

"They'll be all right," she says, with cheerful optimism. "I wonder what's become of Prosy."

"He's up there with his mother. I saw him at the window. But I didn't mean that: they'll be happy enough together, I've no doubt. I mean, has Lætitia done wisely to quarrel with her family?"

"She hasn't; it's only the she-dragon. Tishy told me all about it going to church."

And, oh dear, how poor Prosy, who was up there with his mother, did long to come out to the voices he could hear plain enough, even as far off as that! But then he had been so long away to-day, and he knew his excellent parent always liked to finish the tale of her own wedding-day when she began it—as she often did. So he listened again to the story of the wedding, which was celebrated in the severest thunderstorm experienced in these islands since the days of Queen Elizabeth, by a heroic clergyman who was suffering from pleuro-pneumonia, which made his voice inaudible till a miraculous chance produced one of Squilby's cough lozenges (which are not to be had now for love or money), and cured him on the spot. And how the bridesmaids all had mumps, more or less. And much concerning the amazingly dignified appearance of her own father and mother, which was proverbial, and therefore no matter of surprise to any one, the proverb being no doubt well known to Europe.

But there, it didn't matter! Sally would be there to-morrow.

CHAPTER XXX

HOW A FORTNIGHT PASSED, AND THE HONEYMOONERS RETURNED. OF A CHAT ON THE BEACH, AND MISS ARKWRIGHT'S SCIENTIFIC EXPERIENCE. ALMOST THE LAST, LAST, LAST—MAN'S HEAD!

SALLY to-morrow—and to-morrow—and to-morrow. Sally for fourteen morrows. And the moon that had lighted the devoted young man to his fate—whatever it was to be—had waned and left the sky clear for a new one, on no account to be seen through glass.

They were morrows of inextinguishable, indescribable delight for their victims or victim—for how shall we classify Sally? Who shall tread the inner temple of a girl's mind? How shall it be known that she herself has the key to the Holy of Holies?—that she is not dwelling in the outer court, unconscious of her function of priestess, its privileges and responsibilities? Or, in plainer language, metaphors having been blowed in obedience to a probable wish of the reader's, how do we know Sally was not falling in love with the doctor? How do we know she was not in love with him already? How did *she* know?

All we know is that the morrows went on, each one sweeter than the last, and all the little incidents went on that were such nothings at the time, but were so sure to be borne in mind for ever! *You* know all about it, you who read. Like enough you can remember now, old as you are, how you and she (or he, according as your sex is) got lost in the wood, and never found where the picnic had come to an anchor till all the wings of chicken were gone and only legs left; or how there was a bull somewhere; or how next day the cat got caught on the shoulder of one of you and had to be detached, hooking horribly, by the other; or how you felt hurt (not jealous, but hurt) because she (or he) was decently civil to some new he (or she), and how relieved you were when you heard it was Mr. or Mrs. Some-name-you've-forgotten. Why, if you were to ask now, of that grey man

or woman whose life was linked with yours, maybe now sixty years ago, did he or she have a drumstick, or go on to ham-sandwiches?—or, was it really a bull, after all?—or, had that cat's claws passed out of memory?—or, what was the name of that lady (or gentleman) at the So-and-so's?—if you asked any of these things, she or he might want a repeat into a deaf ear but would answer clear enough in the end, and recall the drumsticks and the equivocal bull, the cat's claws, and the unequivocal married person. And then you would turn over all the little things of old, and wrangle a bit over details here and there; and all the while you would be the very selfsame two that were young and were lost in the wood and trampled down the fern and saw the squirrels overhead all those long years ago.

Many a little thing of a like nature—perhaps some identical—made up hours that became days in that fortnight we have to skip, and then the end was drawing near; and Dr. Conrad would have to go back and write prescriptions with nothing that could possibly do any harm in them, and abstain with difficulty from telling young ladies with cultivated waists they were liars when they said you could get a loaf of bread between all round, and it was sheer nonsense. And other little enjoyments of a G.P.'s life. Yes, the end was very near. But Sally's resolute optimism thrust regrets for the coming chill aside, and decided to be jolly while we could, and acted up to its decision.

Besides, an exciting variation gave an interest to the last week of the doctor's stay at St. Sennans. The wandering honeymooners, in gratitude to that saint, proposed to pay him a visit on their way back to London. Perhaps they would stop a week. So the smallest possible accommodation worthy of the name was found for them over a brandyball and bull's-eye shop in a house that had no back rooms, being laid like a vertical plaster against the cliff behind, and having an exit on a flat roof where you might bask in the sun and see the bright red poppies growing in the chalk, and contribute your share towards a settlement of the vexed question of which are brigs. There wasn't another room to be had in the real St. Sennans, and it came to that or the hotel (which was beastly), and you might just as well be in London. Thus Sally, and settled the question.

And this is how it comes to pass that at the beginning of this

chapter—which we have only just got to, after all this circumlocution!—Sally and one of the Julius Bradshaws were sitting talking on the beach in the shadow of a breakwater, while the other Julius Bradshaw (the original one) was being taken for a walk to the extremely white lighthouse three miles off, or nearly five if you went by the road, by Dr. Conrad, who by this time knew all the walks in the neighbourhood exactly as well as Sally did, neither more nor less. And both knew them very well.

The tide had come up quite as far as it had contemplated, and seemed to have made up its mind this time not to go back in too great a hurry. It was so nice there on the beach, with Tishy and Sally and Miss Gwendolen Arkwright, the late bridesmaid, who was having an independent chat all to herself about the many glories of the pier-end, and the sights to be seen there by visitors for a penny. And it—we are speaking of the tide—had got a delightful tangle of floating weed (*Fucus Vesiculosus*) and well-washed scraps of wood from long-forgotten wrecks—who knows?—and was turning it gently to and fro, and over and over, with intermittent musical caresses, against the shingle-bank, whose counter-music spoke to the sea of the ages it had toiled in vain to grind it down to sand. And the tide said, wait, we shall see. The day will come, it said, when not a pebble of you all but shall be scattered drifting sand, unless you have the luck to be carted up at a shilling a load by permission of the authorities, to be made into a concrete of a proper consistency according to the local by-laws. But the pebbles said, please, no; we will bide our time down here, and you shall have us for your own—play with us in the sun at the feet of these two ladies, or make the whirling shoals of us, beaten to madness, thunder back your voice when it shouts in the storm to the seaman's wife, who stops her ears in the dark night alone that she may not hear you heralding her husband's death. And the tide said very good; but a day would come when the pebbles would be sand, for all that. And even the authority would be gone, and the local by-laws. But it would sound upon some shore for ever. So it kept on saying. Probably it was mistaken.

This has nothing to do with our story except that it is approximately the substance of a statement made by Sally to Miss

Arkwright, who was interested, and had been promised it all over again to-morrow. For the present she could talk about the pier and take her audience for granted.

"But was it that Kensington Gardens business that did the job?" asked Sally, in the shadow of the breakwater, getting the black hair dry after three-quarters of an hour in the sea; because caps, you know, are all nonsense as far as keeping water out goes. So Sally had to sit ever so long with it out to dry. And the very tiny pebbles you can almost see into stick to your hands, as you know, and come off in your hair when you run them through it, and have to be combed out. At least, Sally's had. But she kept on running the pebbles through her still blue fingers for all that as she half lay, half sat by Tishy on the beach.

"Did the job!" repeats the bride on her honeymoon with some indignation. "Sally dear, when will you learn to be more refined in your ways of speech? I'm not a *précieuse*, but—'did the job!' Really, Sally! . . ."

"Observe the effect of three weeks in France. The Julius Bradshaws can parlay like anything! No, Tishy darling, don't be a stuck-upper, but tell me again about Kensington Gardens."

"I told you. It was just like that. Julius and I were walking up the avenue—you know. . . ."

"The one that goes up and across, and comes straight like this?" Tishy, helped by a demonstration of blue finger-tips, recognises this, strange to say.

"No, not that one. It doesn't matter. We didn't see mamma coming till she was ever so close, because of the Speke Monument in the way. And what could possess her to come home that way from Hertford Street, Mayfair, I cannot imagine!"

"Never mind, Tishy dear! It's no use crying over spilled milk. What did she say?"

"Nothing, dear. She turned purple, and bowed civilly. To Julius, of course. But it included me, whether or no."

"But was that what did the job? . . . We-ell, I do not see *anything* to object to in that expression. Was it?"

"If you mean, dear, was it that that made us, me and Julius, feel that matters would get no better by waiting, I think perhaps it was. . . . Well, when it comes to meeting one's mother in Kensington Gardens, near the Speke Monument, and being bowed

civilly to, it seems to me it's high time. . . . Now, isn't it, Sally?"

Sally evaded giving testimony by raising other questions: "What did your father say?" "Did the Dragon tell him about the meeting in the park?" "What do you think he'll say now?"

"Now? Well, you know, I've got his letter. *He's* all right—and rather dear, I think. What do *you* think, Sally?"

"I think very."

"Perhaps I should say very. But with papa you never know. He really does love us all, after a fashion, except Egerton, only I'm never sure he doesn't do it to contradict mamma."

"Why don't they chuck each other and have done with it?" The vulgar child lets fly straight into the bull's-eye; then adds thoughtfully: "*I* should, only, then, I'm not a married couple."

Tishy elided the absurd figure of speech and ignored it. The chance of patronising was not to be lost.

"You are not married, dear. When you are, you may feel things differently. But, of course, papa and mamma *are* very odd. I used to hear them through my door between the rooms at L.B.G. Road. It was wrangle, wrangle, wrangle; fight, fight, fight; all through the night—till two o'clock sometimes. Oh dear!"

"You're sure they always were quarrelling?"

"Oh dear, yes. I used to catch all the regular words—settlement and principal and prevaricate. All that sort of thing, you know. But there they are, and there they'll be ten years hence, that's my belief, living together, sleeping together, and dining at opposite ends of the same table, and never communicating in the daytime except through me or Theeny, but quarrelling like cat and dog."

"What shall you do when you go back? Go straight there?"

"I think so. Julius thinks so. After all, papa's the master of the house—legally, at any rate."

"Shall you write and say you're coming?"

"Oh, no! Just go and take our chance. We shan't be any nearer if we give mamma an opportunity of miffing away somewhere when we come. What is that little maid talking about there?" The ex-bridesmaid is three or four yards away, and is discoursing eloquently, a word in the above conversation having

reminded her of a tragic event she has mentioned before in this story. "I seeps with my bid sister Totey's dolly," is what she appears to be saying.

"Never mind the little poppet, Tishy, till you've told me more about it." Sally is full of curiosity. "Did that do the job or did it not? That's what I want to know."

"I suppose it did, dear, indirectly. That was on Saturday afternoon. Next morning we breakfasted under a thundercloud with Egerton grinning inside his skin, and looking like 'Won't you catch it, that's all!' at me out of the corner of his eye. That was bad enough, without one's married sister up from the country taking one aside to say that *she* wasn't going to interfere, and calling one to witness that *she* had said nothing so far. All she said was, 'Me and mamma settle it between us.' 'Settle what?' said I; and she didn't answer, and went away to the first celebration."

"She's not bad, your married sister," Sally decided thoughtfully.

"Oh no, Clarissa's not bad. Only she wants to run with the hare and explain to the hounds when they come up. . . . What happened next? Why, as I went upstairs past papa's room, out comes mamma scarlet with anger, and restraining herself in the most offensive way for me to go past. I took no notice, and when she was gone I went down and walked straight into the library. I said, 'What is it, papa?' I saw he was chuckling internally, as if he'd made a hit."

"Wasn't he angry? What did he say?"

"Oh no, *he* wasn't angry. Let's see . . . oh! . . . what he said was, 'That depends so entirely on what *it* is, my dear. But, broadly speaking, I should say it was your mother.' 'What has she been saying to you?' I asked. And he answered, 'I can only give her exact words without pledging myself to their meaning. She stated that she "supposed I was going to tell my daughter I approved of her walking about Kensington Gardens with *that man's* arm around her waist." I replied—reasonably, as it seems to me—that I supposed that man was there himself. Otherwise, it certainly did seem to me a most objectionable arrangement, and I hope you'll promise you mother not to do it again.'"

"What on earth did he mean?"

"You don't understand papa. He quibbles to irritate mamma. He meant like a waistband—separate—don't you see?"

"I see. But it wouldn't bend right." Sally's truthful nature postpones laughing at the Professor's absurdity; looks at the case on its merits. When she has done justice to this point, she laughs and adds: "What did *you* say, Tishy?"

"Oh, I said what nonsense, and it wasn't tight round like all that; only a symptom. And we didn't even know mamma was there because of Speke and Grant's obelisk. There wasn't a soul! Papa saw it quite as I did, and was most reasonable. So I thought I would feel my way to developing an idea we had been broaching, Julius and I, just that very time by the obelisk. I asked papa flatly what he would do if I married Julius straight off. 'I believe, my dear,' said he, 'that I should be bound to disapprove most highly of your conduct and his.' 'But *should* you, papa?' I said. 'I should be *bound* to, my dear,' said he. 'But should you turn us out of the house?' I asked. 'Most certainly *not*,' said he emphatically. 'But I should disapprove.' I said I should be awfully sorry for that. 'Of course you would,' said he. 'Any dutiful daughter would. But I don't exactly see what harm it would do *you*.' And you see how his letter begins—that he is bound, as a parent, to feel the strongest disapprobation, and so on. No, I don't think we need be frightened of papa. As for mamma, of course it wouldn't be reasonable to expect her to . . ."

"To expect her to what?"

"Well, I was going to say keep her hair on. The expression is Egerton's, and I'm sorry to say his expressions are not always ladylike, however telling they are! So I hesitated. Now what is that baby talking about down there?"

For through the whole of Tishy's interesting tale that baby had been dwelling on the shocking occurrence of her sister's doll as before recorded. Her powers of narrative—giving a dramatic form to all things, and stimulated by Sally's statements of what the beach said to the sea, and the sea said back—had, it seemed, attracted shoals of fish from the ocean depths to hear her recital of the tragedy.

"Suppose, now, you come and tell it us up here, Gwenny," says the bride to the bridesmaid. And Sally adds: "Yes,

delicious little Miss Arkwright, come and tell us all about it too." Whereupon Miss Arkwright's musical tones are suddenly silent, and her eyes, that are so nearly the colour of the sea behind her, remain fixed on her two petitioners, their owner not seeming quite sure whether she shall acquiesce, or coquette, or possibly even burst into tears. She decides, however, on compliance, coming suddenly up the beach on all fours, and exclaiming, "Tate me!" flings herself bodily on Sally, who welcomes her with, "You sweet little darling!" while Mrs. Julius Bradshaw, anticipating requisition, looks in her bag for another chocolate. They will spoil that child between them.

"Now tell us about the fisses and dolly," says Sally. But the narrator, all the artist rising in her soul, will have everything in order.

"I *told* ze fisses," she says, reproach in her voice.

"I see, ducky. You told the fishes, and now you'll tell us all about dolly."

"I seeps wiv dolly, because my bid sister Totey said 'Yes.' Dolly seeps in her fings. I seep in my nightgown. Kean from the wass—"

"How nice you must be! Well, then, what next?" Sally may be said to imbibe the narrator at intervals. Tishy calls her a selfish girl. "You've got her all to yourself," she says. The story goes on:

"I seep vethy thound. Papa seeps vethy thound. Dolly got between the theets and the blangticks, and came out. It was a dood dob. Dane *said* it was—a dood dob!"

"What did Jane say was a good job? Poor dolly coming out?" A long, grave headshake denies this. The constructive difficulties of the tale are beyond the young narrator's skill. She has to resort to ellipsis.

"Or I sood have been all over brang and sawduss. Dane *said* so."

"Don't you see, Sally," says Tishy, "dolly was in another compartment—the other side of the sheet." But Sally says, of course, *she* understands, perhaps even suspects Tishy of claiming more acquaintance with children than herself because she has been married three weeks. This isn't fair patronising.

"Dolly came out at ve stisses"—so the sad tale goes on—"and

tyed, dolly did. Dane put her head on to ty wiv my pocket-hanshtiff!"

"I see, you little ducky, of course her head had come off, and she couldn't cry till it was put on, was that it? Don't dance, but say yes or no." This referred to a seated triumphal dance the chronicler indulged in at having put so much safely on record. Having subsided, she decided on *zass* as the proper thing to say, but it took time. Then she added suddenly: "But I *told* ze fisses." Sally took a good long draught, and said: "Of course you did, darling. You shan't be done out of that!" But an addendum or appendix was forthcoming.

"My mummar says I must tate dolly to be socked for a penny where the man is wiv buttons—and the man let Totey look froo his pyglass, and see all ve long sips, sits miles long—and I shall see when I'm a glowed-up little girl, like Totey."

"Coastguard's telescope, evidently," says Sally. "The man up at the flagstaff. Six miles long is how far off they were, not the length of the ships at all."

"I saw that. But what on earth were the socks? Does his wife sell doll's clothes?"

"We must try to find that out." And Sally sets herself to the task. But it's none so easy. Some mystery shrouds the approach to this passage in dolly's future life. It is connected with "kymin up," and "tandin' on a tep," and when it began it went wizzy, wizzy, wizz, and e-e-e-e, and never stopped. But Gwendolen had not been alarmed whatever it was, because her "puppar" was there. But it was exhausting to the intellect to tell of, for the description ended with a musical, if vacuous, laugh, and a plunge into Sally's bosom, where the narrator remained chuckling, but quite welcome.

"So Gwenny wasn't pitened! What a courageous little poppet! I wonder what on earth it was, Sally."

Thus Tishy, at a loss. But Sally is sharper, for in a moment the solution dawns upon her.

"What a couple of fools we are, Tishy dear! It wasn't *socks*—it was *shocks*. It was the galvanic battery at the end of the pier. A penny a time, and you mustn't have it on full up, or you howl. Why on earth didn't we think of that before?"

But Nurse Jane comes in on the top of the laughter that

follows, which Miss Gwendolen is joining in, rather claiming it as a triumph for her own dramatic power. She demurs to removal, but goes in the end on condition that all present shall come and see dolly galvanised at an early date. Jane agrees to replace dolly's vitals and sew her up to qualify her for this experience. And so they depart.

"What a dear little mite!" says Mrs. Julius; and then they let the mite lapse, and go back to the previous question.

"No, Sally dear, mamma will be mamma to the end of the time. But I didn't tell you all papa said, did I?"

"How on earth can I tell, Tishy dear? You had got to 'any dutiful daughter would,' etcetera. Cut along! Comes of being in love, I suppose." This last is a reflection on the low state of Tishy's reasoning powers.

"Well, just after that, when I was going to kiss him and go, papa stopped me, and said he had something to say, only he mustn't be too long because he had to finish a paper on, I think, 'Some Technical Terms in use in Cnidos in the Sixth Century, B.C.' Or was it . . . ?"

"That was it. That one'll do beautifully. Go ahead!"

"Well—of course it doesn't matter. It was like papa, anyhow. . . . Oh, yes—what he said then! It was about Aunt Priscilla's thousand pounds. He wanted to repeat that the interest would be paid to me half-yearly if by chance I married Julius or any other man without his consent. 'I wish it to be distinctly understood that if you marry Bradshaw it will be against my consent. But I only ask you to promise me this, Lætitia, that you won't marry any other man against my consent at present.' I promised, and he said I was a dutiful daughter. There won't be any trouble with papa."

"Don't look like it! I say, Tishy, that thousand pounds is very nice. How much will you have? Forty pounds a year?"

"It's more than that. It's gone up, somehow—sums of money do—or down. They're never the same as at first. I'm so glad about it. It's not as if I brought Julius absolutely nothing."

"How much is it?" Sally is under the impression that sums of money that exist on the word of signed documents only, and whose materialisation can only be witnessed by bankers, are like fourpence, one of whose properties is that it is fourpence. They

are not analogous, and Lætitia is being initiated into the higher knowledge.

"Well, dear, you see the stock has gone up, and it's at six three-quarters. You must ask Julius. He can do the arithmetic."

"Does that mean it's sixty-seven pounds ten?"

"You'd better ask Julius. Then, you know, there's the interest." Sally asked what interest. "Why, you see, Aunt Priscilla left it to me eleven years ago, so there's more." But a vendor of mauve and magenta woollen goods, known to Sally as "the beach-woman," was working up towards them.

"That woman never goes when she comes," said Sally. "Let's get up and go!"

We like lingering over this pleasant little time. It helps on but little, if at all, with our story. But in years to come this young couple, who only slip into it by a side-chance, having really little more to do with it than any of the thousand and one collaterals that interest the lives of all of us, and come and go and are forgotten—this Julius and Lætitia will talk of the pleasant three days or so they had at St. Sennans when they came back from France. And we, too, having choice of how much we shall tell of those three or four days, are in little haste to leave them. Those hours of unblushing idleness under a glorious sun—idleness fostered and encouraged until it seems one great exertion to call a fly, and another to subside into it—idleness on matchless moonlight nights, on land or on water—idleness with an affectation of astronomical study, just up to speculating on the identity of Aldebaran or Arcturus, but scarcely equal to metaphysics—idleness that lends itself readily to turning tables and automatic writing, and gets some convincing phenomena, and finds out that so-and-so is an extraordinary medium—idleness that says that letter will do just as well to-morrow, and Smith must wait—such hours as these disintegrate the moral fibre and anæsthetize our sense of responsibility, and make us so oblivious of musical criticism that we accept brass bands and inexplicable serenaders, white or black, and even accordions and hurdy-gurdies, as intrinsic features of the *ensemble*—the *fengshui* of the time and place—and give them a penny if we've got one.

That is and will be Mr. and Mrs. Julius Bradshaw's memory

of those three days or so, when they have grown quite old together, as we hope they may. And if you add memory of an intoxicated delirium of love—of love that was on no account to be shown or declared or even hinted at—and of a tiresome hitch or qualification, an unselfish parent in full blow, you will have the record that is to remain in the mind of Conrad Vereker.

CHAPTER XXXI

HOW SALLY DIDN'T CONFESS ABOUT THE DOCTOR, AND JEREMIAH CAME TO ST. SENNANS ONCE MORE

THAT evening Sally sat with her mother on the very uncomfortable seat they affected on what was known as the Parade, a stone's throw from the house for a good stone-thrower. It had a little platform of pebbles to stand on, and tamarisks to tickle you from behind when the wind was northerly. It was a corrugated and painful seat, and had a strange power of finding out your tender vertebræ and pulverising them, whatever your stature might be. It fell forward when its occupants, goaded to madness, bore too hard on its front bar, and convinced them they would do well, henceforward, to hold it artificially in its place. But Rosalind and her daughter forgave it all these defects—perhaps because they were really too lazy to protest even against torture. It was the sea air. Anyhow, there they sat that evening, waiting for Padlock's omnibus to come, bringing Fenwick from the station. Just at the moment at which the story overtakes them, Rosalind was looking wonderfully handsome in the sunset light, and Sally was thinking to herself what a beautiful mother she had; and how, when the after-glow dies, it will leave its memory in the red gold that is somewhere in the rich brown her eyes are resting on. Sally was fond of dwelling on her mother's beauty. Perhaps doing so satisfied her personal vanity by deputy. She was content with her own self, but had no admiration for it.

"You *are* a dear good mammy. Fancy your losing all the best time of the morning indoors!"

"How the best time of the morning, chick?"

"Sitting with that old cat upstairs. . . . Well, I can't help it. She *is* an old cat."

"You're a perverse little monkey, kitten; that's what *you are*!" Rosalind laughed with an excuse—or caress, it may be—in her