ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

KENELM CHILLINGLY — VOLUME 02

Эдвард Джордж Бульвер-Литтон
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Kenelm Chillingly — Volume 02:

Edward Bulwer-Lytton
Kenelm Chillingly
— Volume 02

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

KENELM CHILLINGLY had quitted the paternal home at daybreak before any of the household was astir. "Unquestionably," said he, as he walked along the solitary lanes, —"unquestionably I begin the world as poets begin poetry, an imitator and a plagiarist. I am imitating an itinerant verse-maker, as, no doubt, he began by imitating some other maker of verse. But if there be anything in me, it will work itself out in original form. And, after all, the verse-maker is not the inventor of ideas. Adventure on foot is a notion that remounts to the age of fable. Hercules, for instance; that was the way in which he got to heaven, as a foot-traveller. How solitary the world is at this hour! Is it not for that reason that this is of all hours the most beautiful?"

Here he paused, and looked around and above. It was the very height of summer. The sun was just rising over gentle

sloping uplands. All the dews on the hedgerows sparkled. There was not a cloud in the heavens. Up rose from the green blades of corn a solitary skylark. His voice woke up the other birds. A few minutes more and the joyous concert began. Kenelm reverently doffed his hat, and bowed his head in mute homage and thanksgiving.

CHAPTER II

ABOUT nine o'clock Kenelm entered a town some twelve miles distant from his father's house, and towards which he had designedly made his way, because in that town he was scarcely if at all known by sight, and he might there make the purchases he required without attracting any marked observation. He had selected for his travelling costume a shooting-dress, as the simplest and least likely to belong to his rank as a gentleman. But still in its very cut there was an air of distinction, and every labourer he had met on the way had touched his hat to him. Besides, who wears a shooting-dress in the middle of June, or a shooting-dress at all, unless he be either a game-keeper or a gentleman licensed to shoot?

Kenelm entered a large store-shop for ready-made clothes and purchased a suit such as might be worn on Sundays by a small country yeoman or tenant-farmer of a petty holding,—a stout coarse broadcloth upper garment, half coat, half jacket, with waistcoat to match, strong corduroy trousers, a smart Belcher neckcloth, with a small stock of linen and woollen socks in harmony with the other raiment. He bought also a leathern knapsack, just big enough to contain this wardrobe, and a couple of books, which with his combs and brushes he had brought away in his pockets; for among all his trunks at home there was no knapsack.

These purchases made and paid for, he passed quickly through the town, and stopped at a humble inn at the outskirt, to which he was attracted by the notice, "Refreshment for man and beast." He entered a little sanded parlour, which at that hour he had all to himself, called for breakfast, and devoured the best part of a fourpenny loaf with a couple of hard eggs.

Thus recruited, he again sallied forth, and deviating into a thick wood by the roadside, he exchanged the habiliments with which he had left home for those he had purchased, and by the help of one or two big stones sunk the relinquished garments into a small but deep pool which he was lucky enough to find in a bush-grown dell much haunted by snipes in the winter.

"Now," said Kenelm, "I really begin to think I have got out of myself. I am in another man's skin; for what, after all, is a skin but a soul's clothing, and what is clothing but a decenter skin? Of its own natural skin every civilized soul is ashamed. It is the height of impropriety for any one but the lowest kind of savage to show it. If the purest soul now existent upon earth, the Pope of Rome's or the Archbishop of Canterbury's, were to pass down the Strand with the skin which Nature gave to it bare to the eye, it would be brought up before a magistrate, prosecuted by the Society for the Suppression of Vice, and committed to jail as a public nuisance.

"Decidedly I am now in another man's skin. Kenelm Chillingly, I no longer

"Remain

"Yours faithfully;

"But am,

"With profound consideration,

"Your obedient humble servant."

With light step and elated crest, the wanderer, thus transformed, sprang from the wood into the dusty thoroughfare. He had travelled on for about an hour, meeting but few other passengers, when he heard to the right a loud shrill young voice, "Help! help! I will not go; I tell you, I will not!" Just before him stood, by a high five-barred gate, a pensive gray cob attached to a neat-looking gig. The bridle was loose on the cob's neck. The animal was evidently accustomed to stand quietly when ordered to do so, and glad of the opportunity.

The cries, "Help, help!" were renewed, mingled with louder tones in a rougher voice, tones of wrath and menace. Evidently these sounds did not come from the cob. Kenelm looked over the gate, and saw a few yards distant in a grass field a well-dressed boy struggling violently against a stout middle-aged man who was rudely hauling him along by the arm.

The chivalry natural to a namesake of the valiant Sir Kenelm Digby was instantly aroused. He vaulted over the gate, seized the man by the collar, and exclaimed, "For shame! what are you doing to that poor boy? let him go!"

"Why the devil do you interfere?" cried the stout man, his eyes glaring and his lips foaming with rage. "Ah, are you the villain? yes, no doubt of it. I'll give it to you, jackanapes," and

still grasping the boy with one hand, with the other the stout man darted a blow at Kenelm, from which nothing less than the practised pugilistic skill and natural alertness of the youth thus suddenly assaulted could have saved his eyes and nose. As it was, the stout man had the worst of it: the blow was parried, returned with a dexterous manoeuvre of Kenelm's right foot in Cornish fashion, and /procumbit humi bos/; the stout man lay sprawling on his back. The boy, thus released, seized hold of Kenelm by the arm, and hurrying him along up the field, cried, "Come, come before he gets up! save me! save me!" Ere he had recovered his own surprise, the boy had dragged Kenelm to the gate, and jumped into the gig, sobbing forth, "Get in, get in, I can't drive; get in, and drive—you. Quick! Quick!"

"But—" began Kenelm.

"Get in, or I shall go mad." Kenelm obeyed; the boy gave him the reins, and seizing the whip himself, applied it lustily to the cob. On sprang the cob. "Stop, stop, stop, thief! villain! Holloa! thieves! thieves! thieves! stop!" cried a voice behind. Kenelm involuntarily turned his head and beheld the stout man perched upon the gate and gesticulating furiously. It was but a glimpse; again the whip was plied, the cob frantically broke into a gallop, the gig jolted and bumped and swerved, and it was not till they had put a good mile between themselves and the stout man that Kenelm succeeded in obtaining possession of the whip and calming the cob into a rational trot.

"Young gentleman," then said Kenelm, "perhaps you will have

the goodness to explain."

"By and by; get on, that's a good fellow; you shall be well paid for it, well and handsomely."

Quoth Kenelm, gravely, "I know that in real life payment and service naturally go together. But we will put aside the payment till you tell me what is to be the service. And first, whither am I to drive you? We are coming to a place where three roads meet; which of the three shall I take?"

"Oh, I don't know; there is a finger-post. I want to get to,—but it is a secret; you'll not betray me? Promise,—swear."

"I don't swear except when I am in a passion, which, I am sorry to say, is very seldom; and I don't promise till I know what I promise; neither do I go on driving runaway boys in other men's gigs unless I know that I am taking them to a safe place, where their papas and mammas can get at them."

"I have no papa, no mamma," said the boy, dolefully and with quivering lips.

"Poor boy! I suppose that burly brute is your schoolmaster, and you are running away home for fear of a flogging."

The boy burst out laughing; a pretty, silvery, merry laugh: it thrilled through Kenelm Chillingly. "No, he would not flog me: he is not a schoolmaster; he is worse than that."

"Is it possible? What is he?"

"An uncle."

"Hum! uncles are proverbial for cruelty; were so in the classical days, and Richard III. was the only scholar in his

family."

"Eh! classical and Richard III.!" said the boy, startled, and looking attentively at the pensive driver. "Who are you? you talk like a gentleman."

"I beg pardon. I'll not do so again if I can help it."—"Decidedly," thought Kenelm, "I am beginning to be amused. What a blessing it is to get into another man's skin, and another man's gig too!" Aloud, "Here we are at the fingerpost. If you are running away from your uncle, it is time to inform me where you are running to."

Here the boy leaned over the gig and examined the fingerpost. Then he clapped his hands joyfully.

"All right! I thought so, 'To Tor-Hadham, eighteen miles.' That's the road to 'Tor-Hadham."

"Do you mean to say I am to drive you all that way,—eighteen miles?"

"Yes."

"And to whom are you going?"

"I will tell you by and by. Do go on; do, pray. I can't drive—never drove in my life—or I would not ask you. Pray, pray, don't desert me! If you are a gentleman you will not; and if you are not a gentleman, I have got L10 in my purse, which you shall have when I am safe at Tor-Hadham. Don't hesitate: my whole life is at stake!" And the boy began once more to sob.

Kenelm directed the pony's head towards Tor-Hadham, and the boy ceased to sob.

"You are a good, dear fellow," said the boy, wiping his eyes. "I am afraid I am taking you very much out of your road."

"I have no road in particular, and would as soon go to Tor-Hadham, which I have never seen, as anywhere else. I am but a wanderer on the face of the earth."

"Have you lost your papa and mamma too? Why, you are not much older than I am."

"Little gentleman," said Kenelm, gravely, "I am just of age, and you, I suppose, are about fourteen."

"What fun!" cried the boy, abruptly. "Isn't it fun?"

"It will not be fun if I am sentenced to penal servitude for stealing your uncle's gig, and robbing his little nephew of L10. By the by, that choleric relation of yours meant to knock down somebody else when he struck at me. He asked, 'Are you the villain?' Pray who is the villain? he is evidently in your confidence."

"Villain! he is the most honourable, high-minded—But no matter now: I'll introduce you to him when we reach Tor-Hadham. Whip that pony: he is crawling."

"It is up hill: a good man spares his beast."

No art and no eloquence could extort from his young companion any further explanation than Kenelm had yet received; and indeed, as the journey advanced, and they approached their destination, both parties sank into silence. Kenelm was seriously considering that his first day's experience of real life in the skin of another had placed in some peril his

own. He had knocked down a man evidently respectable and well to do, had carried off that man's nephew, and made free with that man's goods and chattels; namely, his gig and horse. All this might be explained satisfactorily to a justice of the peace, but how? By returning to his former skin; by avowing himself to be Kenelm Chillingly, a distinguished university medalist, heir to no ignoble name and some L10,000 a year. But then what a scandal! he who abhorred scandal; in vulgar parlance, what a "row!" he who denied that the very word "row" was sanctioned by any classic authorities in the English language. He would have to explain how he came to be found disguised, carefully disguised, in garments such as no baronet's eldest son—even though that baronet be the least ancestral man of mark whom it suits the convenience of a First Minister to recommend to the Sovereign for exaltation over the rank of Mister—was ever beheld in, unless he had taken flight to the gold-diggings. Was this a position in which the heir of the Chillinglys, a distinguished family, whose coat-of-arms dated from the earliest authenticated period of English heraldry under Edward III. as Three Fishes / azure/, could be placed without grievous slur on the cold and ancient blood of the Three Fishes?

And then individually to himself, Kenelm, irrespectively of the Three Fishes,—what a humiliation! He had put aside his respected father's deliberate preparations for his entrance into real life; he had perversely chosen his own walk on his own responsibility; and here, before half the first day was over, what

an infernal scrape he had walked himself into! and what was his excuse? A wretched little boy, sobbing and chuckling by turns, and yet who was clever enough to twist Kenelm Chillingly round his finger; twist /him/, a man who thought himself so much wiser than his parents,—a man who had gained honours at the University,—a man of the gravest temperament,—a man of so nicely critical a turn of mind that there was not a law of art or nature in which he did not detect a flaw; that he should get himself into this mess was, to say the least of it, an uncomfortable reflection.

The boy himself, as Kenelm glanced at him from time to time, became impish and Will-of-the-Wisp-ish. Sometimes he laughed to himself loudly, sometimes he wept to himself quietly; sometimes, neither laughing nor weeping, he seemed absorbed in reflection. Twice as they came nearer to the town of Tor-Hadham, Kenelm nudged the boy, and said, "My boy, I must talk with you;" and twice the boy, withdrawing his arm from the nudge, had answered dreamily, "Hush! I am thinking."

And so they entered the town of Tor-Hadham, the cob very much done up.

CHAPTER III

"NOW, young sir," said Kenelm, in a tone calm, but peremptory,—"now we are in the town, where am I to take you? and wherever it be, there to say good-by."

"No, not good-by. Stay with me a little bit. I begin to feel frightened, and I am so friendless;" and the boy, who had before resented the slightest nudge on the part of Kenelm, now wound his arm into Kenelm's, and clung to him caressingly.

I don't know what my readers have hitherto thought of Kenelm Chillingly: but, amid all the curves and windings of his whimsical humour, there was one way that went straight to his heart; you had only to be weaker than himself and ask his protection.

He turned round abruptly; he forgot all the strangeness of his position, and replied: "Little brute that you are, I'll be shot if I forsake you if in trouble. But some compassion is also due to the cob: for his sake say where we are to stop."

"I am sure I can't say: I never was here before. Let us go to a nice quiet inn. Drive slowly: we'll look out for one."

Tor-Hadham was a large town, not nominally the capital of the county, but, in point of trade and bustle and life, virtually the capital. The straight street, through which the cob went as slowly as if he had been drawing a Triumphal Car up the Sacred Hill, presented an animated appearance. The shops had handsome facades and plate-glass windows; the pavements exhibited a lively

concourse, evidently not merely of business, but of pleasure, for a large proportion of the passers-by was composed of the fair sex, smartly dressed, many of them young and some pretty. In fact a regiment of her Majesty's ——-th Hussars had been sent into the town two days before; and, between the officers of that fortunate regiment and the fair sex in that hospitable town, there was a natural emulation which should make the greater number of slain and wounded. The advent of these heroes, professional subtracters from hostile and multipliers of friendly populations, gave a stimulus to the caterers for those amusements which bring young folks together,—archery-meetings, rifle-shootings, concerts, balls, announced in bills attached to boards and walls and exposed at shop-windows.

The boy looked eagerly forth from the gig, scanning especially these advertisements, till at length he uttered an excited exclamation, "Ah, I was right: there it is!"

"There what is?" asked Kenelm,—"the inn?" His companion did not answer, but Kenelm following the boy's eye perceived an immense hand-bill.

"TO-MORROW NIGHT THEATRE OPENS

"RICHARD III. Mr. COMPTON."

"Do just ask where the theatre is," said the boy, in a whisper, turning away his head.

Kenelm stopped the cob, made the inquiry, and was directed to take the next turning to the right. In a few minutes the compo portico of an ugly dilapidated building, dedicated to the Dramatic Muses, presented itself at the angle of a dreary, deserted lane. The walls were placarded with play-bills, in which the name of Compton stood forth as gigantic as capitals could make it. The boy drew a sigh. "Now," said he, "let us look out for an inn near here,—the nearest."

No inn, however, beyond the rank of a small and questionable looking public-house was apparent, until at a distance somewhat remote from the theatre, and in a quaint, old-fashioned, deserted square, a neat, newly whitewashed house displayed upon its frontispiece, in large black letters of funereal aspect, "Temperance Hotel."

"Stop," said the boy; "don't you think that would suit us? it looks quiet."

"Could not look more quiet if it were a tombstone," replied

Kenelm.

The boy put his hand upon the reins and stopped the cob. The cob was in that condition that the slightest touch sufficed to stop him, though he turned his head somewhat ruefully as if in doubt whether hay and corn would be within the regulations of a Temperance Hotel. Kenelm descended and entered the house. A tidy woman emerged from a sort of glass cupboard which constituted the bar, minus the comforting drinks associated with the /beau ideal/ of a bar, but which displayed instead two large decanters of cold water with tumblers /a discretion, and sundry plates of thin biscuits and sponge-cakes. This tidy woman politely inquired what was his "pleasure."

"Pleasure," answered Kenelm, with his usual gravity, "is not the word I should myself have chosen. But could you oblige my horse—I mean /that/ horse—with a stall and a feed of oats, and that young gentleman and myself with a private room and a dinner?"

"Dinner!" echoed the hostess,—"dinner!"

"A thousand pardons, ma'am. But if the word 'dinner' shock you I retract it, and would say instead something to eat and drink.'"

"Drink! This is strictly a Temperance Hotel, sir."

"Oh, if you don't eat and drink here," exclaimed Kenelm, fiercely, for he was famished, "I wish you good morning."

"Stay a bit, sir. We do eat and drink here. But we are very simple folks. We allow no fermented liquors."

"Not even a glass of beer?"

"Only ginger-beer. Alcohols are strictly forbidden. We have tea and coffee and milk. But most of our customers prefer the pure liquid. As for eating, sir,—anything you order, in reason."

Kenelm shook his head and was retreating, when the boy, who had sprung from the gig and overheard the conversation, cried petulantly, "What does it signify? Who wants fermented liquors? Water will do very well. And as for dinner,—anything convenient. Please, ma'am, show us into a private room: I am so tired." The last words were said in a caressing manner, and so prettily, that the hostess at once changed her tone, and muttering, "Poor boy!" and, in a still more subdued mutter, "What a pretty face he has!" nodded, and led the way up a very clean old-fashioned staircase.

"But the horse and gig, where are they to go?" said Kenelm, with a pang of conscience on reflecting how ill treated hitherto had been both horse and owner.

"Oh, as for the horse and gig, sir, you will find Jukes's livery-stables a few yards farther down. We don't take in horses ourselves; our customers seldom keep them: but you will find the best of accommodation at Jukes's."

Kenelm conducted the cob to the livery-stables thus indicated, and waited to see him walked about to cool, well rubbed down, and made comfortable over half a peck of oats,—for Kenelm Chillingly was a humane man to the brute creation,—and then, in a state of ravenous appetite, returned to the Temperance Hotel,

and was ushered into a small drawing-room, with a small bit of carpet in the centre, six small chairs with cane seats, prints on the walls descriptive of the various effects of intoxicating liquors upon sundry specimens of mankind,—some resembling ghosts, others fiends, and all with a general aspect of beggary and perdition; contrasted by Happy-Family pictures,—smiling wives, portly husbands, rosy infants, emblematic of the beatified condition of members of the Temperance Society.

A table with a spotless cloth, and knives and forks for two, chiefly, however, attracted Kenelm's attention.

The boy was standing by the window, seemingly gazing on a small aquarium which was there placed, and contained the usual variety of small fishes, reptiles, and insects, enjoying the pleasures of Temperance in its native element, including, of course, an occasional meal upon each other.

"What are they going to give us to eat?" inquired Kenelm. "It must be ready by this time I should think."

Here he gave a brisk tug at the bell-pull. The boy advanced from the window, and as he did so Kenelm was struck with the grace of his bearing, and the improvement in his looks, now that he was without his hat, and rest and ablution had refreshed from heat and dust the delicate bloom of his complexion. There was no doubt about it that he was an exceedingly pretty boy, and if he lived to be a man would make many a lady's heart ache. It was with a certain air of gracious superiority such as is seldom warranted by superior rank if it be less than royal, and chiefly

becomes a marked seniority in years, that this young gentleman, approaching the solemn heir of the Chillinglys, held out his hand and said,—

"Sir, you have behaved extremely well, and I thank you very much."

"Your Royal Highness is condescending to say so," replied Kenelm Chillingly, bowing low, "but have you ordered dinner? and what are they going to give us? No one seems to answer the bell here. As it is a Temperance Hotel, probably all the servants are drunk."

"Why should they be drunk at a Temperance Hotel?"

"Why! because, as a general rule, people who flagrantly pretend to anything are the reverse of that which they pretend to. A man who sets up for a saint is sure to be a sinner, and a man who boasts that he is a sinner is sure to have some feeble, maudlin, snivelling bit of saintship about him which is enough to make him a humbug. Masculine honesty, whether it be saint-like or sinner-like, does not label itself either saint or sinner. Fancy Saint Augustine labelling himself saint, or Robert Burns sinner; and therefore, though, little boy, you have probably not read the poems of Robert Burns, and have certainly not read the 'Confessions' of Saint Augustine, take my word for it, that both those personages were very good fellows; and with a little difference of training and experience, Burns might have written the 'Confessions' and Augustine the poems. Powers above! I am starving. What did you order for dinner, and when is it to

appear?"

The boy, who had opened to an enormous width a naturally large pair of hazel eyes, while his tall companion in fustian trousers and Belcher neckcloth spoke thus patronizingly of Robert Burns and Saint Augustine, now replied, with rather a deprecatory and shamefaced aspect, "I am sorry I was not thinking of dinner. I was not so mindful of you as I ought to have been. The landlady asked me what we would have. I said, 'What you like;' and the landlady muttered something about—" here the boy hesitated.

"Yes. About what? Mutton-chops?"

"No. Cauliflowers and rice-pudding."

Kenelm Chillingly never swore, never raged. Where ruder beings of human mould swore or raged, he vented displeasure in an expression of countenance so pathetically melancholic and lugubrious that it would have melted the heart of an Hyrcanian tiger. He turned his countenance now on the boy, and murmuring "Cauliflower!—Starvation!" sank into one of the cane-bottomed chairs, and added quietly, "so much for human gratitude."

The boy was evidently smitten to the heart by the bitter sweetness of this reproach. There were almost tears in his Voice, as he said falteringly, "Pray forgive me, I /was/ ungrateful. I'll run down and see what there is;" and, suiting the action to the word, he disappeared.

Kenelm remained motionless; in fact he was plunged into one of those reveries, or rather absorptions of inward and spiritual

being, into which it is said that the consciousness of the Indian dervish can be by prolonged fasting preternaturally resolved. The appetite of all men of powerful muscular development is of a nature far exceeding the properties of any reasonable number of cauliflowers and rice-puddings to satisfy. Witness Hercules himself, whose cravings for substantial nourishment were the standing joke of the classic poets. I don't know that Kenelm Chillingly would have beaten the Theban Hercules either in fighting or in eating; but, when he wanted to fight or when he wanted to eat, Hercules would have had to put forth all his strength not to be beaten.

After ten minutes' absence, the boy came back radiant. He tapped Kenelm on the shoulder, and said playfully, "I made them cut a whole loin into chops, besides the cauliflower; and such a big rice-pudding, and eggs and bacon too! Cheer up! it will be served in a minute."

"A-h!" said Kenelm.

"They are good people; they did not mean to stint you: but most of their customers, it seems, live upon vegetables and farinaceous food. There is a society here formed upon that principle; the landlady says they are philosophers!"

At the word "philosophers" Kenelm's crest rose as that of a practised hunter at the cry of "Yoiks! Tally-ho!" "Philosophers!" said he, "philosophers indeed! O ignoramuses, who do not even know the structure of the human tooth! Look you, little boy, if nothing were left on this earth of the present race of man,

as we are assured upon great authority will be the case one of these days,—and a mighty good riddance it will be,—if nothing, I say, of man were left except fossils of his teeth and his thumbs, a philosopher of that superior race which will succeed to man would at once see in those relics all his characteristics and all his history; would say, comparing his thumb with the talons of an eagle, the claws of a tiger, the hoof of a horse, the owner of that thumb must have been lord over creatures with talons and claws and hoofs. You may say the monkey tribe has thumbs. True; but compare an ape's thumb with a man's: could the biggest ape's thumb have built Westminster Abbey? But even thumbs are trivial evidence of man as compared with his teeth. Look at his teeth!"—here Kenelm expanded his jaws from ear to ear and displayed semicircles of ivory, so perfect for the purposes of mastication that the most artistic dentist might have despaired of his power to imitate them,—"look, I say, at his teeth!" The boy involuntarily recoiled. "Are the teeth those of a miserable cauliflower-eater? or is it purely by farinaceous food that the proprietor of teeth like man's obtains the rank of the sovereign destroyer of creation? No, little boy, no," continued Kenelm, closing his jaws, but advancing upon the infant, who at each stride receded towards the aquarium,—"no; man is the master of the world, because of all created beings he devours the greatest variety and the greatest number of created things. His teeth evince that man can live upon every soil from the torrid to the frozen zone, because man can eat everything that other creatures

cannot eat. And the formation of his teeth proves it. A tiger can eat a deer; so can man: but a tiger can't eat an eel; man can. An elephant can eat cauliflowers and rice-pudding; so can man! but an elephant can't eat a beefsteak; man can. In sum, man can live everywhere, because he can eat anything, thanks to his dental formation!" concluded Kenelm, making a prodigious stride towards the boy. "Man, when everything else fails him, eats his own species."

"Don't; you frighten me," said the boy. "Aha!" clapping his hands with a sensation of gleeful relief, "here come the mutton-chops!"

A wonderfully clean, well-washed, indeed well-washed-out, middle-aged parlour-maid now appeared, dish in hand. Putting the dish on the table and taking off the cover, the handmaiden said civilly, though frigidly, like one who lived upon salad and cold water, "Mistress is sorry to have kept you waiting, but she thought you were Vegetarians."

After helping his young friend to a mutton-chop, Kenelm helped himself, and replied gravely, "Tell your mistress that if she had only given us vegetables, I should have eaten you. Tell her that though man is partially graminivorous, he is principally carnivorous. Tell her that though a swine eats cabbages and such like, yet where a swine can get a baby, it eats the baby. Tell her," continued Kenelm (now at his third chop), "that there is no animal that in digestive organs more resembles man than a swine. Ask her if there is any baby in the house; if so, it would be safe

for the baby to send up some more chops."

As the acutest observer could rarely be quite sure when Kenelm Chillingly was in jest or in earnest, the parlour-maid paused a moment and attempted a pale smile. Kenelm lifted his dark eyes, unspeakably sad and profound, and said mournfully, "I should be so sorry for the baby. Bring the chops!" The parlour-maid vanished. The boy laid down his knife and fork, and looked fixedly and inquisitively on Kenelm. Kenelm, unheeding the look, placed the last chop on the boy's plate.

"No more," cried the boy, impulsively, and returned the chop to the dish. "I have dined: I have had enough."

"Little boy, you lie," said Kenelm; "you have not had enough to keep body and soul together. Eat that chop or I shall thrash you: whatever I say I do."

Somehow or other the boy felt quelled; he ate the chop in silence, again looked at Kenelm's face, and said to himself, "I am afraid."

The parlour-maid here entered with a fresh supply of chops and a dish of bacon and eggs, soon followed by a rice-pudding baked in a tin dish, and of size sufficient to have nourished a charity school. When the repast was finished, Kenelm seemed to forget the dangerous properties of the carnivorous animal; and stretching himself indolently out, appeared to be as innocently ruminative as the most domestic of animals graminivorous.

Then said the boy, rather timidly, "May I ask you another favour?"

"Is it to knock down another uncle, or to steal another gig and cob?"

"No, it is very simple: it is merely to find out the address of a friend here; and when found to give him a note from me."

"Does the commission press? 'After dinner, rest a while,' saith the proverb; and proverbs are so wise that no one can guess the author of them. They are supposed to be fragments of the philosophy of the antediluvians: came to us packed up in the ark."

"Really, indeed," said the boy, seriously. "How interesting! No, my commission does not press for an hour or so. Do you think, sir, they had any drama before the Deluge?"

"Drama! not a doubt of it. Men who lived one or two thousand years had time to invent and improve everything; and a play could have had its natural length then. It would not have been necessary to crowd the whole history of Macbeth, from his youth to his old age, into an absurd epitome of three hours. One cannot trace a touch of real human nature in any actor's delineation of that very interesting Scotchman, because the actor always comes on the stage as if he were the same age when he murdered Duncan, and when, in his sear and yellow leaf, he was lopped off by Macduff."

"Do you think Macbeth was young when he murdered Duncan?"

"Certainly. No man ever commits a first crime of violent nature, such as murder, after thirty; if he begins before, he may go on up to any age. But youth is the season for commencing

those wrong calculations which belong to irrational hope and the sense of physical power. You thus read in the newspapers that the persons who murder their sweethearts are generally from two to six and twenty; and persons who murder from other motives than love—that is, from revenge, avarice, or ambition—are generally about twenty-eight,—Iago's age. Twenty-eight is the usual close of the active season for getting rid of one's fellow-creatures; a prize-fighter falls off after that age. I take it that Macbeth was about twenty-eight when he murdered Duncan, and from about fifty-four to sixty when he began to whine about missing the comforts of old age. But can any audience understand that difference of years in seeing a three-hours' play? or does any actor ever pretend to impress it on the audience, and appear as twenty-eight in the first act and a sexagenarian in the fifth?"

"I never thought of that," said the boy, evidently interested. "But I never saw 'Macbeth.' I have seen 'Richard III.:' is not that nice? Don't you dote on the play? I do. What a glorious life an actor's must be!"

Kenelm, who had been hitherto rather talking to himself than to his youthful companion, here roused his attention, looked on the boy intently, and said,—

"I see you are stage-stricken. You have run away from home in order to turn player, and I should not wonder if this note you want me to give is for the manager of the theatre or one of his company."

The young face that encountered Kenelm's dark eye became

very flushed, but set and defiant in its expression.

"And what if it were? would not you give it?"

"What! help a child of your age run away from his home, to go upon the stage against the consent of his relations? Certainly not."

"I am not a child; but that has nothing to do with it. I don't want to go on the stage, at all events without the consent of the person who has a right to dictate my actions. My note is not to the manager of the theatre, nor to one of his company; but it is to a gentleman who condescends to act here for a few nights; a thorough gentleman,—a great actor,—my friend, the only friend I have in the world. I say frankly I have run away from home so that he may have that note, and if you will not give it some one else will!"

The boy had risen while he spoke, and he stood erect beside the recumbent Kenelm, his lips quivering, his eyes suffused with suppressed tears, but his whole aspect resolute and determined. Evidently, if he did not get his own way in this world, it would not be for want of will.

"I will take your note," said Kenelm.

"There it is; give it into the hands of the person it is addressed to,—Mr. Herbert Compton."

CHAPTER IV

KENELM took his way to the theatre, and inquired of the door-keeper for Mr. Herbert Compton. That functionary replied, "Mr. Compton does not act to-night, and is not in the house."

"Where does he lodge?"

The door-keeper pointed to a grocer's shop on the other side of the way, and said tersely, "There, private door; knock and ring."

Kenelm did as he was directed. A slatternly maid-servant opened the door, and, in answer to his interrogatory, said that Mr. Compton was at home, but at supper.

"I am sorry to disturb him," said Kenelm, raising his voice, for he heard a clatter of knives and plates within a room hard by at his left, "but my business requires to see him forthwith;" and, pushing the maid aside, he entered at once the adjoining banquet-hall.

Before a savoury stew smelling strongly of onions sat a man very much at his ease, without coat or neckcloth,—a decidedly handsome man, his hair cut short and his face closely shaven, as befits an actor who has wigs and beards of all hues and forms at his command. The man was not alone; opposite to him sat a lady, who might be a few years younger, of a somewhat faded complexion, but still pretty, with good stage features and a profusion of blond ringlets.

"Mr. Compton, I presume," said Kenelm, with a solemn bow.

"My name is Compton: any message from the theatre? or what do you want with me?"

"I—nothing!" replied Kenelm; and then deepening his naturally mournful voice into tones ominous and tragic, continued, "By whom you are wanted let this explain;" therewith he placed in Mr. Compton's hand the letter with which he was charged, and stretching his arms and interlacing his fingers in the /pose/ of Talma as Julius Caesar, added, "'Qu'en dis-tu, Brute?'"

Whether it was from the sombre aspect and awe-inspiring delivery of the messenger, or the sight of the handwriting on the address of the missive, Mr. Compton's countenance suddenly fell, and his hand rested irresolute, as if not daring to open the letter.

"Never mind me, dear," said the lady with blond ringlets, in a tone of stinging affability: "read your /billet-doux/; don't keep the young man waiting, love!"

"Nonsense, Matilda, nonsense! /billet-doux/ indeed! more likely a bill from Duke the tailor. Excuse me for a moment, my dear. Follow me, sir," and rising, still with shirtsleeves uncovered, he quitted the room, closing the door after him, motioned Kenelm into a small parlour on the opposite side of the passage, and by the light of a suspended gas-lamp ran his eye hastily over the letter, which, though it seemed very short, drew from him sundry exclamations. "Good heavens, how very absurd! what's to

be done?" Then, thrusting the letter into his trousers-pocket, he fixed upon Kenelm a very brilliant pair of dark eyes, which soon dropped before the steadfast look of that saturnine adventurer.

"Are you in the confidence of the writer of this letter?" asked Mr.

Compton, rather confusedly.

"I am not the confidant of the writer," answered Kenelm, "but for the time being I am the protector!"

"Protector!"

"Protector."

Mr. Compton again eyed the messenger, and this time fully realizing the gladiatorial development of that dark stranger's physical form, he grew many shades paler, and involuntarily retreated towards the bell-pull.

After a short pause, he said, "I am requested to call on the writer. If I do so, may I understand that the interview will be strictly private?"

"So far as I am concerned, yes: on the condition that no attempt be made to withdraw the writer from the house."

"Certainly not, certainly not; quite the contrary," exclaimed Mr.

Compton, with genuine animation. "Say I will call in half an hour."

"I will give your message," said Kenelm, with a polite inclination of his head; "and pray pardon me if I remind you that I styled myself the protector of your correspondent, and if the

slightest advantage be taken of that correspondent's youth and inexperience or the smallest encouragement be given to plans of abduction from home and friends, the stage will lose an ornament and Herbert Compton vanish from the scene." With these words Kenelm left the player standing aghast. Gaining the street-door, a lad with a band-box ran against him and was nearly upset.

"Stupid," cried the lad, "can't you see where you are going? Give this to Mrs. Compton."

"I should deserve the title you give if I did for nothing the business for which you are paid," replied Kenelm, sententiously, and striding on.

CHAPTER V

"I HAVE fulfilled my mission," said Kenelm, on rejoining his travelling companion. "Mr. Compton said he would be here in half an hour."

"You saw him?"

"Of course: I promised to give your letter into his own hands."

"Was he alone?"

"No; at supper with his wife."

"His wife! what do you mean, sir?—wife! he has no wife."

"Appearances are deceitful. At least he was with a lady who called him 'dear' and 'love' in as spiteful a tone of voice as if she had been his wife; and as I was coming out of his street-door a lad who ran against me asked me to give a band-box to Mrs. Compton."

The boy turned as white as death, staggered back a few steps, and dropped into a chair.

A suspicion which during his absence had suggested itself to Kenelm's inquiring mind now took strong confirmation. He approached softly, drew a chair close to the companion whom fate had forced upon him, and said in a gentle whisper,—

"This is no boy's agitation. If you have been deceived or misled, and I can in any way advise or aid you, count on me as women under the circumstances count on men and gentlemen."

The boy started to his feet, and paced the room with

disordered steps, and a countenance working with passions which he attempted vainly to suppress. Suddenly arresting his steps, he seized Kenelm's hand, pressed it convulsively, and said, in a voice struggling against a sob,—

"I thank you,—I bless you. Leave me now: I would be alone. Alone, too, I must face this man. There may be some mistake yet; go."

"You will promise not to leave the house till I return?"

"Yes, I promise that."

"And if it be as I fear, you will then let me counsel with and advise you?"

"Heaven help me, if so! Whom else should I trust to? Go, go!"

Kenelm once more found himself in the streets, beneath the mingled light of gas-lamps and the midsummer moon. He walked on mechanically till he reached the extremity of the town. There he halted, and seating himself on a milestone, indulged in these meditations:—

"Kenelm, my friend, you are in a still worse scrape than I thought you were an hour ago. You have evidently now got a woman on your hands. What on earth are you to do with her? A runaway woman, who, meaning to run off with somebody else—such are the crosses and contradictions in human destiny—has run off with you instead. What mortal can hope to be safe? The last thing I thought could befall me when I got up this morning was that I should have any trouble about the other sex before the day was over. If I were of an amatory temperament, the Fates

might have some justification for leading me into this snare, but, as it is, those meddling old maids have none. Kenelm, my friend, do you think you ever can be in love? and, if you were in love, do you think you could be a greater fool than you are now?"

Kenelm had not decided this knotty question in the conference held with himself, when a light and soft strain of music came upon his ear. It was but from a stringed instrument, and might have sounded thin and tinkling but for the stillness of the night, and that peculiar addition of fulness which music acquires when it is borne along a tranquil air. Presently a voice in song was heard from the distance accompanying the instrument. It was a man's voice, a mellow and a rich voice, but Kenelm's ear could not catch the words. Mechanically he moved on towards the quarter from which the sounds came, for Kenelm Chillingly had music in his soul, though he was not quite aware of it himself. He saw before him a patch of greensward, on which grew a solitary elm with a seat for wayfarers beneath it. From this sward the ground receded in a wide semicircle bordered partly by shops, partly by the tea-gardens of a pretty cottage-like tavern. Round the tables scattered throughout the gardens were grouped quiet customers, evidently belonging to the class of small tradespeople or superior artisans. They had an appearance of decorous respectability, and were listening intently to the music. So were many persons at the shop-doors and at the windows of upper rooms. On the sward, a little in advance of the tree, but beneath its shadow, stood the musician, and in that musician Kenelm recognized the wanderer from

whose talk he had conceived the idea of the pedestrian excursion which had already brought him into a very awkward position. The instrument on which the singer accompanied himself was a guitar, and his song was evidently a love-song, though, as it was now drawing near to its close, Kenelm could but imperfectly guess at its general meaning. He heard enough to perceive that its words were at least free from the vulgarity which generally characterizes street ballads, and were yet simple enough to please a very homely audience.

When the singer ended there was no applause; but there was evident sensation among the audience,—a feeling as if something that had given a common enjoyment had ceased. Presently the white Pomeranian dog, who had hitherto kept himself out of sight under the seat of the elm-tree, advanced, with a small metal tray between his teeth, and, after looking round him deliberately, as if to select whom of the audience should be honoured with the commencement of a general subscription, gravely approached Kenelm, stood on his hind legs, stared at him, and presented the tray.

Kenelm dropped a shilling into that depository, and the dog, looking gratified, took his way towards the tea-gardens. Lifting his hat, for he was, in his way, a very polite man, Kenelm approached the singer, and, trusting to the alteration in his dress for not being recognized by a stranger who had only once before encountered him he said,—

"Judging by the little I heard, you sing very well, sir. May I

ask who composed the words?"

"They are mine," replied the singer.

"And the air?"

"Mine too."

"Accept my compliments. I hope you find these manifestations of genius lucrative?"

The singer, who had not hitherto vouchsafed more than a careless glance at the rustic garb of the questioner, now fixed his eyes full upon Kenelm, and said, with a smile, "Your voice betrays you, sir. We have met before."

"True; but I did not then notice your guitar, nor, though acquainted with your poetical gifts, suppose that you selected this primitive method of making them publicly known."

"Nor did I anticipate the pleasure of meeting you again in the character of Hobnail. Hist! let us keep each other's secret. I am known hereabouts by no other designation than that of the 'Wandering Minstrel.'"

"It is in the capacity of minstrel that I address you. If it be not an impertinent question, do you know any songs which take the other side of the case?"

"What case? I don't understand you, sir."

"The song I heard seemed in praise of that sham called love. Don't you think you could say something more new and more true, treating that aberration from reason with the contempt it deserves?"

"Not if I am to get my travelling expenses paid."

"What! the folly is so popular?"

"Does not your own heart tell you so?"

"Not a bit of it,—rather the contrary. Your audience at present seem folks who live by work, and can have little time for such idle phantasies; for, as it is well observed by Ovid, a poet who wrote much on that subject, and professed the most intimate acquaintance with it, 'Idleness is the parent of love.' Can't you sing something in praise of a good dinner? Everybody who works hard has an appetite for food."

The singer again fixed on Kenelm his inquiring eye, but not detecting a vestige of humour in the grave face he contemplated, was rather puzzled how to reply, and therefore remained silent.

"I perceive," resumed Kenelm, "that my observations surprise you: the surprise will vanish on reflection. It has been said by another poet, more reflective than Ovid, that 'the world is governed by love and hunger.' But hunger certainly has the lion's share of the government; and if a poet is really to do what he pretends to do,—namely, represent nature,—the greater part of his lays should be addressed to the stomach." Here, warming with his subject, Kenelm familiarly laid his band on the musician's shoulder, and his voice took a tone bordering on enthusiasm. "You will allow that a man in the normal condition of health does not fall in love every day. But in the normal condition of health he is hungry every day. Nay, in those early years when you poets say he is most prone to love, he is so especially disposed to hunger that less than three meals a day can scarcely satisfy his appetite.

You may imprison a man for months, for years, nay, for his whole life,—from infancy to any age which Sir Cornewall Lewis may allow him to attain,—without letting him be in love at all. But if you shut him up for a week without putting something into his stomach, you will find him at the end of it as dead as a door-nail."

Here the singer, who had gradually retreated before the energetic advance of the orator, sank into the seat by the elm-tree and said pathetically, "Sir, you have fairly argued me down. Will you please to come to the conclusion which you deduce from your premises?"

"Simply this, that where you find one human being who cares about love, you will find a thousand susceptible to the charms of a dinner; and if you wish to be the popular minne-singer or troubadour of the age, appeal to nature, sir,—appeal to nature; drop all hackneyed rhapsodies about a rosy cheek, and strike your lyre to the theme of a beefsteak."

The dog had for some minutes regained his master's side, standing on his hind legs, with the tray, tolerably well filled with copper coins, between his teeth; and now, justly aggrieved by the inattention which detained him in that artificial attitude, dropped the tray and growled at Kenelm.

At the same time there came an impatient sound from the audience in the tea-garden. They wanted another song for their money.

The singer rose, obedient to the summons. "Excuse me, sir; but I am called upon to—"

"To sing again?"

"Yes."

"And on the subject I suggest?"

"No, indeed."

"What! love, again?"

"I am afraid so."

"I wish you good evening then. You seem a well-educated man,—more shame to you. Perhaps we may meet once more in our rambles, when the question can be properly argued out."

Kenelm lifted his hat, and turned on his heel. Before he reached the street, the sweet voice of the singer again smote his ears; but the only word distinguishable in the distance, ringing out at the close of the refrain, was "love."

"Fiddle-de-dee," said Kenelm.

CHAPTER VI

AS Kenelm regained the street dignified by the edifice of the Temperance Hotel, a figure, dressed picturesquely in a Spanish cloak, brushed hurriedly by him, but not so fast as to be unrecognized as the tragedian. "Hem!" muttered Kenelm, "I don't think there is much triumph in that face. I suspect he has been scolded."

The boy—if Kenelm's travelling companion is still to be so designated—was leaning against the mantelpiece as Kenelm re-entered the dining-room. There was an air of profound dejection about the boy's listless attitude and in the drooping tearless eyes.

"My dear child," said Kenelm, in the softest tones of his plaintive voice, "do not honour me with any confidence that may be painful. But let me hope that you have dismissed forever all thoughts of going on the stage."

"Yes," was the scarce audible answer.

"And now only remains the question, 'What is to be done?'"

"I am sure I don't know, and I don't care."

"Then you leave it to me to know and to care; and assuming for the moment as a fact that which is one of the greatest lies in this mendacious world—namely, that all men are brothers—you will consider me as an elder brother, who will counsel and control you as he would an imprudent young—sister. I see very well how it is. Somehow or other you, having first admired Mr.

Compton as Romeo or Richard III., made his acquaintance as Mr. Compton. He allowed you to believe him a single man. In a romantic moment you escaped from your home, with the design of adopting the profession of the stage and of becoming Mrs. Compton."

"Oh," broke out the girl, since her sex must now be declared, "oh," she exclaimed, with a passionate sob, "what a fool I have been! Only do not think worse of me than I deserve. The man did deceive me; he did not think I should take him at his word, and follow him here, or his wife would not have appeared. I should not have known he had one and—and—" here her voice was choked under her passion.

"But now you have discovered the truth, let us thank Heaven that you are saved from shame and misery. I must despatch a telegram to your uncle: give me his address."

"No, no."

"There is not a 'No' possible in this case, my child. Your reputation and your future must be saved. Leave me to explain all to your uncle. He is your guardian. I must send for him; nay, nay, there is no option. Hate me now for enforcing your will: you will thank me hereafter. And listen, young lady; if it does pain you to see your uncle, and encounter his reproaches, every fault must undergo its punishment. A brave nature undergoes it cheerfully, as a part of atonement. You are brave. Submit, and in submitting rejoice!"

There was something in Kenelm's voice and manner at once so

kindly and so commanding that the wayward nature he addressed fairly succumbed. She gave him her uncle's address, "John Bovill, Esq., Oakdale, near Westmere." And after giving it, she fixed her eyes mournfully upon her young adviser, and said with a simple, dreary pathos, "Now, will you esteem me more, or rather despise me less?"

She looked so young, nay, so childlike, as she thus spoke, that Kenelm felt a parental inclination to draw her on his lap and kiss away her tears. But he prudently conquered that impulse, and said, with a melancholy half-smile,—

"If human beings despise each other for being young and foolish, the sooner we are exterminated by that superior race which is to succeed us on earth the better it will be. Adieu, till your uncle comes."

"What! you leave me here—alone?"

"Nay, if your uncle found me under the same roof, now that I know you are his niece, don't you think he would have a right to throw me out of the window? Allow me to practise for myself the prudence I preach to you. Send for the landlady to show you your room, shut yourself in there, go to bed, and don't cry more than you can help."

Kenelm shouldered the knapsack he had deposited in a corner of the room, inquired for the telegraph-office, despatched a telegram to Mr. Bovill, obtained a bedroom at the Commercial Hotel, and fell asleep, muttering these sensible words,—

"Rouchefoucauld was perfectly right when he said, 'Very few

people would fall in love if they had not heard it so much talked about.'"

CHAPTER VII

KENELM CHILLINGLY rose with the sun, according to his usual custom, and took his way to the Temperance Hotel. All in that sober building seemed still in the arms of Morpheus. He turned towards the stables in which he had left the gray cob, and had the pleasure to see that ill-used animal in the healthful process of rubbing down.

"That's right," said he to the hostler. "I am glad to see you are so early a riser."

"Why," quoth the hostler, "the gentleman as owns the pony knocked me up at two o'clock in the morning, and pleased enough he was to see the creature again lying down in the clean straw."

"Oh, he has arrived at the hotel, I presume?—a stout gentleman?"

"Yes, stout enough; and a passionate gentleman too. Came in a yellow and two posters, knocked up the Temperance and then knocked up me to see for the pony, and was much put out as he could not get any grog at the Temperance."

"I dare say he was. I wish he had got his grog: it might have put him in better humour. Poor little thing!" muttered Kenelm, turning away; "I am afraid she is in for a regular vituperation. My turn next, I suppose. But he must be a good fellow to have come at once for his niece in the dead of the night."

About nine o'clock Kenelm presented himself again at the Temperance Hotel, inquired for Mr. Bovill, and was shown by the prim maid-servant into the drawing-room, where he found Mr. Bovill seated amicably at breakfast with his niece, who of course was still in boy's clothing, having no other costume at hand. To Kenelm's great relief, Mr. Bovill rose from the table with a beaming countenance, and extending his hand to Kenelm, said,—

"Sir, you are a gentleman; sit down, sit down and take breakfast."

Then, as soon as the maid was out of the room, the uncle continued,—

"I have heard all your good conduct from this young simpleton. Things might have been worse, sir."

Kenelm bowed his head, and drew the loaf towards him in silence. Then, considering that some apology was due to his entertainer, he said,—

"I hope you forgive me for that unfortunate mistake, when—"

"You knocked me down, or rather tripped me up. All right now. Elsie, give the gentleman a cup of tea. Pretty little rogue, is she not? and a good girl, in spite of her nonsense. It was all my fault letting her go to the play and be intimate with Miss Lockit, a stage-stricken, foolish old maid, who ought to have known better than to lead her into all this trouble."

"No, uncle," cried the girl, resolutely; "don't blame her, nor any one but me."

Kenelm turned his dark eyes approvingly towards the girl, and saw that her lips were firmly set; there was an expression, not of grief nor shame, but compressed resolution in her countenance. But when her eyes met his they fell softly, and a blush mantled over her cheeks up to her very forehead.

"Ah!" said the uncle, "just like you, Elsie; always ready to take everybody's fault on your own shoulders. Well, well, say no more about that. Now, my young friend, what brings you across the country tramping it on foot, eh? a young man's whim?" As he spoke, he eyed Kenelm very closely, and his look was that of an intelligent man not unaccustomed to observe the faces of those he conversed with. In fact a more shrewd man of business than Mr. Bovill is seldom met with on 'Change or in market.

"I travel on foot to please myself, sir," answered Kenelm, curtly, and unconsciously set on his guard.

"Of course you do," cried Mr. Bovill, with a jovial laugh. "But it seems you don't object to a chaise and pony whenever you can get them for nothing,—ha, ha!—excuse me,—a joke."

Herewith Mr. Bovill, still in excellent good-humour, abruptly changed the conversation to general matters,—agricultural prospects, chance of a good harvest, corn trade, money market in general, politics, state of the nation. Kenelm felt there was an attempt to draw him out, to sound, to pump him, and replied only by monosyllables, generally significant of ignorance on the questions broached; and at the close, if the philosophical heir of the Chillinglys was in the habit of allowing himself to be

surprised he would certainly have been startled when Mr. Bovill rose, slapped him on the shoulder, and said in a tone of great satisfaction, "Just as I thought, sir; you know nothing of these matters: you are a gentleman born and bred; your clothes can't disguise you, sir. Elsie was right. My dear, just leave us for a few minutes: I have something to say to our young friend. You can get ready meanwhile to go with me." Elsie left the table and walked obediently towards the doorway. There she halted a moment, turned round, and looked timidly towards Kenelm. He had naturally risen from his seat as she rose, and advanced some paces as if to open the door for her. Thus their looks encountered. He could not interpret that shy gaze of hers: it was tender, it was deprecating, it was humble, it was pleading; a man accustomed to female conquests might have thought it was something more, something in which was the key to all. But that something more was an unknown tongue to Kenelm Chillingly.

When the two men were alone, Mr. Bovill reseated himself and motioned to Kenelm to do the same. "Now, young sir," said the former, "you and I can talk at our ease. That adventure of yours yesterday may be the luckiest thing that could happen to you."

"It is sufficiently lucky if I have been of any service to your niece. But her own good sense would have been her safeguard if she had been alone, and discovered, as she would have done, that Mr. Compton had, knowingly or not, misled her to believe that he was a single man."

"Hang Mr. Compton! we have done with him. I am a plain man, and I come to the point. It is you who have carried off my niece; it is with you that she came to this hotel. Now when Elsie told me how well you had behaved, and that your language and manners were those of a real gentleman, my mind was made up. I guess pretty well what you are; you are a gentleman's son; probably a college youth; not overburdened with cash; had a quarrel with your governor, and he keeps you short. Don't interrupt me. Well, Elsie is a good girl and a pretty girl, and will make a good wife, as wives go; and, hark ye, she has L20,000. So just confide in me; and if you don't like your parents to know about it till the thing's done and they be only got to forgive and bless you, why, you shall marry Elsie before you can say Jack Robinson."

For the first time in his life Kenelm Chillingly was seized with terror,—terror and consternation. His jaw dropped; his tongue was palsied. If hair ever stands on end, his hair did. At last, with superhuman effort, he gasped out the word, "Marry!"

"Yes; marry. If you are a gentleman you are bound to it. You have compromised my niece,—a respectable, virtuous girl, sir; an orphan, but not unprotected. I repeat, it is you who have plucked her from my very arms, and with violence and assault eloped with her; and what would the world say if it knew? Would it believe in your prudent conduct?—conduct only to be explained by the respect you felt due to your future wife. And where will you find a better? Where will you find an uncle who

will part with his ward and L20,000 without asking if you have a sixpence? and the girl has taken a fancy to you; I see it: would she have given up that player so easily if you had not stolen her heart? Would you break that heart? No, young man: you are not a villain. Shake hands on it!"

"Mr. Bovill," said Kenelm, recovering his wonted equanimity, "I am inexpressibly flattered by the honour you propose to me, and I do not deny that Miss Elsie is worthy of a much better man than myself. But I have inconceivable prejudices against the connubial state. If it be permitted to a member of the Established Church to cavil at any sentence written by Saint Paul,—and I think that liberty may be permitted to a simple layman, since eminent members of the clergy criticise the whole Bible as freely as if it were the history of Queen Elizabeth by Mr. Froude,—I should demur at the doctrine that it is better to marry than to burn: I myself should prefer burning. With these sentiments it would ill become any one entitled to that distinction of 'gentleman' which you confer on me to lead a fellow-victim to the sacrificial altar. As for any reproach attached to Miss Elsie, since in my telegram I directed you to ask for a young gentleman at this hotel, her very sex is not known in this place unless you divulge it. And—"

Here Kenelm was interrupted by a violent explosion of rage from the uncle. He stamped his feet; he almost foamed at the mouth; he doubled his fist, and shook it in Kenelm's face.

"Sir, you are mocking me: John Bovill is not a man to be

jeered in this way. You /shall/ marry the girl. I'll not have her thrust back upon me to be the plague of my life with her whims and tantrums. You have taken her, and you shall keep her, or I'll break every bone in your skin."

"Break them," said Kenelm, resignedly, but at the same time falling back into a formidable attitude of defence, which cooled the pugnacity of his accuser. Mr. Bovill sank into his chair, and wiped his forehead. Kenelm craftily pursued the advantage he had gained, and in mild accents proceeded to reason,—

"When you recover your habitual serenity of humour, Mr. Bovill, you will see how much your very excusable desire to secure your niece's happiness, and, I may add, to reward what you allow to have been forbearing and well-bred conduct on my part, has hurried you into an error of judgment. You know nothing of me. I may be, for what you know, an impostor or swindler; I may have every bad quality, and yet you are to be contented with my assurance, or rather your own assumption, that I am born a gentleman, in order to give me your niece and her L20,000. This is temporary insanity on your part. Allow me to leave you to recover from your excitement."

"Stop, sir," said Mr. Bovill, in a changed and sullen tone; "I am not quite the madman you think me. But I dare say I have been too hasty and too rough. Nevertheless the facts are as I have stated them, and I do not see how, as a man of honour, you can get off marrying my niece. The mistake you made in running away with her was, no doubt, innocent on your part: but still there

it is; and supposing the case came before a jury, it would be an ugly one for you and your family. Marriage alone could mend it. Come, come, I own I was too business-like in rushing to the point at once, and I no longer say, 'Marry my niece off-hand.' You have only seen her disguised and in a false position. Pay me a visit at Oakdale; stay with me a month; and if at the end of that time you do not like her well enough to propose, I'll let you off and say no more about it."

While Mr. Bovill thus spoke, and Kenelm listened, neither saw that the door had been noiselessly opened and that Elsie stood at the threshold. Now, before Kenelm could reply, she advanced into the middle of the room, and, her small figure drawn up to its fullest height, her cheeks glowing, her lips quivering, exclaimed, —

"Uncle, for shame!" Then addressing Kenelm in a sharp tone of anguish, "Oh, do not believe I knew anything of this!" she covered her face with both hands and stood mute.

All of chivalry that Kenelm had received with his baptismal appellation was aroused. He sprang up, and, bending his knee as he drew one of her hands into his own, he said,—

"I am as convinced that your uncle's words are abhorrent to you as I am that you are a pure-hearted and high-spirited woman, of whose friendship I shall be proud. We meet again." Then releasing her hand, he addressed Mr. Bovill: "Sir, you are unworthy the charge of your niece. Had you not been so, she would have committed no imprudence. If she have any female

relation, to that relation transfer your charge."

"I have! I have!" cried Elsie; "my lost mother's sister: let me go to her."

"The woman who keeps a school!" said Mr. Bovill sneeringly.

"Why not?" asked Kenelm.

"She never would go there. I proposed it to her a year ago. The minx would not go into a school."

"I will now, Uncle."

"Well, then, you shall at once; and I hope you'll be put on bread and water. Fool! fool! you have spoilt your own game. Mr. Chillingly, now that Miss Elsie has turned her back on herself, I can convince you that I am not the mad man you thought me. I was at the festive meeting held when you came of age: my brother is one of your father's tenants. I did not recognize your face immediately in the excitement of our encounter and in your change of dress; but in walking home it struck me that I had seen it before, and I knew it at once when you entered the room to-day. It has been a tussle between us which should beat the other. You have beat me; and thanks to that idiot! If she had not put her spoke into my wheel, she would have lived to be 'my lady.' Now good-day, sir."

"Mr. Bovill, you offered to shake hands: shake hands now, and promise me, with the good grace of one honourable combatant to another, that Miss Elsie shall go to her aunt the schoolmistress at once if she wishes it. Hark ye, my friend" (this in Mr. Bovill's ear): "a man can never manage a woman. Till a woman marries,

a prudent man leaves her to women; when she does marry, she manages her husband, and there's an end of it."

Kenelm was gone.

"Oh, wise young man!" murmured the uncle. "Elsie, dear, how can you go to your aunt's while you are in that dress?"

Elsie started as from a trance, her eyes directed towards the doorway through which Kenelm had vanished. "This dress," she said contemptuously, "this dress; is not that easily altered with shops in the town?"

"Gad!" muttered Mr. Bovill, "that youngster is a second Solomon; and if I can't manage Elsie, she'll manage a husband —whenever she gets one."

CHAPTER VIII

"BY the powers that guard innocence and celibacy," soliloquized Kenelm Chillingly, "but I have had a narrow escape! and had that amphibious creature been in girl's clothes instead of boy's, when she intervened like the deity of the ancient drama, I might have plunged my armorial Fishes into hot water. Though, indeed, it is hard to suppose that a young lady head-over-ears in love with Mr. Compton yesterday could have consigned her affections to me to-day. Still she looked as if she could, which proves either that one is never to trust a woman's heart or never to trust a woman's looks. Decimus Roach is right. Man must never relax his flight from the women, if he strives to achieve an 'Approach to the Angels.'"

These reflections were made by Kenelm Chillingly as, having turned his back upon the town in which such temptations and trials had befallen him, he took his solitary way along a footpath that wound through meads and cornfields, and shortened by three miles the distance to a cathedral town at which he proposed to rest for the night.

He had travelled for some hours, and the sun was beginning to slope towards a range of blue hills in the west, when he came to the margin of a fresh rivulet, overshadowed by feathery willows and the quivering leaves of silvery Italian poplars. Tempted by the quiet and cool of this pleasant spot, he flung himself down

on the banks, drew from his knapsack some crusts of bread with which he had wisely provided himself, and, dipping them into the pure lymph as it rippled over its pebbly bed, enjoyed one of those luxurious repasts for which epicures would exchange their banquet in return for the appetite of youth. Then, reclining along the bank, and crushing the wild thyme that grows best and sweetest in wooded coverts, provided they be neighboured by water, no matter whether in pool or rill, he resigned himself to that intermediate state between thought and dream-land which we call "revery." At a little distance he heard the low still sound of the mower's scythe, and the air came to his brow sweet with the fragrance of new-mown hay.

He was roused by a gentle tap on the shoulder, and turning lazily round, saw a good-humoured jovial face upon a pair of massive shoulders, and heard a hearty and winning voice say,—

"Young man, if you are not too tired, will you lend a hand to get in my hay? We are very short of hands, and I am afraid we shall have rain pretty soon."

Kenelm rose and shook himself, gravely contemplated the stranger, and replied in his customary sententious fashion, "Man is born to help his fellow-man,—especially to get in hay while the sun shines. I am at your service."

"That's a good fellow, and I'm greatly obliged to you. You see I had counted on a gang of roving haymakers, but they were bought up by another farmer. This way;" and leading on through a gap in the brushwood, he emerged, followed by

Kenelm, into a large meadow, one-third of which was still under the scythe, the rest being occupied with persons of both sexes, tossing and spreading the cut grass. Among the latter, Kenelm, stripped to his shirt-sleeves, soon found himself tossing and spreading like the rest, with his usual melancholy resignation of mien and aspect. Though a little awkward at first in the use of his unfamiliar implements, his practice in all athletic accomplishments bestowed on him that invaluable quality which is termed "handiness," and he soon distinguished himself by the superior activity and neatness with which he performed his work. Something—it might be in his countenance or in the charm of his being a stranger—attracted the attention of the feminine section of haymakers, and one very pretty girl who was nearer to him than the rest attempted to commence conversation.

"This is new to you," she said smiling.

"Nothing is new to me," answered Kenelm, mournfully. "But allow me to observe that to do things well you should only do one thing at a time. I am here to make hay and not conversation."

"My!" said the girl, in amazed ejaculation, and turned off with a toss of her pretty head.

"I wonder if that jade has got an uncle," thought Kenelm. The farmer, who took his share of work with the men, halting now and then to look round, noticed Kenelm's vigorous application with much approval, and at the close of the day's work shook him heartily by the hand, leaving a two-shilling piece in his palm. The heir of the Chillinglys gazed on that honorarium, and turned it

over with the finger and thumb of the left hand.

"Be n't it eno'?" said the farmer, nettled.

"Pardon me," answered Kenelm. "But, to tell you the truth, it is the first money I ever earned by my own bodily labour; and I regard it with equal curiosity and respect. But if it would not offend you, I would rather that, instead of the money, you had offered me some supper; for I have tasted nothing but bread and water since the morning."

"You shall have the money and supper both, my lad," said the farmer, cheerily. "And if you will stay and help till I have got in the hay, I dare say my good woman can find you a better bed than you'll get in the village inn; if, indeed, you can get one there at all."

"You are very kind. But before I accept your hospitality excuse one question: have you any nieces about you?"

"Nieces!" echoed the farmer, mechanically thrusting his hands into his breeches-pockets as if in search of something there, "nieces about me! what do you mean? Be that a newfangled word for coppers?"

"Not for coppers, though perhaps for brass. But I spoke without metaphor. I object to nieces upon abstract principle, confirmed by the test of experience."

The farmer stared, and thought his new friend not quite so sound in his mental as he evidently was in his physical conformation, but replied, with a laugh, "Make yourself easy, then. I have only one niece, and she is married to an iron-monger

and lives in Exeter."

On entering the farmhouse, Kenelm's host conducted him straight into the kitchen, and cried out, in a hearty voice, to a comely middle-aged dame, who, with a stout girl, was intent on culinary operations, "Hulloa! old woman, I have brought you a guest who has well earned his supper, for he has done the work of two, and I have promised him a bed."

The farmer's wife turned sharply round. "He is heartily welcome to supper. As to a bed," she said doubtfully, "I don't know." But here her eyes settled on Kenelm; and there was something in his aspect so unlike what she expected to see in an itinerant haymaker, that she involuntarily dropped a courtesy, and resumed, with a change of tone, "The gentleman shall have the guest-room: but it will take a little time to get ready; you know, John, all the furniture is covered up."

"Well, wife, there will be leisure eno' for that. He don't want to go to roost till he has supped."

"Certainly not," said Kenelm, sniffing a very agreeable odour.

"Where are the girls?" asked the farmer.

"They have been in these five minutes, and gone upstairs to tidy themselves."

"What girls?" faltered Kenelm, retreating towards the door. "I thought you said you had no nieces."

"But I did not say I had no daughters. Why, you are not afraid of them, are you?"

"Sir," replied Kenelm, with a polite and politic evasion of that

question, "if your daughters are like their mother, you can't say that they are not dangerous."

"Come," cried the farmer, looking very much pleased, while his dame smiled and blushed, "come, that's as nicely said as if you were canvassing the county. 'Tis not among haymakers that you learned manners, I guess; and perhaps I have been making too free with my betters."

"What!" quoth the courteous Kenelm, "do you mean to imply that you were too free with your shillings? Apologize for that, if you like, but I don't think you'll get back the shillings. I have not seen so much of this life as you have, but, according to my experience, when a man once parts with his money, whether to his betters or his worsers, the chances are that he'll never see it again."

At this aphorism the farmer laughed ready to kill himself, his wife chuckled, and even the maid-of-all-work grinned. Kenelm, preserving his unalterable gravity, said to himself,—

"Wit consists in the epigrammatic expression of a commonplace truth, and the dullest remark on the worth of money is almost as sure of successful appreciation as the dullest remark on the worthlessness of women. Certainly I am a wit without knowing it."

Here the farmer touched him on the shoulder—touched it, did not slap it, as he would have done ten minutes before—and said,—

"We must not disturb the Missis or we shall get no supper. I'll

just go and give a look into the cow-sheds. Do you know much about cows?"

"Yes, cows produce cream and butter. The best cows are those which produce at the least cost the best cream and butter. But how the best cream and butter can be produced at a price which will place them free of expense on a poor man's breakfast-table is a question to be settled by a Reformed Parliament and a Liberal Administration. In the meanwhile let us not delay the supper."

The farmer and his guest quitted the kitchen and entered the farmyard.

"You are quite a stranger in these parts?"

"Quite."

"You don't even know my name?"

"No, except that I heard your wife call you John."

"My name is John Saunderson."

"Ah! you come from the North, then? That's why you are so sensible and shrewd. Names that end in 'son' are chiefly borne by the descendants of the Danes, to whom King Alfred, Heaven bless him! peacefully assigned no less than sixteen English counties. And when a Dane was called somebody's son, it is a sign that he was the son of a somebody."

"By gosh! I never heard that before."

"If I thought you had I should not have said it."

"Now I have told you my name, what is yours?"

"A wise man asks questions and a fool answers them. Suppose for a moment that I am not a fool."

Farmer Saunderson scratched his head, and looked more puzzled than became the descendant of a Dane settled by King Alfred in the north of England.

"Dash it," said he at last, "but I think you are Yorkshire too."

"Man, who is the most conceited of all animals, says that he alone has the prerogative of thought, and condemns the other animals to the meaner mechanical operation which he calls instinct. But as instincts are unerring and thoughts generally go wrong, man has not much to boast of according to his own definition. When you say you think, and take it for granted, that I am Yorkshire, you err. I am not Yorkshire. Confining yourself to instinct, can you divine when we shall sup? The cows you are about to visit divine to a moment when they shall be fed."

Said the farmer, recovering his sense of superiority to the guest whom he obliged with a supper, "In ten minutes." Then, after a pause, and in a tone of deprecation, as if he feared he might be thought fine, he continued, "We don't sup in the kitchen. My father did, and so did I till I married; but my Bess, though she's as good a farmer's wife as ever wore shoe-leather, was a tradesman's daughter, and had been brought up different. You see she was not without a good bit of money: but even if she had been, I should not have liked her folks to say I had lowered her; so we sup in the parlour."

Quoth Kenelm, "The first consideration is to sup at all. Supper conceded, every man is more likely to get on in life who would rather sup in his parlour than his kitchen. Meanwhile, I see a

pump; while you go to the cows I will stay here and wash my hands of them."

"Hold! you seem a sharp fellow, and certainly no fool. I have a son, a good smart chap, but stuck up; crows it over us all; thinks no small beer of himself. You'd do me a service, and him too, if you'd let him down a peg or two."

Kenelm, who was now hard at work at the pump-handle, only replied by a gracious nod. But as he seldom lost an opportunity for reflection, he said to himself, while he laved his face in the stream from the spout, "One can't wonder why every small man thinks it so pleasant to let down a big one, when a father asks a stranger to let down his own son for even fancying that he is not small beer. It is upon that principle in human nature that criticism wisely relinquishes its pretensions as an analytical science, and becomes a lucrative profession. It relies on the pleasure its readers find in letting a man down."

CHAPTER IX

IT was a pretty, quaint farmhouse, such as might well go with two or three hundred acres of tolerably good land, tolerably well farmed by an active old-fashioned tenant, who, though he did not use mowing-machines nor steam-ploughs nor dabble in chemical experiments, still brought an adequate capital to his land and made the capital yield a very fair return of interest. The supper was laid out in a good-sized though low-pitched parlour with a glazed door, now wide open, as were all the latticed windows, looking into a small garden, rich in those straggling old English flowers which are nowadays banished from gardens more pretentious and; infinitely less fragrant. At one corner was an arbour covered with honeysuckle, and opposite to it a row of beehives. The room itself had an air of comfort, and that sort of elegance which indicates the presiding genius of feminine taste. There were shelves suspended to the wall by blue ribbons, and filled with small books neatly bound; there were flower-pots in all the window-sills; there was a small cottage piano; the walls were graced partly with engraved portraits of county magnates and prize oxen; partly with samplers in worsted-work, comprising verses of moral character and the names and birthdays of the farmer's grandmother, mother, wife, and daughters. Over the chimney-piece was a small mirror, and above that the trophy of a fox's brush; while niched into an angle in the

room was a glazed cupboard, rich with specimens of old china, Indian and English.

The party consisted of the farmer, his wife, three buxom daughters, and a pale-faced slender lad of about twenty, the only son, who did not take willingly to farming: he had been educated at a superior grammar school, and had high notions about the March of Intellect and the Progress of the Age.

Kenelm, though among the gravest of mortals, was one of the least shy. In fact shyness is the usual symptom of a keen /amour propre/; and of that quality the youthful Chillingly scarcely possessed more than did the three Fishes of his hereditary scutcheon. He felt himself perfectly at home with his entertainers; taking care, however, that his attentions were so equally divided between the three daughters as to prevent all suspicion of a particular preference. "There is safety in numbers," thought he, especially in odd numbers. The three Graces never married, neither did the nine Muses."

"I presume, young ladies, that you are fond of music," said Kenelm, glancing at the piano.

"Yes, I love it dearly," said the eldest girl, speaking for the others.

Quoth the farmer, as he heaped the stranger's plate with boiled beef and carrots, "Things are not what they were when I was a boy; then it was only great tenant-farmers who had their girls taught the piano, and sent their boys to a good school. Now we small folks are for helping our children a step or two higher than

our own place on the ladder."

"The schoolmaster is abroad," said the son, with the emphasis of a sage adding an original aphorism to the stores of philosophy.

"There is, no doubt, a greater equality of culture than there was in the last generation," said Kenelm. "People of all ranks utter the same commonplace ideas in very much the same arrangements of syntax. And in proportion as the democracy of intelligence extends—a friend of mine, who is a doctor, tells me that complaints formerly reserved to what is called aristocracy (though what that word means in plain English I don't know) are equally shared by the commonalty— /tic-douloureux/ and other neuralgic maladies abound. And the human race, in England at least, is becoming more slight and delicate. There is a fable of a man who, when he became exceedingly old, was turned into a grasshopper. England is very old, and is evidently approaching the grasshopper state of development. Perhaps we don't eat as much beef as our forefathers did. May I ask you for another slice?"

Kenelm's remarks were somewhat over the heads of his audience. But the son, taking them as a slur upon the enlightened spirit of the age, coloured up and said, with a knitted brow, "I hope, sir, that you are not an enemy to progress."

"That depends: for instance, I prefer staying here, where I am well off, to going farther and faring worse."

"Well said!" cried the farmer.

Not deigning to notice that interruption, the son took up

Kenelm's reply with a sneer, "I suppose you mean that it is to fare worse, if you march with the time."

"I am afraid we have no option but to march with the time; but when we reach that stage when to march any farther is to march into old age, we should not be sorry if time would be kind enough to stand still; and all good doctors concur in advising us to do nothing to hurry him."

"There is no sign of old age in this country, sir; and thank Heaven we are not standing still!"

"Grasshoppers never do; they are always hopping and jumping, and making what they think 'progress,' till (unless they hop into the water and are swallowed up prematurely by a carp or a frog) they die of the exhaustion which hops and jumps unremitting naturally produce. May I ask you, Mrs. Saunderson, for some of that rice-pudding?"

The farmer, who, though he did not quite comprehend Kenelm's metaphorical mode of arguing, saw delightedly that his wise son looked more posed than himself, cried with great glee, "Bob, my boy,—Bob, our visitor is a little too much for you!"

"Oh, no," said Kenelm, modestly. "But I honestly think Mr. Bob would be a wiser man, and a weightier man, and more removed from the grasshopper state, if he would think less and eat more pudding."

When the supper was over the farmer offered Kenelm a clay pipe filled with shag, which that adventurer accepted with his habitual resignation to the ills of life; and the whole party,

excepting Mrs. Saunderson, strolled into the garden. Kenelm and Mr. Saunderson seated themselves in the honeysuckle arbour: the girls and the advocate of progress stood without among the garden flowers. It was a still and lovely night, the moon at her full. The farmer, seated facing his hayfields, smoked on placidly. Kenelm, at the third whiff, laid aside his pipe, and glanced furtively at the three Graces. They formed a pretty group, all clustered together near the silenced beehives, the two younger seated on the grass strip that bordered the flower-beds, their arms over each other's shoulders, the elder one standing behind them, with the moonlight shining soft on her auburn hair.

Young Saunderson walked restlessly by himself to and fro the path of gravel.

"It is a strange thing," ruminated Kenelm, "that girls are not unpleasant to look at if you take them collectively,—two or three bound up together; but if you detach any one of them from the bunch, the odds are that she is as plain as a pikestaff. I wonder whether that bucolical grasshopper, who is so enamoured of the hop and jump that he calls 'progress,' classes the society of the Mormons among the evidences of civilized advancement? There is a good deal to be said in favour of taking a whole lot of wives as one may buy a whole lot of cheap razors. For it is not impossible that out of a dozen a good one may be found. And then, too, a whole nosegay of variegated blooms, with a faded leaf here and there, must be more agreeable to the eye than the same monotonous solitary lady's smock. But I fear these reflections are

naughty; let us change them. Farmer," he said aloud, "I suppose your handsome daughters are too fine to assist you much. I did not see them among the haymakers."

"Oh, they were there, but by themselves, in the back part of the field. I did not want them to mix with all the girls, many of whom are strangers from other places. I don't know anything against them; but as I don't know anything for them, I thought it as well to keep my lasses apart."

"But I should have supposed it wiser to keep your son apart from them.

I saw him in the thick of those nymphs."

"Well," said the farmer, musingly, and withdrawing his pipe from his lips, "I don't think lasses not quite well brought up, poor things! do as much harm to the lads as they can do to proper-behaved lasses; leastways my wife does not think so. 'Keep good girls from bad girls,' says she, 'and good girls will never go wrong.' And you will find there is something in that when you have girls of your own to take care of."

"Without waiting for that time, which I trust may never occur, I can recognize the wisdom of your excellent wife's observation. My own opinion is, that a woman can more easily do mischief to her own sex than to ours; since, of course, she cannot exist without doing mischief to somebody or other."

"And good, too," said the jovial farmer, thumping his fist on the table. "What should we be without women?"

"Very much better, I take it, sir. Adam was as good as gold,

and never had a qualm of conscience or stomach till Eve seduced him into eating raw apples."

"Young man, thou'st been crossed in love. I see it now. That's why thou look'st so sorrowful."

"Sorrowful! Did you ever know a man crossed in love who looked less sorrowful when he came across a pudding?"

"Hey! but thou canst ply a good knife and fork, that I will say for thee." Here the farmer turned round, and gazed on Kenelm with deliberate scrutiny. That scrutiny accomplished, his voice took a somewhat more respectful tone, as he resumed, "Do you know that you puzzle me somewhat?"

"Very likely. I am sure that I puzzle myself. Say on."

"Looking at your dress and—and—"

"The two shillings you gave me? Yes—"

"I took you for the son of some small farmer like myself. But now I judge from your talk that you are a college chap,—anyhow, a gentleman. Be n't it so?"

"My dear Mr. Saunderson, I set out on my travels, which is not long ago, with a strong dislike to telling lies. But I doubt if a man can get along through this world without finding that the faculty of lying was bestowed on him by Nature as a necessary means of self- preservation. If you are going to ask me any questions about myself, I am sure that I shall tell you lies. Perhaps, therefore, it may be best for both if I decline the bed you proffered me, and take my night's rest under a hedge."

"Pooh! I don't want to know more of a man's affairs than he

thinks fit to tell me. Stay and finish the haymaking. And I say, lad, I'm glad you don't seem to care for the girls; for I saw a very pretty one trying to flirt with you, and if you don't mind she'll bring you into trouble."

"How? Does she want to run away from her uncle?"

"Uncle! Bless you, she don't live with him! She lives with her father; and I never knew that she wants to run away. In fact, Jessie Wiles—that's her name—is, I believe, a very good girl, and everybody likes her,—perhaps a little too much; but then she knows she's a beauty, and does not object to admiration."

"No woman ever does, whether she's a beauty or not. But I don't yet understand why Jessie Wiles should bring me into trouble."

"Because there is a big hulking fellow who has gone half out of his wits for her; and when he fancies he sees any other chap too sweet on her he thrashes him into a jelly. So, youngster, you just keep your skin out of that trap."

"Hem! And what does the girl say to those proofs of affection? Does she like the man the better for thrashing other admirers into jelly?"

"Poor child! No; she hates the very sight of him. But he swears she shall marry nobody else if he hangs for it. And, to tell you the truth, I suspect that if Jessie does seem to trifle with others a little too lightly, it is to draw away this bully's suspicion from the only man I think she does care for,—a poor sickly young fellow who was crippled by an accident, and whom Tom Bowles could

brain with his little finger."

"This is really interesting," cried Kenelm, showing something like excitement. "I should like to know this terrible suitor."

"That's easy eno'," said the farmer, dryly. "You have only to take a stroll with Jessie Wiles after sunset, and you'll know more of Tom Bowles than you are likely to forget in a month."

"Thank you very much for your information," said Kenelm, in a soft tone, grateful but pensive. "I hope to profit by it."

"Do. I should be sorry if any harm came to thee; and Tom Bowles in one of his furies is as bad to cross as a mad bull. So now, as we must be up early, I'll just take a look round the stables, and then off to bed; and I advise you to do the same."

"Thank you for the hint. I see the young ladies have already gone in.

Good-night."

Passing through the garden, Kenelm encountered the junior Saunderson.

"I fear," said the Votary of Progress, "that you have found the governor awful slow. What have you been talking about?"

"Girls," said Kenelm, "a subject always awful, but not necessarily slow."

"Girls,—the governor been talking about girls? You joke."

"I wish I did joke, but that is a thing I could never do since I came upon earth. Even in the cradle, I felt that life was a very serious matter, and did not allow of jokes. I remember too well my first dose of castor-oil. You too, Mr. Bob, have

doubtless imbibed that initiatory preparation to the sweets of existence. The corners of your mouth have not recovered from the downward curves into which it so rigidly dragged them. Like myself, you are of grave temperament, and not easily moved to jocularity,—nay, an enthusiast for Progress is of necessity a man eminently dissatisfied with the present state of affairs. And chronic dissatisfaction resents the momentary relief of a joke."

"Give off chaffing, if you please," said Bob, lowering the didascular intonations of his voice, "and just tell me plainly, did not my father say anything particular about me?"

"Not a word: the only person of the male sex of whom he said anything particular was Tom Bowles."

"What, fighting Tom! the terror of the whole neighbourhood! Ah, I guess the old gentleman is afraid lest Tom may fall foul upon me. But Jessie Wiles is not worth a quarrel with that brute. It is a crying shame in the Government—"

"What! has the Government failed to appreciate the heroism of Tom Bowles, or rather to restrain the excesses of its ardour?"

"Stuff! it is a shame in the Government not to have compelled his father to put him to school. If education were universal—"

"You think there would be no brutes in particular. It may be so; but education is universal in China, and so is the bastinado. I thought, however, that you said the schoolmaster was abroad, and that the age of enlightenment was in full progress."

"Yes, in the towns, but not in these obsolete rural districts; and that brings me to the point. I feel lost, thrown away here. I have

something in me, sir, and it can only come out by collision with equal minds. So do me a favour, will you?"

"With the greatest pleasure."

"Give the governor a hint that he can't expect me, after the education I have had, to follow the plough and fatten pigs; and that Manchester is the place for ME."

"Why Manchester?"

"Because I have a relation in business there who will give me a clerkship if the governor will consent. And Manchester rules England."

"Mr. Bob Saunderson, I will do my best to promote your wishes. This is a land of liberty, and every man should choose his own walk in it, so that, at the last, if he goes to the dogs, he goes to them without that disturbance of temper which is naturally occasioned by the sense of being driven to their jaws by another man against his own will. He has then no one to blame but himself. And that, Mr. Bob, is a great comfort. When, having got into a scrape, we blame others, we unconsciously become unjust, spiteful, uncharitable, malignant, perhaps revengeful. We indulge in feelings which tend to demoralize the whole character. But when we only blame ourselves, we become modest and penitent. We make allowances for others. And indeed self-blame is a salutary exercise of conscience, which a really good man performs every day of his life. And now, will you show me the room in which I am to sleep, and forget for a few hours that I am alive at all: the best thing that can happen to us in this world,

my dear Mr. Bob! There's never much amiss with our days, so long as we can forget about them the moment we lay our heads on the pillow."

The two young men entered the house amicably, arm in arm. The girls had already retired, but Mrs. Saunderson was still up to conduct her visitor to the guest's chamber,—a pretty room which had been furnished twenty-two years ago on the occasion of the farmer's marriage, at the expense of Mrs. Saunderson's mother, for her own occupation when she paid them a visit, and with its dimity curtains and trellised paper it still looked as fresh and new as if decorated and furnished yesterday.

Left alone, Kenelm undressed, and before he got into bed, bared his right arm, and doubling it, gravely contemplated its muscular development, passing his left hand over that prominence in the upper part which is vulgarly called the ball. Satisfied apparently with the size and the firmness of that pugilistic protuberance, he gently sighed forth, "I fear I shall have to lick Thomas Bowles." In five minutes more he was asleep.

CHAPTER X

THE next day the hay-mowing was completed, and a large portion of the hay already made carted away to be stacked. Kenelm acquitted himself with a credit not less praiseworthy than had previously won Mr. Saunderson's approbation. But instead of rejecting as before the acquaintance of Miss Jessie Wiles, he contrived towards noon to place himself near to that dangerous beauty, and commenced conversation. "I am afraid I was rather rude to you yesterday, and I want to beg pardon."

"Oh," answered the girl, in that simple intelligible English which is more frequent among our village folks nowadays than many popular novelists would lead us into supposing, "oh, I ought to ask pardon for taking a liberty in speaking to you. But I thought you'd feel strange, and I intended it kindly."

"I'm sure you did," returned Kenelm, chivalrously raking her portion of hay as well as his own, while he spoke. "And I want to be good friends with you. It is very near the time when we shall leave off for dinner, and Mrs. Saunderson has filled my pockets with some excellent beef-sandwiches, which I shall be happy to share with you, if you do not object to dine with me here, instead of going home for your dinner."

The girl hesitated, and then shook her head in dissent from the proposition.

"Are you afraid that your neighbours will think it wrong?"

Jessie curled up her lips with a pretty scorn, and said, "I don't much care what other folks say, but is n't it wrong?"

"Not in the least. Let me make your mind easy. I am here but for a day or two: we are not likely ever to meet again; but, before I go, I should be glad if I could do you some little service." As he spoke he had paused from his work, and, leaning on his rake, fixed his eyes, for the first time attentively, on the fair haymaker.

Yes, she was decidedly pretty,—pretty to a rare degree: luxuriant brown hair neatly tied up, under a straw hat doubtless of her own plaiting; for, as a general rule, nothing more educates the village maid for the destinies of flirt than the accomplishment of straw-plaiting. She had large, soft blue eyes, delicate small features, and a complexion more clear in its healthful bloom than rural beauties generally retain against the influences of wind and sun. She smiled and slightly coloured as he gazed on her, and, lifting her eyes, gave him one gentle, trustful glance, which might have bewitched a philosopher and deceived a /roue/. And yet Kenelm by that intuitive knowledge of character which is often truthfulest where it is least disturbed by the doubts and cavils of acquired knowledge, felt at once that in that girl's mind coquetry, perhaps unconscious, was conjoined with an innocence of anything worse than coquetry as complete as a child's. He bowed his head, in withdrawing his gaze, and took her into his heart as tenderly as if she had been a child appealing to it for protection.

"Certainly," he said inly, "certainly I must lick Tom Bowles;

yet stay, perhaps after all she likes him."

"But," he continued aloud, "you do not see how I can be of any service to you. Before I explain, let me ask which of the men in the field is Tom Bowles?"

"Tom Bowles?" exclaimed Jessie, in a tone of surprise and alarm, and turning pale as she looked hastily round; "you frightened me, sir: but he is not here; he does not work in the fields. But how came you to hear of Tom Bowles?"

"Dine with me and I'll tell you. Look, there is a quiet place in yon corner under the thorn-trees by that piece of water. See, they are leaving off work: I will go for a can of beer, and then, pray, let me join you there."

Jessie paused for a moment as if doubtful still; then again glancing at Kenelm, and assured by the grave kindness of his countenance, uttered a scarce audible assent and moved away towards the thorn-trees.

As the sun now stood perpendicularly over their heads, and the hand of the clock in the village church tower, soaring over the hedgerows, reached the first hour after noon, all work ceased in a sudden silence: some of the girls went back to their homes; those who stayed grouped together, apart from the men, who took their way to the shadows of a large oak-tree in the hedgerow, where beer kegs and cans awaited them.

CHAPTER XI

"AND now," said Kenelm, as the two young persons, having finished their simple repast, sat under the thorn-trees and by the side of the water, fringed at that part with tall reeds through which the light summer breeze stirred with a pleasant murmur, "now I will talk to you about Tom Bowles. Is it true that you don't like that brave young fellow? I say young, as I take his youth for granted."

"Like him! I hate the sight of him."

"Did you always hate the sight of him? You must surely at one time have allowed him to think that you did not?"

The girl winced, and made no answer, but plucked a daffodil from the soil, and tore it ruthlessly to pieces.

"I am afraid you like to serve your admirers as you do that ill-fated flower," said Kenelm, with some severity of tone. "But concealed in the flower you may sometimes find the sting of a bee. I see by your countenance that you did not tell Tom Bowles that you hated him till it was too late to prevent his losing his wits for you."

"No; I was n't so bad as that," said Jessie, looking, nevertheless, rather ashamed of herself; "but I was silly and giddy-like, I own; and, when he first took notice of me, I was pleased, without thinking much of it, because, you see, Mr. Bowles (emphasis on /Mr./) is higher up than a poor girl like me.

He is a tradesman, and I am only a shepherd's daughter; though, indeed, Father is more like Mr. Saunderson's foreman than a mere shepherd. But I never thought anything serious of it, and did not suppose he did; that is, at first."

"So Tom Bowles is a tradesman. What trade?"

"A farrier, sir."

"And, I am told, a very fine young man."

"I don't know as to that: he is very big."

"And what made you hate him?"

"The first thing that made me hate him was that he insulted Father, who is a very quiet, timid man, and threatened I don't know what if Father did not make me keep company with him. Make me indeed! But Mr. Bowles is a dangerous, bad-hearted, violent man, and—don't laugh at me, sir, but I dreamed one night he was murdering me. And I think he will too, if he stays here: and so does his poor mother, who is a very nice woman, and wants him to go away; but he will not."

"Jessie," said Kenelm, softly, "I said I wanted to make friends with you. Do you think you can make a friend of me? I can never be more than friend. But I should like to be that. Can you trust me as one?"

"Yes," answered the girl, firmly, and, as she lifted her eyes to him, their look was pure from all vestige of coquetry,—guileless, frank, grateful.

"Is there not another young man who courts you more civilly than Tom Bowles does, and whom you really could find it in your

heart to like?"

Jessie looked round for another daffodil, and not finding one, contented herself with a bluebell, which she did not tear to pieces, but caressed with a tender hand. Kenelm bent his eyes down on her charming face with something in their gaze rarely seen there, —something of that unreasoning, inexpressible human fondness, for which philosophers of his school have no excuse. Had ordinary mortals, like you or myself, for instance, peered through the leaves of the thorn-trees, we should have sighed or frowned, according to our several temperaments; but we should all have said, whether spitefully or envyingly, "Happy young lovers!" and should all have blundered lamentably in so saying.

Still, there is no denying the fact that a pretty face has a very unfair advantage over a plain one. And, much to the discredit of Kenelm's philanthropy, it may be reasonably doubted whether, had Jessie Wiles been endowed by nature with a snub nose and a squint, Kenelm would have volunteered his friendly services, or meditated battle with Tom Bowles on her behalf.

But there was no touch of envy or jealousy in the tone with which he said,—

"I see there is some one you would like well enough to marry, and that you make a great difference in the way you treat a daffodil and a bluebell. Who and what is the young man whom the bluebell represents? Come, confide."

"We were much brought up together," said Jessie, still looking

down, and still smoothing the leaves of the bluebell. "His mother lived in the next cottage; and my mother was very fond of him, and so was Father too; and, before I was ten years old, they used to laugh when poor Will called me his little wife." Here the tears which had started to Jessie's eyes began to fall over the flower. "But now Father would not hear of it; and it can't be. And I've tried to care for some one else, and I can't, and that's the truth."

"But why? Has he turned out ill?—taken to poaching or drink?"

"No, no, no; he's as steady and good a lad as ever lived. But—but—"

"Yes; but—"

"He is a cripple now; and I love him all the better for it." Here Jessie fairly sobbed.

Kenelm was greatly moved, and prudently held his peace till she had a little recovered herself; then, in answer to his gentle questionings, he learned that Will Somers—till then a healthy and strong lad—had fallen from the height of a scaffolding, at the age of sixteen, and been so seriously injured that he was moved at once to the hospital. When he came out of it—what with the fall, and what with the long illness which had followed the effects of the accident—he was not only crippled for life, but of health so delicate and weakly that he was no longer fit for outdoor labour and the hard life of a peasant. He was an only son of a widowed mother, and his sole mode of assisting her was a very precarious one. He had taught himself basket-making; and though, Jessie

said, his work was very ingenious and clever, still there were but few customers for it in that neighbourhood. And, alas! even if Jessie's father would consent to give his daughter to the poor cripple, how could the poor cripple earn enough to maintain a wife?

"And," said Jessie, "still I was happy, walking out with him on Sunday evenings, or going to sit with him and his mother; for we are both young, and can wait. But I dare n't do it any more now: for Tom Bowles has sworn that if I do he will beat him before my eyes; and Will has a high spirit, and I should break my heart if any harm happened to him on my account."

"As for Mr. Bowles, we'll not think of him at present. But if Will could maintain himself and you, your father would not object nor you either to a marriage with the poor cripple?"

"Father would not; and as for me, if it weren't for disobeying Father, I'd marry him to-morrow. /I/ can work."

"They are going back to the hay now; but after that task is over, let me walk home with you, and show me Will's cottage and Mr. Bowles's shop or forge."

"But you'll not say anything to Mr. Bowles. He would n't mind your being a gentleman, as I now see you are, sir; and he's dangerous,—oh, so dangerous!—and so strong."

"Never fear," answered Kenelm, with the nearest approach to a laugh he had ever made since childhood; "but when we are relieved, wait for me a few minutes at yon gate."

CHAPTER XII

KENELM spoke no more to his new friend in the hayfields; but when the day's work was over he looked round for the farmer to make an excuse for not immediately joining the family supper. However, he did not see either Mr. Saunderson or his son. Both were busied in the stackyard. Well pleased to escape excuse and the questions it might provoke, Kenelm therefore put on the coat he had laid aside and joined Jessie, who had waited for him at the gate. They entered the lane side by side, following the stream of villagers who were slowly wending their homeward way. It was a primitive English village, not adorned on the one hand with fancy or model cottages, nor on the other hand indicating penury and squalor. The church rose before them gray and Gothic, backed by the red clouds in which the sun had set, and bordered by the glebe-land of the half-seen parsonage. Then came the village green, with a pretty schoolhouse; and to this succeeded a long street of scattered whitewashed cottages, in the midst of their own little gardens.

As they walked the moon rose in full splendour, silvering the road before them.

"Who is the Squire here?" asked Kenelm. "I should guess him to be a good sort of man, and well off."

"Yes, Squire Travers; he is a great gentleman, and they say very rich. But his place is a good way from this village. You

can see it if you stay, for he gives a harvest-home supper on Saturday, and Mr. Saunderson and all his tenants are going. It is a beautiful park, and Miss Travers is a sight to look at. Oh, she is lovely!" continued Jessie, with an unaffected burst of admiration; for women are more sensible of the charm of each other's beauty than men give them credit for.

"As pretty as yourself?"

"Oh, pretty is not the word. She is a thousand times handsomer!"

"Humph!" said Kenelm, incredulously.

There was a pause, broken by a quick sigh from Jessie.

"What are you sighing for?—tell me."

"I was thinking that a very little can make folks happy, but that somehow or other that very little is as hard to get as if one set one's heart on a great deal."

"That's very wisely said. Everybody covets a little something for which, perhaps, nobody else would give a straw. But what's the very little thing for which you are sighing?"

"Mrs. Bawtrey wants to sell that shop of hers. She is getting old, and has had fits; and she can get nobody to buy; and if Will had that shop and I could keep it,—but 'tis no use thinking of that."

"What shop do you mean?"

"There!"

"Where? I see no shop."

"But it is /the/ shop of the village,—the only one,—where the

post-office is."

"Ah! I see something at the windows like a red cloak. What do they sell?"

"Everything,—tea and sugar and candles and shawls and gowns and cloaks and mouse-traps and letter-paper; and Mrs. Bawtrey buys poor Will's baskets, and sells them for a good deal more than she pays."

"It seems a nice cottage, with a field and orchard at the back."

"Yes. Mrs. Bawtrey pays L8 a year for it; but the shop can well afford it."

Kenelm made no reply. They both walked on in silence, and had now reached the centre of the village street when Jessie, looking up, uttered an abrupt exclamation, gave an affrighted start, and then came to a dead stop.

Kenelm's eye followed the direction of hers, and saw, a few yards distant, at the other side of the way, a small red brick house, with thatched sheds adjoining it, the whole standing in a wide yard, over the gate of which leaned a man smoking a small cutty-pipe. "It is Tom Bowles," whispered Jessie, and instinctively she twined her arm into Kenelm's; then, as if on second thoughts, withdrew it, and said, still in a whisper, "Go back now, sir; do."

"Not I. It is Tom Bowles whom I want to know. Hush!"

For here Tom Bowles had thrown down his pipe and was coming slowly across the road towards them.

Kenelm eyed him with attention. A singularly powerful man, not so tall as Kenelm by some inches, but still above the middle

height, herculean shoulders and chest, the lower limbs not in equal proportion,—a sort of slouching, shambling gait. As he advanced the moonlight fell on his face; it was a handsome one. He wore no hat, and his hair, of a light brown, curled close. His face was fresh-coloured, with aquiline features; his age apparently about six or seven and twenty. Coming nearer and nearer, whatever favourable impression the first glance at his physiognomy might have made on Kenelm was dispelled, for the expression of his face changed and became fierce and lowering.

Kenelm was still walking on, Jessie by his side, when Bowles rudely thrust himself between them, and seizing the girl's arm with one hand, he turned his face full on Kenelm, with a menacing wave of the other hand, and said in a deep burly voice,

"Who be you?"

"Let go that young woman before I tell you."

"If you weren't a stranger," answered Bowles, seeming as if he tried to suppress a rising fit of wrath, "you'd be in the kennel for those words. But I s'pose you don't know that I'm Tom Bowles, and I don't choose the girl as I'm after to keep company with any other man. So you be off."

"And I don't choose any other man to lay violent hands on any girl walking by my side without telling him that he's a brute; and that I only wait till he has both his hands at liberty to let him know that he has not a poor cripple to deal with."

Tom Bowles could scarcely believe his ears. Amaze swallowed up for the moment every other sentiment. Mechanically he

loosened his hold of Jessie, who fled off like a bird released. But evidently she thought of her new friend's danger more than her own escape; for instead of sheltering herself in her father's cottage, she ran towards a group of labourers who, near at hand, had stopped loitering before the public-house, and returned with those allies towards the spot in which she had left the two men. She was very popular with the villagers, who, strong in the sense of numbers, overcame their awe of Tom Bowles, and arrived at the place half running, half striding, in time, they hoped, to interpose between his terrible arm and the bones of the unoffending stranger.

Meanwhile Bowles, having recovered his first astonishment, and scarcely noticing Jessie's escape, still left his right arm extended towards the place she had vacated, and with a quick back-stroke of the left levelled at Kenelm's face, growled contemptuously, "Thou'lt find one hand enough for thee."

But quick as was his aim, Kenelm caught the lifted arm just above the elbow, causing the blow to waste itself on air, and with a simultaneous advance of his right knee and foot dexterously tripped up his bulky antagonist, and laid him sprawling on his back. The movement was so sudden, and the stun it occasioned so utter, morally as well as physically, that a minute or more elapsed before Tom Bowles picked himself up. And he then stood another minute glowering at his antagonist, with a vague sentiment of awe almost like a superstitious panic. For it is noticeable that, however fierce and fearless a man or even a

wild beast may be, yet if either has hitherto been only familiar with victory and triumph, never yet having met with a foe that could cope with its force, the first effect of a defeat, especially from a despised adversary, unhinges and half paralyzes the whole nervous system. But as fighting Tom gradually recovered to the consciousness of his own strength, and the recollection that it had been only foiled by the skilful trick of a wrestler, and not the hand-to-hand might of a pugilist, the panic vanished, and Tom Bowles was himself again. "Oh, that's your sort, is it? We don't fight with our heels hereabouts, like Cornishers and donkeys: we fight with our fists, youngster; and since you /will/ have a bout at that, why, you must."

"Providence," answered Kenelm, solemnly, "sent me to this village for the express purpose of licking Tom Bowles. It is a signal mercy vouchsafed to yourself, as you will one day acknowledge."

Again a thrill of awe, something like that which the demagogue in Aristophanes might have felt when braved by the sausage-maker, shot through the valiant heart of Tom Bowles. He did not like those ominous words, and still less the lugubrious tone of voice in which they were uttered, But resolved, at least, to proceed to battle with more preparation than he had at first designed, he now deliberately disencumbered himself of his heavy fustian jacket and vest, rolled up his shirt-sleeves, and then slowly advanced towards the foe.

Kenelm had also, with still greater deliberation, taken off his

coat—which he folded up with care, as being both a new and an only one, and deposited by the hedge-side—and bared arms, lean indeed and almost slight, as compared with the vast muscle of his adversary, but firm in sinew as the hind leg of a stag.

By this time the labourers, led by Jessie, had arrived at the spot, and were about to crowd in between the combatants, when Kenelm waved them back and said in a calm and impressive voice,—

"Stand round, my good friends, make a ring, and see that it is fair play on my side. I am sure it will be fair on Mr. Bowles's. He is big enough to scorn what is little. And now, Mr. Bowles, just a word with you in the presence of your neighbours. I am not going to say anything uncivil. If you are rather rough and hasty, a man is not always master of himself—at least so I am told—when he thinks more than he ought to do about a pretty girl. But I can't look at your face even by this moonlight, and though its expression at this moment is rather cross, without being sure that you are a fine fellow at bottom, and that if you give a promise as man to man you will keep it. Is that so?"

One or two of the bystanders murmured assent; the others pressed round in silent wonder.

"What's all that soft-sawder about?" said Tom Bowles, somewhat falteringly.

"Simply this: if in the fight between us I beat you, I ask you to promise before your neighbours that you will not by word or deed molest or interfere again with Miss Jessie Wiles."

"Eh!" roared Tom. "Is it that you are after her?"

"Suppose I am, if that pleases you; and on my side, I promise that if you beat me, I quit this place as soon as you leave me well enough to do so, and will never visit it again. What! do you hesitate to promise? Are you really afraid I shall lick you?"

"You! I'd smash a dozen of you to powder."

"In that case, you are safe to promise. Come, 'tis a fair bargain. Is n't it, neighbours?"

Won over by Kenelm's easy show of good temper, and by the sense of justice, the bystanders joined in a common exclamation of assent.

"Come, Tom," said an old fellow, "the gentleman can't speak fairer; and we shall all think you be afeard if you hold back."

Tom's face worked: but at last he growled, "Well, I promise; that is, if he beats me."

"All right," said Kenelm. "You hear, neighbours; and Tom Bowles could not show that handsome face of his among you if he broke his word. Shake hands on it."

Fighting Tom sulkily shook hands.

"Well now, that's what I call English," said Kenelm, "all pluck and no malice. Fall back, friends, and leave a clear space for us."

The men all receded; and as Kenelm took his ground, there was a supple ease in his posture which at once brought out into clearer evidence the nervous strength of his build, and, contrasted with Tom's bulk of chest, made the latter look clumsy and topheavy.

The two men faced each other a minute, the eyes of both vigilant and steadfast. Tom's blood began to fire up as he gazed; nor, with all his outward calm; was Kenelm insensible of that proud beat of the heart which is aroused by the fierce joy of combat. Tom struck out first and a blow was parried, but not returned; another and another blow,—still parried, still unreturned. Kenelm, acting evidently on the defensive, took all the advantages for that strategy which he derived from superior length of arm and lighter agility of frame. Perhaps he wished to ascertain the extent of his adversary's skill, or to try the endurance of his wind, before he ventured on the hazards of attack. Tom, galled to the quick that blows which might have felled an ox were thus warded off from their mark, and dimly aware that he was encountering some mysterious skill which turned his brute strength into waste force and might overmaster him in the long run, came to a rapid conclusion that the sooner he brought that brute strength to bear the better it would be for him. Accordingly, after three rounds, in which without once breaking the guard of his antagonist he had received a few playful taps on the nose and mouth, he drew back and made a bull-like rush at his foe,—bull-like, for it butted full at him with the powerful down-bent head, and the two fists doing duty as horns. The rush spent, he found himself in the position of a man milled. I take it for granted that every Englishman who can call himself a man—that is, every man who has been an English boy, and, as such, been compelled to the use of his fists—knows

what a "mill" is. But I sing not only "pueris," but "virginibus." Ladies, "a mill,"—using with reluctance and contempt for myself that slang in which ladywriters indulge, and Girls of the Period know much better than they do their Murray,—"a mill,"—speaking not to ladywriters, not to Girls of the Period, but to innocent damsels, and in explanation to those foreigners who only understand the English language as taught by Addison and Macaulay,—a "mill" periphrastically means this: your adversary, in the noble encounter between fist and fist, has so plunged his head that it gets caught, as in a vice, between the side and doubled left arm of the adversary, exposing that head, unprotected and helpless, to be pounded out of recognizable shape by the right fist of the opponent. It is a situation in which raw superiority of force sometimes finds itself, and is seldom spared by disciplined superiority of skill. Kenelm, his right fist raised, paused for a moment, then, loosening the left arm, releasing the prisoner, and giving him a friendly slap on the shoulder, he turned round to the spectators and said apologetically, "He has a handsome face: it would be a shame to spoil it."

Tom's position of peril was so obvious to all, and that good-humoured abnegation of the advantage which the position gave to the adversary seemed so generous, that the labourers actually hurrahed. Tom, himself felt as if treated like a child; and alas, and alas for him! in wheeling round, and regathering himself up, his eye rested on Jessie's face. Her lips were apart with breathless terror: he fancied they were apart with a smile of contempt. And

now he became formidable. He fought as fights the bull in the presence of the heifer, who, as he knows too well, will go with the conqueror.

If Tom had never yet fought with a man taught by a prizefighter, so never yet had Kenelm encountered a strength which, but for the lack of that teaching, would have conquered his own. He could act no longer on the defensive; he could no longer play, like a dexterous fencer, with the sledge-hammers of those mighty arms. They broke through his guard; they sounded on his chest as on an anvil. He felt that did they alight on his head he was a lost man. He felt also that the blows spent on the chest of his adversary were idle as the stroke of a cane on the hide of a rhinoceros. But now his nostrils dilated; his eyes flashed fire: Kenelm Chillingly had ceased to be a philosopher. Crash came his blow—how unlike the swinging roundabout hits of Tom Bowles!—straight to its aim as the rifle-ball of a Tyrolese or a British marksman at Aldershot,—all the strength of nerve, sinew, purpose, and mind concentred in its vigour,—crash just at that part of the front where the eyes meet, and followed up with the rapidity of lightning, flash upon flash, by a more restrained but more disabling blow with the left hand just where the left ear meets throat and jaw-bone.

At the first blow Tom Bowles had reeled and staggered, at the second he threw up his hands, made a jump in the air as if shot through the heart, and then heavily fell forwards, an inert mass.

The spectators pressed round him in terror. They thought he

was dead. Kenelm knelt, passed quickly his hand over Tom's lips, pulse, and heart, and then rising, said, humbly and with an air of apology,—

"If he had been a less magnificent creature, I assure you on my honour that I should never have ventured that second blow. The first would have done for any man less splendidly endowed by nature. Lift him gently; take him home. Tell his mother, with my kind regards, that I'll call and see her and him to-morrow. And, stop, does he ever drink too much beer?"

"Well," said one of the villagers, "Tom /can/ drink."

"I thought so. Too much flesh for that muscle. Go for the nearest doctor. You, my lad? good; off with you; quick. No danger, but perhaps it may be a case for the lancet."

Tom Bowles was lifted tenderly by four of the stoutest men present and borne into his home, evincing no sign of consciousness; but his face, where not clouted with blood, was very pale, very calm, with a slight froth at the lips.

Kenelm pulled down his shirt-sleeves, put on his coat, and turned to Jessie,—

"Now, my young friend, show me Will's cottage."

The girl came to him, white and trembling. She did not dare to speak. The stranger had become a new man in her eyes. Perhaps he frightened her as much as Tom Bowles had done. But she quickened her pace, leaving the public-house behind till she came to the farther end of the village. Kenelm walked beside her, muttering to himself: and though Jessie caught his words, happily

she did not understand; for they repeated one of those bitter reproaches on her sex as the main cause of all strife, bloodshed, and mischief in general, with which the classic authors abound. His spleen soothed by that recourse to the lessons of the ancients, Kenelm turned at last to his silent companion, and said kindly but gravely,—

"Mr. Bowles has given me his promise, and it is fair that I should now ask a promise from you. It is this: just consider how easily a girl so pretty as you can be the cause of a man's death. Had Bowles struck me where I struck him I should have been past the help of a surgeon."

"Oh!" groaned Jessie, shuddering, and covering her face with both hands.

"And, putting aside that danger, consider that a man may be hit mortally on the heart as well as on the head, and that a woman has much to answer for who, no matter what her excuse, forgets what misery and what guilt can be inflicted by a word from her lip and a glance from her eye. Consider this, and promise that, whether you marry Will Somers or not, you will never again give a man fair cause to think you can like him unless your own heart tells you that you can. Will you promise that?"

"I will, indeed,—indeed." Poor Jessie's voice died in sobs.

"There, my child, I don't ask you not to cry, because I know how much women like crying; and in this instance it does you a great deal of good. But we are just at the end of the village; which is Will's cottage?"

Jessie lifted her head, and pointed to a solitary, small thatched cottage.

"I would ask you to come in and introduce me; but that might look too much like crowing over poor Tom Bowles. So good-night to you, Jessie, and forgive me for preaching."

CHAPTER XIII

KENELM knocked at the cottage door; a voice said faintly, "Come in."

He stooped his head, and stepped over the threshold.

Since his encounter with Tom Bowles his sympathies had gone with that unfortunate lover: it is natural to like a man after you have beaten him; and he was by no means predisposed to favour Jessie's preference for a sickly cripple.

Yet, when two bright, soft, dark eyes, and a pale intellectual countenance, with that nameless aspect of refinement which delicate health so often gives, especially to the young, greeted his quiet gaze, his heart was at once won over to the side of the rival. Will Somers was seated by the hearth, on which a few live embers despite the warmth of the summer evening still burned; a rude little table was by his side, on which were laid osier twigs and white peeled chips, together with an open book. His hands, pale and slender, were at work on a small basket half finished. His mother was just clearing away the tea-things from another table that stood by the window. Will rose, with the good breeding that belongs to the rural peasant, as the stranger entered; the widow looked round with surprise, and dropped her simple courtesy,—a little thin woman, with a mild, patient face.

The cottage was very tidily kept, as it is in most village homes where the woman has it her own way. The deal dresser

opposite the door had its display of humble crockery. The whitewashed walls were relieved with coloured prints, chiefly Scriptural subjects from the New Testament, such as the Return of the Prodigal Son, in a blue coat and yellow inexpressibles, with his stockings about his heels.

At one corner there were piled up baskets of various sizes, and at another corner was an open cupboard containing books, —an article of decorative furniture found in cottages much more rarely than coloured prints and gleaming crockery.

All this, of course, Kenelm could not at a glance comprehend in detail. But as the mind of a man accustomed to generalization is marvellously quick in forming a sound judgment, whereas a mind accustomed to dwell only on detail is wonderfully slow at arriving at any judgment at all, and when it does, the probability is that it will arrive at a wrong one, Kenelm judged correctly when he came to this conclusion: "I am among simple English peasants; but, for some reason or other, not to be explained by the relative amount of wages, it is a favourable specimen of that class."

"I beg your pardon for intruding at this hour, Mrs. Somers," said Kenelm, who had been too familiar with peasants from his earliest childhood not to know how quickly, when in the presence of their household gods, they appreciate respect, and how acutely they feel the want of it. "But my stay in the village is very short, and I should not like to leave without seeing your son's basket-work, of which I have heard much."

"You are very good, sir," said Will, with a pleased smile that wonderfully brightened up his face. "It is only just a few common things that I keep by me. Any finer sort of work I mostly do by order."

"You see, sir," said Mrs. Somers, "it takes so much more time for pretty work-baskets, and such like; and unless done to order, it might be a chance if he could get it sold. But pray be seated, sir," and Mrs. Somers placed a chair for her visitor, "while I just run up stairs for the work-basket which my son has made for Miss Travers. It is to go home to-morrow, and I put it away for fear of accidents."

Kenelm seated himself, and, drawing his chair near to Will's, took up the half-finished basket which the young man had laid down on the table.

"This seems to me very nice and delicate workmanship," said Kenelm; "and the shape, when you have finished it, will be elegant enough to please the taste of a lady."

"It is for Mrs. Lethbridge," said Will: "she wanted something to hold cards and letters; and I took the shape from a book of drawings which Mr. Lethbridge kindly lent me. You know Mr. Lethbridge, sir? He is a very good gentleman."

"No, I don't know him. Who is he?"

"Our clergyman, sir. This is the book."

To Kenelm's surprise, it was a work on Pompeii, and contained woodcuts of the implements and ornaments, mosaics and frescos, found in that memorable little city.

"I see this is your model," said Kenelm; "what they call a /patera/, and rather a famous one. You are copying it much more truthfully than I should have supposed it possible to do in substituting basket-work for bronze. But you observe that much of the beauty of this shallow bowl depends on the two doves perched on the brim. You can't manage that ornamental addition."

"Mrs. Lethbridge thought of putting there two little stuffed canary-birds."

"Did she? Good heavens!" exclaimed Kenelm.

"But somehow," continued Will, "I did not like that, and I made bold to say so."

"Why did not you do it?"

"Well, I don't know; but I did not think it would be the right thing."

"It would have been very bad taste, and spoiled the effect of your basket-work; and I'll endeavour to explain why. You see here, in the next page, a drawing of a very beautiful statue. Of course this statue is intended to be a representation of nature, but nature idealized. You don't know the meaning of that hard word, idealized, and very few people do. But it means the performance of a something in art according to the idea which a man's mind forms to itself out of a something in nature. That something in nature must, of course, have been carefully studied before the man can work out anything in art by which it is faithfully represented. The artist, for instance, who made that statue, must

have known the proportions of the human frame. He must have made studies of various parts of it,—heads and hands, and arms and legs, and so forth,—and having done so, he then puts together all his various studies of details, so as to form a new whole, which is intended to personate an idea formed in his own mind. Do you go with me?"

"Partly, sir; but I am puzzled a little still."

"Of course you are; but you'll puzzle yourself right if you think over what I say. Now if, in order to make this statue, which is composed of metal or stone, more natural, I stuck on it a wig of real hair, would not you feel at once that I had spoilt the work; that as you clearly express it, 'it would not be the right thing'? and instead of making the work of art more natural, I should have made it laughably unnatural, by forcing insensibly upon the mind of him who looked at it the contrast between the real life, represented by a wig of actual hair, and the artistic life, represented by an idea embodied in stone or metal. The higher the work of art (that is, the higher the idea it represents as a new combination of details taken from nature), the more it is degraded or spoilt by an attempt to give it a kind of reality which is out of keeping with the materials employed. But the same rule applies to everything in art, however humble. And a couple of stuffed canary-birds at the brim of a basket-work imitation of a Greek drinking-cup would be as bad taste as a wig from the barber's on the head of a marble statue of Apollo."

"I see," said Will, his head downcast, like a man pondering,

—"at least I think I see; and I'm very much obliged to you, sir."

Mrs. Somers had long since returned with the work-basket, but stood with it in her hands, not daring to interrupt the gentleman, and listening to his discourse with as much patience and as little comprehension as if it had been one of the controversial sermons upon Ritualism with which on great occasions Mr. Lethbridge favoured his congregation.

Kenelm having now exhausted his critical lecture—from which certain poets and novelists who contrive to caricature the ideal by their attempt to put wigs of real hair upon the heads of stone statues might borrow a useful hint or two if they would condescend to do so, which is not likely—perceived Mrs. Somers standing by him, took from her the basket, which was really very pretty and elegant, subdivided into various compartments for the implements in use among ladies, and bestowed on it a well-merited eulogium.

"The young lady means to finish it herself with ribbons, and line it with satin," said Mrs. Somers, proudly.

"The ribbons will not be amiss, sir?" said Will, interrogatively.

"Not at all. Your natural sense of the fitness of things tells you that ribbons go well with straw and light straw-like work such as this; though you would not put ribbons on those rude hampers and game-baskets in the corner. Like to like; a stout cord goes suitably with them: just as a poet who understands his art employs pretty expressions for poems intended to be pretty and suit a fashionable drawing-room, and carefully shuns them

to substitute a simple cord for poems intended to be strong and travel far, despite of rough usage by the way. But you really ought to make much more money by this fancy-work than you could as a day-labourer."

Will sighed. "Not in this neighbourhood, sir; I might in a town."

"Why not move to a town, then?"

The young man coloured, and shook his head.

Kenelm turned appealingly to Mrs. Somers. "I'll be willing to go wherever it would be best for my boy, sir. But—" and here she checked herself, and a tear trickled silently down her cheeks.

Will resumed, in a more cheerful tone, "I am getting a little known now, and work will come if one waits for it." Kenelm did not deem it courteous or discreet to intrude further on Will's confidence in the first interview; and he began to feel, more than he had done at first, not only the dull pain of the bruises he had received in the recent combat, but also somewhat more than the weariness which follows long summer-day's work in the open air. He therefore, rather abruptly, now took his leave, saying that he should be very glad of a few specimens of Will's ingenuity and skill, and would call or write to give directions about them.

Just as he came in sight of Tom Bowles's house on his way back to Mr. Saunderson's, Kenelm saw a man mounting a pony that stood tied up at the gate, and exchanging a few words with a respectable-looking woman before he rode on. He was passing by Kenelm without notice, when that philosophical vagrant stopped

him, saying, "If I am not mistaken, sir, you are the doctor. There is not much the matter with Mr. Bowles?"

The doctor shook his head. "I can't say yet. He has had a very ugly blow somewhere."

"It was just under the left ear. I did not aim at that exact spot: but Bowles unluckily swerved a little aside at the moment, perhaps in surprise at a tap between his eyes immediately preceding it: and so, as you say, it was an ugly blow that he received. But if it cures him of the habit of giving ugly blows to other people who can bear them less safely, perhaps it may be all for his good, as, no doubt, sir, your schoolmaster said when he flogged you."

"Bless my soul! are you the man who fought with him,—you? I can't believe it."

"Why not?"

"Why not! So far as I can judge by this light, though you are a tall fellow, Tom Bowles must be a much heavier weight than you are."

"Tom Spring was the champion of England; and according to the records of his weight, which history has preserved in her archives, Tom Spring was a lighter weight than I am."

"But are you a prize-fighter?"

"I am as much that as I am anything else. But to return to Mr. Bowles, was it necessary to bleed him?"

"Yes; he was unconscious, or nearly so, when I came. I took away a few ounces; and I am happy to say he is now sensible, but

must be kept very quiet."

"No doubt; but I hope he will be well enough to see me to-morrow."

"I hope so too; but I can't say yet. Quarrel about a girl,—eh?"

"It was not about money. And I suppose if there were no money and no women in the world, there would be no quarrels and very few doctors. Good-night, Sir."

"It is a strange thing to me," said Kenelm, as he now opened the garden-gate of Mr. Saunderson's homestead, "that though I've had nothing to eat all day, except a few pitiful sandwiches, I don't feel the least hungry. Such arrest of the lawful duties of the digestive organs never happened to me before. There must be something weird and ominous in it."

On entering the parlour, the family party, though they had long since finished supper, were still seated round the table. They all rose at the sight of Kenelm. The fame of his achievements had preceded him. He checked the congratulations, the compliments, and the questions which the hearty farmer rapidly heaped upon him, with a melancholic exclamation, "But I have lost my appetite! No honours can compensate for that. Let me go to bed peaceably, and perhaps in the magic land of sleep Nature may restore me by a dream of supper."

CHAPTER XIV

KENELM rose betimes the next morning somewhat stiff and uneasy, but sufficiently recovered to feel ravenous. Fortunately, one of the young ladies, who attended specially to the dairy, was already up, and supplied the starving hero with a vast bowl of bread and milk. He then strolled into the hayfield, in which there was now very little left to do, and but few hands besides his own were employed. Jessie was not there. Kenelm was glad of that. By nine o'clock his work was over, and the farmer and his men were in the yard completing the ricks. Kenelm stole away unobserved, bent on a round of visits. He called first at the village shop kept by Mrs. Bawtrey, which Jessie had pointed out to him, on pretence of buying a gaudy neckerchief; and soon, thanks to his habitual civility, made familiar acquaintance with the shopwoman. She was a little sickly old lady, her head shaking, as with palsy, somewhat deaf, but still shrewd and sharp, rendered mechanically so by long habits of shrewdness and sharpness. She became very communicative, spoke freely of her desire to give up the shop, and pass the rest of her days with a sister, widowed like herself, in a neighbouring town. Since she had lost her husband, the field and orchard attached to the shop had ceased to be profitable, and become a great care and trouble; and the attention the shop required was wearisome. But she had twelve years unexpired of the lease granted for twenty-one years

to her husband on low terms, and she wanted a premium for its transfer, and a purchaser for the stock of the shop. Kenelm soon drew from her the amount of the sum she required for all,—L45.

"You be n't thinking of it for yourself?" she asked, putting on her spectacles, and examining him with care.

"Perhaps so, if one could get a decent living out of it. Do you keep a book of your losses and your gains?"

"In course, sir," she said proudly. "I kept the books in my goodman's time, and he was one who could find out if there was a farthing wrong, for he had been in a lawyer's office when a lad."

"Why did he leave a lawyer's office to keep a little shop?"

"Well, he was born a farmer's son in this neighbourhood, and he always had a hankering after the country, and—and besides that—"

"Yes."

"I'll tell you the truth; he had got into a way of drinking speerrits, and he was a good young man, and wanted to break himself of it, and he took the temperance oath; but it was too hard on him, for he could not break himself of the company that led him into liquor. And so, one time when he came into the neighbourhood to see his parents for the Christmas holiday, he took a bit of liking to me; and my father, who was Squire Travers's bailiff, had just died, and left me a little money. And so, somehow or other, we came together, and got this house and the land from the Squire on lease very reasonable; and my goodman being well eddyeated, and much thought of, and never

being tempted to drink, now that he had a missis to keep him in order, had a many little things put into his way. He could help to measure timber, and knew about draining, and he got some bookkeeping from the farmers about; and we kept cows and pigs and poultry, and so we did very well, specially as the Lord was merciful and sent us no children."

"And what does the shop bring in a year since your husband died?"

"You had best judge for yourself. Will you look at the book, and take a peep at the land and apple-trees? But they's been neglected since my goodman died."

In another minute the heir of the Chillinglys was seated in a neat little back parlour, with a pretty though confined view of the orchard and grass slope behind it, and bending over Mrs. Bawtrey's ledger.

Some customers for cheese and bacon coming now into the shop, the old woman left him to his studies. Though they were not of a nature familiar to him, he brought to them, at least, that general clearness of head and quick seizure of important points which are common to most men who have gone through some disciplined training of intellect, and been accustomed to extract the pith and marrow out of many books on many subjects. The result of his examination was satisfactory; there appeared to him a clear balance of gain from the shop alone of somewhat over L40 a year, taking the average of the last three years. Closing the book, he then let himself out of the window into

the orchard, and thence into the neighbouring grass field. Both were, indeed, much neglected; the trees wanted pruning, the field manure. But the soil was evidently of rich loam, and the fruit-trees were abundant and of ripe age, generally looking healthy in spite of neglect. With the quick intuition of a man born and bred in the country, and picking up scraps of rural knowledge unconsciously, Kenelm convinced himself that the land, properly managed, would far more than cover the rent, rates, tithes, and all incidental outgoings, leaving the profits of the shop as the clear income of the occupiers. And no doubt with clever young people to manage the shop, its profits might be increased.

Not thinking it necessary to return at present to Mrs. Bawtrey's, Kenelm now bent his way to Tom Bowles's.

The house-door was closed. At the summons of his knock it was quickly opened by a tall, stout, remarkably fine-looking woman, who might have told fifty years, and carried them off lightly on her ample shoulders. She was dressed very respectably in black, her brown hair braided simply under a neat tight-fitting cap. Her features were aquiline and very regular: altogether there was something about her majestic and Cornelia-like. She might have sat for the model of that Roman matron, except for the fairness of her Anglo-Saxon complexion.

"What's your pleasure?" she asked, in a cold and somewhat stern voice.

"Ma'am," answered Kenelm, uncovering, "I have called to see Mr.

Bowles, and I sincerely hope he is well enough to let me do so."

"No, sir, he is not well enough for that; he is lying down in his own room, and must be kept quiet."

"May I then ask you the favour to let me in? I would say a few words to you, who are his mother if I mistake not." Mrs. Bowles paused a moment as if in doubt; but she was at no loss to detect in Kenelm's manner something superior to the fashion of his dress, and supposing the visit might refer to her son's professional business, she opened the door wider, drew aside to let him pass first, and when he stood midway in the parlour, requested him to take a seat, and, to set him the example, seated herself.

"Ma'am," said Kenelm, "do not regret to have admitted me, and do not think hardly of me when I inform you that I am the unfortunate cause of your son's accident."

Mrs. Bowles rose with a start. "You're the man who beat my boy?"

"No, ma'am, do not say I beat him. He is not beaten. He is so brave and so strong that he would easily have beaten me if I had not, by good luck, knocked him down before he had time to do so. Pray, ma'am, retain your seat and listen to me patiently for a few moments."

Mrs. Bowles, with an indignant heave of her Juno-like bosom, and with a superbly haughty expression of countenance which suited well with its aquiline formation, tacitly obeyed.

"You will allow, ma'am," recommenced Kenelm, "that this is not the first time by many that Mr. Bowles has come to blows

with another man. Am I not right in that assumption?"

"My son is of hasty temper," replied Mrs. Bowles, reluctantly, "and people should not aggravate him."

"You grant the fact, then?" said Kenelm, imperturbably, but with a polite inclination of head. "Mr. Bowles has often been engaged in these encounters, and in all of them it is quite clear that he provoked the battle; for you must be aware that he is not tho sort of man to whom any other would be disposed to give the first blow. Yet, after these little incidents had occurred, and Mr. Bowles had, say, half killed the person who aggravated him, you did not feel any resentment against that person, did you? Nay, if he had wanted nursing, you would have gone and nursed him."

"I don't know as to nursing," said Mrs. Bowles, beginning to lose her dignity of mien; "but certainly I should have been very sorry for him. And as for Tom,—though I say it who should not say,—he has no more malice than a baby: he'd go and make it up with any man, however badly he had beaten him."

"Just as I supposed; and if the man had sulked and would not make it up, Tom would have called him a bad fellow, and felt inclined to beat him again."

Mrs. Bowles's face relaxed into a stately smile.

"Well, then," pursued Kenelm, "I do but humbly imitate Mr. Bowles, and I come to make it up and shake hands with him."

"No, sir,—no," exclaimed Mrs. Bowles, though in a low voice, and turning pale. "Don't think of it. 'Tis not the blows; he'll get over those fast enough: 'tis his pride that's hurt; and if he saw you

there might be mischief. But you're a stranger, and going away: do go soon; do keep out of his way; do!" And the mother clasped her hands.

"Mrs. Bowles," said Kenelm, with a change of voice and aspect,—a voice and aspect so earnest and impressive that they stilled and awed her,—"will you not help me to save your son from the dangers into which that hasty temper and that mischievous pride may at any moment hurry him? Does it never occur to you that these are the causes of terrible crime, bringing terrible punishment; and that against brute force, impelled by savage passions, society protects itself by the hulks and the gallows?"

"Sir; how dare you—"

"Hush! If one man kill another in a moment of ungovernable wrath, that is a crime which, though heavily punished by the conscience, is gently dealt with by the law, which calls it only manslaughter; but if a motive to the violence, such as jealousy or revenge, can be assigned, and there should be no witness by to prove that the violence was not premeditated, then the law does not call it manslaughter, but murder. Was it not that thought which made you so imploringly exclaim, 'Go soon; keep out of his way'?"

The woman made no answer, but, sinking back in her chair, gasped for breath.

"Nay, madam," resumed Kenelm, mildly; "banish your fears. If you will help me I feel sure that I can save your son from such

perils, and I only ask you to let me save him. I am convinced that he has a good and a noble nature, and he is worth saving." And as he thus said he took her hand. She resigned it to him and returned the pressure, all her pride softening as she began to weep.

At length, when she recovered voice, she said,—

"It is all along of that girl. He was not so till she crossed him, and made him half mad. He is not the same man since then,—my poor Tom!"

"Do you know that he has given me his word, and before his fellow-villagers, that if he had the worst of the fight he would never molest Jessie Wiles again?"

"Yes, he told me so himself; and it is that which weighs on him now.

He broods and broods and mutters, and will not be comforted; and—and I do fear that he means revenge. And again, I implore you to keep out of his way."

"It is not revenge on me that he thinks of. Suppose I go and am seen no more, do you think in your own heart that that girl's life is safe?"

"What! My Tom kill a woman!"

"Do you never read in your newspaper of a man who kills his sweetheart, or the girl who refuses to be his sweetheart? At all events, you yourself do not approve this frantic suit of his. If I have heard rightly, you have wished to get Tom out of the village for some time, till Jessie Wiles is—we'll say, married, or gone elsewhere for good."

"Yes, indeed, I have wished and prayed for it many's the time, both for her sake and for his. And I am sure I don't know what we shall do if he stays, for he has been losing custom fast. The Squire has taken away his, and so have many of the farmers; and such a trade as it was in his good father's time! And if he would go, his uncle, the veterinary at Luscombe, would take him into partnership; for he has no son of his own, and he knows how clever Tom is: there be n't a man who knows more about horses; and cows, too, for the matter of that."

"And if Luscombe is a large place, the business there must be more profitable than it can be here, even if Tom got back his custom?"

"Oh yes! five times as good,—if he would but go; but he'll not hear of it."

"Mrs. Bowles, I am very much obliged to you for your confidence, and I feel sure that all will end happily now we have had this talk. I'll not press further on you at present. Tom will not stir out, I suppose, till the evening."

"Ah, sir, he seems as if he had no heart to stir out again, unless for something dreadful."

"Courage! I will call again in the evening, and then you just take me up to Tom's room, and leave me there to make friends with him, as I have with you. Don't say a word about me in the meanwhile."

"But—"

"'But,' Mrs. Bowles, is a word that cools many a warm

impulse, stifles many a kindly thought, puts a dead stop to many a brotherly deed. Nobody would ever love his neighbour as himself if he listened to all the Buts that could be said on the other side of the question."

CHAPTER XV

KENELM now bent his way towards the parsonage, but just as he neared its glebe-lands he met a gentleman whose dress was so evidently clerical that he stopped and said,—

"Have I the honour to address Mr. Lethbridge?"

"That is my name," said the clergyman, smiling pleasantly. "Anything I can do for you?"

"Yes, a great deal, if you will let me talk to you about a few of your parishioners."

"My parishioners! I beg your pardon, but you are quite a stranger to me, and, I should think, to the parish."

"To the parish,—no, I am quite at home in it; and I honestly believe that it has never known a more officious busybody, thrusting himself into its most private affairs."

Mr. Lethbridge stared, and, after a short pause, said, "I have heard of a young man who has been staying at Mr. Saunderson's, and is indeed at this moment the talk of the village. You are—"

"That young man. Alas! yes."

"Nay," said Mr. Lethbridge, kindly, "I cannot myself, as a minister of the Gospel, approve of your profession, and, if I might take the liberty, I would try and dissuade you from it; but still, as for the one act of freeing a poor girl from the most scandalous persecution, and administering, though in a rough way, a lesson to a savage brute who has long been the disgrace

and terror of the neighbourhood, I cannot honestly say that it has my condemnation. The moral sense of a community is generally a right one: you have won the praise of the village. Under all the circumstances, I do not withhold mine. You woke this morning and found yourself famous. Do not sigh 'Alas.'"

"Lord Byron woke one morning and found himself famous, and the result was that he sighed 'Alas' for the rest of his life. If there be two things which a wise man should avoid, they are fame and love. Heaven defend me from both!"

Again the parson stared; but being of compassionate nature, and inclined to take mild views of everything that belongs to humanity, he said, with a slight inclination of his head,—

"I have always heard that the Americans in general enjoy the advantage of a better education than we do in England, and their reading public is infinitely larger than ours; still, when I hear one of a calling not highly considered in this country for intellectual cultivation or ethical philosophy cite Lord Byron, and utter a sentiment at variance with the impetuosity of inexperienced youth, but which has much to commend it in the eyes of a reflective Christian impressed with the nothingness of the objects mostly coveted by the human heart, I am surprised, and —oh, my dear young friend, surely your education might fit you for something better!"

It was among the maxims of Kenelm Chillingly's creed that a sensible man should never allow himself to be surprised; but here he was, to use a popular idiom, "taken aback," and lowered

himself to the rank of ordinary minds by saying, simply, "I don't understand."

"I see," resumed the clergyman, shaking his head gently, "as I always suspected, that in the vaunted education bestowed on Americans, the elementary principles of Christian right and wrong are more neglected than they are among our own humble classes. Yes, my young friend, you may quote poets, you may startle me by remarks on the nothingness of human fame and human love, derived from the precepts of heathen poets, and yet not understand with what compassion, and, in the judgment of most sober-minded persons, with what contempt, a human being who practises your vocation is regarded."

"Have I a vocation?" said Kenelm. "I am very glad to hear it. What is my vocation? And why must I be an American?"

"Why, surely I am not misinformed? You are the American —I forget his name—who has come over to contest the belt of prize-fighting with the champion of England. You are silent; you hang your head. By your appearance, your length of limb, your gravity of countenance, your evident education, you confirm the impression of your birth. Your prowess has proved your profession."

"Reverend sir," said Kenelm, with his unutterable seriousness of aspect, "I am on my travels in search of truth and in flight from shams, but so great a take-in as myself I have not yet encountered. Remember me in your prayers. I am not an American; I am not a prize-fighter. I honour the first as the citizen of a grand republic

trying his best to accomplish an experiment in government in which he will find the very prosperity he tends to create will sooner or later destroy his experiment. I honour the last because strength, courage, and sobriety are essential to the prize-fighter, and are among the chiefest ornaments of kings and heroes. But I am neither one nor the other. And all I can say for myself is, that I belong to that very vague class commonly called English gentlemen, and that, by birth and education, I have a right to ask you to shake hands with me as such."

Mr. Lethbridge stared again, raised his hat, bowed, and shook hands.

"You will allow me now to speak to you about your parishioners. You take an interest in Will Somers; so do I. He is clever and ingenious. But it seems there is not sufficient demand here for his baskets, and he would, no doubt, do better in some neighbouring town. Why does he object to move?"

"I fear that poor Will would pine away to death if he lost sight of that pretty girl for whom you did such chivalrous battle with Tom Bowles."

"The unhappy man, then, is really in love with Jessie Wiles? And do you think she no less really cares for him?"

"I am sure of it."

"And would make him a good wife; that is, as wives go?"

"A good daughter generally makes a good wife. And there is not a father in the place who has a better child than Jessie is to hers. She really is a girl of a superior nature. She was the cleverest

pupil at our school, and my wife is much attached to her. But she has something better than mere cleverness: she has an excellent heart."

"What you say confirms my own impressions. And the girl's father has no other objection to Will Somers than his fear that Will could not support a wife and family comfortably.

"He can have no other objection save that which would apply equally to all suitors. I mean his fear lest Tom Bowles might do her some mischief, if he knew she was about to marry any one else."

"You think, then, that Mr. Bowles is a thoroughly bad and dangerous person?"

"Thoroughly bad and dangerous, and worse since he has taken to drinking."

"I suppose he did not take to drinking till he lost his wits for Jessie Wiles?"

"No, I don't think he did."

"But, Mr. Lethbridge, have you never used your influence over this dangerous man?"

"Of course, I did try, but I only got insulted. He is a godless animal, and has not been inside a church for years. He seems to have got a smattering of such vile learning as may be found in infidel publications, and I doubt if he has any religion at all."

"Poor Polyphemus! no wonder his Galatea shuns him."

"Old Wiles is terribly frightened, and asked my wife to find Jessie a place as servant at a distance. But Jessie can't bear the

thoughts of leaving."

"For the same reason which attaches Will Somers to the native soil?"

"My wife thinks so."

"Do you believe that if Tom Bowles were out of the way, and Jessie and Will were man and wife, they could earn a sufficient livelihood as successors to Mrs. Bawtrey, Will adding the profits of his basket-work to those of the shop and land?"

"A sufficient livelihood! of course. They would be quite rich. I know the shop used to turn a great deal of money. The old woman, to be sure, is no longer up to the business, but still she retains a good custom."

"Will Somers seems in delicate health. Perhaps if he had a less weary struggle for a livelihood, and no fear of losing Jessie, his health would improve."

"His life would be saved, sir."

"Then," said Kenelm, with a heavy sigh and a face as long as an undertaker's, "though I myself entertain a profound compassion for that disturbance to our mental equilibrium which goes by the name of 'love,' and I am the last person who ought to add to the cares and sorrows which marriage entails upon its victims,—I say nothing of the woes destined to those whom marriage usually adds to a population already overcrowded,—I fear that I must be the means of bringing these two love-birds into the same cage. I am ready to purchase the shop and its appurtenances on their behalf, on the condition that you will kindly obtain the consent of

Jessie's father to their union. As for my brave friend Tom Bowles, I undertake to deliver them and the village from that exuberant nature, which requires a larger field for its energies. Pardon me for not letting you interrupt me. I have not yet finished what I have to say. Allow me to ask if Mrs. Grundy resides in this village."

"Mrs. Grundy! Oh, I understand. Of course; wherever a woman has a tongue, there Mrs. Grundy has a home."

"And seeing that Jessie is very pretty, and that in walking with her I encountered Mr. Bowles, might not Mrs. Grundy say, with a toss of her head, 'that it was not out of pure charity that the stranger had been so liberal to Jessie Wiles'? But if the money for the shop be paid through you to Mrs. Bawtrey, and you kindly undertake all the contingent arrangements, Mrs. Grundy will have nothing to say against any one."

Mr. Lethbridge gazed with amaze at the solemn countenance before him.

"Sir," he said, after a long pause, "I scarcely know how to express my admiration of a generosity so noble, so thoughtful, and accompanied with a delicacy, and, indeed, with a wisdom, which—which—"

"Pray, my dear sir, do not make me still more ashamed of myself than I am at present for an interference in love matters quite alien to my own convictions as to the best mode of making an 'Approach to the Angels.' To conclude this business, I think it better to deposit in your hands the sum of L45, for which Mrs.

Bawtrey has agreed to sell the remainder of her lease and stock-in-hand; but, of course, you will not make anything public till I am gone, and Tom Bowles too. I hope I may get him away to-morrow; but I shall know to-night when I can depend on his departure, and till he goes I must stay."

As he spoke, Kenelm transferred from his pocket-book to Mr. Lethbridge's hand bank-notes to the amount specified.

"May I at least ask the name of the gentleman who honours me with his confidence, and has bestowed so much happiness on members of my flock?"

"There is no great reason why I should not tell you my name, but I see no reason why I should. You remember Talleyrand's advice, 'If you are in doubt whether to write a letter or not, don't.' The advice applies to many doubts in life besides that of letter-writing. Farewell, sir!"

"A most extraordinary young man," muttered the parson, gazing at the receding form of the tall stranger; then gently shaking his head, he added, "Quite an original." He was contented with that solution of the difficulties which had puzzled him. May the reader be the same.

CHAPTER XVI

AFTER the family dinner, at which the farmer's guest displayed more than his usual powers of appetite, Kenelm followed his host towards the stackyard, and said,—

"My dear Mr. Saunderson, though you have no longer any work for me to do, and I ought not to trespass further on your hospitality, yet if I might stay with you another day or so, I should be very grateful."

"My dear lad," cried the farmer, in whose estimation Kenelm had risen prodigiously since the victory over Tom Bowles, "you are welcome to stay as long as you like, and we shall be all sorry when you go. Indeed, at all events, you must stay over Saturday, for you shall go with us to the squire's harvest-supper. It will be a pretty sight, and my girls are already counting on you for a dance."

"Saturday,—the day after to-morrow. You are very kind; but merrymakings are not much in my way, and I think I shall be on my road before you set off to the Squire's supper."

"Pooh! you shall stay; and, I say, young 'un, if you want more to do, I have a job for you quite in your line."

"What is it?"

"Thrash my ploughman. He has been insolent this morning, and he is the biggest fellow in the county, next to Tom Bowles."

Here the farmer laughed heartily, enjoying his own joke.

"Thank you for nothing," said Kenelm, rubbing his bruises. "A burnt child dreads the fire."

The young man wandered alone into the fields. The day was becoming overcast, and the clouds threatened rain. The air was exceedingly still; the landscape, missing the sunshine, wore an aspect of gloomy solitude. Kenelm came to the banks of the rivulet not far from the spot on which the farmer had first found him. There he sat down, and leaned his cheek on his hand, with eyes fixed on the still and darkened stream lapsing mournfully away: sorrow entered into his heart and tinged its musings.

"Is it then true," said he, soliloquizing, "that I am born to pass through life utterly alone; asking, indeed, for no sister-half of myself, disbelieving its possibility, shrinking from the thought of it,—half scorning, half pitying those who sigh for it?—thing unattainable,—better sigh for the moon!

"Yet if other men sigh for it, why do I stand apart from them? If the world be a stage, and all the men and women in it merely players, am I to be the solitary spectator, with no part in the drama and no interest in the vicissitudes of its plot? Many there are, no doubt, who covet as little as I do the part of 'Lover,' 'with a woful ballad, made to his mistress's eyebrow;' but then they covet some other part in the drama, such as that of Soldier 'bearded as a pard,' or that of Justice 'in fair round belly with fat capon lined.' But me no ambition fires: I have no longing either to rise or to shine. I don't desire to be a colonel, nor an admiral, nor a member of Parliament, nor an alderman; I do

not yearn for the fame of a wit, or a poet, or a philosopher, or a diner-out, or a crack shot at a rifle-match or a /battue/. Decidedly, I am the one looker-on, the one bystander, and have no more concern with the active world than a stone has. It is a horrible phantasmal crotchet of Goethe, that originally we were all monads, little segregated atoms adrift in the atmosphere, and carried hither and thither by forces over which we had no control, especially by the attraction of other monads, so that one monad, compelled by porcine monads, crystallizes into a pig; another, hurried along by heroic monads, becomes a lion or an Alexander. Now it is quite clear," continued Kenelm, shifting his position and crossing the right leg over the left, "that a monad intended or fitted for some other planet may, on its way to that destination, be encountered by a current of other monads blowing earthward, and be caught up in the stream and whirled on, till, to the marring of its whole proper purpose and scene of action, it settles here, —conglomerated into a baby. Probably that lot has befallen me: my monad, meant for another region in space, has been dropped into this, where it can never be at home, never amalgamate with other monads nor comprehend why they are in such a perpetual fidget. I declare I know no more why the minds of human beings should be so restlessly agitated about things which, as most of them own, give more pain than pleasure, than I understand why that swarm of gnats, which has such a very short time to live, does not give itself a moment's repose, but goes up and down, rising and falling as if it were on a seesaw, and making as much

noise about its insignificant alternations of ascent and descent as if it were the hum of men. And yet, perhaps, in another planet my monad would have frisked and jumped and danced and seesawed with congenial monads, as contentedly and as sillily as do the monads of men and gnats in this alien Vale of Tears."

Kenelm had just arrived at that conjectural solution of his perplexities when a voice was heard singing, or rather modulated to that kind of chant between recitative and song, which is so pleasingly effective where the intonations are pure and musical. They were so in this instance, and Kenelm's ear caught every word in the following song:—

CONTENT

"There are times when the troubles of life are still;
The bees wandered lost in the depths of June,
And I paused where the chime of a silver rill
Sang the linnet and lark to their rest at noon.

"Said my soul, 'See how calmly the wavelets glide,
Though so narrow their way to their ocean vent;
And the world that I traverse is wide, is wide,
And yet is too narrow to hold content'

"O my son, never say that the world is wide;
The rill in its banks is less closely pent:
It is thou who art shoreless on every side,
And thy width will not let thee enclose content."

As the voice ceased Kenelm lifted his head. But the banks of the brook were so curving and so clothed with brushwood that for some minutes the singer was invisible. At last the boughs before him were put aside, and within a few paces of himself paused the man to whom he had commended the praises of a beefsteak, instead of those which minstrelsy in its immemorial error dedicates to love.

"Sir," said Kenelm, half rising, "well met once more. Have you ever listened to the cuckoo?"

"Sir," answered the minstrel, "have you ever felt the presence of the summer?"

"Permit me to shake hands with you. I admire the question by which you have countermet and rebuked my own. If you are not in a hurry, will you sit down and let us talk?"

The minstrel inclined his head and seated himself. His dog—now emerged from the brushwood—gravely approached Kenelm, who with greater gravity regarded him; then, wagging his tail, reposed on his haunches, intent with ear erect on a stir in the neighbouring reeds, evidently considering whether it was caused by a fish or a water-rat.

"I asked you, sir, if you had ever listened to the cuckoo from no irrelevant curiosity; for often on summer days, when one is

talking with one's self,—and, of course, puzzling one's self,—a voice breaks out, as it were from the heart of Nature, so far is it and yet so near; and it says something very quieting, very musical, so that one is tempted inconsiderately and foolishly to exclaim, 'Nature replies to me.' The cuckoo has served me that trick pretty often. Your song is a better answer to a man's self-questionings than he can ever get from a cuckoo."

"I doubt that," said the minstrel. "Song, at the best, is but the echo of some voice from the heart of Nature. And if the cuckoo's note seemed to you such a voice, it was an answer to your questionings perhaps more simply truthful than man can utter, if you had rightly construed the language."

"My good friend," answered Kenelm, "what you say sounds very prettily; and it contains a sentiment which has been amplified by certain critics into that measureless domain of dunderheads which is vulgarly called BOSH. But though Nature is never silent, though she abuses the privilege of her age in being tediously gossiping and garrulous, Nature never replies to our questions: she can't understand an argument; she has never read Mr. Mill's work on Logic. In fact, as it is truly said by a great philosopher, 'Nature has no mind.' Every man who addresses her is compelled to force upon her for a moment the loan of his own mind. And if she answers a question which his own mind puts to her, it is only by such a reply as his own mind teaches to her parrot-like lips. And as every man has a different mind, so every man gets a different answer. Nature is a lying old humbug."

The minstrel laughed merrily; and his laugh was as sweet as his chant.

"Poets would have a great deal to unlearn if they are to look upon Nature in that light."

"Bad poets would, and so much the better for them and their readers."

"Are not good poets students of Nature?"

"Students of Nature, certainly, as surgeons study anatomy by dissecting a dead body. But the good poet, like the good surgeon, is the man who considers that study merely as the necessary A B C, and not as the all-in-all essential to skill in his practice. I do not give the fame of a good surgeon to a man who fills a book with details, more or less accurate, of fibres and nerves and muscles; and I don't give the fame of a good poet to a man who makes an inventory of the Rhine or the Vale of Gloucester. The good surgeon and the good poet are they who understand the living man. What is that poetry of drama which Aristotle justly ranks as the highest? Is it not a poetry in which description of inanimate Nature must of necessity be very brief and general; in which even the external form of man is so indifferent a consideration that it will vary with each actor who performs the part? A Hamlet may be fair or dark. A Macbeth may be short or tall. The merit of dramatic poetry consists in the substituting for what is commonly called Nature (namely, external and material Nature) creatures intellectual, emotional, but so purely immaterial that they may be said to be all mind and soul, accepting the temporary loans of

any such bodies at hand as actors may offer, in order to be made palpable and visible to the audience, but needing no such bodies to be palpable and visible to readers. The highest kind of poetry is therefore that which has least to do with external Nature. But every grade has its merit more or less genuinely great, according as it instils into Nature that which is not there,—the reason and the soul of man."

"I am not much disposed," said the minstrel, "to acknowledge any one form of poetry to be practically higher than another; that is, so far as to elevate the poet who cultivates what you call the highest with some success above the rank of the poet who cultivates what you call a very inferior school with a success much more triumphant. In theory, dramatic poetry may be higher than lyric, and 'Venice Preserved' is a very successful drama; but I think Burns a greater poet than Otway."

"Possibly he may be; but I know of no lyrical poet, at least among the moderns, who treats less of Nature as the mere outward form of things, or more passionately animates her framework with his own human heart, than does Robert Burns. Do you suppose when a Greek, in some perplexity of reason or conscience, addressed a question to the oracular oak-leaves of Dodona that the oak-leaves answered him? Don't you rather believe that the question suggested by his mind was answered by the mind of his fellow-man, the priest, who made the oak-leaves the mere vehicle of communication, as you and I might make such vehicle in a sheet of writing-paper? Is not the history of

superstition a chronicle of the follies of man in attempting to get answers from external Nature?"

"But," said the minstrel, "have I not somewhere heard or read that the experiments of Science are the answers made by Nature to the questions put to her by man?"

"They are the answers which his own mind suggests to her,—nothing more. His mind studies the laws of matter, and in that study makes experiments on matter; out of those experiments his mind, according to its previous knowledge or natural acuteness, arrives at its own deductions, and hence arise the sciences of mechanics and chemistry, etc. But the matter itself gives no answer: the answer varies according to the mind that puts the question; and the progress of science consists in the perpetual correction of the errors and falsehoods which preceding minds conceived to be the correct answers they received from Nature. It is the supernatural within us,—namely, Mind,—which can alone guess at the mechanism of the natural, namely, Matter. A stone cannot question a stone."

The minstrel made no reply. And there was a long silence, broken but by the hum of the insects, the ripple of onward waves, and the sigh of the wind through reeds.

CHAPTER XVII

SAID Kenelm, at last breaking silence—

> "'Rapiamus, amici,
> Occasionem de die, dumque virent genua,
> Et decet, obducta solvatur fronte senectus!'"

"Is not that quotation from Horace?" asked the minstrel.

"Yes; and I made it insidiously, in order to see if you had not acquired what is called a classical education."

"I might have received such education, if my tastes and my destinies had not withdrawn me in boyhood from studies of which I did not then comprehend the full value. But I did pick up a smattering of Latin at school; and from time to time since I left school I have endeavoured to gain some little knowledge of the most popular Latin poets; chiefly, I own to my shame, by the help of literal English translations."

"As a poet yourself, I am not sure that it would be an advantage to know a dead language so well that its forms and modes of thought ran, though perhaps unconsciously, into those of the living one in which you compose. Horace might have been a still better poet if he had not known Greek better than you know Latin."

"It is at least courteous in you to say so," answered the singer,

with a pleased smile.

"You would be still more courteous," said Kenelm, "if you would pardon an impertinent question, and tell me whether it is for a wager that you wander through the land, Homer-like, as a wandering minstrel, and allow that intelligent quadruped your companion to carry a tray in his mouth for the reception of pennies?"

"No, it is not for a wager; it is a whim of mine, which I fancy from the tone of your conversation you could understand, being apparently somewhat whimsical yourself."

"So far as whim goes, be assured of my sympathy."

"Well, then, though I follow a calling by the exercise of which I secure a modest income, my passion is verse. If the seasons were always summer, and life were always youth, I should like to pass through the world singing. But I have never ventured to publish any verses of mine. If they fell still-born it would give me more pain than such wounds to vanity ought to give to a bearded man; and if they were assailed or ridiculed it might seriously injure me in my practical vocation. That last consideration, were I quite alone in the world, might not much weigh on me; but there are others for whose sake I should like to make fortune and preserve station. Many years ago—it was in Germany—I fell in with a German student who was very poor, and who did make money by wandering about the country with lute and song. He has since become a poet of no mean popularity, and he has told me that he is sure he found the

secret of that popularity in habitually consulting popular tastes during his roving apprenticeship to song. His example strongly impressed me. So I began this experiment; and for several years my summers have been all partly spent in this way. I am only known, as I think I told you before, in the rounds I take as 'The Wandering Minstrel;' I receive the trifling moneys that are bestowed on me as proofs of a certain merit. I should not be paid by poor people if I did not please; and the songs which please them best are generally those I love best myself. For the rest, my time is not thrown away,—not only as regards bodily health, but healthfulness of mind: all the current of one's ideas becomes so freshened by months of playful exercise and varied adventure."

"Yes, the adventure is varied enough," said Kenelm, somewhat ruefully; for he felt, in shifting his posture, a sharp twinge of his bruised muscles. "But don't you find those mischief-makers, the women, always mix themselves up with adventure?"

"Bless them! of course," said the minstrel, with a ringing laugh. "In life, as on the stage, the petticoat interest is always the strongest."

"I don't agree with you there," said Kenelm, dryly. "And you seem to me to utter a claptrap beneath the rank of your understanding. However, this warm weather indisposes one to disputation; and I own that a petticoat, provided it be red, is not without the interest of colour in a picture."

"Well, young gentleman," said the minstrel, rising, "the day is wearing on, and I must wish you good-by; probably, if you were

to ramble about the country as I do, you would see too many pretty girls not to teach you the strength of petticoat interest,—not in pictures alone; and should I meet you again I may find you writing love-verses yourself."

"After a conjecture so unwarrantable, I part company with you less reluctantly than I otherwise might do. But I hope we shall meet again."

"Your wish flatters me much; but, if we do, pray respect the confidence I have placed in you, and regard my wandering minstrelsy and my dog's tray as sacred secrets. Should we not so meet, it is but a prudent reserve on my part if I do not give you my right name and address."

"There you show the cautious common-sense which belongs rarely to lovers of verse and petticoat interest. What have you done with your guitar?"

"I do not pace the roads with that instrument: it is forwarded to me from town to town under a borrowed name, together with other raiment that this, should I have cause to drop my character of wandering minstrel."

The two men here exchanged a cordial shake of the hand. And as the minstrel went his way along the river-side, his voice in chanting seemed to lend to the wavelets a livelier murmur, to the reeds a less plaintive sigh.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN his room, solitary and brooding, sat the defeated hero of a hundred fights. It was now twilight; but the shutters had been partially closed all day, in order to exclude the sun, which had never before been unwelcome to Tom Bowles, and they still remained so, making the twilight doubly twilight, till the harvest moon, rising early, shot its ray through the crevice, and forced a silvery track amid the shadows of the floor.

The man's head drooped on his breast; his strong hands rested listlessly on his knees: his attitude was that of utter despondency and prostration. But in the expression of his face there were the signs of some dangerous and restless thought which belied not the gloom but the stillness of the posture. His brow, which was habitually open and frank, in its defying aggressive boldness, was now contracted into deep furrows, and lowered darkly over his downcast, half-closed eyes. His lips were so tightly compressed that the face lost its roundness, and the massive bone of the jaw stood out hard and salient. Now and then, indeed, the lips opened, giving vent to a deep, impatient sigh, but they reclosed as quickly as they had parted. It was one of those crises in life which find all the elements that make up a man's former self in lawless anarchy; in which the Evil One seems to enter and direct the storm; in which a rude untutored mind, never before harbouring a thought of crime, sees the crime start up from an abyss, feels it

to be an enemy, yet yields to it as a fate. So that when, at the last, some wretch, sentenced to the gibbet, shudderingly looks back to the moment "that trembled between two worlds,"—the world of the man guiltless, the world of the man guilty,—he says to the holy, highly educated, rational, passionless priest who confesses him and calls him "brother," "The devil put it into my head."

At that moment the door opened; at its threshold there stood the man's mother—whom he had never allowed to influence his conduct, though he loved her well in his rough way—and the hated fellow-man whom he longed to see dead at his feet. The door reclosed: the mother was gone, without a word, for her tears choked her; the fellow-man was alone with him. Tom Bowles looked up, recognized his visitor, cleared his brow, and rubbed his mighty hands.

CHAPTER XIX

KENELM CHILLINGLY drew a chair close to his antagonist's, and silently laid a hand on his.

Tom Bowles took up the hand in both his own, turned it curiously towards the moonlight, gazed at it, poised it, then with a sound between groan and laugh tossed it away as a thing hostile but trivial, rose and locked the door, came back to his seat and said bluffly,—

"What do you want with me now?"

"I want to ask you a favour."

"Favour?"

"The greatest which man can ask from man,—friendship. You see, my dear Tom," continued Kenelm, making himself quite at home, throwing his arm over the back of Tom's chair, and stretching his legs comfortably as one does by one's own fireside; "you see, my dear Tom, that men like us—young, single, not on the whole bad-looking as men go—can find sweethearts in plenty. If one does not like us, another will; sweethearts are sown everywhere like nettles and thistles. But the rarest thing in life is a friend. Now, tell me frankly, in the course of your wanderings did you ever come into a village where you could not have got a sweetheart if you had asked for one; and if, having got a sweetheart, you had lost her, do you think you would have had any difficulty in finding another? But have you such a thing in

the world, beyond the pale of your own family, as a true friend,—a man friend; and supposing that you had such a friend,—a friend who would stand by you through thick and thin; who would tell you your faults to your face, and praise you for your good qualities behind your back; who would do all he could to save you from a danger, and all he could to get you out of one,—supposing you had such a friend and lost him, do you believe that if you lived to the age of Methuselah you could find another? You don't answer me; you are silent. Well, Tom, I ask you to be such a friend to me, and I will be such a friend to you."

Tom was so thoroughly "taken aback" by this address that he remained dumfounded. But he felt as if the clouds in his soul were breaking, and a ray of sunlight were forcing its way through the sullen darkness. At length, however, the receding rage within him returned, though with vacillating step, and he growled between his teeth,—

"A pretty friend indeed, robbing me of my girl! Go along with you!"

"She was not your girl any more than she was or ever can be mine."

"What, you be n't after her?"

"Certainly not; I am going to Luscombe, and I ask you to come with me.

Do you think I am going to leave you here?"

"What is it to you?"

"Everything. Providence has permitted me to save you from

the most lifelong of all sorrows. For—think! Can any sorrow be more lasting than had been yours if you had attained your wish; if you had forced or frightened a woman to be your partner till death do part,—you loving her, she loathing you; you conscious, night and day, that your very love had insured her misery, and that misery haunting you like a ghost!—that sorrow I have saved you. May Providence permit me to complete my work, and save you also from the most irredeemable of all crimes! Look into your soul, then recall the thoughts which all day long, and not least at the moment I crossed this threshold, were rising up, making reason dumb and conscience blind, and then lay your hand on your heart and say, 'I am guiltless of a dream of murder.'"

The wretched man sprang up erect, menacing, and, meeting Kenelm's calm, steadfast, pitying gaze, dropped no less suddenly,—dropped on the floor, covered his face with his hands, and a great cry came forth between sob and howl.

"Brother," said Kenelm, kneeling beside him, and twining his arm round the man's heaving breast, "it is over now; with that cry the demon that maddened you has fled forever."

CHAPTER XX

WHEN, some time after, Kenelm quitted the room and joined Mrs. Bowles below, he said cheerily, "All right; Tom and I are sworn friends. We are going together to Luscombe the day after to-morrow,—Sunday; just write a line to his uncle to prepare him for Tom's visit, and send thither his clothes, as we shall walk, and steal forth unobserved betimes in the morning. Now go up and talk to him; he wants a mother's soothing and petting. He is a noble fellow at heart, and we shall be all proud of him some day or other."

As he walked towards the farmhouse, Kenelm encountered Mr. Lethbridge, who said, "I have come from Mr. Saunderson's, where I went in search of you. There is an unexpected hitch in the negotiation for Mrs. Bawtrey's shop. After seeing you this morning I fell in with Mr. Travers's bailiff, and he tells me that her lease does not give her the power to sublet without the Squire's consent; and that as the premises were originally let on very low terms to a favoured and responsible tenant, Mr. Travers cannot be expected to sanction the transfer of the lease to a poor basket-marker: in fact, though he will accept Mrs. Bawtrey's resignation, it must be in favour of an applicant whom he desires to oblige. On hearing this, I rode over to the Park and saw Mr. Travers himself. But he was obdurate to my pleadings. All I could get him to say was, 'Let the stranger who interests himself in

the matter come and talk to me. I should like to see the man who thrashed that brute Tom Bowles: if he got the better of him perhaps he may get the better of me. Bring him with you to my harvest-supper to-morrow evening.' Now, will you come?"

"Nay," said Kenelm, reluctantly; "but if he only asks me in order to gratify a very vulgar curiosity, I don't think I have much chance of serving Will Somers. What do you say?"

"The Squire is a good man of business, and, though no one can call him unjust or grasping, still he is very little touched by sentiment; and we must own that a sickly cripple like poor Will is not a very eligible tenant. If, therefore, it depended only on your chance with the Squire, I should not be very sanguine. But we have an ally in his daughter. She is very fond of Jessie Wiles, and she has shown great kindness to Will. In fact, a sweeter, more benevolent, sympathizing nature than that of Cecilia Travers does not exist. She has great influence with her father, and through her you may win him."

"I particularly dislike having anything to do with women," said Kenelm, churlishly. "Parsons are accustomed to get round them.

Surely, my dear sir, you are more fit for that work than I am."

"Permit me humbly to doubt that proposition; one does n't get very quickly round the women when one carries the weight of years on one's back. But whenever you want the aid of a parson to bring your own wooing to a happy conclusion, I shall be happy, in my special capacity of parson, to perform the ceremony required."

"/Dii meliora/!" said Kenelm, gravely. "Some ills are too serious to be approached even in joke. As for Miss Travers, the moment you call her benevolent you inspire me with horror. I know too well what a benevolent girl is,—officious, restless, fidgety, with a snub nose, and her pocket full of tracts. I will not go to the harvest-supper."

"Hist!" said the Parson, softly. They were now passing the cottage of Mrs. Somers; and while Kenelm was haranguing against benevolent girls, Mr. Lethbridge had paused before it, and was furtively looking in at the window. "Hist! and come here, —gently."

Kenelm obeyed, and looked in through the window. Will was seated; Jessie Wiles had nestled herself at his feet, and was holding his hand in both hers, looking up into his face. Her profile alone was seen, but its expression was unutterably soft and tender. His face, bent downwards towards her, wore a mournful expression; nay, the tears were rolling silently down his cheeks. Kenelm listened and heard her say, "Don't talk so, Will, you break my heart; it is I who am not worthy of you."

"Parson," said Kenelm, as they walked on, "I must go to that confounded harvest-supper. I begin to think there is something true in the venerable platitude about love in a cottage. And Will Somers must be married in haste, in order to repent at leisure."

"I don't see why a man should repent having married a good girl whom he loves."

"You don't? Answer me candidly. Did you ever meet a man

who repented having married?"

"Of course I have; very often."

"Well, think again, and answer as candidly. Did you ever meet a man who repented not having married?"

The Parson mused, and was silent.

"Sir," said Kenelm, "your reticence proves your honesty, and I respect it." So saying, he bounded off, and left the Parson crying out wildly, "But—but—"

CHAPTER XXI

MR. SAUNDERSON and Kenelm sat in the arbour: the former sipping his grog and smoking his pipe; the latter looking forth into the summer night skies with an earnest yet abstracted gaze, as if he were trying to count the stars in the Milky Way.

"Ha!" said Mr. Saunderson, who was concluding an argument; "you see it now, don't you?"

"I? not a bit of it. You tell me that your grandfather was a farmer, and your father was a farmer, and that you have been a farmer for thirty years; and from these premises you deduce the illogical and irrational conclusion that therefore your son must be a farmer."

"Young man, you may think yourself very knowing 'cause you have been at the 'Varsity, and swept away a headful of book-learning."

"Stop," quoth Kenelm. "You grant that a university is learned."

"Well, I suppose so."

"But how could it be learned if those who quitted it brought the learning away? We leave it all behind us in the care of the tutors. But I know what you were going to say,—that it is not because I had read more books than you have that I was to give myself airs and pretend to have more knowledge of life than a man of your years and experience. Agreed, as a general rule. But does not every doctor, however wise and skilful, prefer taking another

doctor's opinion about himself, even though that other doctor has just started in practice? And seeing that doctors, taking them as a body, are monstrous clever fellows, is not the example they set us worth following? Does it not prove that no man, however wise, is a good judge of his own case? Now, your son's case is really your case: you see it through the medium of your likings and dislikings; and insist upon forcing a square peg into a round hole, because in a round hole you, being a round peg, feel tight and comfortable. Now I call that irrational."

"I don't see why my son has any right to fancy himself a square peg," said the farmer, doggedly, "when his father and his grandfather and his great-grandfather have been round pegs; and it is agin' nature for any creature not to take after its own kind. A dog is a pointer or a sheep-dog according as its forebears were pointers or sheep-dogs. There," cried the farmer, triumphantly, shaking the ashes out of his pipe. "I think I have posed you, young master!"

"No; for you have taken it for granted that the breeds have not been crossed. But suppose that a sheep-dog has married a pointer, are you sure that his son will not be more of a pointer than a sheep-dog?"

Mr. Saunderson arrested himself in the task of refilling his pipe, and scratched his head.

"You see," continued Kenelm, "that you have crossed the breed. You married a tradesman's daughter, and I dare say her grandfather and great-grandfather were tradesmen too. Now,

most sons take after their mothers, and therefore Mr. Saunderson junior takes after his kind on the distaff side, and comes into the world a square peg, which can only be tight and comfortable in a square hole. It is no use arguing, Farmer: your boy must go to his uncle; and there's an end of the matter."

"By goles!" said the farmer, "you seem to think you can talk me out of my senses."

"No; but I think if you had your own way you would talk your son into the workhouse."

"What! by sticking to the land like his father before him? Let a man stick by the land, and the land will stick by him."

"Let a man stick in the mud, and the mud will stick to him. You put your heart in your farm, and your son would only put his foot into it. Courage! Don't you see that Time is a whirligig, and all things come round? Every day somebody leaves the land and goes off into trade. By and by he grows rich, and then his great desire is to get back to the land again. He left it the son of a farmer: he returns to it as a squire. Your son, when he gets to be fifty, will invest his savings in acres, and have tenants of his own. Lord, how he will lay down the law to them! I would not advise you to take a farm under him."

"Catch me at it!" said the farmer. "He would turn all the contents of the 'pothecary's shop into my fallows, and call it 'progress.'"

"Let him physic the fallows when he has farms of his own: keep yours out of his chemical clutches. Come, I shall tell him

to pack up and be off to his uncle's next week?"

"Well, well," said the farmer, in a resigned tone: "a wilful man must e'en have his way."

"And the best thing a sensible man can do is not to cross it. Mr. Saunderson, give me your honest hand. You are one of those men who put the sons of good fathers in mind of their own; and I think of mine when I say 'God bless you!'"

Quitting the farmer, Kenelm re-entered the house, and sought Mr. Saunderson junior in his own room. He found that young gentleman still up, and reading an eloquent tract on the Emancipation of the Human Race from all Tyrannical Control,—Political, Social, Ecclesiastical, and Domestic.

The lad looked up sulkily, and said, on encountering Kenelm's melancholic visage, "Ah! I see you have talked with the old governor, and he'll not hear of it."

"In the first place," answered Kenelm, "since you value yourself on a superior education, allow me to advise you to study the English language, as the forms of it are maintained by the elder authors, whom, in spite of an Age of Progress, men of superior education esteem. No one who has gone through that study; no one, indeed, who has studied the Ten Commandments in the vernacular,—commits the mistake of supposing that 'the old governor' is a synonymous expression for 'father.' In the second place, since you pretend to the superior enlightenment which results from a superior education, learn to know better your own self before you set up as a teacher of mankind. Excuse

the liberty I take, as your sincere well-wisher, when I tell you that you are at present a conceited fool,—in short, that which makes one boy call another an 'ass.' But when one has a poor head he may redeem the average balance of humanity by increasing the wealth of the heart. Try and increase yours. Your father consents to your choice of your lot at the sacrifice of all his own inclinations. This is a sore trial to a father's pride, a father's affection; and few fathers make such sacrifices with a good grace. I have thus kept my promise to you, and enforced your wishes on Mr. Saunderson's judgment, because I am sure you would have been a very bad farmer. It now remains for you to show that you can be a very good tradesman. You are bound in honour to me and to your father to try your best to be so; and meanwhile leave the task of upsetting the world to those who have no shop in it, which would go crash in the general tumble. And so good-night to you."

To these admonitory words, /sacro digna silentio/, Saunderson junior listened with a dropping jaw and fascinated staring eyes. He felt like an infant to whom the nurse has given a hasty shake, and who is too stupefied by that operation to know whether he is hurt or not.

A minute after Kenelm had quitted the room he reappeared at the door, and said in a conciliatory whisper, "Don't take it to heart that I called you a conceited fool and an ass. These terms are no doubt just as applicable to myself. But there is a more conceited fool and a greater ass than either of us; and that is the

Age in which we have the misfortune to be born,—an Age of Progress, Mr. Saunderson, junior!—an Age of Prigs."