ask Miss Mac-what's-her-name to go with you. She knows Paris.'

'Better not, mamma. She would ask questions.'

'You are ashamed of me,' said the Baroness contritely.

'Oh, mamma, don't say such a thing! Of course, it's very new to me. I thought you were as good a Protestant as any of us.'

'It's the *Virgin and Child*,' said the Baroness. Thomasine was already getting her things. 'But, reason as you may, I've all my experiences to pit against you. I don't defend myself. I sent you and your sisters to Geneva on purpose: everything's Calvinistic there. But my youth was spent with a dear old nurse, who taught me that our lives are full of saints and devils—and I can't get away from that.'

'Have you some French money for me?' said Thomasine.

Her mother gave it her, with a fervent kiss. 'Child,' said the Baroness, 'you are so like your father: I am glad I called you after him—that is another mystery:

we are like the people they call us after. Yes, you think of others; I try to. I love you dearly, Thomasine. I wish I could be more for my children, but I—I don't know how. I am glad, however, to have you associated with me in my work. You are interested—are you not, dear?—in *Balaam*?"

'Yes, indeed,' said Thomasine, already in the passage. With the aid of the hotel-porter she obtained a cabman who agreed, for twice the legal fare, to convey her out to Auteuil, and, less than half an hour later, having seen him drive off, vociferating, with three times that fare in his pocket, she nervously pushed open the gilt *grille* of the *Etablissement Ducrot*. It was the cabman, not her errand, that had made her nervous. Like her parents, she detested money squabbles, and was entirely unaccustomed to them.

The wintry garden of the *Etablissement* looked chill and deserted. The open-air cure had not yet been invented, and no one, therefore, was sitting or lying in the sodden pathways or on the steaming lawns. A dull grey sky hung heavy against the black tracery of the trees. The bright snow of the *Leyden* gables seemed many weeks away.

'*Là-bas, au fond!*' said a white-aproned man with a broom. She found, picking her way through the damp, the little side-gate, the tall cluster of trees, the half-hidden villa. The line of windows, between their shutters, stared at her, repellent. Nothing stirred. Behind those windows, somewhere, the tragedy was enacting. She passed up the few steps to the *perron*—her walk and her touch were ever of the softest—and rang, perhaps a little timidly. Nothing responded, but through the glass door, that stood ajar, she heard the long murmur of a voice. She felt there was no time to be lost, and pushed on, in the direction of the murmur. The door at the end of the hall—it was that of the small dining-room—stood open. Thomasine stood aghast. The murmur was not a murmur, but a smothered cry.

A man lay on his knees, in the gloom of brown wainscoting, against a divan. His face was hidden: his arms

and hands were entangled, amongst cushions, before it. From hidden depths of suffering broke forth that half-stifled cry.

Thomasine had never before seen or heard a layman pray. Only her father's formal reading, of mornings. She trembled and grew crimson, as if she had stumbled on physical nudity. She turned to fly, but as she turned he lifted his head and saw her.

He was on his feet, in an instant, fairly composed, his attitude courteous, his dark face gone pale. Even in that moment of discomfiture, she realised that she had never seen so—distinguished an attitude, so hauntingly exquisite a face.

'I am anxious to speak to Dr. Lisse,' she said quickly. 'I am his sister. If he has not yet begun——'

'He has begun,' said Kenneth in a broken voice, 'and I am Kenneth Graye.'

The agony that bore down his attempt at reserve was too manifest. And the position, in spite of its embarrassment, came not unnaturally to Thomasine, accustomed, by much parish-work at Leyden, to sympathy with all sorts of distress. Yet we all know how easy it is to sympathise with the indigent.

'Is it——' he stammered, 'it must be—some thing of very great importance that makes you want to speak to him—just now.'

'Yes,' she said, 'but, of course, now he has begun I cannot disturb him.'

'He has begun,' repeated Kenneth; and he sank down again, seated on the divan, resting his head against his hands. 'They are busy at this moment. They have been at it for hours and hours!' His haggard eyes sought the timepiece—'Twenty minutes! They are busy. Do you hear anything?' He went to the door. 'Hush! Didn't you hear a cry? Hush! I fancy I hear one all the time. Deep down in the cushions I hear them most. They are busy over yonder on the other side, behind that door. People cry out, in spite of chloroform: don't they? But, I suppose, you don't know. I wonder if people cry out in spite of chloroform?'

'Yes, they cry out,' said Thomasine, 'sometimes; but they don't feel anything!'

'How do the doctors know that?' His own was almost a cry. 'Because the patient doesn't remember when he wakes? But perhaps the chloroform only kills the memory, not the pain! They say James always felt pain, though he couldn't tell about it! My God!'

He tried to steady himself. 'You see,' he said apologetically, 'it's a matter of life and death, and I had to decide about it, all by myself, his uncle. Perhaps he's dead already. How very quiet they are.'

Thomasine hesitated, whether to go or stay. And then she decided to ask him, quite simply, this stranger with the kindly grief-drawn face.

'Shall I wait for my brother, or shall I go?' she said. He could always indicate his inclination by offering her another room.

'When you found me, I was trying to pray,' he answered abruptly. 'We men don't know much, as a rule, about praying. I think, if there were prayers going on in this house'—again he paused to listen—'You remember that beautiful story in the Bible about Moses—Can you pray?'

'Yes,' said Thomasine Lisse very gently. 'Everyone can.' He looked at her. 'I don't believe,' he said, 'in prayer-book prayers.'

Thomasine, amid her Calvinistic surroundings, had never heard of written supplications. 'They always sound to me,' continued Kenneth, 'as if you were praying for some one else.' He walked back from the door to the clock. 'Oh, my God!' he said, quite low. And that, certainly, was a prayer. At that moment some sort of sound, indefinable, unmistakably reached them from behind the wall at the other side of the passage—to both, whether rightly or wrongly, it shaped itself as a suppressed scream. Kenneth shuddered, and, sinking down by his cushions: 'You are a woman,' he said, 'and, by your face, a good one! Pray!'

Thomasine knelt against the table, hiding out of sight in her muff. In the long, long silence that followed, a thoughtful, breathing silence, listening, holding its breath,

amid the solemn yearnings of the silence, the two stranger souls in the little back-room held unrealised communion with each other in God.

'I can't endure it!' cried Kenneth suddenly—and his voice sounded horribly loud. 'What's the use of praying—praying? With the whole world going wrong? Perhaps we pray wrong—ask the wrong thing and get it for the asking. Does that account for all the misery? No, no; there's plenty of misery without praying. And, what's worse—I don't know what to ask! I don't want the operation to "succeed," whatever that may signify! I mean, not from their medical point of view. What I want is James's good—that only! I want him to be happier, happier, I don't care how! Even if he dies! But, when I say that, a lot of horrible thoughts crop up, that I couldn't repeat aloud,—that people will say that I jumped at the operation as a means to get rid of him, and—and—and they swamp my prayers. My God, will this never end? They've been busy an hour. I—I—what do you say to God, when you speak to Him? I—I want to ask the right thing. Would you very much mind showing me how?'

Thomasine Lisse, who had risen as he commenced speaking, once more sank to her knees. 'Our Father in Heaven,' she said falteringly, 'Our Father—our Father in Heaven, help us! And guide the hands of these men in all they are doing! And have mercy on the soul—and the body—of James Graye!'

'Have mercy,' he repeated, his voice steadying to the words, as he spoke them, 'on the soul—and the body—of James Graye.'

Thus she stayed, till the distant door flung open, and all the doctors came out together.

'It has succeeded—so far,' said Edward Lisse. His square young face had lost most of its natural ruddiness, but the blue eyes shone with a tranquil light. He came out, straight and tall, fair-haired and foreign, amongst the quick Parisian doctors, clever and keen. The Professor lagged behind. 'He—he—how?' Kenneth spoke to Edward only.

THE HEALERS

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'It is marvellous! marvellous!' cried Dr. Ducrot.
'*Mes compliments, mon cher confrère!*'

'He lives,' said Edward. 'My sister!' he added, distressed. A young French doctor had run forward. Kenneth, yet quicker than he, had caught Thomasine, as she swayed, and deposited her gently on the divan. 'It is my fault,' he said, in English. 'I behaved like a selfish brute.' He ran to the sideboard for water. 'I am all right, I never fainted in my life,' gasped Thomasine. Then the room went round, in a whirl of interested doctors' faces, and the Professor's voice inquired through darkness: 'Whatever is my daughter Thomasine doing here?'

CHAPTER XIV

'So it looked very risky at first,' said the Baroness, and she nodded to Thomasine. 'But afterwards, it went much better.'

'Yes,' replied the Professor, 'Edward's diagnosis has certainly been wonderfully correct: the brain was cramped, compressed, as a hand might be squeezed into a jug. They must widen the skull now—an awful thing.'

'Just so,' said the Baroness, still nodding to her daughter, 'but afterwards it went all right.'

'Will he be like other people, father?'

'No, child, how can he? True, you haven't seen him. We shall find out in time. It is interesting, most interesting, quite new to me. But your mother's sending you to hear how things were going on was——' He paused.

'Well?' said the Baroness apprehensively.

'Quite right, dear Jane, of course, but just a *little* hard on Thomasine.'

'Thomasine tells me she is very glad she went. She was able to amuse the poor uncle meanwhile.'

'Not amuse, mamma—occupy.' Thomasine walked away to welcome Laura, in a pale cream dinner-gown. 'What lovely clothes you have!' she said.

'Was there an uncle? Oh yes, the dark young man. I didn't observe him,' answered the Professor.

'I got them at Brussels. I like to wear nice clothes,' said Laura.

'Here comes the hero of the hour!' exclaimed the Baroness, as Edward entered. She solemnly advanced and placed a home-made wreath of laurels on Edward's yellow head. They were dining together, in their hotel sitting-room, and so the little party was complete.

'He looks much more like an Olympian winner in dress-clothes than anything else,' said Thomasine. Laura's eyes were on her lover, but she said nothing. 'May I take it off?' said the lover himself.

'Yes,' replied his mother, 'but you must put it on again, at dessert, when I recite you my ode to Hygiea. You are introduced as her priest!'

The Professor, in an anxious aside to Thomasine, pointed out that Æsculapius would have been more correct, as Edward, if anything, was a priest of healing, and he, the Professor, a priest of health. 'But don't mention it to your mother for worlds,' he added.

'Now, Edward, tell us all your great men said!'

'My great men all spoke of my father's greatness,' answered Edward.

And so the dinner began and progressed under the most favourable auspices. It was not till dessert that the sudden sorrow fell.

The Baroness was standing, erect, over the mandarines and champagne, declaiming to the laurelled (and miserable) Edward, when the hotel porter knocked and produced the telegram. 'A reply from your uncle! How quick of him,' said the Professor. Edward had torn off the wreath: the Baroness stood, paper in hand.

'Now, surely his telegram can wait,' she said. But the Baron had already opened it and was reading it aloud:

'Had misunderstood Abrahams' wire. Paraffin up; rubber also, but it appears we had played for a fall. One hundred thousand required for cover. Wire immediate instructions. Francis.'

'What does it mean?' asked the Baron, instinctively holding out the missive to his son.

'It means ruin,' said the Baroness, and she sank to the table, crushing her ode amongst the laurel leaves. 'It means that you must send Francis Lisse a hundred thousand francs or florins—what does it matter?—to squander, as he has already probably squandered the rest.'

'Has Uncle Francis got your money in his hands, dear father?' asked Edward.

'Yes, my boy. I—I know nothing about money matters. He was taking very good care of it. He told me only the other day, how well things were going. That is why we came here.'

'Edward!' cried the Baroness passionately, striking the blue paper with one hand. 'Understand this! Explain!'

'I think I can do that,' he answered, and he told the eager group of listeners at least what the words of the message meant.

'I must give him this hundred thousand at once?' said the Professor.

'Or the man Abrahams will doubtless sell,' replied Edward. 'How much loss that may entail, we cannot guess.'

'I don't know,' said the Professor, 'but one thing I do know. There is only one means of meeting further demands.'

'No,' cried the Baroness.

'My dear, why do you say "no," when it is "yes"?''

'Not that means, anything but that!—Edward, he alludes to the sale of Bardwyk!'

All of them were silent. At last Thomasine said, 'We can easily spend the holidays somewhere else.'

The Baroness was watching her future daughter-in-law. She had got to acquiesce in Laura, but she now wondered how this adventuress (that fact could hardly be denied) would take the fact of financial, and consequently social, ruin. Perchance this ill-wind would blow Edward release from uncongenial bonds! Meanwhile Laura sat gazing down at her plate, splitting, carefully, mandarine-pips.

'Edward!' said the poor Professor. 'Edward! Edward!' His son went round the table and put an arm round his neck and kissed him on the forehead. 'I don't want Bardwyk,' said Edward; 'you have given me a better inheritance than that.' Laura looked up quickly. 'His name,' said Edward, gazing straight into her eyes. It was then that the Baroness, in a voice broken by passionate weeping—her head against her husband's

shoulder, her cap slipping off—broke into that brief improvisation—the only thing of hers which will ever live a little—the fairly well-known:

'All hail, hereditary lords!
That hold your fief of pure and lofty soul
By daily tests of virtue!'

'Hush! Hush!' murmured the Professor, wiping his eyes with the back of the fateful telegram. While they were discussing the catastrophe and trying to fathom it a second messenger arrived, illuminating whatever in the situation might still remain obscure.

'Unless sum provided instantly, sale inevitable. Loss three hundred thousand. Otherwise recovery probable.'

'That,' said Edward, 'is plain enough.'

'All but the recovery,' said the Baroness.

'A hundred thousand florins is not an incalculable sum,' remarked Laura, speaking suddenly.

The remark was unfortunate, under the trying circumstances, in the Baroness's ears. 'People who have never had the administration of money, my dear,'—she was a woman, so she said 'my dear'; she was a good woman, so she said it undesignedly—'always form a very erroneous conception of the relative value of amounts.' Laura answered nothing, but returned to her chipping of pips. The click-click exasperated the Baroness.

'Where is the first telegram?' asked the Baroness tartly. Her husband, having mechanically pushed it into his breast-pocket, drew out a bundle of loose papers and letters to look for it. As he turned them over with unsteady fingers, a visiting card dropped from among the rest and fell on the table. He looked down at it and recognised it: he had not seen the thing since he thrust it out of sight two days ago. It was the card bearing Mr. Bitterbol's address. He realised, with painful distinctness, at once, that here was the means of salvation. For he knew the world of hygienic food-fads, and he could not doubt one moment that, the enormous outlay for advertisements being guaranteed, such a well-organised swindle as this was quite certain of success. All that was needed was his hall-mark, so to speak, on the patent

sucker. How many of his colleagues had done that sort of thing, were doing it every day! What an easy way of preserving and of beautifying the old home! 'It means thousands,' had said Mr. Bltterbol, in leaving: of course it did. The Baron remembered palatial buildings, seen in various places, almost always belonging to the proprietor of some sort of patent bosh. He had never needed thousands, but he wanted them now. 'I am a poor man: my future is in your hands,' had said Mr. Bltterbol. The Baron, then, could commit a generous action, a righteous action, and Edward would be lord of a fairer Bardwyk. All this passed quickly enough through his brain, as he sat staring down at the card on the table. The address was turned away from him: he had not yet seen it: he had no idea where the man lived: he had forgotten his name. The Baroness, with the automatic curiosity of her sex, reached to take the bit of pasteboard. 'Whose card is this?' she said; 'Charcot's? Pasteur's?' He snatched it from her—he snatched—and from her. She stared at him aghast.

The Professor was holding the card in one of the candles on the dinner-table, where it made a nasty smoke and smell. He flung the charred remains on a plate, and drew a deep breath. 'I don't know whose the card was, and now I never shall,' he said. They were all far too impressed by his great intellect to imagine it could be clouded for a moment. So they only looked uncomfortably at each other. 'These touts outside the hotels,' said Edward, 'ought to be stopped by the police.'

'Why?' asked Thomasine.

'They tout for the music-halls,' answered Edward, 'and music-halls are very wicked places.'

'I know that,' said Thomasine.

'There are none at Bardwyk,' said Laura. And again the remark was ill-chosen. For it called up before the eyes of all her four hearers, with the sounds of the Boulevard outside, the peaceful Dutch home, in the simple green village, the stately square house amidst its ancestral meads. Laura, the stranger, had never seen Bardwyk: what could it be to her? She had been thinking of its

repose, of its dignity, as things most desirable, and that is why she had spoken. But the Baroness only answered dryly, 'No.'

'The dear old place,' said Thomasine.

'We must reply to the telegram,' said Edward. He, the heir, was longing to ask them not to mention Bardwyk again, but Edward had from his father that almost extravagant dread of hurting the feelings of others.

'Will this money, this hundred thousand, save the situation?' demanded Laura. She had left her place and begun walking up and down the room—again to the annoyance of the Baroness, although, really, if Laura did anything well, it was walking. She reiterated her question, stopping short.

'I think it would,' said the Professor. 'At any rate it would save Bardwyk. We could settle up. I should retire.'

'They must have it, then!' said Laura. Nobody answered her, till the Baroness began: 'My dear, as I was saying, people unaccustomed—'

'They must have it: I will give it them!' cried Laura.

'You?' She heard Edward alone.

'Yes, dear one. I—I—I!' She stood for one moment looking at him, then, suddenly, she tore open the lace front of her loose dinner-gown, literally rending the flimsy material asunder in her haste, and loosening, with fevered hands, a broad soft-leather little bag that lay flat under her bosom, she scattered its contents in a shower of crumpled papers across the table, over the floor. She stood there pouring them forth, as it were, from her very breast, pouring them out, with eyes streaming towards him in the eager abandonment of her beautiful arms, pouring them out towards her lover. 'They are mine! They are mine!' she repeated, 'to give to you! I give them to you, dearest! They are mine! They are mine!'

She stopped at last exhausted, her dress all in disorder about her bosom, her face flaming, her hands limp. He was by her side: he had drawn her close: in the presence of the other Lisses he was murmuring broken words of

endearment and of wonder. And everywhere around them lay bank-notes, bank-notes on table and floor.

'There is more than a hundred thousand,' sobbed Laura; 'a great deal more.'

'And it is yours!' exclaimed the Baron. The Baroness only said, 'Laura Baleyne, I entreat you to forgive me!' But this caused Laura to cry so much more that the fat little great lady had to step off her chair and kiss the Sumatran in Edward's arms. Then they all set to gathering up the bank-notes, Dutch and foreign, each of them for so huge an amount, especially the English ones, that the packet was only a thin one, when flattened out, in the end, upon the table.

'And you carry this enormous fortune about with you!' exclaimed the Professor. 'In a bundle!' cried his wife. 'In three separate ones!' wept Laura; 'and I'm so thin it doesn't show!' Then she stopped crying. 'My own father wished it to be so,' she said. 'If you don't much mind, I should like to have a little talk with Edward.' The others, bewildered by what was befalling them, left the lovers alone.

'Edward,' she said, sitting down, while he stood beside her, 'I am glad this has happened, and sorry. You mustn't mind.' She placed one finger on the pile of bank-notes. 'The money is mine, and it isn't mine.'

'O Laura!' Then he waited.

'I will tell you all. It is a long story. You must listen. I would rather not have told you. It is a painful story.'

'Dearest, surely we should have no secrets from each other.'

'Yes, I know: that is what people say. But when the secret is a third person's, I am not so sure. However, now there is no choice. My—my mother left my father. She ran away.' There was a long pause: Laura, her eyes on her hands, blush after blush mantling her southern skin, was evidently trying to master the emotion in her throat.

He stooped and took the hands in his own and kissed them. He did not speak.

'She left her money behind her: he had it. From the day she ran away she disappeared: he never heard of her again. He could not trace her. He would not touch her money: he said they were divorced. It was hers again. So it accumulated—it doubled. One day, a couple of years ago, we received a letter from a lawyer in America saying she had died there, and enclosing a certificate of her death. That was all we ever heard.' Again she hesitated. He pressed the hand he held.

'When my father was dying, not long after, quite towards the end, he—he told me all about this money, and he gave me all of it, like that, just as I have given it to you. He had sent for it from the bank, sold out—what do you call it?—when he knew he was going to—not to get better. He told me he had sold the—the investments, because, I not being of age, there would be so much legal trouble about every form of having it but bank-notes. Do you understand?'

'Perfectly,' said Edward. 'In India especially they would have made you a Government ward.'

'It's all right if you understand,' said Laura contentedly. 'So father told me to take the money with me to Europe, and to keep it by me, and never to speak of it to any one. "For, if you once give it to another person," he said, "a banker, or any one else, they won't allow you to have it back." He was very nervous and very ill in his terrible fever. I don't know if he was right.'

'He was certainly correct,' replied Edward cautiously.

'So I put all the money in slips in a bag fitting just round here, and I wore it day and night.'

'Night! What a risk!' said Edward, partly to himself, terrified at the thought of possibilities. 'How could you sleep a wink with such a breast-plate as that?'

'It wasn't comfortable,' she answered, 'but you see, father said it was the only way. Oh, you mean thieves? I never thought of thieves. I never heard of anybody being robbed. Did you? And, as for that, banks fail, don't they? and companies go smash. Oh, I never was afraid of thieves.'

'But, at any rate, the money is yours, dear—only not

being of age, they would not allow you to have it. But it's yours.'

She turned the full gaze of her lustrous eyes upon him: there was such a weird light in them that he could hardly, with his own clear blue ones, encounter it. 'Now that,' she said, 'is just what I wanted to tell you, only it is so difficult. You will laugh at me, as you have laughed before.' She took both his hands, as he had taken hers. 'Don't laugh at me!' she said piteously. 'It is so difficult to tell you, and I must. I do not believe that my mother is dead.' Her voice had dropped to a whisper. Bending down he just caught the words.

'But you had the certificate,' he said.

'Yes; I don't care about the certificate. She has spoken to me so often since, and told me not to believe it.'

'Spoken to you? But who sent it then?'

'She speaks in my sleep, my trance—call it what you like. She doesn't speak—she guides my pencil: she writes—she writes many things. I do not always understand them all. Now laugh!'

'Laura, you must never say that to me again. I never laughed through my father's illness, least of all have I laughed to-day. Who told you how James Graye felt, when all his life he had been unable to tell any one?'

'She first began speaking to me after my father's death,' continued Laura. 'She told me that she had sent him the certificate and the letter, because she wished him to be free. Now, how could I ever have imagined that?'

'I do not affirm that you imagined it. You mustn't mind my confessing to you that I am not prepared as yet to believe in direct communication between mortals and a "spirit" world, but the possibility of some form of telepathy we scientists can hardly any longer deny.'

'Then you see that my mother is alive,' she cried joyfully; 'you see that. You say she is alive!'

'If she speaks to you, she must certainly be alive.'

Her face fell. 'Honestly,' he added, 'you must give me time.'

'The money is hers, for she lives,' persisted Laura

doggedly, 'but she has always told me to use it, when an emergency came, and therefore it is mine.'

'The emergency has come, certainly,' he replied, looking away to the pile of bank-notes. 'All the same, the money being yours does not make it ours.' She put her hand across her mouth. 'Now I have told you all,' she said, 'take me home. I am very tired, Edward, and you must be almost dead.'

CHAPTER XV

NEXT morning Edward, having spent an almost sleepless night, and held a brief consultation in the morning with his father (who had slept on Jenkins' Pills), telegraphed to Uncle Francis that he must come over to Paris immediately to elucidate his transactions. The answer arrived that the Colonel had started, bringing Mr. Abrahams along with him.

Before that answer reached the hotel Edward had, however, departed to see his patient. There was an important consultation at ten. The operation, as has been said, had been completely successful. The patient was in imminent danger.

After the departure of the other great doctors—of the great doctors, rather, for Edward was by no means a great doctor as yet—the young man, his whole heart one mass of burning anxiety for his patient and worry for his parents, remained alone with Kenneth Graye. Kenneth, for the moment, was not good company. He had fallen into a moody stupor, repeating to himself: 'What will be, will be. Kismet. Ananke. To bear is to conquer our fate, and all that sort of thing. Mental chloroform.'

When Miss MacClachlin came to inquire, at daybreak, he roused himself to tell her that some people cried out, however much chloroform they got giv'n them. 'Which shows,' he said, 'that chloroform's no good.'

'You've been up all night,' replied Miss MacClachlin. 'As for chloroform, this morning, before Paris awoke, more than two thousand brute beasts, shrieking for mercy, with horror-struck eyes, were cruelly slaughtered

at La Villette alone! And yesterday it was the same thing, and to-morrow it will be the same. The whole world is one great death-pit of torture. Are you a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals?’

‘Yes,’ replied Kenneth, smiling in spite of himself.

‘Does that include giving up eating meat?’

‘It ought to include buying your meat of merciful butchers only,’ said Miss MacClachlin, with decision. ‘It ought to include the Siegmund Mask, and all that sort of thing. But it doesn’t. People are so inconsistent. I knew a woman who subscribed to the Society and hunted. The toad!’

Kenneth did not answer. ‘I am close on forty,’ said Maria. (Since Kenneth had declined her proposal, she, from some feminine instinct of self-abasement, rapidly aged herself.) ‘One thing I have learned about my fellow-creatures. The masses do what they like, and the classes do what other people do. My poor butcher-boys at La Villette have a better time, really, than all the fine ladies of Mayfair. But they’re all wrong—all, both the cheerful brutes and the shiny serpents. And outside them lies Christianity, a dead letter: “Do unto others——” There, there, it’s very disheartening, and one would like a good gulp of chloroform: only, as you say, they cry out all the same. Meanwhile, I prefer my bellowing beeves to the—— There, I won’t abuse my own sort. Good-bye!’

This conversation had braced Kenneth in parts: he felt fragmentarily more cheerful. ‘Everybody that’s worth his salt has a bad time here below,’ he reflected, ‘salting and getting salted. Miss MacClachlin’s right. Only the salt that has lost its savour is happy on the dunghill of Mayfair. Look at her, away from that exquisite place in Scotland, in the reek of La Villette!’

‘What forces yqu have to fight against!’ he said to Edward, as they came away from the patient, moaning in his fevered sleep. ‘Disease in a sick body is like the——what’s its name?—Hydra!’

‘There are worse forces than disease,’ replied Edward.

'Mental, you mean? One's own thoughts. Yes, indeed!'

'I was self-righteously thinking of the wickedness of others,' replied honest Edward. 'Wicked men are the worst to fight, I think. I don't understand about them. Nature at least fights fair.'

'I don't agree with you a bit.'

'She fights according to rules; only we don't always know them. We must find them out.'

'How can you say so! That shows the difference of temperament: what a big human world it is! Now, to me Nature seems the ficklest, falsest of foes, always striking in the dark, and the back. I don't mind fighting men. Especially not, when it's a question of defence. I could get my back to the wall and feel happy till I dropped. I suppose that's my Scotch nature. Still, you Dutchmen ought to be good at a stubborn fight.'

'I was not thinking of that sort of open war,' replied Edward; 'I was thinking of intrigue, and swindling, and fraud.'

'Well, even there, I shouldn't mind. I should enjoy acutely the thought that the swindler was getting the worst of it. And, do you know, I imagine, if you will forgive me, that he would. Of course that's my Aberdonian conceit. The Jew story.'

'What Jew story?'

Kenneth laughed outright. 'Wise men say there are only six good stories going in the world since Adam, but it's an immense satisfaction that there's always a man hasn't heard all six. There was a Jew came to Aberdeen—— What is it, Barton?'

'I wonder, Mr. Graye, would Mr. Lisse mind having just a look at Sir James?' Under Barton's impassive manner, and his mask, had flashed out for the last day or two, almost ceaselessly, an anxiety which only the continuous presence of Edward could allay.

When the two men went back to the sitting-room, Edward's mind was made up. Therefore he spoke suddenly, as we do when we break resolutely through our reserve. 'I have no one to confide in but you. And it

is part of my duty to your nephew that my mind should keep as cool as I can manage. The worst fight awaits me this evening, because I know nothing of the weapons.' And he told his sympathetic companion all the little he could. They sat some time in silence, thinking it over: at length Kenneth took the pipe from his lips.

'I owe you about as big a debt as any man can owe another,' he said slowly. 'Whether James gets better or not, you've given all your mind to him for months, and you've found out about his pain, and you've done what you could, at any rate, to stop *that*. We won't say any more about it just now! All right: thanks! I only mean to point out that if there's anything you could possibly think I might be able to do for you, I should remain your debtor, however much it was, just the same.'

'If you could help me to understand the man's figures——' said Edward hesitatingly.

'That is just what I was thinking of; only I hardly knew how to propose it. You see, I don't pretend to be good for much, but I do know about finance—administration of property and that sort of thing. I've had to. I've been looking after my nephew *and* his property all this time, doing little else. Why, I know almost as much about these things as Miss MacClachlin, which is saying'—he laughed—'a good deal.'

L'amie des bouchers?

'Yes, she says she don't understand her agent's accounts, and I'm sure she believes it. But she's as sharp as a needle to prick a penny gone wrong!—and generous beyond—— Hullo, here's Dr. Ducrot!'

'It is marvellous! Marvellous!' cried the French doctor, entering. '*Mes compliments! Encore une fois tous mes compliments, mon cher collègue!*'

'You are too good,' answered Edward for the twentieth time, if not to this collaborator—or shall we say confederate?—then to another.

But, walking away, after an inspection of the unconscious patient, across the deserted garden, with the young Dutchman beside him, the proprietor of the Etablissement Ducrot waxed more practical.

'*Un moment!*' he had said to Edward on the *perron*. They strolled slowly between the leafless shrubs and the clumps of rhododendron. The fat man with the bulging frock-coat squinted down at his rosette. 'If this thing succeeds,' he said, 'if you can make this English Sir talk somewhat, show a little more sense than before, your reputation is established. Honours will come to you fast.'

'My first thought is to ease his pain,' replied Edward. 'I shall be happy enough, if I can do that.'

'Yes. You are lucky in your first patient. Pecuniarily also. He is rich, of course, like all these English milords. He is rich that he burst! Have you discussed as yet your fee with Charcot?'

'No,' said Edward violently. But the doctor's red face did not alter in any way. 'Well,' he answered, with dignified reserve, 'I should say you could certainly ask, for this treatment, a hundred thousand francs, or why not five thousand pounds? They prefer to count in their own way, and an odd way it is—five thousand sterling—eh?—five thousand golden guinea sterling. It sounds well. Sir Graye, this is my little bill for finding your noble nephew's brain—a marvellous new thing in science! How much?—not much: no—five thousand guinea sterling.'

'He is in the greatest danger!' cried Edward.

'But that does not alter the matter of the little bill. It is a big business: there will be many to pay.'

'I do not want any money at all,' exclaimed the exasperated Edward.

Ducrot stood still, and now, certainly, his face altered: the grizzled whiskers seemed to curl up round a purple sun. 'Impossible!' he shouted. 'Ridiculous! Absurd! You injure, you insult the whole profession! Pray, what is to become of us? And of our rightful share? Charcot has certainly a right to ten per cent., for he got you the patient; and I, of course, as you are doubtless aware, receive ten per cent. of all doctors' charges besides my own, in this establishment. You would be robbing us, monsieur, by charging less than five thousand guinea-

pounds! I certainly shall place my percentage on that basis. I expect, monsieur, five hundred golden sterlings. I am entitled to them!' A lady passed, coming from a side-walk—a patient. He took off his tall hat with a broad smile and a wide sweep. 'And how are your neuralgias, madame? Better? Ah, I am so glad.' Then he dropped his voice, and, more calmly: 'But, of course, you do not mean what you say. It would be the end, in the beginning, of your career.'

'You must let me think about it, Monsieur Ducrot,' answered Edward courteously. 'This question of payment is quite new to me. It seems an absurd thing that a man should be paid for experimenting on a poor fellow-creature as I have done.'

Dr. Ducrot shrugged his shoulders. 'I do not understand you,' he said acridly. 'You had better go for information to some older colleague whom you can trust. Farewell! But remember, I beg of you, that five hundred pounds is my legitimate share.'

'Of the plunder,' said Edward, alone in the street, between his teeth. But he soon found out how greatly he wronged Ducrot. The claims that came in from other quarters fitted perfectly into the proprietor's statement of the case.

'And what percentage is due,' asked Edward of one of the young Salpêtrière doctors, 'to the medium who decided me to undertake the operation by certifying the existence of constant pain? I should never have risked it but for that. She is the author of the whole thing!'

The young doctor laughed. 'We call her a patient, not a professional,' he said. 'As yet, we do not pay our patients. Have you seen the Professor's latest extraordinary case of this transmission of nerve-action? Oh, you must come. There are two women in one ward, great friends, one of them is deaf and dumb, the other only hysterical. When the two are joined in a hypnotic trance, the hysterical woman is deaf and dumb too. She hears absolutely nothing, not a pistol fired behind her ears!'

'I must come and see that,' replied Edward.

'There is no difficulty about that: it is not like telepathy,' remarked the young doctor.

'No, telepathy is certainly the great mystery of the moment,' said Edward, 'for such of us, at least, as do not believe in the miracles of spiritism—the'—he stared the young French doctor full in the face—'the communication of impressions from a distance, the fact, proved by experience and entirely unexplained as yet by science, that people occasionally see and hear sights and sounds that are beyond the reach of their eyes and ears. The thing exists.'

'The thing exists,' replied the young assistant, 'and if Charcot live long enough, he will explain it.'

CHAPTER XVI

THAT 3rd of January was the most crowded and the most emotional—the flurriedest—day of the poor Professor's life. Hasty arrangements had been made in the whole scientific world of the city to do him some sort of immediate honour—all sorts of honour—rather harum-scarum, while preparations and pressure were busy with plans for a great official banquet and reception. The quiet old man, who would have disliked that sort of thing, while accepting it as an honour to his nationality, at all times, was now carried round protesting that urgent business, never for a moment out of his memory, would probably recall him to Leyden next day. With '*mais non ! mais non's* !' vociferating all around him, he was wondering what disaster awaited him in Holland: as he entered the great lecture-room of his greatest living colleague, and all the cosmopolite auditory rose up and cheered him to the echo, he was calculating at what hour of the evening he would find himself face to face with Mr. Abrahams—of Abrahams, Moss, Moses, de Montmorency and Company, Bankers. The Baroness, unfit for these medical celebrations, had been carried off by Laura to inspect, with more curiosity than interest, Miss MacClachlin's *Œuvre* at the Abattoirs. Thomasine accompanied her father where ladies could penetrate at all. After her peaceful, if occasionally painful, studies with her brother, the sight of some of the lady-students, for instance, the strenuous Slavs, was rather a shock to her. They were not in Thomasine's line. But the clamorous enthusiasm all around her father imparted to that breathless day in Paris a living delight for all

later musings that easily effaces any vexatious impression of momentary money trouble. The absence of Edward, tied down to Sir James Graye's pillow, was a far more real sorrow, as she stood, listening, by her father's side.

'It is wonderful, but wearing,' gasped the Professor, as he sank into an armchair in his own sitting-room. The long winter evening had fallen.

'Your brother will be here in a couple of hours,' said the Baroness a little tremulously. 'By the bye'—her face broadened to a full smile, as when the sun breaks triumphant through clouds—'I found five newspaper reporters waiting for you when I got back from the Mercy for the Muttons business. I interviewed them all, or I should say, I let them interview me. They were exceedingly sympathetic about *Balaam*. I read them pieces, and they said they were delighted by the sound. Liriam's great speech to the king is to appear in the *Temps*. I expect a proof to-night. I wonder if Thomasine could manage a French translation?'

'Not metrical, mamma,' said Thomasine.

The Baroness smiled. 'No; none of my children have my gift. Edward was a great disappointment; that was, after his infant *début*. Well, well, he has disappointed you too, Thomas, all his life long, but he's coming right in the end.'

'He will be a bigger man than I,' said the Professor. 'And a wiser one, I trust,' he added with a sigh.

'At least he will have no brother to ruin him,' said the lady. She thrust her hand among the Professor's pile of letters, cards, and invitations, the accumulation of the afternoon's successive posts. 'All these!' she said. 'Let me look if my proof is among them.'

'Don't let us judge Francis till we know everything,' remonstrated the Professor. 'He says, "recovery probable."''

The Baroness vouchsafed no answer: she was maturing a base plan for inserting Imphi-Boshek, where most amply characterised as a fool, in the *Figaro*, a harmless but sufficiently sardonic revenge. 'The *Figaro* is going

to bring an article on "Wedded Genius," my dear,' she remarked, 'whereby it means you and me.'

But at this moment Laura, who had been listlessly sorting the envelopes, lifted one for closer scrutiny, and laid it down before the Professor. 'That letter,' she said, pointing, 'is written by a thief.'

'How so, my dear?' The Professor got his spectacles: he fumbled a good deal. 'How so?'

'I suppose you don't believe in graphology; well, you needn't. But, in doubt abstain, as they say in French, and so don't have any business transactions with the writer of that letter: well you he's a thief.'

The Professor had opened the envelope. An exclamation leaped from his lips. 'It is a personal letter from the man Abrahams,' he said, 'with a number of technicalities I should never be able to make out!'

Laura had taken the letter. 'Well, he's a thief,' she said. 'It's quite plain in his handwriting. There may be a lot of nonsense about graphology, but certain characteristics are unmistakable, and dishonesty, like vanity, is one of them. Your Mr. Abrahams will rob you, if he can.'

'Of course: he's a banker,' said the medæval, muddle-headed Baroness.

'Why, my dear, that's the attitude of the Romish Church!' cried the Professor, always analytical.

'It has attitudes worth noting,' replied his lady sagely.

'This Abrahams! This Abrahams!' said the Professor. And again, by no means for the first time that day, he took a pill. 'So much the worse for me, if he is a thief! Heaven knows how I am to meet him! As for your graphology, I should think it highly probable the thing exists. And if so, it must be reducible to some form of science. I have not studied the subject, Laura. People's handwriting manifestly changes with their mental and moral development. Personally I am persuaded nothing would influence a man's mental growth as much as an injection of Semicolon Serum, if we could get it to reach the brain. It would be most interesting to compare a subject's writing before and after that injection. Most

interesting. Most interesting.' The Professor sat pondering: nobody interrupted him, when he did that. 'But there are many pseudo-sciences,' he recommenced presently, 'far better left uninvestigated. They have their use. Of such is legitimate quackery. Now, these pills'—he tapped the box—'it would be quite easy for me to analyse them. I should find nothing inside. But I am careful not to do so. I rejoice in their influence. Unanalysed they calm me, and send me to sleep.' He sighed. 'The world is very complicated,' he said.

'It is full, full, full!' cried Laura—'full of intangible wonders on every hand.'

'Properly analysed, my dear, you would probably find the whole thing was a single microbe,' replied the Professor. 'At present the theory is that it is a primal cell.' Good heavens, how shall I fight this man! I don't understand a word he says!' With these words he rose to prepare for the spiritless dinner, a very different thing from the animated feast of the day before. Despite his abundance of conversational interests, the one engrossing thought came cropping up constantly of the approaching ordeal he felt so unfit to meet.

Before the meal was over the waiter brought in the card of Mr. Kenneth Graye. He was the bearer of a note from Edward. 'I dare not leave my patient. His temperature is 103. Consult Graye. You may trust him absolutely.'

'My brother will be here in twenty minutes,' said the Baron, 'with the other—gentleman.'

'Our idea—your son's and mine—was that I should appear as the person willing to advance the required sum,' said Graye, established with a cup of coffee and a rudimental home-feeling amongst these kindly, simple folks. For Laura had a lazy snile for everybody, and the Baroness, like so many elderly women of her class, looked far less dangerous at first sight than she, quite unconsciously, was.

'That, of course, would procure me a title to go into everything. And then, at least, I could give you my opinion, for what it is worth.'

'I should indeed be glad of it,' said the Professor. 'Indeed I know nobody in Paris whom I could consult as to the exact difference between a bond and a share.'

Kenneth felt not the slightest inclination to smile. The compact being now ratified, the little party awaited the early irruption of the two financiers. By the Englishman's advice, swiftly seconded, the men remained alone to meet the men.

'My dear Jane,' said the Baron, 'why not? You do not imagine I am afraid!'

The Colonel, brave soldier, looked the more disconcerted of the two brothers, when they stood opposite each other. Mr. Abrahams, naturally, seemed placidity itself. He was a thin, little, marked-faced man, with a black stand-up fringe round his polished skull, and lots of tiny grey veins about his keen eyes and his rounded nose.

'Yez, quite so,' he said, dragging his words, 'yez, an English shentleman, yez!'

'Who, I understand you to say, dear brother, would be willing to advance the amount required?' spake the Colonel tremulously.

'If the state of affairs were fully explained to him,' hastily subjoined the Professor.

'Possibly,' put in Kenneth.

'Oh, possibly, of course,' corrected the Professor.

'If the state of affairs were fully explained to him,' said Kenneth. Mr. Abrahams half lifted his drooping lids and took a long stare at the speaker.

'I shall be only too pleased to find a good investment for my money,' added Kenneth, amiably returning the stare. 'Mr. Abrahams will be so kind as to go into particulars, I am sure. He will remember that he has to do with three men who are none of them, strictly speaking, men of business.'

'Ah, that is always such a difficulty!' said Mr. Abrahams. 'You are not in commerce?'

'No.'

'I had wished that you were.'

'I am sorry, but it can't be helped,' said Kenneth.

Mr. Abrahams, opening his cigar-case, slowly selected a cigar. Kenneth looked at the Baron, who nodded. 'May I smoke? Oh, thanks,' said Kenneth, hastily producing his pipe. 'It does clear the brain,' he added. All lighted up. Dutchmen soon do.

Brains, in another five minutes, needed more clearing than they got. Mr. Abrahams explained a great deal, especially his explanations. They required a lot of explaining—all felt that, even he—and the more he explained, the plainer it became that they wanted just a little beyond what they were getting. From the little muddle of papers heaped up before the Colonel, Mr. Abrahams extracted what evidence he deemed necessary. The Colonel, suddenly called upon for a document, invariably produced the wrong one: Mr. Abrahams, through his pince-nez, selected another. 'Oh yes, of course: I beg your pardon. How stupid of me!' said the Colonel. As for the facts which had to be explained, or explained away, they were simple enough. Mr. Abrahams had undertaken, on behalf of Colonel Lisse, vast speculations in petrol and rubber, especially petrol. It appears that, unfortunately, under Mr. Abrahams' supervision, the Colonel and these products had played a sort of see-saw with each other, for when the market dropped, the Colonel was playing for a rise, and when the market rose, he was playing for a fall. It is, therefore, not so difficult to understand that, having been warned when things were 'down,' he should have hurried to congratulate his brother on seeing them 'up.' His instructions, with regard to most of these transactions, had been verbal, excepting two or three brief notes—'The blue envelope, I think. No, not that one'—the eye-glass—'Thanks'—which clearly bore out Mr. Abrahams' assertions. As things stood at present—and really Messrs. Abrahams, Moss, Moses, de Montmorency and Company had been almost invariably lenient in the matter of cover—as things stood at this moment, it looked like madness to realise.

'And like madness to continue,' said the Professor. He had long ago lost the thread on which Mr. Abrahams

strung his ciphers, but he understood as much as that. The sums paid in by the Colonel already were enormous. There was a painful silence after the Professor's remark. It was broken by a knock, and a waiter, and another visiting card.

'Pasteur!' said the Professor aloud. He rose in the greatest agitation. 'I will come down,' he said, 'immediately. Gentlemen, you must excuse me. Even this crisis of my life, for such it is, cannot allow me to keep Pasteur waiting at my door.' He bowed to them all and hurried from the room.

'We cannot decide, in any case, to-night,' remarked Kenneth.

'But we must. I have only time here in Paris till to-morrow noon-day. And I have a most important matter, far more important than this, at eleven o'clock.'

'This matter is important as far as it goes,' replied Kenneth coolly. 'Nothing could be done to-night, if we wished. I cannot leave my nephew, who is very ill, but if you will come to me to-morrow at ten, we can settle the business. You lose nothing by that.'

'Ah, it is the nephew on whom Dr. Lisse performs the great operation, the English milord!' said Abrahams.

'Dr. Lisse has operated on my nephew,' answered Kenneth.

'Ah!' Mr. Abrahams' 'Ah!' expressed approval of English milords, immense operations and resultant wealth. 'Well, yes. I will manage to come to-morrow,' he said. He had never had an English milord among his clients before. 'And Colonel Lisse will kindly leave me these papers,' said Kenneth. The Colonel left them with alacrity.

'I cannot say good-night to the Baron: perhaps I might see Mademoiselle for a moment. I must get back to Auteuil,' said Kenneth,—the Colonel was preparing to escort Mr. Abrahams to another hotel. Thomasine came from the inner room and stood facing Kenneth, in pretty maiden confusion, for thought of their first meeting the day before.

'This man is a thief,' said Kenneth.

Thomasine started. 'So said Miss Baleyne.'

'She was right then. Yes, he is a common thief.'

'So we shall get our money back!' said Thomasine. 'Through the police.'

He smiled a very joyless smile. 'No, for he is a successful thief,' he answered. 'The law never touches a successful financier. And it always can find terms to arrest and condemn, *if it wishes*, one that has failed. Perhaps you have never noticed that?'

'I know so little of these things,' said Thomasine.

'Naturally. I think I may say, that this Mr. Abrahams has not only swindled and defrauded, but actually thieved. However, if we went to a lawyer, he would doubtless say there was no redress. There never is.'

'What, then, must we do?' said Thomasine.

'May I explain? Just one minute. When I first began to look after my nephew's affairs, I soon came into contact with a couple of cases of manifest rascality. I remember so well going to our lawyer, quite simply: "Would you just put this right for me? Get these people condemned." He was an honest man, and he told me at once that the right was on my side and the law on theirs. "And, if it wasn't," he said, "they'd bring it round to their side, by trickery and perjury—they always do. In legal proceedings no honest man ever stands a chance against a rogue." That was a lawyer's verdict. I don't know about your country, but it's bound to be the same.'

'How dreadful! We never had anything to do with law before,' said Thomasine. Her eyes filled with indignant tears, but she drove them back.

'Do you know what one of our greatest chancellors—greatest lawyers, you know—said? If a man, in the street, were to demand my coat or threaten legal proceedings, I should leave him my coat and walk on in my shirt. That, in all my memories, is the most awful condensation of human suffering into one sentence that I know. That little story has actually saddened my life. If I brutally tell it to you, it is because I want to explain, brutally, why I can give you so little assistance, why I smiled—

Heaven help me; I felt that you saw it—when you said: "Through the police!" An honest man against a clever rogue has but one means—brute force.'

'My father cannot employ that,' said Thomasine.

For a moment he did not answer. Perhaps, in his mind's eye, he was watching a free fight between Mr. Abrahams and the Professor. 'The man is coming to me to-morrow,' he said, 'and I believe I shall be able to do something with him. At any rate we shall release the Colonel out of his toils. It is so good of you all to trust me, a complete stranger, in this matter. I cannot tell you how I feel it. It is a quite new experience for me. I—I feel it deeply.' The conclusion was lame: he wisely stopped.

'We—it is we must thank you very gratefully,' said Thomasine.

'I hope you may yet have some little cause. In any case I will do my very best. But I wanted you to be sure you could trust me to do that.' He looked at her.

'Yes, we can trust you to do that,' she replied.

'And my best isn't law and lawyers,' he said. He took her hand, wondering whether, in the foreign way, he oughtn't to—mightn't—kiss it? But he came to the hurried conclusion, that, probably, when you felt no desire to do so, it was the proper thing to do.

On his way home he matured his plan. 'If you please, Mr. Graye,' said Barton, 'Sir James just moans and moans.'

'He has his share of life,' said Kenneth. He turned from the door. Edward stood behind him.

'You think all life is suffering,' said Edward.

'No. I think, for some natures it is a long placidity, and for others it is all torrent and spray. The whole thing is a question of temperament. I fear I can sympathise with James: he is very untutored. He cries in his pain, but you never felt pleasure to equal his dinner.'

'You are bitter,' said Edward, almost tenderly, 'especially about yourself.'

'I admit that life is hardest for the best. James is an idiot.'

'And you are not.'

'No. A hundred times I have wished I were.' His voice sounded from unknown depths.

'Why do you say that, Graye? It is not a right thing to say.'

'Don't ask me why I say it: I have the best of reasons.' His back was turned to his friend.

'You are sorry for us,' said Edward frankly; 'you see this rogue triumphant: it sickens you to see him. I admit that the people who care about the sufferings of others suffer in this world almost more than human flesh can bear. I admit that fully. Almost all great suffering is vicarious. The people who enjoy life are the people who confine themselves to their own immediate pabulum. Very well. Like cows.'

'Don't malign the dumb creatures.'

'I only mean that when a cow ruminates, it never chews another's cud.'

Kenneth lighted his pipe. 'I shan't ruminate any more. What made a doctor of you, Edward Lisse?' He veered round. 'Why don't you answer? Was it pity for your own sufferings? Your health seems to me pretty good.'

'My father was a doctor,' said Edward uncomfortably.

'Yes, curiosity made a doctor of your father, and pity made a doctor of you.' He held out his hand. 'Good-night! You will, if you live but a little longer, leave the world a trifle happier than you found it. What mortal could desire more! But I?'

'Whatsoever his hand found to do, he did it with all his might,' replied Edward. 'That's in the Bible, isn't it? Or something similar. I am not in the habit of quoting the Bible at people, but I leave that for you to ruminate, Kenneth Graye.'

CHAPTER XVII

'I THINK I have made the situation very manifest,' said Mr. Abrahams to Kenneth. They were sitting in the little dark dining-room, away from the sick-chamber and the bright front of the house. Mr. Abrahams had spread out the bits of papers and gone into those unfortunate details.

'Oh, very manifest,' answered Kenneth. 'I hope you found that cigar pretty decent? You don't mind my pipe?'

'The cigar is a dream,' said the financier, who could be poetical on some subjects. 'These, you see, are the deplorable figures. If there is any other question you would ask, I shall be only too pleased to reply to it.'

'There is one question I should still like to ask,' answered Kenneth, sorting the banker's memoranda, according to their dates, as they had been sent in to Colonel Lisse. Abrahams and he had been busy for forty minutes: he was sick of the man.'

'It is this,' he said, selecting a paper, and laying it before the financier. 'Why is this one so different from the rest?'

'Different? How do you mean?' The banker's voice was quite steady: only his clammy cheek turned a little grey.

'Well, you see wherein it is different from all the rest!'

'I must beg of you to explain your meaning,' said Mr. Abrahams stiffly.

'Every one of these statements of sales has under it the words: "For which we accordingly credit your

account, value to-day." All of the smaller ones have. But here is one of an enormous sale of stock—eighty-five thousand florins odd—on which the words are missing. How comes that?

'If the words are missing, it is of course because the account was not credited,' replied the stockbroker insolently. Yes, his tone was suddenly insolent: he coolly relighted his cigar. The insolence of the tone decided Kenneth: it was all he needed. It subsequently meant a small fortune to the Lisses.

'And why was it not credited, do you think?'

'Because it was paid out of hand, of course.'

'A cash payment! It is a large sum for a cash payment.'

'That depends on the business,' said Mr. Abrahams, with a lofty lift of his oriental eyebrows.

'Undoubtedly. Still——' Kenneth glanced at the paper. On the seventeenth of November, a cash payment of eighty-five thousand odd. Your cash account, of course, would bear that out?'

'Of course it would. Do you doubt it?'

'I do not doubt it.' Kenneth could not quite keep the sneer out of his voice. 'It is unfortunate that the Colonel does not remember the cash payment of so enormous a sum.'

'The poor stupid Colonel is a brave soldier,' said Mr. Abrahams. 'May I take another of those most excellent cigars?'

'Help yourself. Colonel Lisse is a bad man of business: he avers that he never received any money—this enormous sum would have had to be paid in bank-notes—but that all payments were credited by you to his account.'

'He is a bad man of business,' said Mr. Abrahams, lighting up.

'But not so bad as to forget receiving, say, eighty-five bank-notes, and the rest. Do you think he dropped them or lost them?'

'Do you think that a banking-house—even so great an one as ours—could make a mistake about one cent. in its

cash payments and not hunt down that mistake before the day closed?’

‘No,’ said Kenneth, and he went round and locked the door.

‘What do you mean? What do you mean to insinuate?’ cried Mr. Abrahams, half rising. ‘Let me tell you, sir, that in my country properly kept books are evidence, legal evidence!’

‘I don’t doubt it,’ replied Kenneth, standing thoughtfully by the door. ‘That’s just the sort of infamous enactment lawyers would make. I dare say it’s the same in my country. Legal evidence—against an honest man’s word—a tradesman’s cooked accounts—by G——!’

‘You insinuate! You insinuate!’ cried Abrahams in a loud fury, behind which he hid his funk. He was not a man of violent measures, his success had been made by smiles and sneers. The locking of the door had greatly disconcerted him.

‘I insinuate nothing. I state that those few words were intentionally omitted. The thing is beautifully simple, when you come to think of it. I suppose the Colonel ought to have noticed the omission when he got your memorandum. But what would that have availed him, even if he had written at once? Your books are legal evidence! By Jove!’

‘I am a swindler, then? A common swindler!’ stammered Mr. Abrahams. His sharp eyes went black.

‘Why use the word? And really your method is so simple a child might have applied it. Simple and beautifully complete!’

‘The law, sir, will decide between us. We shall see whether you have the right to call me—me—me!’ he pointed to his breast, ‘a swindler.’

‘I have called you no such thing. But I certainly shall not contradict you. I haven’t time. You are due somewhere at eleven. It is a quarter to. You have just time to put those words, which were omitted, at the foot of that account.’

‘You are mad.’

‘Not yet,’ said Kenneth in his saddest voice.

'It is absurd.'

'It becomes less absurd,' said Kenneth, 'when I tell you it must be done at once.'

'You use violence! You threaten?'

'Not exactly. But you can't leave this house till it is done.'

'I will cry out. I will rouse the neighbourhood!'

'You may cry out as much as you like, but you will not rouse the neighbourhood. This is a sort of private asylum, and ours is the quietest corner of the grounds. Did any one hear you, they would think it was my nephew.'

'It is a *guet-apens*!'

'Call it whatever you like, but write "for which amount we accordingly credit your account, value to-day." That's all.'

'I will never do it.' Mr. Abrahams put his hands behind his back.

'Then you will not keep your appointment at eleven.'

'I must!' shrieked Abrahams. 'And I must leave for Amsterdam at twelve!'

'You will do neither.'

'I must.' I must telegraph to Amsterdam. I must.'

Mr. Abrahams, as has been said, was eminently fitted for warfare, but not of this downright sort. And he had told the truth in stating that the interests which had brought him to Paris were far greater than the Baron's paltry ruin.

'I don't threaten, but you had better make up your mind. Ah!' Kenneth snatched the paper off the table. 'You were going to tear it up, were you, you rascally thief! Oh, I know you are a great banker, an honourable banker—I can see the little rosette in your button-hole! But now, I *will* threaten. If you tear this up, I shall dash your brains out with yonder bottle.' He nodded to the sideboard. 'No, I haven't a revolver about me, but the bottle will quite do. You don't expect me to do it: I can see that in your eyes. But you will, when you hear that you're locked in with a madman. Quite a pretty sort of madman, if you treat him properly, but

a madman all the same, and a nasty madman, if you treat him wrongly!' He advanced towards the shrinking banker. His dark face glowed: his black eyes were blazing with a frantic fire: his whole voice had changed to a scream: with one hand he caught at the bottle and swung it on high. 'Fool,' he shrieked, 'scoundrel fool, to have raised the devil in me.' He flung the paper on the table. 'There it lies! Destroy it, if you dare! If you do, you will keep your next appointment in hell!'

The banker fell back into the farthest corner and cried out: Kenneth laughed.

'No one came. The clock hurried on. Kenneth spoke again: 'Write quickly and get away. If you wait much longer, it may be too late. I cannot hold out much longer. I have been yearning to kill you, ever since you came into the room.'

'It is robbery with violence,' wailed the banker.

'Don't talk much more! And don't ask for explanations! But listen to me, for God's sake! When I say to you: write and go.' He steadied himself, keeping down his arms by a visible effort. His voice and the change of his face were so terrible that Abrahams stammered: 'Mercy!'

'Oh, for Heaven's sake write and go!' Abrahams glanced at the window, at the door, at the clock, at the man standing before him, a compressed fury, with the loaded bottle in one hand. The man, seeing the glances, laughed again, and as the stockbroker heard that laugh, he seized the pen and with trembling fingers wrote the sentence required of him. The other took the paper and read the words aloud. Then he drew the key from his pocket and flung it on the table. 'Go!' he said. 'You will get the Colonel's instructions to-morrow. Go!'

When the banker had fumbled and stumbled himself out of sight, Kenneth Graye sank his head on the table—on the little heap of papers—with a groan, then another—and another—long, shuddering, like the death-agony of a wounded beast.

Thus Barton found him a full hour later. 'Mr.



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Kenneth!' said the frightened servant, 'Mr. Kenneth! For God's sake bear up!'

Kenneth looked at him stupidly. 'It's all right, Barton,' he stammered. 'I'm—oh, it's all right: you mustn't mind.'

'Mr. Lisse was asking for you, sir—shall I tell him you're not well?'

'Yes—yes.'

'Or, perhaps, it'd be better for you to see him—change your thoughts. I ought to have disobeyed your orders, when I heard you crying out!'

'I didn't cry out—did I? The—the man I had business with cried out. Is that you, Lisse? Come in! I'm all right.'

'What has happened to you?' asked Edward, looking fixedly at him.

'Nothing. It was rather an unpleasant interview, but I've got some of the money back.'

'Don't let's talk of it now. James is better. Go and lie down.'

'No, no, why should I? Where's my pipe?'

'Go and lie down in the dark—to please me: there's a good fellow! What you want is rest.'

When Barton came back to Edward, the latter was still standing in the dining-room.

'Is your master often like this?' he asked.

'How do you mean, Mr. Lisse?'

'I ask you, is your master often like this?'

'And I take the liberty, sir, of asking you, how do you mean?'

'Do your best for him when he is,' said Edward.

CHAPTER XVIII

'I AM a fool,' said the Colonel.

'I beg your pardon?' remarked the Baroness, looking up from her newspapers. Half a dozen lay around her.

'I say that I am a fool, Jane.'

'Nobody else has said it,' replied the Baroness drily.

'Perhaps nobody knows so well as I,' remarked her brother-in-law humbly. 'Had you ever noticed the fact before, Thomasine?'

'No, uncle. Is a gentleman always a fool, when a thief succeeds in robbing him?'

'Dear girl,' said the Professor, patting his daughter's hand.

'That may be as it may be,' replied the Colonel gratefully. 'All the same I am a fool, and I here make public confession of the fact. A man is a fool when he meddles and muddles in things he don't know about. And to rehabilitate—yea, that is the word—myself in the eyes of my family I hereby further announce that I am going to return to the one thing I *do* know about. I have written this morning to the Minister volunteering for active service in Acheen.'

There was a general outcry. 'At your age!' said the Baroness.

'I am over fifty,' replied Colonel Lisse.

'Is it wise? Is it necessary?' asked his brother.

'As for that, I must leave others to judge. But things are going to the dogs there to such an extent, that I can hardly do much harm.' At this moment Kenneth Graye was announced. 'Mr. Graye,' said the Colonel, 'I do not know whether you are aware that Cæsar was a very bad hand at all money matters. I have no wish to compare

myself with Cæsar; all I mean is, you may be a good soldier, and a fool about pounds, shillings, and pence. I am going back to try and get some more work where *this* came from'—they all noticed that the Colonel wore his war-medal—'I start for the Hague this evening. If I fall, Thomas, you must put three F's on my grave under the bananas, three F's only—nothing more.' He waited for them to ask what the three F's would stand for, but as nobody did so, he spake solemnly, annoyed:

"Francis, Fighter, Fool." But none of the nigger boys need know the meaning. Let them think it is: Francis fighting fell.' He sat down heavily, and, in sepulchral tones, repeated: 'Francis fighting fell.'

'That is a beautiful thought,' said the Baroness, with a rapt expression. 'The soldier's grave under the bananas. Francis fighting fell.' After a moment she added: 'It would be a memorable end, Francis. Worthy of the finest poem I could write.'

'I shan't do it on that account,' replied the Colonel, with sudden acerbity. 'For King and Country, Thomas!'

'God send you safe back to us all!' said the Professor. The Baroness, who had been knitting her brows in thought, rose, looked at her watch, thrust her newspapers into a heap and marched up to her brother-in-law. 'When all is said and done,' she spake, 'you are worthy of the name you bear, Francis Lisse.' 'Tis a good name,' said he. 'And a great,' asserted the Baroness, looking at her husband. 'Three men bear it at this moment, and each of them is fighting as bravely as ever did the warrior knights of old. Mr. Graye,' she said, 'you alone know Paris; will you take me where I want to go?' On the stairs she added: 'I am in a great hurry. Do you know the rue Drouot?'

'Certainly. It isn't far.' So they raced along the Boulevard together. She refused to let him call a cab. 'I avoid their cabs,' she said. 'They ill-treat their horses so.' He wondered whether she knew about the things rendered necessary by the very existence of the Institut Pasteur. Perhaps she guessed his thoughts. 'My husband always calls out. "Mind!"' she said vaguely, 'and,

of course, his experiments are a blessing to mankind. Oh, let's hurry; I'm afraid I shall be too late. Is this the street? And the office of the *Figaro*?

'Come with me, I beg of you,' she said, all flurry and nervousness. She gave her name. 'Ah, the wife of the great scientist!' She was shown into a sub-editor's room. 'Your article will be a great success, Madame la Baronne!' 'I have come to stop it,' she gasped. 'At least, to take out part. The quotation from my poem.'

The journalist stared at her with decent vexation. 'But—impossible—the whole thing is set up!'

'Oh, not yet!' she pleaded. 'Surely not yet! I felt sure I should be in time. Let me give you another piece!'

'But, Madame,' remonstrated the editor, smiling at the poor author's vanity—the usual thing—'I regret to think, how few of our readers will be able to appreciate it. To these few, however, the description of'—he glanced at a sheet before him—'Imphi-Boshek will doubtless appeal.'

'It cannot be changed?' said the Baroness helplessly.

'I greatly regret!' Monsieur Gardin lifted a deprecatory hand.

The Baroness joined Kenneth in the lobby. 'Yes, I shall need to have a cab after all,' she said. In the fiacre, she wiped her eyes. 'I hope you don't mind seeing an old woman cry,' she said.

'It makes me wretched to see a woman cry!' he answered. 'I wish I could help you more.'

'Oh, it's not the money,' she answered. 'I don't fancy money would ever make me shed tears. But I've lived fifty-five years without committing a mean action, and I've committed one now.' He did not know what to answer, uncomfortable, locked up with this confession in a cab.

'It's a mean action known only to myself,' she said. 'It hurts nobody.'

'That must surely diminish its meanness very considerably,' he replied. But the Baroness said she did not agree with him and sobbed once or twice during the

short drive back to the hotel. At the last moment, however, her femininity got the better of her. 'I don't know what you may think,' she said, 'I've held up my brother-in-law to ridicule in the *Figaro*.' He could not keep back his look of horror and alarm. What?—the whole money scandal? 'It's only my own ridicule,' she continued. 'Nobody could possibly guess it was he, except my husband and son, and they won't see the paper.'

'I'm afraid, Baroness,' he said, as he helped her to alight, 'the world is too full of crimes to make room for yours. Could I talk to you a moment about this money business?' he added. 'I don't want to trouble the Professor. Shall I tell you?'

'Oh no, don't,' she said pathetically. 'Talk to Thomasine. I shouldn't understand. It really doesn't matter very much: I may say that, as you seem to care so kindly. If there isn't any money left, we can easily live without.' And with head erect, and reddened eyes, she sailed into the sitting-room. 'Thomasine,' she said, 'go and talk with Mr. Graye about these horrid investments! Tell him at any rate, that Laura has plenty, or he'll be wanting to give too much to Edward.'

Alone with her husband, she added: 'We have no call to live on charity yet.'

'No, indeed: yet it looks rather like it with Laura.'

'No, Thomas. If Laura pays for Bardwyk, it must belong to her and Edward. Surely, you don't want it?'

'My dear,' replied the Professor, 'can you imagine my wanting anything but my laboratory? As long as Bardwyk belongs to Edward, I am perfectly content.'

Meanwhile Kenneth was explaining to Thomasine, that the best thing her parents could do with the sum he had succeeded in recovering was to wind up all transactions with Abrahams, Moss, etcetera. 'I am afraid there will not be much left,' he said. 'When all is settled, certainly not enough to keep up a large country-house—'

'But all that is so much simpler with us,' she put in.

He pulled a face, and her heart sank.

'However, I understand that your future sister-in-law——' he hesitated.

'My sister-in-law is not us,' she said. 'We shall be very poor, then, shall we?' Before he could find an answer, she continued tremulously: 'I may never see you again: I have been wanting to ask you—I shall not stay at home, with my two sisters coming back—I suppose you have many grand relations in your country—perhaps you could—could help me to find a place as governess. I have been very well educated——'

'You!' he exclaimed; 'you, in your social position——'

'Don't you think that makes it easier?' she interrupted him. 'One can never lose one's privilege of birth.'

'You can hardly have an idea of the position of a governess in England.'

'I know that your social distinctions are more clearly defined than ours. But that also makes things easier.'

'But I should have thought, if you really decide on anything of the kind—nursing——'

'No, I could not be a nurse. You will mock at my reason: it sounds so conceited. I know too much of medicine!'

'But all nurses think they know a lot about medicine.'

She laughed, in spite of her trouble. 'How prettily you put that,' she said. 'They think they do, and that keeps them happy. But I have studied with my brother, you know—I should see how things were going, and the doctor's mistakes—sometimes—and I couldn't stand that.'

'As far as I am concerned,' he answered almost roughly, 'I am dead against you going as a governess, but of course I'll help you always, in any way I can.'

'Thank you,' she said, and he made up his mind that he could kiss her hand quite as easily as Laura's, who seemed gracefully to expect it.

'These tiresome money matters,' said Laura. 'These tiresome, tiresome money matters. Edward, why don't you take my money and pay the people and have done with it?'

'Dearest, you are not even of age.'

She sat up, alarmed. 'Oh, we can't wait till I'm twenty-three.'

'That is not necessary. At least, I mean, your marriage'll put you right there.'

'Oh, well then, let's marry at once! Take me to a church this afternoon, Edward, and use the money, and let's talk of something else.'

'You'll want your guardian's consent. Who is your guardian? Uncle Francis, of course.'

'I haven't got a guardian. Oh yes, your uncle Francis, I suppose. But he doesn't know about the money, you see.'

He sat thinking.

'When we are married,' he said, 'and you have bought Bardwyk, then Bardwyk will belong to you.' She looked at him for a moment, as if she were going to cry; then she answered: 'And I shall live in it all by myself.' Whereupon he laughed and kissed her. 'James is better this morning again,' he said. 'Only think—if he pulls through!'

'We will take him to Bardwyk,' she replied, 'and nurse him there. I have been thinking that might be our wedding trip. Edward, I don't think there ought to be these big houses standing empty—do you? Don't you think it's a wickedness in our days, with our views? You must put your patients away in Bardwyk, among the woods and the flowers, and nurse them back to life.'

He took her in his arms again rapturously, and kissed her on her lips, on her eyes, on her hair.

'Hush! hush!' she murmured, her Oriental blood aflame. 'Edward, dear, I wonder if your mother thinks me improved? I've been trying hard in Brussels to Europeanise myself, to make myself fit for the fine name you are going to give me. I fear I shall never be a great lady—but—but—oh, Edward, there's another thing troubles me so very much. My mother no longer speaks to me as she used to do.' Two great tears stood in her luminous eyes. He was silent. 'Say something,' she whispered. 'Dearest, what shall I say?' 'Some day you will believe when you understand,' she said. 'I try

to understand, when I believe. Meanwhile, we will take your patients to Bardwyk, and you will study them there.'

'The home of the Lisses a lunatic asylum I' says the Baroness. But the Professor thinks Laura is right.

The Professor, however, had more important things to think about. He got hold of Edward. 'My boy,' he said, 'I hope you will not misunderstand me——'

'No, I quite agree with you,' answered Edward, 'and I told Kenneth Graye so.'

'But we have not yet spoken of the matter.'

'Yes, Graye told me he had offered to advance you the money till my marriage. He is a poor man, however—he did not tell you that—and the money——'

'Money! Money! I have other matters in my head than this everlasting money,' exclaimed the Professor. 'Will you listen for a moment, and let me talk sense?'

Edward composed his features. The Professor took a pill, at sight of which Edward considerably sat down. The Professor followed his example.

'My boy,' said the Professor, 'fate has willed that you should, most unexpectedly, be given the opportunity of making good whatever you may have marred eight years ago. Few men are so favoured.'

'Dear father, what is it you refer to?' asked Edward.

'Boy, you cannot have forgotten—I never wished to speak of it again, but circumstances compel me—that night, when I had asked you to inject——'

'I have not forgotten; it decided my whole future,' said Edward hastily.

'You do not regret that decision?' The Professor bent forward in keenest anxiety.

'I rejoice in it—now,' replied Edward.

'I am glad of that; I am glad to have been the means,' said the Professor complacently. And Edward, his heart full of thoughts of Laura, let the dear old father talk.

'As I was remarking,' continued the Professor, vainly trying to tranquillise his voice, 'you are now offered an exceptional opportunity of putting the thing right. I do

not deny that this was the consideration which brought me to Paris. The moment has come, Edward; the moment has come. You can now inject the serum direct into the open brain of Sir James Graye.'

'Father!' cried Edward, aghast.

'It is absolutely certain that the result will be marvellous,' declared the Professor. 'Brown Sequard's rejuvenescent serum is absurd; he will prove that presently by dying. I cannot understand how the Academy can treat him seriously. But his theory is sound, and there is no doubt that the Semicolon serum, though it will not rejuvenesce, will successfully combat its own microbes. What more do you want? It is supremely important at this moment to semicolonise James Graye's brains!'

'But, father——'

'But me no buts, but listen,' interrupted the Professor angrily. 'I have devoted my whole life to this thing: you see here in Paris with what success. I am certain of my result. It is perfectly scientific.'

'I know that,' said Edward.

'Then what is it? I shall not insult you by imagining for a moment that you want to keep your patient to yourself.'

'No, please, father.'

'I do not.' The Professor pulled his tie 'straight' that was a habit of his, when vexed. The more vexed he was, the 'straighter,' right or left, he pulled it.

'Only, father, I cannot, I dare not, experiment on James Graye.'

'Pray what have you been doing till now?'

'This was kill or cure, father. It isn't quite the same if you'll forgive my saying so.'

'Cure? Cure?'

'I was quite certain,' said Edward earnestly, 'that James Graye would have less pain, if he lived.'

'And I am quite certain that, if you inject my serum in the brain direct, he will be another man.'

'I daren't do it, father.'

The Professor rose, trembling. 'For the second time, then,' he said bitterly, 'nay, for the third—the third—'

my own son places himself in the middle of my path and turns me from the goal.'

'Father!' cried Edward.

'I will remind you,' continued the Professor, remorselessly, 'how I wasted a couple of years in our miserable babble-shop—but no, why should I thus humiliate myself? Let me pass!'

Edward seized his father's hand and drew him back, imploring.

'Father, I can't do it! I can't! Let me at least tell you why. I have passed my word of honour to Kenneth not to experiment in any way on the brain!'

'Passed your word of honour?' repeated the Professor, dully.

'Yes. It is a question with him of—what shall I call it?—Religion. He asked whether I thought the soul was in the brain, and of course I said: yes, as far as we know. And he made me promise most solemnly, before the operation, that I would not touch the brain.'

'This is nonsense!' cried the Professor. 'Why, your whole operation "touches"—practically manipulates the brain.'

'But it leaves it as before, only better placed. I can't help it, father. I have given my word of honour.'

'He is a fool, then,' cried the angry Professor.

'It is his idea. I fear I must, in all honesty, say I understand what he means.'

'If you have pledged your word of honour, though I cannot comprehend your doing it,' remarked the broken-hearted Professor, 'there is no more to be said.' And, without another look at his son, he passed out.

Edward felt more than ever that he treated his poor father ill.

CHAPTER XIX

IN a few days—the official reception having passed off successfully—the Baron and Baroness returned home. They took Laura with them: the banns were to be put up in Leyden, and the marriage would take place there as soon as Edward could leave or move James Graye. Thomasine remained to keep her brother company as guest of Miss MacClachlin. Kenneth Graye showed the two ladies the sights of Paris, and it was astonishing how interested the good-natured Scotch spinster became in art treasures she had never thought of inquiring about till now. She could not have distinguished a Velasquez from a Rembrandt before, or after, her art-course with Graye. He spoke feelingly of the poverty of the greatest masters. 'Then why did they paint?' said Maria. 'Heaven knows!' replied Kenneth. And Thomasine thought that was a most beautiful reply.

To the girl this change from long copyings of *Balaam* to slow wanderings through the Louvre with a sympathetic guide was astonishing and amazing, not so much that she realised the dulness of the former, but rather the delight of the other thing. Miss MacClachlin was persistently kind to Thomasine. She tried also to dissuade her from the governess plan and to attach her to her own Mutton Mission. 'I assure you,' she said, 'a French butcher-boy is a thousand times more interesting any day than an English schoolroom-miss.' Thomasine had German classes and English classes among the *Chevaliers de Bétail*. They were delighted with her. Maria MacClachlin showed not—nay, nor did she feel—an atom of jealousy, when thirty roughs, to her three, demanded to be taught by *la jolie hollandaise*. 'Elle est

aussi belle que les vaches de son pays,' said Jean. '*Sa taille est mieux,*' said Pierre. 'On the long run,' Thomasine confided to Kenneth, 'I would rather have girls. But I wouldn't hurt Miss MacClachlin's feelings for the world.' 'Nor would I,' replied Kenneth, but, somehow, without doing that, he stopped the classes. Miss MacClachlin said he was the most reasonable man she had ever met. Thomasine was lifted out of the classroom and dropped into the dispensary, and there, most unmistakably, she fell on her feet. 'I don't know what I shall do without her,' cried Maria. 'She has actually cured Mimi of the scab.' Mimi was a pet lamb of Maria's, presented to her by her butchers, in the same manner as the one they had—rather at her instigation, it must here be admitted—bestowed upon James Graye.

Maria's '*Cœuvre*' often hung heavy on her hands, and she sighed for the repose—not for the luxury—of Rowan-gowan. (The name of this beautiful home, by the bye, is pronounced '*Roon*,' but no British reader will require to be informed of that fact.) The maid, Hortense, was more especially a trial. To dispense with her was impossible, for she formed the sole link between the delicately-nurtured Presbyterian lady and the crowd of French hooligans, whose language and ways of thinking became instant abracadabra without this indigenous help. In fact, Hortense was Miss MacClachlin's crib. '*Quel toupet!*' said the butchers, and Hortense explained to her mistress what this meant. 'They are remarking on my personal appearance,' she said smiling. 'It pleases them.' 'Indeed!' retorted Miss MacClachlin with un-cordial surprise. She saw many of the maid's disqualifications, but she would not have included beauty amongst them. Canny creature as she was, she never quite fathomed—small shame to her—Hortense's genius for superfluous lies. Yet the only time when the French-woman very nearly got the sack, was when she tried to 'get religion.' 'You may break all the commandments, and you do, in my service, except the third,' said Miss MacClachlin. 'If Mademoiselle,' replied the heathen demurely, 'would give me a written list of her orders, I

should know what number she meant.' Maria heaved a sigh. She had long ago discovered that her butcher-boys thought all her illuminated Bible-texts were remarks (and promises) of her own, unless she put '*Jésus dit*' above them. Things were so different in her native village, where the drunkenest drunkard of them all could repeat his Shorter Catechism backwards. 'More like Holland,' said Thomasine.

Not even on that terrible occasion when Hortense (too liberally treated by a trio of the *chevaliers* to absinthe) gave out, instead of the hymn, the latest catch from the Boulevards, and the whole audience roared it before any one could stop them, not even on that occasion did Miss MacClachlin's pluck desert her. She waited till the uproar was over; then she rose—quiet, well-dressed, substantial and handsome as ever. 'Sit down,' she said sternly to the rollicking maid.

'*Et maintenong,*' she spake, raising her voice. 'I have shown you how the world sings. Now listen to me.' She had a very pure soprano; she sang amid breathless silence—in the reeking gas-lit hall—the French version of a sweet home-memory:

'Paix ! dans ce monde où souffle la tempête !

The words died down in lingering gentleness and purity: 'Peace, perfect peace!'

'*Et maintenong,*' said Miss MacClachlin, 'what sort of a song would you like to have sung over your grave?'

Hortense told everybody afterwards that she had acted according to instructions, and Maria, who was sure the woman would do so, winked at the convenient and congenial lie.

Hortense's adventure with Xavier, though avowedly amusing, must be left unrecorded, for we cannot stray too far in pursuit of so secondary a figure in this chronicle as Hortense. Miss MacClachlin had certainly a right to be angry at the time, but, after all, as she herself very sensibly remarked, if you advertise for an Anomaly, you mustn't be annoyed when you get her. As a matter of fact, Hortense *was* dismissed shortly after the absinthe

business, and a nice sweet English widow of a Chantilly groom secured in her place, but the *booshays* made such fun of the new comer, that Hortense had to be triumphantly reinstated. The widow's knowledge (certified) of *argot* proved confined to the racecourse, while Hortense's extended, like her experience, over every form of Paris slum. 'The woman,' said poor Miss MacClachlin, 'is a very encyclopædia of vice. But I *have* to turn the pages.' She cried a little once, and talked about pitch, broken-hearted. Kenneth quoted Una, and explained his quotation. 'But it is all very well,' said Maria. 'Innocence may pass unharmed through a forest of wild beasts, but not through the streets of a Christian city.' With sudden want of logic he reproached her for exposing Thomasire to possible insult. 'No, no, they're not half as bad as you think!' replied Maria in swift defence of her boys. 'She will have to endure very different treatment, if she goes as governess into some rich manufacturer's house.'

'She can't. She mayn't. She shan't,' he said vehemently.

'You're in love with her: why don't you ask her to marry you?' replied Miss MacClachlin, with beautiful simplicity.

He made no reply, till he said, in the dullest of tones: 'You are pitiless.'

'On the contrary, I am surely the most generous and pitiful of rivals. You must just allow me that, poor old thing that I am, and then we will say no more about it.'

'You know I have no right to marry!'

'Bosh! So I told you once before, under circumstances which left no doubt as to my sincerity. If all of us talked like you, the race would long ago have been extinct.'

'And a good thing too,' said Kenneth.

'That also is bosh, and you know it. It is absolutely correct from our human point of view, so the human point of view must be wrong.'

He laughed. 'I should like to hear Mademoiselle Lisse's opinion. You won't annoy her—will you, please?'

'I will not. I have no appreciation for that sort of humour. But I can give you her opinion if you like.'

'What do you mean?'

'Her opinion would be "yes."'

'That I ought not to marry!'

'Oh most modest of men,—if modesty in a man were ever sincere—that you oughtn't to marry—another than Thomasine Lisse.'

'You have more aptitude for that sort of humour than you give yourself credit for.'

'Don't be rude, Kenneth Graye, and thereby prove how much you are in earnest. You are in love with her, and she is in love with you, and of course she can become a governess if you like!' Miss MacClachlin slapped down her jewelled hands on her grey satin knees. 'And the sooner the better,' she said.

'Good night,' said Kenneth. 'You don't mind my going home, do you? Please tell Mademoiselle Lisse that I am very sorry I've not been able to get those tickets for the Private View to-morrow.'

'So much the better,' replied Miss MacClachlin with great decision. 'It isn't fair for a man who can't marry—bosh!—to pay attentions to a girl at all!'

With this final bitter pill in his throat, half choking him, Kenneth journeyed all the long distance from Belleville to Auteuil. He was dead-tired and hoped to get to his bed, but he found Edward waiting for him.

'Five minutes' talk!' said Edward.

'All right. Is it important?'

'Yes.'

'Wait a second while I get my pipe. Fire away!'

'I have had letters from Holland. All the necessary papers have been got together. They want to fix the date of the marriage.'

'Quite so.'

'They propose this day month.'

'I congratulate you.'

'Thanks. Now about the difficulties.'

'You mean my nephew? It remains an understood thing that we join you at your country home in Holland and that he places himself entirely under your care.'

'Yes,' said Edward thoughtfully.

'There is the difficulty of the wedding journey.'

'There will be no wedding journey; my wife and I will marry at Bardwyk and stay there, or come back here. Laura has no wish to travel as a bride.'

'But in any case you will want your honeymoon to yourself. There can be no difficulty about that. My nephew has sufficiently recovered.'

'I want to talk to you about your nephew. I shall be leaving for Leyden very soon. I want to talk to you before I go.'

'Yes.'

'He has sufficiently recovered from the operation, but he isn't regaining strength.'

'Well, no—he has had an awful time. And he isn't able to tell us about it.'

'I hardly know how to say what I want to say—must say. I ask myself how you will take it. His has been a most miserable life, Graye.'

'It has, but it's going to be more bearable now, isn't it? Look here, what don't you feel up to telling me?' Kenneth laid down his pipe. 'Speak out, man! Good Heavens, Lisse, what's this? You don't mean to say you're anxious about him?'

'I am very anxious about him. But not for anything I could do or leave undone. It hardly matters at this moment whether I stay with him or not. It *doesn't* matter, or I'd stay, of course. The operation has been successful, but the patient is losing strength.'

'He'll pick up.'

'I don't know. His vital energy is slowly sinking. And that, after this long lapse of time, is certainly a very discouraging symptom.'

'Why, *you* mustn't lose courage now, Lisse!'

'My dear fellow, just now I said, "I don't know," but it's no use beating about the bush. I've tried everything that can be tried.'

'You think he is in a bad way?'

'I think he is in a very bad way.'

'Do you want to tell me that he can't get better?'

'So the others think, Graye. I can see that he is very ill.'

'But you don't think he has no chance?'

'I don't want to think it. I should like to say, "Where there is life there is hope." But the others declare that I am sanguine, unwilling to admit the truth, as I naturally would be. I fear they are right. At any rate, Ducrot insists upon my telling you how the matter stands, before I leave. Or else he would have told you himself. He says I am running away.'

'It's as bad as that,' said Kenneth, meditatively.

'It is what the French call a *déprissement*, a slow but certain decline. I cannot deny, Graye, that he is developing symptoms of what we call leukaemia.'

'And that is incurable?' asked Kenneth.

'It is.'

Kenneth took a few pulls at his pipe. Then he said: 'Thanks for telling me.' He held out his hand. 'You haven't deserved this, Lisse.' In the passage, as Edward was getting on his coat: 'Any?—do you think?—any time?' began Kenneth.

'No doctor in the world could say,' replied Edward.

'These things go in rushes and crawls.'

'You are sure nothing can be done?'

'Quite sure, or I should not move from here. So are all the others who are watching the case.'

'Charcot?'

'He agrees with Ducrot.'

'And we must wait like this? Weeks?'

'Possibly months. Or, again, I should not leave you for a day. But, after all, you have far greater doctors here than I. The greatest can do nothing for leukaemia. I shall return with my wife in a few days. We could take your nephew to Bardwyk. The change of air would only be beneficial—while it is feasible.'

'Beneficial?'

'It might postpone,' said Edward softly.

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'Ah! You have not told your sister?'

'Certainly not. No one before you!'

'Oblige me, then, by keeping the secret still.' The bed-room door slipped from Kenneth's usually steady hand; it slammed.

CHAPTER XX

WHEN Edward returned to Auteuil next morning, he just caught on Barton's shaven mask a vanishing expression of alarm. 'Mr. Graye left for London at daybreak,' said Barton, smooth and steady; 'I was to say, sir, he'd be back to-morrow night.'

'Tis still wintry for such travel,' said Edward.

'It come very sudden, sir; important business. You didn't notice as Mr. Graye was looking ill?'

'Not ill, only fagged last night.'

'Commotions is bad for Mr. Graye, sir.'

'Why, so they are for most men.'

'Not in the same way. They tries him very terrible.'

'He is undoubtedly nervous, but he has plenty of stamina,' replied Edward.

The nervousness would hardly have been credited by those who saw Kenneth alight at Charing Cross. In spite of cold weather and a rough and tumble crossing, the young man had kept his clear complexion and his general air of cultured prosperity and easy strength. Most of us are fortunately schooled to hide our weaknesses, but there is no surer proof of inherent health than a band-box appearance after a modern journey. In loose ulster and flat cap—the grotesque garb which even now has not crushed all masculine vanity—he proceeded through an oily haze of orange dirt, borne by a swift and spattering hansom, away into unknown depths of Bloomsbury. There he hid for that night in a little family-hotel, which nobody has ever heard of before or since.

The hiding, however, included a good deal of locomotion through the foggy streets. The first move was a

visit to Dr. Gordon Scrubbs, whom the Grayes have habitually consulted. Scrubbs is one of those accomplished doctors whose waiting-rooms are hung with dubious Italian masters, mostly black. The blackest stood on an easel under the smoky smirch of sky. The doctor hurried in, wiping his lips, from an unreasonably late lunch, or perhaps it was an anticipatory dinner. 'Let me get you some tea,' he said. 'We doctors must take our meals when we can.'

'Thanks,' said Kenneth. 'It is certainly long since I tasted drinkable tea.'

'You are in Paris still? We have all been immensely interested by this wonderful operation. I was talking of it only yesterday to Sir Jasper Dixon-Potts. "Remarkable." That was Sir Jasper's word. "Remarkable." And we have no greater authority on the subject than Sir Jasper Dixon-Potts.'

'You approved of the idea when I wrote to you about it. Don't let me interrupt your repast.'

'Yes, I approved. Sir James is, I trust, doing well?'

'So, so. He continues very weak.'

'That was what I feared. The strain!'

'But you said nothing about it when you wrote,' protested Kenneth.

'I saw from your letter that you were anxious the experiment should take place. And professional etiquette, you know—very difficult to express an opinion—especially in another country. And Charcot is a great name. So is Lisse.'

'But it isn't *the* Lisse.'

'So I understood.' The doctor took another cutlet. 'It isn't anxiety about Sir James that has brought you here, I trust? There was always the risk of the strain.'

'I have come here to ask you—thanks, the tea is very good—whether I ought to marry?'

'Every man ought,' said the doctor, who was a bachelor.

'I mean, you, who know my constitution and my family history, would you advise me not to marry?'

'What do you mean by your family history?'

'My brother committed suicide while temporarily insane.'

'That was the verdict.'

'And his son is an idiot.'

'And his father—your father—was an old-fashioned, sound-headed country gentleman.'

'Who married an Italian wife of whose relations we know nothing.'

'That proves him to have been more sentimental than I have just given him credit for, but it does not prove him to have been in any way deranged. In fact, he wasn't. Nor was Sir Ronald. We need not go into the painful circumstances of your brother's death. They affected Lady Graye so continuously—I may say so morbidly—that I ascribe to her state of mind at the time the condition of her son.'

'My brother left a letter behind him saying he was tired of life. He had everything that makes life worth living.'

'I suppose so,' said the doctor uncomfortably.

'Have you any explanation to offer?'

'If it will set your mind at rest, yes. But you must not take offence, and, moreover, remember I have no proof.'

'You could hardly do me a greater favour.'

'From a conversation we once had, I was led to conclude that your brother had taken a persistent dislike to his estimable wife.'

'Surely that is unusual!'

Doctor Scrubbs smiled. 'I have no personal experience,' he said.

'I mean suicide on that account.'

'Unusual, perhaps, but in a sensitive man quite comprehensible, even to a bachelor. Nothing drives a man to suicide like a daily vexation from which there is no possible chance of escape.'

'An' you think my poor sister-in-law was all that?'

'Remember you wished me to speak plainly.' The doctor sat peeling an orange. 'She was an extremely sweet, religious woman, but her religion took the form of universal disapproval. Everything everybody ever did was wrong.'

Kenneth sighed. 'I am hardly able to judge about my brother. I was so young when he died. But he must have been a nervous man.'

'He was a nervous man. So are you. It is the Italian temperament in you. There is no greater safeguard than nervousness against madness, by the bye, if you happen to be afraid of that.'

'Ah, the Italian temperament!' said Kenneth, slowly rising to his feet. He stood by the door. 'This Sir Jasper Dixon-Potts?'

'Go and see him by all means,' replied Dr. Gordon Scrubbs quickly. Kenneth fancied he reddened. 'Make an appointment,' said Scrubbs; 'he lives in Manchester Square.'

'Is there an hereditary taint?' asked Sir Jasper, when he had heard the preliminaries. Sir Jasper was a shadowy man: white-faced, white-whiskered, white-waistcoated, solemn. He made ten to twelve thousand a year out of human insanity, just as so many of his colleagues make similar amounts out of human imbecility. 'Nobody ought ever to marry, when there is a hereditary taint.'

'My father's family were hard-headed Scotch people; I believe they used to drink a great deal.'

'Ah!' said Sir Jasper Dixon-Potts.

'But that was a general habit in former days.'

'It explains much,' said Sir Jasper pompously. It explained three-quarters of his income!

'My father must have been more romantic than most of his kind, for he fell in love with an Italian, on a trip to the lakes, and married her.'

'There was no hereditary taint in your mother's family?' Sir Jasper crossed his thin hands over his white waistcoat.

'I know nothing of my mother's family. She—she was not socially my father's equal. She was as good as she was beautiful.'

'But there might have been a taint,' said Sir Jasper.

'You think, then, that nobody ought to marry,' demanded Kenneth with inconsistent irritation, 'unless

he is quite sure that there has never been a fool in his family?'

'I do not say that. My own children have married. I mean, I could not afford them that certainty. But you cannot exaggerate the importance of an hereditary taint. By the bye, I see your name'—Sir Jasper looked, through his gold eye-glasses, at his visitor's card—'This nephew of yours, who is an idiot, does not happen by any possibility to be the—eh?—ah?—the Sir James Graye, in whose treatment we have all been so interested of late?'

'Yes, that's my nephew,' said Kenneth.

'Indeed!—very remarkable, very remarkable. I hope the patient is progressing favourably.'

'He is not gaining strength as we should have wished.'

'Ah—quite so! Well, Charcot is a very remarkable man. The—the attempt is a very remarkable one. But the patient is not gaining, I think you said, in strength?'

Kenneth acquiesced. 'I had a painful case in my own family,' continued Sir Jasper, 'the circumstances are well known—where I saw myself compelled to go contrary to the wishes of one very dear to me, on account of an hereditary taint.'

'Indeed,' said Kenneth, feeling for his fee.

'How my distinguished colleague, Sir William Bell, can write as he does, goes beyond me to understand!' The white man, suddenly vivacious, struck his lean fingers viciously on a green review that lay by his side. 'However, in medicine, as in all sciences, there must be differences of opinion. Now, that operation—very remarkable—three guineas,—we could hardly have performed it in England.—Good morning.'

'You do not, then,'—two hours had been spent in a waiting-room with yesterday's newspaper before Kenneth got an opportunity of asking,—'attach such supreme importance to heredity, Sir William?'

Sir William was a cheery little man, bright and brisk. He shot his sentences like volleys. 'My dear sir, if one lunatic condemned a race, how does anybody happen to be outside Bedlam!'

'Still, I thought that modern science——' Sir William jumped round in his chair.

'What, pray, do you think was the mental condition of Adam when he accepted the apple from Eve?' He waited to enjoy the effect of this his favourite shot. 'If you consult my distinguished colleague, Sir Jasper Dixon-Potts, he will tell you the only certain hereditary taint is madness. I cannot agree with him.' He struck his fist, with an angry little thump, on a blue review by his side.

'I have spoken to Sir Jasper Potts. He told me about a case in his own family—he said the circumstances were well known——'

'That was his daughter. He broke off her engagement a few days before the wedding, because the bridegroom's grandmother had died of—or, rather, in—dementia senilis, but he married her a couple of years later to a man, both whose parents had been consumptive.'

Kenneth opened his eyes.

'I am not a mad-doctor. Not a specialist at all. My dear sir, I am speaking very frankly to you, because I cannot let you ruin your whole future through a fad. If the specialists could all get their special legislation, nobody would be allowed to marry whose ancestors had died of anything at all. There is no greater folly than this heredity business, not because it may not exist, but because we know nothing about it. Just now, we are absolutely certain that tuberculosis is not transmissible but infectious: we are not so sure about the tendency to cancer. Three years ago it was just the other way round. Do not misunderstand me. I am far from decrying the noble profession to which I have devoted my life, but we've a lot to learn yet, my dear sir, and this talk about heredity, at the present stage, is sheer cruelty, thoughtless cruelty, as one can see in your case. Oh?—ah?—Three guineas. My best wishes. Good afternoon.'

In his hotel-bedroom Kenneth found a letter which, being marked 'Immediate,' had been sent back to London by Barton at once on its arrival in Paris. It was from the Grayes' cousin, Lady Clandonald, to whom he had

written a fortnight ago about governess-ships. She was in town, and he went to see her at once.

'My dear Kenneth, you here?' The Countess of Clandonald was a fluffy little pink-and-white, doll-faced creature, in laces. She had made a specialty of herself by Buddhism, of which she knew absolutely nothing, and, while waiting for Nirwana, she contrived to spend more than her husband allowed her on the vanities of this fleeting show. But she liked doing kindnesses that cost you nothing, and she said Buddhism taught you to be kind.

'Important business,' replied Kenneth. 'I go back to-night.'

'And how is that poor thing?'

'James is dreadfully weak. We are anxious about him.'

'I can't understand how you permitted that operation. However, nobody can want him to live. You will make a much better——'

'Don't, please, Clara!'

'Oh certainly. But surely it goes without saying. Well, I wrote to you to Paris—how tiresome!'

'It is about that letter I am come.'

'Oh! I had a note from Mrs. Coster this morning—they are Coster and Coster, you know, the great ship-building people, fabulously rich. Would you ring for my maid. You know, she picks up all my letters and sorts them. I couldn't do it for myself.'

'I wonder Donald allows you.'

'Donald? I tell him he may thank his stars. Is there another woman in London could drop all her letters about for her maid to find? I haven't a key in my possession. My purse and my cheque-book lie in an open drawer. That is the chief beauty of Buddhism, it teaches you to ignore all the vanities of life.' She lay back in her blue-and-silver boudoir; the diamonds flashed all about her white satin evening-gown. 'Ellis,' she said, 'find me that letter which came this morning, in the big scrawly hand.'

'I don't think I remember, my lady.' 'Then look for it, please,' said the Countess sharply. A hunt ensued, the maid vainly protesting that the letter had not yet

come into her hands. Ultimately it was discovered, in Lady Clandonald's armchair, behind the cushion against which she was leaning, to complain.

'I am so glad to be of use,' remarked Lady Clandonald. 'This is what Mrs. Coster says: "Yes, I am looking for a governess for my three little girls, aged respectively nine, seven, and four. I should like a nice person, thoroughly respectable and refined; of course all her belongings would have to be quite unexceptionable. We should require first-rate references from the British Consul and one or two pastors of the Established Church of the country, for one cannot be too particular nowadays. She had better be *diplômée*" (the woman has no idea what it means), "and we should expect her to teach French, German, the usual English subjects of course, and the rudiments of Latin, algebra, a little Italian, plain sewing, fancy-work, elementary music and drawing, *no singing or dancing*, but she would have to do calisthenics with the children, and lung exercises and drill, and all the ordinary outdoor games. It is essential that she should *skate*, and be gentle with children, and sweet-tempered, but firm. Oh, I forgot, of course she must be a Protestant, but not a Dissenter" (how bigoted!), "as near Church of England as they have in their country, please, and her French must be Parisian!"' Lady Clandonald put down the letter for a moment. 'Why, these people who don't know *on* from *en* always persist in thinking that the Paris accent is the best!' She resumed: "She would not be expected to come into the drawing-room after dinner, unless we are quite alone, when I should like her to read to me for an hour, or, if her music is good, she might play to my husband; he likes to be played to sleep after dinner."

'Is there any more?' asked Kenneth.

'My dear Kenneth, one can see you never corresponded about a governess. There is a lot more. "Her age should be preferably" (she writes 'preferably' with three r's) "between twenty-five" (she has scratched that out and put 'seven') "and thirty-three: we should pay her thirty-five guineas, and nice presents at Christmas——"

'Thanks,' said Kenneth on his feet. 'A guinea for every year she has spent since her birth, getting ready for Mrs. Coster's family.'

'Do you think your young lady will do?' asked his cousin sweetly.

'I fear not. She is only the most accomplished girl I ever met. Not half enough accomplished to teach the little Coster-mongers!'

'My dear Kenneth, you are quite unjust. I assure you the letter is in no way unusual. Of course she doesn't expect to get quite all she asks, but very nearly. And the wages are very good!'

'Wages!' bounced Kenneth.

'Yes, isn't that right? Oh, salary. How funny you are! Why don't you keep this girl yourself, to teach James, if he gets better?'

'Why not, indeed? I dare say the Coster idiots are not much better than he!'

'You ought to go in for Buddhism,' said Lady Clondonald, smiling. 'It would teach you to feel kindly towards these poor rich slaves of wealth. You can't think what a comfort it is to me, in our present-day society, when all the horrid people have got all the money, to think of them as hampered on their way to Nirwana, by these earthly possessions that other people envy them. My poor sister Dolgelly is crying her eyes out because Jack has had losses. Now, if Donald were to tell me that we must give up one of our places in the country, I should not mind a bit!'

'I see!' said Kenneth.

'Won't you come and dine to-morrow?'

'I must leave for Paris to-night.'

'Well, it's no great loss. Our chef is ill, and the cook does her best, but we miss poor Hippolyte sadly.'

'After all,' said Kenneth to himself, as he was borne through the orange mist of oily dirt by a swift and splashy hansom, 'a man could do worse for the girl he loves than to rescue her from governessdom and make her Lady Graye.'

CHAPTER XXI

A FEW days later they carried Sir James, amid all the luxurious discomforts of modern travel, from Paris to Bardwyk, and dropped him, more dead than alive, into the refreshing peace of an earliest spring-tide, the first soft awakenings of nature, in a land of slow waters, low meadows, and motionless trees. He lay with closed eyes, very white, possibly dreaming.

It was Ducrot who almost drove him from the villa. Ducrot was a good doctor, and by no means a bad man, though a hard and fast money-maker; but he naturally didn't want people to die in the *Etablissement*. As soon, therefore, as the sum of future 'pension' days grew measurably small, the doctor recommended country air. He was much annoyed at Edward's hesitations. Did his eminent young colleague not recognise that a change could be only 'beneficial'? Well, did he, called away by his marriage—*mes compliments!*—desire to confide Sar Shems to a rural practitioner; to some provincial '*Bains*'? Edward shuddered at the idea of the provincial hydro. Who are the unfortunates that fill, with their hopes and their woes, and their often slender purses, those modern bagnios that are springing up like toadstools all over our enervated world?

So the ten per cent. commissions were paid to the various people who laid claim to them, on the fanciful total fixed by those people themselves. Edward, refusing to ask anything like what they advised him, had just enough left, after all demands had been satisfied, to buy a decent outfit at the *Belle Jardinière*. It was rather hard on him that Kenneth, ignorant of these complica-

tions, should frankly declare disapproval of the cut of the *Jardinière* clothes.

Miss MacClachlin saw the party off from the gloomy Gare du Nord, the only gloomy spot in Paris—presumably there hang about it, in the mist of its sunless name, every traveller's dingy memories of departures for dreary skies. Miss MacClachlin was in everybody's way, but that was not a thing she readily noticed. 'I shall be there,' she had told them all, 'at fifteen minutes to the hour.' (Punctuality, says Hortense, is the thief of time.)

Maria stood confiding to the preoccupied Kenneth her fresh troubles with Hortense, which must end in a marriage with the shock-headed young butcher and a wine-shop. 'And I shall have to provide the wine-shop!' lamented the old maid, 'in the interests of morality. I, who loathe wine-shops! But she resolutely refuses to marry him else.'

'Well, you'll be rid of her; that's one comfort,' suggested Kenneth. 'Ye-e-es,' hesitatingly responded Maria MacClachlin. 'She managed them wonderfully, you know.' The good work, without Hortense, looked practically hopeless; who but she could distinguish between drink and devotedness, between emotion and *blague*; who but she could keep order at the distribution of prizes and presents, could calculate the amount of hot chocolate required, or explain how the chevaliers liked it made? 'I shall have to join you in Holland,' said the poor lady. 'Have you got a society for the protection of animals there?'

'We have,' replied Thomasine, for Edward was more than busy with the patient. They were on the platform, the cumbersome saloon-car alongside them; Barton, Kenneth, and a couple of brightly interested blue commissionaires were lifting up, with much twisting and solicitude, the invalid in his invalid-chair. 'We have,' replied Thomasine, 'but it doesn't stop dog-carts; you might come and try to do that.'

'I dislike dog-carts,' said Maria in her decided manner, 'but goat-shays are worse. Besides, we shall never get rid of cruelty for profit as long as we cannot even put

down cruelty for pleasure. Imagine what must be the state of mind of people who, for pleasure, start hunting an uncartered stag! I knew a woman, Thomasine, who subscribed to the society, and who, three times a week, raced after some poor little gasping fox—preserved—because she said the fox was "vermin." The toad!

'How terrible it is to travel with invalids!' remarked Thomasine, watching the porters.

'But I sent back her subscription and paid it myself,' said Maria. 'I couldn't strike her off the list.'

'You must let me show you my father's defence of vivisection. There's neither profit nor pleasure in that. It's quite short and clear. It has been translated into half a dozen languages.'

'It will not convert me,' said Maria.

'Then nothing will,' said Thomasine.

The central clock had come round to the moment of final leave-takings. '*En voiture!*' said the guard for the twentieth time, but now with the accent which must be obeyed. Maria MacClachlin shook hands slowly with Kenneth. Then she came close to Thomasine, and put both arms round her shoulders. 'He loves you!' she said; and that was the cruellest, sweetest thing Maria MacClachlin ever did.

On his arrival at Bardwyk Edward found her wedding-present awaiting him. It was a bronze by Barrège, who was then just coming into prominence, of a man with a wounded boy in his arms. Doubtless Kenneth had helped her about the commission, which must have cost a considerable sum. The man was vaguely like Edward, but the boy was certainly not a bit like Sir James.

Yet the idiot's countenance, as he lay there motionless and waxen, had certainly lost in repulsiveness what it had gained in repose. The tormented expression had left it; the eyes, when he opened them, looked sad, not sore, in the clear grey atmosphere of Holland, grey-green with the prophetic shimmer of half-hidden buddings. Edward cautiously let in more light on the shrinking lids. 'See here, James,' he said, 'see how funny things look in this country!' One day the sick lad stared into the quiet,

cloud-hung sun. Two children in wooden shoes were solemnly toddling along the canal beneath the poplars. He watched them through the light and shade. Edward turned away and hastened from the room. Presently Thomasine went to look for him. 'My God, if we could but save him!' said Edward, and sobs were in his throat. He, the strong, sensitive man, with the cool, firm hand, he could not quite keep back at that moment the sobs that were in his throat.

'Edward is emotional,' said the Professor, 'he cares about his patients. He would never have done for my sort of doctor, but as a psychiatrist he is excellent,—oh, first-rate!' The Professor had not been able quite to forgive Edward; he was doubly gentle with his son.

The Professor had always maintained that there is no such thing as psychiatry. No as yet discovered medicines of any kind can minister to a mind diseased, nor can any treatment in those cases, except a certain moral influence where the patient is not actually insane, have lasting effect on a distracted soul. He believed the more devoutly in a possible scientific study of insanity—the only one—by microbic investigation ('madness is an undiscovered microbe'), and it was the more distressing to him, that Edward should turn away from this only hope of reasonable achievement. The novel idea of the surgical treatment of idiocy (the putting straight, to use his own expression, what had been badly built), came, of course, as a real relief to the scientifically minded father; it was a next best thing, it showed something like genius, although the Professor held surgery—a mechanical trade, 'sleight of hand'—in but poor esteem. 'The progress of surgery in our day has been immense,' said the Professor, 'like the progress of every kind of machinery. A surgeon is a cutting-machine. We cut all sorts of things, nowadays, that we should never have cut before.' 'And the sum of human suffering?' questioned the Baroness anxiously. 'Is the greater,' said, sadly, the Professor.

He was eager to believe that his son was going to prove a pioneer of supreme prominence in an unknown field. He told himself and everybody else so repeatedly.

But in his heart he knew there was only one logical method of investigating abnormality, and that was his own. 'The worst of it is,' he said, 'you cannot study insanity in animals. Mind, my dear!' and, as the Baroness bent, with tightly closed ears, over a price-list of house-linen, the Baron semicolonised a rabbit's brain.

For the Baroness was 'helping' Laura to get things. Eliza had flatly refused to give assistance, and threatened to go. And, in these days, Eliza had to be treated tenderly, for her grief at her Jonker's marriage to the 'Witch' was by no means a humorous thing. During a whole year she had prayed, twice daily, that the house Laura inhabited in Brussels might burn to the ground (Laura's lady lived on the fifth storey), and, the petition not having met with acceptance, the Primitive Calvinist's religious convictions were all gone higgledy-piggledy. 'I don't care who buys my table-cloths,' said Laura, 'as long as I may get my own frocks,' for Laura was ever accustomed to take the secondary difficulties of existence quite smoothly, as they came. As soon as Eliza saw the table-linen the Baroness had bought, she repented in sackcloth and ashes.

When the party from Paris arrived at Bardwyk, Laura was absent in Brussels, packing up and making purchases; the Lisses were at Leyden; the big, old-fashioned country-house, awaking in silence, slowly opened its sleepy eyes. It stands, square, lofty-roofed, red-brick and green-shuttered, two hundred yards from the wide canal against its own background of beeches. In a grey south room, with tall windows up to the ceiling, Sir James spent his silent days. He had not yet asked for the lame lamb from Paris; his attendants had, nevertheless, dragged it along with him, not daring to leave it behind. Ill as he was, half-dead, imbecile, he remained more than ever the centre of interest, the unresting occupation of all.

'He wants Mademoiselle, sir,' said Barton, as Kenneth looked up, inquiring, from his nephew's moans. The boy had been brought out into the open, on the first mild day of liquid sunshine; the soft air seemed to sink

caressingly around him, where he lay against a great mass of rhododendron shrubs. So Thomasine, barely absent, was recalled, and she and Kenneth sat, as they had sat before on various occasions, in silence and thoughtfulness, listening to any sound that rose uppermost—the boy's breathing, the call of a bird.

'I can't get you a situation as a governess. I don't advise you to go as a governess,' Kenneth had said brusquely. Somehow, conversation had died down between them of late. They used to have such quantities to talk about. Now Miss MacClachlin's substantial presence had an unpleasant habit of turning up, mentally, and damming the stream at its start. In the room, by the invalid, they would often sit far apart, each with a book—to-day, in the open air for the first time, the boy seemed disconcerted; he called them, with that strange little call of his, drawing them close to him, closer, beckoning, pressing, appealing, desirous to feel them against him, each on a side, clasping suddenly, in his ungainly clasp, a reluctant hand of each. Drawn down beside him, they hardly dared to stir, their faces, as it seemed to them, almost touching, fixedly turning away to right and left, lest, too consciously, their glances should meet. Over the dull soil around them spring was spreading her first shades of fresh colour; in the grim blackness of gaunt oaks and chestnuts a vague mist arose of coming life. Here and there behind the network of naked branches the russet beach leaves shone like sulphured flames. A silver light was on the broidery of the pinewoods; across the shining masses of the laurels the early gossamers sparkled and swung.

The grey sky still stretched pale above the pale grey landscape, but through all living things that, in the wearing winter sleep, had lost their beauty, strength, and gladness thrilled silently the first faint promise of awakening, of new vigour, new budding, new verdure, new youth.

'He looks very feeble!' said Thomasine.

'Yes,' answered Kenneth, not in the happiest of tones. Her eyes turned involuntarily towards him; she glanced quickly away.

'Still, with this great improvement of the shape of the skull, the face also has altered ; don't you think so? It has been—humanised.'

'True. Sometimes it seems to me as if that soul my poor sister-in-law was always praying for had almost struggled into the eyes.'

Thomasine was silent. Stealing a glance at her, as she sat there close beside him, he saw that a bright drop lay motionless on the bloom of her maiden cheek. Across the ragged wintry grass before them a couple of blackbirds hopped, big and glossy ; they pecked about, right and left, restlessly, in silence, in expectation, like all the rest of the world.

'How still it all is!' said Thomasine, oppressed.

'It is waiting to burst into song,' he replied. Other blackbirds alighted among the bushes, and a twittering of finches sounded feebly in the twigs of the taller trees.

The idiot stirred without opening his eyes. His fingers clutched convulsively the hands of his two protectors ; he drew them together in the grasp of his own. A ray of sunlight, from where the clouds seemed parting, had played across his countenance ; he did not shrink from it, apparently, as of yore. As the radiance of it broke across the gossamers, and the shining green leaves and the russet beech woods, the birds hidden among the branches chirped and fluttered aloud. The dull canal gleamed in the distance ; a flight of white doves swept down, strutting upon the lawn. Kenneth's hand, that lay enclosed over Thomasine's palm, pressed it, and, timidly, with sweet hesitation, she recognised and returned the touch.

When James lifted his listless eyes from the slumber that had fallen upon them, his first thought was of forlornness, desertion—of hands left unwarmed, untouched—his fingers lay loose ; he felt this before he saw his two former companions, a few paces away from him, very close together, their heads bent, almost touching—not forlorn, not deserted, these two. As he watched them, in the dim light of his senses, their lips met. How much

he realised, it would be impossible to say. He loved his Uncle Kenneth, the man who (like Barton, yet different, above, not below, himself) was always with him and always kind—and he warmed to the friendly presence of the girl with the 'angel' face. He closed his eyes again, wearily, and lay softly weeping.

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CHAPTER XXII

'LET him sleep!' said Kenneth, awaking. If, at least, it be awaking to pass from dreams of love to the knowledge that they are dreams no longer. His heart was full of facts, of the truths he had been repeating to Thomasine, all the exquisite truths his touch of the hand had revealed before his lips could utter them, all the exquisite truths she had guessed, had known, was yearning to hear again. Simple truths that take such a world of telling!—the only human truths, when the poor little sum is made, worth living and dying for!

'Hush!—he isn't asleep,' said Thomasine. She rose and went back to James and stood gazing down on him. Presently she stooped and softly kissed him on the brow. 'Oh, don't!' exclaimed Kenneth involuntarily. He flushed crimson with vexation at himself. She turned towards him big, innocent, wondering eyes. A rush of wheels was heard along the drive on the farther side of the house. 'Already?' cried Kenneth, in amazement. 'Yes,' replied Thomasine. 'It must be Edward and Laura.'

For Laura was expected from Leyden to visit the new arrivals in what was so soon to become her home, her own house. They hastened to meet her, but already she had come round through the gardens towards them, blooming in her Eastern beauty, and her brilliant clothing, and her radiant happiness, with her bridegroom behind her—her bridegroom, elated, eager to rejoice over this first welcome of his bride to his birthplace, yet saddened, in the very heart of him, by the deepening shadow of an inavertible fate. Laura's most anxious

first look was for the patient. She started back from his waxen face; his eyes turned, with swift fondness of reproach, to Edward. The shrug of his shoulders made answer: 'Why sadden you without avail?'

She had knelt beside James. He seemed in a sort of faint, or perhaps he was merely too worn-out to notice her. Very gently she passed her hand over his forehead, again and again and again. 'Don't you know me?' she repeated. 'Don't you know me, James?' He nodded laboriously. And again she passed her hand over his forehead. 'Sleep,' she said. 'You must sleep. You must sleep!'

From that day begun, unexpectedly to all, most unexpectedly to herself, Laura's care of James Graye. Even her wedding barely interrupted it—the fussy, flowery wedding, exactly like everybody else's, as are all weddings, only more so. After all, how could a wedding be different from itself, or why should it? Why should it, as an institution, show more variety than the marriage-state which follows it? As long as the civilised world exists, we shall have to endure the limitations of both. The Professor, while declaring the ceremonies and festivities to be, in nowise, scientifically connected with the object in view, enjoyed them satisfactorily: the Baroness read a poem at which nobody laughed. The marriage took place, after all, at Leyden, on account of James's condition, and, immediately afterwards, Edward carried off his wife to the quiet home at Bardwyk, which the marriage-contract had assigned to her by purchase, as henceforth legally hers. The Colonel, looking up from much abashment, had declared himself quite unfit to arrange settlements for heiresses. 'My dear, I am not a man of business. By no means,' he said, in agitated tones. 'I was all right as guardian of a pauper ward. I beg your pardon,' he corrected himself, floundered. 'I mean, your father gave me to understand——'

'Oh, what does it matter, Uncle Frank,' said Laura. 'Let Edward have as much of the money as he wants.'

'And pray, how are we to know how much he wants?'

'Oh, ask him,' said Laura. She yawned, and, sinking

back upon the tiger-skin, she added, with an enormous chocolate between her pearly teeth: 'There will always be enough for my sweets.'

'But this business of the transfer of Bardwyk?'

'Yes, that is very important. We are going to have sick people there, and make them well.'

'I understand nothing about the matter,' said the Colonel, very red in the face, 'but never mind—I am going to the East as soon as this tiresome fuss is over, and I hope to be killed for the cause of my King.' The unexpected alliteration greatly caught his fancy. He repeated with a relish: 'To be killed for the cause of my King. It's all I'm good for,' he added sadly. He felt more than any one imagined the ruin he had brought upon his brother, the sale of the family inheritance to Laura, who was all very well, but an Oriental, and only the wife of a Lisse. But his moustaches curled up as fiercely as ever, so the Baroness feared he didn't care. 'Are you going to have infectious people?' he said, bobbing up and down, 'from the slums?'

'No, no—Edward's patients, the sort he will care about, the mentally afflicted.'

'Idiots!' said the Colonel, 'all over the old home. I suppose I've no right to object, being the only fool in the family!'

Laura eyed him languidly. 'What is a fool?' she said. 'I haven't the faintest idea.'

'A fool is a man who meddles with what he doesn't understand.'

'Then are we all fools,' said Laura.

'Or, rather, who tries to do what he knows can't succeed.'

'Then was Christ a fool,' said Laura gravely.

But this was beyond the Colonel's depth. And, as Laura drew forth another bonbon, he said: 'Well, I was a fool, at any rate. Never mind about the other fools!'

'There will not be any at Bardwyk,' reasoned Laura complacently. 'We shall only take three or four of Edward's most interesting cases, such as James Graye.'

'And your children?' he exclaimed, actually rumpling

his hair. 'Are those going to live with the idiots?' Laura pretended not to have heard him.

'What, pray, is to become of your children?'

'Uncle Frank,' replied Laura, rather impertinently, 'let us talk of the state of the country. Have a sweet!'

'Laura!' cried Uncle Francis passionately. He rose and planted himself in front of her. 'You *must* have children, mind! I insist on it. It would be dishonourable, otherwise, this transfer of Bardwyk to you and your heirs! I should *never* consent!'

She lifted her eyes to his. 'Yes, uncle, yes!' she said soothingly. 'Why, if you could only see your hair! You neat man, you look almost like the Professor! Mind you don't get quite killed in Acheen, please, uncle: come back here to defend the King against the Anarchists!'

'*Atchine, Allemagne, Anarchie!*' vociferated Uncle Francis delightedly. Yet he disliked having to do his combinations in French, for the use of that language, however frequent colloquially in his circle, still indicated a limitation in this particular case. 'Our three foes! And the greatest of these is anarchy.'

'We at Bardwyk, we shall only fight imbecility,' said Laura.

'The most difficult of all,' replied Uncle Frank. He shook his head, while endeavouring to smooth it. His thoughts were of Abrahams, and the ups and downs of petrol and an uncertain banking-account.

Laura, then, devoted herself to the first 'imbecile' on hand. And the nearest duty, with this case, was certainly either to let the boy die in peace or to keep him from dying. 'Let me try, let me try to do the latter!' pleaded Laura. Her husband kissed her hand.

Yet after a time he was compelled to admit, that, as in his father's illness, some sort of health-giving influence, tranquillising, invigorating, was conveyed by the magnetic passes, in a manner as yet unexplained, from the stronger nature to the weaker, from the healthy to the sick. James Graye's life-current, that had seemed oozing away, feebly rallied, hesitated, fluctuated, and very slowly began welling

back. The usual doctors' remedies, that had remained so ineffectual, suddenly caught on. The lessening pulse grew clearer; the heart steadied. 'He is turning the corner,' said Edward, with bated breath. Husband and wife worked together. 'I would give my right hand to understand!' exclaimed Edward impetuously. 'Keep it and believe,' replied Laura. 'There are more things in heaven and earth——'

Edward struck his fist on the table: 'It isn't true,' he cried, 'only we must give philosophy time.'

'And meanwhile?'

'Meanwhile we may use what we can't explain.'

The patient's constitution was by nature robust: his build was of best Scotch bone and sinew, unhampered, in this case, by Scotch brain. His body, for the present, had nothing to do but to get better, and, once pointed in the proper direction, it steered serenely, if very slowly, towards the goal.

Till that glorious day when in the full spring brightness, the green and white freshness of foliage and blossom, with the call of the chaffinches and thrushes all around him, and the sailing clouds overhead, he seemed suddenly to regain possession of his half-forgotten personality, such as it had been, as if a brown twig had faintly budded, with a touch of colour, in his heart. As his physical strength returned to him, it became manifest that he could use his ungainly limbs with far greater ease than before the operation: they even seemed gradually to fit more correctly into his body, and, through it, into the brain, as if the strings in the puppet we all are were pulled taut. Evidently the central controlling power had somewhat righted itself: it could work.

'Have you noticed, Mr. Lisse,' asked Barton, 'that Sir James always sets his foot where he wants to set it now?'

'I have, Barton,' replied Edward in a low voice.

'And what do you say to that, Mr. Lisse, if I may be so free to ask?'

'I say, thank God, Barton.'

'Thank you, Mr. Lisse.'

On the spring day in question James sat gazing at the stretch of young green grass. By the mute comprehension already referred to Barton brought him his lame lamb, now grown into a sheep, neglected since the operation. It stumbled about and nibbled the blades and then set to eating steadily. Presumably, in its own way, it was as happy as it could be. It lifted its head and bleated.

The other dumb creature, watching it, sat solemn and still. Suddenly, and with evident effort, he said, 'Ma!' Edward caught Laura's hand and clasped it tight. He felt her trembling from head to foot.

The next moment, after a painful pause, the idiot uttered the same sound again—and then again and again, struggling to get it correctly, to speak it with greater ease. The song of the birds rang louder, and a rustling caught the trees. From the distance sounded, discordant, a quarrelsome cawing of rooks. Through it all the idiot continued his first articulate utterance, the first movement of infant lips. The sheep, indifferent, echoed it.

'Supposing he could say something else!' whispered Laura.

'No,' replied her husband. He slipped round to Barton, whose mask seemed to have come off, and bade him, in a few hasty words, take no notice, make no change. 'No experiments, above all, at this moment,' he said: then, with a heart full to bursting, he hurried away.

Into the open, into solitude, into communion with nature only: but half-way down the evergreen walk he ran up—at the bend—against Kenneth.

'What's the matter?' said Kenneth.

'What makes you ask?'

'The holiday look in your eyes!'

'You are a poet, Kenneth.'

Grave knocked the ashes out of his pipe. 'Not that,' he said, 'but the dullest of us learn to see it's a workaday world.'

'Well, there are high days in it: you are right.' Edward strode a few paces down the path and came back again. 'Kenneth! Kenneth!'—his eyes shone indeed—'James

has uttered an articulate sound! He has imitated his sheep. He—he—you see what that means! My whole theory is coming true. Bit by bit it is coming—has come true! Just as I saw it must be from the first, when he was miserable, and shut his eyes, and wanted doctors! He can look into the light now, and he can move his limbs as he wishes, and he is beginning to control his organs of speech. The compressed brain can work. And the soul in him above all—oh, above all!—can stand up and can open a window and can hold out a hand to those outside. Kenneth! Kenneth! My God, what a wonderful thing to have happened! The soul in him has broken through!

Kenneth stood contemplating his empty pipe.

'And now, since Laura came,' continued Edward, 'we—we have hardly dared to say it to one another, but we must all have perceived that he is gaining in strength.'

'You said it was impossible he could live!' cried Kenneth.

'Absolutely impossible from the medical point of view! The Academy would say he had no right to live! They would declare him officially dead already!' laughed Edward joyously.

Kenneth stood motionless, contemplating his pipe.

'I must not exaggerate,' Edward went on. 'He will never be like other men: the undeveloped condition of the brain proved that. It will not develop, as with hydrocephalus in infancy. But, at least, he will not suffer, and he will be able to use what he has got. And we shall be able to share his life somewhat!'

Kenneth lifted his eyes from the black bowl of the pipe and fixed them full on Edward.

'I deserve to be kicked,' he said.

Edward fell back a pace. 'What do you mean? Oh, because you objected to the operation? What nonsense, Kenneth: you were right. And if it hadn't been for Laura, we should all have known how right you were!'

'Yes, I objected, because of the danger, you remember that!' cried Kenneth.

'Of course I remember. How disturbed you look! It's

my fault for having sprung the thing on you like this, but I couldn't keep it back. You have your reward, Graye, after all these years of devotion. You have realised your promise to his mother in the end!

'I have asked your sister to marry me, and she has consented,' said Graye. The pipe dropped from his fingers: he stooped to pick it up.

'I—I—well, I'm very glad,' answered Edward heartily.

'I persuaded her, much against her will, to wait and not speak about the matter to her parents until—you see, I didn't want to have this—she left for Leyden the day after, and I haven't seen her since, except just at the wedding—and I didn't want to have this matter discussed while—while James was so ill.'

'But you have corresponded?'

'No: she would not allow that, until I had spoken to your father. And, you see, Lisse, I had nothing to offer your father. I ought to be kicked for having thought of the thing, much more for speaking of it—but how can I help myself? I don't want to blame you, Lisse, and it's very hard on you, for she's your own sister, but I wish to Heaven you had been a little less positive—for her sake!'

'I shall not pretend to misunderstand you,' said Edward. 'You mean that you are poor?'

'I am poor. Worse than that, I am my nephew's life-long nurse and guardian. As such I can share his home, but I have no right to condemn any woman to the same fate.'

'It is the fate the wife desires,' said Edward reassuringly. But Kenneth did not answer. He stood in the middle of the pine-walk, staring ahead.

'You can leave her to decide,' suggested Edward.

'It is not the same thing now,' said the other dully. 'I—I have stolen a march on her. She is no longer free. And yet God knows I have never grudged James one moment of his life! Not I! Not I! And that this should fall on me! It is unjust, Edward. The gods that make sport of us are unjust. I deserve plenty of

punishment—most of us do—but not, not the appearance of regretting James Graye's recovery—not that, not that! It makes me look like a cad. Every word I say makes me look more like a cad. And I don't deserve it, not, at least, as regards this. But I had no right to ask her. I had no right—I had no right.'

'You had the right of every man to whom a woman says yes,' replied Edward.

'Not when the woman doesn't know.'

'You strangely misjudge the girl you have asked to marry you,' said Edward, 'if you think she would be influenced by such considerations as these.' His tone was less cordial: something had got into it of the Baron Lisse.

Kenneth veered round in the path. His eyes were blazing: his whole face was distraught. 'You're a mad-doctor,' he cried; 'can't you see if a man'll ever go mad?'

'No,' replied Edward quickly, 'but one of the best safeguards is his fancying it long beforehand.' He paused: then, very gently: 'You are over-excited, Graye. I have seen you like this once before. But nervousness and excitability are not madness. We will talk it over. We can hear what my father says.'

'I had no right,' answered Kenneth.

'At any rate, the wrong is now done. You have a right to face that fact.'

'It was James's doing, too, said Kenneth, with a sorry smile.

'Would you have it undone?'

'No, by Heaven!'

CHAPTER XXIII

THE Professor smiles at heredity. At the most there may be, as yet scientifically unprovable, a certain predisposition. But this predisposition is balanced by palpable divergence in all sorts of ways. And, as for reversion to anterior types or inheritance from some unknown somebody far up the line, the Professor stops smiling and begins to frown. 'Last week,' he says, 'I had to be present at a great Academic event: we had Saxheim, the famous Saxheim from Würzburg. He proved to us that nobody ever died of anything that somebody between him and Adam hadn't died of before. There was some little difficulty about modern diseases, such as the nervous breakdown, for instance, caused by excess of travelling in trains. But the difficulty is only imaginary—I may say: captious. For it appears that a fossil locomotive has been discovered in a prehistoric cave! Ahem, Jane!'

'Yes, my dear,' says the Baroness, knitting in jerks. 'My grandmother died of eating an apple.'

'That, my dear, if I understand my Bible aright, was the common cause of death for us all. It is a great responsibility for our grandmother.'

'A bit of it stuck in her throat,' said the Baroness.

'It has stuck in ours ever since,' replied the Professor.

'I see you agree with the great Saxheim.'

'Who was he?' asked the Baroness.

'You don't listen to me as you used to,' replied the Baron, annoyed. 'Not that it matters, for Saxheim is wrong. Disease is a microbe: the whole future lies there. They will get to it in time. A malformation or a microbe. Mental disease as well as the rest. All the

non-microbic nervousities and eccentricities are abnormal, just as you and I are abnormal, like everybody else, but they have nothing in common with disease. Madness is a deterioration of the brain—take the commonest form—megalomania: an illness induced by a microbe. Nobody was ever born mad, as they would be, if it was a hereditary thing. And idiocy is a malformation. Look at Edward! Very interesting, Edward. But of secondary importance. The Semicolon Serum will cure all disease some day!’ The Professor sighed.

‘You should hear Laura,’ said Edward, laughing, when the Professor repeated all this to him. ‘All disease is lack of vital energy. Increase the vital energy and nature will heal herself.’

‘I did not know that Laura was a scientific authority,’ remarked the Baroness.

‘But she has done some people a lot of unscientific good,’ interposed the Professor hastily. ‘I do not see why the vital energy should not combat the microbe. It naturally would. I trust some method may be discovered of increasing, and controlling, it scientifically.’

‘That will never be the case,’ replied Edward, ‘until we doctors investigate the various quackeries with which we are at present resolved to have nothing to do.’

‘In my seventh canto,’ declared his mother, ‘the court physicians are powerless to pacify the disconcerted king, but Liriam puts him to sleep by tickling his nose with a peacock’s feather.’

‘But that would wake him!’ protested Jane, the second daughter, freshly home from the measles, and school.

‘Jane, you are pert. And ignorant—the two go together. Where, pray, would the marvellous element come in, if it woke him? Thomasine would never have made such a remark. When she spoke, it was to admire judiciously. And, anyway, her handwriting was much clearer than yours. I shall greatly miss Thomasine.’

But mothers have to miss their daughters. Before the golden summer glories had paled, Kenneth Graye had carried off his Dutch bride from the land of mead and dyke. In the face of Edward’s attitude and the Pro-

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fessor's utterances he could not but accept gladly the happiness that fate had played into his hands. They forbade him to speak of the matter to Thomasine, nor, indeed, had he any serious intention of doing her such injury. 'Your future will be looking after James,' was all he said to her, a little bitterly. 'And after Kenneth Graye,' she answered laughing.

For the present James remained at Bardwyk. Under constant and devoted teaching the afflicted lad was gradually achieving utterance, as of a little child. He knew, of course, the words which had always been spoken to him, a very limited vocabulary, in the days when he could not reply. The difficulty was for him to hunt these up in his dull brain, to sort them correctly, to utter them. And it then became apparent that he had formed mistaken conceptions of many abstract words, habitually misapplying some lightly used term. 'Good' was, according to his impression, whatever was agreeable to James—not such a fool neither! Therefore, when Barton or Uncle Kenneth had spoken to him of a 'good doctor,' and that doctor had hurt him (Edward had never hurt him excepting under chloroform), then the uncle or the servant had lied. The horrible discovery was made that he disbelieved these his faithful caretakers utterly on that account. He liked them, for the creature-comforts with which they had always supplied him, but he distrusted them profoundly. As a result of his mother's persistent teaching the word 'angel' had stuck in his head for whatever was beautiful and pure. He spoke of Laura and Thomasine, when he was able to speak so much, as 'angel.' But a splendid white birthday blanc-mange was not only 'good' but 'angel' also. He had a distressing way of muddling up these synonyms, as when he informed the Baroness (who was dreadfully afraid of him) that Laura was 'pudding,' meaning 'angel' *via* blanc-mange. So with infinite patience they had to unravel him. One day the Baroness—womanly sympathy having somewhat conquered her aversion—after full avowal to Edward, hung her precious amulet around the idiot's neck. He was delighted with it. He said

'Dolly' was pudding and angel, and Mammie Laurie as well. But, as he gradually developed, he grew to distinguish between this 'Dolly' and Laura, his supreme favourite, his ruler and mistress, until a moment came when he definitely transferred his synonym of the Virgin from 'Mammie Laurie' to the less known Thomasine. Of God, of any higher being, it became evident that he knew or understood absolutely nothing. All his mother's teaching and yearning on these subjects had been in vain. His requirements were terrestrial; his divinities human. Edward had expected his weak intellect to prove exceedingly susceptible of hypnotic suggestion. But, with the irregularity which characterises these imperfectly understood symptoms, it was soon manifest that he could be hypnotised into doing all sorts of things, but not into comprehending anything. That is to say, when the hypnotic influence was removed, it left no after-effects. During the trance he could repeat whatever Edward bade him. As soon as he regained his own personality, he knew no more than before. Laura's 'magnetism' suggested nothing, but merely seemed to develop his insufficient natural force. The Baroness said they must teach him that the soul is immortal. 'Has he got a soul?' questioned the unwary Professor. The lady laid down her pen. 'Do you think,' she demanded scathingly, 'that the living soul is a Semicolon?' 'No,' replied the Professor, 'nor the dead one a full stop. Mind!'

The spirit, then, of James Graye remained void of any higher considerations than 'good' which is pleasant, and 'angel' which is fair. But into it there crept, from some undefined source, unbidden, a craving to impart unto others. It was his first manifestation of virtue, extravagant but sincere.

James Graye sat on an old white bench, in the golden summer sunset, among the crimson roses. The evening was silent: a single star shone high in the western heaven. Laura had left him, swept from his side by a sudden breakdown of weariness and tears, after vain attempts—how frequently renewed!—to make him feel something of the majesty of a world beyond our own. She had told

him again of the Creator, the great source of all good gifts: in the midst of her brief explanation he had pointed his finger at *her*: she had run away to hide her chagrin; he was alone. A couple of weeks ago Barton, the faithful, loquacious domestic, had astonished them all by breaking down silently, completely, choosing the moment when his charge began definitely to improve. He had been sent away to recuperate: the only English-speaking servant procurable, a former hotel-waiter, was not really fitted for the place. James, always sensitive as to his surroundings, had an odd way of motioning this pale-faced attendant towards the house: 'Ill! Ill! Go to bye-bye!'

He was alone, then, on the summer evening in the sunset. The tramp who had crept up round the laurel-bushes, stood watching him, wondering. The tramp knew of rich people, from a distance, and of poor people, many of whom were unfortunate. He had no experience of James Grayes. Of the two, however, Sir James was by far the most bewildered, for he had never as yet come into contact with any human being from the outside world. In fact, the tramp was his first acquaintance. They gazed at each other for a few moments in interested silence. The tramp was not a prepossessing object, being bottle-nosed, lantern-jawed, and weather-beaten, with a straggly grey beard, and a battered tall hat. But James, with his white, thin, terrier-face and ungainly limbs, although much more correctly composed than in former days, was not exactly an attractive figure either. The tramp, having proffered much voluble information about his own ailments and those of his numerous orphan children, in Dutch, without extracting any reply, came to the conclusion that the afflicted young gentleman must be deaf and dumb. He therefore desisted, and producing penholders and sheets of note-paper from his wallet, spread these out on the garden table, in mute appeal.

James knew nothing of purchase, or of money, or of writing. The ornamental sheets were garlanded with flowers in the old-fashioned manner, great embossed crimson roses in silver filagree, splendidly gay. These magnificent objects were a present from the stranger.

The lad's heart warmed with a sudden glow of affection to this first unknown creature he met, who thus paused to give him beautiful things. A window indeed—to use Edward's expression—flung open in his cramped heart, towards the world: the world was loving and kind. He had often of late, since his eyes no longer pained him, watched the figures passing along the road by the canal, the horses and carts, the oddly dressed villagers, the children. They were far away, like pictures on the wall. Now, suddenly, one of them was with him, inside his existence, giving gifts. This, then, was the intercourse of human beings; all were 'good' to each other, except such doctors as hurt. He got up, laboriously still, and dragging from tree to tree, he gathered a quantity of the huge red roses all around him—he had always been encouraged to pick flowers—and, advancing, presented his armful, in a great mass of beauty and fragrance, to the tramp.

'Huh?' said the tramp.

This James understood, and he coloured. He knew that his poor offering of things that grew of themselves and faded was not to be compared to the immortal splendour of silver and scarlet which the visitor had conferred upon him, but he had given of his best. He was not the fortunate possessor of a wallet full of treasures to give away.

But the tramp understood quickly enough that the poor young fellow wanted to give him something; thereupon he promptly pointed to his, shocking-bad, boots. Sir James's eyes followed the indication. He understood at once. What boots to walk about in, hurting one's feet! He had plenty of others at home. In a moment, letting all his roses fall around him, he was down on the ground, dragging off his shoes.

They fitted the tramp beautifully. The next moment, however, James was pulling away at his jacket. His waistcoat and trousers followed. The tramp hesitated, casting suspicious glances right and left. There was nobody in sight. The evening was falling. The clothes were an excellent, most serviceable, grey tweed.

Had the tramp, with the clothes on his arm, paused to gather up his sheets of paper and penholders, there would have been an end, in fierce disillusionment, of James Graye's religion of love. The man turned to do the deed. But a titmouse which had been hanging on to a twig, when it ought to have been in bed, lost its sleepy hold and fluttered away through the branches. The man started, and ran. Thus a titmouse became the saviour of James Graye's soul.

The man, as he turned and fled, lost the battered old chimney-pot, and, flinging out his hand in a futile attempt to recover it, dashed the thing on to the table, where he left it to its fate. In this action James saw a fresh impulse of generosity. When Edward and Laura came along the winding path to look for him under the soft summer shadows, linked arm in arm and heart to heart, in the sweetest and closest communion, they found the patient sitting in his underclothing with the tramp's hat placed reverently on his head. The boy's eyes were fixed on the stars with a calm and grateful gaze. It would savour of irreverence even to mention here what idea of supernal reverence had forced itself into the mists of his soul from the conception he had formed of the tramp. The natural attentions of his caretakers had never brought home to him the idea of disinterested loving-kindness, love for love's sake. He now first understood that all these thousands of the great world outside him lived in charity and good feeling: their contact meant love. His whole soul was glowing with brotherly love. To do unto others as you would have them do unto you: this was the whole intercourse of the race. Surely it is worth sixteen years of imbecility to awaken into such a millennium as that!

The alarmed and distressed questionings of his guardians he met with one reiterated, tranquillising answer: 'James give.' There was no more to be said, and Edward, with that quick perception which is the basis of his power, reconstituted pretty accurately what had taken place. The removal of the incredibly dirty old hat was so obvious a sorrow, that the little procession commenced

its homeward course, with Sir James in the middle in his patent woollen underwear and his triumphant, if somewhat unsteady, head-gear.

That evening, however, in spite of the quiet, glad light which had come into his eyes, he remained solemnly contemplative of many things he would not, or could not, speak about. Of late his excellent appetite had returned: they were disconcerted to see him push his plate away. He looked down at the smart shoes on his feet and said 'Give.' 'Give!' he said, holding out his empty hands. And presently Edward understood this also. 'Yes, you may give, James,' he said earnestly, close to the lad's face, looking straight into his eyes. 'We will help you to give. And to be kind.' A couple of days later the gardener's small children were invited in to play with Sir James: he was allowed to give them toys. Then other children from the village followed: later on again—a good deal later—he was taken to see poor people, sick people, people in bed, and encouraged to bring them blankets and fruit. Such actions he easily comprehended. He became a sort of Providence to the village: the cottagers blessed him as he passed. But one mystery he did not fathom, and it was a source of very great grief to him, unbeknown to those who tended him—no stranger ever gave him anything in return, excepting the Angel Tramp. Very gradually he realised that he was rich and the villagers poor. But the Tramp had been poor. And he had given first. The truth must be set down here: it is no use keeping it back. The dead mother's prayer was fulfilled in a manner she had little expected. The tramp became to James Graye his sole manifestation of God.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHILE James Graye was thus passing from death unto life, his faithful guardian of all these years was dreaming away the rapid weeks of an Italian honeymoon with a bride to whom the scenery of the Lago Maggiore seemed as new, and almost as beautiful, as the married state. Delight, therefore, could be theirs, as indeed it was, unbroken, until——

Until the change. For the fates accord, in our mortal destinies, a long placidity to many, to many a gentle rise and decline, but untouched loftiness to none. On the highest heights of human happiness the dizzy soul staggers, and Atropos immediately cuts the rope. Happy they who know neither the capacity for climbing nor the certainty of the fall!

'My life of the last five weeks is a golden dream,' said Kenneth. He lay back in the lazy skiff, with his eyes lifted, lazily also, to the spotless blue dome overhead. 'A golden dream!' he repeated. 'A golden dream!'

He was alone, Thomasine having lain down for a brief rest after a morning spent on the lake. She would be waiting for him presently on the hotel terrace, with afternoon tea. The oars dabbled gently in the water. He lay back, half closing his eyes. The mountains rose, snow-capped, far away beyond the dark-green slopes. Over all things was the radiant sunlight. A golden dream.

That day had been to them both one of supremest, or rather of deepest, satisfaction. For the morning had brought a long letter from Edward—not a very frequent occurrence—with a circumstantial account of the beatitude that had come unto James Graye. Blessed are the

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merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. And surely they dwell in the kingdom of Heaven who find in all things, and, yet more strangely, in all men, nought but the heavenly mind.

Kenneth, lapped by the shining water, in a clear haze of warmth and well-being, lulled to rest beneath the scented heaviness of the widely reposeful air, Kenneth, asleep, as all things, with the joy of conscious entrance-ment, lived, while the hours lagged onwards, through such an afternoon as this, not in Heaven, so be it!—but in Paradise. What a difference between the not-knowing that you're wicked, which is Eden, and the knowing you're not wicked, which is Heaven!

Thomasine's voice called across the water. The boat had drifted towards the landing-steps. Thomasine stood on the hotel terrace, leaning against the parapet, and waved something. Oh, the letters and newspapers! The post!

At that moment, for the first time since their start on life's journey together, she almost disturbed him. No, not she—it was the bundle she held, the tiresome recall to reality. Had she waved an empty palm, his soul would have leaped up to greet her: he would have longed for her to come down and join him, empty-handed—he had almost thought, empty-headed—in the boat, on the water, away, as swiftly as possible, from the shore. What did she want with the letters: they would have kept well enough till dinner-time. But a woman has not a man's capacity for complacency: when she enjoys, she needs to be enjoying something. And one of her curious enjoyments is that daily vexation of the masculine mind, the post. To her, of course, it means distraction; to him, worry. In the wear and tear of a city, it comes to a man undistinguished because unceasing with its all-day certainty of nuisance and possibility of pain. But in a country-retreat, during the calm or the diversion of a holiday, it stands out, occasions insult, and an offence. Faugh—the post! Had he been capable of unkindness, or even want of consideration, to his

young wife, he would gladly have rowed back towards the centre of the lake. As it was—but would he? Once having perceived the repellent thing, we stretch out our hands to get hold of it.

He climbed up to the hotel esplanade. 'Nothing for you but your newspaper,' said Thomasine. She looked fresh and pleasant, in her rough, light-blue travelling suit. No, she was by no means provoking. She imagined he would be most anxious to read about last week's Parliament. She herself had a couple of gossipy letters from friends—an amusing announcement of a marriage. After all, it is rather a mistake to take a foreign husband: he doesn't care about your interesting engagements. She told him so laughing. Laughing back, he said there were worse complications than that. 'But you needn't have called me up for my rubbishy newspaper!' he added. 'I didn't. I called you up for your tea,' she answered. 'And for yourself. Because I wanted to have you!' To that there was only one reply. He made it.

And he idled on the terrace, with his arms against the balustrade, lolling in his chair, looking lazily across the stretch of scintillating water, with his eyes half closed as in a waking dream. A golden dream. Thomasine read the *Leyden Gazette*.

'Oh, Kenneth!' she said.

He opened his eyes wide. Her voice told him that something had happened, and this was just the one idea, at the moment, that he objected to.

'What is it, Tommie?'

'Abrahams is dead.'

'Well, there don't seem much harm in that!'

'But it's very dreadful. He was such a terrible man. The man who ruined my father.'

'The world would be over-full, Tommie, if the bad men in it didn't die.'

Thomasine was silent. She already regretted having used so strong an expression anent the deceased.

'A good riddance of bad rubbish, as we say at home,' continued Kenneth. 'Not that it is much use, for there are plenty of them left. You think me coarse? Well, I

hate that sort of pilfering, blood-sucker thief worse than any. The world could get on well enough with its robbers and highwaymen: 'tis the respectable swindlers that make life in it a curse!

'Happy James!' said Thomasine.

'And if James were left to himself in it for a week, he would be a naked beggar. The highwaymen might leave him his clothes, but the member of Parliament bankers wouldn't.'

'I am sorry Abrahams is dead like this,' said Thomasine.

'I cannot say I care,' he made answer. Then he praised her tea, which was the usual hotel tea, poured out by her—but that makes a great deal of difference, especially in the honeymoon, and, besides, he enjoyed praising all she said and did. He proposed that they should return to the water and potter about till dinner-time. He liked to see her row. She was but a poor hand at the oars, and he, at college and at home, had always gone in for every available form of boating. He delighted now in teaching her and seeing her improve under his tuition, the more so as he saw her improve so very much faster than she actually did. Of course he was sufficiently an adept himself instantly to realise his error, had he wished to do so. There is nothing sweeter in all the length and breadth of love than semi-conscious self-illusionment regarding the rare gifts of the being we adore. Unless, perchance, it be love of her faults—nay, that is not sweeter—not sweeter. It is only madder still.

If the lake had been perfect, with sensuously perfect complacency in the full glare of the reflected sunlight, it was no less perfect, now the shadows began to slope across its silver surface. The evening was approaching, more beautiful, if possible, than the day. 'What are you thinking of?' questioned Thomasine, breaking a silence Kenneth had already broken by a sigh.

'You would laugh at me, if I told you!'

'Kenneth, you promised never to say that again, the other day, when I did not laugh.'

'Well, but——'

'I promise to be quite honest and laugh the first time

I want to. I can't be fairer than that.' She gazed at him, smiling, and with that look of inconclusive approval which a sensible man can endure in the eyes of his sensible wife.

'I was only thinking,' he answered, 'of the infinite something of finite hearts that yearn. It's quite a hackneyed quotation: I've forgotten the word, but don't tell me if you happen to know it,' he added quickly, 'for it isn't the one I want. I don't know which the one is that I want. It doesn't exist. But our hearts are finite, and the somethings that come and fill them are infinite and the result is pain.' He leant his head forward on his hands. 'They press and press,' he said. 'It's like James's skull. With him it was physical. And with us, who are not idiots, it's mental. Which is worse? But for both the result's the same. It is pain.'

Here was a splendid opportunity for religious platitudes, to a devotional young heart like Thomasine, but Thomasine's attitude towards pious commonplace was that it sounded flat from her lips, and so sweet, and even so new, from other people's.

'And too much happiness,' continued Kenneth, 'is perhaps the most painful of all. I suppose it's nonsense: all the same it's true. Nothing hurts like knowing that we can't hold all our happiness. Don't drift among that refuse, Tommie!'

'Poor fellow, you haven't had so many opportunities of trying,' said Thomasine sympathetically. 'What a time you have had with James, Kenneth! But now he is coming round: it will at least be possible to live with him. We shall be happy in Scotland. Is it very beautiful? Is it at all like this? Very different, of course, but also lakes. Tell me about it. Let us talk about our home in Scotland!'

He lighted his pipe. 'James's home' was in Kenneth's throat, but nowhere near his lips. 'It's all nonsense about too much happiness,' he said, laughing; 'before we can turn round and face it, it's gone!' His eyes saddened. 'Ah, but there's where the pain is! Never mind! Yes, let's talk about Scotland, and the future,

and our plans. There's no better cure for too much happiness than talking of the future and making plans!

'Why, Kenneth! What's the matter? I haven't seen you like this before. You've been as bright as could be all the time. Don't croak!'

'I don't want to. Only, when a man is too happy and makes plans for future happiness, he knows they won't take effect. It's like substituting a positive pain for the negative one. Heigho, the wind and the rain! The rain, it raineth every day, and, when the sun shines so persistently, we begin to inquire anxiously where the rain is? Yes, let's talk about home. It rains a good deal more there than here, Tommie, though not as much on our side as in the Highlands. But it's a grand place. I wonder if there's anything I could tell you about, that we haven't discussed a dozen times before.' There was plenty to ask, and to tell, even had these matters been already investigated in twelve times twelve conversations on that lake. They were obliged to go back and dress for dinner long before Kenneth had wearied of describing the glories of Invergraye.

The hotel was but sparsely occupied by the better class of travellers: it was far too early and too warm for the general rush. On the white terrace, under the lamps, in the balminess of the starlit evening, they took their coffee; a gauzy gown, a bright wrap, a buzz of low voices here and there. The green palms, carefully washed, shone dark against the electrical radiance: in patches, along the ground and from parapets ran and hung scarlet masses of geraniums, amongst the white abundance of phlox and stocks. Over it all was the ghostly glare of the great cold globes, against the soft night, warm and musical with distant violin and song.

The gold-laced hotel concierge brought round the evening letters. He had one for Thomasine. 'I thought you were out on the lake, sir,' he said. 'There is one for you also: I will go and fetch it.' Kenneth lifted his handsome, lazy head. 'No!' he cried vigorously. 'Don't do any such thing! I'll come for it, when I go upstairs.' 'But, sir, it is the smallest trouble——'

'I don't want it,' cried Kenneth.

Thomasine looked away from her sheet with an exclamation of horror she vainly tried to check. 'What now?' demanded Kenneth. 'You see what a nuisance letters are in a *dolce far niente* such as this!'

'The man Abrahams committed suicide!' said Thomasine in a frightened voice.

'Is that all?' protested Kenneth testily. 'My dear Tommie, what do you care?'

'His affairs are very much involved. The house has failed.'

'Well, then, Moss, Moses and the rest must look after things.'

'There don't seem to be any Moss, Moses and so on. My mother writes that Abrahams was the business.'

'And a nice business too. I really must object to the continued intrusion of the rascally dead old corpse of a Jew into this night of nights. "In such a night, did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew!" Steal, indeed, she did. The turquoise ring he had from her dead mother, and sundry other trifles. But we forgive her, we Christians, because he was a Jew. Hath a Jew senses, Tommie, affections? passions? We none of us ask, if he has brains.'

'It is terrible,' said Thomasine, gazing away to the dark vagueness of the sleeping hillsides. The night was still very warm, yet she drew the pink fluffiness of her scarf across the filmy muslin of her shoulders. 'Are you cold, dearest?'

'No, it is not that.'

'Thomas, you are silly. Be glad that your father is well out of his toils.'

'Yes, of course. Poor, wretched, wretched man! Wait a minute, Kenneth. I'm all right now. Yes, the night is exquisite, beyond compare!' Her hand lay on the parapet. She had lovely hands. The diamond of his engagement ring caught the lamp-light and flashed. He bent and kissed the hand, and the d'iamond.

'Kenneth, mind! People will see!' He turned his

head carelessly. 'What, the people over yonder? Not they. Why is it that educated persons want to keep their happiness to themselves, Tommie? Is it selfishness, unwilling to go shares, or charity, unwilling to arouse envy?'

'They keep all their emotions to themselves,' said Thomasine.

'True, I am Northern enough for that. But I am Southern in having emotions at all. Do you know, I had never dared to come to Italy before—my mother's country! Of course you know: I told you. I could not have come, with James; we were always with doctors, and naturally not Italian doctors, but I might have come before, as an undergraduate. I didn't dare to. I was afraid of my own emotions. The air here isn't good for people who—oh, I say, I've mislaid my pipe!'

'I dare say it's upstairs. Shall I go for it?'

'No, indeed. Let's sit here just ten minutes longer, and then you must turn in.'

'I'll sit as long as you like.'

'No, you mustn't overtire yourself. Nobody's ever looked after you Tommie. I don't believe you're as strong as you think.'

'Edward was always very good to me. As a child, in the holidays, he used to bring me his sweets. And when his favourite rabbit died, he roasted it, and made me eat more than half!' Thomasine's laugh rang out so merrily that some of the far-away hotel guests looked round—oh, lovers, you know!—so delightful—leave them to themselves! 'But nobody has ever spoiled me as you have all these weeks: how could they?'

'The thing is not unthinkable.'

'It's very good for me they did not. Or you would have found me insufferable.'

'I should have loved you just the same.'

'You think so now. And of course I don't mean to say that you love me for my amiable qualities. Still—'

'Don't get mixed—as you will! Better listen, while I tell you that I shall always love you, even when I discover what an unlovable woman you are. When I see

you are selfish and disagreeable, and cantankerous, and unpleasing, I shall love you just the same.'

'It is easy enough to say these things now, Kenneth, when your love sees none of my faults! But I wish you wouldn't. You frighten me. I don't believe in love without esteem.'

'Thank God, I do.'

'Kenneth!'

'All right, darling. I couldn't quite help the tone. But to think, when the time comes, as come it must, that you don't exactly esteem me—to think that your love should not survive the esteem!' He got up. His face was turned away from her. 'You will love me longer than that,' he said.

'I shall love you as long as I live.'

'Say that again, dearest. No, don't say it. I'm selfish. Love me as long as I live: that's as much as I dare ask. I don't care about the esteem.'

'Yes, you do, Kenneth.'

'A man must esteem a woman: the woman's love must manage without.'

'You can't do without the esteem, Kenneth.'

He laughed. 'Perhaps not.' The laugh was by no means a self-satisfied one. 'But I want the love—the love—the love.'

'You have it. And you are contradicting yourself, for you have just said that some day you will no longer esteem me!'

'Dearest, loveliest and best, I shall do that, even were I mad.'

'Oh, what a word to use! Don't, don't talk about being—that!'

'The talking about it doesn't bring the thing any nearer one.'

'I suppose not, but, but *we* shouldn't talk about it, I think.'

'Why not we? Do you think we are madder than other sane people? Do I strike you as specially crazy?'

'Oh, Kenneth—James!'

'James is an idiot: that is a very different matter.'

Very, very different. The two have nothing in common. Absolutely nothing.' He spoke with eager insistence, as if fighting his own thoughts.

'He is the only deranged person I have ever seen,' she said in a frightened voice. 'I have never come into contact with madness of any kind. It seems to me awful.'

'You don't agree with Edward, then? You wouldn't have chosen his sphere of work?'

'Don't think I mind about James,' she answered, alarmed. 'I shall be very happy with James to look after. It was insanity I was thinking of, raving madness!'—she could no longer restrain the shudder that ran down her frame. 'That seems to me too awful to think about. Kenneth, what made you talk of it at all? In such a night, as you were saying—in such a night!' She looked out, towards the velvet calm above the lake. He drew close to her.

"All was so still, so soft, in earth and air,
You scarce would start to meet a spirit there
Secure that nought of evil could delight
To walk in such a scene, on such a night!"

So, you see, there is no reason to be nervous, he said.

'How much poetry you know! Where is that from?'

'It's Byron. He liked the night, with or without spirits.'

'I don't think anybody was ever so fond of poetry and of pipes,' she continued, cheerful again.

'Two sorts of pipes, then. This has been a long ten minutes.'

'The fault is yours for talking naughty nonsense!' She rose. 'And now you send me away!'

'All for the love of you,' he replied as he followed her into the lighted hotel-vestibule. 'I shall take good care of you as long as I can! Send me down my pipe by the maid,' he called after her, into the disappearing lift.

'Your letter, sir,' said the concierge, at his elbow.

It was a letter from an unknown somebody in Holland, forwarded to the Professor's Leyden address. Yet the extravagant handwriting did not seem altogether un-

familiar. There was a seal, with a double A interlaced. Kenneth stood under the hall-lamp.

'You have killed me: my death lies at your door, and to me, at this supreme moment, it is a last satisfaction, nay, a fierce delight, to tell you of it. I am a ruined man, ruined from the hour when you kept me, by brute force and foul threats, from finishing the business for which I had come to Paris. As I told you, your little Lisse affair was child's play compared with that. So I gave way to your violence, in time, as I thought, but I had not counted on the difficulties of getting back from Auteuil, and I was too late. From that moment my ruin became but a question of time. Now, it is consummated, and I kill myself. No, you have killed me. And, see here, the *money was not owing to the Colonel*. It had been paid in to his account. You say, you are a madman: well, here is stuff to go mad over. Think it out.

'ARTHUR ABRAHAMS.'

'*La pipe de Monsieur,*' said the maid, at Kenneth's elbow.

He took it.

'*Madame prie Monsieur de lui apporter son livre, quand Monsieur montera. Madame l'a laissé sur le divan du corridor.*'

'All right.'

He strode out through the hotel door. A few stars were visible. The moon had risen. The night was white.

He stumbled along amidst the shrubberies. There was a bench, he knew, down the long alley of bamboos and camellia-trees, round the bend, in the little damp corner, against the wall. He saw it in his mind's eye, waiting, empty. The trees hung over it: the corner would be dark, and gloomy—a hidden corner, a hiding-place, noisome, black. As he thought of this, he fairly ran towards it, through the bright shadows, like a hunted animal, hastening to its lair.

He sank down on the bench, a cold stone seat, against the thick leaves, in the silence. Darkness he had found

here, but the horrible white light played outside. He was away from the house, from the lamps, and faces—away from the building which held Thomasine. He drew a long breath.

There was a rustling in the bushes behind him. Or was it volces? How could it be a rustling, when the air was so still? It must be voices, because they were speaking. If he only could listen, he would hear what they said. He tried to listen, gasping, with extended neck. His eyes were starting from his head. For he caught the words. Some of the hotel guests must be out there, in the darkness. They were saying: 'You are the murderer!'

He dashed through the black bushes up against the stone wall. Then he laughed. Of course there could be nobody there, in the wall. And if there had been, how could they be saying that? Nobody knew anything about the murderer but he. At least, not here. Not yet. He must tell them. No, that was the one thing he must not do. He sat down again, with his head in his hands, to think it out.

To think it out. Where had he recently heard that expression? What had Thomasine told him to think out? The immense possibilities of human happiness? or the briefness of it?—again he laughed—no, it was not Thomasine. Right, Abrahams had written to him to think it out. Abrahams was dead. Something—something living—ran across his hand: he drew back the hand hastily: an insect, of course: his nerves were steady.

But before Abrahams died, he had written to him, Kenneth, to think it out. To think out, that here was sufficient to go mad over. Yes, that was the expression used. To go mad over.

Better be exact when you think things out. Abrahams had not died: he had killed himself. No, he had not killed himself: he had been killed. He had written expressly, that Kenneth had killed him. What a thin to write to any man! And Kenneth must go mad over it, thinking it out!

Absurd. Ridiculous. Outrageous. What had he to do with it, if this Jew chose to kill himself? What had he to do with his ruin? He rose, stretching out his innocent arms on high, in an attitude of contempt. And then again he laughed—so loud the stillness echoed him—laughed fiercely, stamping about the dark corner, in uncontrollable mirth. The rascally Jew! The contemptible banking Jew. The cheat! What did it matter to Kenneth that Abrahams had killed himself, or why? Hal hal hal Hush! he must not laugh so loud, people would hear him. The people behind the shrubbery. How could there be people behind the shrubbery, when there was a wall? True, but if there were no people, how could they be whispering? What were they whispering? It was very, very difficult to catch. Hush! there it was again—quite plain—'Murderer.'

He was talking to somebody now, somebody who reasoned very clearly, sitting beside him, on the bench. 'You see, the money *had* been paid to the Colonel. And, if the money had been paid to the Colonel (as it had been), then it was quite manifest that Kenneth Graye was a murderer. Very hard on Kenneth Graye, who otherwise in many ways was quite a decent sort of chap, but palpable, evident, undeniable. Of course he was a murderer: every one could see that who can see that twice two make five. Four. Twice two make four.'

The person on the bench must be a fool to make such a slip as that. He was so angry with him that he struck at him—struck at him again and again, all the more angry because he didn't strike back. He knocked him over on the ground and trampled on him, and then there was nobody there. But people were talking behind the shrubbery, a number of them, talking quite loud, in the wall. You could see them grinning among the leaves. Don't look!

The great thing was to remain calm, for Thomasine's sake. Murderer or not—it was a very interesting question, and he would like to think it out—there again!—but not to-night, for Thomasine's sake. You see, he didn't belong to himself, but to Thomasine, and some thinkings do a

man so much harm. He pressed his hand to his forehead. He ought never to have married her. There again, what a painful thinking, and such a useless one. As useless as two and two make—four. Now, that is a good thing to stick to, in doubt. It doesn't prove anything, yet, up to a point, somehow, it proves you are not a murderer, even when you know you are.

Thomasine! Thomasine! Thomasine! He walked to the end of the shaded corner: the path lay bright before him: he stopped. How fearfully brilliant the night was: he had always disliked the moon. Everything showed grey or black, and ghastly. The hotel-garden looked like a scene from Dante's *Inferno*. What nonsense, when he knew it was only the hotel-garden. He knew well enough. He had said it looked like the 'Inferno.' He was quite annoyed with himself. Of course he knew it was the garden of the Hôtel Bellaria. And therefore it was so absurd of him not to venture across the path. You see, it was so horribly, unnaturally light. And the moon stared, frightful. And there were figures behind you that had come out of the wall, and that disappeared whenever you turned round. He hung against the shadow of the bushes, peering out.

A party of visitors at the hotel came up, laughing and chatting, from the lower road. They passed close to him, a man and two ladies. He was especially grateful for the presence of the ladies. The man was smoking. He felt even more grateful for the scent of the tobacco. He followed them. They turned, recognising him, chaffing him for being all alone.

'Out so late! By yourself?' said one of the ladies.

'It does make one nervous,' he answered, wilfully misunderstanding her; 'but when I heard voices I said to myself: "You scarce would start to meet a spirit there." You know the rest?'

'I guess I forget,' said the fair American.

He finished the quotation. 'It's out of *Lara*. Byron, you know. He enjoyed his nights, with or without spirits.'

'Good pun!' remarked the fair American's husband.

Kenneth shuddered. 'I'm so glad I met you!' he said vehemently. They were standing under the hall-lamp. His companions stared at him, astonished by the violence of his voice. The fair American thought what beautiful eyes he had, chestnut black, like some men of her own race. But a little wild.

'Because now we can arrange about that excursion to the Val Drina,' he said, recovering himself. 'I never arrange without the other man's wife,' laughed the American. 'It means going through the whole thing twice.' He was comfortable and jolly, a successful man, who had never troubled about more money, with a successful spouse and family. He went upstairs, laughing to his wife over his shoulder all the way up. Kenneth heard their laughter, as he got Thomasine's forgotten book. His hand trembled. Something was singing all through his body like telegraph wires. And, worst of all, somebody was talking, quite loud, in his head, had been talking all the time he spoke to the Americans, so loud he sometimes hardly caught what they—the Americans—said. When he stopped and listened, he could distinguish nothing, except from time to time, in the multitudinous hiss of almost coherent phrases, the word 'murderer like a refrain. If only he could have caught the meaning: he stood still, exhausted, staring at the hotel concierge, wondering whether he heard.

He dropped his gaze to his wife's little book, *The Peace of God*. A good little devotional book; the chaplain's wife had brought it her that morning. The Peace of God. The words caught on in his brain as he passed up the empty staircase. That was what the voice was saying. The Peace of God.

It passes all understanding: that was what he remembered about the peace of God. So you need not try to understand it. The thought lay upon his mind like balm. The peace of God.

'Have you brought up my book?' questioned Thomasine, wide awake on her pillow. 'I was so vexed to have let it lie in the hall. It isn't the sort of book for that.'

'*The Peace of God*,' he answered, laying it down.

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'How long you have been, dear!'

'I met the Americans. We must arrange about Val Drina.'

He lay awake for a long time, listening to the music in his brain, like a church-organ. At last he fell asleep and dreamed.

CHAPTER XXV

THE next morning dawned as blue and spotless and serene as the preceding one. The excursion to Val Drina was fixed up by the brisk American in the twinkling of an eye. Almost before the others realised that it was taking place, they found themselves driving back from it. Kenneth had enjoyed it boisterously. Only once or twice he had heard the voices saying 'Murderer'; not if he laughed loud enough. Once he caught his young wife's gaze fixed on him a little wonderingly. But when you marry into another nationality you are never quite as certain of your ground as in your own.

On their homeward road from the Cascade they halted at Cirio for tea. 'And we must take time for our tea, please,' said an English lady who was of the party. 'I can't bear to be hurried over my tea.' As they dispersed themselves all over the gardens, laughing and chattering, a stately, well-dressed figure issued from the little pink hotel against the mulberry-trees, and made straight for Kenneth.

'You here?' he cried in astonishment to Maria MacClachlin.

'Yes,' she answered. 'It isn't one of the coincidences that never occur. I came here on purpose.'

'But how did you know that we——'

'I came away for a holiday, and I chose the lakes, because I knew you were here. We were bound to meet sooner or later at some of these excursion places, like this. I had no wish to intrude on your honeymoon.'

'Are you alone?' he asked uncomfortably.

'No, Hortense is with me. And the widow. Where is your wife? With that gentleman? An American? Shall we walk along this path a bit, to the Belvedere?' She looked at the watch on her wrist. 'My tea is due in four minutes, but it won't come. These Italians are too shockingly unpunctual. No wonder they've missed a couple of centuries. They will never make up for lost time.'

'Do you still wear a watch on each wrist?' he asked, for the sake of something to say.

'Yes, and the worst of it is no care or expense can make the two keep the same time. They would drive me mad, if anything in the world could do that.'

'You said Hortense was with you?' he remarked more uncomfortably still.

'Yes—oh, it's a shocking story. Her butcher was married already and only wanted my wine-shop. But I'm glad to say the awful experience in lying has been a lesson to Hortense. She lies less—I think. And the widow, you remember, the widow of the Chantilly groom?'

'But you got rid of her after a couple of weeks!'

'In those two weeks she contrived to contract a something in her throat—"contract" is the right word: she calls it a "tightening of the borax." She says she got it standing before the hall, urging the people to come in. "You told me to urge 'em, Miss," she says, "and I urged 'em till I 'adn't a hatom o' wind left inside my borax." So she lays the blame at my door. So I had to bring her here.' Maria laughed good-naturedly. 'I shouldn't mind, if she and Hortense would leave off quarrelling. Curiously enough their quarrels are chiefly about the lies that either says the other tells me. Both are right about the other's lying: in fact that is about the only true thing that either says to me.'

'Just now I understood you to say that Hortense told fewer untruths?'

'That is only because she speaks less. Her sorrow has undoubtedly somewhat silenced her. She was very garrulous, you remember, but she is as unreliable as ever. However, don't let's talk about that. I was

anxious to meet with you, my dear young friend. You are very happy, of course.'

He hesitated. She looked at him sharply. 'I have had a month of unbroken felicity,' he hastened to say.

'That is right. You don't mind my consulting you? I have been very anxious to consult you, dear friend.'

He grinned. 'I am an odd man to consult,' he said.

'Dr. Lisse told a very different tale.'

'Oh yes!' he cried, 'yes! yes! I helped the Lisses admirably! Oh, I managed that affair most remarkably well.'

'Just so,' she replied. 'Look here, Mr. Graye. I have been greatly impressed by your sister-in-law, Laura.'

'An exceptional woman.'

'I mean by what she said to me when she was my guest at Belleville. Oh, not by the spirit-business, of course. That is all rubbish and nonsense; and the second-sight, except, perhaps, in the Highlands, must be some sort of trick. You don't believe in dead people coming back to talk to us?'

'No,' said Kenneth. But his voice was so terrible that she stopped. 'Are you ill? I ought to have noticed before. You are not looking at all well. Let us sit down.'

'It is nothing. I am all right, I assure you.'

'Let us sit down here, in the Belvedere,' she commanded. 'Isn't it a glorious view? But you oughtn't to stay in these parts. Too much felicity doesn't seem to agree with you, Kenneth Graye. Or rather, these lake climates don't suit nervous temperaments.'

'Mine is not a nervous temperament. I am calm enough,' he said quickly.

'H'm. Well, if I were you, I should go to Milan a bit, and look at pictures with Thomasine. As we did in Paris. That wasn't exciting. At least, not to me. But what I wanted to ask you about was this. I am sure Laura Lisse is right about big houses. She has begun at once, admirably, with their own place in Holland. Now there is Rowangowan. Thirty unused bedrooms.

Could anything, in our modern condition of social ethics, be more wicked, more absurd ?

'The same thing,' he said, 'holds good of Invergraye.'

'Well !' she answered, 'Invergraye is neither yours nor is it James's, but I am in my senses, and Rowangowan is mine. I shall not marry. Oh, never mind. I'm so glad you've found a congenial helpmate. But now I have both Hortense and the widow to assist me, definitely, I feel I can never abandon my Chevaliers. They are rather too much *sans peur*, I fear, and they certainly are by no means *sans reproche*, but the "muttons" want protecting all the more on that account. And there the great house stands, and will stand for ever—nonsense, Kenneth Graye, I had far better do it, whilst I am alive.'

'What?' He put the question almost mechanically. Yet he was glad of this consultation, striv'g to keep his brain clear for it.

'I confess, I don't care so much for idiots, but I have always felt a special pity for the indigent insane. Now that is where you come in. I want to make Rowangowan into a Connty Asylum for Pauper Lunatics !' She looked at him triumphantly, grateful to know the thing off her mind. 'You being my immediate neighbour, I felt I couldn't do it without your consent.'

'Thanks,' he said in a toneless voice.

'Of course I should build a stone wall all round.'

'Of course,' he said.

'And the river—I should have to do something about the river.'

'Why?' he asked.

'You can't allow lunatics near water,' she said with great decision.

'Oh, of course not,' he answered, with his eyes on the lake.

'You see, Kenneth Graye, I thought there would not be any such very great objections'—her tone had grown a little anxious—'because of the vicinity of a deranged person, anyway.'

'Yes, quite so,' he said eagerly, 'quite so. I quite understand what you mean.'

'I thought, as your poor nephew would now probably live at Invergraye——'

'But you mistake about my nephew. You don't seem to have heard,' he said excitedly. 'Sir James is an idiot no longer. He is going to be a wiser man than any of us. I shall advise him to stand for Parliament! He says "ma" and "ba," and talks words. He calls Thomasine "angel." You see what a clever boy he is, to call Thomasine angel. I don't know what he calls me. They haven't written to say that. But it appears he thinks I'm an awful liar, and Barton too, because we told him that things were good, when they were unpleasant. Isn't that ridiculous, to say a thing's good, when it's unpleasant? Almost as ridiculous as killing a man when he'd paid the money. So, you see, he understands I'm a liar. I wonder whether he has any inkling that I'm a murderer as well!'

'What nonsense you are talking,' said Maria MacClachlin; but she edged away a little and looked down towards the hotel, where the other people were.

'Personally, you don't like nonsense?'

'Oh, I don't mind a little wholesome fooling.'

'You are sane, eminently sane. I am not. I was always a little crazy, as you know. It is in my family.'

'Now, *that* is unwholesome nonsense, as I have told you before. Worse, it is wicked. I have known your family all my life, and my aunt knew them half a century before me. There are no saner people in the country.'

'Very odd,' he said.

'The truth is, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, Kenneth Graye.'

'I am,' he answered. 'I am. That is what I've been saying all day, only they won't hear me. Now, you won't hear me. Whom were you thinking of putting away at Rowangowan?'

'Pauper lunatics, I tell you,' she said, rising.

'Won't you take me? I'm not a pauper, I fear, but I'm a lunatic. There, now I've told you. I'm so glad.'

'For God's sake, what do you mean?'

'Oh, nothing,' he said, laughing. 'I was only joking, of course. Why, you can see how sane I am. Everybody can see it. Nobody would guess, unless I told them. So that proves it's a joke. I'm as sane as the other members of my family. No, that's James. As sane as the members your aunt knew. There's no saner family in Scotland.'

'Shall we join the others?'

He walked beside her. 'I approve of your project. I think it's admirable. There's something most beautifully appropriate to me in the idea of having that lunatic asylum next door. Make a hole in that stone wall of yours that won't let anybody out, but that'll let somebody in. It ought to be quite easy, with our modern appliances, to manage that.'

'Let us hurry! Even Italian tea will be ready by this time,' she said, to create a diversion.

'Oh, the mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small,' he answered. 'No, it's coffee wants grinding, not tea. However, the sentiment holds good. There's no escaping from our ultimate fate, Miss MacClachlin. No escape. No escape.' After that they walked down the pathway in silence, till he began, hurriedly, at the bottom: 'You won't say anything to my wife about my stupid little joke! It is a stupid joke: I oughtn't to make it. I pretend sometimes to think I am going out of my mind, but, of course, that's nonsense. And I'm most especially anxious to keep my little joke from her. I shall have to give it up on that account.'

'The sooner you give it up the better,' said Maria incisively. 'What the fun can be of talking thus to me, as you did in Paris once before, I am at a loss to perceive. You keep this idea about your going mad for me, I trust?'

'Of course,' he said eagerly. 'Of course. Quite right. Yes, it is a little secret between you and me.'

'Well, you may abandon it then, now, my dear friend. I appreciate your motive, but I can assure you I am quite reconciled to the idea of remaining "M. M." She pointed to her brooch, as she concluded, the big silver

'*Misericorde aux Moutons*' badge. And with this final snub she left him. 'Hortense!' she called. The widow came bustling up. 'Hortense is busy,' she said, 'with the other party's "*coshays*." You can 'ear 'em laughing. But "*coshay coshong*," says I.' Close behind her, however, followed the Frenchwoman. 'Ah, you say *co-hong*,' cried the shrill Hortense, 'but what you mean is "*pique*." She jumped with joy at her own miserable pun. Maria sat down, sighing, to her tea. 'You are both late,' she said, 'for I told you to be here at five, waiting. But I can't fine you your usual centime a minute, for I don't know which of my watches has the correct time.' She looked down helplessly at her two wrists. 'Go and find out, Hortense, please!' 'It is the one which retards most,' replied Hortense without budging. Maria laughed.

She greeted Thomasine with real affection. Somehow or other, she felt slightly responsible for the young Dutchwoman's married happiness. She inquired, in a tone which cared for the answer, how things had gone with the bride. 'I am happier,' said Thomasine, 'than I should ever have imagined possible.' 'You deserve it, my dear,' replied Maria heartily. 'Happier than the deserts of any creature alive,' said Thomasine. Maria need say no more. 'And Mr. Graye is well?' she ventured. 'Quite well, and so delighted about his nephew; thanks.' 'I shall come across you again, I daresay, before you leave for home,' said Maria, brushing away her crumbs.

'If all goes well with James, we shall stay in Italy till Christmas. We shall travel on to Florence and Rome,' replied Thomasine. 'I am going back next week to my muttons. Hortense!'

'Yes, Mademoiselle!'

'Tell that *coshay* not to saw his poor horse's mouth like that!'

'But I do not speak Italian, Mademoiselle!'

'Nor do I, as I have told you before. I don't know what "saw" is in French or I'd tell him myself. *Cocchiere! Cocchiere! non—*'

'Segare,' suggested Thomasine.

'Segare la testa al cavallo!'

'Ma, signora, io non sego niente!' came the amazed, good-natured reply.

'Si! Si! Allora non pullere! Oh, that can't be right. How useless you are, Hortense! *Non fare cosi!*' In her vehemence she caught at the little white-and-pink tablecloth and pulled it towards her. It was a flimsy thing, it went very lightly: it sent the tea-things all over her in a shower.

'Oh dear me, what a mess!' she cried. 'What a mess! *Venga qui, cocchiere!* Give him a couple of "leers," Hortense, and tell him to be good to his horse. *Cavaliere! Cristiano! Buona al cavallo! Si!*'

Hortense gave the driver one of the two francs, with a grin—a 'leer' and a leer make two leers, Maria—and explained to him that he was a cavalier and a Christian. He said that a franc wasn't much for a man who was all that. Maria sat demonstrating to Thomasine that a League of Mercy amongst Italian drivers would be as grand a mission as any one could find to undertake, and that only an Englishwoman could work it. Thomasine agreed with her. 'If I live a twelvemonth longer, I shall start it myself,' said Maria. She gave Thomasine a packet of pamphlets about international transport enormities, and three dozen copies of *The Cry of the Cow*. 'All dumb creatures may count on my sympathy,' she said. 'I cannot resist the appeal of a sheep or an ass. And, by the bye, if you ever stand in need of a friend, Thomasine, send a telegram to Maria MacClachlin!'

Thomasine repeated this kindly meant injunction, with much merriment, to Kenneth, in their room at the hotel. 'And why, pray, should you stand in need of telegrams to Maria MacClachlin?' demanded Kenneth uneasily.

'Oh, it was only just her way of saying something friendly.'

'She might have chosen something more reasonable to say.'

'Surely it wasn't quite so absurd.'

'Yes, it was,' he persisted.

'For instance, you might fall ill,' she said gently, to exculpate the other woman.

'Why should I fall ill? I never was ill in my life! What makes you think I should fall ill?' He stopped dressing, excitedly. He turned to her. 'I have not the slightest intention of falling ill.'

'I was only suggesting the vague possibility,' she said, 'God forbid we should have need of her services. She is the sort of person one would naturally turn to in misfortune.'

'Poor Maria!' he said, brushing his hair. And he told his wife about Miss MacClachlin's projects with Rowan-gowan. Thomasine tried to steady her features. 'No,' she said, 'if you ask me, I do not like it. I do not like it, but it cannot be helped.'

'You! I thought you would be sure to approve!' he cried, astonished.

'I am afraid of mad people. I cannot help it. I have an especial aversion to mad people. I know it is wrong.'

'By Jove, I had forgotten. I must write and tell her.'

'Oh no, not that. That would be wicked!' she cried, much upset.

'It's a pity you should have such a dislike to mad people. I—I rather like them.'

'Oh, Kenneth, you cannot mean that.'

'But I do. A touch of nature makes the whole world kin.'

She puckered her brows, endeavouring to follow his meaning.

'As I grow older,' he continued sagely, tying his tie, with firm hand, into its usual perfect bow, 'I realise that the human race consists of fools and madmen. Much better be a madman than a fool.' She laughed at him, cheerfully. 'What a clever, naughty, untrue thing to say!' At dinner he said more clever things. Some of them were naughty, but by no means all untrue.

In the smoking-room he found the chaplain. He was one of the chaplain's favourites. The poor cleric, himself a thoroughly good fellow, had strong likes and dis-

likes he was not expected to show. The twelfth commandment forbade him, and also the hotel company. He was expected to be amiable at two guineas a week during the season. He had known better days, as a successful tea-merchant, before he had gone honourably bankrupt and hurried, half educated, into the church. His preachings were paltry, but his conversations were full of sympathy, without much insight, and of help.

'Do you believe, Mr. Huggins,' asked Kenneth straightway, 'that a man has done a thing, if he didn't want to do it?'

'Suppose we put the case more clearly?' suggested Mr. Huggins, amiably sipping his coffee.

'If you had killed a man——'

'Yes,' said the clergyman, adding a third lump.

'Would you be a murderer?'

'No!' cried the little old chaplain energetically, 'for I am quite certain—God forgive my presumption!—that I should never have had the slightest intention of doing any one any harm!'

Kenneth nodded his head several times. 'I approve of your answer,' he said. 'Still, as you say, you speak presumptuously.'

'My dear sir, do I look like a murderer?'

'Do I?' Mr. Huggins, mild-faced and faded, gazed at the dark-complexioned, dark-eyed young man. 'N-n-no, of course not,' he said. Kenneth noticed the momentary stutter. 'Of course not,' said the chaplain, over-emphasising the denial. For Mrs. Huggins held a frequently expressed opinion that 'all Italians looked like murderers,' even the harmless little handful of native Protestants (approved of and patronised) that met on Sundays in a basement room of the Bellaria. And Mrs. Huggins's secular opinions were her husband's, just as his religious convictions were hers. Mr. Graye had undoubtedly a strong look of an Italian.

'No, no, of course not,' energetically cried Mr. Huggins.

'You know nothing of business, of course, bankruptcy; matters of that kind?' continued Kenneth.

'I—I know a little,' answered the chaplain nervously.

Kenneth recalled his own Free Church minister at home, who had once asked him what those lines were for across a cheque, and he smiled. 'The bankruptcy you know about is moral bankruptcy,' he said. 'Lord! what a lot of people you must see coming into court with no assets!'

'They don't come,' replied the clergyman.

'True, you are not a father confessor. I wish you were.'

'My dear sir, every priest——'

'Yes, I know, but it's different. Protestant priests have wives, and we all, even the best of us, want to tell our wives about other men's faults.'

'I can assure you that confession is sacred.'

'And our wives, even the best of them, want to tell other wives of the faults of other men. It's inevitable.' Kenneth sighed.

The amiable clergyman echoed the sigh, more mildly. He was not the sort of priest who thirsts after casuistry. 'But we hide away our crimes,' said Kenneth moodily, 'and they come to the surface all the same.' 'Ah, true, true,' the clergyman shook a responsive head. 'Too true. Like Enoch Arden!' 'Eugene Aram,' corrected Kenneth irritably. He might be going out of his senses, but this was outrageous. 'Eugene Arden,' admitted Mr. Huggins gently, 'you are right. The name Arden so easy to remember too. Shakespeare, you know.' Kenneth lounged to his feet, and shook the ashes from his pipe. 'You agree with me, I see,' he said. 'No man can be held responsible for the results of an action which he did not foresee.'

'Unless he might reasonably have foreseen them,' amended the clergyman quickly.

'Ah, there's the rub,' answered Kenneth, going out.

CHAPTER XXVI

HE went into the drawing-room, where Thomasine was sitting chatting with the chaplain's wife. He caught the words 'mothers' meeting' and 'calico at ninepence three farthings.' Other groups were in the big room here and there, reading, playing cards. A young girl was screaming 'Thlne eyes!'

'I am going out on the water a blt,' he said.

'Again, dear? Aren't you tired?'

'No. Won't you come with me?'

'Mrs. Graye has a headache,' put in the chaplain's kindly wife.

'All right. I shan't be more than an hour or so.'

'It's very dark, Kenneth.'

'I shall take Giuseppe.' He wandered away to the landing-place, found his boatman—in a trattoria—and shoved off. All these weeks they had had Giuseppe's boat, mostly without Giuseppe. The latter was a not very talkative northern Italian, middle-aged, with a brown moustache and grizzly hair. He was a philosopher, as Kenneth had learnt from the few brief talks that had taken place between them, and he evinced a rather pitiful interest in the fortunes of his fellow-men.

They rowed away slowly into the darkness. The lights of the little town glimmered small, in a cluster and a long-drawn crescent: other radiant specks shone here and there round the far-away circle of the hills. The usual tinkle of mandolines, the faint echo of 'Santa Lucia' sounded from distant corners: over the black expanse of water brooded the solemn stillness of the heavily clouded sky. The night was thick with silence, weighed down by a motionless heat. Kenneth dropped his oars and let the

other man row. The exercise had done him good, as always, but his heart was beating so wildly, he felt he must stop. His thoughts would steady down for a moment, and then they would begin dancing again: it was that whirl which no mortal could stand, a persistent noise, like the clatter of a train over a bridge, going round and round. And your only escape from it was talking, talking incessantly, just when you felt that the one wise thing for you was not to talk. Yet talk you must, to escape from the voices inside you: you would go mad with those voices, unless you heard yourself speaking aloud.

Giuseppe!' The oarsman started.

'Are you married, Giuseppe?'

'I have not that advantage, signore.'

'You think it is an advantage?'

Giuseppe rowed on with leisurely stroke.

'Well? Speak out!'

'To you, signore, the husband of the charming signora, what else could one say?'

'Forget about the charming signora!'

'For me, I should think: happy they who can marry, if they wish. Happier they who wish not.'

'True.'

'He that enjoys with another, enjoys doubly, they say, but, when sorrow comes, it is best to be alone.'

'Yet a sorrow we share is but half a sorrow, they say.'

'Ah, signore, who say? It is the saying of the woman, the coward, the weakling, the fool! A man, when his grief comes to him, he thanks the saints, if it strike him only. There is no more terrible misfortune, surely, than to know that my sorrow is the sorrow of the woman I love.'

'Ah!' cried Kenneth. His cry rang across the dark water. Giuseppe, for a moment, stopped rowing. This young Englishman—his was, of all visitors at the hotel, the most evident perfect felicity. What meant such a cry? The oars sank again, languidly. The English—their manners are always eccentric! There is not a philosopher among them. Giuseppe rowed on.

Presently Kenneth began talking fast and loud. He told Giuseppe a lot about Dante, especially about the *Inferno*: he got down into the seventh circle and the river of blood. He even said the whole lake was blood—blood—blood, and, if you once dropped into it, you would never be able to get out again, at least, if you had murdered a fellow-creature. Centaurs would run all round it and shoot at you with their arrows, if you tried to escape. Giuseppe approved of Dante—*il grandissimo poeta italiano*—but though he had not read any of the poet's writings, he was quite sure Dante could never have said the Lago Maggiore was all blood. Besides, if it had been, you couldn't have seen it in this darkness. And as for Centaurs—well, well, the English are always eccentric. There is not a philosopher among them. If the Signore fell in, he would hold himself up, he, who could swim so admirably, and Giuseppe would probably pull him over the side again. But it was advisable not to fall in. 'Of course,' said Kenneth, settling down; and he told of the usurers who were in hell, and that Dante had not understood, at first, why usury should be a sin at all. 'And it isn't a sin worth mentioning,' he concluded, 'nothing like sending an evil man to his doom.' Giuseppe was a philosopher, but at this stage he crossed himself. Kenneth asked him, frankly, who he thought was the better man of the two, a usurer or a murderer? Giuseppe, from his standpoint as an Italian peasant, did not hesitate to declare for the murderer, whereupon, to his amazement, Kenneth handed him a gold piece. Under such encouragement Giuseppe was emboldened to tell a magnificent story of his own youth, how a cousin of his, beyond the mountains, far away, yonder! a young man, hot-headed, had shot with a rifle the oppressor of the neighbourhood, the local banker, who had ruined, through a mortgage, Giuseppe's uncle—and how the jury, at the assizes, had acquitted the son, in a burst of triumph, and *evvivas*, a halo of glory! Kenneth listened to this story with great attention, and, when it was quite finished, he asked to have it all told over again. Giuseppe complied, though he wished the Englishman would leave off muttering to him-

self the whole time, in an undertone, while the weird, dead old tale was telling, in the dark on the rippling water. From what part was this cousin? From near Bergamo. Ah! Kenneth's mother had lived—had been born—he believed—at Bergamo. He did not speak of his Italian blood to Giuseppe. He knew nothing of his mother's antecedents or connections. She had never been encouraged to refer to them. All that proud, perplexed Scotch family had deemed silence and ignorance best. The name had been Gardoni, Emilia Gardoni. Kenneth, unwilling to inquire, would have liked to know, what the name was of Giuseppe's hero-cousin; he wondered why he wanted to know. The lake was dark, and crimson. The sky was slowly crimsoning. Surely, the skies and waters of the world, at night, were never crimson. Only the waters and the skies of hell.

Slowly, busy with his own reminiscences, the boatman rowed back towards the shore. A long, long time he glided over the silent water. Kenneth lay muttering, in an undertone, never ceasing for a moment, all the time.

'After all,' said the boatman, at last, breaking the oppressive silence between them, 'my cousin enjoyed his triumph but briefly. There is a certain retribution in these things, mysterious. I admire his deed, yet, of course it was wrong. From all points of view, but that of blind enthusiasm, it was wrong.'

The figure in the stern, whilst muttering on, said scornfully, 'You call it wrong?'

'I call it wrong. Philosophy calls it wrong. And Fate. Do you believe in Fate, Signore?'

'In nothing else,' said the figure. The voice was no longer Kenneth's. Once the parched lips said, 'God, have mercy upon me!' and that voice was Kenneth's again.

'*Il fato* judged him guilty.'

'Did he die?' asked the man in the stern. His question fell carelessly, in a flood of eager rubbish that sounded like a legal defence against visionary foes. 'My Lord and Gentlemen of the Jury, you will certainly admit, if you examine the question over again,—if only, Gentlemen of the Jury, you examine it over again, my Lord——'

'No, he did not die. He lost his reason.'

'Aha!' The figure stopped mumbling. 'How interesting! Unusual, I presume?'

'It was not so very unusual in his family, Signore. And, in so far, perhaps, we are wrong in ascribing to a special judgment of fate on his crime in slaying the usurer—(yet I love him for it!)—an event that may only have been a natural development of the trouble in his blood. There was a hereditary taint, Signore. The mark was upon his race. There had been many mad among the Gardoni!'

The figure, that had listened, towards the close, in breathless silence, rose in the stern. It rose to its feet and stood erect for one moment, without sound or speech. Then it flung up its arms, and, with a rocking movement of the body, in the darkness, swung the light boat to and fro. It was all done in ten seconds. 'Signore!' shrieked Giuseppe.

The boat was floating bottom up. Giuseppe had an arm around it, in the water. Kenneth was swimming through the still, black night to the shore. And as he swam, gasping, he cried from time to time: 'Forgive! Mercy!'—cried it into the black and silent night.

He had capsized the boat not far from land. He soon felt the shingle beneath his feet and stood up, dripping. Of Giuseppe he had no remembrance; the man righted his boat and came back to the town, to give the alarm and spread the news that the young English Signore was mad!

Long before that, however, Kenneth had reached the hotel. He ran all the way, muttering to himself and crying: his one thought now was to tell Thomasine, as quickly as possible, that she was not married to him, that she was free; the whole thing had been a mistake. For, surely, the condition of his marriage to her had been that there was no madness in his mother's family, or if there had been, that it didn't matter, and now, you see, it *did* matter, and there had always been mad people among the Gardoni, and therefore, if he was mad—as undoubtedly he now was!—then Thomasine wasn't

legally married to him at all—in a word, she was free! He shouted aloud, and danced and sprang, hatless, dripping wet, in the darkness and loneliness of the high-road, along the lake, among the scented groves and gardens. Sometimes he stumbled: he fell: he was up again, shouting, and shrieking, 'Thomasine, you are free!' It had been the one great oppression of the last twenty-four hours that Thomasine's pure life was bound to his guilty existence: his soul had lain crushed beneath that weight of misery. But now, she was free, and what did it matter that he was in hell? He must tell her. He must tell her at once. Thomasine!

He stood in the entrance of the big hotel drawing-room. Little groups were scattered here and there, on the parquet, beneath the electric light. The fair American was playing dance music. A couple of substantial matrons with muslin caps and spectacles were studying the newspapers. A party of four sat, solemn, round a card-table. Thomasine reclined in the far corner of a long sofa, reading her book. Kenneth saw Thomasine only. The musician stopped her gallop. The whist-players looked up, all four annoyed.

'I cannot understand,' said one of the matrons in a loud voice, behind her paper, 'what the Government can mean by allowing Russia——'

'Thomasine!' cried Kenneth, 'I bring you the great tidings of your freedom! You're not married to me, dear Thomasine, at all.' In the dead silence every eye wandered from the dishevelled figure at the door to the young wife. She dropped her book; she bent mechanically to recover it; she clutched it to her breast.

'Kenneth!'

'Yes, it's all right! I was in such a hurry to tell you, I ran all the way across the water, and I had no time to change my clothes. Giuseppe explained it. Ladies and gentlemen, I take you all to witness, that Thomasine Lisse is not my wife!'

She got up and came towards him, rocking to and fro: the ground seemed to swell and sink beneath her feet.

'Dearest,' she said aloud, 'oh, dear one! My darling! Come with me! Come away!'

But he motioned her back. 'No, that is just what we mustn't do,' he said wisely, 'because, if we do that sort of thing often, then, how can we expect people to understand? All the same, we're not in Scotland: no Scotch marriages here! No, no!'—his eyes travelled round the drawing-room—'I take you all to witness that we are not in Scotland!'

'Oh, dearest one,' she said, 'oh, my darling, come away!'

'I lost my hat, but that doesn't signify. I was in such a hurry to tell you that I jumped from the boat. You will have to reward Giuseppe. Ladies and gentlemen—no, men and women, note that I am in the full possession of my senses. I belong, as a matter of fact, to the sanest family in Scotland'—he laughed merrily—'and I call you all to witness that this dear, darling creature is not my wife!'

Before he could stop her, she had thrown herself upon his breast, her arms were around his neck, her bosom was pressed against his heart. 'My husband! she said, 'oh, my husband! My husband!' She drew him, by the sheer force of her love, she bore him; for a moment he held back, and they hung in the doorway together. Her arms were around him, closer and closer; she clung to him; she led him on. And suddenly he sank his head upon her shoulder and went, crying like a little child.

CHAPTER XXVII

IT is not necessary, and, in fact, it would hardly be feasible, to describe the full horror of the ensuing days. As usual, in a crash of utter catastrophe, the Church, the poor, neglected, unthanked Church stepped in with ready shoulders and willing hands. Mild Mr. Huggins went with Kenneth to the little semi-furnished lodgings that Mrs. Huggins had hastily dusted and somewhat pulled to rights. The hotel manager had insisted, after the scandal in the drawing-room, on the patient's immediate departure from Bellaria; fortunately the poor fellow remained quite calm, if only they would not leave him alone with Thomasine. 'It is most important,' he repeatedly told Mr. Huggins, 'that this lady's name should not be mixed up with mine.' All he wanted was to be allowed to sit by himself and ceaselessly to address his judge and jury. Alone in the hotel, in the early morning, deserted, the young wife telegraphed to Maria. Edward could not be expected before the following day. Miss MacClachlin came across at once. She brought Hortense along with her—'who is most eager to make herself useful, my dear, and she really is a most capable woman.' 'I love crazies. I have much experience of them,' said Hortense. Maria cast a keen glance at her. Hortense did not blench. 'Poor mutton!' said the smiling maid. 'To whom, pray, are you alluding?' demanded Maria. 'Sir Kennet—*évidemment!*'

'Mr. Graye, you would say,' corrected Maria irritably. 'These eccentricities, Mademoiselle, they are for your compatriots; we foreigners, we cannot follow them. Also "Kennet," it is so much prettier than "Graye."' Hortense betook herself to the little house, to make the

poor gentleman more comfortable. She displaced everything Mrs. Huggins had put down, and every change was an improvement. '*Ces prêtres mariés,*' she muttered, '*ça me tourne le cœur.*' Mrs. Huggins's French was of the vaguest; she felt that 'turning the heart' must be connected with conversion, so she smiled most benignly to the loud-ribboned Hortense. She was a good soul, was the chaplain's wife. One of her chief non-religious comforts and secular beliefs, in this world of ups and downs, was a pot of ointment for the wart on her chin; this depilatory she brought, with many nods and smiles, to the French maid. 'Is it for the nerves? I have none,' declared Hortense. The chaplain's wife pointed to her companion's upper lip. 'Ah!—I like my moustache,' said Hortense. All her life she had been big at lies; that brave lie remains her biggest. Mrs. Huggins went and told Maria that Hortense was much impressed by the sight of the chaplain's matrimonial felicity. 'No doubt she has seen, in her own Church, what celibacy leads to,' said Mrs. Huggins. 'She seems very well disposed. Could you not bring her into the Anglican Fold?' '*Plus bête que tous les moutons du monde,*' opined Hortense. '*Mademoiselle devrait soigner ça!*'

On the evening of the second day Thomasine met Edward at the station. 'You must give me back my husband,' she said. Mr. Huggins stood beside her; he did not add: 'With the Almighty's help.' The poor little bankrupt tea-merchant really deserved better of his church than a season chaplaincy and the room beside the kitchen flue, on the fourth floor of the hotel Bellaria.

Edward took his brother-in-law away with him, at once, to Bardwyk. There was no difficulty about that, for, in outer appearances, Kenneth behaved like any other human being. Hortense went with them; Maria accompanied Thomasine. The patient—if so we must call him for the time being—expressed not the slightest objection, as long as it was quite certain that the party would not pass through Scotland on their way. On this point he demanded to be repeatedly reassured. He explained to Hortense the marriage laws of his country—what little he

knew of them: it is a subject on which most Scotchmen have but confused hearsay information to give. Hortense replied that it was a most awful country in the world. Not for all the gold in Glasgow would she go within sight of it! 'Were it like that with us in Paris,' she said, 'I had been married a score of times already!' She added: 'At a time.' 'What if you speak to a young man in a café and take an absinthe together (not that I ever touch absinthe!), you are married to him—fie! And, if there are two young men, to which are you married—eh?' To this reiterated question Kenneth could supply no technical response, but he eagerly advised her to read Wilkie Collins's *Man and Wife*, then a recent sensation. Hortense afterwards told her Paris friends, that, in Scotland, half the population were married to each other without knowing it. '*Puisqu'on ne le sait pas!*' said the Paris friends.

To his scientific brother-in-law Kenneth explained the situation with logical persistence. After the first shock he had settled down to his usual quiet, pleasant-mannered existence. There was nothing about him that suggested insanity—outside the one painful subject of his anxiety to spare Thomasine. 'We were married on the distinct understanding that she ran no risk,' he repeated over and over again. 'Therefore there has been no "consensus": therefore there has been no marriage. I must'—the tears stood in his eyes—'I must try to forget her. She could not, you know, be allied, all her life, to a murderer—it would be too shocking. Thank Heaven, it is not true. And everybody says I am a murderer, so it must be true, though, sometimes, I do not quite see it myself. But, when I try to argue it out from the other side, they raise such a din that it is far better not to argue. It is far better not to argue. Besides, I often see quite clearly, that they are right.'

'Argue with him! Make him see what nonsense it is!' cried Thomasine, as we all cry, when first brought into contact with mental derangement. 'Oh, I could do it in ten minutes, if you would but let me!' Edward shook his head, and, indeed, Kenneth, left alone with his

wife, could but beg of her, finally with tears, to forgive him and to go! It was decided that, for the present, she should accompany her parents to Leyden. They had been staying with Laura at Bardwyk, when Thomasine's summons came. Before they left, however, an important event occurred in the Baroness's life, which must be set down in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ON the morning after Kenneth's arrival the old Baron and Baroness might have been seen slowly progressing through Bardwyk village by means of their customary donkey-shay. It was a sunlit September morning, fresh and crisp; most things, and most persons, looked cheerful. The old couple, unusually silent, were thinking of the daughter they had so sadly welcomed, of the son-in-law who held aloof. Silent, in the literal sense, their advance could not be called, although they shrank from mutual converse, for the Baroness sat up in the little carriage, persistently urging the donkey, who stopped as soon as he no longer heard the 'hoo! hoo!' of her voice, or felt the flap of her reins. And, in fact, he would have stopped even then—the use of the whip being ruled out in the game as an unfair advantage—had not the Baron walked ahead, with persuasive tone, and an extended carrot. The Baron was a picturesque figure in any case, with his cloud of grey hair and fluttering habiliments: the bright carrot added a pleasant touch. 'Come along! come! come!' said the Baron. The Baron pleaded; the Baroness prompted. 'Get along, do!' cried the Baroness. 'Do! do!' said the Baron in a very different tone; and held the carrot within a couple of inches of the donkey's advancing nose. Thus they slowly crept along the winding lane between the still green hedges. By the cottage at the farther end two fair-haired children stood watching, motionless, serious, intent.

'You are tiring yourself, dear love!' said the Baroness presently, 'and, besides, Atalanta has long ago found you out.' At her birth, in a hoary antiquity, the ass had been christened thus, as a sort of inducement to fleetness; she

had never even attempted to live up to her name. 'No! no!' contradicted the Professor. 'Hope springs eternal in the donkey's breast. The name, otherwise, is really too unsuitable; it was the golden fruit which caused Atalanta to go more slowly and to lose the race.' 'The name was an extravaganza,' said the Baroness. 'Surely nothing is so deteriorating as an absolutely unachievable ideal.' 'For a donkey, I grant you,' admitted the Baron. 'Not for a strong man.' And he threw out his breast, and thought of the Semicolon: the seductive carrot he pushed under the donkey's nose. It was done with less than his usual precision: Atalanta leaped forward; only a stump remained in the Professor's hand. The donkey stood still.

'Hoo! hoo!' cried the Baroness, slapping the reins up and down. The donkey marched.

'Now you've done it,' said the Baroness.

'She won't budge another inch,' said the Baron.

'Unless we turn her head. She'll trot home fast enough.'

'Well, you'd better wait for me here, my dear. Domper's cottage is only at the other end of the lane. I shan't be gone ten minutes.'

'Ten minutes! And you want to persuade a pious Dutch peasant to disinfect the room in which his son has died of typhus! To persuade him, when he thinks disinfection is a devil's trick for intruding on God Almighty!'

'Well, you can wait here just as well as there!' replied the Baron, a little put out.

'So be it. But, if I were a man, I shouldn't let myself be mastered by a brainless she-ass!'

'If you were a man, you would,' said the Baron, enigmatically gazing at the pale-blue sky. 'It has been man's—there, never mind. Come after me, if she'll let you.'

The Baron stalked on, waving the forgotten carrot stump. Atalanta watched him complacently. But hardly had the old man disappeared round a bend in the long green vista, when a sudden amazement befell Atalanta.

A loud thud descended on her unexpectant haunches. The Baroness, rising in the cart, smote the ass with the rolled-up manuscript of *Balaam*.

'The Professor is wrong!' she cried aloud. 'If so good a man as Balaam struck his donkey, surely we may! I promised not to whip the beast, but this isn't a whip.'

Atalanta, however, felt the indignity. She started off in an angry little run, a sort of 'no, you *don't*' jerk, until, suddenly, round the corner, she shied.

'Exactly like the other one,' exclaimed the Baroness. A tall black figure in knee-breeches occupied the middle of the road. It swerved to the right, but the Baroness had pulled the ass in that direction; for a moment ass and priest played catch.

'The angel of the Lord!' said the Baroness under her breath. The priest took off his hat and again attempted to pass. He and the lady knew each other by sight and no more; between Catholic and Protestant, in Dutch villages, a great gulf is fixed. The Protestant scorns, too indifferent: the Catholic hates with unresting hate.

'Wait a moment! Don't pass! I have long wanted to meet you,' cried the Baroness, in a voice trembling with agitation. The parish priest drew nearer, in surprise. He supposed that she wished to speak of some case among his poor, but even that was a very unusual step. He glanced round anxiously. If some one were to note their converse? The lane was empty—a few yards off stood his own parsonage, with the little old Roman Catholic church beyond. The scene was very peaceful and silent. Atalanta drooped her ears.

'The ass turned aside in the path,' said the Baroness softly.

'I did not hear it speak,' smiled the priest.

'I hear it now!' replied the Baroness. 'I mean—I mean,' her voice trembled, 'it is as if I heard it. It is as if it spoke to me: Behold the angel of the Lord.'

The priest's face changed. He was a tall, stern-looking man, with the air of an intellectual athlete. His wide nostrils stiffened for a moment; his eyes cleared. 'No,

no,' he said at once, as if to oversee the situation. 'I am a servant of the devil, madam. Every Protestant donkey is afraid of me.'

'Do not speak so,' said the poor, fluttering Baroness. 'I have been wanting to meet with you for a long time. I am very unhappy.'

Again that stiffening of the priest's nostrils and that movement in his eyes.

'I am sorry to hear it, madam. If I can be of any use——'

'Yes, you can be of use! This meeting is providential. A woman, Mr. Priest, wants more than philosophy, or dogma—especially an old woman—she wants religion.'

'Yes—ah yes!' said the priest.

'You have heard of this fresh great trouble that has befallen us?'

'No'—for, in Dutch villages, to an almost incredible degree, the two sections remain unconscious of each other.

'My new English son-in-law has lost his wits. We trust it will be only temporary, but——'

'But what, madam?'

She burst into tears. 'Oh, I am so unhappy. Trouble comes to us, and we have nothing to meet it with. I do not believe in science. I have trusted to it, and waited for it to come true all my life, but it doesn't. What can the doctors do for us? Nothing. My daughter-in-law, with her devil's tricks, can do more than all the doctors! Ah, Mr. Priest, in my old age my daughter-in-law has taught me to believe in the devil. I—I always thought he must be there, but I never was quite sure. Now I've seen him at work. I can see him daily. But—but I've seen the other thing, too, all my life, if I only would admit it. If the devil helps those that ask him, there are saints that do the same.'

'There are, indeed,' said the priest. Atalanta put back her ears.

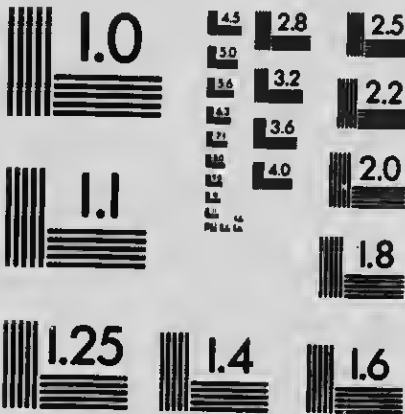
The agitated Baroness fumbled at her breast and drew forth her amulet.

'It was this,' she said, 'not Laura, that saved James



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Graye. And now the demented Kenneth will not wear it.'

'He is demented,' said, pityingly, the priest.

'But the others sympathise with him. And yet, how often have I seen its efficacy. In the critical moment of the fearful operation it reached the house just in time. All through my life it has brought me good fortune. Do you not think it is wonderful it should do so, in the house of a heretic?'

'The Blessed Virgin,' said the priest, 'is good, even to heretics. She follows the precept of her Son: Bless them that curse you.'

'We do not exactly curse her,' suggested the Baroness.

The priest saw his mistake. 'I was not thinking of good Christians like your Nobleness,' he said adroitly.

'I am not a good Christian. I am one of those whom Renan and Strauss have led astray.' The priest shuddered; he saw that this impressed her, so he shuddered again. 'My husband is a great scientist—the greatest scientist living: you know he is that?'

'I do indeed,' said the priest.

'He is a religious man, also, an intellectual believer. Some day he will discover the cure of all physical disease: that will suffice him. But for mental ailments no microbe will bring a remedy. Meanwhile, my son believes in Charcot; my daughter-in-law in magnetism. But these things are either a delusion or they are tricks of the evil one.'

'They are not a delusion,' said the priest.

'I know they are not. Have I not seen them work? They are tricks of the evil one. And I am afraid of him'—she clutched her little image—'Science cannot combat him. I want help. I am frightened. I am miserable. I want help!'

'The Church gives it,' said the priest. She gazed at him as if eager to say much more, held back.

'Surely even your Church,' continued the priest, 'can give some sort of help in such need as yours.'

She did not answer, and, as her silence lengthened, the pleased expression of his eyes spread out across his mask.

'Surely,' he said, 'your religious teacher—your spiritual and apostolic guide——' He paused.

'Oh!' she said, 'the little minister!' She slipped the reins down on the donkey's back. Atalanta lifted up her head and brayed.

'I should not think,' she continued, 'of going to him for advice. He preaches on Sundays, and he pays us visits on week-days, and calls me "your Nobleness" all the time.'

The priest took the hint. 'My daughter,' he said, 'you need spiritual guidance: you must make up your mind where to look for it. I do not know much about your sect: my Church—the Church—has many ways.'

'I have thought of it over and over again,' replied the Baroness. 'I have thought it out for months—for years. There can be but one true Christian Church, and so it must be yours.'

The priest jumped, inwardly, so to speak. Outwardly, he only said: 'These things cannot be discussed like this, in the public road, by a donkey-shay.' There was seeming vexation in his tone, and she hastened to answer: 'But I am very much in earnest. I say again, this meeting is providential. This morning my trouble seemed greater than I could bear. Oh, Mr.——'

'My name is Winx,' said the priest.

'Mr. Winx——'

The priest smiled. 'That sounds stranger still.'

She blushed. 'What do people usually call you?'

'Father Winx.' He laid a fat white hand on the fat grey donkey.

'Ah, that in itself sounds like all the comforts of religion! I have long wanted fatherly help,' cried the old Baroness. 'I feel orphaned in a world of sadness and wonder. Oh, Father Winx!'

'I think that is the Baroness, the distance,' said the priest.

'Is it?' replied the purblind Baroness. Well, I am glad he should see us together. I shall tell him. We must soon meet again.'

'I am always at your service.' The priest stood away.

'This night—in the middle of it—if you realise your state—'

'I must have time,' breathed the Baroness. 'Give me time. My Virgin—do you think she would be more efficacious if she hung on a Catholic breast?'

'Undoubtedly,' said the priest.

'So I feel. Yes, I feel that also,' said the Baroness. 'Would you mind turning my donkey's head in the right direction?'

'It will give me the greatest pleasure,' said Father Winx. Atalanta, however, proved very rebellious. The unwonted gentleman in black knee-breeches evidently disconcerted her. She kicked at his sable calves. And when he exhorted her to be obedient—oh, my daughter!—she lifted her liquid eyes to the heavens and brayed that she was no daughter of his.

The hot priest saluted the Professor. To the latter's voice and touch, now that they guided her whither she was desirous to go, Atalanta immediately showed herself amenable: the old couple drove away homewards: the thoughtful priest wandered into his church.

'You were having a talk, my dear, with the Roman Catholic priest?' began the Professor interrogatively.

'Yes, my dear. Did you convince your man?'

'I am sorry to say no. He is absolutely certain that disinfecting is tempting the Almighty.'

The Baroness smiled grimly. 'I thought as much. Who ever convinced a Dutch Protestant? They all know better than each other. And each of them has a different, the only, truth.'

'Yes, my dear.'

'Would it vex you, my dear, if I became a Catholic?'

The Baron's jump was by no means inward. It very nearly took him out of the cart.

'My dear!' he said, 'are you speaking in joke?'

'By no means. Is it a subject to joke about? I never was more serious in my life.'

'Indeed! Indeed! I presume you have realised the peculiar position of the Papists in this country?'

'Socially, you mean? I have never minded that.'

'No, no!'—the Baron was a little testy—'of course not. I mean historically. You understand what an anomaly they are in the development of Holland? It is that I object to in them. The great wars of the religion were a disease they ought never to have survived. Those wars were fought, amid the most horrible persecutions, for religious liberty, by the Protestants against the Catholics, and the Protestants won. Now, surely, speaking physiologically—physiologically, mind you—from that moment the Dutch Catholic became an anomaly! He has no part in the greatness of his own country. *His* heroes are Alva, the pious Catholic, Philip, the beloved of popes—fiends in human form to every other Dutchman, Christian saints and soldiers to him. My dear, the position is palpably an absurd one. A Catholic may prosper in any other country; in Holland he must feel ashamed to be a Dutchman.'

'I want a religion that'll give me something to hold on by,' said the Baroness. Atalanta scurried homewards, with a clatter of impatience along the stony road.

The Professor extracted a little tin box from his waistcoat-pocket and took one of his Jenkins' pills. 'You talk about the unreasonableness of our Protestants as regards science,' he said, 'but people are much worse in Catholic countries. At Naples, during the recent cholera, the populace stoned the doctors. All they wanted was that the blood of St. Januarius should liquefy.'

'Well, that was something to hold on by,' said the Baroness.

'Not if it liquefied, Jane.'

'Do not be profane, Thomas,' said the Baroness.

Her husband eyed her curiously. 'You see nothing unusual in the two—or is it three?—holy coats, both genuine?' he said.

'I want a religion that'll comfort me,' replied the Baroness.

'Or in the true wood of the cross, that the Pope distributes—enough to build a Noah's ark?'

'I'm unhappy. I want to get away from all the microbes of body and soul,' said the Baroness.

'Or—forgive me, my dear: remember I am a scientist—in the bit of Jacob's ladder?'

'No,' said the Baroness.

The Professor alighted, at his own door, or, rather, at Laura's. 'After that,' remarked the Professor, 'there is no more to be said, my dear.'

Father Winx stood in his Lady Chapel and surveyed the dilapidated walls. His young curate stood beside him: the young curate's face was sadder than the priest's.

'We shall have to tell the people some plain truths,' said the young curate, 'about laying up treasure in heaven.'

'Poor things,' answered the priest, scratching his chin. 'Some of them have very nearly brought their last penny to that bank.'

'Well, it's a good investment,' said the young curate, 'and, after all, while we build churches, the heretics have to support our poor.' He smiled. Father Winx smiled also.

'There may be more money some day,' he said.

'To restore the Lady Chapel?'

'Who knows? To restore the whole church.'

'Father!'

'Or build a new one.'

'Holy Mother, have we come into a fortune?'

'The silver and the gold are mine, my son. The silver and the gold are mine.'

CHAPTER XXIX

It cannot be denied that the Baroness's resolve caused the greatest consternation to her little community. In England, where secessions to Rome are so frequent, it would be difficult to realise what this defection from Calvinism meant. The first thing that happened, of course, was that the maid Eliza, gave notice. This every one had expected. As also that she would presently offer, with bitter tears, to remain. 'One Corinthians, five, nine, twelve,' said Eliza, 'and, really, that'll make it much easier for me now than it was before. Of course I never thought my mistress was one of us, but now she can't even pretend to be.' The Baroness read one Corinthians, five, nine, twelve, and did not feel pleased. But the real surprise was Eliza's, when she found her resignation definitely accepted. Father Winx had provided, it appears, a Catholic Paragon. When that wooden-visaged female took possession of the store-cupboard and linen-press, Eliza earned the martyr's crown. There are moments when art can do no better than to fling a napkin over the face of the sufferer. 'These preserve-pots are very old-fashioned,' said the Paragon. Let the rest be silence!

'Do you mind very much, Thomasine?' asked the Baroness. 'I should be sorry to cause you grief, when you have so much already. But—ah me! I am so forlorn. I want a religion that'll be cleverer than myself!'

No, Thomasine said her mother must of course follow her own conscience. 'I am sure you are quite, quite wrong, dear,' she said, 'if a daughter may say that to her mother. People don't really get nearer to God by using

a number of go-betweens. 'Bu. I understand what you mean, and—oh, mother, life is very difficult!' Thomasine turned away, hastily. She was absolutely alone. She felt that between her and God any human word, almost any human look, would feel like a blow in the face.

Jane, the second daughter, not a very attractive girl, going out a great deal at Leyden and the Hague, and concentrating her energies on a personal 'good time,' Jane openly and shrilly proclaimed her annoyance. From a social point of view entirely she condemned her mother's ill-considered action. 'Mamma might have taken into account,' she cried, 'how ridiculous it makes us all! Nobody has ever done it before, except they were half-witted or wanted to marry. Everybody knows it isn't the second with mamma, and so——!' she shrugged her shoulders! 'It won't do my prospects any good either. Every body'll fight shy of us now.' In this, like so many anxiously egotistical people, she caused herself unnecessary distress. It was true that society fell away a bit from 'the really too eccentric Baroness'—'but I daresay her husband's perpetual microbes are to blame!'—it became all the kinder, however, to her gay, gad-about daughter. 'Poor thing, she has no longer a home!' The Baroness dedicated the third daughter—at the strictly Calvinistic Geneva school—especially to the Virgin Mary, and insisted on her wearing only white and blue. She was actuated by the fierce hope that this one child, at least, would 'come right.' Like all converts, she became, in a few weeks, more fanatical than any of her Catholic acquaintances. She insisted that the house should not contain a scrap of butcher's meat on a Friday morning. The Protestant servants were all replaced by *protégés* of the Paragon. The Professor (having quietly, and handsomely, pensioned Eliza) minded none of these changes, as long as his laboratory was left untouched. Besides, Friday's fish-dinners, thanks to the Paragon, were soon the most luxurious of the whole week. Even the simple Professor noticed that. But the effect was the extreme contrary of what the Paragon expected. 'A religion of fools,' said the Professor. Personally he regretted 'the

Pivot,' who, soon bored to death by attempts to play the independent lady, the futility of which she herself fully realised, presently declined the continuance of the pension—'While I live, I can work,' she said—and passed, with all the honours of war, to Laura. Even a heathen witch was better than a papist. 'We must take the wicked world as we find it,' said Eliza. 'At the best, there's no more than a remnant. And Holland's a very little country, we can't expect to find more than a remnant of the remnant there. It's lucky I'm one,' said Eliza. 'I prefer authentic lunatics,' she declared after a week or two at Bardwyk. 'My poor, poor Mistress!' Then she devoted all her spare moments to the conversion of Hortense. For Hortense had remained on with Kenneth, while Maria was doing a holiday douche at Dr. Ducrot's.

The two maids were of course unable to exchange a single word. This initial difficulty might have daunted a less determined female than Eliza, but that heroic enthusiast bravely met it. As she sat over her needlework, and Hortense over the French comic papers, in the quiet servants' room at Bardwyk, Eliza discoursed volubly, in her own language, on the mysteries of Reformed metaphysics, discoursed by the half-hour together, almost without a break. When the French maid seemed not to be attending, Eliza raised her voice. Once or twice as she bent over a highly-coloured illustration, Hortense laughed, but that may have been emotion. After three evenings she begged Laura to inform the Dutchwoman, that she, Hortense, entirely agreed with her, was quite sure she was right. 'Tell her, I entreat of you,' she said, 'that she has entirely convinced me. Entirely, or I shall die.' As an unexpected outcome of this surrender, Eliza, to the poor Parisian's discomfiture, destroyed all the comic papers, and gave Hortense a bird-and-nest-illumined Dutch text. The text Hortense adroitly passed on to Kenneth, who angrily ordered her to take it away, as it taunted him with the home he had lost.

Thomasine dwelt, for the present, with her parents on the Leyden canal and supported the religious zealotry of

the Baroness, who divided her time between reading little books about the immorality of Luther and composing odes to her latest discovered saints. Thomasine went and helped her father in the laboratory. 'My dear,' he asked on the second day, 'would you like me to say "mind"?' 'Yes,' she answered, 'if it isn't too much trouble, father.' He looked up at her, laid down his lancet. 'I wonder people mind about causing pain,' he said, 'in a world where God causes so much.' 'Don't, father,' said Thomasine. Jane, persistently staying with friends and relations, wrote home scrappy accounts of perennial success.

In the household at Bardwyk Kenneth had received an easy welcome. Only James Graye fought a little shy of him, for James could not rid himself of the impression that Barton and Kenneth had told him untruths. But, more and more, James was beginning to perceive that what he thought untruths were often misunderstandings. On his limited horizon the ups and downs were beginning to show a little less dimly. In his quiet way now, learning daily from Laura, as an unintelligent, gentle-natured child of six might learn, he lived a peaceful round of placid existence, happy in the daily exercise of little kindnesses, of petty charities, gladdened, above other gladnesses, by a passing 'thank you,' a grateful, or even only a friendly, smile. Many of his kindnesses were infantile—a cake saved from his own tea for Hortense—a flower culled in a thunderstorm (which he drew) for Laura—but in all there was always the sublimed desire (so rare in children) to make sacrifice of self,—not, however, an altruistic sacrifice. His whole little soul-existence was built up upon gratitude. He wanted to be good to the people who were good to him. Goodness was kindness, being nice. He adored Edward, who, more by accident than design, had never caused him conscious suffering. It was Edward who had taken away the pain from his eyes, the stress from his head. He could look into the sunlight now and see the birds flash, twittering, among the flowers. They wanted to give him pets, but he said 'No.' The whole wide-open world, it appeared,

was pets to him now. And, unable to distinguish as yet between wild animals and domestic, he could not understand the captivity of anything that might run about in his sight. Most 'innocent' and different from other human beings he remained in that he could not be made to appreciate the value of personal possession. 'But a dog for your very own, James. A dog that you may order about and teach to obey you. A dog that nobody else may play with.' Of all this he comprehended nothing. But the first time he saw a bird in a cage, outside a cottage, he burst into tears. He bought its freedom—so eagerly, that birds were hung up in cages all along his road. The Burgomaster had to interfere: a trade was rapidly developing round Bardwyk of birds for ransom at two hundred per cent. Edward strove ceaselessly to make the boy realise the conception: 'I must keep something I don't want for myself.' 'As long as he doesn't grasp that, he is a natural,' said Edward. 'Civilisation consists in the acquirement of superfluities. But James, even before he is satisfied, gives away.' In all these slow developments of his nephew, Kenneth was greatly interested. In fact, Edward and he frequently discussed the lad's case together. 'He will never be a clever man,' said Edward, 'but, at least, he can be a happy and an honest one.'

'That is more than most of us achieve,' said Kenneth, and he sighed. In all matters of daily intercourse, and certainly in all questions of abstract argument, Kenneth remained the sensible, right-hearted fellow he had always been. Only—suddenly, without visible preparation—the terrible fits of depression would fall on him when he accused himself of having caused an innocent death. 'I am a murderer!' he would cry, starting to his feet. 'What business have I here sitting talking, among you, as if I too were a decent man? I am a criminal! If the laws were not so inadequate, men would come and lock me away?' 'I could have borne my guilt,' he confided to Edward, 'if the law had turned upon me. I could even have found various palliations, I think, for of course there are palliations: there always are. But now that

nobody attacks me, I cannot but accuse myself. After all, the man died. I killed him. Had I not done what I did, he would be alive to this day. And I did it because I was mad, you see. Yes, I was mad. I had always been. That has been the great sorrow of my life far worse than the looking after James. The knowledge that sooner or later I must lose my reason, because it is in the blood.'

'You know you are not mad,' Hortense had said to him, but that had brought on the single paroxysm of fury. 'And quite right too,' said Hortense to herself afterwards, thinking it out. 'There's so many mad people wanting to be thought sane, that surely it's hard on a sane person, if we refuse to think him mad.' She wrote full accounts to Maria MacClachlin, who was always asking for later news. Yet, of course, there was never really any later news than the first. It is no use reasoning about a delusion such as Kenneth's that Thomasine was still free. 'You cannot marry unless there is a consensus,' he said over and over again, 'and a madman cannot give his consensus—surely, that is a law among all nations—you do not deny that, Hortense?'

'No,' replied Hortense, 'it's nonsense, so I daresay it's law.'

'Send for Dr. Lisse,' cried the indignant Kenneth. Edward agreed with Kenneth. His great theory, on which all his well-known successes are built up, is that you must accept the unreason of the patient you are treating entirely as if it were your own idea of common sense. Having thus got into his confidence, you can then influence him by suggestion, hypnotic or otherwise. He was trying all the Salpêtrière methods of psychic 'determination' on Kenneth, confident that at present, in any case, there was no organic deterioration of the brain. 'You mustn't tell an insane person that you want to bring him round to your way of thinking,' says Edward, 'you must travel round with him, or rather you must travel him round, so to speak, unconsciously. That's the only chance—Krafft-Ebing is right as far

as he goes, but I go farther. I know I can succeed by animal magnetism, in many cases where his mere hypnotism failed. It was my wife taught me that. Even functional disease of the brain is curable by imparting new life-energy. I have frequently cured it. Only organic deterioration is hopeless, as with the heart or the kidneys, or anything else.' 'Of course,' said the Professor, 'find the microbe.'

'So it is an understood thing,' wrote Hortense to her mistress, 'that Sir Graye is not to be conscientiously' (the right word was 'consciously') 'influenced. He wishes to believe his relations were mad, and he therefore also, and nobody may say him nay. I, mon Dieu! when I said to my little brother ten times a day: "Thou art an idiot!" never did I understand that then I must be an idiot too!' 'Stuff and rubbish!' cried Maria MacClachlin, indignantly crumpling up the letter in a shapey hand. 'The whole world is going mad with doctordom. The doctors are the microbes of the race. Stuff and nonsense! The doctors! They torture the dumb creation and the sentient human soul. *That's what they call* anæsthetics.' Then she rang for the sporting Chantilly widow, who appeared with a long-drawn pale face and a hoarse cough. The pale face Miss MacClachlin cannily ascribed to nature, the hoarse cough to art.

'Pack!' said Maria. The widow started: she thought some of her speculations must have been found out.

'I beg your pardon, ma'am?' she stammered interrogatively.

'I said: pack!' replied Maria, who disliked the widow so intensely, it was only with the greatest difficulty she could get herself to speak to her—fewer words than necessary, generally looking the other way. 'Pack; I'm going.'

'Oh, indeed, ma'am,' replied the widow much relieved, with that maddening cough of hers, 'and which, if I may be permitted to ask, as my poor dead husband used to say—'

'Half a franc!' said Maria. The Chantilly widow began to cry—her other weapon, less efficacious than

the cough. The cough, as we know, had been contracted (or, rather, the throat) by appealing to the fleeting 'booshay'; the whine was the widow's im- and opportunity. The frequent, and always incongruous, allusions to the departed stable-boy (largely aids to commiseration) had compelled the good-natured Maria, in self-defence, to institute a heavy fine on the mention of his name. For Maria MacClachlin's good-nature had its common-sense limits; she was aware you could turn it sour, so she did her best to keep it sweet. In accordance with her own system of precautions she knew she ought long ago to have dismissed the widow, but the widow called heaven to witness against such monstrous wickedness as turning her adrift. Once indeed the poor forlorn female in a foreign country had feebly suggested alimony, but Maria was one of those unfortunate wealthy philanthropists who consider it a sin to pauperise the poor. Nothing is more destructive of a life's repose than that conviction. It can only subsist satisfactorily on a heart of granite: anything a little more porous it eats away.

'Hortense never mentions her dead affections to me!' cried Maria with the asperity of a mind distraught.

'No, indeed; she wouldn't know where to begin,' retorted the Chantilly widow.

'Don't assert more than you can prove,' admonished Maria, who, like most old maids, was consumed with a longing to hear something of the amiable frailties of her *entourage*.

For only reply the Chantilly widow started coughing till Maria fairly stamped her foot.

'Hortense doesn't cough,' exclaimed Maria. She was powerless against the terrible Chantilly widow, but she had discovered one way of punishing her, and she mercifully employed it.

'The widow stopped coughing and resumed her tears. 'Nor weep,' cried Maria. For a moment the widow stared, baffled. Then she said: 'Not weep? You've never seen her, ma'am, in her cups and her hiccups, as my dear departed——'

'Half a franc!' cried Maria, who never exacted her

finer. She rose. 'It's no use,' she said, 'you may just as well give it up. Hortense is coming back to me, whatever you may say.' The Chantilly widow clasped her hands and waggled her long face for several seconds. 'Well, they du say,' she spake, as if to herself, 'that the Scotch is less parti-cular than the English, where whisky's concerned, but I *have* known English high-class families where the mere mention of a servant's drinking caused the lady to fall down two flights of stairs. "Cook's drunk, ma'am," says Parkins, and at them awful words Mrs. 'Arcourt——'

'Go and pack!' exclaimed Maria.

'But in this country, where everything's as ordinaire as the wine, as my poor husband used to say, which you won't let me mention him, ma'am, though he was as humoursome a man as ever rode a horse, as good as takin' *Punch*—not the beveridge I don't mean, for a soberer never stepped, but the idiotical' (she meant periodical) 'joke-paper with the huntin' pictures that he used to say was the best——'

'If everything isn't packed to-morrow at twelve, I leave you behind with a month's wages,' said Maria.

'To-morrow at twelve, ma'am, and might I know——'

'Ask at the Bureau for a time-table. I'll look out a train. And mind I have my douche, as usual, at thirty.'

'Wouldn't it be better to have it earlier, if we are to start at twelve?' said the Chantilly widow. 'And perhaps, ma'am, you would kindly let me know——'

'I think I shall telegraph to Hortense to meet me at Basle,' replied Maria. Then she turned round with a rustle of her silks and immersed herself in an enormous arm-chair and the *International Cry of the Cow*.

But Hortense remained unmolested at Bardwyk, and it was Hortense who first saw the char-à-bancs coming up the avenue with the whole party, three weeks later, and who gave the, too tardy, alarm.

CHAPTER XXX

KENNETH was sitting by the open window with his account-books and papers, for he kept up, of course, the administration of his nephew's large property, and he did it as firmly and as clearly as ever. He had just written a letter to his agent in Scotland, pointing out very courteously but decidedly, that there must be something wrong, if two cottages wanted re-thatching, the roofs of which had not lasted two-thirds of what the others did. When that letter arrived, 'Why, I thought his own roof wanted thatching!' said the agent, annoyed.

Kenneth leant back in his chair, looking moodily at the envelope: all the craving of his hungry heart was for Thomasine. The separation was causing him agonies—alternately aglow and aflame—which he did not, because he could not, confide to any one. In his own heart, despite all his make-believe arguments, he did not believe that Thomasine could, or would, marry again. He was trying to tell himself so, and everybody, in the mad hope, that somehow, by sheer force of insistence, the thing might come true. We have, all of us, even the sanest, had that sort of feeling at times. And, if it did not come true, if he and Thomasine remained man and wife—well, then she was not in a different position from other unfortunates, on whom the cruel fate has fallen of finding themselves wedded to the insane. It was an awful fate: he had tried all in his power, in his wild love of her, to annul the wrong he had done her—if the law, the church, all the false paraphernalia of civilisation mocked his efforts, then the injury became no longer his but society's. And, indeed, it is a monstrous thing, that the law should condemn the wife of a madman, carrying him away from

her for ever, to inexorable solitary celibacy. There is only one thing more terrible, and that is the perpetuation of a hereditary curse.

Reflecting on these merciless realities with a heart that was gradually bleeding itself sick, Kenneth lay back in his chair. Close by he heard the voice of Laura, teaching James from a highly-coloured popular science-book, to distinguish between the best-known varieties of singing-birds. Nothing interested the boy more, or as much. Abstract things, like history—or even like fairy tales—left him indifferent: it seemed as if he would never understand why any one should wish to read or write. What he saw was what he cared about; even an abstract God dropped away from his comprehension. About birds, beasts and flowers—ay, and fishes—he would soon know more than his mistress. There was plenty of water about Bardwyk; one morning, by Laura's instructions, the head-gardener had shown James how you put a worm on a hook and hung it in the shallow water. The lad watched intently the wriggling creature at the end of the line, saw it disappear, saw the roach flash out of the water, on to the grass, with the naked hook right through its throbbing throat. Then suddenly, without a word of warning, he lurched heavily, in all his rough strength, against the unexpectant peasant and toppled him right over into the dirt and luckweed of the ditch. He ran home and told Barton he had killed the 'Deevil,' for to this personage he had been introduced by Hortense, who *que diable'd* and *diable'd* every accident of her daily life. 'Ah, the deevil!' says Hortense, whenever anything happens that she doesn't like. Sir James's tiny vocabulary with its unlooked-for extension on the natural history side, was of course confined to the English language; he was unable to express to the evil one, when next he encountered him, the regret he openly evinced at his resuscitation. The common people about the place set down his action to the pure malignity of the idiot. They listened, with a semi-deferential smile, to Edward's explanation. 'He oughtn't to be allowed to go loose,' they said amongst themselves. In fact, when

shortly afterwards, Tommy, the coachman's child, hanging over forbidden water for apples, fell in, he had the wit, as he scrambled out, to avoid a whipping, by laying the blame on Sir James. 'The idiot,' he sobbed, 'he comes behind me, as I was standing looking up at the swallows, and he shoves me in! I—I—wasn't—I mean, I was thinking—and he—he frightened me dreadfully—hi—hi—hi!' A deputation waited upon Edward about seeing that the idiot always had a companion in his walks abroad. Which was agreed to. James, unable to unravel the psychical entanglement of a cock and bull story, declared his willingness to explain why he had pushed the little boy into the pond, if only he could remember having done it. Edward began to compare this most interesting case of automatic unconscious action with similar indications in the rarer forms of criminal epilepsy. He was grieved that the boy, who had always been such a good boy, should develop these symptoms, although he fully realised, of course, as a doctor, the passivity of the patient. His clever article in the *Neue Medizinische Jahrbücher* rests entirely on the presumption that James was really quite unconscious of his action, both before and after, and *at the time*, when he pushed in the coachman's little boy. Rottenköfer's reply admits the before and even the after (if you grant the subconscious or latent perceptivity), but it cannot for a moment allow—and after all, that is the really important issue—the automatic objectivity of the actual deed. Everybody nowadays, in the scientific world at any rate, is convinced that Rottenköfer was wrong.

'There's a car-full of trippers driving up the avenue!' called Hortense, out of breath. 'If I could speak a word of the language, which is like coughing, I'd have warned one of the gardeners. I did try a lot of coughing once on Eliza, but she didn't seem to make head or tail of it, she's so stupid, and she only cooked me some nasty herb-tea!' Hortense laughed shrilly, and turned, by the window, to see the carriage draw near. 'It's a bean-feast,' she said, 'no, it's Neapolitan singers, no, it's—*diable!*' Her breath failed her. A *char-à-bancs* came

wheeling round the gravel drive—one of those many-seated conveyances which the Dutch, in remembrance of happy days in the country, call 'Johnny Pleasures,'—it can never have contained a more motley, though it often may have carried a gayer, company. Most prominent among the collection of odd accoutrements and outlandish appearances was the touzled gold-red head, under its blue veil, of the buxom Maria MacClachlin. That lady, bigger than ever in a light yellow dust-cloak, peered out anxiously behind a curtain of the overloaded vehicle. She waved a hand with a long white musketeer glove—was it a symbol of peace or an improvised flag of truce? Kenneth and Laura came out at the French windows. The van drew up, and Maria descended—a difficult operation—down a wheel. 'Well,' she said, with a long-drawn whiz, 'here we are at last.' There was much exhaustion in her manner. She cast a rather nervous glance along the double line and mixed jumble of figures and faces, eagerly craning or apathetic, of her cargo; then she pulled herself together and, in a resolutely bright voice, 'My dear Laura,' she cried, 'I am delighted to see you'—a pause—'now *do* say the same.' Laura was horror-struck by the thought that the energetic and compassionate Scotchwoman had probably collected a supply of afflicted ones to 'stock' Bardwyk. 'I—I don't think we—we've room,' she stammered, 'I must go and ask Edward.' Immediate measures seemed called for. The cart must not be unloaded at the door. 'Oh yes, please, call your husband,' said Maria. 'Ah, Hortense? I trust you are well. Would you let the old lady out?' Like a shot, the French maid saw her opportunity. 'Ah, Meessis,' she called to the Chantilly widow, whose long face was protruding over a big clerical shovel hat, 'Mademoiselle says I am to assist you to descend!' Maria turned sharply. 'Open the door,' she said, 'for the poor old Italian, and don't play the fool!' When Maria put on that accent, Hortense hastened to pacify her. She turned a handle, and the chance of exit thus once having been offered, the whole covey slowly and solemnly staggered forth out of the coop which had

confined them, and, in spite of Laura's murmured and muttered protests, spread itself in a conglomeration of bundles, human and otherwise, around the central figure, the impresaria of the show.

'My dear Mr. Graye,' said Maria. 'My dear friend, I am delighted to see you looking so well.'

'Thanks,' said Kenneth. 'Physically, my health is excellent. Psychically, of course—'

'Of course,' said Maria, more nervously still. 'That is just what we have come to talk about. These friends of mine are very tired with their long journey; do you think they might go in and sit down?'

'Oh, certainly, by all means!' exclaimed the ever-courteous Kenneth, hastily stepping aside. So, in spite of the uncertain opposition of Laura, while the gardens were still being scoured for Edward, the travellers trooped through the window and distributed themselves in variegated attitudes of picturesque clumsiness all over the large old-fashioned room. 'None of my friends speak a word of English, except the interpreter,' said Maria. The Chantilly widow, thus ignored, started coughing. Maria took no notice. Hortense said: 'Tchah!'

The company, indeed, did not look as if it would prove conversant with the English language, or with Englishry in any form. It was supremely, southernly foreign. Manifestly its components must be located amongst the Italian peasant class. There were, first, in a corner by themselves, seemingly apathetic, but not devoid of a certain dignity, two blear-eyed, rather broken old men, with parchmety faces, lean, grizzled, in a black-stockinged country dress, and, in company with them, a bright-visaged, restless old spinster, as lean, as parchmety, but with a rainbow-coloured scarf and a brilliant red bundle. Not far from these—to the spinster's evident satisfaction—was seated a portly, perspiring village priest, bucolic, black-habited, in buckles and a hat like a boat. The priest's eyes were brown beads, and he betrayed a benevolent interest in everybody and everything. More consciously authoritative, with a profession to assert, a lanthorn-jawed, yellow-cheeked individual, probably an attorney, had

taken up a position where every one could notice him, fussing with blue papers and other documents, in and out of a shiny leather bag. Inert and intentionally unconcerned, sat beside him another gentleman, a fat one, middle-aged, in a loose suit of shabby grey clothes, much the worse, like the gentleman himself and his limp linen, for the heat and exhaustion of the journey. This gentleman spread his fat hands on his fat knees, and all the ten greasy fingers stood out against the grey cloth, black-rimmed. The smart, polyglot interpreter-courier, a young man with a yellow moustache, had evidently found imperative diversion in an ironical courtship with the smirking Chantilly widow: it seemed manifest that the latter lady was building up an airy edifice on a pin's point, destined to an inexorable fall. Within two minutes Hortense had realised the full delight of this discovery—*que diable!* she said under her breath; for once she regretted, now the widow has come, her inability to converse with Eliza.

'These, then, are my little party,' said Maria, with an all-comprehensive sweep of the long musketeer glove. 'Ah, Dr. Lisse!'—for Edward had entered, breathless—'I trust you will forgive me for thus sweeping down upon you, for my object is a most excellent one, as you will see.'

'Will you tell us what it is?' said Edward.

'Mr. Kenneth Graye here, as I understand,' replied Maria, with a graceful inclination of her head, 'is annoyed by some information which has reached him regarding the health of his mother's relations in Italy. Quite right, too,' she continued, nodding to Kenneth, and to everybody else, all round, but especially to Kenneth. 'Most natural in these days of heredity. Formerly all we cared about was to know that our ancestors were well-born, but now we are especially anxious to know that they were born well.'

Kenneth's face had been clouding over, like a tempest-covered sky, but now, suddenly, he laughed—laughed brightly. The sound of his laugh stopped the protest on Edward's lips.

'In all my long experience of charity work,' Maria hurried on, 'there is one rule that never fails and that never must be lost sight of. It is, "Verify evidence." Whatever you undertake, make up your mind to verify evidence. Hardly a day passes but there comes to me some heart-rending appeal for compassion; the facts are seldom quite so heart-rending' (she glanced at her widow) 'as the appeal. As for the number and size of the falsehoods in daily fabrication' (she glanced at her French maid) 'all the world over, nobody can form the faintest conception of that, until he has tried a little verifying of evidence. Kenneth Graye, you are a Scotsman; you will agree with me that, in all things, a man should ca' canny. Hoot, man, ca' canny! See me make you sit up!'

This last exclamation, called forth by extreme nervous excitement, thrilled Miss MacClachlin with horror whilst she uttered it. It seemed to have no effect on Kenneth, who, indeed, had sunk down in an attitude of collapse. 'Miss MacClachlin,' said Edward, trying to draw her aside, 'may I have a word with you?' He added hastily in an undertone: 'I do not believe in heredity, but Mr. Graye does. There is the difference—he does in *defiance* of argument, and that is what you sane people can never understand——' She broke away from him impatiently. 'I meet him on his own ground,' she said, 'why didn't you do that? Yes, my dear friend Graye, we all agree with you. If there is madness in your mother's family, then, of course, you are hopelessly lost.' Kenneth shuddered. 'Hopelessly. But is there? That is the question. I knew a family'—she glanced round her audience, most of whom could not, of course, understand a single word she said—'I knew a family, where was an estimable gentleman, as sane as you or I, apparently saner. He wouldn't and couldn't go out of his mind, he said. But he had to. There was a hereditary taint.'

Kenneth looked up. 'What family was that?' he demanded.

Miss MacClachlin's eyes leaped about. 'It was my—my French maid's,' she said. 'You remember, Hortense, the case I am referring to——'

'I should think I did,' cried Hortense, delightedly catching at this unexpected cue. 'It was my brother, my own poor brother, Alfonso. Ten times a day would I say to him, "*Tu es fou. Tu es idiot,*" and always, most vigorously, he denied it. But it was no use; he had to give in. It was the family—how calls Mademoiselle it?—rot? Ah, my poor brother!'

'Brother-in-law, Hortense,' prompted Maria.

'Brother-in-law, yes, of course, or else I too should be crazy—*que diable!* Ah, *ce pauvre*—Jouquin. Yes, that was his name; I have often thought that his must have been the same family as yours, Meessi.'—she nodded to the Chantilly widow, whose maiden name was Judkins, as she was incessantly informing everybody, on account of the well-known importance of the Judkins connection at Biddlecombe (where Josiah Judkins, the grocer, has twice been Mayor). The widow bridled. 'All *my* relations were Church of England,' she said.

Maria intervened. 'That's right,' she cried. 'Verify evidence. If *all* your family were Church of England, then a Roman Catholic Frenchman can't be a relation. And if there never was a deranged person among your ascendants, then you can't have a hereditary taint.'

Kenneth nodded his head. 'True!' he said. Immediately, he relapsed into the same seemingly apathetic position as before. One of the old Italians took snuff; the other made a little querulous noise, and moved his hand for the snuff-box. Their sister intervened, conciliating them. It was quite a little incident in the long silence of the lay figures, sitting there, impassive as a waxwork show.

'And so,' burst out Maria, 'I travelled to the place itself, and found out about the family, and here they are!' She flung out her hand. The courier stopped grinning at the widow to tell the strangers that they were being referred to. The whole semicircle of Italians got up and bowed.

'I like that!' exclaimed Laura, always enthusiastic, carried away despite herself.

'Thanks. I went for facts from the first. I got facts.

After all, that remains the important point. And here are my facts. I knew it wouldn't make any impression on your—on Mr. Graye, if I came and told them to him, or brought them in writing. You mightn't have believed me, dear friend, or you might have thought I was misinformed. So I've brought the facts with me. Here they are! Again that fling of the glove. The younger of the two old men, having got possession of the snuff-mull, here sneezed with a distressing explosiveness. 'Santa Maria!' said the priest. 'Here,' repeated Maria MacClachlin, 'they are! You can examine them for yourself, at your leisure, Mr. Kenneth Graye.' Her voice was slightly ironical, and yet very tender. 'Permit me,' she continued, 'to present—where are you, Antoine?' (this, with a turn of the head to the courier, who was pinching the Chantilly widow's finger-tips)—'Signor Luigi Campodolci'—the flabby grey man rose and bowed—'Sindaco of Valguicciola, Signor Marcantonio Manchipotti, Notary Public.' 'Reale!' said the yellow gentleman, rising pompously and dropping the leather bag—'his Reverence, the Parish Priest of Vaiguicciola'—the priest smiled and waved his shovel hat—and last, but assuredly not least, the brothers, and the Signorina, Gardoni!

'But what have you brought all these people here for?' demanded Edward.

'I have told you,' replied Maria coolly. 'They can prove to my friend here, indubitably, as nothing else could ever prove it, that mental derangement is unknown in his mother's family.'

Kenneth leaped in his chair. 'Giuseppe?' he cried.

'Sì, Signore,' said one of the older brothers, rising to his feet. Kenneth stared at him wildly. 'No, I don't mean you,' he said. 'But there was a boatman, Miss MacClachlin, at the Bellaria, who knew all about the Gardonis of Bergamo, and who told me definitely—definitely—you understand, that, sooner or later they all went mad.'

'Do you speak Italian?' replied Maria.

'No. I can understand a little.'

'Well, that's better than nothing. Dr. Lisse, let us leave Mr. Graye here alone with these people. He can then find out everything for himself without believing them influenced by me.'

Edward hesitated. He did not believe the experiment could do any good, but, then, neither did he see in it much risk of harm. His own attempts at hypnotic determination had remained entirely ineffectual with Kenneth.

'Yes, that will be best,' said Kenneth Graye. Left alone with the Italians, he remained sitting some time, motionless, his eyes on the ground. The tension was becoming unendurable, when the old woman said: '*Ahime!*'

Kenneth looked up quickly. 'I beg your pardon,' he said in English. 'You must excuse me; my mind is apt to wander.—Tell me,' he turned to the interpreter, and his eyes swept the semicircle, 'what the—Notary has got to say.'

'*C'est ça,*' replied the courier briskly. He gave a twist to his fair moustaches and called on Signor Manchipotti. The yellow gentleman in rusty black gathered up and let fall his documents all around him, as he began reading rapidly, with splendidly sonorous vowels, long sentences, in which the word *reale* alone seemed to roll forth into prominence—*reale—ale—ah!*

None of the others listened. Kenneth plucked at his own knees, perplexed.

'If I were to explain first,' said the bored interpreter suddenly. Kenneth jumped at the idea; the Notary, much put out, sat down.

'In the district of Bergamo,' began Antoine, enunciating very slowly and clearly, and selecting the simplest Italian words, 'there have long been too families of Gardoni, and one of them is not Gardoni at all; though few nowadays know that. At Valguicciola, in the mountains, live the original Gardoni'—the three old people nodded—'honest cultivators'—they nodded more vigorously—'you follow me, Signore?'

'Yes, yes,' said Kenneth impatiently.

'*Va bene.* Early in this century, in the Napoleonic wars, a daughter of their race was led astray by a French soldier called Dupuy. She followed him to Bergamo; he deserted her there. Her descendants live in the town to this day; they are well-known drinkers and brawlers. One of them, some years ago, committed a murder under dramatic circumstances, which gained great notoriety. They call themselves not Dupuy, but Gardoni. They are, as I said, well known for their recklessness and for the strain of madness that is in them. And, because of the noise they make, "Mad as a Gardoni" has become a saying among the common people of Bergamo.'

'Why do you tell me all this?' exclaimed Kenneth, his great eyes flaming. 'I have always avoided learning it. I feel that Dr. Lisse knows it; I have asked him once, but he did not reply.'

'He does not know what we know,' answered Antoine in English; then he resumed his slow Italian. 'The original Gardoni live in their valley unknown and ashamed.' 'No! No!' protested one of the old men; he waved his skinny fingers. 'Peace!' commanded the flabby Sindaco, pulling himself together. 'Not ashamed,' corrected Antoine, 'but unknown. They avoid Bergamo. Yet one of them, tired of poverty among the mountains, settled there some fifty years ago as a tavern-keeper. His brothers were angry with him for doing so—eh?' The Interpreter turned to the three old peasants. 'Si! Si!' they all said with animation.

'It was this man's only daughter, Lucia, Mr. Graye, whom your father met, at his little osteria, and married.' He paused.

'And what does all this prove?' asked Kenneth in the silence.

'The Sindaco and his Reverence are here to testify that the record of the Gardoni family of Valguicciola is clear of all noticeable aberration or excess. The Notary Public and Royal of Bergamo'—Signor Marcantonio bowed—'will prove to you by documentary evidence, obtained at great trouble and cost—but Made-

moiselle said she minded not these—that the same can no wise be said of the Dupuys of Arrésy-le-Dôme in Auvergne. Dupuy is the commonest name in France, Signore; it has not been easy to trace the runaway soidler. It was done through the French ministry of war. Once his village discovered, a very small one, the rest was soon known. The soidier came of a wild race; he had run away to the wars without awaiting the conscription. His name was notorious in the region for poaching and drinking. His father, a red-hot republican, had led the sack of the Châteaux in the vicinity, and had gone mad over his own theories. The name occurs repeatedly on the books of the public asylum of Clermont-Ferrand. The taint of drink and madness in the Pseudo-Gardonis of Bergamo is the taint of the French Dupuys.' He stopped.

'*Evviva l'Italia!*' said the Sindaco, smiling.

Kenneth had sat listening intently, straining. His eyes had been fixed on the courier's face. Now without moving them he said:

'You have all this in evidence?'

'The documents are waiting, in French and in Italian.'

'And these, if I understand her aright, are two uncles, and an aunt of my mother's?'

'Exactly.'

Kenneth rose and went up to them, taking their hands, one by one.

'*Io le ringrazio tanto,*' he said. '*Grande viaggio. Molto stanchezza. Grazie.*'

'*Viente,*' said the old people, greatly confused.

The old woman would have dropped a curtsey to her grand-nephew; he held her up, clasping her withered hands, looking straight into her eyes.

'*Mi hanno fatto molto bene,*' he struggled on. '*Grazie. Mi hanno servato. Mia moglie ringraziava.*'

Thereupon the old woman began to cry piteously, and even Antoine, who had been smiling to hear the comic Italian, graveily left off.

CHAPTER XXXI

'WELL?' said Maria MacClachlin. 'Well?'

Kenneth sat, with all the papers, blue and yellow, spread out before him, between the Sindaco and the Notary. In his own painstaking manner he was going through the evidence, now that it had been brought home to him, an odd figure, had it not been so pathetic, of a man proving to himself that he needn't be mad.

'You see,' replied Kenneth, looking up, 'how irresistibly right I was. I cannot understand the Professor and— and Edward. Look at the line down from this obscure little French village, down into Italy. There is no escape from it. The race is doomed.'

'I admit it,' said Maria.

'Absolutely condemned, from the first, against its will. There is no so certain heredity as madness. Fifty years hence the law will forbid such races to marry.'

'It will,' said Maria, 'but the very heredity of it proves you are free.'

He got up, and, excusing himself to his companions, led her into another room. He stood for a moment looking out of the window; then he asked in a low voice, 'Did you think I was mad?'

'No,' she replied energetically, 'only the victim of error.'

'That is the fault of the mad-doctors. Once they get hold of you, there is no hope for you. You must either think exactly like everybody, or else you are abnormal, deranged.' Maria took good care not to point out to him how unreasonable he was, as we all are with our physicians. Why, it was *he* who had insisted, till yester-

day, that it was an insult to common sense to look upon him as sane.

'I must go to Thomasine, if she will have me,' said Kenneth.

'Ah!' said Maria.

'You think she will not?' he inquired anxiously.

'I was smiling at your "if."'

'Because, you know, even now I am by no means what Edward Lisse would call "sane."'

'She will take you—she would always have taken you—as you are.'

'But I was right to stay away from her, as long as I believed that curse to be upon me,' he persisted; 'you admit that?'

'Yes, I admit it,' said Maria.

'The fear has been upon me all my life. It was a vague horror at home. A thing never to be mentioned; I don't know how I first heard of it. As a small child, I suppose, before people thought I understood. My mother knew; it made her miserable; she died young—in the cold Scotch home where no one understood her. It seems that her father had quarrelled with the others, when he left them—they say so—she deemed herself of the shameful race, those of Bergamo. And I never inquired, for dread of discovering yet more.'

'Edward Lisse inquired and found out all wrong, about the crazy ones only,' said Maria triumphantly.

'In later life my father and my brother used to disagree. I think my father soon repented of his romantic marriage. My mother was never mentioned, but when my brother did things my father didn't like, my father would say to him, "You're mad, like all your mother's family." I have several times—oh, too often—heard him say that. Yet the things my brother did were far from insane; he was a Liberal in politics, while my father was a Tory; he married a poor girl, pretty, and exceedingly pious. But he was sane enough, except at the end.'

'I know,' said Maria.

'Then James was born.' Kenneth shuddered. 'My life has been a gloomy one,' he said simply.

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'But it is going to be brighter now.' He let this pass. 'You are the kindest woman in the world,' he said brusquely. 'You will kill yourself for others, if you don't mind.'

'I shall mind.'

'I don't believe you can help it. You can't see a man or beast in pain without flying to the rescue. There is nothing you wouldn't do for sheer pity.'

She knew what he was referring to, and she hastened to say: 'Yes, for sheer pity.'

'Fancy offering to tie yourself down, from sheer pity, to the care of an idiot and a monomaniac—'

'Don't,' she interrupted him. 'That is long ago. It was merely an impulse of pity.'

He checked himself at once. 'You are as noble a woman as ever lived,' he said. 'Blessed, blessed are the pitiful, for they too shall find pity.'

'God grant it be so,' said Maria; and with that she had to rest content.

Such contentment would have been easier, had all things henceforth gone well with Kenneth, but this was not the case. With inherent courtesy he had turned the bright side to Maria, for he realised, and was most unwilling to underestimate, the great service she had rendered him. That comedy he could not keep up towards his wife.

At the first summons, Thomasine hurried across from Leyden. She arrived that night. 'I have always said you ought to go,' said the Baroness. 'A wife's place is at her husband's side. I should never have deserted your father.' This reiterated reproach had not been the least of Thomasine's trials during the last dull weeks at Leyden. Her appeals to Edward had been met by the invariable reply that Kenneth himself entreated her 'to forget him.' Her one attempt to speak with her husband, to plead with him, had gone down in a heart-broken failure too terrible to contemplate. 'For God's sake, have pity on me!' Kenneth had moaned. The Professor told Thomasine, gently, she must be thankful her husband still remembered, and loved her. 'As a rule,' he said,

'in cases of this kind, the patient is filled with aversion, declares that "he does not know the lady," insists that he is married to some one else.' 'Is that worse?' asked Thomasine.

The Baroness, unspeakably comforted by all the resources of her new-found religion, went about saying all sorts of prayers in all sorts of places. She searched for the right kind of saint, as some people go through a succession of pills. Yet it must be admitted that, being herself attacked about this time, by a persistent and incurable toothache, she sneaked away to a somnambulist, who, to her great indignation, advised her to have the tooth out. Now, that was a source of much perturbation to the Baroness. For, on the one hand, she was struck with amazement at the clairvoyante's having discovered what was the matter with her (although she had held her palm to her swollen cheek, imperceptibly, as she fancied, all the time during her visit); on the other hand, she was firmly resolved not to sacrifice any of her few remaining molars, and yet did not see her way, at present, to undertaking the necessary pilgrimage to Bärenbach, 'where the teeth of the most aged, my dear,' said her most recent friend, the Catholic Baroness C——, 'have been actually observed to grow out of their gums.' 'I should not like that,' said the Baroness rather tartly. 'Oh, my dear, can you doubt the saint's wisdom? They stop in time.' The Baroness, by her persistent church-going, at such hours as were most inconvenient to her surroundings, by her frequent fasts, falling lucklessly on other people's birthdays and holidays, by all her paraphernalia of different rights and wrongs from her Protestant neighbours, was rapidly making herself, not despised—that, perhaps, she would hardly have minded—but ridiculous. For, affect what we will of large-minded toleration, we all scorn a piety which we do not comprehend. And the Baroness, by her former intellectual eccentricities, had aroused a good-humoured banter, to which she had by no means objected; besides, her undeniable cleverness and knowledge had carried her through. But Dutch Calvinism, with its hard intellectuality, can see in a

relapse into the old Roman Catholic symbolism only a softening of the brain. This the Baroness learnt, with dismay. It was a deeply humiliating trial to her. But she held on. 'My dear,' she said to her husband pathetically, 'you don't think I'm a blethering idiot?' 'No,' said the Professor. 'Pasteur, you know, believes all I believe,' continued the poor lady. 'Yes,' said the Professor. Presently he added, 'Pasteur is the supreme intellect of his age. 'I wish—oh, how I wish—that I could believe that the blood of St. Januarins, when it liquefies, stops the cholera, and that twenty masses at eight francs each are good for thirty days of Purgatory!' The Baroness shook her head. 'You haven't got the figures right,' she said sadly. But the old man lay with his cloud of grey hair on his dusty writing-table. 'If only I could believe all that you believe!' he said. 'For a man of science our Protestant religion, it is too little, and not enough!'

'If only you could become as a little child,' wailed the Baroness.

'Yes, my dear,' said the Professor humbly.

'Pasteur believes it all,' repeated the lady, a little fretfully.

'He had not my starting-point, dear; you must take that into account.'

'But I had!' The Baroness dropped a tear on *Balaam*. She was obliged to rewrite the whole work, from the beginning, changing altogether her point of view. Whole passages had to come out in which the Ass talked as a Protestant. The animal now swore 'by St. Joseph,' and spoke prophetically of his favoured descendant (in the direct line) who should convey the Holy Family, along the identical road, into Egypt. What with this rewriting, and all her Odes and Hymns, and her interminable church-goings, the poor Baroness had less time for household duties than ever. The Paragon cheated. It was the one joy, the fierce joy of Eliza's bleeding heart, that she did. Half the night, on her sleepless pillow, Eliza would weep to think of the Paragon, making arrangements with the butcher for a

daily half-pound of meat, written down but undelivered, and the profits divided—ah me! 'She will *never* notice it, poor old dear!' sobbed Eliza. 'See what comes of deserting the religion of your fathers! Half a pound! And meat up a whole halfpenny again!' Here her feelings got altogether the better of her; she lighted her candle and reached out for her little book of devotion. She opened it and read: 'The righteous shall flourish like a bay-tree.' Eliza smiled. She did not know what a bay-tree was; she fancied it to be a Hortensia. The Hortensia is, in appearance, a soft and delicate pink (when not a rather ghastly blue). So Eliza blew out the candle and laid her head on the pillow and slept.

Thomasine had been very pleasant in the house and a great comfort to the troubled Professor. Also she had done much to smooth over the Baroness's social ruptures and philanthropic upsets. But now Thomasine was going back to Kenneth. The second daughter Jane refused to return home, clinging angrily to her worldly acquaintances and relations at the Hague. '*Maman s'est faite impossible,*' she wrote to her father, in the slipshod French of her surroundings. '*Je ne veux pas qu'elle gâte mon avenir.* I have already told Billy' (Billy was the name of a young officer that frequently turned up in her letters of late) 'how I mock myself of the religious ups and downs of *maman.*' The Baroness, then, built her hope on the youngest daughter, still at Geneva. She would return, to lift some of the weight of literary labour off her mother's drooping shoulders—in other words, to undertake the copying of the converted *Balaam*. Meanwhile the Baroness wrote to her, eagerly urging her to wear only the white and blue clothing, to which she—the Baroness—attached so much value. 'Send me a photograph! you will feel the blessing of it,' she wrote. The young girl, unable to bear the ridicule of twenty Calvinist school-fellows, secretly sent a photo in which an écru dress with fawn-coloured ribbons came out white on white. 'My dear child!' said the Baroness, pointing to the framed picture. 'My youngest! Dedicated, you see, to the Virgin. It must have its effect?' This, imploringly, to

the Baroness C——. 'Indeed, it must have its effect,' said that lady sympathetically. 'I have often wished,' the Baroness went on in meditative accents, 'and wondered, if I could do it to the Professor, would it——' she paused and sighed, 'have its effect?' The other lady smiled. Really this new convert was too fatuously ignorant. 'My sweet,' she said mellifluously, 'you surely know it is only the very young——' 'I know, I know,' interrupted the Baroness hastily, 'but it has often seemed to me his soul is very nearly like that of a little child. And he is so anxious to believe.' She got up and went and stood in front of the portrait of her daughter in écru and fawn-coloured ribbons. The tears coursed down her worn old cheeks. 'Oh, blessed Virgin!' she whispered, 'Mother of Pity, like the soul of a little child.'

Thomasine found her husband alone on the greensward, that stretches down to the water, in front of the house. Evening was falling: the shadows of the great beeches and chestnuts lay long across the grass. A crowd of white ducks were about his feet, and he was feeding them. He had given up expecting her; the train was late; he was weary with waiting. She came softly over the grass, behind him. 'Kenneth,' she said. He turned and flung forward, grasping her in his arms; that was all. As he turned, he dropped his basket of bread, and a great fluttering and clattering of the ducks rose all around it. Their turmoil sounded violent in the still night-air. The husband and wife held each other embraced.

'We must never part again,' said Thomasine, at length.

She stepped aside, and a great sadness swept over his face. 'You cast in your lot with a murderer,' he said.

'Dear Kenneth!'

'Hush! Let us understand each other clearly. Let there be no mistakes. This discovery—or proof, call it what you will—this *fact* that my mind is not deranged, that I have no *right* to think my mind deranged'—he spoke with strange incisiveness—'it is a blessing, Thomasine, and it is not.'

'Kenneth!'

'I—oh, Thomasine, I was not sorry to think myself insane. Now that I look back, I see it all too clearly. But I felt it all the time. It was a relief to escape to that thought. I fled to it. I hugged it. I clung to it. They have taken it from me. And they have done well. In so far as it kept me away from you, it was agony, God alone knows what agony—but, but'—his voice broke down; the tears stood in his eyes—'I could only come back to you a murderer, and so I come back now.'

'But, Kenneth, darling, surely——'

Then he told her, in short, swift sentences, of the letter that Abrahams had written, of the blood that was on his—Kenneth's—head. 'Innocent blood,' he said. 'It was almost a relief—nay, it *was* a relief to think that, when I thus compelled Abrahams, when I drove him by sheer force of terror to obey me, it was the deed of a man possessed. Madness was my one escape from guilt, and my mind, unconsciously but eagerly, snatched at it. Now, I know it was otherwise. I am responsible for my actions. I am responsible.' He broke down completely for a moment; then he steadied himself. 'I am a murderer,' he said. 'Is it better to live with a murderer than a madman? Speak.'

'I will live with the murderer,' she answered.

'But you would have lived with the madman too?'

'I think not'—and even in the gathering shadows she saw his face flush up with relief—'not if the doctors had forbidden it. You see, even to you, who were not mad, I did not come, as long as you wished me not.'

'It was for love of you I wished you not.'

'I know, dearest. And it is for love of you, for love of you, that now I come.'

'But see,' he persisted, 'the blot is on my soul. Oh, I have dreaded this moment, the awakening! how often have I dreaded it, through the sleepless hours, have dreaded it and put it off, and rejoiced to know that I was only mad. Only a poor madman! You cannot condemn a madman. Even when the rope is round his neck, some one runs up and says: "You mustn't hang him: he is

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mad!—and they detain him during Her Majesty's pleasure.'

'Oh, Kenneth, do not speak like this.'

'Dearest, I cannot deceive you. Oh, how I wish I could! I cannot. I dare not. It would be useless. We cannot start to-night to live a lie. The weight is on my soul. The—the veil is before my eyes. The world is dark. I killed the man. And I robbed him first. If you think it out, it was deliberate robbery. He had paid the money which I made him pay again. And the robbery led, as it so often does, to murder. And he was innocent. He told me so with his dying breath.'

She drew her husband's arm through hers. Slowly they walked down to the silent water. The ducks only rustled and paddled and quacked. The moon hung, a narrow crescent, in the deep-blue water, and in the deep-blue sky.

'You and I, we will face it together,' she said.

CHAPTER XXXII

BUT an hour later, alone with Laura, she broke down and flung herself sobbing on a couch. Her sister-in-law drew close to her. It was not in Laura's character to evince inarticulate sympathy. 'Poor thing, I am so sorry for you,' she said.

Thomazine sat up and dashed her hand across her eyes. 'Why? Why should you be sorry for me?' she said. 'It is nothing. I am only nervous.'

Laura shook her handsome head: she stood there, looking, as ever, too modern and too fashionable for her surroundings, in her light evening wear with diamonds about her arms and neck. Yet no specialist husband, whatever his specialty, could have had a more helpful helpmate. Besides his regular work at the great Government Lunatic Asylum, so strangely called 'Wits-End,' Edward had recently started a small home for pauper Idiots on whom his operation could be performed, in the village. The villagers were not particularly pleased at this. Preparations were also being made at Bardwyk for the reception of three suitable patients belonging to the higher classes, as soon as Kenneth should be able to leave, patients fitted neither for the public asylum, nor for that perhaps still more hopeless prison, the expensive private home. Applications Edward of course had, but as yet they were only from the relatives of clinical patients, from the very poorest, and even these mostly conditioned that there should be no tinkering at their dear ones' heads. In fact, Edward Lisse's position was a very difficult one. A persistent wind of antagonism against his discovery had gradually arisen in all the

medical centres of Europe. In America they were more tolerant, open to conviction, but, as yet, unconvinced. As a rule, the medical is the least conservative of the professions, for in their utter incertitude and tomfoolery of inefficacious nostrums the doctors naturally snatch at any new chance of an accidental success. It is that which so enrages them against patent medicines, the thought that, possibly, here might be the opportunity of doing something, only the other quack will not tell how it is done. Edward, however, fell between two schools. The surgeons, while fascinated by every form of 'section,' turned in scorn from the methods of the Salpêtrière, and openly proclaimed even the immortal Charcot a three-quarters humbug. The school of Nancy, on the other hand, went so far as to declare that, probably, with care and patience, Edward's effect might have been obtained without any 'section' at all. For this they could never adduce any proof, and, in medicine, after all, results are more important than in the other professions, because the world looks out for them more eagerly. The theologian who maintains that wrong is right can find few to gainsay him; the lawyer who proves it to be so meets with general commendation, but the physician finds his fallacy unexpectedly exposed by death. A couple of learned Germans tried Edward's operation, but without the genius of his touch, and certainly without the 'magnetic' after-treatment. Both subjects succumbed. Thereupon began that great and reverberative onslaught which was so ably and voluminously sustained by Schlagenbach and Dumpfmayer. It proved, ultimately, that Sir James Graye was dead. That was the one thing wanting to make this egregious trickery palpable to all. German scientific argument easily supplied it.

To the poor Professor these immense international squabbles—the storm in the little medicine-pot—were a source of great affliction. He was pleased with his son's success, so far as it went, but his sympathies were with Dumpfmayer and Schlagenbach. He appreciated their scientific basis. He wished Edward would see the value of microbic investigation—a hopeless sigh!—the whole

dispute might have been avoided, had James Graye been semicoionised at the time.

'You are looking quite fagged again,' says Laura to her father-in-law. 'Is it your old sleeplessness? Don't!'—with extended hand she stops the Jenkins' pill—'Let me put you to sleep once more!'—and to sleep she puts him, protesting.

'It is absoiutely,' stammers the Professor, 'unsci-sci-sci——' and he sighs himself away, peacefully, into oblivion.

So Laura, having finished her day—one of unusual weariness—with James, and having done, with Eliza's aid, all she could for the numerous Italians, now laid down the French novel she had just taken up, laid it down beside the box of chocolates, and the great vase full of brown oak-leaves and lemon-coloured chrysanthemums. 'Thomasine,' she said, 'I know.' She took out one of the big silver-paper bonbons and began deliberately peeling it. But that was to hide her nervousness, for her slender fingers trembled. The box, by the bye, was the great link between her and James Graye—its 'magnetic' influence can hardly be overestimated. It was, in its manifold developments, a sort of under-religion, a supplementary 'Law and the Prophets,' teaching James what to do and what to leave undone. 'You know?' exclaimed Thomasine, alarmed. 'What do you mean? What do you know?'

'I know what is at the bottom of Kenneth's misery—of all his mental trouble.'

Thomasine felt her heart stand still. 'I think you are mistaken,' she faltered.

'No, I am not,' Laura sank down beside her sister-in-law on the sofa. 'I have known for a long time. But what is the use of speaking of wickedness to one who replies: "I am mad"?''

'What do you know? What do you think you know?' whispered Kenneth's wife.

'I know that he has done something which is a great evil. It will not let him rest. Hush, do not start. I do not say——'

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'You accuse my husband!' cried Thomasine starting to her feet. 'The best! The noblest!'

The other drew her down. 'I do not say,' continued Laura soothingly, 'that it is a wicked thing, but he thinks it so. In any case it is a great evil. It has brought about great evil, great sorrow. And the thought of that will not let him rest.'

'You know much,' said Thomasine, annoyed.

'I have kept it to myself,' replied Laura. 'No one else suspects. All his half-mad talk about murder proves, according to the medical theories of our day, that he never did anything of the kind. As soon as a man's mind becomes deranged, the one thing he persistently accuses himself of is the one thing he never by any chance can have done. They are all agreed on that, and my own husband with them. Some day he will learn better, but I would not have him learn it of—me, through—Kenneth.'

'You believe Kenneth to be a murderer?' cried Thomasine; and her knees knocked against each other.

'I believe that he believes himself to be so. I need know no more.'

'It's a good thing you stopped there,' said Thomasine bitterly.

Her words stung the hot-blooded Sumatran. 'I need not have stopped,' said Laura.

'No. You might have probed the poor delirious brain.'

'I have not exchanged a word with Kenneth on the subject. You wrong me. I have simpler and surer means.' And, as Thomasine stared, in troubled wonderment:

'Only my poor old little planchette, that any one can buy in a toy-shop for a shilling. And so, I dare say, you can buy a divining-rod cheap, and then you can go out and find water with it! Or perhaps not. If not, the safest thing is to laugh at those who do. But, however much you laugh, you can't deny, unless you won't examine, that the divining-rod, in some hands, does find water. And the little planchette, in some hands'—she

dropped her voice unconsciously—'is a thing to be afraid of. I am afraid of it, in my own.' Her accent, the expression of her face over the concluding sentence, checked Thomasine's irritated protest. In subdued tones the Dutchwoman asked: 'Do you mean to say it tells you things you do not know?'

'Shall we ask it?' replied Laura, in a whisper.

Unwillingly Thomasine pressed closer against her companion's side. 'Ask it what?' she murmured.

'I asked it,' continued Laura in the same breathless voice, 'what was Kenneth's self-accusation, and it wrote "Murder." There is nothing wonderful in that, you will say: he himself told us as much all day—my own fingers shaped the words. But—but the next question—I did not dare to put it—I *would* not put it—shall we put it together,—now?'

'Why not?' replied Thomasine loftily, yet shaking from head to foot. 'I know the answer. I would know it in spite of a hundred planchettes.'

'The thing is but the paltry means,' said Laura earnestly. 'In all Bible prophecy the simplest articles of daily use are chosen. This little running pencil—she had taken it from a drawer—is only just a little running pencil. Let us take another pencil—shall we?—and put it into the board.' She turned suddenly, while at work. 'Do you believe,' she said, 'or don't you?' that Swedenborg saw his house burning, that night when at dinner with his friends, and wrote down all the facts, in their presence?'

'I never heard of it,' replied Thomasine.

'There is not a fact better attested in all history. What bigots men of science are! Even Edward. "I wasn't there," he says.' She had fixed the pencil; she motioned Thomasine to draw near. 'Let us ask it,' she said, 'if Kenneth is really responsible for the death of the Jew.'

'The Jew!' screamed Thomasine.

'Hush. Yes, I asked it that one question more. I should have warned you. I am nervous. Forgive me: no one told me. I asked whom he accused himself of

killing, and it said "the Jew," so of course I knew it was Abrahams.'

Thomasine pressed her white lips together. With faltering fingers she drew Laura's hands down upon the board. For a long time they stood there together. 'Is Kenneth,' they had written, 'responsible for the death of the Jew?' In the silence of the dimly-lighted room their breath could be heard irregularly rising and falling. At last the crazy pencil started and ran scrawling across the paper: 'No.'

In spite of her own reason and conscience, Thomasine drew a great gasp of relief. 'Of course,' she said, 'that was what we wished it to say. There is surely no great wonder in that.'

'Did I wish it to say about the Jew?' replied Laura fiercely. 'Did I know anything to connect the Jew's name with Kenneth?'

'You—might have guessed,' suggested Thomasine timidly.

'Indeed, I am not so clever as all that. But, as I was saying, there's none so superstitious as they who won't believe.' And, gathering the board and pencils to her injured bosom, the Sumatran swept indignantly from the room. Not so quickly, but that she had to stand aside for Maria, who smiled sweetly upon her, as she went by.

'I am not sorry,' said Maria MacClachlin. 'Your brother's wife and I were not created to understand each other. Not that that matters, Thomasine; there is plenty of room in the world for a lot of people besides myself.'

'Oh, how shall I ever thank you? How shall I ever thank you?' said Thomasine. Her voice was broken; she could hardly get out the words.

'Tut, tut! Are you beginning again? I haven't come to talk about that.'

'To think that you should have done all that for a stranger!'

'Oh, well!' Maria MacClachlin did not easily look taken aback. 'I don't think that's the prettiest way to put it. Let us say——'

'I mean,' interrupted Thomasine hastily, 'for one who could have no manner of claim——'

'Quite so. I know exactly what you mean. No claim of any kind but friendship. In fact, I would have done the same for—for Hortense.'

'I know you would, dear Miss MacClachlin,' assented Thomasine heartily, 'or for a sheep, for the matter of that—one of your *moutons*. You are goodness, and kindness, and charity itself.'

'Yes, charity is a good word,' said Maria. 'It covers a multitude of sins.' Then she burst out laughing; her eyes were looking full into Thomasine's. 'Oh, I'm terribly, terribly charitable,' she said, 'and you can't think what a trial it is. Especially to one's temper. Now, I'm off tomorrow morning, and there'll be the devil to pay—may I just say that once?—about getting all these Italians back to their native Valguicciola. For I suppose Kenneth Graye will hardly want to carry his grand-uncles to Scotland? Not that they'd go with him. They wouldn't stir from their village, unless I brought their curé along with them. Thank Heaven he was willing to come, for a consideration. And do you know what that was? A new image of the Virgin for his altar, in bright blue and gold—such an ugly thing: we had to get it at Milan, coming through. And I too, who have all my life warred against Mariolatry, or any -olatry! I wonder what the Kirk-session of Rowangowan would say?' She laughed, rather shamefacedly. 'But, as for the aunt and uncles, they don't say much, over and beyond: *Quando ritornaremo?* which means, I believe, When are we going back?' She looked interrogatively at Thomasine. 'I suppose so,' said the latter.

'Well, *ritornarello*, or however you say, "they'll go back," and the sooner the better. They were dreadfully upset by the dinner in the dining-car. I ought to have realised that you can't, at that age, suddenly begin taking an unaccustomed repast in bumps.'

'I suppose not,' said Thomasine, smiling feebly. 'What trouble you have had, and are still having! And what expense! You said something just now, dear Miss Mac-

Clachlin, about paying the—the devil, and, indeed, before you go, we must speak about this matter of paying you. I am afraid Kenneth is hardly able to discuss—and yet, I don't know. He manages all James's money matters, I hear, as admirably as ever.'

'Stuff and nonsense!' burst out the indignant Maria. 'It is you that are not able to discuss! See what comes of having to talk one's mother-tongue to a foreigner. Say another word about payments, and there will be the—oh, dear, dear, I ought to be ashamed of myself. But so ought you, a thousand times more. And, my dear, while we are about it, let a rough old Scotchwoman tell you a fact, and don't you be too angry with her for stating it. Kenneth Graye hasn't more golden guineas than he can find a use for, though he has enough not to stand in need of charity from any one. But I shouldn't think there was a man in the United Kingdom more painfully conscientious about keeping his poor nephew's big fortune distinct from his own little patrimony.'

'I know, I know,' said Thomasine, for no woman likes to hear another woman volunteer information of this kind.

'Yes, you know, but not as much as I do, because, you see, I am from his part of the world,' persisted Maria. 'However, let us talk about something else. What do you think has happened to the Chantilly widow? Antoine is going to take her off my hands.'

'Antoine?'

'The courier I picked up at Milan to manage this business. The widow has asked him to marry her, and I haven't the heart'—Maria's bright eyes twinkled—'to be selfish about it. But, dear me!—he says I must buy them a little hotel—that seems to be my fate!—and in his native country too, in Belgium, where every other house is already an *estaminet*. All I feel is, it can't be so very wicked in a place where there are as many as all that already—what do you say?'

'Wouldn't he take a temperance hotel?' suggested Thomasine.

'Oh dear no, I'm sure he wouldn't. And besides, you

know, I have a sort of sneaking idea—I hardly dare to give it utterance—that those can't be very cheerful places. Oh, it's so hard to do good conscientiously!' Miss MacClachlin sighed heavily. 'How often I have wished I was a Jesuit!'

'Why?'

'Oh, because then you could do evil that good may come of it! Oh, what a lot of nice bright evil I could do to my poor booshays! But, I beg your pardon, I forgot your mother was one.'

'I don't think my mother is exactly a Jesuit,' objected Thomasine mildly.

'Oh, a Catholic: isn't it the same thing? Well, I must leave my poor widow with you, if you'll let me, while Antoine takes the party back to Valguicciola. I start for Paris to-morrow with Hortense. Hortense will miss the widow.'

'I thought she hated her and quarrelled with her all day,' exclaimed Thomasine.

'Yes, that is why she will miss her,' replied Maria grimly. But such computations were entirely outside Thomasine's nature. She fancied Maria must be wrong.

'I wonder whether your sister-in-law would mind keeping my widow,' said Maria pensively. 'I ought to have asked her, but she flew by me in such a hurry. I dare say she prefers to avoid me. Likings are almost always mutual.'

'No, no, I am sure she will be delighted. Besides, who of us could refuse you anything? I will go and find her.' Thomasine moved to the door. 'I really can't take the widow back with me,' said Maria. 'Something might occur to upset her plans.'

Laura, however, had betaken herself to her own small room, and thither no one ever followed her but her husband. He found her there, later on, her face blotted with the traces of one of her rare, passionate bursts of tears.

'Laura! Dearest! What is this?'

'Oh, nothing,' she said. 'Nothing at all.'

'Nothing? You expect me to believe that? And

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what am I to answer? Of course, Madam: excuse me for disturbing you! And to come away?'

She hesitated for a moment. Then she broke into fresh tears. 'Ah no, Edward. It is not nothing. I am in very great trouble. Some months ago I already told you: my mother no longer speaks to me. Ever since the—the affair of the money she no longer speaks. She used to come to me daily in my—my trances: it was the happiness of my life: she would speak to me sweet things, endearing things. They would have meant nothing to you: you have known love all your life; to me they meant, oh so much! And when I gave you my money and we married, it stopped. See, the pencil—it writes only angry scribblings. I have asked her whether she was angry with me for marrying, she does not answer. I have never dared to tell you all this, but to-night I am so wretched I can no longer keep it back.'

'My dear child! my dear Laura! What folly is this?'

'Oh, do not call it folly, my husband! If you knew what it meant to me! When I was lonely and wretched, at Palembang, without a mother, and when my sister died, and all that dreary year at Brussels, when I was waiting, oh—there was always my sleep—my—my call it what you will, to look forward to. It was the daily joy of my life. I know she didn't tell me anything important, no deep secrets, no great prophecies. But that was because she was alive. By that I knew she was alive. I know of other girls whose mothers have told them wonderful mysteries of other worlds, but they had gone there, to learn them. And now she is only silent, only silent. When I ask her, if she is alive, she is silent. When I ask her if she is angry with me, she is silent too.' Laura's tears flowed abundantly.

'Dear, dear creature, stop weeping,' pleaded Edward. He put his arm round his wife's neck. It was a beautiful neck. The passionate Southerner leant against him, with cheeks of loveliest carmine under the black masses of her hair. 'Oh, why did you come in?' she sobbed, 'and surprise me? In half an hour I would have been myself again. It isn't fair!' Her tone was so sincere that she

hurt him, and with her abnormal sensitiveness she at once felt she had done this. The consciousness drove her to complete confession. 'Fresh misfortune is coming upon me,' she said shudderingly. 'It is coming nearer and nearer. Ah no, beloved!' she put up her hand, 'if I am certain of anything in my life, beside your love! it is of my so-called second sight—my horrible, horrible second sight! Would to God I did not possess it!' She stopped suddenly, and half lifting herself on one elbow, looked him in the eyes. 'Edward, tell me, before God, you who have seen all the Salpêtrière could show you, you know this thing exists as well as I? Can you deny it?'

'I have not denied it, child, but it is so uncertain, so entirely beyond scientific control. Nine-tenths of it is delusion.'

'The other tenth suffices. Edward, a woman is coming here; she is coming soon: she will bring us misfortune!'

'My dear girl——'

'Well, this is prophecy. There is nothing more difficult to prove than prophecy. I take my chance. She has come over sea. I have seen her repeatedly, standing on deck. I have seen her in my trance only, never else, never in my dreams. I never see anything in my night-dreams. She wears an Indian shawl, of many colours, a Cashmere shawl, and a green bonnet. I have never seen her face. I have tried again and again, but she will not let me see her face.'

'Laura, if you give way like this, I shall take you to Charcot.'

She clung to him. 'She is coming nearer and nearer. She is no longer on the boat. And a horrible man is with her. His face I can see quite plain.'

'Perhaps Uncle Frank will bring her,' said Edward, trying to joke. 'I have just heard from him that the Government has stopped him at Suez and ordered him to come back for further instructions. Just like the Government.'

'My man is not a bit like Uncle Frank.'

'But Uncle Frank may have sailed with your lady.'

'Edward,' she said very gravely, 'who warned your father not to go skating?'

'That was a fluke,' he answered quickly, 'a very explainable fluke.'

'Who told you what James Graye felt?'

'Oh, that was direct communication—a recognised and scientifically controllable phenomenon.'

'What long words you use! And yet only to-night my planchette yonder——' she stopped dead.

'Surely, Laura, it is easily demonstrable that the pencil only writes your own thoughts.'

'Sometimes I wonder,' said Laura, musing, 'that you ever devoted yourself to the study of the mind at all.'

'I have you to thank for that, Laura, and I thank you every day of my life. We are groping forward to magnificent discoveries in mysteries of which the earliest Egyptians, to our lasting humiliation, seem to have known much more than we.'

'And meanwhile you deny the possibility of telepathic perception?'

'I do not say that, dear. I cannot say that. Only——'

'And my Chinaman?'

'Well—I wasn't there,' said Dr. Lisse.

CHAPTER XXXIII

NEXT morning Thomasine and Edward accompanied Maria and her Italians to the station. The party was to separate at Cologne.

'I have given up my idea of lunatics at Rowangowan,' said Miss MacClachlin to Thomasine. 'Although, really, you know, I am in danger of thinking'—she cast a sly glance in the direction of Edward—'that I was born to be a mad-doctor. But we don't want any mad people about there. We want you and your husband to come and live at Invergraye. There is a lot of work to be done there, and we want you to do it.'

'What sort of work?' asked Thomasine.

'You will see fast enough when you get there.'

'But the estate is not Kenneth's. As you were saying last night, he has no money.'

'Humph!' replied Maria. 'You mustn't remember all the things I say. Well no, he hasn't. That's the bother. And he piles up James's in the bank. I asked him once, "You can be just, out of another man's purse," he says, "and you may even be generous. But not charitable." I suppose he's right. Of course he's right. Well, I *may* be charitable. If you call it charitable to give away what you don't want. Rowangowan is on the sea-coast, you know, nine miles from Invergraye. I'm going to turn the big empty house into a Ladies' Convalescent Home, —that's nothing, but I want to build Rest-Houses for sick operatives round the corner of the bay. I can't do that without male assistance; you must make your husband come and help me. Oh, and a "country-change" for horses; I've set my heart on that, and I'm going to call it "The Country Change"; don't you think that's a nice, quaint name?'

'Very,' said Thomasine.

'But I can't give up my booshays and my muttons. I thought I should be glad to, for it's uphill work, hut I find I should miss them dreadfully. I can divide my time between Paris and Aberdeenshire; I like travelling—it was a—pleasure to go to Bergamo; it was really, believe me! But you and your husband *must* absolutely settle up yonder, or the whole plan can't come off.'

Thomasine looked away. She could not damp the brisk Scotchwoman's triumphant ardour by stating the truth.

'He'll come all right now; you see if he doesn't,' said Maria, as if reading her thoughts. 'Dear me, that old woman will *certainly* get *écrasée* before she reaches her native hills. And what he ought really to take up is work among hoys. I've always said so. Among rough boys. Did you ever see him with James, when James was in a bad temper?'

'Yes,' said Thomasine.

'Well—no wonder you fell in love with him. I say so, and I'm old enough to be his mother. At least, if we'd lived in the East. Well no, not quite. In fact, I'm not ten years older than he is. But that's neither here nor there. You're younger. Oh, is that the train coming in? Well, good-bye, Thomasine, and, if anything were ever to happen to James—there, now I've said it—what my friend ought to start is an Agricultural Colony at Invergraye—there's plenty of land he doesn't want—for Vagahond and Destitute Boys. Come, Hortense: in another twenty-four hours you shall see your dear Paris again.'

'*Peut-on vivre ailleurs?*' said the Frenchwoman. '*On existe.*'

'Don't talk French to me,' cried Maria, laughing. 'I pay you for your broken English.'

'And my argot,' replied Hortense. 'Ah, Paris! *Pour le reste! Chouette!*'

The train, with its unusual load, steamed away. At the last moment a little confusion was occasioned by the curé's enormous coat of a hat falling off his head from the

window, but Edward sent it spinning forward, like a Japanese kite, and it easily caught up, and was caught by, the occupants of the next carriage.

'Nothing will happen to James,' said Thomasine to herself, as she drove back by her brother's side. God forbid it should, in Miss MacClachlan's sense of the word. The boy's health had improved rapidly. A little ungainly in his movements, he was yet able now to move about with ease. He even played a sort of unscientific football with Edward; he was not equal to the greater intricacies of cricket. His favourite pastime, however, was rowing, but, since the affair of the coachman's child, he would allow no one into his boat, nor would he even approach the water-side with a companion. 'I might want to throw them in again,' he said. He had a horror of his uncomprehended, unremembered wrong-doing. And Edward naturally disliked his being much alone, a lad with that epileptical tendency towards unreasoned crime. 'I don't mind, if you do throw me in, Sir James,' said Barton, 'I can swim like a fish.' This was not strictly correct, for fishes are born swimming, and you don't learn to do as well as they, when you go secretly and take second-rate lessons, after forty—still, Barton could doubtless have floundered out of a Dutch canal. He followed his charge over long miles of meadow and forest, and helped to carry home baskets of 'the most outlandish weeds.' 'You may say what you like about wildflowers,' declares Barton, 'but I say: they stink. Give me a blooming—I'm sure I beg your pardon, madam—rose.'

James agreed with Barton about roses. But he would have thought it stupid of the man—had he not known, that he, James, was stupider than anybody—to summarise all uncultivated nature as 'a tree,' 'a flower,' and 'a bird.' 'But, Barton, it isn't a chaffinch; it's a bullfinch—hark!' 'I didn't say it was a chaffinch, Sir James; I said as it was a bird.' James, wondering, crept away amongst his roses. Yes, certainly; they were his favourites also. He had a garden of them for himself at Bardwyk, with trellis-work at the end, and an arbour, and even a little hot-

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house that Edward had given him on his birthday. He knew the names of any number. Once mentioned, he seemed never to forget them. There were hundreds, but he could never be taught to count those on one tree. He said: 'One and one and one,' like other naturals, in South Sea Islands. Nor could he ever be made to grasp the significance of money, or of buying anything. Ever since his first experience with the tran.p, he paid in roses, when he had them, one for a golden sovereign, perhaps, and fifty for a kindness, like a child keeping shop. Of any effort, other than out-door, he soon wearied, but, excepting the muscular strength of his arms, his physical health was not robust. His chest was peaked; the heart and lungs had developed badly; these things, of course, nature could no longer alter. Edward got the boy a turning-lathe for bad weather, and Laura read to him. He rarely listened, incapable of grasping the written presentment of anything. 'Oh, a butterfly!' he would cry suddenly, in the middle of the story of the *Children in the Tower*—or even of the *Babes in the Wood*.

'He is better and stronger than ever, I think,' said Thomasine, driving through the flat meadow-land with her brother.

'Who is?' asked Edward, for he thought she must be speaking of her husband, and wondered somewhat.

'James.'

'Oh yes, James is. In fact, he is quite my success. I wasn't so fortunate,' he smiled—'with Kenneth.'

'You couldn't help that. Besides, your information from Bergamo bore out all that Kenneth said.'

'Miss MacClachlin would say I should have verified my evidence. And that could only have been done by going to the country. But, as a matter of fact, I should never have adopted her method at all. I admit that. It is an entirely new departure in treatment to reason with any one labouring under a "fixed idea," and to prove to him, by ocular demonstration, that his facts are wrong. I entirely agree with Miss MacClachlin that her only chance of success lay in the ocular demonstration. Even then it was the merest chance. But I am ungenerous to

say that, now it has succeeded. I admit that the experiment is marvellously interesting to me; it opens up an entirely new field of possibilities. But they are only possibilities, without any scientific basis. However, all treatment of the mentally deranged has been empiric guesswork up till now. We are on the threshold of a new era. Now Kenneth's case is a purely mental, you might almost say moral, one. There isn't any organic disorder—thank Heaven—hardly even functional, in the stricter sense. You know these things as well as I do, Thomasine; haven't you studied them with me?'

'They look so different,' she murmured, 'in those we love.' She gazed out at the placid cattle, languidly munching their food.

'You can't take Kenneth's as a strictly pathological case. But in all the gradations to which his belongs Charcot's is the new—how shall I say?—gospel. But it is a scientific gospel. Charcot, and Bernheim and Krafft-Ebing are going to found, in our century, a new school, a first school for the treatment of functional cerebral disorder. Of course my father is right that, where there is actual disease, it is doubtless a question of microbes, but of that as yet we know absolutely nothing, the whole microbe business being barely begun.'

'You talk as if you had done nothing,' said Thomasine.

'Oh, my work has been chiefly surgical. And I too am only just beginning. Yes, Tommie, they *must* come round to me in time, and then'—his cheek glowed—'there will be no more idiocy.'

'You mean that if James Graye had been operated on in infancy——'

'We should have brought him on a great deal farther than we can ever bring him now.'

'And yet you have brought him so far! But there will always be *dementia senilis*.'

'There will always be *dementia senilis*, and there will always be death. Yet I don't know—about the *dementia*—when our father's theory of the Semicolon comes true. It is far more scientifically plausible than Brown-Sequard's elixir, yet Brown-Sequard's elixir is receiving, at this

moment, the sympathetic attention of the whole medical world.'

'The dear father!' said Thomasine. 'The Semicolon the great life-principle, the destroyer of all the destructive bacteria that make for deterioration and old age. Why, if only it could be introduced properly into the system, nobody would die!'

'We haven't got as far as that yet,' replied Edward. 'And, besides, we should always kill each other.'

'Oh, why doesn't father publish the whole thing at once!'

'Because he must first kill a human being to prove it.'

'I know, I know. At least, I mean, I have always half known, half understood. But there must be some other way.'

'There is no other way. And father knows that, whatever he may try to make himself believe. The whole theory is valueless, until the serum has been tried on a human being, and that human being—the strength not yet having been properly tested—would almost certainly die.'

'Almost certainly?'

'I think one might say "certainly."'

'I wonder,' said Thomasine, in an awe-struck whisper, 'he has never tried it upon himself. I suppose he couldn't. Thank God!'

Edward faltered a moment. 'No, he couldn't,' he said. 'Why, there the dear old fellow is! And mother also! They must have come to have a look at the Italians!'

The Baron and the Baroness stood on the house-steps. 'We have come to find out, ourselves, about Kenneth,' said the Baron. 'And where,' asked the Baroness, 'is the dear old Italian curé?'

Thomasine, as she went up to her husband, said to herself, between her set teeth: 'If this stranger woman did all that to help him, shall I not do the rest? God helping me, I will.'

CHAPTER XXXIV

'I AM sorry I had no opportunity for meeting and thanking the lady,' said the ever-courteous Baron. No one enlightened him, but all wondered what would have happened, had Maria MacClachlin found herself face to face with the greatest 'physiologist' of the century—after Pasteur. As it was, she left a quantity of leaflets scattered about the house, in odd places. The Professor found several on his bedroom table and in the soiled-linen basket—*The Cry of the Cow*, and the far more pathetic *Appeal of the Rabbit from Man to Man's God.* After reading the latter, the Professor stood for a long time with one lean finger to his nose. 'Yes,' he said at last, 'yes, my dear, yes. I suppose we must all appeal from each other's cruelty to the Judge who—who made life so.' But the Baroness sat lamenting that she had missed all those interesting types of her new faith. 'I feel drawn to them on that account,' she said, 'I can't tell why. The dear, pious, innocent souls!' She was greatly grieved to hear that Antoine, being a Catholic, was going to marry a Protestant. 'It was very, very wrong of him,' she said, and she eagerly set about converting the Chantilly widow. Antoine was an avowed Atheist, the Sindaco a Free-thinker, the Notary a Voltairean. The widow wrote to Antoine whether he would like her to change, but she begged him to 'consider her feelings.' He replied, in his objectionable manner, that her feelings might be 'blowed' and her religion as well. It is difficult to see how it could be done. And he asked, what *la vieille*, meaning Maria, had said, before she left, about the hotel. The widow promptly returned the little books (about the immorality of Luther and the seven lean kine which prove there are

seven sacraments, not two, etc.) to the Baroness: that was quite right of her, but she need not have returned them with a jerk. '*Toujours église d'Angleterre,*' she said. The Baroness sighed heavily: she had no idea what the wicked words meant.

The old lady therefore now concentrated her ministrations on Kenneth, 'who needed them,' she said, which was true. The Professor turned to Sir James. Invariably considerate, especially to women, Kenneth would listen for long hours without replying much. He went his own way, as a rule, getting out of everybody else's, his eyes downcast or uplifted with an inward look. Constantly he would do a kindness, endeavour to make himself pleasant, to tear himself loose from his reflections, but soon he would sink back with a sigh. It was manifest that the blackness of his thoughts shut out from him the light of the world around him. The weight of his own soul was bearing him down. 'You are too good to me,' he burst out once, to his all-tender spouse, 'I can't bear your goodness,' and he sunk his face on his hands. At such moments she could do nothing but leave him. Sleeplessness came upon him, that most horrible of all the Erinyes. She heard him standing by the window, in the middle of the night. 'Innocent blood is on my hands,' he was saying, 'I can see it in the dark.' She called him gently. 'Go to sleep, dear,' he said; 'I'm not mad, only guilty. Go to sleep.'

Once he asked her suddenly, as they were playing chess: 'This man—do you think he had a wife and children? Oh, what does it matter? If it were not for the wrong I did him, his soul would be alive to-day.' Yet he won the game. Perhaps because he played so well (as he did) or because Thomasine played badly (as well she might). She must set herself to get at the whole truth about this Abrahams, without betraying her husband to the others. It would not be an easy task: she had no idea how to begin. He painfully guarded his secret: since his partial recovery he never even alluded to the vague self-accusation which had constantly been on his lips at first. Only to Thomasine

he spoke of it. 'For your sake,' he said, 'no one must ever know. I conjure you, do not say a word of it to your brother. Let him think, let them all think, it was mere mad talk. Thank God, you say I never mentioned a name.' Whenever he saw Edward he would laugh and joke. And that, perhaps, was saddest of all. 'I can't make him out,' said Edward frankly. 'His mind no longer seems deranged, and yet you might call him melancholy-mad. He is manifestly a case for suggestive treatment. I entreat you once more to let me try that, Thomasine!' 'Oh no, no, no,' cried Thomasine. She was so agitated that her brother desisted—till next time.

When the Baroness heard of suggestive treatment, she now crossed herself. Father Winx, with whom she held long conferences, commended her idea of getting Kenneth to wear a charm. 'His long fits of depression,' said the Baroness, 'are really too terrible to see.' Her heart yearned over her afflicted son-in-law. Always more interested in men's minds than in women's, she could not rest till he first of all (for she despaired of Edward) should be as happy as she was. 'Oh, I am so happy now, so happy,' she would repeat to her husband. 'My whole heart and soul were always Catholic. If I had been a man, I should have loved to be Pope!' And I, then, my dear?' queried the poor Professor. 'Well, I shall never be a man,' said the lady shortly.

She did a very beautiful thing. For with intense self-sacrifice, she loosened her own especial relic from her husband's neck (her relic, on which she counted for their 'dying together,' her supreme earthly desire). 'Dearest,' she said tenderly, 'he has more need of it than you! Shall we part from it, dearest, for his sake?' The Professor kissed her upon the forehead. So the little sixpenny Virgin was sewn into Kenneth's coat. His clothes were made on a different plan from the Professor's. He discovered it that same day. An arrangement was made whereby it could be secreted, without falsifying the line.

'It will keep you, at any rate: it will preserve you

from evil spirits,' said the Baroness. Laura looked up from James's herbarium: he needed her neat fingers for that work. But she said nothing, though she knew the 'evil spirits' were her own revered 'cosmic energies.' Laura had learnt much wisdom, and much tolerance, since those first days with the Baroness at Leyden. 'My daughter-in-law is a Buddhist,' confessed the Baroness, with tears, to Pastor Winx. 'A Buddhist,' said the good father, 'dear me, that is very dreadful. They are the people—are they not?—who worship a Cow?'

While Laura was steadying her fingers for the herbarium, the Professor came into the room. 'Uncle Francis writes,' he said, 'from Genoa, that he will be with us in a couple of days.' The Baroness no longer talked of 'Imphi-Boshek,' for her confessor had told her it was uncharitable. But he remained in the poem, where he ended his days as a pre-Christian anchorite. Through the final canto his every utterance began: 'In the days when I was a fool—in my own wisdom.' 'He adds,' continued the Professor, 'I am bringing with me a surprise for Laura. Something very strange is going to happen to Laura very soon.'

'Nothing else? Nothing more than that?' exclaimed the Baroness. 'Oh, how like—Mary! Joseph! Laura has fainted!'

'No,' said Laura, righting herself. 'What made you think so?' But she had dropped a great splash of gum over the delicate tissue-paper. Sir James gave a cry of rage. 'It is nothing, James, nothing: I will put it right.' But James, who was accustomed to find Mammie Laura only 'angel,' started up, muttering angry gibberish, and ran away into the woods. 'I am sorry I startled you so: of course it is only my brother's fun,' said the scared Professor. 'Of course, only his fun,' echoed Laura, agitatedly occupied with the herbarium, and only making matters much worse.' Kenneth lifted his eyes. 'What a jolly thing is fun!' he said. 'You can't have too much of it.' 'My brother is always full of life,' said the Professor. 'I'm very glad he's coming,' said Graye.

But when the Colonel arrived, he proved very far from

lively. 'I am a soldier, not a sailor,' he complained, 'by no means. And it's cruelly hard to fetch a man back, who's just got as far as Suez. And why? All a question of buttons. How many buttons should go to a sergeant-major? Pooh!'

'Yes, that's how they waste the nation's money,' said somebody.

'How they waste!—how they waste the nation's energies!' cried the Colonel. 'The nation's money is nothing, sir: 'tis the nation's flesh and bones, like me.' But immediately his face lighted up again. 'Flesh for freaks,' he said, 'and bones for buttons! Well, it can't be helped. I see this morning's paper declares that other countries also, thank Heaven!—England for instance—are going to the dogs.'

'I am sorry to hear it,' said the Professor.

'Then you are wrong, Thomas, but you were always wrong about politics. When you were in Parliament, I never could agree with a word you said.'

'I was much in the same position,' replied the Professor mildly, 'except when I talked about hygiene, and everybody walked out.'

'Come with me, Uncle Francis. I want to speak to you,' said Laura at the Colonel's elbow, in an agitated voice. He followed her. 'What is this going to happen to me?' she said, turning to him. 'Who is coming?'

He closed his eyes and pursed up his grinning lips. 'My dear Laura, how curious you ladies are!'

'Answer me, please! Who is coming?'

He opened one eye and winked. 'I do not think I mentioned any one coming. How astute of you! What made you guess?'

'Answer me. Tell me. It is no joke to me.'

'No joke, certainly. But a very delightful and pleasing surprise.'

She clenched her hands. 'What surprise?'

He laughed. 'A surprise loses rather by being told about, doesn't it? O Laura, Laura! "When wicked, wily woman wants——"'

She came close to him. 'You have no nerves,' she said.

'No, indeed! I, a King's soldier! "Stern, stubborn, strong as stone they stand——"'

'Oh, my God!' said Laura.

He started. 'My dear Laura, what vehemence! I have passed my word. A few moments' patience, I beg of you. It is only an agreeable little joke.'

'Agreeable!'

'If I hadn't passed my word not to betray her'—he continued distressed—'you know how I hate refusing anybody anything. And especially you, my dear,'—he pulled out his watch—'she ought to have been here by this time. She allowed me an hour's start from the station.'

'She! she!' repeated Laura passionately. There was a loud peal at the front door. 'Ah!' Laura blanched to the lips. Loud voices were heard in the passage, a sort of scuffle ensued: the door of the room was flung violently open. A shrill whistle rang into the room. 'She is here: I saw her through the window!' cried the whistler, in tones that were almost a shriek. A big woman stood on the threshold, with a mountain of fair hair, grizzled and frizzled, and voluminous arms outstretched. She had a wild and roving eye. 'If I'm not to have free entrance to my own child!' shouted the apparition, 'then I should like to know what I came to—— Go away, Colonel Lisse!' 'Certainly,' replied Francis, 'if you will let me——' He circled apologetically round the big figure.

'So this is—Lord a mercy, the child is ill!'

Laura had stepped back: she was leaning against a cabinet, her great eyes staring, staring, not so much at the woman, as at the woman's bonnet and shawl.

'Hold up!' said the visitor. Well, I admit, it is a bit sudden. But it's all right, Laura. I'm your mother, come all the way from—where was I last?—to say, and see, how d'ye do. Whoop!' Again that shrill whistle.

The Colonel had slipped out: Laura spoke not a word. 'Come here, child,' exclaimed the new arrival, whose every tone was a cry, 'let's sit down on this sofa together. Now the man's gone, you can give way to your feelings—there!' She drew her shrinking companion down beside

her and enveloped her in the folds of the big shawl. 'There! You might kiss me a little more energetically—in fact, that's putting it very mildly, for you haven't kissed me at all.'

'It is so sudden,' said Laura dully, 'and I don't understand.'

'Of course not. That's half the joke.'

'But my mother had been dead for years.'

'That's the other half! And you never believed it, minx! Look me in the face and say if you ever believed it!'

'My father did,' said Laura markedly.

But the other was in no way abashed. 'I intended him to,' she replied coolly. 'It cost money and pains enough to get the thing done, even in Texas. Well, he could forget me, if he liked, and marry again. Whoop!'

'He did not,' said Laura.

'I know he didn't. Had enough, I suppose,' she laughed. 'Well, I did my best for him. I haven't married again. And the only man I ever loved is dead.'

Laura did not ask who that man was.

'I am going to marry now, however, but we haven't come to that yet. Well, Laura, you might give me another kiss, or a hug, or something. What do daughters usually give to mothers who come back from the grave?'

'I don't know,' said Laura lamely.

'Unnatural child! Well, I've been to, and come back from, a good many places, since I last saw you, *that high!* but they were all above the ground. And I was last coming back from India, to—to have a talk with you, when, by one of those coincidences that always occur, I met your uncle Francis Lisse on the boat.'

'You have not come here,' asked Laura faintly, 'to tell me that you are going to marry Colonel Lisse?'

The visitor laughed like a steam whistle. 'No, indeed! He is far too grand for me. And how he would bore me with his Pee—Po—Pots!'

To this Laura made no answer.

'But he told me about you on the boat, a little. He's not communicative to strangers, is your uncle. Talks a

lot, but little to the point. About the country going to the dogs, and things no rational creature can care about. However, you've made a great match: I knew that. 'A Baroness you are—eh? By Gosh!'

'No, I am not a Baroness,' replied Laura pettishly.

'Huh?'

'My husband's father is a Baron.'

'Well, that doesn't look like sense. However, it's all one to me. I shall be grand enough in my own way, soon.'

To this statement again Laura could find no fitting answer.

Mrs. Baleyne had risen and was parading, with shawl outstretched, about the room. At times she emitted shrill whistles, and curtsied to the air.

'You're a fine lady, at any rate,' she said, 'and a rich one. And you'll be pleased to see me blossoming out as a ditto. No more Sumatra for you and me, Laura. And so, as we may as well talk business at once, before your relations come in, how about that money?'

'The—the money,' faltered Laura.

'Yes. You're a fine-looking girl, Laura, and I'm proud of you, but you're not over-affectionate to your mother that's yearning over you with all a mother's heart. You—you might say something nice about me, Laura: I've worn well for forty-five. And such a full life as I've had too—plenty of movement. And you might get up some show of interest in the man who's going to be your step-papa.'

'Who is it?' murmured Laura, her eyes full of the face she had seen so ceaselessly of late.

'His name is Bitterbol. He isn't a fine gentleman—a little fresh and breezy, but he's got it in him. And he's going to make me as rich as Van Houten's cocoa. I promised him I'd speak to you about the money at once. Have you got it anywhere handy—ha!'

'The money is spent,' said Laura. The whistle the new comer emitted was louder than any that had gone before.

'You tell him that when he comes here presently,' she

said. And then suddenly, to Laura's horror, the great flaring creature seemed to double up and dwindle, like a collapsible tent, and settle down into a little bundle that disappeared behind a big chintz sofa. Over the tall back a scared face looked out. 'You tell him that when he comes!' said a squeaky voice. 'Whoop!'

'He isn't coming here!' cried Laura.

'Coming here? Of course he's coming here. To get acquainted with the family. He's waiting in the gardens till I call.'

'Go to him,' exclaimed Laura in the greatest agitation. 'Say it's spent!'

The head dived behind the sofa. 'Whoop!' it said from somewhere underneath. 'Not I! You must manage that, my dear. Why, he's counting on the money to make me richer than Gracious!'—'Cresus' was what the lady meant. 'You had no business to spend it,' she piped, still hiding. 'It was my money. You must get it back.'

'I can't get it back. I bought this house with most of it. It was mine to do what I liked with, when you died.'

The big face rose solemnly over the bar of flowered chintz and stayed there. 'You are not, then, one of us?' said the lips—low, comparatively.

'Wha—what do you mean?' asked the trembling Laura.

'You know what I mean. *You* didn't believe I was dead, though I wished your father to. I knew *you* needn't, unless you chose. *You* could find out, if you desired to know the truth. Your father laughed at all I held most sacred: that was one of the reasons why I couldn't endure to remain with him. But *you*, and your sister that's dead, I made you of us from your babyhood. *You* were initiated. You could speak to me and with me, wherever I was—eh?'

'Wh—what do you mean?' repeated Laura, lying staring, half swooning on her couch.

'You know what I mean'—the odd, big face grew portentously solemn: the eyes rolled wildly. 'Could you hear me speaking to you—say—or could you not?'

'Yes,' gasped Laura. 'I could hear you speaking. And the things you said were always good and kind. And you told me I might use the money for my own happiness.'

'Those were lying voices!' The big woman rose and leant across the sofa-back, with outstretched arm. 'And you might have learnt, at any time, that they were lying! Where's your ring?'

Laura steadied herself on her couch. 'I have no ring,' she said.

'Your ring! Child of evil, in the name of the Ineffable, your ring!'

'I have only this,' said Laura, and her fingers closed on Edward's plain gold circlet.

'Pshaw! When I left the house'—the woman behind the sofa spoke as if such an action were not unusual—'I placed upon your childish finger, as you lay asleep, a ring, and I whispered in your ear in sacred words the dead must hear, that you speak to me, when in doubt of lying voices, with that ring upon the finger next the pen.'

'I know nothing of this,' stammered Laura. 'Often I have hesitated, have doubted, have wanted to get nearer you. And for many months you have not replied to me at all.'

'You have been led astray,' said her mother solemnly, 'by lying voices. It is your father's doing. He must have drawn the ring from your finger. Probably he threw it away. It was like him, the——'

'Madam,' cried Laura, springing to her feet, 'my father——'

'The child of earth. He was that. And I could not live with him. There is no worse term of reproach from a spirit-soul. I am a spirit-soul, as you might have been, but for your father! But you couldn't get away, all the same, from the mystic words I spoke in your ear. Without the ring they have led you wrong! Oh, terrible powers of the Unseen! Your father has turned my blessing into a curse!'

'Do not—do not speak like this!' cried Laura. She hid her face in her hands.

'See here!'—the woman tore off her glove—'the Mahatma's ring! And you had its complement. The hollest thing, perhaps, in all the Indies! Do not question how I came by it. Together they annulled time and space! And now where is the money? Where?'

'Is Mr. Bitter—a spirit-soul?' asked Laura timidly.

At the mention of this gentleman his future bride collapsed.

'He is nearer Theosophy than any other religion,' she said, 'and that is a great thing nowadays.'

'But what does he want all the money for?' pleaded Laura.

'He shall tell you himself, for by the great god Buddh—whoop!—here he is!'

And, indeed, Mr. Bitterbol entered as they were speaking, with Thomasine.

'I met this gentleman in the garden,' said the latter. 'He was coming to see you.'

'Make us known!' proclaimed the lady behind the sofa, cautiously peering round it, and then, more cautiously, coming out.

'Oh, you can't have the money!' cried Laura, letting everything go, in her horror and alarm.

Mr. Bitterbol, as we know, was a bluff, sailor-like man, but his face could wear very commercial expressions.

'You're abrupt, ma'am,' he said. 'I like abruptness. Let me be abrupt too. Can't have the money? We must.'

Thomasine looked doubtfully from one to the other. 'Better stay,' remarked Laura's mother, sitting down, on an absurdly low stool, at the farther end of the room.

'Yes, by all means, let the lady stay,' assented Mr. Bitterbol. 'I've a bone to pick with this family, I have. A year ago, my fortune was as good as made, when the old gentleman here cuts up crusty, and "No, I won't," says he. It wouldn't have cost him more than a dozen lines of writing, and we'd all have been a-walling in wealth to-day. I come to Leyden a-purpose. "No, I won't," says he. Not that it really *would* have come off, at the moment, for the man that was to supply the needy, he

draws back a couple of weeks later, and says he can't. But the old Professor didn't know nought of that. And now we start afresh with the money, and we're going to have it this time, you bet.'

'I have used it,' says Laura, in a toneless voice.

'Used it, have you, young lady? Well, you'll have to find it again. For it wasn't yours to use, but that lady's—my intended's!' A smothered exclamation from Thomasine.

'And you're not dead, like t'other one. I shouldn't have let him off, for I had his engagement, but there, he was dead, killed himself, and his affairs gone smash, so there was no more to be said. 'Where there's nothing, the king loses his rights,' says the proverb. So you'll have to kill yourself or find the money, my fine lady, and even the killing'll be no good unless you die insolvent!'

'Hendricus!' gasped Mevrouw Baleyne.

'You're a mother, dear. You let me manage this business. We want the money within a couple of days at this address'—he pl. down a scrap of paper on the nearest table—'our banker's. We're in a hurry. You say it, my dear!'

'Yes, yes,' acquiesced Laura's mother hastily, 'I've been saying it all the time.'

'Excuse me,' put in Thomasine, 'there is one thing I do not understand. You say my father refused to help you in some plan—'

'Cocos——' began Bitterbol, but he suddenly checked himself, in a cough. 'We'll work it without him,' he said. 'We've got another man, nearly as good.'

'But the plan wouldn't have succeeded anyhow, for the man who was to supply the money, said he couldn't, and the man had committed suicide?'

Mr. Bitterbol laughed. 'You're a sharp'un!' he said. 'Not that I see what it matters to you. But the Jew that was to provide the money, whom I never saw, went bankrupt and killed himself, so the go-between, my banker there—a nod at the table—said: here the matter ends—d'ye twig, mum? Dang it!'—a sudden burst of his bluff, sailor manner—'What's that to you?'

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If you think I'm lying, you can go and ask him, and welcome. And this noble family here, if report speaks true, was mixed up with the old Jew's bankruptcy and suicide!

By this time he was very hot and angry. He marched to the door. 'Come away, my love,' he said. 'In a couple of days, if you please, we shall hear from this lady, or her husband, at our banker's!'

Mevrouw Baleyne stood still in front of her daughter. 'O Laura!' she said, with the attitude and a tone of a priestess. 'Laura! Laura! It all comes of the loss of the Mahatma ring!'

When they were gone, Laura fell into Thomasine's arms. 'It means ruin,' she cried wildly. 'I knew it was coming! O Thomasine, the horrible face!'

CHAPTER XXXV

EDWARD, unfortunately, was away from home for a couple of days, attending a 'psychiatric' congress in Amsterdam. The two women, therefore, had, for the moment, no male help to appeal to; on Edward, the quiet student, engrossed in his theories, depended, not at critical stages only, the whole daily life of the disconnected family. He was the ring, seemingly unmoved in itself, through which all the fluttering strings were drawn. Even Eliza said far more frequently than she imagined, that she really must ask this or that of the 'Jonker,' which title of his unmarried youth she still unreasonably bestowed on Dr. Lisse. Not that his universal responsibility called for extravagant pity. He had always enjoyed, more than the average of his scientific colleagues would have done, the cares and pleasures of gardening, building, even farming—in one word, the sort of work that is inseparable from the management of an estate. And he knew every stick and stone of his beloved Bardwyk. But the bearing of everybody else's burdens may become too much at moments for a too gentle-hearted man.

His ideal had long been—we all have our tastes—to see the old home filled with gentle 'crazies.' 'My son, if I ever have one, can turn them out again,' he said, laughing. Laura buried her face on his shoulder. 'You will have one,' she whispered. He drew her head up to his and looked into her eyes.

But Laura's thoughts, for the moment, when left alone with her sister-in-law, were not of prospective offspring but of a suddenly very actual parent. Her grief, her nervous discomfiture, seemed to sweep her to the ground. 'My mother!' she reiterated. 'O Thomasine, my

mother! My mother!—in the tone lay all the disappointment, the disillusion, the new pain. What could others assert, or suggest? The hard fact was there, to be faced. The shattered image lay prone. 'Ah, how are we to distinguish,' exclaimed Laura, 'between good spirits and evil?' She turned a pair of haggard eyes to her sister. Then only Thomasine allowed herself, hesitatingly, to 'preach.' 'By prayer,' she said.

The next morning Thomasine departed for Leyden. The Baroness was engrossed with Kenneth, more amiably enduring and melancholy than ever, but revolving a great scheme for teaching James to ride. James, unaware of that scheme as yet, very angry still with Laura, had turned more and more to the kindly old Professor who knew many of the flowers which Laura had to look out. Thomasine, then, went off for the day to Leyden: nothing could be done, in any case, about the money, until Edward returned that night.

It was to the address of 'our bankers' that Thomasine betook herself. Here, at last, afforded by some sort of 'chance'—but Thomasine would never have admitted that—was a faint clue, a possible starting-point, the name of a 'go-between,' who had been mixed up in the now defunct 'business' of Mr. Abrahams. Feeble as the indication seemed, she clutched at it. Up till now she had nowhere seen an opening: inquiry or advertisement would have courted discovery at once.

The office of 'our bankers' was an unexpectedly imposing one, in a main thoroughfare. Thomasine had constantly passed it without noticing the house or the name. Banks were not much in her way. Nor business, generally. Of course she could see one of the gentlemen. 'Mrs. Graye?' An English name—there are many, especially Scotch—in Holland. She was seized with a sudden alarm, that the man of business might know her. But no: that was hardly likely: she had never heard of him. There were numberless banks in the town: they are the only trade that seems unchecked by competition.

The head of the firm—for he it was—looked up as she entered. No, she had never seen him before, and it was

evident that he did not recognise her. He was still quite a young man, almost bald, with a little fair moustache and a winning manner. A good thing, in his profession, that last. 'In what can we be of service to you, madam?' he said suavely, leaning back in his desk-chair. And there Thomasine's difficulty began. Not that she had not concocted her little plan, through her long night of watching and hope. But the plan wasn't a good one: it couldn't be. And the best little plans often crumble, in the naked light of a 'What do you want?'

'I understand,' said Thomasine, 'that you were concerned in the business of the late Mr. Arthur Abrahams of this town.' That sentence came, as it stands, out of the plan.

'Your information is hardly correct,' sweetly replied the bald young man: and there the plan faded out of sight.

Thomasine looked so sad, so utterly disconcerted, and innocent and charming, that the bald young man took pity on her, a thing he by no means felt inclined to do. 'We have transacted business with and for Mr. Abrahams,' he said.

'Then you could know about his business—you could give information about it.'

'That, madam, we could certainly not.'

'Legitimate information, I mean, of course,' said Thomasine precisely. A bit of the plan again picked up here.

'For that,' said the young man adroitly, 'I should refer you to his confidential clerk.'

Thomasine's heart leaped, as a skiff in sight of the haven. 'He had a confidential clerk?'

The banker smiled at her outcry. 'We often have,' he said. He rang and spoke briskly through a speaking-tube: the address was brought.

'It is an odd part of the town,' said the bald young man.

'I shall find it,' answered Thomasine, rising. 'Might I ask: had this Mr. Abrahams a large business?'

'Very large.'

'As—as large as this?'

'Larger. But different, in many ways.' The bald young man smiled again, as he showed her to the door.

A queer part of the town it was indeed. Down a long and narrow, dead-asleep canal, with grass among the cobble-stones and tall gables nodding forwards to catch a glimpse of themselves in the stagnant, weed-grown water. A hand-cart came rattling along with a whistling boy: it made the silence all the more apparent, as its clatter died away round a corner, to the busy streets. A woman in a linen jacket stood looking over a half-door, another, in a cap, scrubbing down by the dirty water, called up to her 'Missions!' whereby she signified 'district-visiting,' in direct reference to Thomasine.

The latter held on her way and turned into a little slop—it was no better—an alley with a post in the middle of its entrance, a passage so narrow you could easily touch the houses on both sides as you passed along. Here, close to the canal end, hung a slanting glass door, at the top of three much-worn stone steps, with an inhabited cellar underneath them, and on the jamb of the door was a large 7, her number. Number seven Paradise Walk. The inhabited cellar, which sold 'Fire and Water,' *i.e.* not strong drinks but boiling water and firing, turned out to look at her. She opened the slanting door, and a little bell made a great deal of noise.

For the little bell protected valuable property, margarine, mouldy cheeses, and preserved Italian eggs. A fat slovenly woman came out at once to look after them. 'Oh, no customer!' said the fat woman's dirty face. Her thick lips said: 'And what may you be pleased to want?'

'Mr. Lucas Peper?' answered Thomasine.

'Right up at the top as high as you can go, and mind the hole in the middle.' Thomasine undertook the ascent up a much-worn perpendicular ladder with a rope at the side. She was not much perplexed, for she had found time, amidst her studies with Edward and her copyings of *Balaam*, for plenty of Sunday School work. The woman looked after her with a sullen grin. For the

lodger expressly forbade all visitors, and moreover had never had any: his landlady was paying him out because he did not buy of her wares.

Thomasine knocked at the only door on the top landing—four stories high, four feet square: you came up as through a trap. She received no answer, but a frightened squeak showed the room had some one in it, so she boldly walked in.

The low, crazy garret—not a line of it straight—seemed more like a damaged box than an apartment. A bare wooden floor and small window, grey paper ceiling and walls. A deal table and chair, a box-bed and a hair-trunk, and, prominent, the sole object to attract notice: an iron safe. It was not large, yet how had they ever got it up there? And how long would the rotting timbers bear the strain?

No, not the only object. On the naked table, in the utter bareness of the room, a big book, closed, a Bible. The sight of it was to Thomasine as the light in the home-window to one who deems himself many miles away.

By the table, on the solitary chair, a white-haired old man was sitting, listless, his hands in his lap. As the door creaked open, he looked up and his expression changed at once from apathy to the acutest alarm. 'Get away!' he cried. 'Who are you? Money? I never give.'

'I have not come for money,' replied Thomasine.

'Religion? I don't want your religion. I've enough of my own. How did you come up? Where's the landlady?'

'She sent me up,' explained Thomasine innocently.

'She must have been drunk again. Go! Go!'

'I believe you can be of service to me without any inconvenience to yourself,' hazarded Thomasine, with a beating heart. She stood by the door. No, she wasn't going.

'I never was of service to any one,' said the old man.

'Then, wouldn't you begin now? It will cost you nothing.' He eyed her and slowly got off his only chair.

'Sit down,' he said, and, indeed, she had need to. The old man stood by the safe.

'You helped Mr. Abrahams in all his business?' began Thomasine nervously.

'I was his clerk,' cried the old man quickly. 'His clerk. His clerk.'

'But you knew about his business.'

'I knew: oh, I couldn't help that. It's dead and done for.' His lean fingers unconsciously clutched a corner of the safe. 'Nobody talks of it now.'

'You won't mind my talking of it for a moment,' persisted Thomasine, very white.

'What's done can't be undone. It's all dead, and buried, and gone.'

'I am Baron Lisse's daughter,' said Thomasine simply. 'You remember the name—Lisse?'

'Yes,' said the old man. 'I remember the name.'

'My father, or rather his brother, Colonel Lisse, had many transactions with your late master.'

'That's the word,' interrupted the old man. 'My master! You've used the right word. He wasn't my employer. He was my master. I couldn't help what he did. It wasn't my work.'

'I repeat I am not come to ask you for money, Mr. Peper. Only for information. We think that in all those transactions we may possibly have wronged Mr. Abrahams. He is dead, and the thought troubles us.'

'What!' asked the old man. 'Say that again.'

'We think we may quite possibly have wronged him. He implied as much. The thought troubles us.'

'Heh!'—Thomasine started back before his shrillness. He had flung himself forwards, his old eyes ablaze.

'You think you might have wronged Arthur Abrahams! The thought troubles you!' He came and sat down on the hair-trunk. 'Tell me. Tell me everything,' he said.

She complied, or, rather, she told him the little she knew, with awkward phrases that his keenly wrinkled brows seemed easily to unravel. As she spoke Thomasine gained courage. 'These eighty thousand florins,' she said, 'which my husband forced him—yes, forced him,

we admit, by absolute brute force—to refund, it appears that he had already paid them. He said so, in the last words he wrote to my husband, before he—died. If this be true—and what man lies in the hour of death?—we have robbed him, and by our robbery ruined him, and driven him to suicide. The thought will not let my husband rest. It has almost deprived him of his reason. We want to get at the whole truth. We *must* get at it. It is that I am here for. If we have taken this money from the dead man—*stolen* it, and killed him—it must be refunded somehow. Had he a wife? Children? Are these starving for want of what we took? No one knows of this thing but my husband and myself—and one relative who only guesses the lesser part! My husband has—has been out of his mind: only quite recently he has been able to tell me. Do you wonder that he—he *must* know.’ She paused a moment, and, choking down her tears: ‘We cannot bring the dead man to life,’ she said, ‘but perhaps we can right, as far as we are able, the wrong that we have done.’

For a moment the old man sat motionless. Then he said: ‘God has sent you here. He is merciful. He is far more merciful to me than anything I had ever hoped.’

‘Let me know the worst,’ said Thomasine. ‘We will refund what we can. But—it is the thought that his death lies at our door!’

‘I will tell you about myself,’ was the old man’s answer. ‘For more than twenty-five years I was Arthur Abrahams’ slave. Call me, if you like, his cashier. That was my title. All his business passed through my hands: there was much of it, but we had few clerks, for it was all done by go-betweens, middlemen. He seldom kept a client in his own hands, unless he got such a—such a good one as Colonel Lisse. “It would be a pity,” I remember his saying to me, “not to—use Colonel Lisse direct.”’ The old man drew a long breath. ‘And even with our big clients, whom we kept, he always pushed me forward: “Be careful,” he’d say to them, “with my cashier. His name’s Peper,¹ and peppery he is, all

¹ Peper, in Dutch = *Pepper*.

pepper. The less you say to him the better. I've known him put on an extra per cent. with a man that had called him Mr. Mustard, and I couldn't make him take it off!" That's the sort of thing he'd say about me, the liar, and the wretches'd be so afraid of me, they wouldn't dare to plead.'

'But why——' asked Thomasine, and stopped.

'Why did I remain with him? Of course he had me well in his power. He'd lent me money I could never repay him, in a little business of my own, and so he sold me up and made me his cashier. I had a wife and child—they're dead—he hadn't. Make yourself easy on that score. He was a much younger man than I: he used me and wore me out,'—his eyes flashed: 'but I've survived him!'

'You know, then, about this money?' pleaded Thomasine.

'I was coming to that. He had paid the money—true enough—but never mind—let me tell you how he repaid it.' He turned to gaze at her. 'I wonder,' he said thoughtfully, 'how I can make a lady like you understand.'

'I will try,' said Thomasine.

'You said: Does a man tell lies in the face of death? Perhaps not, and yet many a murderer has said at the gallows' foot: I am innocent. But my master did not distinguish, as you do, between truth and untruth. And the untruth he died with was a truth of its kind.'

'You must be more explicit,' said Thomasine.

The old man lent over the table. 'He paid,' he said, 'across the counter, as it were, but not in notes, which the Colonel would doubtless have remembered. Not in notes—ah, no: far from it! He paid in shares, at full nominal value, at par, if you understand, shares that were not quoted on 'change, shares in a company that, at the time—true, existed—I suppose that saved what he would call his conscience—yes, the company existed at the time—see?'

'But the shares were worthless?'

'He would say not. It is difficult to prove, you see,

when there is no quotation and the company's prospects are all in the future. And the Colonel put the shares away in his strong-box which was in our keeping, and probably forgot all about them or mixed them up with other shares.'

'But the shares must have been found, then, in the box?' persisted Thomasine.

'Aha, you are not such a simpleton as most of 'em l'—old Peper's manner had gradually changed to vivacious interest. The slumbering business memories awoke in him against his will. His dead chief's definition of his character cannot have been quite without foundation. 'No: they probably had been exchanged again for others. These values were constantly coming and going. They were mixed up with large loans on security—for purposes of speculative purchase, you see. Ah, the villain—I remember perfectly, his figuring out the eighty thousand odd. The shares he paid with came to a trifle more, in his estimate, an even sum, you see—and the Colonel paid him the difference in silver coin of the realm.' The old cashier sat meditatively gazing at the safe. 'It's all in the books,' he said. 'I wrote it in with the rest, all neat and fair to look at, but it wouldn't have borne investigation by a business man. Old Abrahams himself was chief director of that rotten company. It was dangerously like criminal fraud, that time, and he knew it. If he hadn't known that, he'd never have given in to your husband. Dear, dear, like criminal fraud, and to think of all the kinds of fraud that are not criminal!' He nodded towards the safe. 'Shall we look it out?' he said, 'or shall we let it rest?'

'As you—wish,' said Thomasine.

'No, no—better let it rest.'

'Some day, perhaps, you will show it to my husband?'

'No—no: better let it rest. And yet—I don't know: I could make it very plain to him. We must see. Do you know what is in that safe? Books. Books. All the books of all the five-and-twenty years. The neighbours think it's gold. I bought the safe at the sale, and from the official receiver, when all was over, I begged the

books. I had a little money. Do you know how? I had saved up all those years to free myself from him, me and my wife and child. Then they died. And when he shot himself, my bond wasn't found. He must have destroyed it. I'd paid him many times over in extortionate interest. So you see I had my bit of money, and d'ye know what I do with it? Can you keep a dead secret?'

'I think I can.'

'Don't say you think.'

'I can.'

'That's better. I should like to tell you. I have never told a soul. But your face looks good. Listen. I give it away.'

Thomasine's eyes travelled round the beggarly room.

'Yes, that's just it,' said the observant Peper. 'When Abrahams did for himself, I saw it all, as I never had before, and it sickened me. I saw what I was coming to, through aiding and abetting. And now I do all I can, you see, sending it away in secret without anybody's ever knowing where it comes from. I send it right and left, to all kinds of institutions, in small sums of one pound. It's little enough, God knows. But it's all I've got; He knows that too. And'—unconsciously his hand settled down upon the tattered Bible—'my left hand doesn't know what my right hand does—you see?'

'Never doubt the gift will bring its blessing,' said Thomasine.

'Blessing? Ah, sufficient, child, if it lightens the curse a bit! I'm an old man to turn religious, but I'm doing my best. Pepper turning into salt—eh? Yes, that's what I say to myself, sitting up here and sending off my one pound notes. Pepper turning into salt—ha! See?'

Thomasine glanced a little anxiously at the door. She rose.

'Do you know why I chose this room?' pursued the old man. 'No, you don't. You'd never guess. I want to tell *you*. I never told a soul anything all those months. I'll never tell again. Listen. I was always a moderate man, Lord knows, but the things I like best

in the eating way, is the things that woman sells down below!

'So you have them handy,' said the bewildered Thomasine.

'Handy!' He jumped up and came after her. 'I never touch them. I pass by them, daily, and I eat my dry bread. That'll be accounted to me, eh? That'll be accounted?'

Thomasine hesitated, from anxiety to speak aright.

'Oh, I know it's faith, and not works,' he cried—he seemed to have a wonderful aptitude for reading her thoughts—'but there's treasure to be laid up in heaven all the same, and I'm an old man: I haven't much time left. Lord, to think of all the treasure *he* laid up on earth, and no treasure left in the end! Fresh cheese, eh? New-laid eggs, eh? Grass butter, eh?'—with each cry he came a step nearer—'that'll be accounted to me—see?'

'I cannot understand why Mr. Abrahams revenged himself so cruelly upon my husband,' said Thomasine, pausing on the threshold.

'Your husband was the first man that ever did him—see?'

'But his affairs must have been in a bad way already?'

'That was his own doing, through his wild speculations, not another man's.'

'But—but'—it was Thomasine's last doubt: she had stayed to give it utterance—'even if my husband was right in getting the money back, he kept him by force from going to his appointment, and that ruined him.'

'So he told himself; so he tried to make himself believe. So he, probably, believed, for to doubt it was to doubt his own foresight. And the more he believed it, the more he hated your husband. But even complete success in Paris could not have righted his last big speculation. I can prove it'—he nodded backwards to the safe—'from the books.'

'I thank you for all you have done for us. I thank you from the bottom of my heart,' said Thomasine, with extended hand. 'You must let me come and see you again: you must let me bring my husband.'

He took the hand and grasped it so energetically, that she winced. 'It is I must thank you,' he said. '*This*'ll be accounted. As for coming again, if the landlady's drunk, as she probably will be, she'll let you up, as she did to-day.'

Drunk or not, the landlady was at the bottom of the set of ladders, inquisitive and vociferative. 'Did he give you anything? No, he never gives nothing to nobody. Did you see his iron chest full of gold? He'll be murdered some day.'

Thomasine picked her grateful way to the station. Her heart was singing with happiness. She yearned to be back at Bardwyk, with her glad tidings. In the High Street, to her vexation, she ran up against her sister Jane. 'Hullo! Now, that's lucky,' cried Jane. 'I ran over to consult my three dearest friends, but I'd just as lief ask your advice. Oh, you can take a later train to Bardwyk. Billy Galonne has asked me to be his wife. He asked me last night, at the German Legation ball. Of course I shall accept him. Now, what is your advice?'

CHAPTER XXXVI

WHILE Thomasine was thus advising for her husband and other relatives at Leyden, the household of Bardwyk had gone altogether wrong. Laura, distracted with the long prospective wait, till nightfall, for her husband, had shut herself up, disconsolate, in her own little room. Ruin stared them in the face. It would be impossible to find the money without selling Bardwyk. Even then, what is the value of an estate, suddenly thrown upon the market like that?

She took up the little planchette and deliberately snapped it in two. The thought was in her mind, *corruptio optimi pessima*, though she could not have expressed it. And she prayed, in a wild sort of way, as the slow hours lengthened, to be 'delivered' from the Second Sight. The time came and passed, when it was her daily custom to 'magnetise' James Graye, but she did not unlock her door. Of the beneficent effect of this animal magnetism on the lad's simple personality there could be no doubt. But during the last days the result had not been so satisfactory; it seemed as if his nature resisted, instead of accepting the proffered invigorating calm. Of a truth, his great reliance on his benefactress was shaken; he could not explain his doubt to himself. He was trying to do it to the Professor. 'Mammie Laura not good,' was what he said, but the baby words conveyed a great deal. The herbarium—his collection of dried flowers—had been the pride, almost the object, of his life. It was the one big thing he had done, had been continuously occupied in doing, during all these months; he had seen it grow, his creation, had clung to it and kept it by him,

hugging it to his breast, showing it to whoever came near him, turning over its pages, in his long lonelinesses, by the hour. And now Mammie Laura—his helpmate in making it—had ruined it. For, hastening, in her agitation, to wipe up the first splotch of gum, when she dropped it, she had upset the whole bottle, and the sticky liquid had oozed at once through all the openings of the thin tissue paper, and in trying to remove the stains and to loosen the sheets, she had worn holes through some and torn others, and the whole thing was a wreck. Such a misfortune had never befallen him before; he was unable, or partly unwilling, to comprehend the accident. He believed she was angry with him, for having picked, in the hothouses, rare flowers she had desired him to leave untouched. He had forgotten, and gathered them for his collection. 'I shall take away the herbarium, if you do it again,' she had said. And now she had kept her word.

So the lad was sorrowful, and yet more sore. Many things had happened of late to disturb him. Barton, by sheer patience and cunning, in the form of long-drawn lollipops, had elicited from coachman's Tommy the confession of James's innocence in the affair of the pond. 'And I never thought for a moment that Sir James could have done such a thing,' remarked Barton, 'all the same, it's as well to have it proved. And as for the nasty young varmint, I promised him to make his father promise he wouldn't lick him, and I hopes the father, being a Dutchman, won't keep his word.' Barton, with fine insular self-consciousness, disapproved of everything and everybody about him, excepting Kenneth, whom he pitied, James, whom he loved, and himself, whom he loved, pitied and admired. In his devotion to his young master he had even gone to the extent, incredible as it seemed to himself, of learning a few Dutch words, with the sole object of getting at coachman's Tommy; this had taken some laborious weeks, while Barton, struggling with the uncouth sounds, would go and stand gloomily watching his unconscious victim at play. The more easily procured lollipops preceded the carefully prepared

conversation by many days; quite unexpectedly the question was sprung at last on the sucking infant: 'Sir James not putted Tommy in pond—no?' Vehement up and down noddings of the head and silence. 'Father not whippie Tommy; I—I'—finger on breast—'I promise.' Etcetera. At last it was noddings, few and grave, to and fro.

Of course Edward was glad, oh, of course; all must rejoice to see Sir James's sweet character righted. Still, there were all the articles in the *Medizinische Jahrbücher*, and there was the controversy with Rottenköfer, and, dear me! what uphill work is all medical study! (and what downhill tumbles too).

But James, when Barton brought him the agreeable news, which had cost the faithful servant so much effort, James was utterly broken-hearted. 'I knew you couldn't have done such a thing, Sir James, but the little Dutch varmint——' James, with a wild look of confusion in his eyes, broke into a storm of outcries and tears. It was an attack, to the servant's horror, such as the boy had had once or twice before, in his former condition, when he could not express his feelings by any other means. 'Sir James! Sir James, dear, what is it? For God's sake! I thought you would be so pleased——' The mask had fallen off Barton's face; he was all love and anxiety. But James, even when he quieted down, refused to utter his thoughts, in spite of much argument on Barton's side, for Barton, as has been stated before, was a garrulous domestic. His eloquence, to the last, far exceeded his charge's meagre vocabulary.

The truth was that James Graye, now seventeen, for the first time learnt man's cruelty, his evil injury of his own kind, his deceit. He had realised long ago that your fellow-creatures could be unkind to you, could do things to you, at least, that you did not like, that felt unpleasant; they could say that things were 'good' for you which weren't, because they hurt you; even Kenneth and Barton had done that, and he could never forget it. But such little confusions were very different from the diabolical wickedness of Tommy's accusation. Men, of

course, hurt animals constantly—witness the gardener with his worm and his fish: he had never seen—how should he?—one man strike another, or a child. Like many wiser haters of slaughter, he contentedly ate his salmon or his beefsteak. But here was deliberate harm done, without any reason, by a fellow-creature he had never injured, to his innocent self. Suddenly the dreamy 'Deevil' became a living actuality, a human being, undistinguishable from the friends around him—any one of those friends, at any moment, might be stabbing him without his knowing it, to the heart. The whole world—his small world—became a wilderness of devils. The sun went out, leaving the horizon lurid. All faces grinned at him. Had Tommy not always smilingly touched his cap?

Other experiences followed. That last time, when he ran away, angry, into the woods—a thing they had often told him not to do—he had met a beggar, who, tentatively, asked him the time. Uncle Kenneth had given him a watch, a delightful ticking plaything, though he could not read its mystery: when the beggar pointed to the bright gold chain, James understood, and laid the watch in the other's hand, so that in the gathering dusk he might find out the hour for himself. The beggar immediately bolted, and, as James ran after him shouting, he must have known, running the faster, that it was not James's intention to give away the watch. Therefore men took things from you—stole. And a big lout in the village had, without rhyme or reason, thrown a stone after him, as he was driving, on some charitable errand, with Laura, that had hit him on his poor weak head. Oh horrible, the world was horrible. Thomasine, whom he perhaps most admired as the most 'angel' of his circle of acquaintance, was naturally much occupied with her husband. And now Mammie Laura had wickedly destroyed the Herbarium, because he had picked her flowers, not remembering. His only experience of absolute, undiluted goodness—not that he thus reasoned out the friends all around him—was the tramp who had bestowed on him the beautiful golden roses, to whom he

had given his perishing flowers and his clothes. The old hat and the coloured bits of paper were his relics, as precious as anything the Baroness could revere in a Leyden chapel. These symbols he had placed on the top of his chest of drawers, where they lay in state. The bottle-nosed old pedlar remained the supreme manifestation, in James's life, of the divine.

'My dear boy,' said the Professor, 'there is no question more insolvable than the question: What is life? And yet we shall find out what life is before we find out what we live it for. Illogical,' said the Professor, looking at James, 'but you won't mind that.' James liked to sit and hear the Professor orate to him, in slow and correct, if un-English, English. He understood hardly a word, but when all the world is dark around you, it is not unpleasant to hear fine things said to you, which you do not understand. The fair sounds bring with them a suggestion of possible light that you do not see.

'The one is biology and the other is theology, you see,' continued the Professor. 'I have a sort of sneaking temptation of the devil in me that theology doesn't fit into science, at least not into inductive, bacteriological science. But, then, look at that great chemist, Pasteur! As good a Catholic as my wife. Of course it's a temptation of the Devil. Do you ever meet with the Devil, James?'

'Don't,' said the boy, catching at the word. His shrinking was so manifest that the Professor paused. 'What do you know of the Devil, boy?'

'Devils. Devils everywhere,' exclaimed James.

'So my wife says. But when I come to look for them, scientifically, I find only microbes. Shall we find, as knowledge progresses, that the spiritual powers of evil are all microbes, or shall we find that the microbes are all spiritual powers of evil? That is the supreme question, James.' The Professor slapped his knee. 'The whole future of the race lies there.'

The boy, intent on his own dark thoughts, sat gazing, with troubled eyes, into space.

'The only thing we can be absolutely sure of, James, speaking spiritually, is that self-sacrifice is the greatest thing on earth. It is absolutely illogical, opposed to the whole principle of nature, which is self-assertion; it is unprovable, unreasonable, absurd. It is definitely outside all science, and opposed to all ratiocination. Philosophy rejects it; the people who think advise you to develop yourself. But the people who feel know it is the one thing that makes man more than man. I tell you, James, it is the one spiritual axiom, the single thing that seems to me to lie outside the microbic development of the world. When all's said and done, the soul of man is a development of life like any other. It has only one quality which isn't, as distinguished from self-destruction, which is—self-sacrifice. How much of this do you understand?'

'No,' said James.

'A minimum, indeed. But perhaps you put into practice as much of it as I do. Still, I should gladly have tried that experiment of mine on myself, had Edward not rendered it for ever impossible. Poor, foolish, loving lad! But in that, I dare say, there was as much vanity as devotion.'

'Huh?' said James.

'Now you, though you don't understand, you would like, wouldn't you, to do something that would make everybody else happier than they were?'

James kicked a pebble at his feet. 'I wish I was like that,' he said.

'What, as hard as that? Not caring about anybody? You can't mean it.'

'I wish I didn't feel, didn't see, didn't hear. Nothing,' said James.

'What makes you so unhappy? Shall I go and get you some of Mammie Laura's chocolates?'

The boy turned such a look on his companion, that the good old Professor felt something shrivel in his breast. 'Good gracious!' he thought, 'they can have no idea of this.' Then he said, ignorant of all the little village bounties: 'What you want is to do more good to others;

then you will see how good they are to you.' When he had spoken this twice over, marking the meaning clearly, James said: 'No. Like a shot bird.'

'My poor, poor boy,' said the Professor. 'Do you always feel like this?'

'Always,' said James, to whom all present emotion seemed permanent.

'I wish I could do something for you.'

'Make me'—again James kicked the pebble—'so.'

The Professor felt the little syringe-case in his top waistcoat pocket; he felt the little bottle of Semicolon Serum. He reflected regretfully that here was an opportunity such as would never occur again. This useless life—not even happy—why cumbered it the ground? Its simplified conditions made it all the more legible for an experiment. And what an experiment! Not the usual medical investigation: Will this or that remedy succeed? No, it won't—which annually costs the lives, amid unspeakable tortures, in the laboratories, of some thousands of animals, in the hospitals, of some dozens of human beings. The Professor knew for certain that his Semicolon Serum was the life-energy that combats decay. Since Pasteur's recent discoveries, immediately after the attempt in which he had risked his own life, the Professor was absolutely confident that the serum could be successfully applied. Therefore the question which the experiment must settle was not: Shall it be injected? but: In what solution? The answer would be decisive; that answer would almost certainly be a death.

What life in all the world could be better sacrificed than this life? The Professor, who had broached his secret with infinite precautions, to his most intimate friend amongst all his colleagues, Mestitchensky, had received an offer of a healthy Russian criminal, but he had not been able to make up his mind to accept it. Now here was a soul ready for removal, incapable of life and clamorous for oblivion.

'Like that,' said James, pointing to his pebble. 'Like that.'

The Professor positively trembled. He looked furtively

left and right, in the solitude and the silence. Over, on the other side of the lawn, towards the water, stood a grey stone statue of Minerva, which he himself had placed there many years ago, Minerva, the goddess of science and medicine, with her serpent and her owl. Calm, impassive, with her great stone eyes, she seemed to bid him do his duty, telling him that life is fleeting, and the world eternal, that lives are nothing, and the race is all.

Slowly the Professor drew his little leather case from his pocket, very slowly he opened it, and most slowly extracted the syringe. Very carefully he inspected the slender silver needle. The boy watched him semi-inquisitive.

Suddenly the Professor threw the syringe from him—vehemently; it dashed to pieces on the gravel, twenty feet away. The boy gazed after it, little interested, not understanding.

'Smash!' said the boy. 'Yes, like that. If you smashed me, Professor, would anybody be sorry—eh?'

There was a great hunger in his question, but the Professor was too excited to observe it. 'Don't talk like that,' said the Professor curtly. 'It's silly. I'm not going to smash you.'

'But would anybody be unhappy if you did?'

'Not if you are troublesome and put tiresome questions,' said the Professor, who was overwrought.

'I don't want to be troublesome,' answered James. But to himself he added: 'They wouldn't be unhappy. Nobody would.'

Presently, in their painful silence, he fished up from ancient depths of semi-consciousness the inquiry he had been slowly feeling for.

'Would Uncle Kenny be?'

'Would Uncle Kenny be what?'

'Unhappy.'

'Of course he would. I thought you were not going to be tiresome.'

'But once, while she was here, I heard Miss Maria say to Barton—*that*.' It was perhaps the longest speech

James Graye had ever made in his life. It was a very important one.

'Of course she did.'

The boy vigorously shook his head.

'A blessing for Uncle Kenny, if I was dead.'

'You heard her say that!' cried the Professor. At his tone, at his face, James suddenly gave a quick look of intelligence, such as comes to minds of his class. He nodded repeatedly. 'Good God!' cried the Professor. Then he recovered himself. 'Oh, nonsense,' he said, 'nonsense, nonsense.' But James only responded, as a statement, not as an exclamation: 'Good God.' That was a fact he could cling to. Though he but dimly knew what it signified, it was comforting. 'And I was to be dead,' he murmured under his breath, for he was afraid the Professor would catch him up again and call him tiresome. He was utterly weary of a world of wickedness, where everybody, for all you knew, lied and stole. And it would be a blessing—he had heard aright; the Professor had understood it, and knew why, though he wouldn't tell—it would be a blessing for Uncle Kenny, at any rate, if he, James Graye, were no more.

The Professor arose. He felt worn out. And also, perhaps therefore, in need of his dinner. Why were they dining so late that night? It was already near dark. Oh, of course; they were waiting for Edward, and also for Thomasine, who had telegraphed that she was delayed at Leyden. But Edward had come back; the Professor had seen him drive up. The old man cared little for creature comforts, but he cherished his little punctualities. The post had come in also; he had noticed that. He must go and see whether there were any letters. 'Come, James,' he called. 'Come along in!'

'Yes,' said James. He got up and walked slowly across the grass, away from the canal. Once among the trees he started running. He ran faster and faster in the dusk, through the glowering beechwoods. He heard a bird call, and he noted that it was a blackbird. 'How late in the year,' he thought. It would be a blessing to Uncle Kenny—that, at least, seemed certain.

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He could be 'good'—that is, 'kind'—to Uncle Kenny, just as God was 'good' to him. And his last remembrances were all of the tramp.

For a moment he stood motionless by the lonely pond near the orchard, Tommy's pond. The grey sky sank lower. Then he let himself slowly glide, a heavy weight, beneath the still, dull, gleaming water.

CHAPTER XXXVII

WHILE the Professor was holding forth on the beauties of self-sacrifice, Edward was striving to gather from his wife's broken sentences some accurate impression of the calamity that had befallen her, and therefore him, during his brief absence.

'You and me and the babe unborn,' sobbed Laura, 'we are turned out of house and home.'

'We must find another—house,' said Edward. In a second he added: 'And where you are, it will be a home.'

She put her arm round his neck, and then suddenly she quieted down. For this creature of many emotions could pass swiftly from the pain of a thing to its pleasure, from its pleasure to its pain. 'You are too good to me,' she said, 'far better than I deserve——' and she even laughed brightly. It was evident that she could not feel attached to Bardwyk as he was—of poverty, of the value or loss of money she had little conception: her anxiety through all that long day had been for his suffering, not her own, in the future. *Her* sorrow had come when the unexpected visitor said: 'I am your mother.'

'She is going to marry this man,' she murmured. 'Oh dearest'—and she turned red, and pale again—'to marry him.'

What do we say when we wish to proffer comfort and know that we cannot? We say—possibly: 'It may not be as bad as you think.'

'Oh yes, yes. She does not even care for him, Edward. He has promised to make her tremendously rich, and so she marries him.'

'He will succeed,' said Edward.

'How do you know, dear?'

'He is the man of the infant-feeder. The patent coconut business. I remember my father telling me something about it. It is utter rubbish of course, folly and quackery. But in medicine, or rather in hygiene, that sort of thing always succeeds. He told you he has got a big man to call it after. And your mother supplies several hundred thousand francs for the first advertisements. They are bound to succeed. In a year or two she will be too rich for Holland!'

'Such a horrible way!' said Laura. He smiled. 'It is quite a usual way. Any health-craze will succeed, if you spend twenty thousand pounds on advertisements. And know how to advertise,' he added. 'Mr. Bitterbol evidently does.'

'Oh, Edward, couldn't you make some money—a lot of money—as much as you want—as we want, dear?'

He laughed loudly. 'How like a woman's reasoning! "It's very disgusting. Won't you do it, my dear?" Now, how do you think, could I do it?'

'Of course I mean not in a disgusting way. By Jenkins' pills: they must be all right?'

'I suspect they are bread pills. My father is far too wise to have them analysed. But I haven't got the twenty thousand pounds.'

She sighed and rumbled his hair—a thing she liked doing, because he kept it, and his whole exterior, so superlatively groomed. 'Not a bit like a future professor,' she said. 'See me—I look untidy beside you,' and she flung her laces about her, and pushed up the great black coils on her head and looked round for the tiger-cloak.

'I don't care for myself,' she said, 'and, poor or not, you'll always be a famous genius, but it's very hard to keep baby out of Bardwyk.'

'Don't,' he said, and after he had said that only, she could but hold him tighter and press him closer and kiss him once—not more than once—again.

Yet when Uncle Francis entered, he disturbed them. They felt he could just as well have come much later, or not at all.

'I beg your pardon, Edward,' said Uncle Francis, 'but my time is so very limited. The matter is of exceeding importance. Can I speak to you for a few moments alone?'

'Oh, indeed!' pouted Laura.

'My dear Laura, they are two "B's" that don't go together. Beauty, you know, and Business. I wish I could think of a third B.' He held the door open for her with a low bow: 'Shall we say Beauty and Business Bad, eh? Or'—she swept past him—'Beauty and Business'—he curved round behind her back—'Bah!' He closed the door.

'Edward,' he said, coming back to the table, 'time presses. In a few days I shall again undertake my voyage. This time, I trust, the Government will let me get to Batavia or recall me on this side Port Said.'

'I should think so!' cried Edward.

'You can never be sure what a Government will do. When you are in my age you will know that. Whatever abilities a man may have had by nature, as soon as he becomes Government, they go. Look at Gambetta!'

'Yes,' said Edward.

'Look at—but I won't mention names nearer home. It's the same with Parliament. In every country, where there's a Parliament, the grown men behave more childishly, more sillily than a couple of hundred children, *playing* at Parliament, ever would. I've watched our own men making laws; do you mean to say that a hundred lunatics from your asylum of Wit's-End, if you got them together, could make such laws?'

'I don't think they could,' said Edward.

'Do you use the word in my sense?'

'I am not a politician,' replied Edward.

'Nor a patriot?'

'Yes—by Jove!'

'Then you can answer my question. Never mind. But it's unthinkable that the greatest fools should reach all the highest places, and, therefore, when a clever man reaches a high place, the place must turn him into a fool. I've had enough, thanks!—of seeing the country dragged

down to the dogs. You won't be troubled again by me and my theories, Edward.'

'No, no; we have always—appreciated them, uncle.'

'You're a good fellow, Edward. Politician—eh?—Patriot—Pooh! But what I mean to say is, I shall stay out there. If I fall—for my country—you remember, by the bye, what you are to put on my grave-stone in that case?'

'I—I am not sure. Have you left no written instructions?'

Uncle Francis heaved a deep sigh. 'Fie, Fie, Fie,' he said sadly. 'F. F. F. Francis Fighting Fell.'

'I will put it down at once,' said Edward, pulling out a pocket-book, but Uncle Francis seemed to find this move lacking in courtesy.

'And if I do *not* fall,' he remarked irritably, 'I shall marry out there, and settle down. I shall marry some rich Indian widow, for I am not impervious to the advantages of wealth. You can smoke such good cigars. But I shall do more than that; I shall turn into an equatorial Babu—no, I mean a Nabob. A Satrap. I shall live in splendid gardens, and very probably start a harem. I shall become a Mohammedan then, of course. I hope you have a sufficiently high opinion of my religious and moral standard, Edward'—he turned on his nephew with a certain air of irritation—'to understand that I should never start a harem, unless I had become a Mohammedan first?'

'I have,' said Edward.

'I am glad to hear it,' replied his uncle, only half mollified. 'I should not write these things home; women don't comprehend them, and, besides, your mother has turned into a bigot. But I tell them to you, as a sensible man and the future head of the family. That, however, is not really what I had come to speak of. *That* could wait till to-morrow. *This* won't. In one thing, Edward, I cannot contradict your mother-in-law. As I was saying, great wealth is a not undesirable thing.'

'My mother-in-law!' exclaimed Edward. 'Do you know anything of that miserable affair?'

'I should hardly have alluded to her in those terms,' replied the Colonel. 'Yet they strike me as rather apt. She is a poor, miserable creature, Edward. Know about her? I? Why, didn't I come over with her on the boat?'

'I hadn't realised that,' said Edward.

'And I gave her your address. I wrote to your father about it, but she begged me not to spoil her little surprise. Surprise, indeed—the wretch! I feel, Edward, that I am, somehow, responsible.'

'By no means. You are in no way responsible.'

Uncle Francis shook his head. 'That's when we most feel we are,' he said. 'When we are, we seldom feel it. 'Tis the fate of a gentleman. But, if I'm to be responsible, Edward, I can bear more responsibilities than one.'

'How so?' said Edward.

'I can help you,' replied the Colonel. He drew a letter out of his pocket. 'You must get rid of this woman, of course.'

'I wish I knew how.'

'Remove her. At once.'

'I am not an Eastern Satrap, uncle. I haven't got a bag and a Bosphorus.'

'Pardon me, you have. Decent ones. Civilised ones. Righteous ones. That is what I have come to talk about.' He had unfolded the letter—a long one, an epistle—and now spread it out on the table. 'You must stop this marriage,' he said, 'immediately. The woman isn't fit to marry. She mayn't.'

'She is of age,' said Edward bitterly.

'But not "*compost mentis*,"' cried the Colonel. 'There, now I've said it. Here's a letter from her to me, begging me to interfere with you and her dear, sweet child about the money. Bitterbol is so violent, talks of nothing but lawyers and law-courts! Ten pages of rigmarole. Magic rings, magnetism, Mahatmas—what *are* Mahatmas?—enough to prove her crazy in the eyes of any mad-doctor in Christendom.'

Edward took the letter and read it through very carefully, while the Colonel stamped and fussed about the room.

'Get her locked up within a week,' cried the Colonel. 'Nearest relations. Daughter acts. Son-in-law first authority in the country. Put her away at Wit's-End. Give her a nice room.'

Edward laid down the letter without speaking. The Colonel stood still, opposite him.

'You don't mean to say that you foresee difficulties? Why, you know perfectly well that, with the existing laws, any of us can get any of our relations locked up, if we care to. I've heard you say so a dozen times: in fact it was that made me think of it. You've only got to go to a doctor and describe your relations from your point of view, and the doctor says they're abnormal at once. Everybody's abnormal nowadays, and certainly everybody's relations, as described by each other, are. And, then, *that* woman! Most of us don't care to do it, on account of the expense!'

Edward thoughtfully flattened the letter out. 'I can't do it,' he said.

Uncle Francis' eyes grew as big as saucers. 'You can't do it!' he cried. 'Why, who could do it more easily than you?'

'On that very account I can't do it. Because I'm that sort of doctor.'

'Of course you can't sign the certificate yourself. But you've only to speak the word, and any of your colleagues will.'

'True. And that's why I can't speak the word.'

The Colonel grew crimson about the face and twirled his smart moustaches. 'I'm not advising any villainy,' he said in staccato tones. 'The letter is a lunatic's letter, and the woman's talk to me, on the steamer, was a lunatic's talk. You seem hardly to be aware what is at stake. This house!' The Colonel raised his voice and struck his knuckles on the table. 'Our home, sir. Bardwyk. We are the Lisses of Bardwyk, Edward. This our house is at stake.'

Edward lifted his eyes to his uncle's face. 'I know,' he said. 'You needn't dwell on that, uncle.'

'Very well. You prove that the woman is not in her



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right mind. The money remains invested as it was, and you are appointed trustee.'

Edward took a few hasty strides up the room; then he turned.

'Oh, don't tempt me,' he burst out. 'It's simple enough, as you say! Easy enough too, in sooth. It can be done to-morrow. If she were poor and we had to support her, perhaps she would ask us to do it! But I can't do it—I can't—to enrich myself. Oh, I admit all you say about half the people in the asylums not being more "abnormal" than the people who make our laws! I admit that two-thirds of the patients in the sanatoria would be all the better for it, if their relations stopped paying so much a day for them and turned them out into the fields to work. I admit it all. But you must, *we* must distinguish sharply between the mad and the eccentric. The mad we must put into "establishments" of some kind; the eccentric we only may.'

'Well, you may,' said Uncle Francis suddenly.

'Only if they wish it, or if they can't support themselves.'

Uncle Francis snatched at the sheets on the table.

'You won't do it?' he cried. 'You'll let this woman marry her Bitterbol?'

'I can't stop her.'

'Can't? Can't?' shouted the Colonel. 'Can't, I tell you! But, if you haven't the spirit to save the old place, I have. I'll take this letter to—to your rival. You're bound to have a professional rival in this country. You doctors all have.'

'Don't, uncle,' exclaimed Edward in great distress. 'It would be perfectly hopeless. We should oppose it. You would only make a scandal. Pray, pray, don't do that!'

'We shall see!' cried Imphi-Boshek, storming out in a great rage.

Edward remained thoughtful. Yet what was the use of thinking? His thoughts could only mean sorrow, if not regret.

'If you please, Jonker,' said Eliza in the doorway—

and her voice had in it the usual protest against all things that happened in this family—'the carriage that brought the Freule Thomasine from the station' (Eliza habitually refused to give her young lady the foreign name, occasionally adding, with marked spite: oh, I forgot, Mrs. Cry) 'has also brought an outlandish person. This is his card.' Edward, at sight of the name on the card, checked a little cry of astonishment. 'Show him in at once,' he said. The name was that of one of the American delegates at the 'Psychiatric' Conference. At the closing meeting, only three or four hours ago, they had said good-bye.

'And is dinner,' asked Eliza, 'to be kept waiting indiscriminately?'

'I fear so.'

'Well, it's spoilt anyhow,' said Eliza, taking herself off.

The American was a quick, brisk man, with a pleasant air of doing things because he liked them. 'You will be surprised at my following you in this manner,' he said, 'but, just after you had left Amsterdam, I got a very important cablegram which concerns you. And as I cross to Harwich by this night's boat, I thought I could not do better than hurry after you.'

'A cablegram which concerns me!' repeated Edward in surprise.

'Yes, let me find it for you.' As he searched in his pocket-book, Edward remarked: 'I am awfully sorry you have had all this trouble for me. You will hardly be able to catch your boat.'

'They told me I could just do it. I have brought on my luggage. Here is the message. You will see it is worth while.' He unfolded the telegraph slip and read:

'Offer Dr. Li: perform his operation on my son. Twenty thousand dollars. Three more probable, if successful, similar terms. Bittwell.'

'Bittwell!' exclaimed Edward. 'The Railway King!'

'Suet-King,' corrected the American. 'But it's of no consequence. I couldn't merely send this on to you, you see; I thought you'd like to talk it over.'

'I am truly grateful to you,' answered Edward.

'Oh, I shall get my modest fee,' said the brisk American. 'And Bittwell would expect me to see you about it. But you, my dear sir, I congratulate you. Come over to us for three or four months and make a big fortune.' He looked round the room. 'Perhaps,' he added, 'you will say that is hardly necessary. Still, it is always pleasant to gain a lot of money by sheer merit.'

'Have all your millionaires idiot sons?' questioned Edward, half-smiling.

The half-smile was returned. 'Not all. But a larger proportion, naturally, than any other class of the population.'

'Well, I must think of it, and talk it over with my wife. Can you manage to stay to dinner? In theory, I accept. But I distrust myself—'

'You needn't do that. To tell you the truth, I came over with instructions from Charles G. Bittwell to look into this new departure of yours. Why, your speech was *the* event of our meeting! Surely you must have noticed the effect it had. You are too modest, sir. It was magnificent! I cabled to Bittwell immediately after it, but I said, seeing who you are'—another glance round the stately old room—'"big offer advisable." So, having no answer, I thought he'd given up the idea, and of course I didn't speak of it to you.'

'It takes away my breath,' said Edward. He felt on the point of telling this stranger that the old house was going to remain the property of the Lisses—the property of Edward Lisse—after all. Why, it was going to become his property: he would buy it from his wife.

'I feel confident the operation will be successful,' said Edward, thinking aloud. 'Yes, I feel that I may assert that, though I don't like asserting. You may tell Mr. Bittwell that. It is much less risky than the first one I performed. The death of the patient is now hardly a thing to be feared.'

For the first time the American looked a little put out. 'I hope you do not imagine that we are so ignorant in the States,' he said, 'as to think there is any connection

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between the death of the patient and the success of the operation?'

Before Edward could answer, Thomasine stood in the room. 'Oh, Edward,' she said, 'I beg your pardon for interrupting, but mother and Kenneth aren't in yet, and they've been out a long time. And Barton can't find James anywhere!'

Edward turned to the American with a bright laugh: 'You see what a good doctor I am!' he said. 'Both my charges out of sight, and I here, discussing a future cram-full of fame and money!'

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE Baroness was contented with her day. Delivered from the assiduities of Laura and the anxieties of Thomasine, she had spent a quiet morning, and a more emotional, but by no means unpleasing, afternoon. As the shadows lengthened the emotional interest increased.

She had enjoyed, amongst other intellectual titillations, a fierce theological battle with Eliza. These contests, during her stay at Bardwyk, came up suddenly, in the smooth atmosphere, like squalls. Undeniably the ambient air was charged with them. A suggestion would drop, an allusion; and, all at once, the antagonists were at each other, with loud clamour, hammer and tongs. This time the affray had come on with delightful unforeseenness: it had developed as unexpectedly in a perfect zigzag of metaphysics: subjects had been vehemently taken up, muddled and dropped again—such as the immaculate conception, the transformation of the elements—almost too sacred to be mentioned here. At one moment Eliza, carried away by sectarian zeal, had declared that 'Mary was just a woman like herself.' From such impious profanation the Baroness had fled in horror, but, on the stairs, she had thought of a revenge. She hung over the balusters. 'Eliza,' she said, 'the Paragon'—she did not call her new housekeeper the Paragon, but the name has got lost somehow—'possesses the most wonderful receipt for making quince jelly. I must send your mistress some.' If there was anything Eliza disliked more than the thought of the wonderful quince jelly, it was the application of the words 'your mistress' to Laura, the Sumatran, the Witch. When she stopped crying in her own room and dabbed her eyes—which she did

fiercely with eau de Cologne that smarted: 'If it wasn't for the dear boy, that I love like my own baby, I'd leave the house to-night,' she said. 'But they hold me by the dear boy, my poor Edward, and they know it. A nice life he has between his mother and his wife. But as long as he's got a shirt to his back, I shall see that it's aired. And,' added Eliza magnanimously but unnecessarily, in a loud voice, to herself, 'when he hasn't a shirt left, owing to *her*' (not the Baroness was meant here!) 'spending every penny that they've got on her silks and her laces, then his faithful Eliza will buy him one with the little she's saved in his good father's house! His poor, weak, foolish father. The poor, weak, silly men.' Eliza then applied to her chief source of exhilaration, a calendar 'For the Afflicted,' with daily texts selected from the Psalms and the Lamentations about your bones being poured out with roaring and your—one hardly dares to mention it—cleaving to the ground. Occasionally, when household trials were overwhelming, Eliza could not resist tearing off to-day's text, somewhere during the afternoon, and looking for to-morrow's. She did so now. Whenever it was done, her sense of order reproached her all through the rest of the day. She sighed, rose and busied herself about Mr. Kenneth's Essence of Beef.

For it was Edward's opinion that Kenneth needed strengthening. 'His appearance is delusive: the constitution wants building up.' There is no more facile explanation of mental or moral trouble than that the body has not sufficient strength to cast it off. The doctors are rapidly teaching us that all wickedness or sorrow is nerves. Rather difficult—only all they say is credible—when a man has so fine a physique as Kenneth Graye.

The Baroness had betaken herself to her son-in-law, still flushed with the exertion of honourable war. 'I do hate and detest fighting,' said the Baroness, sinking down in an arm-chair. 'Anything for a quiet life.' She had brought part of the manuscript of *Balaam* with her; she spread it out on her lap.

Kenneth looked up from a letter he was reading. 'Very different from my good correspondent here,' he

said. 'Miss MacClachlin flies off anywhere, in search of a good fight.'

'Your Scotch friend? Where is she now?'

'At her own place, for a change. She has flung herself, heart and soul, into this great scheme for decayed gentlewomen and mill-hands.'

'Are they to live together?' inquired the Baroness, turning over the pages of *Balaam*.

'Oh no; in fact there's to be a hill, and a curve of the bay, between them. The ladies will live at Rowangowan—Maria's house; new homes are to be built for the sick mill-hands. "Our object," she writes—he referred to the letter—"is to make the poor things better and good. That is to be our motto, engraved on everything. 'Better and Good.' On the house-fronts, and on the notepaper. It will be seen—a constant great moral and sanitary lesson—on their bed-linen, on their mugs and on their plates." Kenneth looked up pensively. 'It is to be hoped,' he said, 'that it will be seen upon their mugs in the end.'

'What do you mean?' asked the Baroness.

'Nothing,' he replied, hastily returning to his reading. "'The decayed ladies are to have it too." Bravo! That's like Maria. It may stop their decaying. "But oh the trouble there is about the building. Everybody is so dishonest. No, I shouldn't say that, but they certainly all seem to be. How I wish you were here! Couldn't you come?"' He laid the letter down, and his eyes looked wistfully away towards the horizon.

'Which way is Scotland?' asked the quickly sympathetic Baroness.

'Yonder,' he said.

'I suppose you will be going back soon.'

'As soon as James is well enough, if he ever is well enough, to do without Edward's care—and Laura's. Laura has a most marvellous influence over James. We cannot deny that it is her—magnetism, call it what you like—that has developed the—soul in him.'

'I do not deny it,' replied the Baroness shortly.

'It is that which has kept me,' continued Kenneth,

talking for the moment, as he so frequently did, as if he were a normally happy, healthy man. 'I feel that his mother, could she see us, would shed happy tears in heaven. Can she see us? Does she know that her long prayers are answered, her faith is rewarded? Her child may not have much of an intellect—she would not have cared for that—but he has a human soul.'

'Heaven often employs strange means,' replied the Baroness. 'For myself, I cannot approve of these "magnetic" influences.' He stared at her in astonishment. 'Why?' he said. 'The history of your Church is full of them!' Then he halted, feeling that they did not comprehend each other. 'Shall I read you,' asked the Baroness suddenly, 'a bit of *Balaam*?'

Now that was an embarrassing proposition, for of course he would not be able to follow a single line, but it was also a comparatively attractive one, for he would not longer be required to talk.

'The French reporters,' remarked the Baroness apologetically, 'to whom I read some of this in Paris, said they thought it had a most majestic fall. I have always thought that was a particularly appreciative thing to say about an epic poem. "A most majestic fall."'

'It was indeed,' acquiesced Kenneth, folding up his own correspondence, and putting it, with an unheard sigh, away.

'I cannot do better,' continued the Baroness, 'than read you the passage in which Balaam exorcises and renders powerless the magical incantations of the wizards. He sprinkles holy water over them——'

'Holy water?' cried Kenneth.

'Yes. Holy water was in constant use among the Canaanites. Father Winx tells me that has been indubitably ascertained by a learned professor of Louvain. The Protestants, who pervert everything, say he has proved its Pagan origin, but we of course see it was prophetic.'

Kenneth went and picked up one of his papers that had fluttered to the ground. 'I understand,' he said.

'You see, *we* in *our* church exorcise evil spirits: we

don't employ them!' After which retrospective thrust the Baroness hastily plunged into her reading. She pushed her cap awry—but that it had been before. Her fuzzy hair stood out. The usual blots were on her brown silk dress: the usual enthusiasms were in her gestures and her voice.

Kenneth sat and listened vaguely to what seemed a cataract of gutturals, the steady descent of a moraine. His eyes were on Maria's post-mark—Drumtychlochlar—for some reason or other the letter had been posted at his own post-town. Well, there was nothing in that to move him: he received constant letters from his agent and others, which bore that mark. Only yesterday the minister's wife had written about a Sale of Work. 'I wish you were here to help us,' she had said. But to-day the sight of the stamp disturbed him. We cannot reason about these things. He wondered if that good creature Maria had driven over, in his absence, to the Invergraye Manse and had posted her letter at the little town, as she passed through. And the thought conjured up before his eyes the long winding pretty hill-road from Rowangowan to Invergraye, with the hamlets dotted here and there along it, and, near his end, the grey mass of the old town. He wondered what they had decided about the Sale and who would open it. Like every reasonable man, not a curate, he hated bazaars and charity entertainments of every kind, yet this very Sale was giving him a taste of homesickness. He had spent a third of his life away from the place, in this dreary quest after health with his nephew: of late he had felt more and more that he wanted to be there, doing some of the lots of work himself. It was good of the minister's wife to express, like Maria, a desire to have him. If she wanted him for the money—well, people must want you for something, and she knew he would send the money, anyhow. James's money. James—he smiled at the thought—ought to open a Sale of Work at Invergraye.

The Baroness did not read well. Hers was a drone with much manual action—one of the most ying forms of elocution, but it doesn't matter much when your

solitary auditor cannot even catch a proper name. Besides, Balaam, in Dutch, is spoken and written quite differently. It rhymes . . . Villiam.

The Baroness, it must be admitted, had occasionally perpetrated English verses, as well as French ones, but she felt dreadfully shy about showing the English to her son-in-law. She was always putting off the evil moment. They suffered under her erroneous impressions, built up on examples rashly gathered from the greatest poets, that all the words in the English language rhymed more or less with each other, however they were pronounced. The evidence was materially affected by her having got wrong the fourteen pronunciations of 'ough,' and the six—or how many are there?—of 'ou.' One stanza much appreciated in the family ran:—

'Each mortal has his own brief tail (*sic* tale)
We bloom but for a little while (*sic* wail?)
Then hurry to our common gaol.'

Sic, Goal intended, under the impression that the two words were spelt and pronounced alike.

Undoubtedly Kenneth would have thought as kindly about these verses as he thought and spoke of all things that came within his ken. But he was not yet destined to know them. He sat thinking. And 'Billiam' flowed past him, like the turn of a water-mill.

He sat thinking, his thoughts growing ever sadder. It had been Thomasine's care, these last weeks, by constant, gentle vigilance, to keep him as far as possible from these solitary broodings. The whole horror of his situation once more deepened upon him. Who was he to wish for home surroundings? To wish for work? He wasn't even Lord of Invergraye. By no means. He was simply Sir James Graye's guardian, custodian, and lifelong caretaker. And a good thing, too, for James Graye, if a simpleton, was at least an innocent and pure-hearted creature, doing good all round him, with clean hands, every day of his life. While he!

He had robbed, not for his own sake, yet robbed, with violence, another man, and by doing so had driven his

wretched victim to commit suicide. That was a plain fact, which no reasonable thinker could deny. Nobody knew of it but himself and Thomasine, and on the two several occasions, since his wife's return, when he had quietly and earnestly asked her whether he had not done this, she had not found courage openly to gainsay him. It was not done on purpose, she had faltered, not with desire to kill. What a futile 'recommendation to mercy,' from which his own conscience turned in contempt! How many deeds of violence are done 'with intention to kill'? With or without intention, the man was dead: the weight of his dead soul lay on Kenneth's heart.

And the intention had been there, at all costs, to get the money. Why could he not believe the man, rogue as he seemed? Why, in his Christian cocksureness, assume that the Jew must be a swindler, in his insular superiority feel confident of the right to bully a foreigner? He had threatened to beat out the other's brains—he would have done it! An easy excuse, in the fury of your ungovernable passion, to say that you think you are mad. You are entitled, hereditarily, to think yourself mad!

He had reasoned it out a hundred times, never speaking of the thing to a stranger, only twice to his own wife. What was the use of speech, or of thought? He had done it. You can get away from speech, not from thought. You cannot even any longer, with the agreeable excuse of the first weeks, say that you are insane. You are quite sane, as sane as any of the others, with this blood-guiltiness on your soul. A good thing he was not a Spiritist, like Laura, or he might try calling up spirits of the dead! That way, indeed, would real madness lie! At this stage he laughed.

The Baroness stopped her reading—Imphi-Boshek had just been wounded—in amaze. She stared at Kenneth: her expression changed. He was not weeping—men of northern breeding can seldom weep; he was simply staring, with those great dark eyes of his, Italian eyes, into the stagnant misery beyond.

'Will you not tell me,' she said very softly, 'of your trouble?'

He shook his head. 'It is nothing,' he answered. 'Nothing real.'

'For such unreal sorrows—sorrows that we cannot speak—my Church has remedies, and my Church alone.'

Again he shook his head. 'Confession would do me no good,' he said.

'I was not referring to confession,' she answered. 'For confession we must put our burdens into words. I was thinking of the weight we bear—a nameless weight we could not even analyse—that drowns us down, that drags us down into a black and bottomless pit.' The last words she spoke almost in a whisper. Her voice was so gentle, her manner so sad, he could not put her away from him. It seemed, as if with every word she drew closer. 'My dear son,' she murmured, 'let us seek it together—the relief that comes to those who ask it. I could tell you of myself. I have long wanted to speak to you—ever since we came—but I dared not. And I knew not what Thomasine would think—and yet—and yet—oh, what does that matter, when there is a soul to be saved from depths of wretchedness? We are far too afraid of each other, we poor humans! Oh, let me help you!'

He laid his hand on the portfolio in front of him. He looked at her with tender surprise. 'I don't quite understand,' he said, but he said it tentatively: his eyes were seeking the meaning of hers. 'Do not want to understand,' she said. 'Only believe. You must have faith as a little grain of mustard-seed, and the mountain that is bearing you down will be flung away into the sea!' And, as he yet hesitated, trying to fathom her intention, trying to grasp, in a great overflow of light, some faint promise of this coming deliverance, she rose to her feet, dropping the forgotten, precious manuscript of her poem. 'Come,' she said.

He rose also; half blindly he followed her.

'Wait one moment,' she said, almost in a commanding voice. 'Wait for me here.' She went into the house and immediately returned, holding something hidden in her hand. 'Come,' she repeated. 'Let us go.'

They went along the road together, in the autumn

evening shadows. On both sides of them the stately poplars rose motionless, like a cathedral nave. Only from the topmost summits a faintest rustle ran down the silent columns, as of distant voices in wordless song. And ever, at the farther end of the long avenue, the fading rays, in changeful light against the pale-blue heaven, combined, as in a great east window, the glories of a steadfast-shining cross.

'You are not cold?' she asked suddenly.

He started, ashamed that the question had not occurred to him, for this old woman, come out thus without hat or cloak.

'Let us go back,' he said. 'Let me get you a shawl.'

'No, no,' she said hurriedly. 'Not for me. Let us hasten on.'

As she went, she took between her fingers the thing she had brought out with her, a lump of wax, and began fashioning it with trembling touch. And she began telling him of herself in broken accents, quivering with emotion, her breath caught in irrepressible sobs. 'All my life it has been with me,' she said, 'my burden, greater than I could bear. When I read Strauss and Renan, and studied what they call the Higher Criticism, and Max Müller and the rest, I always felt what they said was true, only it mustn't be, it couldn't be—the world would be too horrible if it were. And now, *credo quia absurdum*—oh, you can't think what a comfort that is, what a rest—only my husband doesn't understand it properly. Poor, poor, dear man. You can't be a scientist and a Protestant. You can't say: I want a reasonable faith. Oh, *credo quia absurdum!*' She repeated the words over and over again, and her mind gradually found fresh rest in them, her voice grew calm.

A child stopped them by the wayside, asking for alms. He was a dark-brown gipsy-child, with rings in his ears, half-naked, speaking broken French. 'Yes, yes, I will give to thee,' exclaimed the Baroness, fumbling eagerly in her pockets. 'Dear me, I have left my purse at home, Kenneth! Wait one moment! We will give to thee, child.' But Kenneth also had come out without money.

The child continued to beg, not believing. 'Tiens!' said the Baroness, and handed him her brooch. 'I had passed him my word,' she added, apologetically to Kenneth, as the frightened child ran away into the bushes. 'Would you have him think ever after that the lady he met had lied?' A few minutes later, at the cross-roads, they came upon the gipsy-cart, a green thing, with a horse and a swarthy man beside it, the sort of wagon that travels round the fairs. The man, who was mending a whip, looked up and nodded. 'The Lord be with you!' said the Baroness solemnly, in French. 'And with thy spirit,' came the quick reply. The Baroness passed on, with Kenneth. The man called to a gipsy woman who came to the cart-window. 'Sold!' he cried to her, in much stronger vernacular. 'I thought my Church-answer was worth a florin at least!'

'That is the beauty of my Church,' said the Baroness to her companion. 'It is universal. Not like your little sects. In the sands of the Sahara, amongst the icebergs of Spitzbergen, we meet and are one. *Ave Maria!* cries the East. The West has but one response: *Gratia Plena!*'

'True, Baroness.'

'I wish you would not call me "Baroness" or "Madam"—will you not call me "Mother," in the good old Dutch way?'

'Yes—mother,' he said.

The shadows grew longer. The far white cross, standing out more distinctly, seemed to beckon them to make haste. The Baroness, still shaping with those nervous fingers, began again to speak.

'When I first took the great step I should have taken long ago, a wondrous peace came over me, as of a little boat, buffeted by the sea, that suddenly curls, on the same water, into port. But soon awakened the sorrow of knowing my nearest and dearest to be all outside. My heart was weighed down within me. And the thought, ever more oppressing, grew upon me that it was *my* fault, if all my children were Protestants. Had I sought the light sooner! Had I guided their infant steps aright!'

Even now she shuddered. 'I took my poor, weak, weighed-down heart to our lady of Kevelaer. I laid it down upon her altar-steps. I said: "Oh Lady of Pity and Healing, heal thou my wounded heart!"' The tears choked her utterance: she stumbled, half-blinded. 'And all the sorrow went,' she stammered, 'all the burden. And my heart is like a little child's.'

They had turned off the high-road into the lane, near the village. The little old Catholic Church of Bardwyk lay before them, in the evening silence. High above it, from the placid heaven, shone a single star.

'We cannot go to Kevelaer,' said the Baroness. 'Would to God we could! For tens of thousands have been healed there in the same manner as I. Their tribute-hearts, silver and golden, fill chapel and shrine. Oh, wonderful beyond words is the power of the Virgin of Kevelaer. She is mightier, Kenneth, than any Virgin on this side of the Alps! But here also, at Bardwyk, the Virgin will receive us, if we come to her. Come, my son. Come!' She caught hold of his arm, drawing him onwards. In her other hand she held the work she had completed, a roughly-moulded waxen heart.

At the church door Father Winx met them. Before the Baroness's cry of elation Kenneth felt, as he had felt all along, under her tenderness, that he could not turn against her. And his heart was full also of love and gentleness, of tremulous surrender and hope. Meekly he followed into the building. It was still a very humble old tumble-down building. The grand new church was not yet begun.

'Father,' exclaimed the Baroness, 'my son-in-law is as yet a Protestant, but that doesn't matter, does it?—our Lady will also have pity on Protestants. He is very unhappy and he doesn't know why.'

'Surely, surely,' replied the Father. 'Our Lady had mercy on you!'

'Oh, help us!' she cried, extending her hand to the priest. Together they sank on the steps of the altar, before the Virgin. The Baroness, her eyes streaming, held up the waxen heart. 'Oh pray for us,' she repeated

to the Father, 'pray for us! Have mercy on us, Virgin Mother of Mercy: see this heart that we bring to thee. bruised and broken! We don't know why it feels so unhappy, do thou take its unhappiness away!'

'Do thou,' echoed the good Father, 'take its unhappiness away!'

'We offer thee a golden heart,' cried the Baroness, her voice hoarse with weeping. 'We will hang it up here, a heart of gold!'

'If the gentleman is as wealthy as report affirms,' whispered the Father in the Baroness's ear, 'perhaps he might offer a new church?'

'Kenneth,' said a very low voice, in the dimness close beside them. 'Kenneth.' He turned, where he knelt, gazing up at the figure that was bending over him.

'Kenneth, dearest, will you listen for a moment to me?'

'Thomasine!' cried Kenneth aloud, and sprang to his feet.

'Dearest, I want to speak with you. I have many things to say.'

The Baroness had also risen. 'Could you not have waited a few minutes?' she asked angrily. 'Is what you have to say so important as all that?'

'It can wait, if Kenneth wishes, mother,' replied Thomasine. 'But—but—' and, as Kenneth hesitated, seeking a solution: 'Mother, would you and this gentleman leave me alone with my husband for a very few moments, please?'

'Oh, certainly, Thomasine, if you wish it—in this idolatrous temple, pray.'

'In this church,' said Thomasine. She remained standing by Kenneth's side, in silence, till the footsteps had died away. Then she said simply:

'Kenneth, God has helped me to find proof that you accuse yourself wrongfully. I have been this day with the man who knew all the secrets of him you thought you injured so terribly: it is not true: he injured you. In his books, when his confidential clerk shows them you, you will find evidence, that he had not paid the real value of the money—only worthless paper—and that, moreover,

you are in no way responsible for his death. You understand what I am saying, dearest, and you believe it?'

'Say it again,' he murmured, and she obeyed.

'You believe it?'

The answer was ready in his heart: for a moment his lips refused to utter it. Then he said simply: 'I believe it. Because you say it. Without proof.'

'Dearest, you shall have proof.'

'I believe it. Oh, Thomasine, how were you enabled to do this?'

She drew him towards her. 'I want to tell you,' she whispered. She laid her head upon his shoulder. 'Come closer,' she murmured, 'oh, come closer, my husband,' and then, in the solemn shadowed silence of the listening sanctuary:

'I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me,' she breathed. 'Day by day—night by night—I cried—and He heard.'

He held his arm around her: he kissed her, unable to speak.

'For He hears,' she continued. 'Oh, He hears. Our lives go all wrong, for a time, and even our consciences seem mistaken, and we don't know what to do, or where to turn—we don't know whether we are guilty or not guilty. We see the dreadful results of our actions—as we think—result or not, the terrible thing has happened: we don't know what to do next or what to say. One thing only we know,—always:—we can cling to that for ever—if we cry to Him, He listens—if we call to Him, He hears!'

Still Kenneth held his arm tightened around her: he laid his cheek against hers. 'Life,' he said, 'is all too difficult. I wonder, would He hear me?'

She drew him away from the side-chapel, where she had found him, away to the high altar, above which gleamed, in the dark, a mighty Cross, like a triune flame.

'Pray to—God!' said Kenneth, sinking down with his face in his hands, 'that He may listen. We try to do right, and wrong comes of it. Pray to Him, that I may learn to cry to Him, and He may hear!'

As he released his hold of her, Thomasine, clinging yet

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closer, sank beside him. And she lifted her white face to the dim radiance of the Cross. A memory came upon her of her childhood days, a half-forgotten English hymn:

'To Thee, O Father, mindful of Thy love!'

She said the words over again softly in the darkness of the altar-steps. High overhead, through the lofty chancel-windows, fell the pale light of the dying day.

'And having with us Him who pleads above,
We here present our willing sacrifice!'

'We would do right,' murmured Kenneth, 'for others—and wrong comes of it! Whenever we are surest—see, we most surely go astray. We know nothing except that we are going astray. O love, dear love, these fleeting lives of ours! Who will help us in the future? What shall our hands find to do in it? O God, that hast saved me from blood-guiltiness, I would see clear: I would do right!'

'Most patient Saviour, who canst love us still!'

said the sweet, sweet voice of Thomasine.

They knelt together, side by side, then, in silence. A bar of light from the chancel-windows deepened across the altar, in the gathering gloom.

A man was rapping at the church door, which Father Winx had closed in leaving: at first they did not hear. It was Barton, shaking with emotion, his mask all gone to pieces, the tears pouring down his cheeks:

'Oh, Mr. Graye!' he cried. 'Oh, Sir Kenneth! Oh, Sir Kenneth! Mr. Graye!'

THE END

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