

so many buds to nip. He became aware that he was giving a good deal of attention to this sort of gardening.

Also, he had a consciousness that he was growing morbidly anxious for the maintenance of his own oblivion. That which was at first only a misgiving about what a return of memory might bring to light, was rapidly becoming a definite desire that nothing should come to light at all. How *could* he look forward to that "hypothetical" wife whom he did not in the least believe in, but who might be somewhere, for all that! He knew perfectly well that his relations with Krakatoa Villa would *not* remain the same, say what you might! Of course, he also knew that he had no relations there that *need* change—most certainly not! At this point an effort would be made against the outcrop of his thoughts. Those confounded buds were always bursting. It was impossible to be even with them.

Perhaps it was on this evening, or rather early morning, as he walked home to his lodgings, that Fenwick began to recognise more fully than he had done before Mrs. Nightingale's share in what was, if not an absolute repugnance to a revival of the unknown past, at least a very ready acquiescence in his ignorance of it. But surely, he reasoned with himself, if this cause is making me contented with my darkness, it is the more reason that it should be penetrated.

An uncomfortable variation of his dream of the resurrected first-floor crossed his mind. Suppose he had forgotten the furniture, but remembered the place, and gone back to tenant it with a van-load of new chairs and tables. What would he have done with the poor old furniture?

CHAPTER XI

MORE GIRLS' CHATTER. SWEEPS AND DUSTMEN. HOW SALLY DISILLU-
SIONED MR. BRADSHAW. OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN

It is impossible to make Gluck's music anything but a fore-taste of heaven, as long as there is any show of accuracy in the way it is rendered. But, then, you must go straight on, and not go over a difficult phrase until you know it. You must play fair. Orpheus would probably only have provoked Cerberus—certainly wouldn't have put him to sleep—if he had practised, and counted, and gone back six bars and done it again.

But Cerberus wasn't at 260, Ladbroke Grove Road, on the Tuesday following Mrs. Erskine Peel's musical party, which was the next time Sally went to Lætitia Wilson. And it was as well that he wasn't, for Sally stuck in a passage at the end of one page and the beginning of the next, so that you had to turn over in the middle; and it was bad enough, goodness knew, without that! It might really have been the north-west passage, so insuperable did it seem.

"I shall never get it right, I know, Tishy," said the viola.

And the violin replied: "Because you never pay any attention to the arpeggio, dear. It doesn't begin on the chord. It begins on the G flat. Look here, now. One—two—three. One—two—three."

"Yes, that's all very well. Who's going to turn over the leaf, I should like to know? I know I shall never do it. Not because the nerves of my head are giving way, but because I'm a duffer."

"I suppose you know what that young man is, dear?" Sally accepts this quite contentedly, and immediately skips a great deal of unnecessary conversation.

"I'm not in love with him, Tishy dear."

"Didn't say you were, dear. But I suppose you don't know what he is, all the same." Which certainly seems inconsecutive, but we really cannot be responsible for the way girls talk.

"Don't know, and don't want to know. What is he?"

"He's from Cattley's." This throws a light on the conversation. It shows that Sally had told Lætitia who she was going to meet at her mother's next evening. Sally is not surprised.

"As if I didn't know all about this! As if he didn't tell me his story!"

"Like the mock-turtle in Alice?"

"Now, Tishy dear, is that an insinuation, or isn't it? Do be candid!"

"The mock-turtle told his story. Once, he was a real turtle."

"Very well, Tishy dear. That's as much as to say Julius Bradshaw is mock. I can't see where the mockness comes in myself. He told *me* all about it, plain enough."

"Yes—and you know what a rage Mrs. Erskine Peel is in, and says it was an *éclaircissement*."

"Why can't she be satisfied with English? . . . What! Of course, there are *hundreds* of English equivalents for *éclaircissement*. There's bust-up."

"That's only one."

"Tishy dear, don't be aggravating! Keep to the point. Why mustn't I have Julius Bradshaw to play with if I like because he's at Cattley's?"

"You may, if you *like*, dear! As long as you're satisfied, it's all right."

"What fault have you to find with him?"

"I! None at all. It's all perfectly right."

"You are *the* most irritating girl."

"Suppose we take the *adagio* now—if you're rested."

But Sally's back was up. "Not until you tell me what you really mean about Julius Bradshaw."

So Lætitia had her choice between an explicit statement of her meaning, and an unsupported incursion into the *adagio*.

"I suppose you'll admit there *are* such things as social distinctions?"

Sally wouldn't admit anything whatever. If sociometry was to be a science, it must be worked out without axioms or postulates. Lætitia immediately pointed out that if there were no such things as social distinctions of course there was no reason why Mr. Julius Bradshaw shouldn't take his violin to Krakatoa

Villa. "Or here, or anywhere," concluded Lætitia, with a touch of pride in the status of Ladbroke Grove Road. Whereupon Sally surrendered as much of her case as she had left.

"You talk as if he was a sweep or a dustman," said she.

"I don't see why you should mind if I do, dear. Because, if there are to be no social distinctions, there's no reason why all the sweeps and dustmen in Christendom shouldn't come and play the violin at Krakatoa Villa. . . . Now, not *too* slow, you know. One—two—three—four—that'll do." Perhaps Sally felt it would be a feeble line of defence to dwell on the scarcity of good violinists among sweeps and dustmen, and that was why she fell into rank without comment.

This short conversation, some weeks on in the story, lets in one or two gleams of side-light. It shows that Sally's permission to the young man Bradshaw to call at her mother's had been promptly taken advantage of—jumped at is the right expression. Also that Miss Wilson had stuck-up ideas. Also that Sally was a disciple of what used to be called Socialism; only really nowadays such a lot of things get called Socialism that the word has lost all the discriminative force one values so much in nouns substantive. Also (only we knew it already) that Sally was no lawyer. We do not love her the less, for our part.

But nothing in this interchange of shots between Sally and her friend, nor in anything she said to her mother about Mr. Bradshaw, gives its due prominence to the fact that, though that young gentleman was a devout worshipper at the shrine of St. Satisfax, he had only become so on the Sunday after Miss Sally had casually mentioned the latter as a saint she frequented. Perhaps she "dismissed it from her mind," and it was obliging enough to go. Perhaps she considered she had done her duty by it when she put on record, in soliloquy, her opinion that if people chose to be gaping idiots they might, and she couldn't help it. She had a happy faculty for doing what she called putting young whippersnappers in their proper places. This only meant that she managed to convey to them that the lines they might elect to whippersnap on were not to be those of sentimental nonsense. And perhaps she really dealt in the wisest way with Mr. Bradshaw's romantic adoration of her at a distance when he fished for leave to call upon her. The line he made his applica-

tion on was that he should so like to play her a rapid movement by an unpronounceable Slav. She said directly, why not come and bring his violin on Wednesday evening at nine? That was her mother's address on the card on the fiddle-case. He must recollect it—which he did unequivocally.

Now, if this young lady had had a fan, she might have tittered with it, or blushed slightly, and said, "Oh, Mr. Bradshaw!" or, "Oh, sir!" like in an old novel—one by Fanny Burney, or the like. But she did nothing of the sort, and the consequence was that he had, as it were, to change the *venue* of his adoration—to make it a little less romantic, in fact. Her frank and breezy treatment of the subject had let in a gust of fresh air, and blown away all imagination. For there naturally was a good deal of that in a passion based on a single interview and nourished by weekly stimulants at morning services. In fact, when he presented himself at Krakatoa Villa on Wednesday evening as invited—the day after Lætitia's remarks about his social position—he was quite prepared to be introduced to the young woman's *fiancé*, if . . . Only, when he got as far as the *if*, he dropped the subject. As soon as he found there was no such person he came to believe he would not have been much disconcerted if there had been. How far this was true, who can say?

He was personally one of those young men about whom you may easily produce a false impression if you describe them at all. This is because your reader will take the bit in his teeth, and run away with an idea. If you say a nose has a bridge to it, this directly produces in some minds an image like Blackfriars Bridge; that it is straight, the Æginetan marbles; that it is *retroussé*, the dog in that Hogarth portrait. Suggest a cheerful countenance, and you stamp your subject for ever as a Shakespearian clown. So you must be content to know that Mr. Bradshaw was a good-looking young man, of dark complexion, and of rather over medium height and good manners. If he had not been, he would never, as an article of universal provision for parties, have passed muster at Cattley's. He was like many other young men such as one sees in shops; but then, what very nice-looking young men one sometimes sees there! Sally had classed him as a young whippersnapper, but this was unjust, if

it impugned his stature. She repeated the disparaging epithet when, in further justification to Miss Wilson of her asking him to her mother's house, she sketched a policy of conduct to guide inexperienced girls in their demeanour towards new male friends. "You let 'em come close to, and have a good look," said the vulgar child. "Half of 'em will be disgusted, and go away in a huff."

Mrs. Nightingale had known Mr. Bradshaw for a long time as a customer at a shop knows the staff in the background, mere office secretions, who only ooze out at intervals. For Bradshaw was not strictly a counter-jumper, although Miss Wilson more than once spoke of him so, adding, when it was pointed out to her that theoretically he never went behind counters, by jumping or otherwise, that that didn't make the slightest difference: the principle was the same.

Sally's mother did not share her friend's fancies. But she had not confidence enough in the stability of the earth's crust to give way freely to her liberalism, drive a coach-and-six through the Classes, and talk to him freely about the shop. She did not know what a Social Seismologist would say on the point. So she contented herself with treating him as a matter of course, as a slight acquaintance whom she saw often, merely asking him if that was he. To which the reply was in the affirmative, like question-time in the Commons.

"Is this the Strad? Let's have it out," says Sally. For Mr. Bradshaw possessed a Strad. He brought it out of its coffin with something of the solicitude Petrarch might have shown to the remains of Laura, and when he had rough-sketches its condition of discord and corrected the drawing, danced a Hungarian dance on it, and apologized for his presumption in doing so. He played so very well that it certainly did seem rather a cruel trick of fate that gave him nerves in his head. Sally then said, might she look at it? and played chords and runs, just to feel what it was like. Her comment was that she wished her viola was a Strad.

We record all this to show what, perhaps, is hardly worth the showing—a wavering in a man's mind, and that man a young one. Are they not at it all day long, all of them? Do they do anything but waver?

When Sally said she wished her viola was a Strad, Mr. Brad-

shaw's mind shortly became conscious that some passing spook, of a low nature, had murmured almost inaudibly that it was a good job *his* Strad wasn't a viola. "Because, you see," added the spook, "that quashes all speculation whether you, Mr. Bradshaw, are glad or sorry you needn't lay your instrument at this young lady's feet. Now, if immediately after you first had that overwhelming impression of her—got metaphorically torpedoed, don't you know?—such a wish as hers had been expressed, you probably would have laid both your Strad and your heart at her feet, and said take my all!" But now that he had been so far disillusioned by Sally's robust and breezy treatment of the position, he was not quite sure the spook had not something to say for himself. Mr. Bradshaw was content to come down off his high horse, and to plod along the dull path of a mere musical evening visitor at a very nice house. Pleasant, certainly, but not the aim of his aspirations from afar at St. Satisfax's. His *amour propre* was a little wounded by that spook, too. Nothing keeps it up to the mark better than a belief in one's stability—in love-matters, especially.

He was not quite sure of the exact moment the spook intruded his opinion, so *we* can't be expected to know. Perhaps about the time Miss Wilson came in (just as he was showing how carefully he had listened to Joachim) and said could *he* play those? She wished *she* could. She was thrown off her guard by the finished execution, and for the moment quite forgot Cattley's and the classitudes. Sally instantly perceived her opening. She would enjoy catching Tishy out in any sort of way. So she said: "Mr. Bradshaw will show you how, Tishy dear; of course he will. Only, not now, because if we don't begin, we shan't have time for the long quartet." If you say this sort of things about strangers in Society, you really ought to give them a chance. So thought Lætitia to herself, and resolved to blow Sally up at the first opportunity.

As for that culprit, she completed her work, from her own position of perfect security, with complacency at least. And she felt at the end of her evening (which we needn't dwell on, as it was all crotchets, minims, and F sharps and G flats) that her entrenchments had become spontaneously stronger without exertion on her part. For there were Tishy and Mr. Bradshaw,

between whom Sally had certainly understood there was a great gulf fixed, sitting on the very same sofa and talking about a Stradivarius. She concluded that, broadly speaking, Debrett's bark is worse than his bite, and that he is, at heart, a very accommodating character.

"I hope you saw Tishy, mamma dear." So spoke Sally to her mother, after the musicians first, and then Fenwick, had dispersed their several ways. Mrs. Nightingale seemed very *distraine* and preoccupied.

"Saw Tishy what, kitten?"

"Tishy and Mr. Bradshaw on that sofa."

"No, darling. Oh yes, I did. What about them?"

"After all that rumpus about shop-boys!" But her mother's attention is not easy to engage this evening, somehow. Her mind seems somewhere else altogether. But from where it is, it sees the vulgar child very plainly indeed, as she puts up her face to be kissed with all its animation on it. She kisses it, animation and all, caressing the rich black hair with a hand that seems thoughtful. A hand can. Then she makes a little effort to shake off something that draws her away, and comes back rather perfunctorily to her daughter's sphere of interest and the life of town.

"Did Lætitia call Mr. Bradshaw a shop-boy, chick?"

"Very nearly—at least, I don't know what you call not calling anybody shop-boy if she didn't." Her mother makes a further effort—comes back a little more.

"What did she say, child?"

"Said you could always tell, and it was no use my talking, and the negro couldn't change his spots."

"She has some old-fashioned ideas. But how about calling him a shop-boy?"

"Not in words, but worse. Tishy always goes round and round. I wish she'd *say!* However, Dr. Vereker quite agrees with me. *We* think it *dishonest!*"

"What did Dr. Vereker think of Mr. Bradshaw?" We have failed to note that the doctor was the 'cello in the quartet.

"Now, mamma darling, fancy asking Dr. Prosy what he thinks! I wasn't going to. Besides, as if it mattered what they think of each other! . . . Who? Why, men, of course!"

"Mr. Fenwick's a man, and you asked him."

"Mr. Fenwick's a man on other lines—absolutely other. He doesn't come in really." Her mother repeats the last four words, not exactly derisively—rather, if anything, her accent and her smile may be said to caress her daughter's words as she says them. She is such a silly, but such a dear little goose—that seems the implication.

"We-e-ll," says Sally, as she has said before, and we have tried to spell her. "I don't see anything in that, because, look how reasonable! Mr. Fenwick's . . . Mr. Fenwick's . . . why, of course, entirely different. I say, mother dearest. . . ."

"What, kitten?"

"What were you and Mr. Fenwick talking about so seriously in the back drawing-room?" The two are upstairs in the front bedroom at this minute, by-the-bye.

"Did you hear us, darling?"

"No, because of the row. But one could tell, for all that." Then Sally sees in an instant that it is something her mother is not going to tell her about, and makes immediate concession. "Where was the Major going that he couldn't come?" she asks. "He generally makes a point of coming when it's music."

"I fancy he's dining at the Hurkaru," says her mother. But she has gone back into her preoccupation, and from within it externalises an opinion that we should be better in bed, or we shall never be up in the morning.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT FENWICK AND SALLY'S MOTHER HAD BEEN SAYING IN THE BACK DRAWING-ROOM. OP. 999. BACK IN THAT OLD GARDEN AGAIN, AND HOW GERRY COULD NOT SWIM. THE OLD TARTINI SONATA

As soon as ever Mr. Bradshaw touched his violin, and before ever he began to play his Hungarian Dance on all four strings at once, Mrs. Nightingale and Mr. Fenwick went away into the back drawing-room, not to be too near the music. Because there was a fire in both rooms.

In the interval of time that had passed since Christmas Sally had contrived to "dismiss from her mind" Colonel Lund's provisions about her mother and Mr. Fenwick. Or they had given warning, and gone of their own accord. For by now she had again fallen into the frame of mind which classified her mother and Fenwick as semi-elderly people, and, so to speak, out of it all. So her mind assented readily to distance from the music as a sufficient reason for a secession to the back room. Non-combatants are just as well off the field of battle.

But a closer observer than Sally at this moment would have noticed that chat in an undertone had already set in in the back drawing-room even before the Hungarians had stopped dancing. Also that the applause that came therefrom, when they did stop, had a certain perfunctory air, as of plaudits something else makes room for, and comes back again after. Not that she would have "seen anything in it" if she had, because, whatever her mother said or did was, in Sally's eyes, right and normal. Abnormal and bad things were conceived and executed outside the family. Nor, in spite of the *sotto voce*, was there anything Sally could not have participated in, whatever exception she might have taken to something of a patronising tone, inexcusable towards our own generation even in the most semi-elderly people on record.

Her mother, at Sally's latest observation point, had taken