

sorrow, physical injury, and moral defeat, were written in every line of the poor drawn face and shrunken form. The brow was furrowed, the breathing hard, the mouth dry and bloodless. Upon the mind of the new-comer, possessed as it was with the image of what David Grieve had been two short months before, the effect of the spectacle was presently overwhelming.

He fell on his knees beside the sleeper. But as he did so, he noticed the black thing on the floor, stooped to it, and took it up. That it should be a loaded revolver seemed to him at that moment the most natural thing in the world, little used as he personally was to such possessions. He looked at it carefully, took out the two cartridges it contained, put them into one pocket and the revolver into the other.

Then he laid his arm round the lad's neck.

'David!'

The young man woke directly and sat up, shaking with terror and excitement. He pushed his visitor from him, looking at him with defiance. Then he slipped his hand inside his coat and sprang up with a cry.

'David!—dear boy—dear fellow!'

The voice penetrated the lad's ear. He caught his visitor and dragged him forward to the light. It fell on the twisted face and wet eyes of Mr. Ancrum. So startling was the vision, so poignant were the associations which it set vibrating, that David stood staring and trembling, struck dumb.

'Oh, my poor lad! my poor lad! John wanted me to come yesterday, and I delayed. I was a selfish wretch. Now I will take you home.'

David fell again upon his chair, too feeble to speak, too feeble even to weep, the little remaining colour ebbing from his cheeks. The minister used all his strength, and laid him on the bed. Then he rang and made even the callous and haughty madame, who was presently summoned, listen to and obey him while he sent for brandy and a doctor, and let the air of the night into the stifling room.

CHAPTER XII

In two or three days the English doctor who was attending David strongly advised Mr. Ancrum to get his charge home. The fierce strain his youth had sustained acting through the nervous system had disordered almost every bodily function, and the collapse which followed Mr. Ancrum's appearance was severe. He would lie in his bed motionless and speechless, volunteered no confidence, and showed hardly any rallying power.

'Get him out of this furnace and that doghole of a room,' said the doctor. 'He has come to grief here somehow—that's plain. You won't make anything of him till you move him.'

When the lad was at last stretched on the deck of a Channel steamer speeding to the English coast, and the sea breeze had

brought a faint touch of returning colour to his cheek, he asked the question he had never yet had the physical energy to ask.

'Why did you come, and how did you find me?'

Then it appeared that the old cashier at Heywood's bank, who had taken a friendly interest in the young bookseller since the opening of his account, had dropped a private word to John in the course of conversation, which had alarmed that youth not a little. His own last scrawl from David had puzzled and disquieted him, and he straightway marched off to Mr. Ancrum to consult. Whereupon the minister wrote cautiously and affectionately to David asking for some prompt and full explanation of things for his friends' sake. The letter was, as we know, never opened, and therefore never answered. Whereupon John's jealous misery on Louie's account and Mr. Ancrum's love for David had so worked that the minister had broken in upon his scanty savings and started for Paris at a few hours' notice. Once in the Rue Chantal he had come easily on David's track.

Naturally he had inquired after Louie as soon as David was in a condition to be questioned at all. The young man hesitated a moment, then he said resolutely, 'She is married,' and would say no more. Mr. Ancrum pressed the matter a little, but his patient merely shook his head, and the sight of him as he lay there on the pillow was soon enough to silence the minister.

On the evening before they left Paris he called for a telegraph form, wrote a message and paid the reply, but Mr. Ancrum saw nothing of either. When the reply arrived David crushed it in his hand with a strange look, half bitterness, half relief, and flung it behind a piece of furniture standing near.

Now, on the cool, wind-swept deck, he seemed more inclined to talk than he had been yet. He asked questions about John and the Lomaxes—he even inquired after Lucy, as to whom the minister who had lately improved an acquaintance with Dora and her father, begun through David, could only answer vaguely that he believed she was still in the south. But he volunteered nothing about his own affairs or the cause of the state in which Mr. Ancrum had found him.

Every now and then, indeed, as they stood together at the side of the vessel, David leaning heavily against it, his words would fail him altogether, and he would be left staring stupidly, the great black eyes widening, the lower lip falling—over the shifting brilliance of the sea.

Ancrum was almost sure too that in the darkness of their last night in Paris there had been, hour after hour, a sound of hard and stifled weeping, mingled with the noises from the street and from the station; and to-day the youth in the face was more quenched than ever, in spite of the signs of reviving health. There had been a woman in the case, of course: Louie might have misbehaved herself; but after all the world is so made that no sister can make a brother suffer as David had evidently suffered—and then there was the revolver! About this

last, after one or two restless movements of search, which Mr. Ancrum interpreted, David had never asked, and the minister, timid man of peace that he was, had resold it before leaving.

Well, it was a problem, and it must be left to time. Meanwhile Mr. Ancrum was certainly astonished that *any* love affair should have had such a destructive volcanic power with the lad. For it was no mere raw and sensuous nature, no idle and morbid brain. One would have thought that so many different aptitudes and capacities would have kept each other in check.

As they neared Manchester, David grew plainly restless and ill at ease. He looked out sharply for the name of each succeeding town, half turning afterwards, as though to speak to his companion; but it was not till they were within ten minutes of the Central Station that he said—

'John will want to know about Louie. She is married,—as I told you,—to a French sculptor. I have handed over to her all my father's money—that is why I drew it out.'

Mr. Ancrum edged up closer to him—all ears—waiting for more. But there was nothing more.

'And you are satisfied?' he said at last.

David nodded and looked out of window intently.

'What is the man's name?'

David either did not or would not hear, and Mr. Ancrum let him alone. But the news was startling. So the boy had stripped himself, and must begin the world again as before! What had that minx been after?

Manchester again. David looked out eagerly from the cab, his hand trembling on his knee, beads of perspiration on his face.

They turned up the narrow street, and there in the distance to the right was the stall and the shop, and a figure on the steps. Mr. Ancrum had sent a card before them, and John was on the watch.

The instant the cab stopped, and before the driver could dismount, John had opened the door. Putting his head in he peered at the pair inside, and at the opposite seat, with his small short-sighted eyes.

'Where is she?' he said hoarsely, barring the way.

Mr. Ancrum looked at his companion. David had shrunk back into the corner, with a white hangdog look, and said nothing. The minister interposed.

'David will tell you all,' he said gently. 'First help me in with him, and the bags. He is a sick man.'

With a huge effort John controlled himself, and they got inside. Then he shut the shop door and put his back against it.

'Tell me where she is,' he repeated shortly.

'She is married,' David said in a low voice, but looking up from the chair on which he had sunk. 'By now—she is married. I heard by telegram last night that all was arranged for to-day.'

The lad opposite made a sharp, inarticulate sound which

startled the minister's ear. Then clutching the handle of the door, he resumed sharply—

'Who has she married?'

The assumption of the right to question was arrogance itself—strange in the dumb, retiring creature whom the minister had hitherto known only as David's slave and shadow!

'A French sculptor,' said David steadily, but propping his head and hand against the counter, so as to avoid John's stare—'a man called Montjoie. I was a brute—I neglected her. She got into his hands. Then I sent for all my money to bribe him to marry her. And he has.'

'You—you *blackguard!*' cried John.

David straightened instinctively under the blow, and his eyes met John's for one fierce moment. Then Mr. Ancrum thought he would have fainted. The minister took rough hold of John by the shoulders.

'If you can't stay and hold your tongue,' he said, 'you must go. He is worn out with the journey, and I shall get him to bed. Here's some money: suppose you run to the house round the corner, in Prince's Street; ask if they've got some strong soup, and, if they have, hurry back with it. Come—look sharp. And—one moment—you've been sleeping here, I suppose? Well, I shall take your room for a bit, if that'll suit you. This fellow'll have to be looked after.'

The little lame creature spoke like one who meant to have his way. John took the coin, hesitated, and stumbled out.

For days afterwards there was silence between him and David, except for business directions. He avoided being in the shop with his employer, and would stand for hours on the step, ostensibly watching the stall, but in reality doing no business that he could help. Whenever Mr. Ancrum caught sight of him he was leaning against the wall, his hat slouched over his eyes, his hands in his pockets, utterly inert and listless, more like a log than a human being. Still he was no less stout, lumpish, and pink-faced than before. His fate might have all the tragic quality; nature had none the less inexorably endowed him with the externals of farce.

Meanwhile David dragged himself from his bed to the shop and set to work to pick up dropped threads. The customers, who had been formerly interested in him, discovered his return, and came in to inquire why he had been so long away, or, in the case of one or two, whether he had executed certain commissions in Paris. The explanation of illness, however, circulated from the first moment by Mr. Ancrum, and perforce adopted—though with an inward rage and rebellion—by David himself, was amply sufficient to cover his omissions and inattentions, and to ease his resumption of his old place. His appearance indeed was still ghastly. The skin of the face had the tightened, transparent look of weakness; the eyes, reddened and sunk, showed but little of their old splendour between the blue circles beneath and

the heavy brows above; even the hair seemed to have lost its boyish curl, and fell in harsh, troublesome waves over the forehead, whence its owner was perpetually and impatiently thrusting it back. All the bony structure of the face had been emphasised at the expense of its young grace and bloom, and the new indications of moustache and beard did but add to its striking and painful black and white. And the whole impression of change was completed by the melancholy aloofness, the shrinking distrust with which eyes once overflowing with the frankness and eagerness of one of the most accessible of human souls now looked out upon the world.

'Was it fever?' said a young Owens College professor who had taken a lively interest from the beginning in the clever lad's venture. 'Upon my word! you do look pulled down. Paris may be the first city in the world—it is an insanitary hole all the same. So you never found time to inquire after those Molière editions for me?'

David racked his brains. What was it he had been asked to do? He remembered half an hour's talk on one of those early days with a bookseller on the Quai Voltaire—was it about this commission? He could not recall.

'No, sir,' he said, stammering and flushing. 'I believe I did ask somewhere, but I can't remember.'

'It's very natural, very natural,' said the professor kindly. 'Never mind. I'll send you the particulars again, and you can keep your eyes open for me. And, look here, take your business easy for a while. You'll get on—you're sure to get on—if you only recover your health.'

David opened the door for him in silence.

The reawakening of his old life in him was strange and slow. When he first found himself back among his books and catalogues, his ledgers and business memoranda, he was bewildered and impatient. What did these elaborate notes, with their cabalistic signs and abbreviations—whether as to the needs of customers, or the whereabouts of books, or the history of prices—mean or matter? He was like a man who has lost a sense. Then the pressure of certain debts which should have been met out of the money in the bank first put some life into him. He looked into his financial situation and found it grave, though not desperate. All hope of a large and easy expansion of business was, of course, gone. The loss of his capital had reduced him to the daily shifts and small laborious accumulations with which he had begun. But this factor in his state was morally of more profit to him at the moment than any other. With such homely medicines nature and life can often do most for us.

Such was Ancrum's belief, and in consequence he showed a very remarkable wisdom during these early days of David's return.

'As far as I can judge, there has been a bad shake to the heart in more senses than one,' had been the dry remark of the

Paris doctor; 'and as for nervous system, it's a mercy he's got any left. Take care of him, but for Heaven's sake don't make an invalid of him—that would be the finish.'

So that Ancrum offered no fussy opposition to the resumption of the young man's daily work, though at first it produced a constant battle with exhaustion and depression. But never day or night did the minister forget his charge. He saw that he ate and drank; he enforced a few common-sense remedies for the nervous ills which the moral convulsion had left behind it, ills which the lad in his irritable humiliation would fain have hidden even from him; above all he knew how to say a word which kept Dora and Daddy and other friends away for a time, and how to stand between David and that choked and miserable John.

He had the strength of mind also to press for no confidence and to expect no thanks. He had little fear of any further attempts at suicide, though he would have found it difficult perhaps to explain why. But instinctively he felt that for all practical purposes David had been mad when he found him, and that he was mad no longer. He was wretched, and only a fraction of his mind was in Manchester and in his business—that was plain. But, in however imperfect a way, he was again master of himself; and the minister bided his time, putting his ultimate trust in one of the finest mental and physical constitutions he had ever known.

In about ten days David took up his hat one afternoon and, for the first time, ventured into the streets. On his return he was walking down Potter Street in a storm of wind and rain, when he ran against some one who was holding an umbrella right in front of her and battling with the weather. In his recoil he saw that it was Dora.

Dora too looked up, a sudden radiant pleasure in her face overflowing her soft eyes and lips.

'Oh, Mr. Grieve! And are you really better?'

'Yes,' he said briefly. 'May I walk with you a bit?'

'Oh no!—I don't believe you ought to be out in such weather. I'll just come the length of the street with you.'

And she turned and walked with him, chattering fast, and of course, from the point of view of an omniscience which could not have been hers, foolishly. Had he liked Paris?—what he saw of it at least before he had been ill?—and how long had he been ill? Why had he not let Mr. Ancrum or some one know sooner? And would he tell her more about Louie? She heard that she was married, but there was so much she, Dora, wanted to hear.

To his first scanty answers she paid in truth but small heed, for the joy of seeing him again was soon effaced by the painful impression of his altered aspect. The more she looked at him, the more her heart went out to him; her whole being became an effusion of pity and tenderness, and her simplest words, maidenly and self-restrained as she was, were in fact charged with something electric, ineffable. His suffering, his neighbourhood, her

own sympathy—she was taken up, overwhelmed by these general impressions. Inferences, details escaped her.

But as she touched on the matter of Louie, and they were now at his own steps, he said to her hurriedly—

‘Walk a little further, and I’ll tell you. John’s in there.’

She opened her eyes, not understanding, and then demurred a little on the ground of his health and the rain.

‘Oh, I’m all right,’ he said impatiently. ‘Look here, will you walk to Chetham’s Library? There’ll be a quiet place there, in the reading room—sure to be—where we can talk.’

She assented, and very soon they were mounting the black oak stairs leading to this old corner of Manchester. At the top of the stairs they saw in the distance, at the end of the passage on to which open the readers’ studies, each with its lining of folios and its oaken lattice, a librarian, who nodded to David, and took a look at Dora. Further on they stumbled over a small boy from the charity school who wished to lionise them over the whole building. But when he had been routed, they found the beautiful panelled and painted reading-room quite empty, and took possession of it in peace. David led the way to an oriel window he had become familiar with in the off-times of his first years at Manchester, and they seated themselves there with a low sloping desk between them, looking out on the wide rain-swept yard outside, the buildings of the grammar-school, and the black mass of the cathedral.

Manchester had never been more truly Manchester than on this dark July afternoon, with its low shapeless clouds, its darkness, wind, and pelting rain. David, staring out through the lozenge panes at the familiar gloom beyond, was suddenly carried by repulsion into the midst of a vision which was an agony—of a spring forest cut by threadlike paths; of a shadeless sun; of a white city steeped in charm, in gaiety.

Dora watched him timidly, new perceptions and alarms dawning in her.

‘You were going to tell me about Louie,’ she said.

He returned to himself, and abruptly turned with his back to the window, so that he saw the outer world no more.

‘You heard that she was married?’

‘Yes.’

‘She has married a brute. It was partly my fault. I wanted to be rid of her; she got in my way. This man was in the same house; I left her to herself, and partly, I believe, to spite me, she went off with him. Then at the last when she wouldn’t leave him I made her marry him. I bribed him to marry her. And he did. I had just enough money to make it worth his while. But he will ill-treat her; and she won’t stay with him. She will go from bad to worse.’

Dora drew back, with her hand on the desk, staring at him with incredulous horror.

‘But you were ill?’ she stammered.

He shook his head.

‘Never mind my being ill. I wanted you to know, because you were good to her, and I’m not going to be a hypocrite to you. Nobody else need know anything but that she’s married, which is true. If I’d looked after her it mightn’t have happened—perhaps. But I didn’t look after her—I couldn’t.’

His face, propped in his hands, was hidden from her. She was in a whirl of excitement and tragic impression—understanding something, divining more.

‘Louie was always so self-willed,’ she said trembling.

‘Aye. That don’t make it any better. You remember all I told you about her before? You know we didn’t get on; she wasn’t nice to me, and I didn’t suit her, I suppose. But all this year, I don’t know why, she’s been on my mind from morning till night; I’ve always felt sure, somehow, that she would come to harm; and the worrying oneself about her—well! it has seemed to grow into one’s very bones.’—He threw out the last words after a pause, in which he had seemed to search for some phrase wherewith to fit the energy of his feeling. ‘I took her to Paris to keep her out of mischief. I had much rather have gone alone; but she would not ask you to take her in, and I couldn’t leave her with John. Well, then, she got in my way—I told you—and I let her go to the dogs. There—it’s done—done!’

He turned on his seat, one hand drumming the desk, while his eyes fixed themselves apparently on the portrait of Sir Humphry Chetham over the carved mantelpiece. His manner was hard and rapid; neither voice nor expression had any of the simplicity or directness of remorse.

Dora remained silent looking at him; her slender hands were pressed tight against either cheek; the tears rose slowly till they filled her grey eyes.

‘It is very sad,’ she said in a low voice.

There was a pause.

‘Yes—it’s sad. So are most things in this world, perhaps. All natural wants seem just to lead us to misery sooner or later. And who gave them to us—who put us here—with no choice but just to go on blundering from one muddle into another?’

Their eyes met. It was as though he had remembered her religion, and could not, in his bitterness, refrain from an indirect fling at it.

As for her, what he said was strange and repellent to her. But her forlorn passion, so long trampled on, cried within her; her pure heart was one prayer, one exquisite throb of pain and pity.

‘Did some one deceive you?’ she asked, so low that the words seemed just breathed into the air.

‘No,—I deceived myself.’

Then as he looked at her an impulse of confession crossed his mind. Sympathy, sincerity, womanly sweetness, these things he had always associated with Dora Lomax. Instinctively he had

chosen her for a friend long ago as soon as their first foolish spars were over.

But the impulse passed away. He thought of her severity, her religion, her middle-class canons and judgments, which perhaps were all the stricter because of Daddy's laxities. What common ground between her and his passion, between her and Elise? No! if he must speak—if, in the end, he proved too weak to forbear wholly from speech—let it be to ears more practised, and more human!

So he choked back his words, and Dora felt instinctively that he would tell her no more. Her consciousness of this was a mingled humiliation and relief; it wounded her to feel that she had so little command of him; yet she dreaded what he might say. Paris was a wicked place—so the world reported. Her imagination, sensitive, Christianised, ascetic, shrank from what he might have done. Perhaps the woman shrank too. Instead, she threw herself upon the thought, the bliss, that he was there again beside her, restored, rescued from the gulf, if gulf there had been.

He went back to the subject of Louie, and told her as much as a girl of Dora's kind could be told of what he himself knew of Louie's husband. In the course of his two days' search for them, which had included an interview with Madame Cervin; he had become tolerably well acquainted with Montjoie's public character and career. Incidentally parts of the story of Louie's behaviour came in, and for one who knew her as Dora did, her madness and wilfulness emerged, could be guessed at, little as the brother intended to excuse himself thereby. How, indeed, should he excuse himself? Louie's character was a fixed quantity to be reckoned on by all who had dealings with her. One might as well excuse oneself for letting a lunatic escape by the pretext of his lunacy. Dora perfectly understood his tone. Yet in her heart of hearts she forgave him—for she knew not what!—became his champion. There was a dry sharpness of self-judgment, a settled conviction of coming ill in all he said which wrung her heart. And how blanched he was by that unknown misery! How should she not pity, not forgive? It was the impotence of her own feeling to express itself that swelled her throat. And poor Lucy, too—ah! poor Lucy.

Suddenly, as he was speaking, he noticed his companion more closely, the shabbiness of the little black hat and jacket, the new lines round the eyes and mouth.

'You have not been well,' he said abruptly. 'How has your father been going on?'

She started and tried to answer quietly. But her nerves had been shaken by their talk, and by that inward play of emotion which had gone on out of his sight. Quite unexpectedly she broke down, and covering her eyes with one hand, began to sob gently.

'I can't do anything with him now, poor father,' she said, when she could control herself. 'He won't listen to me at all.

The debts are beginning to be dreadful, and the business is going down fast. I don't know what we shall do. And it all makes him worse—drives him to drink.'

David thought a minute, lifted out of himself for the first time. 'Shall I come to-night to see him?'

'Oh do!' she said eagerly; 'come about nine o'clock. I will tell him—perhaps that will keep him in.'

Then she went into more details than she had yet done; named the creditors who were pressing; told how her church-work, though she worked herself blind night and day, could do but little for them; how both the restaurant and the reading-room were emptying, and she could now get no servants to stay, but Sarah, because of her father's temper.

It seemed to him as he listened that the story, with its sickened hope and on-coming fate, was all in some strange way familiar; it or something like it was to have been expected; for him the strange and jarring thing now would have been to find a happy person. He was in that young morbid state when the mind hangs its own cloud over the universe.

But Dora got up to go, tying on her veil with shaking hands. She was so humbly grateful to him that he was sorry for her—that he could spare a thought from his own griefs for her.

As they went down the dark stairs together, he asked after Lucy. She was now staying with some relations at Wakely, a cotton town in the valley of the Irwell, Dora said; but she would probably go back to Hastings for the winter. It was now settled that she and her father could not get on; and the stepmother that was to be—Purcell, however, was taking his time—was determined not to be bothered with her.

David listened with a certain discomfort. 'It was what she did for me,' he thought, 'that set him against her for good and all. Old brute!'

Aloud he said: 'I wrote to her, you know, and sent her that book. She *did* write me a queer letter back—it was all dashes and splashes—about the street-preachings on the beach, and a blind man who sang hymns. I can't remember why she hated him so particularly!'

She answered his faint smile. Lucy was a child for both of them. Then he took her to the door of the Parlour, noticing, as he parted from her, how dingy and neglected the place looked.

Afterwards—directly he had left her—the weight of his pain which had been lightened for an hour descended upon him again, shutting the doors of the senses, leaving him alone within, face to face with the little figure which haunted him day and night. During the days since his return from Paris the faculty of projective imagination, which had endowed his childhood with a second world, and peopled it with the incidents and creatures of his books, had grown to an abnormal strength. Behind the stage on which he was now painfully gathering together the fragments of his old life, it created for him another, where, amid scenes

richly set and lit with perpetual summer, he lived with Elise, walked with her, watched her, lay at her feet, quarrelled with her, forgave her. His drama did not depend on memory alone, or rather it was memory passing into creation. Within its bounds he was himself and not himself; his part was loftier than any he had ever played in reality; his eloquence was no longer tonguetied—it flowed and penetrated. His love might be cruel, but he was on her level, nay, her master; he could reproach, wrestle with, command her; and at the end evoke the pardoning flight into each other's arms—confession—rapture.

Till suddenly, poor fool! a little bolt shot from the bow of memory—the image of a *diligence* rattling along a white road—or of black rain-beaten quays, with their lines of wavering lamps—or of a hideous upper room with blue rep furniture where one could neither move nor breathe—would strike his dream to fragments, and as it fell to ruins within him, his whole being would become one tumult of inarticulate cries—delirium—anguish—with which the self at the heart of all seemed to be wrestling for life.

It was so to-day after he left Dora. First the vision, the enchantment—then the agony, the sob of desolation which could hardly be kept down. He saw nothing in the streets. He walked on past the Exchange, where an unusual crowd was gathered, elbowing his way through it mechanically, but not in truth knowing that it was there.

When he reached the shop he ran past John, who was reading a newspaper, up to his room and locked the door.

About an hour afterwards Mr. Ancrum came in, all excitement, a batch of papers under his arm.

'It is going to be war, John! War—I tell you! and such a war. They'll be beaten, those braggarts, if there's justice in heaven. The streets are all full; I could hardly get here; everybody talking of how it will affect Manchester. Time enough to think about that! What a set of selfish beasts we all are! Where's David?'

'Come in an hour ago!' said John sullenly; 'he went upstairs.'

'Ah, he will have heard—the placards are all over the place.'

The minister went upstairs and knocked at David's door.

'David!'

'All right,' said a voice from inside.

'David, what do you think of the news?'

'What news?' after a pause.

'Why, the war, man! Haven't you seen the evening paper?'

No answer. The minister stood listening at the door. Then a tender look dawned in his odd grey face.

'David, look here, I'll push you the paper under the door. You're tired, I suppose—done yourself up with your walk?'

'I'll be down to supper,' said the voice from inside, shortly. 'Will you push in the paper?'

The minister descended, and sat by himself in the kitchen thinking. He was a wiser man now than when he had gone out, and not only as to that reply of the King of Prussia to the French ultimatum on the subject of the Hohenzollern candidature.

For he had met Barbier in the street. How to keep the voluble Frenchman from bombarding David in his shattered state had been one of Mr. Ancrum's most anxious occupations since his return. It had been done, but it had been difficult. For to whom did David owe his first reports of Paris if not to the old comrade who had sent him there, found him a lodging, and taught him to speak French so as not to disgrace himself and his country? However, Ancrum had found means to intercept Barbier's first visit, and had checkmated his attempts ever since. As a natural result, Barbier was extremely irritable. Illness—stuff! The lad had been getting into scrapes—that he would swear.

On this occasion, when Ancrum stumbled across him, he found Barbier, at first bubbling over with the war news; torn different ways; now abusing the Emperor for a *cochon* and a *fou*, prophesying unlimited disaster for France, and sneering at the ranting crowds on the boulevards; the next moment spouting the same anti-Prussian madness with which his whole unfortunate country was at the moment infected. In the midst of his gallop of talk, however, the old man suddenly stopped, took off his hat, and running one excited hand through his bristling tufts of grey hair pointed to Ancrum with the other.

'*Halte là!*' he said, 'I know what your young rascal has been after. I know, and I'll be bound you don't. Trust a lover for hoodwinking a priest. Come along here.'

And putting his arm through Ancrum's, he swept him away, repeating, as they walked, the substance of a letter from his precious nephew, in which the Barbizon episode as it appeared to the inhabitants of No. 7 Rue Chantal and to the students of Taranne's *atelier de femmes* was related, with every embellishment of witticism and *blague* that the imagination of a French *rapin* could suggest. Mademoiselle Delaunay was not yet restored, according to the writer, to the *atelier* which she adorned. '*On criait au scandale,*' mainly because she was such a clever little animal, and the others envied and hated her. She had removed to a studio near the Luxembourg, and Taranne was said to be teaching her privately. Meanwhile Dubois requested his dear uncle to supply him with information as to *l'autre*; it would be gratefully received by an appreciative circle. As for *la sœur de l'autre*, the dear uncle no doubt knew that she had migrated to the studio of Monsieur Montjoie, an artist whose little affairs in the *genre* had already, before her advent, attained a high degree of interest and variety. On a review of all the circumstances, the dear uncle would perhaps pardon the writer if he were less disposed than before to accept those estimable

views of the superiority of the English *morale* to the French, which had been so ably impressed upon him during his visit to Manchester.

For after a very short stay at Brussels the nephew had boldly and suddenly pushed over to England, and had spent a fortnight in Barbier's lodgings reconnoitering his uncle. As to the uncle, Xavier had struck him, on closer inspection, as one of the most dissolute young reprobates he had ever beheld. He had preached to him like a father, holding up to him the image of his own absent favourite, David Grieve, as a brilliant illustration of what could be achieved even in this wicked world by morals and capacity. And in the intervals he had supplied the creature with money and amused himself with his *gaminerie* from morning till night. On their parting the uncle had with great frankness confessed to the nephew the general opinion he had formed of his character; all the same they were now embarked on a tolerably frequent correspondence; and Dubois' ultimate chance of obtaining his uncle's savings, on the *chasse* of which he had come to England, would have seemed to the cool observer by no means small.

'But now, look here,' said Barbier, taking off his spectacles to wipe away the 'merry tear' which dimmed them, after the recapitulation of Xavier's last letter, 'no more nonsense! I come and have it out with that young man. I sent him to Paris, and I'll know what he did there. *He's* not made of burnt sugar. Of course he's broken his heart—we all do. Serve him right.'

'It's easy to laugh,' said Ancrum dryly, 'only these young fellows have sometimes an uncomfortable way of vindicating their dignity by shooting themselves.'

Barbier started and looked interrogative.

'Now suppose you listen to me,' said the minister.

And the two men resumed their patrol of Albert Square while Ancrum described his rescue of David. The story was simply told but impressive. Barbier whistled, stared, and surrendered. Nay, he went to the other extreme. He loved the absurd, but he loved the romantic more. An hour before, David's adventures had been to him a subject of comic opera. As Ancrum talked, they took on 'the grand style,' and at the end he could no more have taken liberties with his old pupil than with the hero of the *Nuit de Mai*. He became excited, sympathetic, declamatory, tore open old sores, and Mr. Ancrum had great difficulty in getting rid of him.

So now the minister was sitting at home meditating. Through the atmosphere of mockery with which Dubois had invested the story he saw the outlines of it with some clearness.

CHAPTER XIII

In the midst of his meditations, however, the minister did not forget to send John out for David's supper, and when David

appeared, white, haggard, and exhausted, it was to find himself thought for with a care like a woman's. The lad, being sick and irritable, showed more resentment than gratitude; pushed away his food, looking sombrely the while at the dry bread and tea which formed the minister's invariable evening meal as though to ask when he was to be allowed his rational freedom again to eat or fast as he pleased. He scarcely answered Ancrum's remarks about the war, and finally he got up heavily, saying he was going out.

'You ought to be in your bed,' said Ancrum, protesting almost for the first time, 'and it's there you will be—tied by the leg—if you don't take a decent care of yourself.'

David took no notice and went. He dragged himself to the German Athenæum, of which he had become a member in the first flush of his inheritance. There were the telegrams from Paris, and an eager crowd reading and discussing them. As he pushed his way in at last and read, the whole scene rose before him as though he were there—the summer boulevards with their trees and kiosks, the moving crowds, the shouts, the 'Marseillaise'—the blind infectious madness of it all. And one short fortnight ago, what man in Europe could have guessed that such a day was already on the knees of the gods?

Afterwards, on the way to the Parlour, he talked to Elise about it,—placing her on the boulevards with the rest, and himself beside her to guard her from the throng. Hour by hour, this morbid gift of his, though it tortured him, provided an outlet for passion, saved him from numbness and despair.

When he got to Dora's sitting-room he found Daddy sitting there, smoking sombrely over the empty grate. He had expected a flood of questions, and had steeled himself to meet them. Nothing of the sort. The old man took very little notice of him and his travels. Considering the petulant advice with which Daddy had sent him off, David was astonished and, in the end, piqued. He recovered the tongue which he had lost for Ancrum, and was presently discussing the war like anybody else. Reminiscences of the talk amid which he had lived during those Paris weeks came back to them; and he repeated some of them which bore on the present action of Napoleon III. and his ministry, with a touch of returning fluency. He was, in fact, playing for Daddy's attention.

Daddy watched him silently with a wild and furtive eye. At last, looking round to see whether Dora was there, and finding that she had gone out, he laid a lean long hand on David's knee.

'That'll do, Davy. Davy, why were you all that time away?'

The young man drew himself up suddenly, brought back to realities from this first brief moment of something like forgetfulness. He tried for his common excuse of illness; but it stuck in his throat.