

He could not understand the man's motive for such detestable treachery and falsehood. His anger rose to a white heat as he thought of it, and he determined to "have it out" with him whatever the consequences might be. "No apology will serve his turn," he muttered. "The scoundrel! He has lied deliberately, and, by Jove, he shall pay for it!"

And he started off rapidly in the direction of Piccadilly, but on the way he suddenly remembered that he had no weapon with him, not even a cane wherewith to carry out his intention of thrashing Sir Francis, and calling to mind a certain heavy horsewhip, that hung over the mantel-piece in his own room, he hailed a hansom, and was driven back to his house in order to provide himself with that implement of castigation before proceeding further. On arriving at the door, to his surprise he found Lorimer, who was just about to ring the bell.

"Why, I thought you were in Paris?" he exclaimed.

"I came back last night," George began, when Morris opened the door, and Errington, taking his friend by the arm, hurried him into the house. In five minutes he had unburdened himself of all his troubles, and had explained the misunderstanding about Violet Vere, and Thelma's consequent flight. Lorimer listened with a look of genuine pain and distress on his honest face.

"Phil, you *have* been a fool!" he said, candidly. "A positive fool, if you'll pardon me for saying so. You ought to have told Thelma everything at first—she's the very last woman in the world who ought to be kept in the dark about anything. Neville's feelings? Bother Neville's feelings! Depend upon it, the poor girl has heard all manner of stories. She's been miserable for some time—Duprez noticed it." And he related in a few words the little scene that had taken place at Errington Manor on the night of the garden party, when his playing on the organ had moved her to such unwonted emotion.

Philip heard him in moody silence. How had it happened, he wondered, that others—comparative strangers—had observed that Thelma looked unhappy, while he, her husband, had been blind to it? He could not make this out—and yet it is a thing that very commonly happens. Our nearest and dearest are often those who are most in the dark respecting our private and personal sufferings—we do not wish to trouble them—and they prefer to think that everything is right with us even though the rest of the world can plainly perceive that everything is wrong. To the last moment they will refuse to see death in our faces, though the veriest stranger meeting us casually clearly beholds the shadow of the dark angel's hand.

"Apropos of Lennox," went on Lorimer, sympathetically watching his friend, "I came on purpose to speak to you about him. I've got some news for you. He's a regular sneak and scoundrel. You

can thrash him to your heart's content—for he has grossly insulted your wife."

"Insulted her?" cried Errington, furiously. "How—what—"

"Give me time to speak." And George laid a restraining hand on his arm. "Thelma visited my mother yesterday and told her that on the night before, when you had gone out, Lennox took advantage of your absence to come here and make love to her—and she actually had to struggle with him, and even to strike him, in order to release herself from his advances. My mother advised her to tell you about it—and she evidently then had no intention of flight, for she said she should inform you of everything as soon as you returned from the country. And if Lady Winsleigh hadn't interfered, it's very probable that—I say, where are you going?" This as Philip made a bound for the door.

"To get my horsewhip!" he answered.

"All right—I approve!" cried Lorimer. "But wait one instant, and see how clear the plot becomes. Thelma's beauty has maddened Lennox. To gain her good opinion, as he thinks, he throws his mistress, Violet Vere, on *your* shoulders—(your ingenuous visits to the Brilliant Theater gave him a capital pretext for this)—and as for Lady Winsleigh's share in the mischief, it's nothing but mere feminine spite against you for marrying at all, and hatred of the woman whose life is such a contrast to her own, and who absorbs all your affection. Lennox has used her as his tool, and the Vere also, I've no doubt. The thing's as clear as crystal. It's a sort of general misunderstanding all round—one of those eminently unpleasant trifles that very frequently upset the peace and comfort of the most quiet and inoffensive persons. But the fault lies with *you*, dear old boy!"

"With *me*!" exclaimed Philip.

"Certainly! Thelma's soul is open as daylight—you shouldn't have had any secret from her, however trifling. She's not a woman 'on guard'—she can't take life as the most of us do, in military fashion, with ears pricked for the approach of a spy, and prepared to expect betrayal from her most familiar friends. She accepts things as they appear, without any suspicion of mean, ulterior designs. It's a pity, of course!—it's a pity she can't be worldly wise, and scheme and plot and plan and lie like the rest of us! However, *your* course is plain—first interview Lennox and then follow Thelma. She can't have left Hull yet—there are scarcely any boats running to Norway at this season. You'll overtake her, I'm certain."

"By Jove, Lorimer!" said Errington suddenly. "Clara Winsleigh sticks at nothing. Do you know she actually had the impudence to suggest that *you*—you, of all people—were in love with Thelma!"

Lorimer flushed up, but laughed lightly. "How awfully sweet

of her! Much obliged to her, I'm sure! And how did you take it, Phil?"

"Take it? I didn't take it at all," responded Philip, warmly. "Of course, I knew it was only her spite—she'd say anything in one of her tempers."

Lorimer looked at him with a sudden tenderness in his blue eyes. Then he laughed again, a little forcedly, and said:

"Be off, old man, and get that whip of yours! We'll run Lennox to earth. Halloo! here's Britta!"

The little maid entered hurriedly at that moment—she came to ask with quivering lips, whether she might accompany Sir Philip on his intended journey to Norway.

"For if you do not find the Froken at Hull, you will want to reach the Alten Fjord," said Britta, folding her hands resolutely in front of her apron, "and you will not get on without me. You do not know what the country is like in the depth of winter when the sun is asleep. You must have the reindeer to help you—and no Englishman knows how to drive reindeer. And—and"—here Britta's eyes filled—"you have not thought, perhaps, that the journey may make the Froken very ill—and that when we find her—she may be—dying—" and Britta's strength gave way in a great big sob that broke from the depths of her honest, affectionate heart.

"Don't—*don't* talk like that, Britta!" cried Philip, passionately, "I can't bear it! Of course, you shall go with me! I wouldn't leave you behind for the world! Get everything ready"—and in a fever of heat and impatience he began rummaging among some books on a side-shelf, till he found the time-tables he sought. "Yes—here we are—there's a train leaving for Hull at five—we'll take that. Tell Morris to pack my portmanteau, and you bring it along with you to the Midland Railway Station this afternoon. Do you understand?"

Britta nodded emphatically, and hurried off at once to busy herself with these preparations, while Philip, all excitement, dashed off to give a few parting injunctions to Neville, and to get his horsewhip.

Lorimer, left alone for a few minutes, seated himself in an easy-chair and began absently turning over the newspapers on the table. But his thoughts were far away, and presently he covered his eyes with one hand as though the light hurt them. When he removed it, his lashes were wet.

"What a fool I am!" he muttered, impatiently. "Oh, Thelma, Thelma! my darling!—how I wish I could follow and find you and console you!—you poor, tender, resigned soul; going away like this because you thought you were not wanted—not wanted!—my God!—if you only knew how one man at least has wanted and yearned for you ever since he saw your sweet face! Why

can't I tear you out of my heart—why can't I love some one else? Ah, Phil!—good, generous, kind old Phil!—he little guesses." He rose and paced the room up and down restlessly. "The fact is I oughtn't to be here at all—I ought to leave England altogether for a long time—till—till I get over it. The question is, *shall* I ever get over it? Sigurd was a wise boy—he found a short way out of all his troubles—suppose I imitate his example? No—for a man in his senses that would be rather cowardly—though it might be pleasant!" He stopped in his walk with a pondering expression on his face. "At any rate, I won't stop here to see her come back—I couldn't trust myself—I should say something foolish—I know I should! I'll take my mother to Italy—she wants to go; and we'll stay with Lovelace. It'll be a change—and I'll have a good stand-up fight with myself, and see if I can't come off the conqueror somehow! It's all very well to kill an opponent in battle—but the question is, can a man kill his inner, grumbling discontented, selfish Self? If he can't, what's the good of him?"

As he was about to consider this point reflectively Errington entered, equipped for traveling, and whip in hand. His imagination had been at work during the past few minutes, exaggerating all the horrors and difficulties of Thelma's journey to the Alten Fjord till he was in a perfect fever of irritable excitement.

"Come on, Lorimer!" he cried. "There's no time to lose! Britta knows what to do—she'll meet me at the station. I can't breathe in this wretched house a moment longer—let's be off!"

Plunging out into the hall, he bade Morris summon a hansom—and with a few last instructions to that faithful servitor, and an encouraging kind word and shake of the hand to Neville, who, with a face of remorseful misery, stood at the door to watch his departure, he was gone. The hansom containing him and Lorimer rattled rapidly toward the abode of Sir Francis Lennox, but on entering Piccadilly the vehicle was compelled to go so slowly on account of the traffic, that Errington, who every moment grew more and more impatient, could not stand it.

"By Jove! this is like a walking funeral!" he muttered. "I say, Lorimer, let's get out! We can do the rest on foot."

They stopped the cabman and paid him his fare—then hurried along rapidly, Errington every now and then giving a fiercer clinch to the formidable horsewhip which was twisted together with his ordinary walking-stick in such a manner as not to attract special attention.

"Coward and liar!" he muttered, as he thought of the man he was about to punish. "He shall pay for his dastardly falsehood—by Jove he shall! It'll be a precious long time before he shows himself in society any more!"

Then he addressed Lorimer. "You may depend upon it he'll shout 'Police! police!' and make for the door," he observed.

"You keep your back against it, Lorimer! I don't care how many fines I've got to pay as long as I can thrash him soundly!"

"All right!" Lorimer answered, and they quickened their pace. As they neared the chambers which Sir Francis Lennox rented over a fashionable jeweler's shop, they became aware of a small procession coming straight toward them from the opposite direction. *Something* was being carried between four men who appeared to move with extreme care and gentleness—this something was surrounded by a crowd of boys and men whose faces were full of morbid and frightened interest—the whole *cortège* was headed by a couple of solemn policemen. "You spoke of a walking funeral just now," said Lorimer suddenly. "This looks uncommonly like one."

Errington made no reply—he had only one idea in his mind—the determination to chastise and thoroughly disgrace Sir Francis. "I'll hound him out of the clubs!" he thought, indignantly. "His own set shall know what a liar he is—and if I can help it he shall never hold up his head again!"

Entirely occupied as he was with these reflections, he paid no heed to anything that was going on in the street, and he scarcely heard Lorimer's last observation. So that he was utterly surprised and taken aback when he, with Lorimer, was compelled to come to a halt before the very door of the jeweler, Lennox's landlord, while the two policemen cleared a passage through the crowd, saying, in low tones, "Stand aside, gentlemen, please! stand aside," thus making gradual way for four bearers, who, as was now plainly to be seen, carried a common wooden stretcher covered with a cloth, under which lay what seemed, from its outline, to be a human figure.

"What's the matter here?" asked Lorimer, with a curious cold thrill running through him as he put the simple question.

One of the policemen answered readily enough.

"An accident, sir. Gentleman badly hurt. Down at Charing-Cross Station—tried to jump into a train when it had started—foot caught—was thrown under the wheels and dragged along some distance—doctor says he can't live, sir."

"Who is he—what's his name?"

"Lennox, sir—leastways, that's the name on his card—and this is the address. Sir Francis Lennox, I believe it is."

Errington uttered a sharp exclamation of horror—at that moment the jeweler came out of the recesses of his shop with uplifted hands and bewildered countenance.

"An accident? Good heavens!—Sir Francis! Upstairs!—take him upstairs!" Here he addressed the bearers. "You should have gone round to the private entrance—he mustn't be seen in the shop—frightening away all my customers—here, pass through!—pass through, as quick as you can!"

And they did pass through, carrying their crushed burden tenderly along by the shining glass cases and polished counters, where glimmered and flashed jewels of every size and luster for the adorning of the children of this world. Slowly and carefully, step by step, they reached the upper floor, and there, in a luxurious apartment furnished with almost feminine elegance, they lifted the inanimate form from the stretcher and laid it down, still shrouded, on a velvet sofa, removing the last number of *Truth*, and two of Zola's novels, to make room for the heavy, unconscious head.

Errington and Lorimer stood at the doorway, completely overcome by the suddenness of the event—they had followed the bearers upstairs almost mechanically—exchanging no word or glance by the way—and now they watched in almost breathless suspense while a surgeon who was present gently turned back the cover that hid the injured man's features and exposed them to full view. Was *that* Sir Francis? that blood-smearred, mangled creature?—*that* the lascivious dandy—the disciple of no-creed and self-worship? Errington shuddered and averted his gaze from that hideous face so horribly contorted, yet otherwise death-like in its rigid stillness. There was a grave hush. The surgeon still bent over him—touching here, probing there, with tenderness and skill—but finally he drew back with a hopeless shake of the head.

"Nothing can be done," he whispered. "Absolutely nothing!"

At that moment Sir Francis stirred—he groaned and opened his eyes; what terrible eyes they were, filled with that look of intense anguish, and something worse than anguish—fear—frantic fear—coward fear—fear that was always more overpowering than his bodily suffering.

He stared wildly at the little group assembled—strange faces, so far as he could make them out, that regarded him with evident compassion. What—what was all this—what did it mean? Death? No, no! he thought madly, while his brain reeled with the idea—death? What *was* death?—darkness, annihilation, blackness—all that was horrible—unimaginable! God! he would *not* die! God!—who *was* God? No matter—he would live; he would struggle against this heaviness—this coldness—this pillar of ice in which he was being slowly frozen—frozen—frozen!—inch by inch! He made a furious effort to move, and uttered a scream of agony, stabbed through and through by torturing pain.

"Keep still!" said the surgeon, pityingly.

Sir Francis heard him not. He wrestled with his bodily anguish till the perspiration stood in large drops on his forehead. He raised himself, gasping for breath, and glared about him like a trapped beast of prey.

"Give me brandy!" he muttered, chokingly. "Quick—quick! Are you going to let me die like a dog?—damn you all!"

The effort to move—to speak—exhausted his sinking strength—his throat rattled—he clinched his fists and made as though he would spring off his couch—when a fearful contortion convulsed his whole body—his eyes rolled up and became fixed—he fell heavily back—*dead!*

Quietly the surgeon covered again what was now nothing—nothing but a mutilated corpse.

“It’s all over!” he announced, briefly.

Errington heard these words in sickened silence. All over! Was it possible? So soon? All over!—and he had come too late to punish the would-be ravisher of his wife’s honor—too late! He still held the whip in his hand with which he had meant to chastise that—that distorted, mangled lump of clay yonder—pah! he could not bear to think of it, and he turned away, faint and dizzy. He felt, rather than saw, the staircase, down which he dreamily went, followed by Lorimer.

The two policemen were in the hall scribbling the cut-and-dry particulars of the accident in their note-books, which having done, they marched off, attended by a wandering, bilious-looking penny-a-liner who was anxious to write a successful account of the “Shocking Fatality,” as it was called in the next day’s newspapers. Then the bearers departed cheerfully, carrying with them the empty stretcher. Then the jeweler, who seemed quite unmoved respecting the sudden death of his lodger, chatted amicably with the surgeon about the reputation and various *de-merits* of the deceased—and Errington and Lorimer, as they passed through the shop, heard him speaking of a person hitherto unheard of, namely, Lady Francis Lennox, who had been deserted by her husband for the past six years, and who was living uncomplainingly the life of an art student in Germany with her married sister, maintaining, by the work of her own hands, her one little child, a boy of five.

Once in the open street, with the keen, cold air blowing against their faces, they looked at each other blankly. Piccadilly was crowded; the hurrying people passed and repassed—there were the shouts of omnibus conductors and newsboys—the laughter of young men coming out of the St. James’s Hall Restaurant; all was as usual—as, indeed, why should it not? What matters the death of one man in a million? unless, indeed, it be a man whose life, like a torch uplifted in darkness, has enlightened and cheered the world—but the death of a mere fashionable “swell” whose chief talent has been a trick of lying gracefully—who cares for such a one? Society is instinctively relieved to hear that his place is empty and shall know him no more. But Errington could not immediately forget the scene he had witnessed. He was overcome by sensations of horror—even of pity—and he walked by his friend’s side for some time in silence.

“I wish I could get rid of this thing!” he said suddenly, looking down at the horsewhip in his hand.

Lorimer made no answer. He understood his feeling, and realized the situation as sufficiently grim. To be armed with a weapon meant for the chastisement of a man whom Death had so suddenly claimed was, to say the least of it, unpleasant. Yet the horsewhip could scarcely be thrown away in Piccadilly—such an action might attract notice and comment. Presently Philip spoke again.

“He was actually married all the time!”

“So it seems;” and Lorimer’s face expressed something very like contempt. “By Jove, Phil! he must have been an awful scoundrel!”

“Don’t let’s say any more about him—he’s dead!” and Philip quickened his steps. “And what a horrible death!”

“Horrible enough indeed!”

Again they were both silent. Mechanically they turned down toward Pall Mall.

“George,” said Errington, with a strange awe in his tones, “it seems to me to-day as if there were death in the air. I don’t believe in presentiments, but yet—yet I cannot help thinking—what if I should find my Thelma—*dead?*”

Lorimer turned very pale—a cold shiver ran through him, but he endeavored to smile.

“For God’s sake, old fellow, don’t think of anything so terrible! Look here, you’re hipped—no wonder, and you’ve got a long journey before you. Come and have lunch. It’s just two o’clock. Afterward we’ll go to the Garrick and have a chat with Beau Lovelace—he’s a first-rate fellow for looking on the bright side of everything. Then I’ll see you off this afternoon at the Midland—what do you say?”

Errington assented to this arrangement, and tried to shake off the depression that had settled upon him, though dark forebodings passed one after the other like clouds across his mind. He seemed to see the Altengard hills stretching drearily, white with frozen snow, around the black fjord; he pictured Thelma, broken-hearted fancying herself deserted, returning through the cold and darkness to the lonely farm-house behind the now withered pines. Then he began to think of the shell-cave where that other Thelma lay hidden in her last deep sleep—the wailing words of Sigurd came freshly back to his ears, when the poor crazed lad had likened Thelma’s thoughts to his favorite flowers, the pansies—“One by one you will gather and play with her thoughts as though they were these blossoms; your burning hand will mar their color—they will wither and furl up and die—and you—what will you care? Nothing! No man ever cares for a flower that is withered—not even though his own hand slew it!”

Absorbed in painful reflections, he was a very silent companion for Lorimer during the luncheon which they took at a quiet little restaurant well known to the *habitués* of Pall Mall and Regent Street. Lorimer himself had his own reason for being equally depressed and anxious—for did he not love Thelma as much as even her husband could?—nay, perhaps more, knowing his love was hopeless. Not always does possession of the adored object strengthen the adoration—the rapturous dreams of an ideal passion have often been known to surpass reality a thousand-fold. So the two friends exchanged but few words, though they tried to converse cheerfully on indifferent subjects, and failed in the attempt. They had nearly finished their light repast, when a familiar voice saluted them.

“It is Errington—I thocht I couldna be mistaken! How are ye both?”

Sandy Macfarlane stood before them, unaltered, save that his scanty beard had grown somewhat longer. They had seen nothing of him since their trip to Norway, and they greeted him now with unaffected heartiness, glad of the distraction his appearance afforded them.

“Where do you hail from, Mac?” asked Lorimer, as he made the newcomer sit down at their table. “We haven’t heard of you for an age.”

“It is a goodish bit of time,” assented Macfarlane, “but better late than never. I came up to London a week ago from Glasgie—and my head has been in a whirl ever since. Eh, mon! but it’s an awfu’ place!—may be I’ll get used to’t after a wee while.”

“Are you going to settle here, then?” inquired Errington, “I thought you intended to be a minister somewhere in Scotland?”

Macfarlane smiled, and his eyes twinkled.

“I hae altered ma opeenions a bit,” he said. “Ye see, ma aunt in Glasgie’s deed—”

“I understand,” laughed Lorimer. “You’ve come in for the old lady’s money?”

“Puir body!” and Sandy shook his head gravely. “A few hours before she died she tore up her will in a screamin’ fury o’ Christian charity and forethought—meanin’ to mak aither in favor o’ leavin’ a’ her warld’s trash to the Fund for Distributin’ Bible Knowledge among the Heathen—but she never had time to fulfill her intention. She went off like a lamb—and there bein’ no will, her money fell to me, as the nearest survivin’ relative. Eh! the puir thing! if her dees-imbodied spirit is anywhere aboot, she must be in a sair plight to think I’ve got it, after a’ her curses!”

“How much?” asked Lorimer, amused.

“Oh, just a fair seventy thousand or so,” answered Macfarlane, carelessly.

“Well done, Mac!” said Errington, with a smile, endeavoring

to appear interested. “You’re quite rich, then? I congratulate you!”

“Riches are a snare,” observed Macfarlane, sententiously, “a snare and a decoy to both soul and body!” He laughed and rubbed his hands—then added with some eagerness: “I say, how is Lady Errington?”

“She’s very well,” answered Sir Philip hurriedly, exchanging a quick look with Lorimer, which the latter at once understood. “She’s away on a visit just now. I’m going to join her this afternoon.”

“I’m sorry she’s away,” said Sandy, and he looked very disappointed; “but I’ll see her when she comes back. Will she be long absent?”

“No, not long—a few days only”—and as Errington said this an involuntary sigh escaped him.

A few days only—God grant it! But what—what if he should find her *dead*?

Macfarlane noticed the sadness of his expression, but prudently forbore to make any remark upon it. He contented himself with saying:

“Well, ye’ve got a wife worth having, as I dare say ye know. I shall be glad to pay my respects to her as soon as she returns. I’ve got your address, Errington—will ye take mine?”

And he handed him a small card, on which was written in pencil the number of a house in one of the lowest streets in the East End of London. Philip glanced at it with some surprise.

“Is *this* where you live?” he asked, with emphatic amazement.

“Yes. It’s just the cleanest tenement I could find in that neighborhood. And the woman that keeps it is fairly respectable.”

“But with your money,” remonstrated Lorimer, who also looked at the card, “I rather wonder at your choice of abode. Why, my dear fellow, do you *know* what sort of a place it is?”

A steadfast, earnest, *thinking* look came into Macfarlane’s deep-set eyes.

“Yes, I do know, pairfectly,” he said, in answer to the question. “It’s a place where there’s misery, starvation, and crime of all sorts—and there I am in the very midst of it—just where I want to be. Ye see, I was meant to be a meen-ister—one of those douce, cannie, comfortable bodies that drone in the pulpit about predestination and original sin, and so forth—a sort of palaver that does no good to ony reasonable creature—an’ if I had followed out this profession, I make nae doot that, with my aunt’s seventy thousand, I should be a vera comfortable, respectable, selfish type of a man, who was decently embarked in an apparently important but really useless career—”

“Useless?” interrupted Lorimer, archly. “I say, Mac, take care! A minister of the Lord *useless*!”

"I'm thinkin' there are unco few meen-isters o' the Lord in this world," said Macfarlane, musingly. "Maist o' them meen-ister to themselves, an' care na a wheen mair for Christ than Buddha. I tell ye, I was an altered mon after we'd been to Norway—the auld pagan set me thinkin' mony an' mony a time—for, ma certes! he's better worthy respect than mony a so-called Christian. And as for his daughter—the twa great blue eyes o' that lassie made me fair ashamed o' mysel'. Why? Because I felt that as a meen-ister o' the Established Kirk, I was bound to be a sort o' heep-ocrite—only thinkin', reasonable man wi' a conscience canna be otherwise wi' they folk, and ye ken, Errington, there's something in your wife's look that maks a body hesitate before tellin' a lee. Weel, what wi' her face an' the auld *bondé's* talk, I reflectit that I couldna be a meen-ister as meen-isters go, an' that I must e'en follow oot the Testament's teachings according to ma own way o' thinkin'. First, I fancied I'd rough it abroad as a mees-ionary, then I remembered the savages at hame, an' decided to attend to them before onything else. Then my aunt's siller came in handy—in short, I'm just gaun to live on as wee a handfu' o' the filthy lucre as I can, an' lay oot the rest on the heathens o' London. An' it's as well to do't while I'm alive to see to't mysel'—for I've often observed that if ye leave your world's gear to the poor when ye're deed, just for the gude reason that ye canna tak it to the grave wi' ye, it'll melt in a wonderfu' way through the hands o' the 'secretaries' an' 'distributors' o' the fund, till there's naething left for those ye meant to benefit. Ye maunna think I'm gaun to do ony preachin' business down at the East End—there's too much o' that an' tract-givin' already. The puir soul whose wee hoosie I've rented hadna tasted bit nor sup for three days—till I came an' startled her into a greetin' fit by takin' her rooms an' payin' her in advance—eh! mon, ye'd have thought I was a saint frae heaven if ye'd heard her blessin' me—an' a gude curate had called on her just before and had given her a tract to dine on. Ye see, I maun make mysel' a *friend* to the folk first, before I can do them gude—I maun get to the heart o' their troubles—an' troubles are plentiful in that quarter—I maun live among them, an' be an o' them. I wad 'mind ye that Christ Himsel' gave sympathy to begin with—He did the preachin' afterward."

"What a good fellow you are, Mac!" said Errington, suddenly seeing his raw Scotch friend with the perverse accent in quite a new and heroic light.

Macfarlane actually blushed. "Nonsense, not a bit o' t!" he declared quite nervously. "It's just pure selfishness, after a—for I'm simply enjoyin' mysel' the hale day long. Last nicht I found a wee cripple o' a laddie sittin' by himsel' in the gutter, munchin' a potato skin. I just took him—he starin' an' blinkin' like an owl at me—and carried him into my room. There I gave

him a plate o' barley broth, an' finished him up wi' a hunk o' gingerbread. Ma certes! Ye should ha' seen the rascal laugh! 'Twas better than lookin' at a play from a ten-guinea box on the grand tier!"

"By Jove, Sandy, you're a brick!" cried Lorimer, laughing to hide a very different emotion. "I had no idea that you were that sort of a chap."

"Nor had I," said Macfarlane quite simply—"I never fashed mysel' wi' thinkin' o' ither folks' troubles at a—I never even took into conseederation the meanin' o' the Testament teachings till I saw your leddy wife, Errington." He paused a moment, then added gravely: "Yes, and I've fancied she maun be a real live angel, and I've sought always to turn my hand to something useful and worth the doin' ever since I met her."

"I'll tell her so," said poor Philip, his heart aching for his lost love as he spoke, though he smiled. "It will give her pleasure to hear it."

Macfarlane blushed again like any awkward school-boy.

"Oh, I dinna ken about that!" he said, hurriedly. "She's just a grand woman any way." Then, bethinking himself of another subject, he asked: "Have you heard o' the Reverend Mr. Dyce-worthy lately?"

Errington and Lorimer replied in the negative.

Macfarlane laughed—his eyes twinkled. "It's evident ye never read police reports," he said. "Talk o' meen-isters—he's a pretty specimen! He's been hunted out o' his place in Yorkshire for carryin' on love affairs wi' the women o' his congregation. One day he locked himsel' in the vestry wi' the new-married wife o' one o' his prencipal supporters—an' he had a grand time of it—till the husband came an' dragged him oot an' thrashed him soundly. Then he left the neighborhood, an' just th' ither day he turned up in Glasgie."

Macfarlane paused and laughed again.

"Well," said Lorimer, with some interest; "did you meet him there?"

"That I did, but no to speak to him; he was far to weel lookit after to need my services," and Macfarlane rubbed his great hands together with an irrepressible chuckle. "There was a crowd o' hootin' laddies round him, an' he was callin' on the heavens to bear witness to his purity. His hat was off, an' he had a black eye, an' a' his coat was covered with mud, an' a policeman was embracin' him vera affectionately by th' arm. He was in charge for drunken, disorderly, an' indecent conduct, an' the magistrate cam' down pretty hard on him. The case proved to be exceptionally outrageous—so he's sentenced to a month's imprisonment an' hard labor. Hard labor! Eh, mon! but that's fine! Fancy him at work—at real work—for the first time in a' his days! Gude Lord! I can see him at it!"

"So he's come to that," and Errington shrugged his shoulders with weary contempt. "I thought he would. His career as a minister is ended—that's one comfort!"

"Don't be too sure o' that," said Sandy, cautiously. "There's always America, ye ken. He can mak' a holy martyr o' himsel' there. He may gain as muckle a reputation as Henry Ward Beecher—ye can never tell what may happen—'tis a queer warld."

"Queer, indeed," assented Lorimer, as they all rose and left the restaurant together. "If our present existence is the result of a fortuitous conglomeration of atoms, I think the atoms ought to have been more careful what they were about, that's all I can say."

They reached the open street, where Macfarlane shook hands and went his way, promising to call on Errington so soon as Thelma should be again at home.

"He's turned out quite a fine fellow," said Lorimer, when he had gone. "I should never have thought he had so much in him. He has become a philanthropist."

"I fancy he's better than an ordinary philanthropist," replied Philip. "Philanthropists often talk a great deal and do nothing."

"Like members of Parliament," suggested Lorimer, with a smile.

"Exactly so. By the bye, I've resigned my candidateship."

"Resigned? Why?"

"Oh, I'm sick of the thing! One has to be such a humbug to secure one's votes. I had a wretched time yesterday—speechifying and trying to rouse up clod-hoppers to the interests of their country—and all the time my darling at home was alone, and breaking her heart about me. By Jove! if I'd only known! When I came back this morning to all this misery, I told Neville to send in my resignation. I repeated the same thing to him the last thing before I left the house."

"But you might have waited a day or two," said Lorimer, wonderingly. "You're such a fellow of impulse, Phil—"

"Well, I can't help it. I'm tired of politics. I began with a will, fancying that every member of the House had his country's interests at heart—not a bit of it! They're all for themselves—most of them, at any rate—they're not even sincere in their efforts to do good to the population. And it's all very well to stick up for the aristocracy; but why, in Heaven's name, can't some of the wealthiest among them do as much as our old Mac is doing for the outcast and miserable poor? I see some real usefulness and good in *his* work, and I'll help him in it with a will—when—when Thelma comes back."

Thus talking, the two friends reached the Garrick Club, where they found Beau Lovelace in the reading-room, turning over some new books with the curious smiling air of one who believes there can

be nothing original under the sun, and that all literature is mere repetition. He greeted them cheerfully.

"Come out of here," he said. "Come into a place where we can talk. There's an old fellow over there who's ready to murder any member who even whispers. We won't excite his angry passions. You know we're all literature-mongers here—we've each got our own little particular stall where we sort our goods—our moldy oranges, sour apples, and indigestible nuts—and we polish them up to look tempting to the public. It's a great business, and we can't bear to be looked at while we're turning our apples with the best side outward, and boiling our oranges to make them swell and seem big! We like to do our humbug in silence and alone."

He led the way into the smoking-room, and there heard with much surprise and a great deal of concern the story of Thelma's flight.

"Ingenuous boy!" he said, kindly, clapping Philip on the shoulder. "How could you be such a fool as to think that repeated visits to Violet Vere, no matter on what business, would not bring the dogs of scandal yelping about your heels. I wonder you didn't see how you were compromising yourself."

"He never told *me* about it," interposed Lorimer, "or else I should have given him a bit of my mind on the subject."

"Of course," agreed Lovelace. "And—excuse me—why the devil didn't you let your secretary manage his domestic squabbles by himself?"

"He's very much broken down," said Errington. "A hopeless, frail, disappointed man. I thought I could serve him—"

"I see," and Beau's eyes were bent on him with a very friendly look. "You're a first-rate fellow, Errington, but you shouldn't fly off so readily on the rapid wings of impulse. Now I suppose you want to shoot Lennox—that can't be done—not in England at any rate."

"It can't be done at all, anywhere," said Lorimer, gravely. "He's dead."

Beau Lovelace started back in amazement. "Dead! You don't say so! Why, he was dining last night at the Criterion—I saw him there."

Briefly they related the sudden accident that had occurred, and described its fatal result.

"He died horribly!" said Philip, in a low voice. "I haven't got over it yet. That evil, tortured face of his haunts me."

Lovelace was only slightly shocked. He had known Lennox's life too well, and had despised it too thoroughly to feel much regret now it was thus abruptly ended.

"Rather an unpleasant exit for such a fellow," he remarked. "Not æsthetic at all. And so you were going to castigate him?"

"Look!" and Philip showed him the horsewhip; "I've been carrying this thing about all day—I wish I could drop it in the streets; but if I did, some one would be sure to pick it up and return it to me."

"If it were a purse containing bank-notes you could drop it with the positive certainty of never seeing it again," laughed Beau. "Here, hand it over!" and he possessed himself of it. "I'll keep it till you come back. You leave for Norway to-night, then?"

"Yes. If I can. But it's the winter season, and there'll be all manner of difficulties. I'm afraid it's no easy matter to reach the Alten Fjord at this time of year."

"Why not use your yacht, and be independent of obstacles?" suggested Lovelace.

"She's under repairs, worse luck!" sighed Philip, despondingly. "She won't be in sailing condition for another month. No, I must take my chance, that's all. It's possible I may overtake Thelma at Hull—that's my great hope."

"Well, don't be down in the mouth about it, my boy," said Beau sympathetically. "It'll all come right, depend upon it. Your wife's a sweet, gentle, noble creature—and when once she knows all about the miserable mistake that has arisen, I don't know which will be greatest, her happiness or her penitence, for having misunderstood the position. Now let's have some coffee."

He ordered this refreshment from a passing waiter, and as he did so, a gentleman with hands clasped behind his back, and a suave smile on his countenance, bowed to him with marked and peculiar courtesy as he sauntered on his way through the room. Beau returned the salute with equal politeness.

"That's Whipper," he explained with a smile, when the gentleman was out of ear-shot. "The best and most generous of men! He's a critic—all critics are large-minded and generous, we know—but he happens to be remarkably so. He did me the kindest turn I ever had in my life. When my first book came out, he fell upon it, tooth and claw, mangled it, tore it to ribbons, metaphorically speaking, and waved the fragments mockingly in the eyes of the public. From that day my name was made—my writings sold off with delightful rapidity, and words can never tell how I blessed, and how I still bless, Whipper. He always pitches into me—that's what's so good of him. We're awfully polite to each other, as you observe—and what is so perfectly charming is that he's quite unconscious how much he's helping me along. He's really a first-rate fellow. But I haven't yet attained the summit of my ambition"—and here Lovelace broke off with a sparkle of fun in his clear steel-gray eyes.

"Why, what else do you want?" asked Lorimer, laughing.

"I want" returned Beau, solemnly, "I want to be jeered at by 'Punch.' I want 'Punch' to make mouths at me, and give me

the benefit of his inimitable squeak and gibber. No author's fame is quite secure till dear old 'Punch' has abused him. Abuse is the thing nowadays, you know. Heaven forbid that I should be praised by 'Punch!' That would be frightfully unfortunate!"

Here the coffee arrived, and Lovelace dispensed it to his friends, talking gayly the while in an effort to distract Errington from his gloomy thoughts.

"I've just been informed on respectable authority that Walt Whitman is the new Socrates," he said, laughingly. "I felt rather stunned at the moment, but I've got over it now. Oh, this deliciously mad London! What a gigantic Colney Hatch it is for the crazed folk of the world to air their follies in! That any reasonable Englishmen with such names as Shakespeare, Byron, Keats, and Shelley to keep the glory of their country warm, should for one moment consider Walt Whitman a poet! Ye gods! Where are your thunderbolts?"

"He's an American, isn't he?" asked Errington.

"He is, my dear boy! An American whom the sensible portion of America rejects. We, therefore—out of opposition—take him up. His chief recommendation is that he writes blatantly concerning commonplaces—regardless of music or rhythm. Here's a bit of him concerning the taming of oxen. He says the tamer lives in a

"Placid pastoral region.

There they bring him the three-year-olds and the four-year-olds to break them—

Some are such beautiful animals, so lofty looking—some are buff-colored, some mottled, one has a white line running along his back, some are brindled,

Some have wide flaring horns (a good sign!) look you! the bright hides, See the two with stars on their foreheads—see the round bodies and broad backs

How straight and square they stand on their legs—"

"Stop, stop!" cried Lorimer, putting his hands to his ears. "This is a practical joke, Beau! No one would call that jargon poetry!"

"Oh!—wouldn't they though!" exclaimed Lovelace. "Let some critic of reputation once start the idea, and you'll have the good London folk who won't bother to read him for themselves, declaring him as fine as Shakespeare. The dear English muttons! fine Southdowns! fleecy baa-lambs! Once let the press-bells tinkle loudly enough across the fields of literature, and they'll follow, bleating sweetly in any direction! The sharpest heads in our big metropolis are those who know this, and who act accordingly."

"Then why don't you 'act accordingly'?" asked Errington, with a faint smile.

"Oh, I? I can't! I never asked a favor from the press in my life—but its little bell has tinkled for me all the same, and a few of the

muttons follow, but not all. Are you off?" this as they rose to take their leave. "Well, Errington, old fellow," and he shook hands warmly, "a pleasant journey to you, and a happy return home! My best regards to your wife. Lorimer, have you settled whether you'll go with me to Italy? I start the day after to-morrow."

Lorimer hesitated, then said: "All right! My mother's delighted at the idea. Yes, Beau, we'll come. Only I hope we sha'n't bore you."

"Bore me! you know me better than that," and he accompanied them out of the smoking-room into the hall, while Errington, a little surprised at this sudden arrangement, observed:

"Why, George, I thought you'd be here when we came back from Norway—to—to welcome Thelma, you know!"

George laughed. "My dear boy, I sha'n't be wanted! Just let me know how everything goes on. You—you see, I'm in duty bound to take my mother out of London in winter."

"Just so!" agreed Lovelace, who had watched him narrowly while he spoke. "Don't grudge the old lady her southern sunshine, Errington! Lorimer wants brushing up a bit too—he looks seedy. Then I shall consider it settled—the day after to-morrow we meet at Charing Cross—morning tidal express, of course—never go by night services across the Channel if you can help it."

Again they shook hands and parted.

"Best thing that young fellow can do!" thought Lovelace as he returned to the club reading-room. "The sooner he gets out of this, into new scenes, the better; he's breaking his heart over the beautiful Thelma. By Jove! the boy's eyes looked like those of a shot animal whenever her name was mentioned. He's rather badly hit!"

He sat down and began to meditate. "What can I do for him. I wonder?" he thought. "Nothing, I suppose. A love of that sort can't be remedied. It's a pity—a great pity! And I don't know any woman likely to make a counter-impression on him. He'd never put up with an Italian beauty"—he paused in his reflections, and the color flushed his broad, handsome brow, as the dazzling vision of a sweet, piquant face with liquid dark eyes and rippling masses of rich brown hair came flitting before him—"unless he saw Angela," he murmured to himself softly—"and he will not see her—besides, Angela loves me!"

And after this, his meditations seemed to be particularly pleasant, to judge from the expression of his features. Beau was by no means ignorant of the tender passion—he had his own little romance, as beautiful and bright as a summer-day—but he had resolved that London, with its love of gossip, its scandal, and society papers—London, that on account of his popularity as a writer, watched his movements and chronicled his doings in the most authoritative and incorrect manner—London should have no

chance of penetrating into the secret of his private life. And so far he had succeeded, and was likely still to succeed.

Meanwhile, as he still sat in blissful reverie, pretending to read a newspaper, though his thoughts were far away from it, Errington and Lorimer arrived at the Midland Station. Britta was already there with the luggage; she was excited and pleased; her spirits had risen at the prospect of seeing her mistress soon again—possibly, she thought gladly, they might find her at Hull—they might not have to go to Norway at all. The train came up to the platform, the tickets were taken, and Sir Philip, with Britta, entered a first-class compartment, while Lorimer stood outside leaning with folded arms on the carriage-window, talking cheerfully.

"You'll find her all right, Phil, I'm positive," he said. "I think it's very probable she has been compelled to remain at Hull; and even at the worst, Britta can guide you all over Norway, if necessary. Nothing will daunt her."

And he nodded kindly to the little maid who had regained her rosy color and the sparkle of her eyes in the eagerness she felt to rejoin her beloved "Froken." The engine-whistle gave a warning shriek. Philip leaned out and pressed his friend's hand warmly.

"Good-bye, old fellow! I'll write to you in Italy."

"All right—mind you do. And I say—give my love to Thelma!"

Philip smiled and promised. The train began to move—slowly at first, then more quickly, till with clattering uproar and puffing clouds of white steam it rushed forth from the station, winding through the arches like a black snake, till it had twisted itself rapidly out of sight. Lorimer, left alone, looked after it wistfully, with a heavy weight of unuttered love and sorrow at his heart, and as he at last turned away, those haunting words that he had heard under the pines at the Alten Fjord recurred again and again to his memory—the words uttered by the distraught Sigurd—and how true they were, he thought! how desperately, cruelly true!

"Good things may come for others—but for *you*, the heavens are empty!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Honor is an old-world thing, but it smells sweet to those in whose hand it is strong.—OUIDA.

DISAPPOINTMENT upon disappointment awaited Errington at Hull. Unfortunately, neither he nor Britta knew of the existence of the good Norwegian innkeeper, Friedhof, who had assisted Thelma in her flight—and all their persistent and anxious inquiries elicited no news of her. Moreover, there was no boat of any kind leaving immediately for Norway—not even a whaler or fishing-smack. In a week's time—possibly later—there would be a steamer starting for Christiansund, and for this Errington, though almost mad with impatience, was forced to wait. And in the