

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE OLD PORTRAIT IS DISCOVERED AND OLD JENKS HAS A REAL VOYAGE AT SEA.

THE spring passed quickly away, and the fervors of the June sun were upon us. Mrs. Sanderson, whose health had been a marvel of uniformity, became ill, and showed signs of that failure of the vital power which comes at last to all. She was advised by her physician that she needed a change of air, and encouraged to believe that if she should get relief at once she might retain her hold upon life for some years longer. Arrangements were accordingly perfected to send her with a trusty maid to a watering-place a few leagues distant. I have no doubt that she had come to look upon death as not far away from her, and that she had contemplated the possibility of its visitation while absent from home. I could see that her eye was troubled and anxious. Her lawyer was with her for two days before her departure.

On the morning before she left she called me into her little library, and delivering her keys into my keeping, said:

"I have nothing to tell you, Arthur, except that all my affairs are arranged, so that if I should never return you will find everything in order. You know my ways and wishes. Follow out your plans regarding yourself, and my lawyer will tell you of mine. Maintain the position and uphold the honor of this house. It will be yours. I cannot take it with me; I have no one else to leave it to—and yet—"

She was more softened than I had ever seen her, and her sad and helpless look quite overwhelmed me. I had so long expected her munificence that this affected me much less than the change, physical and mental, which had passed over her.

"My dear, precious Aunt," I said, "you are not going to

die. I cannot let you die. I am too young to spare you. You will go away, and get well, and live a long time."

Then I kissed her, and thanked her for her persistent kindness and her splendid gifts, in words that seemed so poor and inadequate that I was quite distressed.

She was deeply moved. Her physical weakness was such that the iron rule of her will over her emotions was broken. I believe she would have been glad to have me take her in my arms, like a child, and comfort her. After sitting awhile in silence, I said: "Please tell me what you were thinking of when you said: 'And yet?'"

She gave me no direct reply, but said: "Do you remember the portrait of a boy which you saw when you first came to the house?"

"Perfectly," I replied.

"This key," said she, taking the bunch of keys from my hand which I still held, "will open a door in the dining-room which you have never seen opened. You know where it is. After I am gone away, I wish you to open that closet, and take out the portrait, and hang it just where it was before. I wish to have it hang there as long as the house stands. You have learned not to ask any questions. If ever I come back, I shall find it there. If I do not, you will keep it there for my sake."

I promised to obey her will in every particular, and then the carriage drove up to bear her away. Our parting was very quiet, but full of feeling; and I saw her turn and look back affectionately at the old house, as she passed slowly down the hill.

I was thus left alone—with the old servant Jenks—the master of The Mansion. It will be readily imagined that, still retaining my curiosity with regard to the picture, I lost no time in finding it. Sending Jenks away on some unimportant errand, I entered the dining-room, and locked myself in. Under a most fascinating excitement I inserted the key in the lock of the closet. The bolt was moved with difficulty, like one long unused. Throwing open the door, I looked in. First I

saw an old trunk, the covering of rawhide, fastened by brass nails which had turned green with rust. I lifted the lid, and found it full of papers. I had already caught a glimpse of the picture, yet by a curious perversity of will I insisted on seeing it last. Next I came upon an old punch-bowl, a reminder of the days when there were men and revelry in the house. It was made of silver, and had the Bonnicastle arms upon its side. How old it was, I could not tell, but it was evidently an heirloom. A rusty musket stood in one corner, of the variety then known as "Queen's Arms." In another corner hung a military coat, trimmed with gold lace. The wreck of an ancient and costly clock stood upon a shelf, the pendulum of which was a swing, with a little child in it. I remember feeling a whimsical pity for the child that had waited for motion so long in the darkness, and so reached up and set him swinging, as he had done so many million times in the years that were dead and gone. I lingered long upon every article, and wondered how many centuries it would take of such seclusion to dissolve them all into dust.

I had no excuse for withholding my eyes from the picture any longer. I lifted it carefully from the nail where it hung, and set it down by the dining-room wall. Then I closed and locked the door. Not until I had carefully cleaned the painting, and dusted the frame, and hung it in its old place, did I venture to look at it with any thought of careful study; and even this observation I determined to take first from the point where I sat when I originally discovered it. I arranged the light to strike it at the right angle, and then opening the passage into the library, went and sat down precisely where I had sat nearly six years before, under the spell of Mrs. Sanderson's command. I had already, while handling it, found the date of the picture, and the name of the painter on the back of the canvas, and knew that the lad whom it represented had become a man considerably past middle life, or, what seemed more probable, remembering Mrs. Sanderson's strange actions in regard to it, a heap of dust and ashes.

With my first long look at the picture, came back the old days; and I was again a little boy, with all my original interest in the beautiful young face. I expected to see a likeness of Henry, but Henry had grown up and changed, and I found it quite impossible to take him back in my imagination to the point where his face answered, in any considerable degree, to the lineaments of this. Still there was a likeness, indefinable, far back in the depths of expression, and hovering around the contour of the face and head, that at first puzzled me, and at last convinced me that, if I could get at the secrets of my friend's life, I should find that he was a Bonnicastle. I had often while at school, in unexpected glimpses of Henry's features, been startled by the resemblance of his face to some of the members of my own family. The moment I studied his features, however, the likeness was gone. It was thus with the picture. Analysis spoiled it as the likeness of my friend, yet it had a subtle power to suggest him, and to convince me that he was a sharer of the family blood.

I cannot say, much as I loved Henry, that I was pleased with my discovery. Nor was I pleased with the reflections which it stirred in me; for I saw through them something of the mercenary meanness of my own character. I was glad that Mrs. Sanderson had never seen him. I was glad that he had declined her invitation, and that she had come to regard him with such dislike that she would not even hear his name mentioned. I knew that if he were an accepted visitor of the house I should be jealous of him, for I was conscious of his superiority to me in many points, and felt that Mrs. Sanderson would find much in him that would please her. His quiet bearing, his steadiness, his personal beauty, his steadfast integrity, would all be appreciated by her; and I was sure she could not fail to detect in him the family likeness.

Angry with myself for indulging such unworthy thoughts, I sprang to my feet, and went nearer to the picture—went where I could see it best. As I approached it, the likeness to Henry gradually faded, and what was Bonnicastle in the distance be-

came something of another name and blood. Another nature mingled strangely with that to which I was consciously kindred. Beneath the soft veil which gentle blood had thrown over the features, there couched something base and brutal. Somewhere in the family history of the person it represented the spaniel had given herself to the wolf. Sheathed within the foot of velvet was hidden a talon of steel. Under those beautiful features lay the capacity of cruelty and crime. It was a wonderful revelation, and it increased rather than lessened the fascination which the picture exerted upon me. Not until an hour had passed away, and I knew that Jenks had returned from his errand, did I silently unlock the doors of the dining-room and go to my chamber for study.

When the dinner-hour arrived, I was served alone. Jenks had set the table without discovering the returned picture, but in one of the pauses of his service he started and turned pale.

"What is the matter, Jenks?" I said.

"Nothing," he replied, "I thought it was burned. It ought to be."

It was the first intimation that I had ever received that he knew anything about the subject of the picture; but I asked him no more questions, first, because I thought it would virtually be a breach of the confidence which its owner had reposed in me, and, second, because I was so sure of Jenks's reticence that I knew I had nothing to gain by asking. He had kept his place because he could hold his tongue. Still, the fact that he could tell me all I wanted to know had the power to heighten my curiosity, and to fill me with a discomfort of which I was ashamed.

A few days of lonely life passed away, in which, for a defense against my loneliness, I devoted myself with unusual diligence to study. The first letter I received from Mrs. Sanderson contained the good news that her strong and elastic constitution had responded favorably to the change of air and place. Indeed, she was doing so well that she had concluded to stay by the sea during the summer, if she should continue to find

herself improving in strength. I was very much relieved, for in truth I had no wish to assume the cares of the wealth she would leave me. I was grateful, too, to find that I had a genuine affection for her, and that my solicitude was not altogether selfish.

One warm evening, just before sunset, I took a chair from the hall and placed it upon the landing of the steps that led from the garden to the door, between the sleeping lions, and sat down to enjoy the fresh air of the coming twilight. I had a book in my hand, but I was weary and listless, and sat looking off upon the town. Presently I heard the sound of voices and laughter from the hill below me; and soon there came in sight a little group whose approach made my heart leap with delight. Henry, Claire and Millie were coming to make a call upon their lonely friend.

I greeted them heartily at a distance, and Henry, with his hat in his hand, walking between the two girls, sauntered up to the house, looking it over, as it seemed to me, very carefully. Suddenly, Millie sprang to the side of the road, and plucked a flower which she insisted upon placing in the button-hole of his coat. He bent to her while she fastened it. It was the work of an instant, yet there was in it that which showed me that the girl was fond of him, and that, young as she was, she pleased him. I was in a mood to be jealous. The thoughts I had indulged in while looking at the picture, and the belief that Henry had Claire's heart in full possession, to say nothing of certain plans of my own with regard to Millie, reaching far into the future—plans very vague and shadowy, but covering sweet possibilities—awoke a feeling in my heart towards Henry which I am sure made my courtesies seem strangely constrained.

I invited the group into the house, and Claire and Millie accepted the invitation at once. Henry hesitated, and finally said that he did not care to go in. The evening was so pleasant that he would sit upon the steps until we returned. Remembering his repeated refusals to go home with me from school, and thinking, for a reason which I could not have shaped into words, that I did not wish to have him see the pict

ure in the dining-room, I did not urge him. So the two girls and myself went in, and walked over the house. Millie had been there before with her mother, but it was the first time that Claire's maidenly figure had ever entered the door. The dining-room had already been darkened for the night, and we only looked in and took a hurried glimpse of its shadowy furniture, and left it. Both the girls were curious to see my room, and to that we ascended. The outlook was so pleasant and the chairs were so inviting that, after looking at the pictures and the various tasteful appointments with which the room had been furnished, we all sat down, and in our merry conversation quite forgot Henry, and the fact that he was waiting for us to rejoin him.

Near the close of our pleasant session I was conscious that feet were moving in the room below. Then I heard the sound of opening or closing shutters. My first thought was that Jenks had come in on some errand. Interrupted in this thought by the conversation in progress, the matter was put out of my mind for a moment. Then it returned, and as I reflected that Jenks had no business in that part of the house at that hour, I became uneasy.

"We have quite forgotten Henry," I said; and we all rose to our feet and walked down stairs.

Millie was at the foot in a twinkling, and exclaimed: "Why, he isn't here! He is gone!"

I said not a word, but went straight to the dining-room. Every shutter was open, and there stood Henry before the picture. He appeared to be entirely unconscious of my entrance; so, stepping up behind him, I put my hand upon his shoulder, and said: "Well, how do you like it?"

He started as if I had struck him, trembled, and turned pale.

"The fact is, I got tired with waiting my boy," he said, "and so came in to explore, you know, ha! ha! ha! Quite an old curiosity-shop, isn't it? Oh! 'How do I like it?' Yes, quite a picture—quite a picture, ha! ha! ha!"

There certainly was no likeness in the picture to the Henry

who stood before it then. Haggard, vacant, convulsed with feeling which it was impossible for him to conceal, he stood before it as if fastened to the spot by a relentless spell. I took him by the arm and led him into the open air, with his hollow-sounding voice and his forced, mechanical laugh still ringing in my ears. The girls were alarmed, and asked him if he were ill.

"Not in the least," he replied, with another attempt at a laugh which made me shiver. The quick instinct of his companions recognized the fact that something unpleasant had happened, and so, overcoming the chill which his voice and manner had thrown upon them, they thanked me for showing them the old house, and declared that it was time for them to go home. Bidding me a hearty good-night, they started and went out of the gate. Henry lingered, holding my hand for a moment, and then, finding it impossible to shape the apology he had evidently intended to make, abruptly left me, and joined the girls. They quickly passed out of sight, Claire tossing me a kiss as she disappeared, and I was left alone.

I was, of course, more mystified than ever. I did not think it strange or ill-mannered for Henry to enter the dining-room unattended, for I had invited him in, I had kept him long waiting, and there was no one to be disturbed by his entrance, as he knew; but I was more convinced than ever that there was some strange connection between that picture and his destiny and mine. I was convinced, too, that by some means he had recognized the fact as well as I. I tossed upon my bed until midnight in nervous wakefulness, thinking it over, permitting my imagination to construct a thousand improbable possibilities, and chafing under the pledge that forbade me to ask a question of friend or servant.

It was a week before I saw him again, and then I found him quite self-possessed, though there was a shadow of restraint upon him. No allusion was made to the incident in the dining-room, and it gradually fell back into a memory, among the things that were, to be recalled years afterward in the grand crisis of my personal history.

Not a day passed away in which Jenks did not inquire for the health of "the mistress." He seemed to be lost without her, and to feel even more anxious for her health than I did. "How is she now?" and "When does she say she is coming back?" were always the inquiries, after he had brought me a letter.

One day I said to him: "I thought you did not like my Aunt. You were always wanting to get away from her."

"I don't say that I do like her," said Jenks, with a quizzical expression of countenance, as if he were puzzled to know exactly what his feelings were, "but the fact is she's a good woman to get away from, and that's half the fun of living. When she's here I'm always thinking of leaving her, and that takes up the time and sets me contriving, you know."

"You can't sail quite as much as you used to," I said, laughing.

"No," said he, "I'm getting rather old for the sea, and I don't know but thinking of the salt water so much has given me the rheumatism. I'm as stiff as an old horse. Any way, I can't get away until she comes back, if I want to ever so much. I've nothing to get away from."

"Yes, Jenks," I said, "you and your mistress are both getting old. In a few years you'll both get away, and you will not return. Do you ever think of what will come after?"

"That's so," he responded, "and the thing that bothers me is that I can't get away from the place I go to, whether it's good or bad. How a man is going to kill time without some sort of contriving to get into a better place, I don't know. Do you think there's really such a place as heaven?"

"Of course I do."

"No offense, sir," said Jenks, "but it seems to me sometimes as if it was only a sort of make-believe place, that people dream about just to pass away the time. They go to meeting, and pray and sing, and take the sacrament, and talk about heaven and hell, and then they come home and laugh and carry on and work just the same as ever. It makes a nice way to

pass Sunday, and it seems to me just about the same thing as sailing on an Atlas. One day they make believe very hard, and the next it's all over with. Everybody must have his fun, and everybody has his own way of getting it. Now here's this Miss Lester down at Mr. Bradford's. She's got no end of a constitution, and takes it out in work. She goes to all the prayer-meetings, and knits piles of stockings for poor people; but dear me! she has to do something, or else she couldn't live. So she tramps out in all sorts of weather, and takes solid comfort in getting wet and muddy, and amuses herself thinking she's doing good. It's just so with the stockings. She must knit 'em, any way, and so she plays charity with 'em. I reckon we're all a good deal alike."

"No, Jenks," I said, "there's really and truly such a place as heaven."

"I s'pose there is," he responded, "but I don't see what I can do there. I can't sing."

"And there's another place."

"I s'pose there is—that's what they say, and I don't see what I am going to do there, for I don't like the sort of people that live there. I never had anything to do with 'em here, and I won't have anything to do with 'em anywhere. I've always kept my own counsel and picked my own company, which has been mighty small, and I always expect to."

These last remarks of Jenks were a puzzle to me. I really did not know what to say, at first, but there came back to me the memory of one of our early conversations, and I said: "What if she were to go to one place and you to the other?"

"Well," he replied, his thin lips twitching and quivering, "I shouldn't be any worse off than I am now. She went to one place and I went to another a good while ago; but do you really think people know one another there?"

"I have no doubt of it," I replied.

"Well, I shouldn't care where I was, if I could be with her, and everything was agreeable," said Jenks.

"So you still remember her."

"How do you s'pose I could live if I didn't?"

At this he excitedly unbuttoned the wristband of his left arm, and pulled up his sleeve, and there, pricked patiently into the skin, after the manner of sailors, were the two names in rude letters: "THEOPHILUS JENKS AND JANE WHITTLESEY."

"I did it myself," said Jenks. "Every prick of the needle hurt me, but the more it hurt the happier I was, just to see the two names together where no man could rub 'em out; and I think I could stand 'most anything else for the sake of being with her."

I was much impressed by this revelation of the inner life of the simple old man, and the frankness with which he had given me his confidence. Laboring from day to day, year after year, in a position from which he had no hope of rising, he had his separate life of the affections and the imagination, and in this he held all his satisfactions, and won all his modest mental and spiritual growth. At the close of our conversation I took out my watch, and, seeing that it was time for the mail, I sent him off to obtain it. When he returned, he brought me among other letters one from Mrs. Sanderson. He had placed it upon the top of the package, and, when he had handed it to me, he waited, as had become his custom, to learn the news from his mistress.

When I had opened the letter and read a few lines, I exclaimed: "Oh, Jenks! here's some great news for you." And then I read from the letter:

"My physician sas that I must have a daily drive upon the beach, but I really do not feel as if I should take a moment of comfort without my old horse and carriage and my old driver. If you can manage to get along for two or three weeks with the cook, who is entirely able to take all the service of the house upon her hands, you may send Jenks to me with the horse and carriage. The road is very heavy, however, and it is best for him to put everything on the *Belle of Bradford*, and come with it himself. The *Belle* touches every day at our wharf, and the horse will be ready for service as soon as he lands."

I read this without looking at Jenks's face, but when I finished

I glanced at him, expecting to see him radiant with delight. I was therefore surprised to find him pale and trembling in every fiber of his frame.

"That's just like an old woman," said Jenks. "How does she s'pose a horse is going to sea? What's he to do when the steamer rolls?"

"Oh, horses are very fond of rolling," I said, laughing. "All he will have to do will be to lie down and roll all the way, without straining himself for it."

"And how does she s'pose a carriage is going to keep right side up?"

"Well, you can sit in it and hold it down."

Jenks looked down upon his thin frame and slender legs, and shook his head. "If there's anything that I hate," said he, "it's a steamboat. I think it will scare the old horse to death. They whistle and toot, and blow up and burn up. Now, don't you really think—candi? now—that I'd better drive the old horse down? Don't you think the property'll be safer? She never can get another horse like him. She never'll get a carriage that suits her half as well as that. It don't seem to me as if I could take the responsibility of risking that property. She left it in my hands. 'Take good care of the old horse, Jenks,' was the last words she said to me; and now because she's an old woman, and does'n't know any better, she tells me to put him on a steamboat, where he's just as likely to be banged about and have his ribs broke in, or be burned up or blowed up, as he is to get through alive. It seems to me the old woman is out of her head, and that I ought to do just as she told me to do when she was all right. 'Take good care of the old horse, Jenks,' was the last words she said."

The old man was excited but still pale, and he stood waiting before me with a pitiful, pleading expression upon his wizen features.

I shook my head. "I'm afraid we shall be obliged to risk the property, Jenks," I said. "Mrs. Sanderson is very particular, you know, about having all her orders obeyed to the letter."

She will have no one to blame but herself if the whole establishment goes overboard, and if I were you I wouldn't miss this chance of going to sea at her expense for anything."

Then Jenks resolutely undertook to bring his mind to it. "How long will it take?" he inquired.

"Oh, three hours or so," I replied carelessly.

"Do we go out of sight of land?"

"No, you sail down the river a few miles, then you strike the ocean, and just hug the shore until you get there," I replied.

"Yes; strike the ocean—hug the shore—" he mumbled to himself, looking down and rubbing the bald spot on the top of his head. "Strike the ocean—hug the shore. Three hours—oh! do you know whether they have life-preservers on that steamboat?"

"Stacks of them," I replied. "I've seen them often."

"Wouldn't it be a good plan to slip one on to the horse's neck when they start? He'll think it's a collar, and won't be scared, you know; and if there should happen to be any trouble it would help to keep his nose up."

"Capital plan," I responded.

"What time do we start?"

"At eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

Jenks retired with the look and bearing of a man who had been sentenced to be hanged. He went first to the stable, and made all the necessary arrangements there, and late into the night I heard him moving about his room. I presume he did not once close his eyes in sleep that night. I was exceedingly amused by his nervousness, though I would not have intimated to him that I had any doubt of his courage, for the world. He was astir at an early hour in the morning; and breakfast was upon the table while yet the early birds were singing.

"You will have a lovely day, Jenks," I said, as he handed me my coffee.

As he bent to set the cup beside my plate, there came close to my ear a curious, crepitant rustle. "What have you got about you, Jenks?" I inquired.

He made a sickly attempt to smile, and then pulling open the bosom of his shirt, displayed a collapsed, dry bladder, with a goose-quill in the neck ready for its inflation.

"That's a capital idea, Jenks," I said.

"Do you think so? What do you think of that? and he showed me the breast pocket of his coat full of corks.

It was impossible for me to restrain my laughter any longer.

"Number one, you know," said Jenks, buttoning up his coat. "Number one, and a stiff upper lip."

"You're a brave old fellow, any way, Jenks, and you're going to have the best time you ever had. I envy you."

I drove down to the boat with him, to make the arrangements for the shipment, and saw him and the establishment safely on board. The bottom of the carriage was loaded with appliances for securing his personal safety in case of an accident, including a billet of wood, which he assured me was to be used for blocking the wheels of the carriage in case of a storm.

I bade him good-by at last, and went on shore, where I waited to see the steamer wheel into the stream. The last view I had of the old man showed that he had relieved himself of hat and boots, and placed himself in light swimming order. In the place of the former he had tied a red bandanna handkerchief around his head, and for the latter he had substituted slippers. He had entirely forgotten me and the existence of such a town as Bradford. Looking dreamily down the river, out towards that mysterious sea, on which his childish imagination had dwelt so long, and of which he stood in such mortal fear, he passed out of sight.

The next evening I heard from him in a characteristic letter. It was dated at "The Gladds," and read thus:—

"The Bell is a noble vessel.

"The horse and carriage is saif.

"She welcomed me from the see.

"It seems to me I am in the moon.

"Once or twice she roaled ferefully.

"But she rited and drove on.

"I count nineteen distant sales.  
 "If you will be so kind as not to menshun the blader.  
 "The waves roll in and rore all night.  
 "The see is a tremendous thing, and the atlas is nowhare.

"From an old Tarr

"THEOPHILUS JENKS."

A few days afterwards, Henry and I made a flying trip to New Haven, passed our examination for admission to the freshman class, and in the weeks that followed gave ourselves up to recreations which a debilitating summer and debilitating labor had made necessary.

## CHAPTER XII.

### MRS. SANDERSON TAKES A COMPANION AND I GO TO COLLEGE

DURING the closing days of summer, I was surprised to meet in the street, walking alone, the maid who accompanied Mrs. Sanderson to the sea-side. She courtesied quite profoundly to me, after the manner of the time, and paused as though she wished to speak.

"Well, Jane," I said, "how came you here?"

She colored, and her eyes flashed angrily as she replied "Mrs. Sanderson sent me home."

"If you are willing, I should like to have you tell me all about it," I said.

"It is all of a lady Mrs. Sanderson met at the hotel," she responded,— "a lady with a pretty face and fine manners, who is as poor as I am, I warrant ye. Mighty sly and quiet she was; and your aunt took to her from the first day. They walked together every day till Jenks came, and then they rode together, and she was always doing little things for your aunt, and at last they left me out entirely, so that I had nothing in the world to do but to sit and sew all day on just nothing at all. The lady read to her, too, out of the newspapers and the books, in a very nice way, and made herself agreeable with her pretty manners until it was nothing but Mrs. Belden in the morning, and Mrs. Belden at night, and Mrs. Belden all the time, and I told your aunt that I didn't think I was needed any more, and she took me up mighty short and said she didn't think I was, and that I could go home if I wished to; and I wouldn't stay a moment after that, but just packed up and came home in the next boat."

The disappointed and angry girl rattled off her story as if