

"My dear lad, I am delighted," the doctor said, shaking him heartily by the hand, "how has this miracle come about?"

"I cannot give you all the details, Doctor. I will simply give you the facts, which, by the way, I shall be glad if you will retail to your patients for public consumption," and he then repeated the statement that he had arranged with Mr. Brander that he should make.

"And that is the tale you wish me to disseminate?" the doctor said, with a twinkle of his eye, when Cuthbert concluded.

"That is the statement, Doctor, and it has the merit of being, as far as it goes, true. What the nature of the illegality of this sale was, I am not at liberty to disclose, not even to you, but I have discovered that beyond all question it was irregular and invalid, and Brander and I have come to a perfectly amicable understanding. I may tell you that to prevent the trouble inseparable even from a friendly lawsuit he assigns the property to me as Mary's dowry, and as a sort of recognition of the fact that he acted without sufficient care in advising my father to take those shares in the bank. Thus all necessity for the reopening of bygone events will be obviated."

"A very sensible way, lad. You will understand, of course, that I know enough of Jeremiah to be quite sure that he would not relinquish a fine property if he had a leg to stand upon. However, that is no business of mine, and I have no doubt that the fact that he is going to be your father-in-law, has had no small influence in bringing about this very admirable arrangement. Of course the matter will make a good deal of talk, but these things soon die out, and the county will welcome you back too heartily to care how your return has been brought about. You can rely upon my action in the part of town-crier, and I am sure to some of my patients the flutter of excitement the news will occasion will do a great deal more good than any medicine I could give them. Of course you are going to stay here?"

"Only to dinner, Doctor. I shall run up to town again this evening."

## CHAPTER XXI.

It was on the last day of March that Cuthbert Hartington reached Paris. During the six weeks that had elapsed since he had left it many events had taken place. He himself had gone away a comparatively poor man, and returned in the possession of the estates inherited from his father, unimpaired save by the mortgage given upon them by Mr. Brander. He had succeeded beyond his hopes; and having obtained unlooked-for proofs of the fraud that had been practised, had been able to obtain restitution—which was to him the most important point—and all had been done without the slightest publicity. In Paris, the danger he had foreseen had culminated in the Commune. The battalions of National Guards from Montmartre and Belleville had risen against the Provisional Government; the troops had fraternized with them and their generals had been murdered in cold blood.

The National Guards of the business quarters had for a time held aloof, but, in the absence of support from without and being enormously outnumbered, they were powerless, and the extreme party were now in absolute possession of the city. M. Thiers and the Assembly at Versailles had so far been unable to take any steps to reduce the revolted capital. Such troops as had been hastily collected could not be relied upon to act and it seemed probable that the National Guards and Paris would, in a short time, take the offensive and obtain possession of Versailles, in which case the flame of insurrection would spread at once to all the great towns of France, and the horrors of the Terror might be repeated.

The line of railway to Paris was still open, for upon the Communists preparing to cut off all communications, the Germans, still in great force near the town, pending the carrying out of the terms of the treaty of peace, threatened to enter Paris were

such a step taken. A vast emigration had taken place among the middle classes, and over fifty thousand persons had left Paris. So far the Communists had abstained from excesses, and from outrage upon peaceable citizens; had it been otherwise, Cuthbert would have returned to fetch Mary away at once. Her letters to him, however, had assured him that there was no cause whatever for uneasiness about her, and that everything was going on precisely as it had done, during the siege by the Germans. He had been anxious that she should, if possible, remain for the present in Paris, for he did not wish her to return to her family, and had made up his mind that if it became absolutely necessary for her to leave Paris she should arrange to go straight down to Newquay and stay there with her friends.

As he alighted from the carriage at the Northern Railway Station he found the place occupied by National Guards. There was no semblance of discipline among them; they smoked, lounged about, scowled at the few passengers who arrived, or slept upon the benches, wrapt in their blankets. There were none of the usual hotel omnibuses outside and but one or two fiacres; hailing one of these he was driven to his lodgings. He was greeted by the concierge with surprise and pleasure.

"So monsieur has come back. We did not expect you, though Monsieur Caillard, who comes here every day, told us that you would be sure to be back again in spite of the Reds. Ah, monsieur, what horror to think that after all Paris has gone through, these monsters should have become masters of the city! It would have been a thousand times better to have had the Prussians here, they would have kept order, and those wild beasts of Montmartre would not have dared even to have murmured. You have heard how they shot down peaceful citizens in the Rue de la Paix? Have you come to stay, monsieur?"

"For a time, anyhow;" and taking the key of his rooms Cuthbert carried up his pormanteau, and then at once came down and drove to Madame Michaud's.

Mary was half expecting him, for in his last letter to her he had told her he hoped to arrive in Paris that evening.

"I have been horribly anxious about you, Mary," he said, after the first greeting.

"There was no occasion for your being so," she replied, everything is perfectly quiet here, though from what they say there may be fighting any day, but if there is it will be outside the walls and will not affect us here."

"I don't think there will be much fighting," he said; "if the troops fraternize with the Communists there's an end of the business, all France will join them, and we shall have the Reign of Terror over again, though they will not venture upon any excesses here in Paris, for, fortunately, the Germans are still within gunshot, and they would have the hearty approval of all Europe in marching in here, and stamping the whole thing out. If the troops, on the other hand, prove faithful, I feel sure, from what I saw of the Belleville battalions, that there will be very little fighting outside the walls. They may defend Paris for a time, and perhaps bravely, for they will know they are fighting with ropes round their necks, and the veriest cur will fight when cornered. Your people here are not thinking of leaving, I hope?"

"No, and they could not now if they wanted; the Commune has put a stop to emigration, and though the trains still run once or twice a day, they go out as empty as they come in. Have you got through your business?" she asked, with a shade of anxiety.

"Yes, dear, and most satisfactorily; everything has been arranged in the happiest way. I unexpectedly obtained proofs that the sale of Fairclose was altogether irregular, and indeed, invalid. I have seen your father, who at once, upon my laying the proofs before him, recognized the position. Our arrangement has been a perfectly amicable one. He is going to retire altogether from business, and will probably take up his residence at some seaside place where there is a bracing climate. The doctor recommends Scarborough, for I may tell you that he has had a slight stroke of apoplexy, and is eager himself for rest and quiet. Fairclose and the estate comes back to me, nominally as your dowry, and with the exception that there is a

mortgage on it for £20,000, I shall be exactly in the same position that I was on the day my father died. I may say that your mother and the girls are delighted with the arrangement, for, somehow, they have not been received as cordially as they had expected in the county—owing of course to a foolish prejudice arising from your father's connection with the bank, whose failure hit everyone heavily—and they are, in consequence, very pleased indeed at the prospect of moving away altogether."

Mary's forehead was puckered up in little wrinkles of perplexity as she listened. "I am glad of course, very glad, that you have got Fairclose back," she said, "though it all seems very strange to me—is that all that I am to know, Cuthbert?"

"That is all it is necessary that you should know, Mary, and no one else will know any more. Your father's illness and the doctor's injunctions that he should retire from business altogether and settle in some place with a mild climate, is an ample reason for his leaving Fairclose, and your engagement to me, and my past connection with the place are equally valid reasons why I should be his successor there. I do not say, Mary, that there may not have been other causes which have operated to bring about this result, but into these there is no need, whatever, for us to enter. Be contented, dear, to know that all has turned out in the best possible way, that I have recovered Fairclose, that your family are all very pleased at the prospect of leaving it, and in that fact the matter ends happily for everyone."

"I lunched at the old place only yesterday," he went on lightly, "and the girls were in full discussion as to where they should go. Your father is picking up his strength fast, and with rest and quiet, will, I hope, soon be himself again. I expect, between ourselves, that he will be all the better for getting away from that work in the town, with its lunches and dinners. The Doctor told me that he had warned him that he was too fond of good living, specially as he took no exercise. Now that he will be free from the office, and from all that corporation business, he will no doubt walk a good deal more than he has done for many years and live more simply, and as the doctor told me yesterday, the chances are that he will have no recurrence

of his attack. I may tell you that from a conversation I had with him I learned that your father will still draw a very comfortable income from the business, and will have amply sufficient to live in very good style at Scarborough."

The fact that Cuthbert had lunched at Fairclose did more to soothe Mary's anxiety than anything else he had said. It seemed a proof that however this strange change had come about, an amicable feeling existed between Cuthbert and her father, and when he wound up with "Are you contented, dear?" she looked up at him with tears in her eyes.

"More than contented, Cuthbert. I have been worrying myself greatly while you have been away, and I never thought that it would end as happily as this. I know, dear, that you have concealed a great deal from me, but I am contented to know no more than that. I am as sure as if you had told me that you have brought all these things about in this friendly way for my sake. And now," she said after a pause, "what are your plans for yourself?"

"You mean for us, Mary. Well, dear, my plan is that we shall wait on here and see how things turn out. I don't want to go back to England till all these arrangements are carried out. I don't intend to have to go to Scarborough to marry you, and I think it will be vastly better for us to be married quietly here as soon as the chaplain at the embassy returns, which, of course, he will do directly these troubles are over. My present idea is, that I shall let the house at Fairclose, or shut it up if I cannot let it, and let the rents of the property go to paying off this mortgage, and I intend to take a modest little place near London, to live on our joint income, and to work hard until Fairclose is clear of this incumbrance."

"That is right, Cuthbert. I have been wondering ever since you told me you were to have Fairclose again, if you would give up painting, and hoping that you would still go on with it. I should so like you to win a name for yourself as a great painter."

Cuthbert laughed. "My dear child, you are jumping a great deal too fast at conclusions. I am not yet out from school. I

have painted my two first pictures, which you like, principally because your face is in one of them, but that is a short step towards becoming a great artist. You are like a young lady in love with a curate, and therefore convinced that some day he will be Archbishop of Canterbury, and with almost equally good foundation; however, I shall do my best, and as I shall still have a strong motive for work, and shall have you to spur me on I hope I may make a modest success."

"I am sure you will, and more than that," she said, warmly; "if not," she added, with a saucy laugh, "I think you might as well give it up altogether; a modest success means mediocrity, and that is hateful, and I am sure you yourself would be no more satisfied with it than I should."

"Well, I will go on for a bit and see. I agree with you, that a thing is not worth doing unless it is done well, but I won't come to any final decision for another year or two. Now it is past ten o'clock, and I must be going."

"When will you come? To-morrow?"

"I will come at three o'clock. Have your things on by that time, and we will go for a ramble."

René Caillard came into Cuthbert's room at nine o'clock the next morning.

"I came round yesterday evening, Cuthbert, and heard from the concierge that you had arrived and had gone out again. As she said you had driven off in a fiacre, it was evidently of no use waiting. I thought I would come down and catch you the first thing this morning. You look well and strong again, your native air evidently suits you."

"I feel quite well again, though not quite so strong. So things have turned out just as I anticipated, and the Reds are the masters of Paris."

René shrugged his shoulders. "It is disgusting," he said. "It does not trouble us much, we have nothing to lose but our heads, and as these scoundrels would gain nothing by cutting them off, I suppose we shall be allowed to go our own way."

"Is the studio open again?"

"Oh, yes, and we are all hard at work, that is to say, the few

that remain of us. Goudé has been fidgeting for you to come back. He has asked several times whether I have news of you, and if I was sure you had not left Paris forever. I know he will be delighted when I tell him that you have returned; still more so if you take the news yourself."

"I suppose Minette has resumed her duties as model?"

"Not she," René said scornfully, "she is one of the priestesses of the Commune. She rides about on horseback with a red flag and sash. Sometimes she goes at the head of a battalion, sometimes she rides about with the leaders. She is in earnest but she is in earnest theatrically, and that fool, Dampierre, is as bad as she is."

"What! Has he joined the Commune?"

"Joined, do you say? Why, he is one of its leaders. He plays the part of La Fayette, in the drama, harangues the National Guards, assures them of the sympathy of America, calls upon them to defend the freedom they have won by their lives and to crush back their oppressors, as his countrymen crushed their British tyrants. Of course it is all Minette's doing; he is as mad as she is. I can assure you that he is quite a popular hero among the Reds, and they would have appointed him a general if he had chosen to accept it, but he said that he considered himself as the representative of the great Republic across the sea, that he would accept no office, but would fight as a simple volunteer. He, too, goes about on horseback, with a red scarf, and when you see Minette you may be sure that he is not far off."

"Without absolutely considering Dampierre to be a fool, I have always regarded him as being, well, not mad, but different to other people. His alternate fits of idleness and hard work, his infatuation for Minette, his irritation at the most trifling jokes, and the moody state into which he often fell, all seem to show as the Scots say, 'a bee in his bonnet,' and I can quite fancy the excitement of the times, and his infatuation for that woman may have worked him up to a point much more nearly approaching madness than before. I am very sorry, René, for there was a good deal to like about him, he was a gentleman

and a chivalrous one. In Minette he saw not a clever model, but a peerless woman, and was carried away by enthusiasm, which is, I think, perfectly real; she is in her true element now, and is, I should say, for once not acting. Well, it is a bad business. If the Commune triumphs, as I own that it seems likely enough, it will do, he will in time become disgusted with the adventurers and ambitious scoundrels by whom he is surrounded, and will, like the Girondists, be among the first victims of the wild beasts he has helped to bring into existence. If the troops prove faithful, the Commune will be crushed, and all those who have made themselves conspicuous are likely to have but a short shrift of it when martial law is established. Well, René as there is nothing that can be done in the matter, it is of no use troubling about it. None of the others have gone that way, I suppose."

"Of course not," René exclaimed indignantly. "You don't suppose that after the murder of the generals any decent Frenchman would join such a cause, even if he were favorable to its theories. Morbleu! Although I hate tyrants I should be tempted to take up a rifle and go out and defend them were they menaced by such scum as this. It is not even as it was before; then it was the middle class who made the Revolution, and there was at least much that was noble in their aims, but these creatures who creep out from their slums like a host of obnoxious beasts animated sorely by hatred for all around them, and by a lust for plunder and blood, they fill one with loathing and disgust. There is not among them, save Dampierre, a single man of birth and education, if only perhaps you except Rochefort. There are plenty of Marats, but certainly no Mirabeau.

"No, no, Cuthbert, we of the studio may be wild and thoughtless. We live gayly and do not trouble for the morrow, but we are not altogether fools; and even were there nothing else to unite us against the Commune, the squalor and wretchedness, the ugliness and vice, the brutal coarseness, and the foul language of these ruffians would band us together as artists against them. Now, enough of Paris, what have you been doing in England, besides recovering your health?"

"I have been recovering a fortune, too, René. A complicated question concerning some property that would, in the ordinary course of things, have come to me has now been decided in my favor."

"I congratulate you," René said, "but you will not give up art, I hope?"

"No, I intend to stick to that, Rene. You see I was not altogether dependent on it before, so that circumstances, are not much changed."

"You finished your pictures before you went away, did you not? The temptation to have a peep at them has been very strong, but I have resisted nobly—it was heroic, was it not?"

"It must have been. Yes, I put the finishing touches to them before I went away, and now I will show them to you René; it is the least I can do after all your kindness. Now go and look out of the window until I fix the easels in a good light, I want your first impressions to be favorable. There," after a pause, "the curtain is drawn up and the show has begun." He spoke lightly, but there was an undertone of anxiety in his voice. Hitherto no one but Mary had seen them, and her opinion upon the subject of art was of little value. He, himself, believed that the work was good, but yet felt that vague dissatisfaction and doubt whether it might not have been a good deal better, that most artists entertain as to their own work. In the school René's opinion was always sought for eagerly; there were others who painted better, but none whose feeling of art was more true or whose critical instinct keener.

René looked at the pictures for a minute or two in silence, then he turned to Cuthbert and took one of his hands in his own. "My dear friend," he said, "it is as I expected. I always said that you had genius, real genius, and it is true; I congratulate you, my dear friend. If it were not that I know you English object to be embraced, I should do so, but you are cold and do not like a show of feeling. These pictures will place you well in the second rank; in another year or two you will climb into the first. They will be hung on the line, that goes without saying. They are charming, they are admirable,

and to think that you are still at the school. I might paint all my life and I should never turn out two such canvases ; and it is a sin that one who can paint like that should expose himself to be shot at by Prussians. Now, do you sit down and let me look at them."

"Do so, René, and please remember that I want not praise, but honest criticism ; I know they have defects, but I want you to point them out to me, for while I feel that they might be improved, I have my own ideas so strongly in my head, that I cannot see where the faults are as you can. Remember, you can't be too severe, and if possible to do so, without entirely having to repaint them, I will try to carry out your suggestions."

René produced a pipe, filled and lighted it, then placed a chair so that he could sit across it and lean upon the back. He sat for upwards of a quarter of an hour puffing out clouds of tobacco-smoke without speaking.

"You mean what you say, Cuthbert?" he said at last. "Very well, I will take the bright one first. As to the figure I have nothing to say ; the effect of the light falling on her head and face is charming ; the dress is perhaps a little stiff, it would have been bettered if relieved by some light lace or gauze, but we will let that pass ; it is a portrait and a good one. It is your pretty nurse at the Ambulance. Am I to congratulate you there too?"

Cuthbert nodded.

"I thought so," René went on, without moving his gaze from the pictures, "and will congratulate you presently. The background of the figure is the one weak point of the picture, that, too, like the portrait, I doubt not, was taken from reality, for with your artistic feeling you would never have placed that bare wall behind the figure. You have tried by the shadows from the vine above to soften it, and you have done all you could in that way, but nothing could really avail. You want a vine to cover that wall. It should be thrown into deep cool shadow, with a touch of sunlight here and there, streaming upon it, but less than you now have falling on the wall. As it is now, the cool gray of the dress is not sufficiently thrown up, it, like the wall,

is in shade except where the sun touches the head and face ; but, with a dark cool green, somewhat undefined, and not too much broken up by the forms of the foliage, the figure would be thrown forward, although still remaining in the shade, and I am sure the picture would gain at once in strength and repose. Now, as to the other. It is almost painfully sombre, it wants relief. It expresses grief and hopelessness ; that is good ; but it also expresses despair, that is painful ; one does not feel quite sure that the young woman is not about to throw herself into the sea. Now, if you were to make a gleam of watery sunshine break through a rift in the cloud, lighting up a small patch of foam and breaker, it would be a relief ; if you could arrange it so that the head should stand up against it, it would add greatly to the effect. What do you think?" he asked, breaking off suddenly and turning to Cuthbert.

"You are right in both instances, René. Both the backgrounds are from sketches I made at the time ; the veranda in the one case, and the sea and sky and rock in the other are as I saw them, and it did not occur to me to change them. Yes, you are a thousand times right. I see now why I was discontented with them, and the changes you suggest will be invaluable. Of course, in the sea-scene the light will be ill-defined, it will make its way through a thin layer of cloud, and will contrast just as strongly with the bright warm sunshine on the other picture, as does the unbroken darkness. There is nothing else that you can suggest, René?"

"No, and I almost wish that I had not made those suggestions, the pictures are so good that I am frightened, lest you should spoil them by a single touch of the brush."

"I have no fear of that, René, I am sure of the dark picture, and I hope I can manage the other, but if I fail I can but paint the wall in again. I will begin at once. I suppose you are going round to Goudé's ; tell him that I am back, and will come round this evening after dinner. Ask all the others to come here to supper at ten ; thank goodness we shall have a decent feed this time."

Directly René had left, Cuthbert set to work with ardor,

He felt that René had hit upon the weak spots that he had felt and yet failed to recognize. In four hours the sea-scape was finished, and as he stepped back into the window to look at it, he felt that the ray of misty light showing rather on the water than on the air, had effected wonders, and added immensely to the poetry of the picture.

"I have only just time to change, and get there in time," he said, with a very unlover-like tone of regret, as he hastily threw off his painting blouse, ate a piece of bread left over from breakfast, and drank a glass of wine. He glanced many times at the picture.

"Curious," he muttered, "how blind men are to their own work. I can detect a weak point in another man's work in a moment, and yet, though I felt that something was wrong, I could not see what it was in my own. If I succeed as well with the other as I have done with this I shall be satisfied indeed."

"You are a quarter of an hour late, sir," Mary said, holding up her finger in reproof as he entered. "The idea of keeping me waiting, the very first time after our engagement. I tremble when I look forward to the future."

"I have been painting, Mary, and when one is painting one forgets how time flies; but I feel greatly ashamed of myself, and am deeply contrite."

"You don't look contrite at all, Cuthbert. Not one bit."

"Well, I will not press for forgiveness now, I think when you see what I have been doing you will overlook the offence."

"What have you been doing? I thought you told me that you had quite finished the two pictures, the day you came to say good-bye before you started for Brussels."

"René has been criticising them and has shown me where I committed two egregious blunders."

"Then I think it was very impertinent of him," Mary said in a tone of vexation. "I am sure nothing could have been nicer than they were even when I saw them, I am certain there were no blunders in them, and I don't see how they could be improved."

"Wait until you see them again, Mary. I altered one this morning, but the other will take me three or four days steady work. I am not so sure of success there, but if you don't like it when you see it, I promise you that I will restore it to its former condition, now let us be off; if I am not mistaken there is something going on, I saw several battalions of National Guards marching through the streets; and there is a report that 50,000 men are to march against Versailles. We may as well see them start, it may turn out to be an historic event."

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## CHAPTER XXII.

THE march against Versailles did not take place on the first of April, although the Communists had every reason to believe that they would meet with no opposition, as on the previous night two regiments of the army, forming the advanced guard between Versailles and Paris, came in, together with a battery of artillery, and declared for the Commune. The next morning Cuthbert went up at nine o'clock, as he had arranged to take Mary out early, and to work in the afternoon. Just as he reached the house he heard a cannon-shot.

"Hurry on your things," he said as he met her, "a gun has just fired; it is the first in the Civil War; perhaps the National Guard are starting against Versailles; at any rate it will be worth seeing."

The girl was ready in two or three minutes, and they walked briskly to the Arc de Triomphe. As they did so they could hear not only the boom of cannon, but the distant firing of musketry. Around the Arch a number of people were gathered, looking down the long broad avenue running from it through the Porte Maillot, and then over the Bridge of Neuilly to the column of Courbeil. Heavy firing was going on near the bridge, upon the banks of the river, and away beyond it to the right.

"That firing means that France is saved from the horrors of another red Revolution, Mary," Cuthbert said. "It shows that some of the troops at least are loyal, and in these matters ex-