

keep the twenty years that had passed clearly in her mind; could deal with the position from a good, sensible, matter-of-fact standpoint.

The past was past, and happily forgotten by him. The present had still its possibilities, if only the past might remain forgotten. Surely she could rely on herself to find the nerve to go through what was, after all, a mere act of duty. Knowing, or rather feeling, that Fenwick would ask her to marry him as soon as he dared—it was merely a question of time—her duty was plainly to forewarn him—to make sure that he was alive to the antecedents of the woman he was offering himself to. She knew *his* antecedents; as many as she wished to know. If the twenty years of oblivion concealed irregularity, immorality—well, was she not to blame for it? Was ever a better boy than Gerry, as she knew him, to the day they parted? It was her fault or misfortune that had cast him all adrift. As to that troublesome question of a possible wife elsewhere, in the land of his oblivion, she had quite made up her mind about that. Every effort had been made to find such a one, and failed. If she reappeared, it would be her own duty to surrender Fenwick—if he wished to go back. If he did not, and his other wife wished to be free, surely in the *chicane* of the law-courts there must be some shuffle that could be for once made useful to a good end.

Mrs. Nightingale had reasoned it all out in cold blood, and she was, as we have told you, a strong woman. But had she really taken her own measure? Could she sit there much longer; with him beside her, and his words of twenty years ago sounding in her ears; almost the feeling of the kisses she had so dutifully pointed out the lawlessness, and allowed the repetition of, in that old forgotten time—forgotten by him, never by her! Was it possible to bear, without crying out, the bewilderment of a mixed existence such as that his presence and identity forced upon her, wrenching her this way and that, interweaving the woof of *then* with the weft of *now*, even as in that labyrinth of musical themes and phrases in the other room they crossed and recrossed one another at the bidding of each instrument as its turn came to tell its tale? Her brain reeled and her heart ached under the intolerable stress. Could she still hold on, or would she be, after all, driven to make some excuse, and run for the

solitude of her own room to live down the tension as best she might alone?

The music itself came to her assistance. Its triumphant strength, in an indescribable outburst of hope or joy or mastery of Fate, as it drew near to its final close, spoke to her of the great ocean that lies beyond the crabbed limits of our stunted lives, the boundless sea our rivulets of life steal down to, to be lost in; and while it lasted made it possible for her to be still. She took her eyes from Fenwick, and waited. When she raised them again, in the silence Op. 999 came to an end in, she saw that he had moved. His face had gone into his hands; and as she looked up, his old action of rubbing them into his loose hair, and shaking it, had come back, and his strong identity with his boyhood, dependent on the chance of a moment, had disappeared. He got up suddenly, and after a turn across the room he was in, walked into the other one, and contributed his share to the babble of felicitation or comment that followed what was clearly thought an achievement in musical rendering.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said Lætitia Wilson. "Was ever a poor girl so sat upon? I feel quite flat!" This was not meant to be taken too much *au pied de la lettre*. It was merely a method of praise of Mr. Bradshaw.

"But what a jolly shame you had to give it up!" This was Sally in undisguised admiration. But in Mr. Julius Bradshaw's eyes, Sally's identity had undergone a change. Her breezy frankness had made hay of a *grande passion*, and was blowing the hay all over the field. He had come close to, and had a good look; but he will hardly go away in a huff, although he feels a little silly over his public worship of these past weeks. Just at this moment of the story, however, he is very apologetic towards Miss Wilson; on whom, if she reports correctly, he has sat. He tries no pretences with a view to her reinstatement, even on a par with himself. He knows, and every one knows, they would be seen through immediately. It is no use assuring her she is a capital player, of her years. Much better let it alone!

"Are you any the worse, Mr. Bradshaw?" says Dr. Vereker. Obviously, as a medical authority, it is his duty to "voice" this inquiry. So he voices it.

"N—no; but that's about as much as I can do, with safety. It won't do to spoil my night's rest, and be late at the shop." It was easy to talk about the shop with perfect unreserve after such a performance as that.

"Oh dear! we are so sorry for you!" Thus the two girls. And concurrence comes in various forms from Vereker, Fenwick, and the pianist, whom we haven't mentioned before. He was a cousin of Miss Wilson's, and was one of those unfortunate young men who have no individuality whatever. But pianists have to be human unless you can afford a pianola. You may speak of them as Mr. What's-his-name, or Miss Thingummy, but you must give them tea or coffee or cake or sandwiches, or whatever is brought in on a tray. This young man's name, we believe, was Elsley—Nobody Elsley, Miss Sally in her frivolity had thought fit to christen him. You know how in your own life people come in and go out, and you never know anything about them. Even so this young man in this story.

"I was very sorry for myself, I assure you"—it is Bradshaw who speaks—"when I had to make up my mind to give it up. But it couldn't be helped!" He speaks without reserve, but as of an unbearable subject; in fact, Sally said afterwards to Tishy, "it seemed as if he was going to cry." He doesn't cry, though, but goes on: "At one time I really thought I should have gone and jumped into the river."

"Why didn't you?" asks Sally. "I should have."

"Yes, silly Sally!" says Lætitia; "and then you would have swum like a fish. And the police would have pulled you out. And you would have looked ridiculous!"

But Sally is off on a visit to her mother in the next room.

"Tired, mammy darling?"

She kisses her, and her mother answers: "Yes, love, a little," and kisses her back.

"Doesn't he play *beautifully*, mother?" says Sally.

But her mother says "Yes" absently. Her attention is taken off by something else. What is wrong with Mr. Fenwick? Sally doesn't think anything is. It's only his way.

"I'm sure there's something wrong," says Mrs. Nightingale, and gets up to go into the front-room rather wearily. "I shall

go to bed soon, poppet," she says, "and leave you to do the honours. Is anything wrong, doctor?" She speaks under her voice to Vereker, looking very slightly round at Fenwick, who, after the movement that alarmed her—a rather unusually marked head-shake and pressure of his hands on his eyes—is standing looking down at the fire, on the rug with his back to her, as she speaks to Vereker.

"I fancy he's had what he calls a recurrence," says the doctor. "Nothing to hurt. These half-recollections will go on until the memory comes back in earnest. It may some time."

"Are you talking about me, doctor?" His attention may have been caught by a reflection in a glass before him. "Yes, it was a very queer recurrence. Something about lawn-tennis. Only it had to do with what Miss Wilson said about the police fishing Sally out of the water." He looks round for Miss Wilson, but she is at the other end of the room on a sofa talking to Bradshaw about the Strad, as recorded once before. Sally testifies:

"Tishy said it wouldn't work—trying to drown yourself if you could swim. No more it would."

"But why should that make me think of lawn-tennis? It did." He looks seriously distressed by it—can make nothing out.

"Kitten," says Sally's mother to her suddenly, "I think I shall go away to bed. I'm feeling very tired."

She says good-night comprehensively, and departs. But she is so clearly the worse for something that her daughter follows her to see that the something is not serious. Outside she reassures Sally, who returns. Oh no, she is only tired; really nothing else.

But what drove her out of the room was a feeling that she must be alone and silent. Could her position be borne at all? Yes, with patience and self-control. But that "why should it make me think of lawn-tennis?" was trying. Not only the pain of still more revived association, but the fear that his memory might travel still further into the past. It was living on the edge of the volcano.

Her own memory had followed on, too, taking up the thread of that old interview in the garden of twenty years ago. She

had felt again the clasp of his arm, the touch of his hand; had heard his voice of passionate protest—protest against the idea that he could ever forget. And she had then pretended to make a half-joke of his earnestness. What would he do now, really, if she were to tell him she preferred his great friend Arthur Fenwick to him? That was nonsense, he said. She knew she didn't. Besides, Arthur wanted Jessie Nairn. Why, didn't they waltz all the waltzes at the party last week? . . . Well, so did we, for that matter, all-but. . . . And just look how they had run away together! Wasn't that them coming back? Yes, it was; and artificial calm ensued, and more self-contained manners. But then, before the other two young lovers could rejoin them, she had time for a word more.

"No, dear Gerry, seriously. If I were to write out *no* to you in India—a great big final *no*—then what do you think you would do?"

"I know what I *think* I should do. I should throw myself into the Hooghly or the Ganges."

"You silly boy! You would swim about, whether you liked or no. And then Jemadars, or Shastras, or Sudras, or something would come and pull you out. And then how ridiculous you would look!"

"No, Rosey, because I can't swim. Isn't it funny?"

Then she recollected *his* friend's voice striking in with: "What's that? Gerry Palliser swim! Of course he can't. He can wrestle, or run, or ride, or jump; and he's the best man I know with the gloves on. But swim he *can't!* That's flat!" Also how Gerry had then told eagerly how he was nearly drowned once, and Arthur fished him up from the bottom of Abingdon Lock. The latter went on:

"It was after that we tattooed each other, his name on my arm, my name on his, so as not to quarrel. You know, I suppose, that men who tattoo each other's arms can't quarrel if they try?" Arthur showed "A. Palliser," tattooed blue on his arm. Both young men were very grave and earnest about the safeguard. And then she remembered a question she asked, and how both replied with perfect gravity: "Of course, sure to!" The question had been:—Was it invariable that all men quarrelled if one saved the other from drowning?

She sits upstairs alone by the fire in her bedroom, and dreams again through all the past, except the nightmare of her life—that she always shudders away from. Sally will come up presently, and then she will feel ease again. Now, it is a struggle against fever.

She can hear plainly enough—for the house is but a London suburban villa—the strains from the drawing-room of what is possibly the most hackneyed violin music in the world—the Tartini (so-called) Devil Sonata—every phrase, every run, every chord an enthralling mystery still, an utterance none can explain, an inexhaustible thing no age can wither, and no custom stale. It is so soothing to her that it matters little if it makes them late. But that young man will destroy his nerves to a certainty outright.

Then comes the chaos of dispersal—the broken fragments of the intelligible a watchful ear may pick out. Dr. Vereker won't have a cab; he will leave the 'cello till next time, and walk. Mr. Bradshaw wants to get to Bayswater. Of course, that's all in our way—we being Miss Wilson and the cousin, the nonentity. We can give Mr. Bradshaw a lift as far as he goes, and then he can take the growler on. Then more good-nights are wished than the nature of things will admit of before to-morrow, Fenwick and Vereker light something to smoke, with a preposterous solicitude to use only one tandsticker between them, and walk away umbrella-less. From which we see that "it" is holding up. Then comes silence, and a consciousness of a policeman musing, and suspecting doors have been left stood open.

And it was then Sally went upstairs and indited her friend for sitting on that sofa after calling him a shop-boy. And she didn't forget it, either, for after she and her mother were in bed, and presumably better, she called out to her.

"I say, mammy!"

"What, dear?"

"Isn't that St. John's Church?"

"Isn't which St. John's Church?"

"Where Tishy goes?"

"Yes, Ladbroke Grove Road. Why?"

"Because now Mr. Bradshaw will go there—public worship!"

"Will he, dear? Suppose we go to sleep." But she really

meant "you," not "we"; for it was a long time before she went to sleep herself. She had plenty to think of, and wanted to be quiet, conscious of Sally in the neighbourhood.

We hope our reader was not misled, as we ourselves were, when Mrs. Nightingale first saw the name on Fenwick's arm, into supposing that she accepted it as his real name. She knew better. But then, how was she to tell him his name was Paliser? Think it over.

CHAPTER XIII

OF A SLEEPLESS NIGHT MRS. NIGHTINGALE HAD, AND HOW SALLY WOKE UP AND TALKED

WAS it possible, thought Rosalind in the sleepless night that followed, that the recurrence of the tennis-garden in Fenwick's mind might grow and grow, and be a nucleus round which the whole memory of his life might re-form? Even so she had seen, at a chemical lecture, a supersaturated solution, translucent and spotless, suddenly fill with innumerable ramifications from one tiny crystal dropped into it. Might not this shred of memory chance to be a crystal of the right salt in the solvent of his mind, and set going a swift arborescence to penetrate the whole? Might not one branch of that tree be a terrible branch—one whose leaves and fruit were poisoned and whose stem was clothed with thorns? A hideous metaphor of the moment—call it the worst in her life—when her young husband, driven mad with the knowledge that had just forced its way into his reluctant mind, had almost struck her away from him, and with angry words, of which the least was traitress, had broken through the effort of her hands to hold him, and left her speechless in her despair.

It was such a nightmare idea, this anticipation that next time she met Gerry's eyes she might see again the anger that was in them on that blackest of her few married days, might see him again vanish from her, this time never to return. And it spread an ever growing horror, greater and greater in the silence and the darkness of the night, till it filled all space and became a power that thrilled through every nerve, and denied the right of any other thing in the infinite void to be known or thought of. Which of us has not been left, with no protection but our own weak resolutions, to the mercy of a dominant idea in the