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MARY OF MARION ISLE

BY

H. RIDER HAGGARD

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# MARY OF MARION ISLE

## CHAPTER I

## LORD ATTERTON

"I think, Clara, that your cousin Andrew is a damned young fool. You must excuse the language, but on the whole I consider him the damnedest young fool with whom I ever had to do."

Thus in cold and deliberate tones did Lord Atterton express himself concerning Andrew West, the only son of his deceased brother. Clara Maunsell, his sister's child who was also an orphan, studied her uncle for a while before she answered, which there was no need for her to do at once as he was busy lighting a cigar. An observant onlooker might have thought that she was thinking things out and making up her mind what line to take about the said Andrew West.

These two, uncle and niece, presented a somewhat curious contrast there on that September day in the richly furnished but yet uncomfortable library of Lord Atterton's great house in Cavendish Square. He was a medium-sized, stout man of about sixty-eight years of age. His big, well-shaped head resembled that of a tonsured monk, inasmuch as it was completely bald save for an encircling fringe of white hair. His face was clean-cut and able, with rather a long nose and a fierce, determined mouth remarkable for the thinness of the lips and absence of any curves. There was much character in that mouth; indeed, his whole aspect gave an impression of cold force. "Successful man" was written all over him.

The niece was a young lady of about four-and-twenty, of whom at first sight one would instinctively say, "How pretty she is, and how neat!"

In fact, she was both. Small in build but perfectly proportioned, fair in complexion with just the right amount of colour, with crisp auburn hair carefully dressed, and steady, innocent-looking blue eyes, a well-formed mouth and a straight little nose, she was the very embodiment of prettiness as distinguished from beauty, while in neatness none could surpass her. Her quiet-coloured dress suited her

to perfection, no one had ever seen that auburn coiffure disordered even in a gale of wind, her boots and gloves were marvels of their sort, and even the pearl drops on the necklace she wore seemed to arrange themselves with a mathematical exactitude. "Little Tidy" they had called her in the nursery, and "Clever Clara" at school, and now that she was grown up these attributes continued to distinguish her.

In a way there was about her more than a hint of her uncle, Lord Atterton. Between a young lady and this old man, especially as the one might be said to represent decorated ice-cream and the other something very much on the boil, there could be no real resemblance. And yet the set of their mouths and the air of general ability common to both of them, did give them a certain similitude, due no doubt to affinity of blood.

Lord Atterton finished lighting his cigar, very much on one side, and Clara finished her reflections, which apparently urged her to a course of non-committal.

"Andrew," she said in her light, pleasant and evenly balanced voice, "is just Andrew and there is no one else quite like him."

"Why not say that an ass is just an ass and that there is no other ass quite so much an ass?" snapped her uncle, biting heavily at the end of the cigar.

"Because, Uncle, I do not consider that Andrew is an ass. I think, on the contrary, that he has in him the makings of a very clever man."

"Clever! Do you call it clever for an inexperienced young fellow to take up all these Radical, not to say Socialistic ideas which, if ever they are put into practice,--thank God, that will not be in my time!--would utterly destroy the class to which he belongs? Has it ever occurred to you, Clara, that your cousin Algernon is my only child and that his lungs are very delicate? If anything happened to him," he added with a twitch of the face, "Andrew must succeed to the title?"

She nodded her head.

"Naturally that has occurred to me, Uncle, but I see no reason to suppose that anything of the sort will happen. The doctors say they are sure this new treatment will succeed. Also, Algernon might marry and leave children."

"The doctors! I have no faith in doctors and I know our family weakness. Look at me, the last of five, all of them taken off with something to do with the lungs. As for marrying, Algernon will never marry. Also, if he did, he would have no children. I believe that one day that mad hatter of a fellow, Andrew, will be Lord Atterton," he said with emphasis, and, turning, threw the ruined cigar into the fire

which burned upon the hearth although the day was mild.

"It's a hard thing," he went on with a kind of choke in the throat, "to be successful in everything else--make a large fortune, come into a title and the rest--and yet not to have a healthy son to inherit it all. And if Algernon goes--oh! if he goes----!"

Again Clara considered for a moment and appeared to come to the conclusion that the moment was one when it would be right and proper to exhibit sympathy, if possible without causing alarm, as ill-judged doses of that quality often do.

"Don't fret, Uncle," she said softly. "I know how you worry about all these things and it makes me worry too. Often I lie awake at night and think about it."

"So do I, and listen to Algernon coughing in the room above."

"Yes, but there is really no need for you to be anxious. He is ever so much better. Oh! my dear Uncle, I implore you--there, you know what I mean although I am not good at expressing myself," and furtively wiping her eyes with a very clean and beautifully embroidered handkerchief, she advanced to him and laid her cool lips upon his brow.

"Thank you, my dear, thank you," he said. "I know you have a good heart and feel for me, which is more than anyone else does. I only wish you had been----"

"Hush!" said Clara, stepping back lightly, "here they come."

As she spoke the door was thrown open somewhat violently and two young men entered the room. Except in age (they were both twenty-one) they differed strangely. The first, Andrew, who had outstepped his cousin, was tall and lanky and as yet comparatively unformed, with thin, delicate hands and small feet, although no one would have guessed this from the boots it pleased him to wear. He was not good-looking; for that his face was too irregular, but a singular charm pervaded him. It shone in the vivacity of his large dark eyes, which now were full of fire and now seemed to go to sleep, and was reflected from his whole countenance that was of a remarkable mobility and seemed to respond to every thought which flitted across his mind. For the rest his waving brown hair was over long and unkempt and his clothes were shocking. A dilapidated velveteen coat that might have come second-hand from the wardrobe of a deceased artist, and a red tie, frayed and faded, that had managed to slip up over one point of a limp calico collar, were peculiarities most likely to immediate attention, although there were others which would have paid for research, such as a rusty steel watch-chain from which hung some outlandish charms, and the absence of two waistcoat buttons. Yet with it all no one of any class could for a moment have mistaken his standing, since Andrew West was one of those

men who would have looked a gentleman in a sack and nothing else.

His cousin Algernon was different indeed. To begin with, his attire was faultless, made by the best tailor in London and apparently put on new that moment. Within this perfect outer casing was a short, pale-eyed, lack-lustre young man with straight, sandy hair and no eyebrows, one whose hectic flush and moist hands betrayed the mortal ailment with which he was stricken, a poor, commonplace lad who, loving the world and thirsting for its pleasures, was yet doomed to bid it and them an early farewell.

The two were arguing as they came up the stairs, Andrew in clear, ringing tones, and Algernon in a husky voice to which low little coughs played the part of commas and full stops. So loudly did they talk that Lord Atterton and Clara could hear what they said, for the massive mahogany doors stood ajar.

"I tell you, Algy, and mind you, I am a medical man, or shall be next week, that you drink too much of the family whisky. It has poisoned thousands and is poisoning you, although I dare say yours comes out of the best vat, not that which has made millionaires of West & Co., and a peer of your grandfather----" (here that unwilling eavesdropper, Lord Atterton, snorted and muttered something that Clara could not catch). "Claret should be your tipple, and perhaps a couple of glasses of port after dinner, no more."

"Claret is poor stuff to lean on when one feels low, Andrew; besides, I am not fool enough to drink West's whisky; I know too much about it, for you see I'm in the business. Anyway, a short life and a merry one for me," replied Algernon with a husky chuckle.

Then they entered the room.

"Would you be so good as to shut that door, Andrew," said his uncle icily.

"If you wish, Uncle, though it should be left open for the room is far too hot,--Ah! I thought so," he added, glancing at a thermometer which hung upon the wall, "over seventy-two, and no wonder when you have a fire upon a mild September afternoon, and everything shut."

"I hate cold," interrupted Algernon.

"I dare say," replied Andrew. "Most of us do hate what does us good. As a matter of fact, you should live in a low temperature with all the windows open."

"Perhaps, Andrew," said Lord Atterton, puffing himself out like a turkey cock, "you will be so good as to allow me and Algernon to regulate our house in our own way?"

"Certainly, Uncle. It isn't my business, is it? Only I wouldn't if I were your medical adviser. Where there is a tendency to a pulmonary weakness," he added rather sententiously, "as in our family," and he glanced at Algernon, "fresh air is essential."

"Thank you for that information," replied his uncle with sarcasm, "but I have already sought advice upon the point from the heads of the profession to which I understand you intend to belong."

"Then why do you not follow it?" said Andrew coolly, whereon the discreet Clara, foreseeing trouble, intervened hurriedly with a question.

"Are you really going to be a doctor soon, Andrew?" she asked.

"Yes, I hope so, Clara. I have just gone through my final examination, which is why I'm able to come and look you up, for the first time in six months, I think."

"And for the last in six years, I hope," muttered Lord Atterton to himself.

If Andrew overheard him he took no notice, but went on gaily.

"I don't suppose that any of you know what it is to work for twelve or sometimes fourteen hours a day, but if you did, you would understand that it does not leave much time for paying visits. Such amusements are for the idle rich."

"Indeed," growled Lord Atterton. "Well, I think I have done as much as that in my time."

"I think you misunderstand me, Uncle," went on the imperturbable Andrew. "By work, I mean intellectual research in any branch of knowledge; I do not mean the mere pursuit of wealth in a business."

Algernon in the background chuckled hoarsely, a faint and swiftly repressed smile flittered over Clara's placid features like a shadow over a still lake, and Lord Atterton turned purple.

"What do you mean, young man?" he gasped.

"Oh! nothing personal," replied the gay Andrew in the intervals of lighting a cigarette, "but I think you will admit, Uncle, that there is a difference between, let us say, the skilful advertisement of patent medicines or alcoholic drinks with the assistance of a large office staff, and the mastering of a science by individual application."

"All that I am inclined to admit at present," ejaculated Lord Atterton, "is that you are a most offensive young prig."

"Do you think so?" answered Andrew with an airy smile. "Well, I dare say from your point of view you are right. Everything depends upon how one looks at things, doesn't it, Uncle? Now I hate trade and look upon the drink traffic as a crime against the community, at any rate where the manufacture of spirits is concerned, having seen too much of their effects, and I dare say that these convictions make me intolerant, as all young people are apt to be----"

"And I hate impertinent Pill-boxes, like yourself, Sir," shouted Lord Atterton.

"Which shows," replied Andrew calmly, "that intolerance is not peculiar to the young. By 'Pill-boxes' I suppose you symbolize the Medical Profession in general, of which I am informed you are a great supporter where your own ailments and those of your family are concerned. Now if hate, as it is fair to assume, implies disbelief, why do you employ them?"

Lord Atterton tried to answer, but only succeeded in gurgling.

"Such disparagement," went on Andrew, "seems peculiarly unjust in your case, Uncle, seeing that one of your grandfathers was an eminent 'Pill-box' of the old school whose monographs upon certain subjects are still studied, and, so far as I am able to judge, infinitely the most respectable and useful man that our family has produced."

Here Algernon, on a sofa in the background, burst into convulsive screams of laughter which he tried vainly to stifle with a cushion, while the infuriated Lord Atterton rushed from the room uttering language which need not be recorded.

"You've done it this time," said Algernon, removing the sofa cushion and sitting up. "If there's one thing his Lordship hates" (he always called his father his Lordship behind his back), "it is any allusion to his medical ancestor whose mother was a mill-hand and who dropped his h's."

"I expect that's where his vigour came from, and if he dropped h's, he picked up lives, hundreds of them; indeed, he was a most admirable person."

"Oh! Andrew," broke in Clara, "can't you stop fooling? Don't you see that you are ruining yourself?"

"Well, if you ask me, Clara, I don't. Besides, how am I ruining myself? I expect nothing from my uncle who has never given me anything, except an occasional luncheon and many lectures. I know that everybody goes about blacking his boots just because he is so rich, so it can't hurt him to hear a little of the truth by way of a change."

"But it may hurt you, Andrew. What are you going to do when you become a doctor?"

"Oh, that's all arranged. An excellent fellow called Watson, a really clever man though a bit of a Socialist, who might be anything but because of his opinions prefers a practice in Whitechapel, is going to take me as an assistant. He was one of the examiners and suggested it himself only this morning, from which I gather that I have passed all right. It is a splendid opening."

"Indeed," remarked Clara doubtfully, "and what is Doctor Watson going to pay you?"

"I don't know. Something pretty small, I expect, but that doesn't matter to me, for I've a couple of hundred a year of my own, you know, which is riches to most young doctors."

Clara looked him up and down with an air of genuine if tempered amazement on her face that was not entirely unmixed with admiration. Then she asked:

"Do you really mean to say, Andrew, that it is your intention to become the assistant of an unknown Socialistic practitioner in the East End who will pay you little or nothing?"

"That is my intention and desire, Clara," he answered in the intervals of lighting another cigarette. "What do you see against it?"

"Oh! nothing," she answered, shrugging her shoulders, "except the results which commonly follow from madness of any sort. To begin with, you will infuriate our uncle----"

"Strike that out," interrupted Andrew, "for I have done it already. Nothing can make him hate me more than he does."

"--who," went on Clara, taking no notice, "with all his enormous interest would otherwise have been able to help you to a career in almost any walk of life that offers rewards at the end of it--or earlier----"

"To those with relatives whose money gives them direct or indirect means of corruption and thereby of lifting the undeserving over the heads of the deserving," suggested Andrew.

Again she shrugged her shoulders, and went on:

"Next, you will starve. Your Socialist medical man won't pay you anything, and such an appointment will lead you nowhere."

"Don't alarm yourself, Clare. I haven't the slightest fear of suffering from the want of proper nutriment. Food is cheap in the East

End, and a couple of pints of stout will furnish as much stimulant as is desirable in twenty-four hours. Also, if I pass in Surgery, as I think I shall, I have every hope that my hospital will not entirely cast me off. Perhaps you didn't know, Clara, that surgery is my only love, that I have a natural instinct that way and, if I may say so, a flair for diagnosis. For instance, there is a gland in your neck that I long to remove, although you may not be aware of the thing. It spoils the proportions and under certain circumstances may be dangerous some day."

"Please leave my glands alone," said Clara. "I don't know what glands are."

"Then why did you lift your hand and touch that to which I alluded, Clara, not knowing that I cultivate the art of observation? Any competent physician will tell you that it might become the seat of tubercle, to which all our family are prone."

"You won't frighten me with your talk of glands," replied Clara quite calmly, "or because one side of my neck swells when I have a cold. Well, if you give no weight to my arguments, what are yours? What you have to urge in favour of the course of life which you propose to follow?"

Andrew drew himself up and threw his cigarette into the fire. In a moment his whole aspect changed. From that of a somewhat annoying, assertive and egotistical youth, it became one of an earnest young man animated by a great purpose.

"I'll tell you if you will open your mind and are sufficiently interested to listen," he said. "I have this to urge: that our time here is short, and that whatever we understand by God Almighty lays upon us the duty of making of it the best use possible, not only for our own sakes, but for that of the world in which we live, according to the opportunities that may be given to us. Now mine, I know, are very humble. I am nobody and nothing, a person without prospects." (Here Clara opened her innocent-looking eyes and stared at him.) "But I believe that I have some ability in a certain line and I intend to use it to the best of my power in serving my fellow-men. An opportunity of doing so has come to me in a locality where my fellow-men, and women and children, are more numerous and probably more miserable than they are anywhere else upon the earth. In these circumstances I do not intend to allow my person advantage, or what seems to be my advantage as you see it, to weigh with me. That is my answer."

"And a jolly good one, too," exclaimed Algernon, suddenly sitting up amidst his sofa-cushions among which he had seemed to be somnolent, and breaking into the conversation.

"You're a real sport, Andrew, more power to your elbow! I'm no use, I

know, and never shall be," here by accident or design he coughed, "but," he added with an outburst of genuine felling, "I respect you, old fellow, whatever Clara may think."

"Please leave my thoughts out of the question, Algernon," said Clara with severity. "Perhaps I also respect Andrew. But I try to look all round things and not to be carried away by sudden enthusiasms, and I think that in his own interests he is making a mistake. He would do better to fall in with his uncle's wishes, or prejudices if you choose to call them so."

"And I think that I shall do better to fall in with what I consider to be my duty, and to leave my interests to look after themselves, Clara. That, however, is no particular virtue on my part, since they do not excite me."

"Which means that you are going to be a slum doctor, Andrew."

"Yes, my dear, that's what it means, also that if you happen to meet me when you are driving in the Atterton carriage and pair, I shall not expect you to recognize your humble relative."

"Don't be silly, Andrew. You wouldn't if you only knew how ridiculous you become when you are on your high horse."

"High horse! A neat repartee for the carriage and pair, on which I congratulate you, Clara. But don't let's wrangle. Our lines are laid in different places, that is all, and I dare say we shan't see much of each other in the future, so we had best part friends. Good-bye, old girl," and stretching out his long arm, he took her round the waist, drew her to him and gave her a kiss.

Then he shook Algernon by the hand, bidding him come to a certain address if he wanted any gratis medical advice, and to look after himself in various ways, and departed at a run, nearly knocking over a stately menial who was bringing coffee and liqueurs.

"I think that Andrew is mad," remarked Clara, smoothing her hair which had been disarranged by the energy of his embrace.

"I dare say," said Algernon, as he tossed off a glass of cognac, "but I only wish I were half as mad. I tell you, Clara, that he is the best of the family, as you will come to see one day. Though when you do, I shan't be here."

"Perhaps," said Clara, "for no one knows what may happen in the future, and if he should succeed, it may alter my views."

"Succeed," ejaculated Algernon with a hoarse chuckle. "Do you mean to the title?"

"You know very well that I meant nothing of the sort, Algernon," she answered with a look of calm contempt, and left the room.

"All the same she did, although she may not have known it," reflected Algernon, as, after another half-glass of cognac, he settled himself down to snooze among the sofa cushions. "Clara thinks that no one sees through her, but I do. She's a deep one, is Clara, and, what's more, she'll always get her way. But when she has, what is the good of it?" Then he went off to sleep till tea-time.

## CHAPTER II

## MRS. JOSKY

Lord Atterton, who had been taking a little walk round the square to soothe his nerves, returned when he thought that Andrew had departed. In fact, he chose an unlucky moment, for just as he opened the front door of West House and stepped across the threshold, he came into violent and personal collision with that young gentleman who was rushing out at a great pace, thinking of something else and not looking where he was going.

"Confound you for an awkward fellow!" exclaimed his Lordship. "You've smashed my hat."

Andrew picked up the article which had served as a buffer between their two colliding bodies and now resembled a half-closed concertina.

"Very sorry," he said, surveying the topper critically. "It does seem rather the worse, doesn't it? But cheer up, Uncle, you can afford a new one, which will give employment. The hatting trade is rather depressed just now they tell me in Whitechapel."

"Cheer up!" gasped Lord Atterton. "I may as well tell you outright, Andrew, that your visits to this house are the last things to cheer me up. First you outrage my feelings and then you crush my hat which was new. Oh! hang it all," he added, hurling the wreck into the corner of the hall, "the less I see of you in the future the better I shall be pleased, and there you have it straight."

"I rather think your sentiment is reciprocated," remarked Andrew in a reflective voice. "Somehow we seem to get on each other's nerves, don't we?"

"Yes, nerves and toes," replied his Uncle wrathfully, lifting the foot upon which Andrew had trodden.

"If you wore a sensible soft hat as I do, instead of a tall one, it wouldn't have happened, Uncle, but it's no use crying over squashed

chimney-pots, and for the rest, you need not fear that I shall put any strain upon your hospitality. I'm sorry about Algernon, though, as I'm fond of him and should like to see him sometimes. Uncle, I may as well take this opportunity to tell you that whatever your smart Harley Street men may say, you are treating him wrongly."

"Indeed, and how out of your great experience would you advise that the case should be dealt with, Andrew?" he asked with heavy sarcasm.

"Well, to begin with, Uncle, you should cut off his liquor. He drinks too much, as does everyone in this house except Clara. Then--open-air and perhaps a winter in Switzerland. I'll ask my man Watson what he thinks about that. Unless you change your methods and can persuade him to change his, it is my duty to say that the results may be very serious indeed."

"Oh!" ejaculated Lord Atterton, "confound you for a presuming young puppy, and confound Watson, whoever he may be, and confound everything!"

Then, without waiting for any possible answer, he rushed into the nearest room and slammed the door.

Andrew strolled into the street, crossing it to the square railings, lit a third cigarette, and while he did so contemplated the façade of his uncle's palatial mansion.

Looks like whisky, he mused; metaphorically stinks of whisky and ought to have a gigantic bottle of West's Best (Lord! Shall I ever live down that name?) with the famous advertisement of red-shirted Canadians refreshing themselves amidst golden sheaves with the same in the intervals of their noble toil, set upon the parapet among the chimney-pots.

In short, look at the whole infernal place, and then think of its presiding genius, my noble and opulent relative who sits within like a great bald-headed spider fat with the blood of a thousand victims, and therefore pre-eminent in the spider world.

He paused and laughed at his own metaphor, for when not depressed Andrew was a merry soul; then, continuing his reflections, he walked towards Oxford Street to take a bus for Whitechapel.

Anyway, I'm not wanted there. The old gentleman told me that pretty straight, as I meant that he should, for I can't bear the sight of him, purse-proud, vulgar man who calls himself noble. I like Algernon, though, if he is dissipating himself to death with his weak lungs, for he has good instincts, which will never develop in this world, poor old chap. And Clara isn't at all bad. She thinks herself deep as an ocean, and is as easy to see through as a plate-glass window. Her transparency is quite delightful; one sees her making her hand for

every trick, and yet feels quite sure she will win the game, and at any rate she never makes rows; she fights with the rapier, not with the broadsword. Also at bottom she isn't unkind.

At this point he found a bus, and having clambered on to the top of it, still followed his train of thought.

Let's look at the other side of the picture. I criticize my uncle and Clara, and they criticize me. They look on me as a spoiled darling, ruined by an adoring mother, now happily departed, and they consider me vain because people think me clever; also opinionated because so far--well, I have done well in my small way. Further, they dislike my views of life and duty, which are opposed to the interests and instincts of their gilded, pinchbeck rank, and do not appreciate the connection with the common medical student who probably will never be heard of in the world. Nor can they understand that such an earth-worm may have ideas of his own and wish to make his private tunnel out of sight of the golden creatures who walk about in Cavendish Square. Well, Andrew, they are quite right as /they/ see things; also, I dare say that you /are/ offensive, though the patients in the hospital don't think so. And you are quite right as /you/ see the things. So the upshot of it is, that you had better go your own way and leave them to go theirs towards the oblivion which will swallow you all. But all the same, you are sorry for Algernon, the noble inheritor of West's Whisky.

In due course Andrew reached his rooms in a little street that opened off the Whitechapel Road. It was, and probably still is, a rather squalid-looking street where dwelt small tradesmen, with a proportion of the humbler class of Jews. The houses were of stucco with basements but not tall, and the one in which Andrew lived was inhabited by the widow of a working tailor and her little daughter. Fortunately the tailor had insured his life for £1200 so that his relict was not left penniless, and being an inveterate Londoner, preferred to live on among the people whom she knew.

To occupy herself she had taken to dealing in second-hand clothes and furs in a small way and, more for company than for anything else, she took a lodger in her two upper rooms. Her name was Mrs. Josky, though from what country Josky the departed originally hailed Andrew never discovered. Probably he, or his father, was a Polish Jew. She herself was a plain, good-tempered, bustling and talkative little Cockney, full of a lively sympathy with everybody and everything. Like most of her class she was, however, somewhat superficial, except in one particular, her love for her daughter, a little girl of nine whose big dark eyes, premature development and Eastern style of budding beauty, revealed her Semitic blood. This child Mrs. Josky adored. She was her one passion in life (Josky, apparently, had produced no deep impression upon her during their brief association).

Therefore it came about that she also adored Andrew, for what reason will be seen.

After his mother's death Andrew gave up the little house in Campden Hill where they had lived so happily, and having stored the best of the furniture together with a few heirlooms, looked for lodgings near the hospital where he was studying, with the double object of being close to his work and of observing the people of the East End.

Casually walking down Justice Street, for so it was oddly called, as he presumed because some forgotten Daniel had once come to judgment there, he reached No. 13, and observed that over the little shop of which the window was filled with old coats and rather moth-eaten fur garments, was exhibited a placard inscribed, "Good rooms to let with meals." There were very similar placards in many other windows, but the unconventional Andrew was attracted to No. 13 by a desire to defy superstition.

So in due course he became Mrs. Josky's tenant, and very comfortable she made him from the first. A little later on, however, had he been living in a good house with a devoted mother and a staff of well-trained servants, he could not have been better looked after. It happened thus. Shortly after he took up his abode in Justice Street, the little girl, who was named Lauretta, or Laurie for short, contracted pneumonia very badly indeed. Although he was not yet a qualified practitioner, Andrew diagnosed the disease at once, with the result that implore as he would, Mrs. Josky absolutely refused to call in any doctor, declaring that young Mr. West was cleverer than all of them put together, and that he and no one else should attend Laurie. Nor would she have a nurse, not from motives of economy, but because of a kind of fierce maternal jealousy which prevented her from allowing any other woman to come near her child. The end of it was that Andrew had to double the part of physician and night-nurse, rather an exhausting business for a young man who worked all day, especially as, this being his first case, he was filled with doubts and anxieties.

Well, by good luck or good management, with the accompaniment of the most devoted care, he pulled the child through. When he was able to assure Mrs. Josky that she was quite out of danger, that good woman threw her arms round his neck, kissed him and said that she would die for him if need be, as no doubt she would have been quite willing to do.

After this Andrew was more comfortable than ever in those lodgings and lived like a fighting-cock. In time he slowly awoke to the fact that his bills were singularly small for the amount of food that he consumed, and on investigation, discovered that Mrs. Josky was practically supporting him. Then there was a row, also there were tears and he threatened to go away. He insisted that she should

produce books to show the cost of what she bought for him. Mrs. Josky, whose leading characteristic was obstinacy, refused to do anything of the sort and even accused herself of theft in the sense of feeding herself and her child out of his provisions. At last they compromised. He paid more for his board; Mrs. Josky concealed the books and he lived even better than he had done before. Moreover, all his clothes were pressed and mended and, although he knew it not, some of his undergarments, such as shirts, were made for nothing. No wonder he had declared to Clara that £200 a year was wealth to an East End doctor!

Andrew arrived at Justice Street at about half-past four, the time at which he was accustomed to return from the hospital and have tea. The pretty little Laurie, who loved him almost as much as her mother did, was, as usual, looking out for him from the doorstep, and seeing him while yet a long way off, called out to her mother in the back regions, informing her of his advent. Mrs. Josky called back that all was ready, and proceeded to kill the fatted calf by breaking two fresh eggs, which were expensive just then, into the frying-pan. To be accurate, she broke three, for having conceived suspicions of Number Two, she put it aside for her own consumption, rather liking the taste of straw, as she explained to Laurie.

Andrew arrived, kissed Laurie according to the rule, searched for and found in his velveteen coat a little packet of chocolate creams of which she was extremely fond, and went up to his room to tidy himself for, as it happened, he had an engagement that afternoon. When he came into the sitting-room, after washing his hands and brushing his hair, he was met by Mrs. Josky bearing a spotless tray with a real china teapot that she had obtained from some one in temporary difficulties in exchange for a pair of second-hand boots, with a cup and muffin dish full of hot buttered toast to match, and followed by Laurie, who supported in her thin little hands the dish with the fried eggs.

"Good gracious! Mrs. Josky," he said, "I don't want all that. Besides, I am going out to tea."

"Then you should have said so earlier," she replied with firmness, adding, "not but what I guessed it when I saw that letter in a lady's writing this morning; also that you had bought a new toothbrush which you didn't want."

"Your intuition is wonderful, Mrs. Josky, but please take away those eggs. Laurie can eat them."

"I should like to see her do it," replied Mrs. Josky darkly, "teaching the child to steal my lodger's food, indeed. Look here, Mr. West, either you eat those eggs or they go straight into the dustbin, which you know would be a wicked waste. Come now," she added in soothing tones as though she were addressing an invalid off his feed, "you know you want them with all your hard work, passing examinations and such, and you, as I believe, still growing."

"I can't and I won't," said Andrew. "I've had a gigantic lunch."

"You can and you will," replied Mrs. Josky with decision as she drew a chair to the table.

Then Andrew sat down and ate the eggs under her stern eye, also the buttered toast, for his appetite was excellent, while she poured out the tea which cost more per pound than she would have cared to tell him. No wonder he always declared there was no tea like Mrs. Josky's.

"Where are you going to your next tea, Mr. West?" she inquired as she gathered up the plates.

"To Doctor Watson's," he answered, "whose assistant I shall be if I get through."

"Oh! to Miss Watson's, are you. I thought it was her writing on the letter. Well, there's no denying that she's a beautiful young woman, for I've seen her several times at church and treats and such like, of the sort that young gentlemen like to have tea with, not minding how it's made, though a bit of a fool I should think, if they do call her the Whitechapel Rose."

"Great Scot! what a name," said Andrew, "though as a matter of fact she is named Rose. But why do you say she is a bit of a fool, Mrs. Josky?"

"Just because one woman knows another," she replied with a mysterious shake of the head. "Also because God Almighty don't give everything all at once. If a girl is as lovely as all that outside, you mark my words she ain't got nothing inside. Look at me," she added, thrusting forward her angular and kindly little face with the brown eyes in which humour twinkled, "I ain't no beauty, am I? Whatever Josky, being after all a man, could see in me I never could guess--but I'm pretty good at cooking, and not so bad at a deal, either."

"There's something in the argument," reflected Andrew. "I've seen it exemplified in very handsome men. But, as regards Miss Watson, I had formed rather a different opinion. Well, well, we shall see."

"Yes, Mr. West, I dare say you will," remarked Mrs. Josky with emphasis, and departed carrying the tray.

When she had gone Andrew retired to his bedroom and tidied up again. Looking at his hair he recognized that it was long and regretted that recently he had found no time to have it cut. Now it was too late. Suddenly he remembered an ancient pot of pomade, at least he thought it was pomade, which, amongst other débris removed from his mother's house, stood in a cupboard in a corner. He found it. Inspection was not very satisfactory and it smelt. After all, was it pomade? At this

stage in its career nothing short of analysis could tell. Still, in his anxiety to curb his rebellious locks he risked it, only to discover that it was decayed ointment which as a lad he had used upon his hands after they had been chafed by over-rowing on the Thames. That was when it was already on, and nothing short of prolonged shampooing would have removed it. Next, after reflection, he changed the red tie for a brown one that was somewhat less seedy, slipping over it a beautiful antique gem in an eighteenth-century setting that represented Venus rising from the sea, which had come to him from his father. About the velveteen coat he hesitated, but finally decided to leave it alone because he could not be bothered to hunt for another.

From all of which things it will be gathered that Andrew desired to look his best at the tea-party to which he was going, an impulse that had not overtaken him when departing to lunch with his grand relatives at Cavendish Square. Near the front door he met Mrs. Josky who eyed him with suspicion, remarked that he had on his Sunday tie, and sniffed.

"What's the matter?" asked Andrew.

"Well, Sir," she said, "I did think something might have gone wrong with those drains again, there was such a smell down that back yard, and now it seems to have come here too."

"Oh! I know," remarked Andrew guiltily. "I found some stuff that had gone bad and threw it away."

"Indeed, then it's a pity, Sir, that you threw it on to your hair first."

After this Andrew fled, leaving Mrs. Josky still sniffing on the door-step.

Holding his hat in his hand, for he knew the cause of Mrs. Josky's suspicions and wished to air his head, Andrew pursued his way through the devious streets of Whitechapel, till he came to a remote region in the neighbourhood of the river. Here in some bygone generation there had been houses of importance, occupied no doubt by prosperous tradesmen or merchants of the day. One of these, a red brick Georgian mansion of some pretensions, stood among a mass of mean dwellings that, as the value of land increased, had been built on what were once its extensive gardens, whereof nothing remained except a desolate little patch of ground in front of the house, upon which stood the foundation walls of a long-departed greenhouse. This dwelling, which was still known as Red Hall probably from its colour, was now the abode, private and professional, of Dr. Watson, a very eminent man in his way, but one whose career had been injured by his peculiarities and his open, often ill-timed, advocacy of extreme Socialistic views.

Mounting the dirty steps Andrew came to the front door, the massive

dignity of which many successive layers of different coloured paints and graining could not conceal. Indeed, a splinter chipped off by the vagrant stone of some mischievous boy, showed that it was made of no humbler wood than old Honduras mahogany, while the tarnished brass knocker of twisted snakes also testified to the former standing of the house within.

As the bell was out of action he applied himself to this knocker for some time without result. At length the door was opened by a dilapidated, snuff-coloured little woman with watery eyes and hair that looked like faded tow, who appeared to be irritated at being summoned from the lower regions.

"Why couldn't you go round by the surgery, Brother West" (everybody at Red Hall called each other Brother or Sister), she asked in a high and squeaky voice which suggested an effort to smother tears. "Here I am with the tea to get ready, to say nothing of the supper to cook, and the kettle boiling over at this very moment into the gas stove, making enough smell to poison one, and you come hammering, hammering at the front door which Sister Rose is too proud to open, till I don't know the teapot from the saucers."

"I'm sorry, Sister Angelica, but I thought the Doctor might be busy in the surgery."

"Busy! Of course he's busy. He's always busy doing work for a pack of ragamuffins who never give him so much as a thank-you. What's more, he's got that Harley Street swell, the famous Somerville Black who looks after the Royalties and has three carriages and pairs, in there with him."

"Somerville Black!" said Andrew with respect. "What's he doing here? It's scarcely his beat."

"Oh! I don't know. Some case the Doctor's got hold of which interests him. A girl who's the daughter of a fish-hawker and thinks that she's three girls and acts as such."

"Three girls!"

"Yes, Brother, or rather two girls, one herself and the other a farmer's daughter, and a dead woman, I think it is Mary Queen of Scots, or Lady Jane Grey, or some one. When she's herself she talks fish and swears as might be expected with her bringing up. When she's the farmer's daughter she talks cows and pigs and lectures on agriculture, although she's never been out of Whitechapel or seen one of them alive; and when she's the party that was going to be beheaded she takes on wonderfully, just like Shakespeare, the Doctor says."

At this moment a dull explosion sounded from below.

"Heavens above! there's that gas stove blowing up," exclaimed Sister Angelica, and vanished away like a grey ghost, leaving Andrew to his own devices.

## CHAPTER III

## ROSE

Andrew, who knew the house, went down the long centre passage to a certain door and opening it, entered a very pleasing Early Georgian room whereof the walls were covered by large pine panels, once painted white no doubt, but now of a faded grey, and remarkable for a beautiful Adam mantelpiece, carved pine cornices, and a moulded ceiling of the period. It was well furnished, too, in its way, for furniture, when he could pick it up cheap, was Dr. Watson's one extravagance. Thus there were some good Queen Anne pieces; also a really fine Elizabethan refectory table, untouched and with the true bulbous legs (Sister Angelica hated that table because it took so much polishing). Lastly, there were a few excellent pictures also picked up by Dr. Watson, and over the whole place brooded a kind of peaceful charm as is sometimes observable in Queen Anne or Georgian rooms.

Noting to his disappointment that the place was empty, Andrew walked up and down casually examining the pictures and wondering whether Miss Rose had told him to come at five, or half-past. For ten minutes or more he continued to wonder, till at length that young lady appeared. Certainly she was a charming sight as she glided into the room wearing a white dress which, though simple, fitted her tall and rather stately figure well enough. Anywhere Rose Watson would have been reckoned a beautiful woman, one among ten thousand. She had all the points of beauty; an exquisitely tinted face, large blue eyes, a shapely head on which her plentiful golden hair was coiled like a crown, a sweet mouth, a well-cut nose not too sharp, and long, delicate hands and feet. Also her voice was low and gentle and her movements were full of native grace. In short, she was lovely, a perfect type of the Eternal Feminine.

"How do you do, Mr. West?" she said, colouring slightly, perhaps because of the evident admiration that was written in his eyes, or perhaps because it was her weakness, or her gift, so to do when she addressed a man. "Forgive me if I do not call you Brother after our silly fashion here, but really I can't."

"The last thing in the world I wish is that you should call me Brother," he answered in a rather shy way, adding, "About whatever others I may be indefinite, upon that point I am quite clear."

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting," she went on hurriedly, dropping the blue eyes, "but that silly old Angelica has made some frightful

mess with the gas stove and nearly blew us all up. I found her covered with blacks and with a lock of her hair on fire."

"I dare say," replied Andrew. "Tow burns easily, doesn't it?"

She laughed a little and remarked good-naturedly:

"Well, it is rather like tow now you mention it. Then I hear that Dr. Somerville Black is coming into tea and I had to find the best things. I wish he wouldn't."

"So do I," murmured Andrew.

"Oh!" she continued with an outburst of genuine feeling, "how horrible it is to be poor and have only one servant, or rather none at all, for Angelica is a kind of cousin, you know, not a servant."

"I'm not sure," said Andrew. "Poverty has its advantages. You, I understand, would like to be rich."

"Of course I should. I will be quite honest about it. I should like to have carriages and jewels and proper dresses and a fine house with lots of people to wait on me. Then I should be quite happy," and she laughed again in her charming, rather childish fashion.

"Perhaps you wouldn't be happy after all, Miss Watson. I have just come from seeing some people who have all these things in abundance and they are not happy--except perhaps Clara," he mused aloud.

She looked up quickly as though she would like to ask who Clara was, but if so, she refrained and only said:

"Wouldn't you like to be rich, Mr. West? But perhaps you will one day."

"I don't think so," he answered, shrugging his shoulders, "unless I should become a successful man like Somerville Black, which is most improbable, and I don't know that I want to."

She considered him for a little while in an innocent way, playing with the red rose she wore in the bosom of her white dress, but said nothing.

"What's the use of riches?" he went on, suddenly taking fire. "At best they are only an addition. I'd rather have health, or happiness, or ability, or the power to do good to others, than any amount of riches. At the present moment," he added slowly, "to take a concrete example, I'd rather have that rose than a cheque for a thousand pounds."

Again she laughed gently, looking at him doubtfully, but not without a certain amount of admiration, as she answered:

"When it has faded, say by to-morrow morning, you may think that you would rather have had the thousand pounds. However, if you believe it worth so much, you can have it for nothing, because, because--I have a prettier one upstairs."

"I am content with that because you have worn it," he answered, stretching out his hand.

She began to unfasten the rose, which seemed to be an intricate and lengthy operation, and Andrew apparently thought it an act of common kindness to try to help her, with the result that he pricked his finger rather badly. However, it was out at last and in his hand. Then something happened to him. His heart began to beat violently, a mist swam before his eyes, he lost his reason, his judgment, everything that distinguished him in ordinary moments, as, in short, Nature for her own purposes decrees that most men and some women must occasionally do. The issue was that quite undesignedly and without the smallest premeditation he kissed that lovely girl full upon the lips.

"Oh!" she said, turning the exact colour of the red rose in his hand and looking first as though she were going to cry and then to laugh; for to tell the truth at that instant laughter was nearer to her than were tears. "Oh! you know you oughtn't to do that."

"I don't care," said Andrew defiantly. "I love you."

What else he would have said or done remains dark, for at that moment footsteps were heard in the passage and a big genial voice saying:

"In all my professional experience, which is fairly extended, I do not think I ever met such a case. Of course, we are aware that a woman is never what she seems to be, except when she is in a rage, but you don't often find one who announces herself to be three people and without any histrionic training plays all the parts so well."

"No," answered another rather dreamy voice, that of Dr. Watson. "It suggests all sorts of queer things, doesn't it? For example, reincarnation and the imprisonment of sundry entities in one corporeal shape."

"Ah! Doctor," said the big voice of Somerville Black, "there you are getting into mysticism, which personally I find it safer always to put out of court. To me, therefore, at present it suggests an unusual and most complicated case of nerves, resulting probably from suppressed instincts."

Then came a crash, followed by:

"Hullo! Ma'am, I didn't see you coming."

"Oh!" exclaimed Rose, "that idiot Angelica has run into him with the tea-tray in the dark passage," and promptly she sped like a swallow towards the door.

As she reached it, it opened, and behold! there was a second collision, this time between Rose and the large advancing shape of Dr. Somerville Black.

With another "Oh!" she recoiled, as a bird might that had unexpectedly come into contact with a bull, and would have fallen had not the advancing Andrew caught her.

"I begin to think," went on the big voice, "that /I/ have been reincarnated as a shunting railway truck. However, young lady," he added, suddenly realizing the kind of person with whom he had to do, "if you like to come out of that friendly shelter and charge again, I am sure I don't mind."

Then followed explanations, in the midst of which Dr. Watson, who had stayed behind in the passage to assist with the overset crockery, arrived upon the scene. He was a tall, thin, nervous-looking man, with dark eyes and a clean-shaved, ascetic face that would have become a mediæval saint, on which from time to time appeared a smile of singular sweetness. Idealist was written all over him, especially in his eyes which had the dreaming look of the typical visionary. Curiously enough, there was a considerable resemblance between him and Andrew; indeed, they might easily have passed for father and son. Nor did this cease with their physical characteristics, since their mental fibre and attitude were very similar. Both of them were dreamers, both were somewhat impracticable, neither of them had in him the making of a successful man, as the world understands success. Of course, it was the lack of these qualities, as also the presence of others, that drew the two together. From the time that Andrew had appeared at the hospital, a shy, awkward, unusual kind of youth, Dr. Watson had taken a fancy to him which, as years went on, ripened into as much friendship as is possible between men of such different ages. He became his favourite pupil, and somehow it was always understood, without anything very definite being said on the matter, that when he was qualified he would join Dr. Watson in his Whitechapel practice.

Catching sight of him the Doctor's face brightened with one of his sweet smiles.

"How do you do, Brother Andrew?" he said. "Very glad to see you and to congratulate you."

Dr. Somerville Black, a man of quick perceptions, glanced quickly at all three of them and then said, addressing Rose:

"Ha-ha, young lady, now I see why you refuged where you did, in this young gentleman's arms, though to tell the truth, unless I had your

father's word for it, and I suppose he ought to know, I should never have believed that you were brother and sister, even when he is so obviously your father's son."

Now Rose coloured in her usual fashion. Dr. Watson looked puzzled, and Andrew, with some irritation, for this term of Brother where Rose was concerned annoyed him, explained that there was a slight mistake as he was unconnected with anyone in the room.

"It is our habit," added Dr. Watson, "to give the fraternal salutation to friends in this house, as is customary among the community of Christian Socialists to which I and my family belong."

"Oh! is it?" said Black, with one of his loud, jolly laughs. "Personally I was never so fond of my relations as to wish to extend their number, especially in Whitechapel. However, Sister, to adopt the sororal style, as I think the other Sister in the passage has upset the tea all down my back, I shall be grateful if you can lend me a cloth. I have to go on to see a royal lady, and those infernal flunkeys might notice the stain."

The article was produced from somewhere and snatching it from Rose's hand, Andrew began to rub his back.

"I think, young gentleman," exclaimed Somerville Black, "that our joint Sister there could conduct this operation just as effectively with an expenditure of exactly one-fourth of the muscular force. Unless you are careful, you will wear a hole through my new frock-coat. But why is Brother, or Uncle, or Father Watson offering you his congratulations? Have you perhaps just entered upon some contract of a prenuptial character with our Sister? I seem to diagnose symptoms indicative of the complaint called Love."

If Rose had coloured before, now she turned positively scarlet. Faintly she murmured some denial and fled from the room, while Andrew commenced an involved contradiction.

"Don't waste words, young man. I think it highly probable that my diagnosis is correct, but that the disease is still in the suppressed form. The rash will appear later, say after fourteen days' incubation. If it is wrong, however, so much the better for some other fellow."

At this point Dr. Watson, who had been listening unconcernedly to his eminent colleague's jovial if unusual jesting, explained that he was congratulating Andrew on having done extremely well in his final examination, as from private sources of information he had just learned was the case. As a matter of fact being, as has been said, very fond of him, it would not have troubled him at all to learn that he and Rose were affianced. Indeed, in an indefinite way he had once or twice hoped that this might happen.

"Oh! that's it," said the jolly doctor. "So you are going to become a saw-bones like the rest of us. Well, I wish you luck and a fat practice among the Jews, and if ever you want a helping hand, don't you forget old Somerville Black, F.R.C.S., M.D., Honorary Physician to exactly twenty-three Royalties, whom he fondly hopes will pay his bill with a baronetcy shortly, since he thinks it probable that they will not do so in any other way. And now here comes our Sister to whom you are not engaged which, as an antique eligible myself who has only buried one wife, I am naturally glad to learn. Young lady, whenever you feel inclined to share a peculiarly hideous house in Harley Street with an old buffer of established income, just drop me a postcard, will you? Good gracious! What's the matter with the other Sister's head?" and he pointed to the tow-like /chevelure/ of Angelica of which a considerable portion had been given to the flames.

"It was an accident to the gas stove," explained Rose, glad to have an opportunity of changing the subject, for Angelica seemed too overcome to speak.

"Ah! then if the scalp is burned I prescribe the application of some fatty ointment to keep away the air. Fee for consultation, two guineas. It would be three in Harley Street. And now for that tea."

All this while the bewildered Angelica was engaged in setting on the Elizabethan table at more or less irregular intervals, four stout pieces of crockery which looked like porridge-bowls or small slop basins. Then at the end of it she placed a large brown teapot, and in the middle a plate of thick bread and butter, with a handful of knives and another of teaspoons. Rose seized the teapot and began to pour into the porridge-bowls.

"Hullo!" said Somerville Black, "did we smash all the saucers?"

"No," explained Rose, tears of vexation springing to her eyes. "We have no saucers. Father does not consider them necessary, and I am sorry to say that the best set of bowls was smashed."

"Oh! I see. The simple life! Well, don't look vexed, young lady. These things are capital, or would be if only they had a handle. Just show me how you get hold of them, will you? With both hands, I suppose. By George, what a beautiful table this is!"

"Yes," said Dr. Watson, waking up, for as usual he had been paying no attention. "It is rather fine, isn't it? Real Elizabethan and, except for those initials cut on it, without blemish."

"Jolly," said Somerville Black. "I like oak; there's something solid about it. When you see another like it, just let me know will you, and Sister, this is the best tea I have tasted for many a day. No, take away that bread and butter, or I shall eat the lot. There, now I must be going. Haven't enjoyed myself so much for months, so don't you be

surprised if I come back. Good-bye, Sister, what's your name?"

"Rose," she murmured.

"Then it is one that suits you very well. Good-bye, Sister Rose, and Brother, what's your name--oh! West, Brother West, and Father Watson, and Aunt, what do you say? Angelica? Aunt Angelica. I'll remember you all to the royal ladies."

So, still shouting chaff over his shoulder, he ran from the house and disappeared into the magnificent carriage and pair that was waiting at the gate.

"Thank heaven he is gone!" said Andrew, who for some time had been sunk in a gloomy silence.

"Why?" asked Rose.

"Because he is vulgar and overpowering and makes bad jokes, and goes on as if the whole place and everybody in it belonged to him."

"Well, at any rate, he is cheerful and I am sure he meant to be very kind, and there isn't too much cheerfulness and kindness about here."

"Good thing too," muttered Andrew, "if they are of his variety."

"It is a curious thing about Somerville Black," broke in Dr. Watson, evidently following the line of his own thoughts, "that being a man quite without real distinction in our profession he is yet in his own way one of the best and most successful doctors whom I ever knew. I suppose it is to be accounted for by his intense humanity, I mean his insight into the hearts of his fellow-creatures which springs from his wide sympathies. Now he had never met any of you before, but if you were taken with an obscure disease I am sure that he would diagnose it correctly before you had been three minutes in his consulting-room, because already he has added you up and weighed your respective strengths and weaknesses. Then, unless the case was very simple, he would leave the doctoring of you to some one else who is an expert in that particular line, for his power is almost purely one of diagnosis and his gift of healing lies in his magnetic personality."

"Sounds rather like faith-cure," said Andrew disparagingly. Then, prompted by the sense of justice that was so strong in him, he added, "At any rate, he must know something as well, as he is an F.R.C.S."

"Oh! when he became that they were not so particular as they are nowadays; also, I dare say he hypnotized the examiners and made them take a great deal for granted. Anyhow, he hasn't touched a knife for twenty years. Not but that he does know a great deal in his own way."

"I suppose that he is really very rich, Father?" said Rose.

"I believe about the richest man in the profession, though he did not make it all out of doctoring. They say that the Jews who come to consult him, give him information and opportunities of investing in all their best things on what is called the 'ground floor.' He cannot have inherited his wealth, as I believe his origin was quite humble, and he has no one to leave it to except one peevish daughter who suffers from hypochondria and is as unlike him as possible. She bores him so much that he told me some time ago he really thought of marrying again if only to get the comfort of a home."

Rose looked as though she would like to ask whether the lady had been selected, but if so, thought better of it and asked nothing. Then, glancing at his watch, the doctor rose and went away, leaving the two alone.

Rose murmured something about clearing away the tea things, but Andrew came and stood beside her and said:

"No, don't go away, I want to speak to you."

In his voice there was some note of command such as a man uses towards a woman whom he believes to be his, and Rose was of the class that is susceptible to such exercise of authority, whether justified or not. Also, she was curious, for her instinct told her what was coming and she wished to know whether this attractive young man was in love with her, and if so, how much. A proposal, if he meant to propose, had not come her way before, and it was only natural that she should not wish to nip it in the bud. Lastly, life at Whitechapel was dull and here was a new excitement. So she remained seated and looked up at him through the shadows of the gloaming, like an angel out of mist.

For a moment or two Andrew played with the rose in his buttonhole, and looked down at her with a strange fire in his dark eyes. At last he spoke in a broken, uncertain voice:

"Rose, just before that troublesome man came in I told you that I loved you. Then there was the crash, a rather ill-omened crash," he added with a little laugh as though uttering a thought aloud, and paused.

She made no answer, unless a sigh could be so described.

"Now I repeat it," he went on, "in case you should have forgotten in the interval."

Still she made no answer, being one of those women who feel that their greatest strength lies in silence and forget that it is generally taken to mean consent. Her tender beauty, the grace of her form, the scent that rose from her rippling hair, the loveliness of her eyes into which the twilight seemed to have crept, in their sum intoxicated

him who for the first time had passed beneath the yoke of passion. He fell to his knees before her; he cast his arms about her slender waist; he kissed her dress, her hands and then, growing reckless or unknowing, drew her down towards him and pressed his lips upon her face, her eyes, her hair; yes, and on her lips also.

She did not resist him, she let him have his way, only she never kissed him back. While she refrained from that, according to her peculiar code, the rest did not matter. Gently she pushed him away from her and rose. He also rose and stood trembling, ashamed of what he had done.

"I love you! I love you!" he repeated. "You are my angel and my star."

She smiled a little. Somehow it had never occurred to her to think of herself as either an angel or as a star. Nor did she particularly wish to fill those parts however figuratively, who was quite content to remain just a beautiful young woman in the flesh.

"I know," she murmured indefinitely, then paused.

"Oh! say more than that," he went on with passion. "Say that you love me also."

"I don't know," she replied still more indefinitely.

"But you must; you must. It is impossible that I can love so much and not be loved back again. You must love me. You must marry me, Rose."

At these words she looked up quickly. So he was going all the way--he meant marriage.

"I have never thought much of love, Andrew, and you are very young to talk of marriage. Also, how could we marry when we have nothing to live on?"

"I have something," he answered, "a couple of hundred a year or so, and my profession."

"I'm afraid that won't be worth much to you for a long while, especially as you have made up your mind to work in Whitechapel where everybody expects to be doctored for nothing."

Now an idea occurred to Andrew, namely, to tell her that he had other prospects of a sort. He rejected it, however, first because they could not materialize except through the death of others, on which it seemed mean and unworthy to speculate, and secondly for the reason that he shared Dr. Watson's prejudices about rank--to a certain extent his contempt for it, and in short held the whole business sordid, not mete for discussion with this divine and adorable creature. Perhaps it was the greatest mistake of his life, or the wisest act. It depends in

what light it is regarded in view of all that was to come. What could such things matter, he reflected, when love, holy, unalterable love and nothing less was at stake? So of those prospects he said nothing.

"Besides," went on Rose, who had employed the interval in marshalling her arguments, "there is my father to be considered. If I married, he would be quite alone, and I promised my mother that I would always look after him. I could never break that promise, Andrew, just to please myself."

"You might look after us both," he suggested.

She shook her delicate head, and said:

"Three in a house would never agree, especially when both had such claims. You would grow jealous and he would be sore, and what would a poor woman do between you?"

"Then do you refuse me?" he asked bluntly. "Oh! don't tell me that you refuse me."

"I never said so," she replied, looking down. "I must have time to think."

"Oh! take it then," he answered. "I can come back to-morrow."

"You silly, Andrew! I mean a long time, at least a year. So many things happen in a year and by then I should know--my own heart. In a year, too, you would know if you really cared about me. You must remember that in a way I am the first girl you have met, and doubtless you will see others whom you may think more suitable for many reasons and--better-looking."

"I shall see no others," he replied sternly.

"Well, even if you do not, surely you would not wish to take advantage of my weakness and inexperience to press me to an irrevocable decision. It would not be like you to do so, because you know that a girl who is openly engaged is always tarnished if after all it should come to nothing--whatever the reason."

As it happened no argument could have been used more likely to appeal to Andrew. He tarnish Rose? Perish the thought! Sooner would he die.

"I see," he said. "I never looked at it in that light. Take your year. At the end of it I shall claim you, and you will give me the answer that I want."

She smiled in a dazzling fashion and avoiding that issue, said:

"Very well, so it is agreed. Meanwhile we will be the dearest of

friends and you will say nothing as to an engagement, and I will say nothing even to my father. And now, dear Andrew, good night. I hope you will always think of me as I think of you and come to see me whenever you can. Oh! I never said that you might kiss me again, but after all, one more makes no difference."

## CHAPTER IV

## SOMERVILLE BLACK

It is doubtful whether all London held a happier man than was Andrew that night. Of course he was not finally and openly engaged, but then how good were Rose's reasons against such a course. How noble and unselfish! She thought of her father as a loving daughter should; she thought of him, Andrew, believing--though what put such a mad idea into her head he could not conceive--that he might wish to change his mind; she thought of what he would feel if by any chance their open betrothal came to an end, and he knew that thereby he had caused her name to be breathed upon; she thought, too, of how he might be hampered if he married very young and without sufficient means. In short, she thought of everybody and everything but herself. Oh! indeed she was a pearl above price, a woman whom a king might be glad to marry, an angel, one almost too good for this world. And she had let him kiss her, not once but often, and he knew--oh! full surely--that never, never would she have allowed this unless her heart told her that he was the one man on earth to whom she wished to give that holy right.

He walked back to Justice Street treading so lightly that figuratively he seemed to float, a precious sensation which is granted occasionally to the young. Mrs. Josky saw him coming from her point of vantage on the doorstep and, like Dr. Somerville Black, at once diagnosed the case.

"He's been and gone and done it," she said to herself. "Poor young man!"

Then she fled to prepare the supper.

A little later she arrived with that meal to find Andrew gazing rapturously at the ceiling.

"Anything wrong with the plaster, Mr. West?" she asked, "or are you expecting an angel to come down into Justice Street, because if so, I fancy you will have to wait a long while."

"I was only thinking, Mrs. Josky."

"What of? Medicines and such-like?" Then her eye fell upon the rose.

"You had better put it in water," she said, pointing to that flower, "for I think you've seen the best of it. Or perhaps you would like to press it, for then, being wired, it will hold together a long time, until you want to throw it away or get another."

"That's a good idea," said Andrew, and going to a shelf he took down a massive medical work (it chanced to be on diseases of the heart), and reverently deposited the rose between the pages.

"Better put some tissue-paper round it," suggested Mrs. Josky, "or it will stain the pretty picture" (which was one of the pectoral cavity cut open to reveal the organs within).

Again Andrew obeyed while Mrs. Josky watched him gloomily.

"Is that a very rare sort of rose, Mr. West," she asked while she pretended to arrange the plates, "that you take such particular care of it? Or is there some other reason?"

Andrew could resist no longer. He must communicate his joy, and here was an ideal confidante, one who would triumph with him, and understand.

"There /is/ another reason, Mrs. Josky," he said solemnly. "This flower means a great deal to me; it is the gift of the lady whom I love."

"Is it, indeed, Mr. West? Well, it is pretty and it didn't cost her much, but does the lady love /you/?"

"Oh! yes, I think so. There are some things which young and innocent girls don't say right out, you know, Mrs. Josky. But in view of what passed----" and he paused.

"Ah! kisses and the rest, I suppose. I've heard of them before, I have indeed. But what did pass, Mr. West? If you feel moved to tell me, I'll tell you what I think."

So Andrew told her at great length and with an extraordinary wealth of detail, nor, although it agonized her to know that the chops were getting cold, did Mrs. Josky attempt to cut him short.

"I forgot," said Andrew, when at length the history came to an end. "I promised secrecy; however, as you don't know who the lady is, it doesn't matter."

"No, I don't know, so of course it doesn't matter. But I was trying to think this business out, Mr. West. You are kind of engaged to some one you met suddenlike, but she isn't engaged to you?"

"No, now you mention it, Mrs. Josky, not exactly engaged."

"In short, the hook's in your mouth, but not in hers, and a year hence you are to find out whether she likes the taste of the bait."

"I should never have thought of calling it a hook, Mrs. Josky."

"Of course not, nobody does who is the right side of thirty. But somehow I didn't treat Josky like that, all take and no give, so to speak; and what's more, I don't think he would have stood it, if I had, for he wasn't romantic, wasn't Josky. 'Now you make up your mind, Emma,' he said to me, 'for I've got five minutes to spare for this job and no longer.'"

"Perhaps," suggested Andrew, "the temperament of the late Mr. Josky and my own differ somewhat."

"There ain't no doubt about that, Mr. West. They differs a lot. Well, there it is, you've gone through the top and one day you'll come out at the bottom, and then you'll know how you like it. Everybody does that kind of thing; why, I did myself before I met Josky. And now I'll take those chops down and warm them up."

"I don't want any chops," murmured Andrew.

"But you'll eat them all the same to support you through the trials of this mortal life," and she departed, leaving him wondering.

Somehow the tale of his perfect romance had not been as enthusiastically received as he could have hoped. But then Mrs. Josky was--well, Mrs. Josky, and could hardly be expected to understand.

As a matter of fact that good woman understood with almost painful clearness.

"She's a baggage, is that Rose Watson," she said, addressing a vagrant black-beetle in the kitchen which she had failed to squash, "with no more heart than a dead heifer. She's keeping him hanging on, poor boy, while she looks round to see if she can't do better. Well, after all, her looks are her fortune, as the saying goes, and she mustn't be blamed if she takes them to the highest market. Still, I'm sorry for him, poor boy, for he thinks the world of her. It's just like the measles and he's got to get through with them, and that's all there is about it."

Three days later Andrew went to tea again at Red Hall, but somehow never got a word alone with Rose, for Sister Angelica and a friend were constantly in evidence, and however long he sat seemed determined to sit longer. On the famous Elizabethan table, however, he observed a new set-out of china which, being a young man of taste and having some

knowledge of such things, he was well aware must have been as costly as it was beautiful.

"What a pretty tea-service," he remarked.

"Yes," replied Rose, colouring. "Isn't it kind of Doctor Somerville Black? He sent them to me with a charming note to make up for those which he broke in the passage."

"Oh!" said Andrew. "I thought Sister Angelica broke them by running the tray into his back."

"Yes, I did," said Angelica, "it was so dark with all the doors shut and no gas lit."

Then the subject dropped, but Andrew left the rest of his tea undrunk in the lovely Sèvres cup. Rose observed it as she observed everything, and took an opportunity to touch his hand and give him one of her most angelic glances. Also, when he went away, she pressed it and gave him another heavenly look, and once more he walked home on air, yet feeling as if there were something just a little wanting. Also, he wished that the opulent Somerville Black would keep his antique Sèvres tea-services to himself.

As time went on he wished it a great deal more, since Somerville Black always seemed to be about the place. His interest in the young woman with the three personalities was apparently insatiable; also, it spread to other of Dr. Watson's cases. As it happened, however, Andrew saw very little of him. Chance, or something else, so arranged matters that they did not come across each other. Once they met upon the doorstep of Red Hall when the jovial doctor favoured him with a jest or two, asking him which member of the "floral kingdom" attracted his attention in the house. At first Andrew could not understand the riddle, but afterwards remembered that there is a plant called Angelica and another named Rose. Occasionally he saw the fine carriage drawn by high-stepping horses speeding down the Whitechapel streets and inside of it caught sight of the doctor, looking more imposing and larger than ever in a resplendent fur-lined coat. One cold day, about this time too, he met Rose in the street, and noticed that she also was wearing a very beautiful long fur garment made of the finest sealskin with a collar and cuffs apparently of sable, which became her graceful figure very well indeed. He told her so, whereon she coloured and changed the subject. Afterwards he remembered that his cousin Clara had a somewhat similar coat which their uncle, Lord Atterton, had given to her and that she had told him it cost a hundred guineas. So he supposed that Rose's garment must be an imitation, or perhaps one that she had inherited from her mother, since he was sure that her father could never have afforded to pay so much for such an article.

He made some allusion to the matter to Sister Angelica, who acknowledged it with a watery and vacuous smile and, like Rose,

changed the subject. After this, although he was the most innocent and unsuspecting of men, it must be confessed that Andrew did sometimes wonder whence had come those wondrous furs.

So perhaps did her own father, who once then they came from visiting a patient together, observed Rose passing them on the further side of the road, remarked in his /distrait/ manner that she seemed to be very finely dressed, then coloured a little as though a thought had struck him, and looked down at the pavement.

For now, it should be explained, Andrew, being fully qualified, was acting as a kind of assistant to Dr. Watson. There was no agreement between them; they were not partners, nor was he paid. As he was so rarely paid himself, this detail appeared to escape the doctor's mind, nor, he being in funds, did it occur very vividly to that of Andrew. He had gravitated towards the Red Hall surgery and begun to work there, that was all. Moreover, soon this work became of a very engrossing character, for the doctor's practice, as is common with those of a more or less gratis nature in a populous neighbourhood, was very large indeed and absorbed all Andrew's time. In fact, soon he found himself working about twelve hours a day, to say nothing of night calls, and with little leisure left for anything else, no, not even to visit Rose.

At intervals, however, that charming young lady did ask him to tea, though generally this happened on days when he chanced to be exceptionally busy and could not possibly be spared. It is difficult to leave Whitechapel mothers under certain circumstances when they have no one else to look after them, even to partake of tea with one's adored.

It was in connection with some most unusual case of this character, that once more he came into contact with Dr. Somerville Black. The details do not in the least matter, but the upshot of it was that Andrew, confronted by frightful and imminent emergency and with no one at hand to consult, resorted to an heroic surgical treatment which he had once read of as possible, though there was no clear record of its ever having been followed with success. Having done all he could, he ran out from the place with the object of finding Dr. Watson, leaving some local midwife in charge of the patient. In the main street he met a carriage blocked by an accident to an omnibus, and standing by it, Dr. Somerville Black who had descended to see what had happened and, as a matter of fact, was returning after taking tea at Red Hall.

The doctor caught sight of him, and with his usual keenness guessed from his face that he was in trouble.

"What's wrong, Brother West?" he asked in his jovial tones.

Andrew stopped and remembering only that here was a famous physician, briefly detailed the circumstances.

"By Jove!" said the doctor, "that's interesting. I've given up that sort of work, but if you will allow me, I should like to have a look at the case, for I remember one like it when I was a medical student, and I have got half an hour to spare."

Andrew, of course, was delighted and they returned together to the mean tenement house.

"I'll tell you what," said Somerville Black when he had finished his examination, "this is a thing that Clinton ought to see. You know who I mean, Sir Claude Clinton, the great obstetrician. He's a friend of mine, and if you will wait here I'll drive off and see if I can find him. Your treatment has been tremendous, my friend; I've never known such a thing attempted, but I'm not sure that you haven't hit on the right line of action."

Then off he went, and within a little over an hour was back with Sir Claude Clinton, a quiet, brave-faced man.

Again there was an examination, at the end of which Sir Claude turned and said to Andrew, with a little bow:

"I congratulate you on your courage and skill. I should scarcely have dared to attempt such an operation myself, and that it should have been carried out at the right moment with only the assistance of a person like that," and he nodded towards the parish midwife, "is almost unprecedented. Unless complications supervene, as is of course possible and even probable, I think that the woman should live and be none the worse. Anyhow, it was a great achievement which so far has been successful. With your leave I will meet you in consultation over this case to-morrow, should the patient still live. If she dies, perhaps you will let me have a telegram. Here is my address."

Then he departed. A few minutes later, after giving some medical directions, Dr. Somerville Black and Andrew followed him from the house. In the street outside where his carriage stood, the former said suddenly:

"What are you doing now, West? Working for our friend, Brother Watson, in his extensive but unremunerative practice?"

"Yes," answered Andrew, "and I don't know which is the more remarkable, the extent or the unremunerativeness."

"Ah! just as I thought. Well, look here, my young friend, if you will allow me to say it, I've taken a fancy to you. Don't be mistaken, I'm some judge of character though little else, for my medical reputation, as Clinton there would tell you if you asked him, is more or less a sham--I mean, it is not founded on real attainments like Clinton's. Now I've added you up pretty thoroughly and I see your weak points,

which are many. For instance, you are a dreamer and an idealist, both of which qualities are mistakes in our trade, also so nervous that you will probably wear yourself out and die before you have reached my age, which is fifty-eight, whereas I, who am neither of these, hope to live another twenty years at least. Now tell me, ain't I right?"

"As to the first part of your diagnosis, I should say yes," answered Andrew. "As to the rest, perhaps so. I neither know nor care."

"Also you are very inexperienced, for book learning with a certain amount of hospital work is not experience as I understand it. But you have the insight of a fine temperament and with it courage, otherwise you could never have conceived and carried out that operation on the good woman in there at the critical instant and without assistance, one from which, as he said, Clinton himself would have shrunk. Also you have youth on your side, to regain which I would give back all that I have won in life. The upshot of it is that I like you, West, especially as you are a gentleman which I ain't quite, and--are you open to an offer?"

"What sort of an offer?" asked Andrew astonished.

"Something of this kind. You come to me as an assistant, not as a partner, mind you, with a salary of, let us say, £500 a year to begin with. Then if you do as well as I expect you will, the partnership can follow, and in a few years' time when you are old enough and I die or grow tired of it, the whole bag of tricks, which means one of the finest businesses in London, £8000 a year, for that's what my books have averaged lately after deducting twenty per cent for expenses."

Andrew heard and, understanding the magnitude and unusual nature of the offer made by one of the great men of the profession to a complete novice like himself, flushed with pride and pleasure. Yet oddly enough, his first impulse was to refuse. Why? He did not know exactly. The opening offered was splendid and made /bona fide/: Dr. Watson could easily replace him with some other young man anxious to gain experience, and after all, however democratic one might be, the atmosphere of Park Lane was more agreeable than that of Whitechapel. No, it was none of these things; it was that there existed some antagonism between the offerer and himself, not a personal antagonism, for individually, within his limitations, he liked Somerville Black whose essential goodness he recognised, as much as Somerville Black liked him, but rather one of circumstance. It was the facts of life that antagonized them, their interests, he felt, were directly opposite upon some vital matter which at the moment his mind did not define. All he knew was that it existed and would continue to exist, and on account of it he wished to say No.

Then another idea came to him, namely, that if he said Yes, he might be able to marry Rose within a year. By that time he was sure that he would have established himself firmly with Somerville Black and,

loving him as he was quite certain that she did, that his prospects would be such that she would no longer feel it her duty to postpone their union.

These reflections settled the matter.

"Thank you," he said. "It is awfully good of you, seeing what you are and what I am, and I'll come when it is convenient for Doctor Watson to let me go. Indeed, I am very much flattered."

"No, you ain't, young man," answered Black with one of his jolly laughs. "You think me a successful Society doctor, a kind of quack, not fit to hold a candle to men like Clinton, or even Watson, and in a way you are right. But I am not altogether a quack, as I think I could prove to you if I were to take the trouble to tell you all that has been passing through your mind during the last few minutes, which I think I can guess pretty well. Learn to control your features, West, it is one of the first duties of a doctor; and don't let your eyes advertise your thoughts. Just one more thing, don't think that I am a man to take advantage of my position and money to do another any wrong. Never, never. I have to see my road pretty clear before I set foot on it, and it must be a straight one. Now I am off. This afternoon's job has cost me more than ten guineas already. Drop me a line to say when you can come and we will settle the details in any way you like. Good-bye, give my love to the Flower-garden at Red Hall, if you are going that way, and tell Sister Rose--oh! well, never mind."

He bustled off to his carriage, leaving a stream of chaff behind him as was his fashion. At its door, however, he halted and calling Andrew to him, suddenly became professional.

"Look here," he said, "about that case of yours yonder. You've done everything possible, or so Clinton would say, but I tell you there is a great deal more to do. I believe you have saved the woman's life; now it remains for you to save her mind. The probability is, although Clinton would never think of it, that when she understands what has happened, she will go mad. If you can prevent that, I shall think even better of you than I do."

I am not certain that he is not a big doctor after all, although he is jealous of Clinton because of his European reputation, thought Andrew, as he watched Somerville Black's carriage disappear amidst the motley equipages of the squalid street.

## CHAPTER V

## ARABELLA

As it happened, Andrew did visit the "Flower-garden" at Red Hall that afternoon, because Rose, for him the queen of all flowers, had asked him to tea. Owing to circumstances that have been set out, he arrived a little late for which he was reproached by Rose, who opened the front door for him.

"Oh! Andrew," she said, "I did hope that you would have been in time for once, since then we might have had a few minutes together. Now that can't be, as Angelica and my father are waiting for their tea, and immediately afterwards my cousin Emma is coming for me and we are going to the theatre where we have a box."

"What theatre? I didn't know any of them began before eight o'clock, and who gave you the box?" asked Andrew rather heavily, for something about all these announcements chilled him.

"The Haymarket, which takes a long time to reach by bus; also we must be early because of the crowd, and Emma has the box."

"I see," replied Andrew without conviction, whereon she brushed his hand with her own and after a quick glance up the passage, bent her sweet face towards him. Then, when the inevitable had happened, with a little sigh of happiness, she flitted before him into the sitting-room.

Following more slowly, for he had paused to hang up his hat, Andrew met Dr. Watson who was coming from the surgery, and stopped to report to him all that had happened in connection with his remarkable case. Watson listened entranced.

"You did right, quite right," he said, "though I'm not certain that I should have dared. However, if Clinton has approved, all is well, for I think him the greatest authority in Europe. It was good of him to come, too, but those big men are often like that and will do for nothing what they would charge fifty guineas for if they were called in. Well, my boy, you must be tired, come and have some tea. We will talk about it afterwards."

So they went in and drank tea out of the porridge-bowls, the best china not being in evidence, and Andrew, who had eaten little that day, devoured sundry slices of the thick bread and butter, also some /marrons glacés/ which Rose presented to him in an elegant and expensive-looking box, after all of which he felt much refreshed.

Presently, in a rather nervous kind of way, like one who feels it incumbent on her to show an active interest in the proceedings of some one else, she asked Andrew what he had been doing.

"Well," he answered gaily, "if you want to know, subject to your father's consent, I have been accepting an appointment, or rather a kind of partnership in the making."

"Indeed! Oh! do tell me about it. Will you be well paid?"

"Very well, much more than I am worth, five hundred pounds a year to begin with, which means a lot to me," and he glanced at her with meaning.

"Five hundred pounds a year!" she exclaimed, opening her big blue eyes, while Sister Angelica, in a thin voice like that of a far echo, repeated, "Five hundred pounds a year!" from the shadows at the end of the long Elizabethan table, and even Dr. Watson, awaking from his reveries, looked extremely interested. "Who offered you that?" and again Sister Angelica echoed, "Who offered you that?"

"You would never guess though. It was a friend of yours, Doctor Somerville Black."

Rose's face fell.

"Really," she said in a voice so quiet that it was almost stern, "and what are you to do? Go somewhere to look after the patients whom he sends away to that watering-place of which he is so fond?"

"No," answered Andrew, "I am to stop here to help him in London."

"Oh! that will be delightful for you," she said, smiling mechanically. "And now I must try on my new dress before Emma comes to fetch me, so good-bye, An--I mean Mr. West--I /do/ congratulate you. I do indeed." Then for one moment she let her beautiful blue eyes rest on his, and turning, glided away.

As it happened, doubtless by the merest accident, Dr. Somerville Black found himself for a little while in the box that was occupied by Rose and her cousin Emma at the Haymarket that night. Being busy he did not stop long, which in a sense did not trouble him as he was no playgoer, and in fact had not been inside a theatre for years. Arriving in the middle of an act, he waited until its end and then asked what it was all about. Rose, with the very same sweet smile and the very same glance of the perfect eyes that had entranced Andrew in the afternoon, explained to the best of her ability, which was not very well, since she had no natural gift towards synopsis.

"Ah!" said the doctor with a yawn, "most thrilling, I have no doubt, but I find real life quite interesting enough for me. You see, I have just come here from a death-bed, that of a lady who was rather great in her quiet way and who has suffered from cancer for three years without a murmur. So the sham sufferings of that painted minx at so much a night don't move me very deeply, but I am glad that you young people like them, having none of your own. By the way, I know the

lady; she's consulted me several times and never paid my bill, and I who have seen more of her than you have, can tell you that she is uncommonly plain and has an execrable figure which goes out wherever it ought to come in and goes in wherever it ought to come out."

"Oh! Doctor," said Rose, "how can you say such things of the beautiful Elfrida Verney?"

"Perhaps because she hasn't paid my bill, or perhaps because they happen to be true. It isn't easy to disentangle human motives even if they chance to be one's own. By the way, did you see young West before you left home? And if so, had he any more news of that case in Hozier's Lane?"

"I saw him," answered Rose, "but he said nothing to me about Hozier's Lane."

"No, of course he wouldn't. When a man sees you, young lady, he thinks of things different to Hozier's Lanes, and people hovering on the edge of death. I admit I do myself who am nearly forty years his senior," and he looked at her and sighed.

"He told me," went on Rose, hurriedly, blushing beneath those admiring eyes, "that you had asked him to come to help you in your work."

"Yes, I did. I have a high opinion of that young man, although he has weaknesses like the rest of us. Have you anything to say against it? By your voice I gather you don't approve."

"Oh! no, though of course my father will miss him, and I should have thought that more experience among the poor would have been useful to him before he went into a fashionable practice."

"Would you, indeed. Well, my dear, now that we have come to professional matters, perhaps you will allow me to form my own judgment. I'll listen to yours on actresses or fur coats, or china, or anything that is pretty and useless, but not upon whom I should choose to be my assistant in my work, which is ugly but I hope on the whole useful, even if well paid. Now I must be off if I want to catch that lady in time, for, you see, I promised to be with her when she died and I don't give her more than another hour or two. Here, young woman, bring a couple of boxes of those chocolates, the best you've got. Now good night to both of you. I hope you will enjoy the rest of the play. You'll find my small brougham waiting outside to take you home; I've told the door-porter about it. I'll come and see you soon at Red Hall; indeed, I may be down there to-morrow about that case of West's."

Then with a smile and a nod he was gone.

"What an interesting man the Doctor is," said Cousin Emma, a neutral-tinted person who had been observing everything from the

corner of the box.

"Yes, very," answered Rose in the intervals of crunching up one of the chocolates with her pearl-like teeth. "But I wish he wouldn't come here and talk about death-beds; it spoils the play." Then taking another chocolate, she added, "Hush! the curtain is going up and we mustn't miss anything."

Having triumphantly pulled his case in Hozier's Lane out of the very jaws of death and generally wound up his medical affairs with Brother Watson by inducting another young man into his honourable but unpaid share in that extensive practice, Andrew departed from Red Hall and proceeded to Harley Street. To be accurate, he did not altogether proceed since he continued to reside at Justice Street. Dr. Somerville Black had suggested that he should take rooms in his neighbourhood and even half-offered to put him up on the top floor of the great Harley Street mansion, while at the same time suggesting that he might find himself more independent elsewhere. But when Andrew brought the subject to the notice of Mrs. Josky, there was such an explosion that he never even dared to allude to it again. Growing frigid, Mrs. Josky began by asking whether he thought that he had been cheated in her house, because, if so, she was willing to produce the accounts--if she could find them, though she rather believed that she had used the most of them for Laurie's curl-papers. However, doubtless the tradesmen would "come forward" to corroborate her statements.

When Andrew disclaimed any such idea with an almost agonized emphasis, she took another tack, or rather tacks. Was the cooking not to his taste? She knew that sometimes in Whitechapel one did not get quite the freshest fish. Herself, recently, she had been made very ill by a bad herring, but she thanked both her own God and that of the deceased Josky, who was of another sort though which she had never really understood, that the said herring, although she had bought it for him, inspired her with doubts, so that she determined to eat it herself.

Again Andrew waved his hands wildly and began to explain, till she cut him short.

Perhaps, she suggested, it was the distance that troubled him. If so she had a friend, a connection indeed, for he was a relative of Josky's, who happened to be under certain obligations to her and owned a really tip-top hansom cab. For a very moderate sum this person, his horses and his cab would be at Andrew's disposal day and night, "for," added Mrs. Josky darkly, "I'll see he don't cheat you. He'd know better than to try it on with me, would Amos, unless he wants to see them hosses and that cab at his uncle's, I mean, up the spout."

Andrew murmured something about trams and buses, but again she cut him short.

"I know what it is," she said. "It's the neighbourhood which you think low, having as it were gone up in the world. Well, I have been considering a move myself. Give me a fortnight and I'll see what I can do over Harley Street way. I'm told there's a good opening for my kind of trade round about Marylebone Road."

"But it isn't the neighbourhood," gasped Andrew.

"Then it must be that there dratted girl, what they call the Whitechapel Rose," ejaculated Mrs. Josky, "and Abraham and all the prophets, as Josky used to say, only know what I am to do against her. I'll make bold to say one thing, though, Mr. Andrew, and that is, you look out that you don't find her in Harley Street before you."

"Whatever do you mean?" asked Andrew amazed.

Mrs. Josky pulled herself up, fearing that she might have gone too far, and Andrew, recovering strength, gathered himself for another charge, when the Fates intervened in the shape of stifled sobs followed by a piercing howl, proceeding from the landing outside. Mrs. Josky heard and inspiration took her.

"Listen to that poor child, Mr. Andrew," she said, "what you dragged up from the bottom of the grave. She's been eavesdropping, having guessed what was in your heart, for which I'll smack her head afterwards, and that's why she's howling outside there, like a cat on the tiles, because she can't bear to think that you're so cruel as to go and leave her, which she never would have believed of you, nor for the matter of that, wouldn't I unless I had heard it with my own ears and on the right side of the door."

Then with frightful suddenness Mrs. Josky also burst into tears.

"Stop! Stop!" cried Andrew, "and I'll stop too--for all my life, if you like."

Instantly, Mrs. Josky's tears dried up, and at the same moment the howls from the landing died away.

"That's all right, Sir," she said in a matter-of-fact voice, "and I'm glad, since there won't be any need for me, who hate changes, to look for a new lodger. When one knows the weaknesses of a gentleman, however bad they may be to put up with, one doesn't wish to try those of another that might be worse. Now I've got a beautiful crab for you for supper, and a bottle of white wine to drink with it, that a friend of mine in the trade gave me. Shatter Squirm, I think he called it, which I hope it won't make you do, and a toasted cheese to follow. So I'll be off to dress it and to smack the head of that Laurie if I can catch her, to teach her not to listen at doors."

So she went with triumph in her eye, metaphorically flapping her wings, and leaving Andrew so prostrate that it took the best part of the bottle of Château Yquem to restore his equilibrium. Until circumstances separated them, never again did he venture to suggest that he should depart from the shelter of Mrs. Josky's hospitable roof.

While he was digesting the crab and toasted cheese with Château Yquem sauce, which did not prove altogether an easy process, Andrew reflected on many things. Amongst others his mind dwelt upon a single sentence he recalled, standing up like a rock above the foaming flood of Mrs. Josky's eloquence, that in which she had so rudely spoken of Rose as "a dratted girl," and requested him to beware lest he should find her "in Harley Street before him." What on earth did she mean by that? It suggested that affection for him might take Rose to Harley Street, which, though flattering, was absurd, seeing that there was no one there of whom she could be jealous and she could always meet him at her own home if she wished. Could she then be suffering from some illness of which Mrs. Josky was aware, that would cause her to consult Dr. Somerville Black? No, that, too, was absurd, for never had he known anyone so entirely healthy.

And, now that he came to think of it, why had Rose herself received the news of his appointment in the way she did? He would have expected her to be delighted, seeing that it meant that within less than the appointed year he ought, with ordinary fortune, to be in a position to support her comfortably as his wife. And yet, although she had of course congratulated him, there was something in her tone which did not suggest delight, but rather a hidden reserve of disapproval. Perhaps she thought that he should not have left her father, even to better his fortune for her sake, being the unselfish creature that she was. He could not say; all he knew was that Dr. Watson himself took an entirely different view. There was no doubt about his pleasure at such a chance having come in the way of his unpaid assistant. At length Andrew gave it up and went to bed where, in his uneasy slumbers, the crab and the toasted cheese seemed to take up the problem and argue it out in a fashion as grotesque as it was unpleasant.

Next morning he presented himself at Harley Street and began his career as a fashionable physician.

"Glad to see you," said Somerville Black in his jolly tones. "That will be your kennel," and he showed him a kind of ante-chamber to the consulting-room. "All the books here, you see"--with a sweep of his arm he indicated shelves of medical works--"I don't read them much myself, prefer to study the living subject. But you may get something out of them. The other kind of books are in those drawers, and it will be your job to keep them in future. By the way, would you like a cheque on account? No. Well, so much the better. They think me liberal, but if you only knew how I hate parting with money! Comes from associating so much with Jews, I suppose. Talking of Jews,

there's an old woman of that ancient race coming to see me presently, but she must see you instead as I have to go off to something really important, a little girl who is supposed to have swallowed a latch-key. She--the old woman I mean--has nothing the matter with her, except stinginess which has congested her liver. Listen to what she has got to say and prescribe Epsom Salts morning and evening in double doses. Good-bye, the door doesn't fit very well, but that don't matter as you will be able to listen to all that goes on in here and pick up some wrinkles. I dare say a lot of people will turn up and I mayn't be back till lunch. There's a list of their names and appointments on that desk; I've put their most probable diseases underneath. Do the best you can with them, and take the fees if they offer any, which I don't suppose they will."

Then he swept off like a hurricane, leaving Andrew terrified and bewildered.

Three minutes later the butler, Tompkins, a venerable, white-whiskered individual who looked like a cross between a stage peer and a mute, ushered in the old Jewess, Mrs. Solomon Isaacs by name, who stared at him amazed.

At first their interview was tumultuous, as she began by telling him that she had come to see the doctor, not the under-footman. Andrew laughed and replied with some repartee which made the other laugh also. Then she set out her symptoms, glad of a new listener, and ended by saying that if he prescribed Epsom Salts for her, she would throw them at his head. He replied that he would never dream of doing such a thing, as her case was far too serious, and wrote out a prescription in which the despised Epsom Salts appeared under an enormous Latin name. This pleased her so much that she departed, saying that she hoped she would see him again next time she called and not the doctor, and actually left her two guineas on the table, an event which Somerville Black afterwards declared partook of the miraculous.

Others came also. Some of them refused to see him, while others consented, and with these on the whole he got on fairly well. Still, it was a tired young man who received Dr. Black upon his return and, retiring to his own compartment, joyfully left him to deal with the remaining appointments.

At length they were all worked through, and as they washed their hands together in the lavatory, Black congratulated Andrew on his modicum of success.

"You'll do all right," he said, "or would if you didn't look as if you had just come from school. I think a pair of glasses would help you, just window-glass in a frame, you know, and if you didn't mind, a little doctoring of your hair to give it a pepper-and-salt appearance; they would soon put up with the rest. But most of these old women can't stick a fellow who looks as though he has been sucking lollypops

won in a bet on leap-frog."

Andrew, who felt nettled at these pointed allusions to the juvenility of his appearance, ignored the subject and asked what happened to the child who had swallowed the latch-key.

"Nothing at all," answered the doctor, "thanks to me. When I got there they had three of the big surgeons, to say nothing of an anæsthetist and two hospital nurses, and were just going to operate. 'Hold on a bit,' I said, 'for I am the family physician to this household.' Then I made a few investigations and, to cut the story short, I found the latch-key in the child's bed, where she had hidden it to tease the nurse who made use of it for her own purposes. After that she went to sleep and dreamed that she had swallowed it, and waking up of course simulated the symptoms, or they thought she did. My word! you never saw a crowd look sillier than did those learned members of our profession when I produced that key. One of them wanted to operate all the same, thinking that I had played a trick on them, but the patient has now gone for a walk in the park, while her parent is signing cheques for half-fees. But let us go to lunch, for I expect Arabella is waiting and nothing upsets her temper more than my being late for lunch. She's my daughter, you know, and I hope for your sake that she may take a liking for you, which is more than she has ever done to me. Or if she has, she conceals it very well. You be advised by me, and if she speaks of her health, shake your head and look sad. Above everything, don't tell her that she looks quite well, or is only suffering from too much money and nothing to do."

Then he led the way to the dining-room, Andrew following with some trepidation, for this description of Arabella frightened him.

From the doorway he caught sight of a tall and elegant-looking woman of about thirty years of age, very beautifully dressed, standing in front of a fire and staring at the clock.

"Hullo! my dear," said the Doctor with such boisterous geniality that Andrew suspected it of being forced, "are you here already?"

She looked round at him and Andrew saw that she was well-favoured enough, but with a thin-lipped, rather ill-tempered mouth and restless, discontented eyes, in almost every respect the exact opposite to her father, although oddly enough in her general appearance she resembled him.

"I have been here exactly forty-two minutes, Father," she said, pointing to the clock. "You may remember that our luncheon hour, fixed by yourself, is twenty minutes past one, which allows five minutes for accidental delay, and it is now twelve minutes past two, which means of course that all the food is spoiled and I shall have another attack of indigestion."

"Sorry, my love, but I was detained by another young lady----"

"Oh! don't trouble to explain, Father. I am quite aware that everybody comes before me. My health or convenience does not matter."

At this moment she caught sight of Andrew, who was hovering indeterminate in the doorway reflecting with affection on 13 Justice Street and Mrs. Josky, and her whole attitude changed.

"Is that Doctor West?" she asked with animation. "If so, you might introduce me. I should like to apologize to him for a spoiled luncheon."

Then Andrew rose to the occasion nobly.

"It is I, Miss Somerville Black, who have to apologize to you," he said humbly. "The truth is that owing to a stupid mistake I made, I am afraid that I delayed your father. You see, I am a novice here."

"Splendid," muttered Dr. Black.

"I quite understand," said Arabella, "but I am afraid that my wretched indigestion makes me peevish."

"No wonder," said Andrew. "Have you tried the new cure? We were very successful with it in Whitechapel."

"Oh! What is it?" she asked with intense interest, which evidently was shared by her father.

"Something very simple, so simple that I am almost afraid to mention it to you in your father's presence."

"Oh! don't mind me," broke in Dr. Black, "I'm always ready to learn."

"Well, then, it is hot water drunk before and after each meal, also on getting up and at bedtime with about six drops of lemon juice, not more, please, and not less, in each tumblerful. That's the first part of it. The second is not to become a slave to regularity. Doctor Watson, with whom I have been working and who originated this cure, is very strong on that point. He declares that it is our rigid system of meals at fixed hours which accounts for most of these troubles from which no other animal seems to suffer. For instance, himself he will sometimes breakfast at seven and sometimes at eleven, and dine at any hour of the day or night, with the result that he has a perfect digestion."

"I see," said Arabella, "I dare say there is a great deal in the idea. Tompkins, give me some boiling water and a lemon."

"And bring me some too, Tompkins," said the doctor, "with the whisky."

After this things went very well indeed. Andrew discoursed to Arabella about her ailments and afterwards of other matters, with the result that she was soon in the best of tempers, while the Doctor ate an excellent lunch in peace.

"Magnificent, my boy," he said, "magnificent," when at last she had departed beaming. "Splendid idea, that hot water, and the six drops of lemon were a perfect stroke of genius. Only I foresee that she will want me to take it also--without the whisky. You know," he added, changing his tone, "my daughter is a good girl enough, but she has this crank about her health. To tell you the truth, there was a little disappointment a few years ago. If she could only get married, she would be all right. But when a woman is always talking of her digestion--well, it makes a man think that it might interfere with his."

## CHAPTER VI

## THE HOSPITAL

Andrew's career as assistant to Dr. Somerville Black in his fashionable and lucrative practice may be summarized in very few words, especially as it was short. He was quite successful in his humble rôle of medical bottle-washer, but the whole business bored him to distraction, because in it, so far as he was concerned, there was absolutely nothing of any importance. Many serious cases came to Dr. Black and received the benefit of his singular gift of diagnosis and shrewd and valuable advice. But he did not deal with them himself; after indicating their nature, almost invariably he passed them on to the real experts in the various branches of medical lore. Still less of course did Andrew deal with them, whose function was simply to hold the stage when the doctor was not there, with any gag that might be convenient, often by calling on and chatting with patients suffering from nothing in particular, when Black had not time to visit them. Very soon, indeed, he came to understand that so far as essentials were concerned and at the bottom he cared for nothing else, he would learn more of his trade in a single month at Whitechapel than he could hope to do in a year in Park Lane, although his pecuniary earnings might be in an inverse ratio.

At first Andrew was amused and interested, but quickly grew weary and, being intensely zealous and thorough by nature, came to the conclusion that however much he might hope to make out of it ultimately, this Park Lane practice was no place for him, although for reasons of his own it was desirable that he should stay there for a while until he found another opening. Otherwise how was he to marry Rose Watson, as he hoped and expected to do, at the end of his year of probation? This was one of his troubles, but he was faced by another that was even

worse than his daily struggle between professional conscience and personal advantage. Arabella, who was a good many years his senior, took a fancy to him which soon became very marked. On every possible occasion she consulted him about her imaginary symptoms, deferring to his advice in a fashion which he thought pathetic, since he knew it to be based on nothing.

Now Andrew, although he could play a part for a while and appreciate a joke, was at bottom an earnest and upright young man. Therefore at length the truth burst out of him, even where his master's daughter was concerned.

"It is absurd of you, Miss Black," he said, "to consult me, a mere novice, when you have at your command your father, who in his own way is one of the most skilled of our profession, and all its other members as well. But since you persist in doing so, I will tell you what I think. It is that you are a perfectly healthy woman; there is nothing at all the matter with you."

Thus quoth the exasperated Andrew, reflecting, not altogether with regret, that the speech would put a full stop to his practice as second fiddle to a fashionable physician. Arabella's pale but statuesque face flushed a little as she heard, but to his surprise she showed no anger, only great interest.

"How curious that you should tell me that," she said. "Nobody else has, not even my father. They all give me prescriptions."

"Because they are afraid of you and do not want to be worried," blurted out Andrew. "I could give you a prescription also and one which would prove a perfect cure for all your ailments, which are real enough in their way."

"Indeed, and what is it?"

"To cease thinking about yourself and begin to think about others. You have too much to your hand. Stop taking, and give."

In a nebulous fashion it came home to Arabella that his words embodied a fine idea.

"How?" she asked, then added with an outgush of truth, "I am a failure, Doctor West, and a very unhappy woman. My father and I do not get on. We bore each other and I am a disappointment to him. Of course we are very wealthy, but that does not seem to help matters since we have no society, except that of other doctors and rich, common people whom my father sometimes entertains for professional reasons. They do not care for me, and I," she added sighing, "have attracted no one outside because, you see, I am stupid and interest nobody, and am not good-looking enough to please them otherwise. Also I am a fidget, I know it, and so, between one thing and another, even the money does

not seem to help me and I feel very lonely, having no relations. What is the use of driving out in beautiful clothes and a splendid carriage and pair, when everybody looks at your fur coat and the horses and not at you, and if they talk about you at all, only say that you will have a lot of money?" she ended pathetically with a kind of sob.

"I don't know," said Andrew who was touched. "None, I should think. But, dash it all! Miss Arabella, it is your own fault. Why are you eternally talking about your health and making fusses because people are late for luncheon, and so forth, till you get the reputation of being a crank, as I do myself for different reasons. Don't stop to answer, but since you have been so good as to consult me and as crank calls to crank, I'll give you my advice. Imagine that you have only two pounds a week to live on and stick to that limit, and take a boxful of your oldest clothes--if you have any old clothes--and go out to work."

She considered him a little and then asked:

"Would you think better of me if I did?"

"I don't quite see what I have to do with it, but of course I should."

"Then I'll try, if you will show me how."

Andrew ran his fingers through his wavy hair and studied her with his dark eyes. Suddenly an idea came to him and he said:

"Doctor Watson, with whom I worked before I came here, keeps a curious hospital of his own, a sort of home for irritating and indefinite cases, generally of elderly females whom the regular hospitals won't take and who are not mad enough to be sent to an asylum, broken-down ladies and that kind, with a few drug victims whom he treats mostly by suggestion. It is reported that he does this on the interest of a sum of money, thirty thousand pounds, which a grateful patient left him to apply as he thought best. He might have kept it for himself if he wished, but being the man he is, took a different view and never tried. So he runs this place, helping out the expenses with such voluntary contributions as he can get. His nurses are also voluntary and therefore hard to find. I believe he wants one now, and she need not be skilled but just ready to work. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I think so. But wouldn't money be more serviceable?"

"For him, but not for you," replied Andrew almost rudely.

"Where should I live? In the hospital?" she asked again.

"No, I think not, the patients would get upon your nerves at night, and perhaps you might get upon theirs. But I've no doubt that he would put you up at Red Hall, where there is lots of room, if you don't mind

roughing it. And now I must be off. I've to meet your father about a case of an hysterical young woman. Her fit always takes her at five o'clock, and it's a quarter to now. Forgive me if I have made suggestions which I dare say you think foolish."

"I don't think them foolish," gasped Arabella. "I think them extremely wise, though I fear that I shall be very useless at first. Will you take me to see Doctor Watson?"

Andrew reflected. Here was a good excuse for another visit to Red Hall, or in other words, to see Rose.

"Yes," he answered, "that is, if you do not mind calling at 13 Justice Street where I live, at, say, twenty minutes to six. If I am not there by then, as I expect to be, my landlady, Mrs. Josky, will look after you till I come. Does that suit you? Very well. Now I must be off."

At twenty minutes to six accordingly, or rather before it, one of Dr. Black's smart broughams drew up at 13 Justice Street. Arabella, like many other idle and aimless women, having developed an idea, was anxious to act upon it in a hurry. Moreover, she desired greatly to please Andrew and to advance herself in his good opinion. At the bottom Arabella had something in her. Circumstances and environment had made her what she was, also youthful ailments which she could not believe she had outgrown. Had she been otherwise placed she might have been a useful woman enough, although perhaps one not altogether easy to live with in any intimate relation. Now she was determined that she would do something.

She never stopped to consult her father, since it had long been agreed between them that provided she did not trouble him, she was free to go her own way. Also she possessed a considerable fortune inherited from her mother, and therefore no financial question would arise between them. Lastly, they did not get on, and she was quite certain that he would not object to her temporary absence from his house. This indeed proved to be the case.

After he had left her it suddenly occurred to Andrew that he ought not to have made his suggestion to Arabella without first consulting her father. Therefore when he met him, he told him what he had done and of the surprising way in which she had welcomed his quite random and casual idea.

The doctor was not in the least disturbed, indeed he laughed.

"It's just one of her whimsies," he said; "she is as full of them as a pod is of peas. If she takes the business on I expect she will be back in a week. But I agree with you that what she wants is work and an occupation in life, for though she was delicate once, her only real weakness now is her temper. If only she could marry some decent fellow and have half a dozen children she would be as right as rain."

He reflected a little, then added:

"But I don't know how she would get on in that flower garden at Red Hall, that is if Watson is fool enough to have anything to do with her as a nurse for his softies. Yet perhaps it is as well that she should become acquainted with----" then he checked himself suddenly and turned the subject by saying, "But let us leave Arabella to manage her own affairs, which she is quite old enough to do, and attend to ours. I have no doubt I shall hear plenty about them in due course."

Laurie, an inquisitive and observant child, was fond of watching what went on in the street, which in summer she did from the doorstep, and in winter through the window of the room where Mrs. Josky carried on her somewhat mysterious commercial transactions. This habit of hers had a business side, since she kept the shop, noted the arrival of customers who often liked to call after dark, and if necessary, summoned her mother should she be cooking or otherwise employed. Presently from this coign of vantage she perceived the brougham with its fast, high-trotting horse which, after some hesitation and preliminary search by a footman, pulled up in front of their door, information that Laurie conveyed at the top of her voice to her mother in the kitchen below.

Mrs. Josky arrived in a hurry and peeped through the window just in time to see the tall and statuesque Arabella descend from the brougham of which the door was held open by the long-coated footman.

"My!" said Mrs. Josky, "I wonder what she is coming here for. To sell something on the sly, perhaps, but if it's them sables she's got on, they're beyond me."

Then she went to the door where a colloquy ensued, which resulted in her showing Arabella up to Andrew's sitting-room, where she lighted the gas with a box of matches which she produced from her pocket.

"I'll have the fire going in a minute, Ma'am, which in general I don't do before half-past six, since Mr. West doesn't ever eat before eight nowadays, and sometimes later, that's trying enough to one who has to cook his meals. I understood you to say you wished to see him, Ma'am," she added interrogatively, for curiosity burned within her like a fire.

"Yes," replied Arabella. "I am Miss Somerville Black, and Doctor West arranged to meet me here at twenty minutes to six."

"Then you will have ten minutes to wait, Miss, as it is only half-past five; or mayhap longer, as he isn't a very punctual gentleman, which is awkward if it is a case of sudden sickness."

"There is no sickness in the matter," replied Arabella shortly.

"Doctor West is going to take me to Red Hall."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Josky, in the intervals of puffing at the fire, "to see Miss Rose, I suppose. But perhaps you know her already if you are Doctor Somerville Black's daughter, Miss, since he goes there often enough."

"Who is Miss Rose?" inquired Arabella, now as curious as Mrs. Josky herself.

"Why," replied Mrs. Josky between her puffs, "who should she be, except Rose Watson, the Whitechapel Rose they call her because she's such a beauty. It is a strange thing, Miss, if you haven't heard of her, being Doctor Black's daughter and Doctor West's friend, seeing that according to all accounts they both worship the ground she walks on. But there, men are men and like to keep things to themselves, and small blame to them."

"Do they?" answered Arabella rather vacuously, "and--is this young lady so very beautiful?"

"To be honest, Miss, there ain't no doubt about that, so far as face and figure go, which is what men look to, though for the rest, to my mind as empty as a tin can with a hole in it."

"You don't seem to like her," said Arabella.

"Who likes a young woman what leads a young gentleman that's been her lodger for long and dragged her child out of the grave, a fool's dance, meaning to shut the door in his face at the end of the room?" inquired Mrs. Josky enigmatically as she ceased from her fire-raising labours.

Arabella, more interested than she had been in anything for years, was about to ask what on earth she meant, when Mrs. Josky held up a warning finger and exclaimed in a stage whisper:

"Hush! he's coming. I hear his step in the street and I'd know it among a thousand, since he don't walk, he runs, being always in such a blooming hurry, and Laurie what loves him, will have the door open before he gets there. There, don't you hear her kissing him, which sometimes I should like to do myself. And to think of his wasting himself on that there Rose what will come to pieces presently leaving nothing but a stalk in his hand and that full enough of prickles. But mum's the word about her, Miss, of whom I've no doubt you'll get to know plenty before all's done," she added with ominous emphasis.

In another moment Andrew rushed into the room, freeing himself from Laurie who was clinging to his hand, and began apologies.

"No need to be humble, Mr. West," interposed Mrs. Josky severely.

"Seeing that the young lady, your visitor, says you weren't due till twenty to, which leaves you with a minute to spare by the clock, which I keep exactly to church time, as did Josky before me. And now, you'll have your tea and an egg before you start wherever you may be going, since you won't get nothing there, except----"

"No, no, Mrs. Josky," broke in Andrew, "many thanks, but we must be getting on."

"Ah! I thought you would be in a hurry and I hope you will find yourself well paid. May I expect to see you back to-night, Mr. West, for dinner, I mean, and will this lady be with you?"

"Yes, of course, Mrs. Josky--I mean No; I mean I shall be alone. Time? Oh! the same as usual. Come one, Miss Black, the horse is getting cold."

"And so will the dinner be," murmured Mrs. Josky, "before I see you again. If only this one would take you off that one, it might be a good job. But she hasn't got the looks, at least of the right sort, and there ain't the stuffing in her."

"Mrs. Josky seems to be very fond of you, Doctor West," remarked Arabella in the brougham.

"Yes, now you mention it, I suppose she is. She's a dear soul, but she makes me eat too much," replied Andrew, absently, for his mind was fixed upon the sure and certain hope of seeing Rose.

As in common in such cases, he was destined to disappointment, for when they reached Red Hall, Sister Angelica who opened the door informed them that Rose was out, adding vaguely that she had not the least idea where she had gone or when she would be in again.

The information seemed to strike Andrew like a blow, for he stood quite still, as though at a loss what to do next, then murmured something about "another time."

"But," suggested Arabella, "I thought that we came to see Doctor Watson. You did not tell me that this young lady managed the hospital."

"Of course not, and of course we did--I mean, come to see Doctor Watson. Is he in, Sister Angelica?"

"Oh! yes," replied Angelica. "You'll find him having his tea about an hour late, as I know to my cost, having had to boil the water three times."

So saying, she melted away nebulously into the darkness of the passage, leaving them to their own devices.

"Come on," said Andrew to Arabella. "Perhaps you had better take my hand, as I know the steps and they haven't lit the gas."

Presently they found themselves in the sitting-room where Doctor Watson was seated at the Elizabethan table, a cup of cold tea before him, which his interest in the book he was reading had caused him to forget to drink. Looking up at the noise of their entry, he caught sight of a tall female form in the shadow, and concluded that it was that of his daughter.

"I'm glad you're back, Rose," he said, "for really this tea is undrinkable; I think it must have been made yesterday and stood ever since. Angelica's gifts do not lie in the way of tea-making; I meant to speak about it before, but I so seldom see you now, for you are never down to breakfast----"

"It is I, Doctor Watson," interrupted Andrew hurriedly, "and this lady is not Rose, but Miss Somerville Black, who has come to see you."

"Didn't know there was a Miss Somerville Black," muttered the doctor to himself, then added aloud,

"Ah! a patient, I suppose. Will you like to go into the surgery, Miss Black?"

Then ensued explanations, and the end of it was that Dr. Watson said that if Arabella cared to make a trial of the hospital, he would be pleased; also, that she was very welcome to lodge at Red Hall as a paying guest, since he was sorry to say that he could not afford to put her up for nothing, that is if she was not fastidious and if she did not mind poisonous tea and erratic meals. He suggested, however, that first she had better come and see the hospital which was almost next door, at once if it suited her, before the patients went to bed.

To Andrew's surprise Arabella answered firmly that it did suit her. Moreover, she proposed that he should return to Justice Street in the brougham, and send it back to take her home.

As Andrew saw no signs of Rose and, having had no lunch that day, suddenly began to think with affection of Mrs. Josky's dinner, he went, leaving Dr. Watson and Arabella to settle things as they pleased. He did not care how they settled them, for Rose being absent, the world was empty to him, and void of interest.

Here it may be stated that, conducted by Dr. Watson, Arabella went over the hospital. She saw the patients, a number of miserable old women belonging to the rag-tag and bobtail of a certain class of female who, most of them, had seen better days and fallen under the bondage of moral weaknesses connected with their bodily plight.

They did not interest her very much, though being good-hearted, she pitied their woes. But suddenly, in a kind of flash, it came home to her that if she lost her money, under certain quite conceivable circumstances she might become just like one of these aimless and futile women, a thought that gave her a shock and ultimately an inspriation.

Now she had one talent; she was an admirable housewife. No establishment was better run than that of her father, and although he never realized it, she managed everything and at a minimum of expense, considering its costly scale. At once she observed that this hospital was /not/ well run, and pointed out sundry details to Dr. Watson which struck him very much. Also she asked if she might see the books, only to find that there was none that could be produced. In the end she said:

"Well, I do not know whether I should be useful here as a nurse, but I think that I could do the housekeeping, if only I was told how much there is to spend."

"Then for heaven's sake try," exclaimed the doctor, "for I am in despair about it and Rose gives me no help, although it is a woman's business."

They went back to Red Hall and there, subject to her father's consent, fixed up matters to their mutual satisfaction, the agreement being that Arabella was to fill the position of matron for a month on trial.

Just as she was going away Rose returned and for the first time the two women came face to face.

While Dr. Watson introduced them they studied each other with results that were pleasing to neither. Arabella admitted to herself that Rose really was beautiful, of that there could be no doubt, but concluded at once that she did not like her. Rose set down Arabella as plain, which she was not for her features were good. What she lacked was colour and any vivacity whereof her general boredom with life had robbed her. Also she reciprocated Arabella's distaste. In short, the two women felt that their attitude towards each other was one of antagonism. Meanwhile Arabella was wondering what Mrs. Josky had meant by saying that her father worshipped the ground that this girl walked on. As regarded Andrew she could understand. Though it made her jealous, since she had conceived so strong a liking for him herself, it was only natural that a young man should be attracted by such a face and form. But what could a man of her father's age find in her to worship?

In another minute they had parted, since after a few rather awkward words Arabella announced that she must hurry or she would be late for dinner. When she was gone Rose asked her father why she had come. He told her and she listened astonished.

"Do you believe all that, Father?" she said.

"Why not, Rose?"

"Do you think it likely that a lady who has thousands and thousands would want to come to work in that dreadful hospital among those horrid old women?"

"It seems that she does," answered her father in his musing voice. "After all, why not? Is it impossible that a woman, however rich, should be touched by a sense of the higher things? If so, what do you suggest is her reason?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Rose with unusual irritation, for hers was a placid nature, "to please Andrew--I mean Doctor West, probably, or----" and she paused.

"Or what, Rose?"

"To spy upon me," she answered and, turning, left the room.

Now what on earth did she mean by that? reflected her father. What conceivable reason could Miss Black have that would induce her to spy upon Rose? Then this good, easy man, whose mind was lost in those higher things of which he had never spoken to a daughter who understood nothing about them, shrugged his shoulders and gave up the problem, wondering as he did so what she would say when she learned that Miss Black was to live in the house. It occurred to him that she might object, also that, speaking generally, his home was uncomfortable. Whenever he mentioned it, always he was informed that this was because of his Socialistic cranks which led him to prefer teacups without saucers, and so forth, an argument that hitherto had reduced him to silence. Now, however, he began to doubt its force, remembering that saucers and tablecloths are not the whole of domestic life.

"Oh!" he muttered to himself as he felt his way towards the surgery down the dark passage where it had not occurred to anyone to light the gas, "the truth is that Rose and I cannot understand each other and don't get on. I wish she would marry, though if she did I am not sure that her husband would praise her in the end. Beauty isn't everything, especially when the heart inside of it is small," he added with as much bitterness as his gentle nature could conceive.

## CHAPTER VII

## ANDREW'S FAREWELL

Arabella went to the hospital, and, like Bottom, was translated. For the first time in her idle, aimless and luxurious life, she found herself with work to do and faced by real responsibility which called out innate qualities inherited from her vigorous and active-brained father. Soon she forget her own petty ailments in attending to the real illnesses of others, some of which, as it happened, were serious at the time. Also her natural talent for housewifery was given full scope and she used it to great advantage. Soon, like herself, that hospital was also transformed, so much so that it would have been difficult to recognise it as the same place. The meals were punctual and sufficient; the old women looked tidier and more cheerful, while the house by degrees attained to a perfect cleanliness. The only people who seemed dissatisfied with the change were the servants, two rather rough women who had acted as under-nurses. In course of time, however, even these became reconciled, since when once its back was broken, they found the work lighter than it had been before.

It must be admitted that there was another cause for this transformation, although of it Dr. Watson never knew. When Arabella took charge of the place she found the accounts in a sad state, also that expenditure had outrun income. Now Arabella was blessed with this world's goods and had a large balance at her bankers. So in some mysterious way that the doctor never quite mastered, very shortly income overtook expenditure and one of his great anxieties was removed.

Moreover, this paying guest made her influence felt in his own home. She became great friends with the amiable but vacuous Angelica, and in her spare time would assist her in the kitchen, for Arabella loved a kitchen. No longer did the gas stove prove a mystery measureless to woman; no longer was the tea an undrinkable essence or dinner a feast more movable than that of Easter. Only Rose, who viewed these changes with a kind of indolent disapproval, remained precisely the same, since she was one of those women who do not vary. She never had taken and never meant to take any trouble about anything, except her own comfort and personal appearance. To these she had always attended and to these she continued to attend. Between her and Arabella there was established a state of armed neutrality, superimposed upon a basis of cordial dislike. Each of them despised the other, but neither being warlike by nature, matters never proceeded to a state of open quarrel.

Soon Arabella came to understand that Andrew was the victim of a hopeless infatuation for Rose and notwithstanding her own secret /tendresse/ for that young gentleman, accepted the situation with a sigh of pity for his fate. This partiality of hers did not escape Rose's acumen, with the result that her attitude to Andrew became more tender, since she desired to rivet his chains, and where he used to secure one kiss now often he was allowed three. Further, Rose did not attempt to conceal her intimacy with Andrew from Arabella, both because she knew this hurt her on a sore spot and also for a deeper reason. If Arabella thought her devoted to Andrew, she would not

suspect her in any other direction.

As may be guessed, parental affection under these new circumstances induced Dr. Black to visit Red Hall much more frequently than he had done before it became the scene of Arabella's activities. In truth he was honestly delighted at the change in his daughter, which he looked on as little short of marvellous and indeed could not quite understand. Still, once having assured himself of this transfiguration, he was not selfish enough to wish to disturb her when she was engaged upon her duties at the hospital, as generally proved to be the case about tea-time, an hour at which the patients had to be prepared for bed and given their supper. Therefore he would take his tea at Red Hall and afterwards stop in for a few minutes' chat with his daughter at the hospital next door.

So, with the single exception of Rose, everyone was pleased, even Andrew, who now understood why Dr. Black continued to be so frequent a visitor at Red Hall, for had not Rose herself pointed this out to him?

Andrew's connection with the great Harley Street practice came to a sudden and unexpected end under the following circumstances. One morning when he was out seeing a patient who had been handed over to him as she had nothing the matter with her except nerves, Lord Atterton and his son Algernon were shown into Dr. Somerville Black's consulting-room. To him his Lordship explained that Algernon was suffering from a cough, so having heard the doctor highly spoken of, he had brought the young man to be prescribed for. Black, with veiled sarcasm, for his visitor's manner annoyed him, remarked that this was most kind of him. As a matter of fact he knew all about Algernon's case from Andrew, who had confided to him his fears of its issue and his grief at the manner in which it was being treated. However, this he kept to himself and proceeded to make an examination, engaging his patient meanwhile in shrewd general conversation calculated to reveal his habits and symptoms, although for the most part it seemed to be directed towards other subjects, till presently it was interrupted by a violent fit of coughing that seized Algernon, producing some blood from his lungs. When it was over, Dr. Black took him into another room and asked him to amuse himself for a few minutes with /Punch/ and the /Vie Parisienne/ while he made a few rough tests.

Algernon consented with a bad grace, for he was surly over the whole business and had been brought to the doctor against his will.

Then Black returned to the consulting-room where Lord Atterton addressed him before he could open his lips, saying:

"Of course I know that the boy has nothing serious the matter with him, although a conceited young fool of a nephew of mine, Andrew West, did try to frighten me about his state last autumn and gave

unsolicited advice as to his treatment."

"Oh! Doctor West did that, did he? Well, although he is so young, I have some respect for his judgment and powers of diagnosis. He ought to be a big man in our trade one day."

"So you know him," said Lord Atterton somewhat surprised. "Anyway, it was pretty cool of him to set up his opinion against that of men like Smilie and Waite."

"Oh! yes, I know him pretty well; also I know Smilie and Waite very well, both of them. We doctors have a little rhyme about them, which I won't repeat to you. And now, my lord, since your time is even more precious than my own, do you want to hear what I believe to be the truth about your son, or do you want an opinion on the Smilie and Waite recipe, which, whatever else it does, will mean sundry more visits to this room and a considerable number of guineas into my pocket extracted in the best and most immaculate manner."

"I imagine that I pay you for the truth," said Lord Atterton stiffly.

"Very good. Then I grieve to have to tell you that I fear Doctor West was correct when he told you that your son's case is serious, exactly how serious I shall know in a day or two when certain investigations have been concluded. I can, however, state positively that he is in an advanced stage of what you would call consumption and that both his lungs are affected, also I think to some extent his throat. Further, I judge that his habits of life, I refer to the consumption of alcohol, are aggravating his complaint."

"How can you say that, Doctor, when both Smilie and Waite----"

"Forgive me, Lord Atterton, but if you want the opinions of those men, go to them and follow their advice, as I gather you have been doing. If you want mine, listen to it and be guided by it or not as you like. Or, if you have doubts on the matter of my competence, I will give you the names of several other men whose judgment is supposed to be the best in London where such cases are concerned, and you can check my verdict by theirs."

Now Lord Atterton's optimism began to fail him, for he felt that this big, uncompromising man was saying what he believed. His eyes blinked beneath the bushy eyebrows and his face fell in. For be it remembered that in his fashion he loved his son although he despised him, also that about him centred all the eager ambitions of, comparatively speaking, the newly rich and self-made man.

"What do you mean and what is to be done?" he asked fiercely.

"I mean," replied Black in a gentler tone, for his sympathy was stirred, "that unless your son changes his mode of life, especially

with reference to alcohol, and gets out of this climate at once, say until June, he will, in my opinion, not live till June."

"Good God! And where is he to go? I sent him to the West of England, but he went out stag-hunting on Dartmoor, which he had promised not to do, and caught a chill."

"Perhaps South Africa would be best, but there is the Bay to cross where the winds are bitter just now. If he lives, and mind you I cannot guarantee that he /will/ live, for the disease is very advanced and I understand there is a family history, ultimately he may have to live in that, or some similar climate. Meanwhile, I suggest that his best chance would be Egypt, which he can reach by Brindisi."

"How is he to go alone to South Africa or Egypt?" stormed Lord Atterton. "I cannot accompany him unless I sacrifice vital business interests and my duties in the House of Lords."

"It would be better than--going to heaven alone, Lord Atterton. But where money is no object, or a small one, surely that could be arranged. I suggest that we ask your son his own opinion on that point."

"I don't think he has any, but do what you like," replied Lord Atterton sinking into a chair, for he was overcome.

"Very good, but perhaps, if you don't mind, you will let me do the explanations."

So Algernon was called into the room and with wonderful gentleness, in a tone entirely different from that which he had adopted towards his father, Dr. Black explained to him as much of the position as he thought desirable. Now Algernon did not lack perception, or indeed courage of a sort.

"No need to wrap it up so nicely, Doctor," he said with a laugh, "for I quite understand. You mean that I drink too much, which I dare say I do, also that I shall die if I stop here, and very likely if I go away. Well, I don't care if I do die, for the world isn't a very pleasant place when you cough twelve hours out of the twenty-four and feel as weak as a cat until you get a bottle of champagne into you. However, I want to say this. If I have to go to Egypt, or any other damned hole, I won't do so alone. There's only one fellow I will go with, and--that's my cousin Andrew."

"Andrew!" burst out his father. "He is the very last person whom I should wish to be your companion. I dislike him extremely. Moreover," he added, forgetting himself in his anger, "he has a direct interest----"

Here Dr. Black looked at him and he stopped.

At this moment the door opened and Andrew himself walked into the room.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," he exclaimed, "I did not know that there was a consultation. The servant----"

"What is the meaning of this?" Lord Atterton asked acidly. "After all that has passed it looks like an arrangement."

"Please choose your words more carefully, Lord Atterton," said Dr. Black. "Doctor West is my assistant, and it was not I who introduced his name into this consultation."

"How do you do, Uncle?" broke in Andrew. "I didn't see who you were. And how are you, Algie, old fellow? Not very grand I am afraid from the look of you. But what's the matter?"

"I'll tell you, Andrew, as no one else seems inclined to do so," replied Algernon with a hoarse chuckle. "This is the position. The doctor there, I forget his name, says I am going to die unless I go to Egypt, at least that's what he means. I have answered that I won't go to Egypt unless you come with me. Otherwise I'll stop here and die, as being of full age I have a right to do, while my father doesn't want me to die, or you to go to Egypt with me. That's how it stands."

Andrew's face fell.

"Go to Egypt now," he said. "It wouldn't suit me at all. Besides," he added as a thought struck him, "I'm working here. I can't leave Doctor Black. It is out of the question."

"All right," said Algernon indifferently, "then I'll stop here and die, as I dare say I should do in Egypt and put you to the trouble of making a mummy of me," and again he chuckled.

"There are other doctors besides your cousin," interrupted Lord Atterton.

"I have no doubt there are, Father, lots of them. But I'm not taking any, and there's an end."

For a little while there was silence, for the /impasse/ seemed to be complete. Black broke it, glancing at the clock.

"I haven't much time to spare," he said, "so I think we had better come to a decision about this business one way or another. It seems that we all have to give up something, except the patient, whose wishes must be respected, since otherwise he would derive no benefit from the change. Andrew West doesn't want to go to Egypt, I don't want to lose Andrew West whose services I find valuable. Lord Atterton does

not wish him to be his son's companion for personal reasons of which I know nothing. Meanwhile, in the interests of the patient, which as I was always taught must be the first consideration, it is desirable, unless my judgment is at fault, that he should go and that his cousin should accompany him. Do I put the case fairly?"

"I suppose so," grunted Lord Atterton.

"Very well. Then for my part I will arrange to dispense with Doctor West's services for the necessary time of absence, say till the end of May, since it would be well that the journey home should be broken at Algeciras, or some such place, of course on a business basis which I could arrange with you, Lord Atterton, since I repeat I consider them valuable to myself, also to you and your son."

Lord Atterton grunted again, and Algernon, who could see a point, grinned visibly.

"Well," went on the doctor, "that's my share of the sacrifice. Now then, Andrew West, are you ready to make yours and go for a tour in the Near East for the sake of your cousin, although I gather that you do not wish to do so?"

Andrew hesitated, for the thought of the adored Rose pulled at his heart-strings. Then he glanced at poor Algernon's pinched face and noted that he was watching him with a kind of whimsical expectancy, or rather hope, and hesitated no longer. How could he set his private desires against the welfare of his cousin of whom he was really fond, when he knew that this cousin's life might hang upon his decision.

"Oh! yes, though I don't want to, I'll go, as it is Algernon's wish and your advice, Doctor," he said briefly.

Algernon smiled--he had a smile of singular sweetness--and remarked more to himself than to the company:

"I thought he would, but all the same it is good of old Andrew."

"Very well," went on Black. "Two stumbling-blocks are out of the way. Now, what do you say, Lord Atterton, for you're the paymaster, you know, and seem to have prejudices?"

"I--I----" exclaimed his Lordship, growing suddenly red in the face and even up to his bald head, for he was not accustomed to being cornered in this fashion. "Oh! confound it! Have your own way. I wash my hands of the business."

"Are you sure that you would not first like to consult Doctor Smilie, or Doctor Waite, or some other man?"

Lord Atterton shook his head, for he would not trust himself to speak.

"Very well then, my lord. If these two young gentlemen will leave the room and talk over their prospective journey, you and I will go into a few business details."

So Algernon and Andrew went, and presently through a window saw Lord Atterton strut into the waiting brougham, and heard him snap out the word "Home."

"Hullo," said Algernon, "he must be in a rage, for he don't even mean to give me a lift back. I expect your friend, the doctor, has stuck him pretty well for your valued services, old boy."

As a matter of fact he had, for shortly afterwards Black informed Andrew with one of his big laughs that he would be five hundred guineas the richer for that job, adding, "of course, I told him that the money went into my account, as you were working on a salary, and so it will. But it won't stick there. He called it extortion, for though that noble lord is said to be very comfy, he don't like parting with cash, even where his son is concerned. But all the same I got the cheque before he left, with three guineas for the consultation thrown in."

The following afternoon Andrew made a very melancholy pilgrimage of farewell. Evidently rumours of his departure, or rather knowledge thereof, had reached Red hall before him, since he found Rose awaiting him alone in the sitting-room.

"I was sure you would come," she said in a tearful voice, "so I gave up my engagement and did not go out."

"That is very sweet of you," said the adoring Andrew, embracing her.

She disengaged herself gently and went on:

"What is this I hear about your going abroad with some cousin who is ill? You know Angelica is friends with that funny landlady of yours, Mrs. Josky----"

Here Andrew started, for the information explained much which he had never been able to understand.

"She went this morning to buy something at her little shop where she gets most of her peculiar garments, and Mrs. Josky, who was almost in tears, told her that you were leaving England at once."

"Well, dear, it is true," answered Andrew. "I have a cousin whose lungs are shaky and must be got to Egypt until the summer comes. We used to see a good deal of each other when we were boys and he is

rather fond of me" (here Rose managed to convey with a look that /this/ did not surprise her), "and has taken it into his stupid head that he won't travel with anyone else. So you see I thought it my duty to go, although it breaks my heart to part from you."

"How noble of you!" murmured Rose.

"Nonsense, dear. Sometimes one /must/ do things, that's all. Anyway, I have passed my word, and there's an end, for a person who breaks a promise deserves never to be spoken to again. Don't you agree with me?"

"Of course," exclaimed Rose with enthusiasm.

"If I broke my word to my cousin," continued Andrew in his most exalted manner, "although I confess I feel much tempted to do so, how could /you/ ever trust me again, for instance? Why, you might think, and quite rightly, that perhaps I should do the same thing to you, whereas I want your confidence in me to be as boundless as mine is in yourself, darling."

"Of course you do," repeated Rose, wishing her heart that Andrew would descend from this high moral horse. It bored her when he talked like that, as he was too fond of doing. Such sentiments, she felt, should be reserved for servants, also she heard more than enough of them from her own father.

"Besides," proceeded Andrew, "I am only to be away for about three months, which, although you may think it so, as I do, isn't an eternity. And then, there is the money side of the matter to be considered, which is important to you and me."

"Indeed," said Rose, now really interested, "and what about the money side?"

"Well, this. My cousin has a rich father who is in trade, in the liquor line in fact, and Doctor Black has charged him a very heavy fee for my services. This he says he means to hand over to me, which is just like his generosity."

"Yes," said Rose, and involuntarily her hand went to her throat, where beneath her high dress was hidden a pearl necklace that she dared not wear openly. "How much is he going to pay you?"

"Five hundred guineas."

"That's a lot," said Rose, opening her eyes. "They must think a great deal of you."

"Too much," replied Andrew, "but I didn't make the bargain. If it had been left to me I shouldn't have asked anything. Still, it is

fortunate, isn't it, dear? You see, when I come back, as the doctor is going to keep my place open, I shall be in a position to marry you."

Rose coloured most becomingly and whispered, "Yes."

"We might begin in a small way," went on Andrew, ecstatically. "Mrs. Josky has two more rooms at the top of the house, and she would make you very comfortable and soon grow as fond of you as she is of me."

Rose looked doubtful, she could not help it, and to change the subject asked:

"What is your cousin's name?"

"Oh! the same as my own, West," answered Andrew absently.

"Indeed? I thought all the Wests were gentlefolk."

He laughed as he replied:

"Then you are quite mistaken there, dear. Their origin was humble enough, and some of them have not forgotten the manners and customs of their forbears. Money can't make a gentleman, Rose."

"No, Andrew, but it can do a great deal, can it not?"

Ignoring her question, Andrew turned to more congenial topics. In poetic language and with a touching fervour, he assured her that he would think of her all day and most of the night, that he would never look at another woman, except to assure himself of the depths of difference between her and his adored, that he would count the minutes which lay between them and reunion, that he would write to her every day, although he gathered from the postal guide that the mails only left Egypt twice a week.

"Do you think that would be wise, dear, although it is so nice of you? You see, Sister Angelica is all the virtues rolled into one, but she is very prying and takes in the letters."

"Damn Sister Angelica!" exploded Andrew, adding, as he remembered Mrs. Josky's dark hints, "I believe she has made enough mischief already."

Rose wondered what he meant, but thinking it best not to probe the recesses of her adorer's simple mind, inquired instead of another matter.

"Do you think that Miss Black intends to stay at the hospital?"

"I expect so," answered Andrew indifferently. "It is doing her a lot of good and her old father is delighted with the change in her; also your father thinks her work excellent, and says he never knew what

comfort was before--I mean in the hospital. But why do you ask?"

"My father does not live in the hospital," replied Rose with an admixture of sweetness and acerbity that somehow reminded Andrew of the taste of an acid drop, "and I ask because if so, it makes me still more certain that it would not be wise for you to write to me too often. She also is very curious, and--you silly Andrew--has it never occurred to you as possible that I am not the only woman who likes you a little?"

"What on earth do you mean? Oh! I see," he added, colouring, "though it is all bosh. Why, she's several years older. Well, I could send the letters to Mrs. Josky."

"Who would probably open them over the kettle and afterwards deliver them through Sister Angelica," commented Rose.

"Well, what do I care if she does?" expostulated Andrew who felt himself being enveloped in a kind of net of feminine wiles. "I have nothing to be ashamed of in my letters and I don't see the use of all this secrecy, or quite understand why you wish it. Why shouldn't I go to your father and tell him? Taking everything into consideration, although I know I am unworthy of you, I am in a position to ask a man for his daughter's hand."

"Of course you are, dear, but hush! there is somebody coming."

"Let them come," said Andrew heroically, but Rose only moved further away and turned up the gas.

Then the door opened and there entered Arabella and Dr. Watson, talking with evident interest about the affairs of the hospital.

"Fancy, Father," said Rose, ignoring Arabella's presence, "Doctor West has come to tell us that he is going at once to Egypt in charge of a patient."

"Is he?" replied Watson. "Then all I have to say is that it is another instance of the truth of the old axiom, that the gods favour the young, for I suppose that the patient will pay expenses. Here am I, who all my life have been longing to get to Egypt and never found a chance of doing so, while it drops into his mouth, who perhaps would just as soon stop at home. Anyway, I congratulate you, Andrew, and hope that you will make the best of your opportunities. Did you say that the tea was coming, Miss Black?"

"I will go to see," interrupted Rose.

"It is not necessary," said Arabella in her precise voice. "Sister Angelica is just bringing it up. Indeed, I made it myself while she cut the bread and butter."

"You are becoming the angel of the house," interposed Dr. Watson gallantly and smiling in his gentle fashion, "isn't she, Rose?"

"Angels are difficult to define; there are so many sorts of them," replied Rose, her wits quickened in an inward fire of indignation. She did not want to bother about the tea herself, but that this other woman should do so was, she felt, almost an insult. Then she glided from the room on a quite unnecessary journey concerning that meal.

It proved a short one, since she met Angelica in the narrow passage and had to return in front of her. During tea Arabella contrived entirely to monopolize Andrew, discoursing to him of Egypt and begging him to write to her and to tell her all about its wonders, and whenever she ceased speaking for a moment Dr. Watson took up his parable which had to do with ophthalmia and other Eastern diseases, so that Rose was left in the cold. At length the doctor bade him good-bye and good luck very warmly and went away.

But Arabella did not go away; on the contrary, whether by accident or design, she sat there like a rock and embarked upon an argument on Socialism, on which she was growing enthusiastic, the doctor evidently having infected her with his cult. Now Andrew also had leanings that way, but as at the moment he desired to practise another kind of Socialism /à deux/, very earnestly did he wish that Arabella would reserve her views for a more fitting occasion, especially as he must leave within a quarter of an hour to keep a professional appointment which could not possibly be neglected. First he tried answering in monosyllables and then took refuge in silence, but Arabella, who had not forgotten Rose's remarks as to the different angelic degrees, would not be put off. In an even, monotonous voice she favoured him with a summary of one of Dr. Watson's lectures on his favourite topic, and as Andrew had heard it and knew that it was long, he could only sit still and watch the hands of the clock.

Now at first Rose was grateful to Arabella who, unwittingly, was protecting her from demonstrations with which she found it a little difficult to deal. By degrees, however, her indignation awoke, as she came to understand the nature of the manoeuvre and that its real object was to rob her of her lover's farewell words. Yet, as she could not tell Arabella to leave the room, there was nothing to be done except to sit still also and hate her more heartily than usual.

At length came the inevitable moment when Andrew must go, since otherwise he would miss the consultation of which he had to make report to Dr. Black.

"I can't stay any longer," he said, springing up in despair. "Good-bye, Miss Black. I hope that when I return I shall have found that you have followed the scriptural injunction and divided all your goods among the poor. Do you mind coming outside a moment, Miss Rose?

I have a private message which I want you to give to your father," an announcement at which Arabella smiled sarcastically.

Rose hesitated, then gave way, as in fact she always did when Andrew insisted upon anything, because it was easiest.

Andrew slammed the door behind them both and there followed some hurried and broken endearments in the passage which, although they did not know it, proved very interesting to Sister Angelica listening intently from the gloom of a landing upstairs.

As a matter of fact these demonstrations were somewhat one-sided, since Rose merely stood still, occasionally murmuring words that might have been spoken in Esperanto, for any meaning they possessed. Andrew thought that she was assenting with passion to all he said and promising to marry him immediately on his return, but on these points Rose's conscience was clear, for as she reflected afterwards, not without a certain virtuous satisfaction, she had really said nothing at all, or at any rate nothing that could be twisted into a compromising promise.

Indeed, as he rushed away shouting for a hansom cab, it even occurred to Andrew himself that he had no exact recollection of the language in which she had conveyed her deathless vows. However, he concluded that this was because of his own extreme agitation and that doubtless it was all right. How could it be otherwise, though he /did/ wish that she had given him just one kiss in return for the many that he had showered upon her. Of course this was because her sweet modesty intervened, but still, although it was brutal of him, and even coarse, he did wish it very much.

His last words were to implore her to come to see him off at the train and to give her very definitely the name of the station and the hour, asking her if she had mastered them.

She answered, "Yes, yes," but whether these affirmatives conveyed that she would be there, or that she had committed these topographical and chronological details to her memory, he could not be sure.

Thus did Andrew, with an aching heart, part from his first love, the woman whom he adored with all the blind passion of an ardent nature and who was destined to deal him the deadliest blow a man can receive in his youth.

When he met her again she was differently circumstanced.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE STATION

On the day following his farewell to Rose, Andrew lunched at West House in Cavendish Square. The arrangement was that he and Algernon were to proceed to Dover by an afternoon train and there spend the night, catching the Brindisi express boat the next morning. This was Clara's idea.

"You see," explained Algernon to Andrew, "she says it is to give me a rest and make a break in the journey, as though that little bit to Dover mattered one way or the other. What she means is that I might make a night of it if I didn't start till the next morning, forgetting that one can do that at Dover."

"No, you can't, old boy," answered Andrew firmly. "There will be no evenings out while you are in my charge, for I've got to earn that fee by faithful duty, which Clara knows."

"Oh! yes," chuckled Algernon, "there isn't much that Clara doesn't know. But what I don't understand is why she bothers about me at all. It isn't cousinly affection, for she has none for me, and whether I live or die will make no difference to her--perhaps, though, it would make a difference," he added reflectively.

"I think you judge Clara rather hardly," said Andrew. "She may be fonder of you than you think."

"She may, but I am quite certain that she is fond of herself and always has something up her sleeve. However, I have no doubt you'll learn who is right some day, so as my breath is short we won't waste any in argument."

That luncheon was not a cheerful feast. Over it there seemed to hang a kind of ominous shadow which the sparkling of the wines and the gleam of the silver dishes, handed round by perfectly trained and obsequious footmen, did nothing to dispel. Lord Atterton was surly and depressed; Algernon, who did not wish to leave England, was sullen and annoyed; Andrew, whose heart ached at the separation from his adored Rose, was silent and internally sentimental. Only Clara was just the same as usual; cool, collected, pretty, beautifully dressed, immaculate in manner; armed at all points against the chances and changes of this mortal life. She chatted away gaily about Egypt which Andrew gathered she must have been reading up in a guide-book, since she told him details of the orientation of the Great Pyramid, of the number of square yards that its base covered and of the millions of tons weight of stone which it contained, facts which she asked him to verify by local inquiry. To her uncle she was sympathetic, suggesting that he might travel with her to Spain to meet the pair on their return, an idea that did not seem to appeal to him, for he only grunted. To Algernon she offered her congratulations at his chance of making acquaintance with a lovely climate and of seeing the world, also of visiting the Cairo Museum and inspecting its mummies.

"Thank you," said Algernon, "but I prefer live people to dead ones; there will be lots of time for them afterwards," a remark that did not tend to lift the general depression.

At length the meal was over and Andrew was conducted by his uncle into the study where presently Clara joined them, leaving Algernon alone in company with the port. Then ensued a jobation. Lord Atterton dilated to Andrew on the greatness of his responsibilities, on the largeness of the sum which his services were costing him, on his general doubts as to his fitness for the office which he had undertaken, as to the way in which he should keep the accounts, and so forth, till at length that young man lost his temper.

"Look here, Uncle," he said, "if you think I want this billet, you never made a greater mistake in all your life. So far as I am concerned, I'd gladly give you the fee back again, with five per cent added out of my own pocket, to be rid of the job. I have reasons of my own for wishing not to leave England just now--" here Clara looked at him sharply--"and I want to get on with my medical work, instead of fooling about the world with a difficult young man who likes--well, to indulge himself. So, if you wish, I am quite willing to cry off."

"Don't get into a huff, Andrew," interposed Clara soothingly, "you must think of Algernon, not of yourself."

"Who else do you suppose I am thinking of, Clara? It's because I'm fond of old Algy and he won't travel without me, that I'm going at all. Do you consider it a pleasant business to have him on my hands in his state of health, especially as if anything did happen to him, as is quite possible, all sorts of things might be said," here he glanced wrathfully at his uncle. "I tell you that with me it is only a matter of duty."

"Don't talk so much about your duty," muttered Lord Atterton, "but do it, and I shall judge you according to the results. Most young men would not grumble about a duty of the sort at the figure which that Somerville Black has extorted from me."

"Then I know very well how I shall be judged, and that is, precious hardly, whatever happens," exclaimed Andrew indignantly. "Now I'm off to arrange things. I suppose you'll bring Algy to the station where I will meet you," and he left the room.

Clara followed him to the hall and, slipping her arm through his, said quite gently for her:

"Don't be vexed, Andrew. I know you don't want to go, if perhaps not all your reasons, although I may guess them. I know, too, how well you are getting on in your work and, though you mayn't believe me, I'm proud of it. As for our uncle, you shouldn't blame him too much, for

you see how it is with him. He is half-mad with anxiety about Algernon, and that is what makes him so unpleasant."

"Then what will he be, Clara, if the complaint should take a bad turn, as I tell you it may? Why," he added bitterly, "I shouldn't wonder if he said that I had murdered him, for though I hardly ever think about the thing, I can't help remembering that I am the next heir to his confounded title."

"If such a thing should happen, Andrew, which God forbid, well, it would be His Will, that's all. And if you will forgive me for saying so, meanwhile, in all ways, especially in any arrangements that you make contemplate for your future," she added meaningly, "I wish that you would bear more in mind what are your real position and expectations in the world. Now you must be going."

Andrew was at the station early for reasons not entirely connected with the luggage. Indeed, he expected that Rose would be there earlier still, having taken the precaution to send her a postcard on the previous night, ante-timing the departure of the train by about forty minutes. Therefore he was disappointed when a hurried but careful search of the Charing Cross terminus revealed no sign of her. Suddenly his hopes revived, for in the distance he caught sight of the tall, ascetic form of Dr. Watson, peering about him amiably, and saw that he was followed by a lady. When a few seconds later he discovered that the lady was Arabella his mental temperature fell with a suddenness that was almost alarming. Collecting himself, however, he greeted them as cordially as possible and thanked them for coming to see him off. Then, as he was about to inquire for the missing one without whom all Charing Cross was but a howling and deserted wilderness, the doctor said:

"Rose must have made a mistake about the hour of the train, since a porter told me that it does not leave for nearly forty minutes."

"I think that the mistake was Doctor West's," interrupted Arabella in her precise way. "I saw his postcard on the floor where Rose had let it fall, and certainly it said 3.10, not 3.55."

Avoiding the matter of the postcard, which would have involved explanations, Andrew asked if Rose was there.

"I don't think so," answered the doctor. "I understood that she was coming, but that she might be a little late, as she wanted first to call at a shop in Regent Street. Didn't you, Miss Black?"

"She did not mention the matter to me one way or the other, and therefore I have no idea of what she intended," replied Arabella still more precisely, adding, "Hats sometimes take a long while to try on and make people forget appointments."

This started the doctor on a dissertation about woman's obsession for dress, which he began to illustrate by ancient and savage examples, remarking that he had no doubt that Eve was careful as to the cut of her skin garments. Andrew listened with a vacuous smile which he summoned up to conceal his inward agony, and was positively relieved when he saw Mrs. Josky bustling towards him, dragging Laurie by the hand, though he thought he had got over the pain of that voluminous farewell.

"Oh! there you are, Doctor West," she exclaimed. "I thought that I might be late, having lost that dratted Laurie in the crowd outside the bus. Well, all's well that ends well, and I have brought you your rug which you left behind, also a thick coat, since a Jew with whom I do business, who once lived in Egypt, said that it is sometimes very cold there" (in fact the rug and the thick coat were a subterfuge, for Mrs. Josky had deliberately secreted them in order to follow her adored Andrew to the railway station).

He thanked her and then found it necessary to devote his attention to Laurie, who had just realized for the first time the completeness of the impending separation, and showed signs of vociferous breakdown. So, while Dr. Watson continued his lecture on female vanity to Arabella, whom it seemed really to interest, Andrew set to work to console Laurie with promises of a present of Turkish Delight, the succulence of which he described in glowing terms.

"Stop talking to that snivelling kid, who has given trouble enough already," interrupted Mrs. Josky, who felt herself neglected, "and let's go through the list of your luggage again, since if there is anything else left, I can send it by the night train to Dover."

"We've done it four times----" expostulated Andrew, and broke off as he caught sight of the large form of Dr. Somerville Black surging towards him.

"Hullo! here you are, Andrew," said Black. "I thought I would drop round and give you an idea or two that occur to me about the treatment of that young man whom you are going to bear-lead. Why, there are Watson and Arabella, but I don't see the rest of the Flower-garden," and his face fell. "They seem very interested in each other, don't they? Too much so to notice a little one like me, so here goes," and he plunged into medical details about Algernon's case, making Andrew take down a certain prescription in his note-book.

This went on until Lord Atterton and Clara appeared convoying Algernon, who seemed to be in a somewhat festive mood.

"That young man has been drinking a stirrup-cup, unless I am much mistaken," remarked Black as his keen eye fell upon him. "You will have to guard against this tendency of his, since Egypt won't do him much good if he is always half-drunk."

Andrew groaned, overwhelmed by his accumulated woes, but had no time to answer, for just then the others reached them.

The details of that interminable farewell need not be described at length. Lord Atterton said little, but Andrew, whose dark eyes roaming round in continual search of Rose upon the crowded platform fell upon his face, noted that it was wrung with grief. His mouth twisted and although the day was cold, beads of perspiration appeared upon his bald head and forehead which he wiped away with a silk pocket-handkerchief, lifting his hat to do so; his small eyes that followed his son's every movement blinked continually, and from time to time he brushed his hand across them, evidently brushing away a tear. Moreover he noticed that notwithstanding her quiet, even talk to whoever happened to be next to her, Clara also observed these things and was watching her uncle anxiously. Only Algernon did not observe. His energies were absorbed in trying to obtain a copy of the /Sporting Times/ which was not forthcoming, and in bribing porters with sixpences to get it for him.

Andrew, who was by nature sympathetic, understood that his uncle was suffering; more, that he was terribly afraid lest he was looking his last upon his only child who, whatever his failings, was all the world to him a lonely man; perhaps even that in his soul he had some premonition that this was so. Andrew did not like his uncle; their natures were antagonistic and he had never pretended otherwise. But now for the first time he felt drawn to him and remembered that after all the same blood ran in their veins, so much so that he freed himself from the rest of the party and went to where Lord Atterton stood looking strangely alone even in that populated place.

"I will do my best for him, Uncle, I will indeed," said Andrew, in answer to the thoughts which he knew were passing through the man's mind.

"I hope so," was the steely answer. "Under all the circumstances, if you didn't, you'd be a--well, never mind. And I tell you straight out, Andrew, that if anything happens to Algernon while he is in your charge I shall never forgive you."

"Then that means that you will be very unjust, Uncle."

"Perhaps, but it is true. I hate the whole business," he added with cold passion, "and wish that I had never gone into the house of that infernal, vulgar doctor there, more than I ever wished anything in my life. But it was fate, for otherwise why should I have found /you/ there, of all men in the world? Don't answer, for there is nothing to be said. If you want money, draw on me to any extent. Your Letter of Credit is practically unlimited."

"Why don't you come too?" asked Andrew in despair.

"If you wish to know, I'll tell you. Not for any of the reasons that I have given, but because my son does not want me. He dislikes me as much as you do yourself, and my presence would retard or destroy his chance of recovery."

Then Andrew understood all the tragedy of the life of this most successful man.

Retiring overwhelmed, he met Dr. Black, who had strolled a little way up the platform as though he were looking for some one, and was now returning to speak to his daughter.

"The Flower-garden don't appear," said the doctor, "which is odd, since I understood that she was coming."

Andrew wondered vaguely how or why he understood anything of the sort, but only said:

"So did I and everybody else. I suppose she has not met with an accident?"

"Good God!" said the doctor, starting, "I hope not."

"So do I," replied Andrew, fervently.

Then the guard ordered him into the train and everybody began to say good-bye, though their words were lost in the piercing howls to which the emotional Laurie at length gave vent.

Algernon nearly missed it after all. He had vanished. Just as the whistle blew he appeared running and waving a copy of the /Sporting Times/ in triumph.

"I've got it," he said with a triumphant chuckle that ended in a cough. "Good-bye, Father. Keep your pecker up and your temper down, and don't forget to post it to me every week."

Lord Atterton stretched out his arm, perhaps to take his son's hand, perhaps to embrace him. In either case he was too late, for the guard pushed Algernon through the door as the train began to move, and slammed it behind him. Then they were off and the last of them that Andrew saw was Clara waving the very cleanest and most delicate of pocket-handkerchiefs and Mrs. Josky kissing one hand to him, while with the other with great vigour she shook the howling Laurie.

After this, Algernon having remarked: "Thank Heaven! That infernal business is over," went to sleep in one corner of the carriage, while Andrew sat in the other, brooding over the cruelty of fate which had prevented him from seeing Rose and racked with fears lest something should have happened to her.

At Dover his anxieties on this point were relieved, for when he entered the hotel where they had taken rooms for the night, a telegram was put into his hands. He tore it open in a fever of apprehension, to find it was from Dr. Black and read:

"Flower-garden all right. Picked a late Rose in the Strand and drove it home to be put in water in a Red vase. Had been detained selecting appropriate foliage, but found colours difficult to match. Good luck, and don't fall in love with tropical blooms which this climate never suits. Black."

From all which ponderous and characteristic joke Andrew gathered that Arabella was not far wrong when she suggested that Rose had gone to try on hats. Still, he could have wished that she had selected some other opportunity for that feminine entertainment. A shiver of doubt went through him as he reflected on this matter. If Rose loved him as much as he knew she did, how could she become so engrossed with clothes that she had missed him at the station--especially when he had given her a margin of an extra forty minutes?

Although he was not over-punctual, had their positions been reversed he could never have made such a mistake. But then women were different to men; he must always remember that women were extremely different, and that bright butterfly, Rose, flitting in the sunshine and herself filled with sweetness and light, also perhaps with dreams of which the thought thrilled him, naturally took little reck of such a common everyday thing as time. It was lucky that Dr. Black had found her, doubtless wandering bewildered in the crowd and probably being stared at by brutal men, for the Strand was not a place for her to frequent alone, also that he had been able to drive her home.

On second thoughts, was it so fortune? Now he came to think of it, how did the doctor know she was coming to the station? And generally why did he know everything about her? Not through Arabella he was sure, since, although they were living in the same house, nobody seemed to be quite so unacquainted with whatever had to do with Rose.

It never occurred to him that the drab-coloured and insignificant Angelica who did everything for Rose, possessed eyes and ears which she might be willing to put at the service of anyone who treated her kindly and generously, and that kindness and generosity were outstanding characteristics in the nature of Dr. Black. If he had thought of the matter at all, he would have concluded that Angelica was too fond of Rose and too faithful to her interests to "give her away" in any particular.

He disliked Angelica, a person who did not appeal to him because he thought her one of petty mind, and he knew that she disliked him although she pretended otherwise. Still, with the blind confidence of youth in love that believes itself to be loved, he never dreamt that

Angelica would wish Rose to marry anyone but himself, or that she could conceive her cousin's true advantage to lie in another direction. Nor could he have held it possible that she told certain stories to Mrs. Josky which she knew would filter through to him with added point, in the hope that they might cause him to doubt Rose.

Yet in fact all these things were so, and Dr. Black found Sister Angelica quite useful in her way.

Truly "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise."

## CHAPTER IX

## WHAT HAPPENED IN EGYPT

Andrew and Algernon had a prosperous journey to Egypt. In the train from Paris to Brindisi they, or rather Algernon for Andrew seemed to feel no further interest in the female sex, made the acquaintance of a handsome and vivacious young woman whose name was Fairley. She was travelling with an elderly aunt, a somnolent person with a stout figure and a squeaky voice who was also named Fairley. Andrew could not make out much about them, except that they were not ladies, and indeed did not take the trouble to do so, for the elder Miss Fairley, either from torpor or for other reasons, was uncommunicative, while the younger Miss Fairley, who soon came to be known as Florence as a kind of identification badge, talked little of her home or belongings, although she talked a great deal about everything else. All he gathered was that they were well-to-do and came from Manchester or its neighbourhood, also that they were supposed to be travelling for the benefit of the health of Miss Fairley senior, whom Algernon christened the Dormouse.

As a matter of fact the real object of their journeyings was different. Miss Fairley senior was the sister and Miss Fairley junior was the daughter of a deceased Manchester tradesman who had left the latter a certain fortune, but not nearly as much as she wanted. Indeed, being an active-minded and pushing young woman, she wanted a good deal, amongst other things to escape from her humble associations and to advance herself in the world by means of a satisfactory marriage, objects which she could not attain in Manchester where she was known. In pursuit of these perfectly laudable aims she was undertaking a trip to Egypt where, as she put it, "nice people go in winter," dragging the Dormouse with her as the most ideal of chaperones, since a person who sleeps eighteen hours out of the twenty-four and spends the remaining six in thinking about her liver and her food, sees little and hears less.

Luck favoured her from the start, since at the Paris /gare/ she stumbled upon Algernon, who was immensely struck by her large and

generous appearance and her flashing black eyes, and invoked his assistance as a friendly Englishman (Andrew was absent seeing about the luggage) to help her to retrieve her aunt who had gone to sleep in a waiting-room and could not be found.

Of course, after this adventure they travelled in the same carriage, talking incessantly, much to Andrew's annoyance, for in his soulful mood he found the Dormouse a more restful companion. By the time they reached Brindisi the fair and buoyant Florence knew all there was to learn about Algernon, and decided that, in vulgar language, he filled her bill. It is not every day that the daughter of a Manchester tradesman comes across the only son of one of the wealthiest peers in England who is clearly stricken with admiration for her at first sight. Her heart swelled at the thought of what might not happen as a result of this most fortunate /rencontre/.

"Why, within a year I might be a prospective peeress," she reflected to herself, and trembled at the glittering vision. Alas! poor Florence did not recall the wise and ancient proverb as to the number of slips there are between cups and lips.

Perhaps the Dormouse was not always quite as much asleep as she seemed to be. At any rate, in an interval of wakefulness induced by sea-sickness which afflicted them both during their first night on the boat, she asked her niece in hollow tones, what she was after with "that young Honourable."

"What is a woman generally after with a man?" replied Florence with acerbity from the upper bunk.

"All sorts of things; it depends upon what she can get," commented the Dormouse. "But I suppose marriage is your game. You'd like to be a peeress."

"Who wouldn't?" said Florence tartly.

"Then I'm thinking that you've got the wrong one by the boot. You should go for the doctor, for he comes next. I found that out in a book in the saloon, and he'll live longer. That Honourable is a crock."

"Well, women have lost their husbands before now," reflected Florence aloud.

"Oh, I see," said the Dormouse with brutal frankness. "You mean that if he lives long enough to marry you, you don't care what happens afterwards. Well, you'd better look sharp, for he isn't a laster. And now be quiet, for I want to be sick."

Florence did look sharp, and by the time they reached Port Said was secretly half-engaged to Algernon, who insisted that they should

accompany the pair on their journey up Nile to the Second Cataract. This development filled Andrew with horror, especially as it was one that he was totally unable to prevent. When he remonstrated Algernon, who like most weak men could be very obstinate, told him straight out that he had come to look after his health, not his morals, and that he had nothing whatsoever to do with his matrimonial enterprises. In this attitude the vulgar and vigorous Florence encouraged him, twitting him about his "Nursey" as she called Andrew. So that unfortunate could only write to Clara, telling her in a kind of wail how things were tending and leaving it to her discretion to inform Lord Atterton or not, as she thought best. One consolation he had. Whether it was owing to the stimulus of his love affair, or to the change of climate, he was able to report that Algernon's health had improved remarkably and continued to do so from day to day.

They went up the Nile, a journey that interested Andrew very much indeed and opened his eyes to many things. Algernon and Miss Fairley, however, soon grew tired of temples and took to amusing themselves in other fashions, while the Dormouse, when she was awake, devoted her energies to avoiding donkey-boys and flies. In his leisure, which was ample, Andrew wrote long letters to Rose descriptive of sunsets and scenery and the wonders of the ancient world, which, to tell the truth, bored her extremely. Indeed, in the end she ceased from reading them, merely throwing her eyes over the pages to see if they contained anything personal. She did more, for presently there reached him a nice little note on scented paper, in which she hinted delicately that he had better not write so often as it put her in an awkward position, which she was sure he would not wish to do. Moreover, when he did write, would be please be careful to say nothing that she could not show to her father, who liked to see his letters as he seemed to be very interested in Egyptian history.

This epistle chilled Andrew even more than did the station episode, to which she made no allusion. On reflection, however, he came to see matters from Rose's point of view and to acknowledge to himself that she was, as usual, perfectly right. Until they were openly engaged, the conventions must be respected.

The rest of the story is short. After about six weeks spent upon the Nile the party returned to Cairo where they put up at Shepheard's Hotel. One day Algernon insisted upon accompanying Miss Fairley on a distant inspection which involved a visit to Sakhara and an inspection of the tombs there. Andrew begged him not to go as the long donkey-ride would, he thought, be too much for his strength. But Algernon persisted, telling Andrew that he could stop behind with the Dormouse if he liked. So the three started and carried out their programme, Andrew feeling rather desolate, since the other two indicated clearly enough that the less they saw of him the better they would be pleased.

It was one of those wretched days which sometimes occur at the

beginning of the Egyptian summer. The sky was grey and a bitter wind blew which strengthened to a gale in the afternoon. Moreover, to his disgust, although he had brought it down for him, Andrew discovered that Algernon had sent his donkey-boy back with his overcoat, saying that he should not need it. He offered him his own, but although he was only clad in thin flannels, Algernon refused to wear it out of sheer obstinacy.

In due course they descended into the Tomb of the Bulls where the heat was stifling and bathed them in perspiration. Then came the /dénouement/. Andrew, who was entranced by the marvels of this wondrous sepulchre, lingered behind with one of the guides to see a little more of them, and when he emerged found that the pair had vanished. There was his donkey, but the other two were gone. When he inquired where to, the boy could only say:

"See other tomb. Say soon back."

So Andrew waited a long while, then mounted and searched for them, without avail. Returning to the entrance to the Serapeum again he waited till the light grew low, and at last concluding that they must have returned to the hotel, started for Cairo, cursing Algernon and the girl in his heart, for he guessed that they had played him some deliberate trick.

When after a long and bitterly cold ride, most of it in the dark, at length he reached Shepheard's, it was to find that they were still absent and that the aunt had seen or heard nothing of them. Thoroughly alarmed, he was about to organize search parties fearing lest some accident had overtaken them, when they appeared, the lady, notwithstanding the cold, looking flushed and triumphant. Algernon's case, however, was different, for evidently the icy blast had chilled him through. He was utterly exhausted, his teeth were chattering and his face had assumed a blueish tinge. Giving no explanation of his conduct he went to his room and asked for a bottle of brandy. When Andrew followed after paying the donkey-boys whose extortions he found it necessary to resist in a lengthy altercation, he discovered that he had already drunk about a third of the brandy and was helping himself to more. Taking away the bottle, he put him to bed and took the best steps he could in the circumstances. By now the spirits, drunk upon an empty stomach, had taken effect upon Algernon who became maudlin and burst into amorous rhapsodies from which Andrew gathered that he and Miss Fairley were going to be married at once, whatever Andrew or anyone else chose to say or do.

"Then you will have to be married in bed," he retorted grimly, "for you have nearly five degrees of fever and are on the way to be very ill."

These remarks, wrung from his cousin's exasperation, excited Algernon to a kind of drunken fury. He cursed and swore at Andrew, calling him

a spy and other unpleasant names; he said that he was poisoning him with his medicine, adding with a sneer that doubtless it was to his advantage to do so. He shouted and became incoherent, until at length a terrible fit of coughing stopped his breath.

Then of a sudden he was covered with blood, having burst a vessel in his lungs.

Everything possible was done and he was kept alive for three days. Before the end he became sensible and quite calm. He asked to see Miss Fairley, but Andrew had to tell him that when they learned that he was so ill, she and her aunt had left the hotel and he did not know where they had gone.

"I see," said Algernon, with a return of his old shrewdness. "Knew that the game was up and didn't wish to be entangled with the obsequies, or talked about." He paused for breath, then went on. "I've been a damned fool, old fellow, but that girl made me mad and I didn't know what I was doing. Also I have behaved very badly to you the only creature I care for in the world, and I'm afraid the Governor will be angry, though, God knows, it wasn't your fault. Yes, and I forgot, you'll be the next Lord Atterton. Well, I hope it will bring you joy, though it don't seem much when one's dying. You had better marry Clara. Remember what I say, you had better marry Clara."

These were the last sensible words he spoke, for that night he burst another blood-vessel and died.

Andrew, who was almost crazed with misery and misfortune, cabled this sad news home. Next day, just before the funeral, which must take place quickly in Egypt, he received an answering cable from Clara, directing him to bring the body home, and adding: "This is the special wish of Uncle, who is ill." But it was too late, and indeed in any case, owing to the local regulations, the difficulties would have been almost insuperable, even after embalmment. So Andrew had to cable back to this effect.

Everything being finished, he started to return to England on a certain boat by which he had said in his cable that he might be expected. It should be added that in addition to the telegrams, already by the previous mail he had written to Lord Atterton an accurate and detailed account of everything connected with his son's illness and death.

Now again Andrew's ill-luck pursued him. The train he took from Cairo was timed to catch the mail steamer with an hour to spare. For some unexplained cause it was delayed in starting and broke down on the way. From a junction near to the Canal where the stoppage occurred, the passengers saw the great vessel, brilliantly lighted from stem to stern, glide past them to Port Said. When ultimately they reached that town it was to see the said vessel, which being a mail steamer could

not be delayed, steaming slowly out to sea.

So in that horrible city Andrew was doomed to pass a whole week, waiting for the next boat. It was the longest week that he had ever experienced. There he sat upon the wooden balcony of a most indifferent hotel and stared at the busy port through which ships came and went like shadows, pausing a while to receive into their bowels vast quantities of coal, then departing on their endless journeyings. Or perhaps he walked upon the quays and up and down the main street where Oriental wares and curios are sold, and black touts proffer doubtful picture cards to travellers.

But all this time his mind was busy over the sorrowful story that he would have to tell at Cavendish Square. Only one thought came to relieve his depression. Soon, within three weeks at most, he would see Rose again. She would be waiting for him anxiously, for he had written to tell her of his return, on a postcard since she seemed to object to letters, a form of communication that had prevented him from explaining its causes. Of her sympathy at any rate he was sure, also of that of Mrs. Josky and of Somerville Black, who, being a doctor, would understand everything. With this thought, then, he consoled himself as best he could.

At last, the boat, a slow one, came in, and he sailed.

Reaching London in due course upon a beautiful May morning, Andrew left his own luggage at the Charing Cross cloak-room and drove straight to Cavendish Square with that which had belonged to his cousin. Although he would have liked to postpone it, he felt that this business was one to be done with. So he set his teeth and determined to face it out.

All too soon he reached his destination. Somehow there was that in the appearance of the great house which filled him with a chill of fear. To begin with, from the direction in which it faced, it still lay in shadow, while all around was sunlight. Then the blinds were only half-drawn. Moreover, certain melancholy-looking men with a ladder were engaged in fixing iron hooks into the façade as though on them to support a notice-board. This indeed was their purpose, but that notice-board was a hatchment bearing the arms of the Wests with a surprising number of quarterings. Also a particularly merry butcher's boy passing upon his rounds, as he observed, looked up at the house with a kind of awe and stopped his whistling as he went by.

More depressed than ever by these signs and tokens, Andrew rang the bell. The door was opened by a footman behind whom stood the butler, both of them clothed in deep mourning. The latter started when he saw him and motioned to the footman to get the luggage off the cab. Then with a bow but without a word he preceded Andrew to the study that

opened out of the hall, and throwing wide the door, announced, "Lord Atterton."

Vaguely Andrew wondered what the man could mean, but concluded that by some slip he must be addressing his master. As the door shut behind him he saw a figure emerge from the shadows at the end of the room, in which he recognized that of Clara, clad all in black which, as was usual with her garments, became her extremely well.

"Oh! Andrew," she exclaimed with some show of genuine emotion, "you come to a sad house, Andrew."

"I know, dear," he answered, "but it wasn't my fault."

"Of course not, Andrew, but there is more than that. Our uncle----"

"Well, what of him, Clara?"

"Dead! he was buried yesterday."

"Good God!" said Andrew. "That is why the butler called me Lord Atterton?"

She nodded. "You are that now, you see. Algernon's death killed him," and she pointed to a chair, adding, "there is so much to tell you."

He sank into it and she began:

"After that terrible cable of yours he never was the same. A kind of fit of rage seized him, rage against Providence which had robbed him of his only child, and I am sorry to say rage against you who were with Algernon at the end, though for this he could give no definite reason."

"My uncle always disliked me and he was always unjust."

Clara nodded, and went on:

"Then arrived your letter written immediately after Algernon's death, which must just have caught a mail and come through very quickly. When he had read it his anger against you redoubled, because he said that on your own showing it was owing to your neglect of duty in leaving Algernon alone with that girl that he got chilled through which brought on the hæmorrhage that killed him. Indeed, I wish, Andrew, that you had not explained all that business so fully."

"I had to tell the exact truth," he replied coldly. "I explained that Algernon gave me the slip, as it is easy to do in such a place. If my uncle had any sense of justice, he must have understood this."

"Yes, dear, but you see he would not understand because he had become almost insane. Also the fact that you did not bring home the body inflamed him still more, because he said it was disobedience to his orders."

"It was impossible, Clara. There were reasons which prevented him from being embalmed. Further, it would not have been allowed by the authorities."

"I know and told uncle as much. But it was of no use. He raved away against you and even, I am sorry to add, made vile suggestions which I will not repeat. Perhaps you can guess them."

"Perfectly, Clara. That I had allowed Algernon to die, or perhaps had murdered him to forward my own interests?"

"That kind of thing," she replied evasively. "And now comes the worst."

"The worst! What worse can there be than accusations of murder?"

"This. Suddenly an idea struck him and he said that at any rate you should not benefit. Then he ordered the carriage and drove off to his lawyers where he spent a couple of hours. When on his return I asked him what he had been doing, he said that I should find out one day, and went on abusing you. Next morning he had an apoplectic stroke and in twenty-four hours was dead. He never spoke after the stroke. Yesterday afternoon when the funeral was over the lawyer stopped behind in this house and read me a copy of the will."

"Does it suggest that I am a murderer?" asked Andrew.

"No, it says nothing whatsoever about you. I expect the lawyer prevented that. But the sum and substance of it is--oh! I am almost ashamed to tell you--that he has left me everything he could, an enormous sum together with the distilleries, etc. I believe that the value of it all is between £20,000 and £30,000 a year, and that it will be more."

For the first time Andrew laughed as he answered:

"Has he? Well, that's lucky, for he might have done something ridiculous with the money. I congratulate you on being so rich and I only wish you could take the title into the bargain, though doubtless you will be able to get one for yourself."

"Thank you, Andrew," she answered with decision, "but I have not the slightest intention of marrying, at any rate at present. It is only right that I should tell you, however, that the lawyer said that in his opinion you would have very good grounds to contest this will."

"I!" exclaimed Andrew with indignation. "I contest that man's will in order to try to take what he did not wish me to have! What can you think of me, Clara: Do you suppose that I care anything at all about his dirty money, or that I want wealth?"

"Really you are a very strange man, Andrew," said Clara, opening her eyes wide. "Well, I am afraid that you do not altogether escape the contamination of property, since you must succeed to the entailed estates in Scotland which are worth several thousands a year, though I believe they are expensive to keep up; and to this house which is also entailed. And now, dear Andrew, I want to say something. I think that our uncle has treated you wickedly, chiefly because you never would humour him, as I confess that I always did, and made jokes about the peerage, which of course was distilled out of whisky, as was his fortune. Honestly I have felt for you very much, being fond of you in my own way, Andrew, and had great difficulty in keeping quiet while he reviled you as he did."

"Thank you, old girl," said Andrew. "It's very kind of you to talk like that I can tell you it's appreciated," and throwing his arm about her, he drew her to him and gave her a brotherly kiss upon the forehead.

She coloured a little and remarked as she disentangled herself:

"You are just a great baby, Andrew, and therefore must be treated as a baby. If you had wished to fight me for this fortune, as you have a perfect right to do, I should have fought you. But as you have taken the line you have, I feel that you must be protected against yourself, and therefore I propose to share it with you. I can get on quite nicely on £12,000 or £15,000 a year."

Andrew laughed again.

"No, you don't, old girl," he said. "Keep your money and don't smell whisky as you spend it. If I'm hard up, as I dare say I shall be, I'll borrow a tenner of you some time. For the rest I have every prospect of being able to earn my own living, even if those blessed estates cost as much as they bring in. As for this mausoleum of a house, it shall be sold if that can be done. And look here, don't think that I am not grateful to you for your kind offer, for I am, especially as it shows," he added more to himself than to her, "how wrong was old Algy's estimate of you. You know, Clara, when something happens that causes you to respect a person whom you have been persuaded not to respect--well, it is worth more than all the West distilleries."

"So Algy thought badly of me, did he?" she exclaimed, looking at him sharply. "If so, I am sorry, for he was shrewd."

"Oh! no, I didn't mean that. He thought that you looked after

yourself, that's all."

"So I do," replied Clara, "and mean to go on doing; it is necessary in this world which we have to get through as comfortably as we can."

"Quite right too, old girl. That's my motto exactly, as you'd agree if only you knew what a schemer I am. Well, all this awful business is done with. Poor Algy is dead--by the way, I will send in a statement of accounts to the lawyers; and our uncle is dead and I hope has gone somewhere where his temper will improve and his sense of justice grow. So really I am beginning to feel quite light-hearted again. Or at least I should if it wasn't for this accursed title, which will stand in my way a lot. Do you think that I must really call myself Lord Atterton?"

"You may call yourself anything, Merry-andrew, if you like, but other people will call you Lord Atterton," remarked Clara severely.

"Oh! Well, at any rate it needn't begin at once. Mrs. Josky won't know, for instance."

"Mrs. Josky! Do you mean to say that you are going back to live in that place?"

"Of course. You seem to forget that I have my living to earn. That reminds me, there's an appointment I must keep, so I'll be going. I'll come to see you in a day or two, and perhaps shall bring you some news. Also I want my breakfast. Good-bye, dear. You can find me if you want me," and he turned to go.

"Stop," said Clara. "The resources of this establishment run to bacon and eggs."

"Oh! no, not--not as I like them cooked. Also I couldn't think of troubling these gorgeous menials of yours and the place smells of funerals. Good-bye," and he fled.

Now what is one to make of a man like that? reflected Clara as she heard the front door, opened by himself, slam behind him. On the whole I think him rather delightful and, yes, I like him better than I ever did anyone else. He is the only male creature who does not actively repel me, and very nice-looking too, in his way. Just fancy his refusing £10,000 a year which ought to be his own. Well, I suppose that I shall have to pay it secretly into his account, through the estate, or somehow; he'd never know the difference, or if he did, he would never find out where it came from, if the lawyers and agents were properly cautioned.

She paused for a while, then went on, still thinking to herself:

So Algy had a bad opinion of me; Andrew let that out in his silly way.

Well, Algy was right as, when sober, he always was in such matters, for I have a bad opinion of myself. I did scheme for that inheritance. By hints I put the idea into uncle's mind, always meaning to share it with Andrew. And now that he won't take my bounty, I am ashamed of myself, because I know very well that had it been the other way about, I should have taken his.

Again she paused, and again went on:

Andrew is mixed up with some woman. I'm sure of it, for that's what he meant by his ridiculous talk about an appointment which he could have had no time to make. Who can it be? Not that frigid Miss Black whom I saw at the station, for she isn't a lady and looks like an animated statue and Andrew never liked marble, although I am sure she likes him, for I saw her looking at him. If it is only an intrigue with a married woman or someone, it doesn't matter. He'll wear that out. But if it is some girl whom he means to marry, I shall hate her, that's all, and him too. What's more, she added to herself with conviction, Andrew is the sort of man who would make a housemaid into Lady Atterton if he took a fancy to her, and apologize to her for the title. Oh! he's an idiot, that's what he is, and he wants looking after if he is not to be wasted to the world. I shouldn't wonder if he doesn't come near me again for weeks, unless I fetch him. Now I must go on with the inventory. I wonder whether anyone in the world ever bought as much bad silver as my uncle. Well, Andrew will get it, not I, or rather, it will go into the Bank and remain there, for he can't use it at Mrs. Josky's, which is his idea of a fitting abode for a member of the peerage.

## CHAPTER X

## A MEETING

When Andrew said that he wanted breakfast he told rather an awkward fib since some had been served on the train, enough for him at any rate, who was at no time a great eater. What he really wanted was to get away from Cavendish Square and the discussion of subjects that he found unpleasant.

Once outside the house he reflected as to what he should do next. Of course, his desire and impulse were to fly on the wings of the wind, or rather of a cab, to Red Hall, Whitechapel. Only he remembered that Rose was nearly always out in the morning, shopping he supposed, as was her father. Also it would be seemly to prepare her for his arrival, lest it should give her a shock and cause her to say something before others which afterwards she might regret.

There was a further reason. It was his duty--as may have been gathered, Andrew had a great idea of duty--to report himself at once

to Somerville Black, which was easy, as he lived so near. First, however, he went to a telegraph office and despatched two wires, one addressed Watson, so that anyone could open it, and the other Josky. Their contents, with the alteration of a single word, were identical. The first ran: "Back from Egypt. Coming to tea." The second: "Back from Egypt. Coming to dinner." Both of them were signed "Andrew West" although he remembered with irritation that no longer was this his designation. Also each was exactly twelve words long, and therefore, as he reflected with satisfaction, would go for sixpence. For Andrew had already made up his mind that he would get nothing out of his inheritance and therefore must practise economy for Rose's sake. Then he walked on to Harley Street where, as it was now past eleven, he expected to find Black ready to receive his fashionable patients, who generally began to arrive to consult him at that hour.

As it happened, the butler, Tomkins, being absent for some reason, the door was opened by a maid who knew Andrew, although of her he had very vague recollections.

"Doctor in?" he asked.

"No, Sir," was the answer. "Having only returned last night he has no appointments till after lunch. He has gone out to see some special case, but I expect he will be back soon."

"All right," said Andrew, "I will wait for him," and walked straight into the consulting-room, closing the door behind him.

Here, for lack of anything better to do, he sat down at Black's desk and began to examine the case-book which lay upon the table, trying to pick up details concerning various patients with whom he had been connected before he left for Egypt. Soon he became absorbed in this research, tracing them forward from page to page, and sighing when he found entered on a certain date against the name of a young lady who had interested him--"Died. Heart failure."

So absorbed was he that he never heard the door open, or a woman enter softly. Now this room faced east and the May sun being very strong early that morning, the blinds had been drawn and not yet pulled up again, although by now the sun was off the windows. Therefore to anyone coming in from the bright light without, the place was for a little while almost dark. Thus it happened that Rose, for it was she, seeing a man seated in Dr. Black's chair engaged in the study of Dr. Black's manuscript book, concluded not unnaturally that it was Dr. Black.

"Oh! my dear," she exclaimed, "are you back already. How delightful!"

Andrew, hearing the voice which had been echoing through his dreams for months and ravished by this affectionate greeting, forgetting also that it was odd it should have been offered to him in this house and

room, sprang from the chair. In the enthusiasm and rapture of the moment he did more, for seeing before him a particularly lovely and fragrant Rose, arrayed in charming summer apparel, without a word he swept her into his arms and kissed her passionately.

At what exact period in these proceedings Rose became aware of her mistake he never learned. At any rate, probably through surprise, she allowed them to go on without interruption, till he released her indeed in order to use his lips for their more common purpose of speech. Then she said, with a kind of gasp and trembling all over:

"Oh! you mustn't. Andrew, you must never do that again."

"Why--why not?" he asked blankly.

"Oh!--didn't you know? I wrote a letter to Justice Street to tell you--because--because I am married."

"Married!" he said, sinking back into the chair, which was one of the variety that wheels round. "Married! Oh, I am mad or dreaming--or in hell. What do you mean? To whom are you married?"

"To--to--Doctor Black," she gasped.

"Then you are a devil," he replied, "and a----" Here a word came to his lips which he did not utter, although she guessed it quickly enough.

"Don't, don't!" she exclaimed. "Can't you understand?"

"No," replied Andrew, "I can't. I understand nothing except that I wish I were dead."

She put her hands before her face as though to shut out the sight of his burning and indignant eyes. Thus she did not see, who from her position in the room alone could do so, the door, which was not latched, swing open and that Dr. Black, who had let himself into the house immediately after her, was standing in the doorway like a picture in a frame. Nor did she hear him, since on the thick carpet his feet were noiseless. Andrew, too, neither heard nor saw anything, for his senses seemed to be shrivelled in a flame of agony.

"You are a traitress," he went on in a heavy voice; "you have betrayed me. You have broken my heart and ruined my life, and never again shall I be able to believe in any woman. Tell me before we part, why did you do it? Did you fall in love with him, or were you forced into it? Oh! say that you were forced."

"It was such a good match for me," she murmured confusedly, "as I was unhappy at home where Arabella seems to have taken possession of my father and the whole place, and I--I confess it--I am fond of nice

things such as you could never have afforded to give me, and liked to be a great lady with a position."

Andrew smiled grimly and went on:

"Thank you. I understand that. Now one other question and I will trouble you no more--for ever. Did you never care for me at all? Did your kisses and the lock of hair you gave me and all the talk of our getting married at the end of a year mean nothing? Were you all the time fonder of Doctor Black than of me? Was I just the second string to your bow?"

"No, no! You are the only man I ever had any feeling for, and oh! I have it still. I thought it would go away after I was married, but it doesn't and--I--I--hate marriage. Don't reproach me, for I can't bear it, Andrew. You see, he was so fond of me; he doted on me, as they say old men sometimes do on girls, and I thought that he had love enough for both of us. And I have told you, it was such a good match that I didn't seem able to give it up to become the wife of a struggling young doctor, who wasn't even a man of family, as you told me yourself before you went to Egypt. There, I shouldn't say these things to you, but I can't help it because I know, dear Andrew, that we shall never see each other again and it is my last chance of speaking. Don't be bitter against me and don't think I didn't care for you in my way, if you remember me at all in after life."

Andrew laughed drearily, and answered:

"It seems that we are both of us on the rocks, so it is of no use now to blame the steering. You poor girl! I wonder which of us is more to blame, I for believing, or you for deceiving. I suppose we shall know one day. Meanwhile, with ordinary luck life is a longish road and in the course of it I hope that one forgets many things. Still, it seems hard that this should have happened at its beginning, since God and I alone know how I loved you, Rose. You could never understand; you are not of that sort, if it exists. Well, I'm glad we kissed again before I found out that you were a married woman. It will be something to remember, for at any rate I shan't forget that. Good-bye, again," and he began to grope round rather blindly for his hat, for his eyes were full of tears.

Then it was that the picture came out of its frame, or in other words Dr. Black walked into the room.

"Hullo!" he said with a kind of ghastly echo of his usual joviality. "So you are back from Egypt, Lord Atterton, and looking very well, though a bit tired. Have you congratulated our friend Andrew upon his accession to rank and fortune, Rose?"

She sank into a chair, ejaculating feebly:

"I don't understand what you mean."

"Don't you, my dear? Then I'll explain. It is very simple. Andrew's cousin is dead and his uncle, the millionaire, was buried yesterday--if you read the papers you would have seen. Therefore our mutual friend, the struggling young doctor, is now Lord Atterton. So you really should congratulate him."

Rose burst into subdued weeping and began to search for a pocket-handkerchief, which she could not find.

"Hullo! what's the matter?" went on the doctor. "Take this," and he dragged from the tail pocket of his professional frock-coat, where it was mixed up with a stethoscope, an enormous yellow silk bandana with a black border, which he handed to her politely. "Look here," he went on, "I'm not given to eavesdropping as a rule; it is out of my line, who have always been a straightforward sort of party, a mere common man of no family and therefore rather primitive. But I have been fortunate enough, quite accidentally, to overhear what passed between you two."

"Oh!" ejaculated Rose, while Andrew muttered something else.

"I say fortunate enough," went on the doctor, "because it is always well to have things cleared up and to know where you are. I never could bear fogs, in which one is so apt to take wrong turnings."

"Please!" said Rose, but her husband continued remorselessly:

"First of all, allow me to express my heartfelt sympathy with you young people, and, Andrew my boy, or rather my lord, accept from me the most earnest apologies of an honest man who quite unwittingly has done you a dreadful wrong."

"I suppose you didn't know," said Andrew.

"To think that I knew, Lord Atterton, would be to offer me an insult that I should neither forget nor forgive, although as an old man of the world and a Christian, at any rate in theory, I can forgive most things. No, I did not know. Once I suspected, however, from a hint that our tow-headed friend, Sister Angelica, gave me, that there was something between you two. So I went, as I always do, to the source and asked the young lady here who, unless my ears deceived me, assured me that I was quite mistaken."

Here Rose buried her face in the yellow bandana with the appropriate black border.

"After that," proceeded Black, "being too easily persuaded, as we are all apt to be under certain circumstances, things went on as they do between doting old men who are fools enough to set their hearts upon

beautiful young women, for psychological reasons with which you, Andrew, being a doctor, will be well acquainted. You see, I never expected to be loved, but it occurred to me also that I might have enough of that commodity to serve for two with careful use and suitable trimmings, nice things, you know, like jewels, and carriages and the rest."

"Don't be hard," interrupted Andrew, his face twisting for the pain he knew Rose must feel.

"No, I don't want to be. A doctor who has studied human weaknesses for thirty-five years learns to make allowances and is surprised at nothing. But there it is. And now, my dear, suppose that you go and compose yourself. Don't think that I am going to come the heavy husband over you, although I admit that the mess is one which will take a little mopping up. I have too many frailties of my own to be severe on those of others, and I think that the greatest saying ever uttered was, 'Judge not that ye be not judged!'"

Rose got up and looked wildly, first at her husband and then at Andrew.

"You must both despise me," she gasped.

Andrew shook his head and Black answered:

"Oh no, no one despises a young woman for being weak, especially if she is very pretty. Only it should be a warning to you not to try to sit on two stools at once--much better to choose one of them and plant yourself firmly in the middle, especially if the legs are fairly sound. And now I think we have had enough of this conversation, although it has its humorous side. By the way, my dear, would you kindly have my things moved back into that room in which I used to sleep before I was remarried? If you don't know which it is, the housemaid will."

"Oh!" exclaimed Rose again, and fled wringing her hands.

"Poor girl," said the doctor, as he closed the door behind her. "She has brewed a nice pot of tea for the three of us; senna instead of tea-leaves, jalap instead of sugar and the water of jealousy for milk. We are all to be pitied, but she the most of us, I think."

"I suppose so," commented Andrew.

"Now look here, my boy," went on the doctor, "what are you going to do, about her, I mean? I gather that you are much attached to her, or were."

"Yes, she was all the world to me. I fell in love with her the first time I saw her, and so I suppose I must remain. I wish that I had died

instead of my cousin."

"I shouldn't take it like that if I were you. There are lots of women in the world and not so much difference between them as one imagines. Now the question is, how much does she care for you?"

"Precious little, I imagine, or she wouldn't have done what she did."

"I am not certain. Girls are queer things and to some of them an immediate temptation, like that of easily gained wealth, may divert feelings which it by no means destroys. On the whole, however, I incline to agree that Rose is not a person of deep affections. I formed that opinion during our week's honeymoon, and what I have learned to-day tends to make me believe that it is true. I hope, too, that the converse also applies and that neither is she a person of deep dislikes."

"Anyway, there is nothing to be done," said Andrew.

"Oh! yes there is, if you have the pluck and can get over scruples. I am sorry to say I am fairly healthy for my age, so it is not likely that I shall oblige you both by dying, as the superfluous husband does in a novel. But if you can get over your scruples, and hers, if she has any, and have the courage to face the business, you might take her away. Most scandals can be lived down; in fact, this one would make you both rather interesting. They'd call it a romance, and in course of time you might marry."

"No, no," said Andrew. "Leaving you and myself out of the question, I could not tarnish Rose."

"Tarnish! Ah! that suggests all sorts of questions as to the real nature of virtue, doesn't it? Also as to whether marriage is really the philosopher's stone that turns other qualities, such as love of money, into gold. However, I respect you for the sentiment and advise you, under those circumstances, to keep as clear of her as possible, since there come moments with the best of men when they don't know what they are doing and their good resolutions burn up like a bit of paper."

"I agree," said Andrew. "I shall try never to see her again. It's a pity for quite different reasons, since I hoped that we might continue our professional association, which is now made impossible."

"Yes, and so did I, that is, if a lord can remain a struggling doctor. My word! what a lot of mischief women make with their ambitions and their fancies and their passions and their jealousies. If I had the ordering of the world, I'd blot them out of it altogether, or else leave them to live in it alone and take it out of one another."

"So would I," said Andrew, with conviction.

"Yes, just at present, but who knows--one of these days you may take different views, though after all they may end in the same conclusion. There was something to be said for those old hermits, though the life must have been trying, and even they couldn't get rid of their thoughts. If the truth were known I think there is more sin in thoughts than ever there is in deeds, for in thoughts we do everything we want. No man is really good until he has conquered his thoughts, and no woman either. Something like that has been pointed out on high authority, hasn't it?"

"Which means that goodness does not exist, since no one ever conquered his thoughts."

"Quite so. That's what we are taught in the Bible, isn't it--that all men are sinners? It doesn't mention women, doubtless because that goes without saying--a foregone conclusion. Lord! how bitter we are getting--an old fool and a young one, both of us fish landed by the same fair hand."

"That wanted neither of us, but only the half-shekel in the mouth of the second, which she didn't find in the first."

"Yes, Andrew, that's about it. But you see she lacked insight and perseverance. If she had cut Number One open, she'd have found a whole shekel inside him, stamped with a coronet. It's amazing she never knew. I wonder why the others didn't tell her. Perhaps they didn't know either, though I should have thought Arabella did. However, she is an odd bird, is Arabella, who has a way of keeping information to herself and--dash it! what does it all matter? The thing's finished. Both fish are on the plate--a hot one."

For a few seconds the two men stood opposite to each other and laughed drearily at this sardonic joke. Then Andrew said:

"Well, good-bye, I feel as though I wanted something to eat--or to drink."

"Exactly. Sorry that under the circumstances I can't ask you to stop to lunch. Indeed I think I am going out myself, to give things time to settle down a bit. What are you going to do? See about your inheritance, I suppose--register the title, or whatever happens upon those occasions."

"Curse my inheritance," said Andrew with vigour, "and for the matter of that, my cousin Clara has got most of it. The old man hated me like poison and thought that I had murdered his son to get his shoes."

"Did he? Did he indeed? Well, he was an unreasonable old beast; he ought to have been a woman. But what are you going to do?"

"I don't know. Work with Watson, I think, if he will have me."

"Then you will have to settle that with Arabella, for she's top-dog there now; at least, I believe so. I don't know much about her myself, for she's in such a rage with me that I daren't go near her. She wouldn't come to the church and declines to have anything to do with those whom God has joined together. Look here, my boy, to tell you the truth, I've grown fond of you and I hope we shall meet again sometimes, although we may remind each other of what we would rather forget."

"So do I," answered Andrew, whose respect and liking for Dr. Black had somehow come to bloom in this strange atmosphere of tragi-comic events. Perhaps a sense of mutual misfortune drew them together.

"I was thinking of starting a branch practice out Bayswater way, where I have a lot of wealthy patients. Perhaps you might take charge. There'd be lots of money in it. I will let you know about it later on. Anyway, you have been elected to that little club for which I put you down, and we might meet there and dine together sometimes, for they have a strict rule against the admission of women beyond the door-mat."

"Thanks," said Andrew vaguely, for just then a new wave of wretchedness and despair seemed to blot out his intelligence. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Black, wringing his hand. "Oh! what an accursed fool I was not to ask you yourself instead of that poor girl!"

Then Andrew went.

When the front door had shut behind him the burly, good-hearted doctor sat down in the chair, pretending to study the case-book which Andrew had left open on the desk. Had there been any to watch him, they would have seen his face suddenly grow old, as though all in a minute age had seized upon his health and vigour.

"I should like to make an entry in this book, of a fresh patient. James Somerville Black, aged fifty-eight. Temperament sanguine. Nature rather too human for his years. Remarks. An infernal old fool who tried to play the part of a young man, and got what he deserved."

He ceased with the ghost of one of his hearty laughs, and presently, /flop/, /flop/, there fell two drops of water upon the white page of that book.

Such was the end of Dr. Black's little romance undertaken rather late in life.

## CHAPTER XI

## TEMPTATION

By a kind of natural gravitation, for he never could remember how he got there, Andrew arrived at his old lodgings in Justice Street. Laurie, from her point of observation in the doorway, whence (during the summer months) she seemed to keep a watch as assiduous as that of Sister Anne in Bluebeard's tower, espied him while yet a long way off, and having screamed the glad news to her mother in the back premises, rushed down the road and cast herself panting into his arms.

"Oh! Mr. West, oh! Mr. West!" she exclaimed, "you've come back and it's--it's really summer-time."

She said this, not because the remark was particularly appropriate, but for the reason that joy bubbled up in her little heart, and in her short experience she associated joy and summer. Moreover, Andrew's quick and sympathetic nature appreciated her feelings and the manner of their expression and, what is more, reflected them. For some reason this common little girl's evident delight at his return touched him deeply. He had been through so much misery that morning. He had made acquaintance with the concentrated hate of a dead man, who had died doing his best to work him injury, and with the piercing treachery of a living woman. For the first he cared little, although it pained him because of its injustice. But the second had dealt him a mortal blow.

For in a way it was mortal, as such thrusts of Fate are apt to be when they pierce our hearts in youth. It is very common and very easy to laugh at the love-affairs of the young, but after all few others are real. Then it is that budding men and women give all they have, emptying the springs of faith and trust and affection, pouring them out as an offering upon the feet of mocking Aphrodite. And if it is but to see them swallowed in the sands of disillusion, oh! here is disaster irredeemable. Although they do not believe it, the spring will fill up again and there will be fresh outpourings. But the water of the offerings will be different, as the mocking Aphrodite knows well enough, salt, or bitter, or turbid, or whatever the added quality may be. Where is the beautiful faith? Where, where the lost ideals as to the infinitely superior nature of woman, and to what purpose was all that half-divine devotion? If death were the cause of the loss, or stern necessity, or self-sacrifice, or some sense of duty, it might be borne.

But when the theft is deliberate, above all, when it is venal--love and honour and physical purity, and the joy of life and the hope of

eternal union sold for money, oh! then has disaster any deeper depths, at any rate to such a nature as that of Andrew?

Something of all this, although at the moment he did not express it to himself in so many words, burst upon the heart of that unfortunate young man, as the eager, loving, half-Eastern child leapt into his arms. Perhaps it was the contrast of her spontaneous, oriental adoration for the man who had saved her life and whom she worshipped as a father and a brother rolled into one, with the attitude of the guilty Rose trembling before him in the shadowed consulting-room, and thinking, not so much of the blackness of her own deliberate sin, which had no excuse in love or sudden passion, as of her shame at its discovery and her fear of the reproaches of him whom she had betrayed. Or it may have been because he felt that here was one who truly loved him, although she was but a Whitechapel Jewess, and remembered that he could not say as much of anyone else in the world, unless it chanced to be that child's cockney mother.

He kissed her and as he did so tears came to his eyes and he stifled a sob. Indeed, he was overcome, so much so that he dared not let the child see his emotion.

"Run to your mother, Laurie," he said somewhat huskily, "and tell her I want some lunch. I forgot to buy a pipe."

"There are six in your room, besides the broken one," ejaculated Laurie with painful accuracy.

"Never mind, dear. I want another of a new sort," answered Andrew, wishing that he had said he needed tobacco.

Laurie departed, evidently unconvinced, while turning, Andrew wandered for half an hour amidst the busy crowds of Whitechapel suffering like the damned, for all his loneliness had got a hold on him and now he understood the full measure of his disaster.

Recovering himself at length, he returned to Justice Street, having entirely forgotten to buy any sort of pipe.

This time Mrs. Josky was waiting for him as well as Laurie, and with a perfect torrent of words.

"So here you are at last, good lord--I mean, my lord!" she exclaimed, for the knowledge of his accession to rank though it escaped Rose, had reached Mrs. Josky, possibly through Sister Angelica. Or she may have read it in the weekly paper of which she was a student. "To think that I should have a real lord in this house, and one who has been to Egypt too! Why, it's enough to bring Josky back from the dead, for he did always love a title."

"Then it's more than I do, Mrs. Josky. What I should love is some

lunch, for I hadn't much breakfast."

"It is ready," she answered. "Laurie, go and fetch the fried sole, and bring the chop five minutes later, and if you upset anything, I'll smack you."

So, convoyed by Mrs. Josky, he went upstairs to the familiar room and sank into a chair.

"Where's your luggage?" she asked. "You don't mean to say you've been and lost it?"

"I forget," answered Andrew. "Oh! I know. In the cloak-room at Charing Cross. I'll fetch it afterwards."

"No, I'll do that. But whatever is the matter with you?"

Then an idea striking her, she added:

"It isn't that false-hearted hussy, is it? Oh! I've known all about it from the beginning, though you never guessed," and setting her arms akimbo she stared at him inquiringly.

Andrew groaned, because he could not help it, and she went on:

"I was in the church, I was, and when I saw her smiling there like a pretty dressed-up doll and fingering those big pearls, why, for sixpence I could have torn them off her neck, although that fat old doctor was staring at her as though he would like to eat her, the silly fool."

"Don't!" said Andrew. "Please don't, here's Laurie and I want my lunch. Go away, please, and let me eat."

So Mrs. Josky went, looking unutterable things, and somehow Andrew got through that meal. Afterwards, to escape from his landlady's overwhelming kindness, he went to Charing Cross to fetch his luggage which, Mrs. Josky being out marketing for his dinner, he unpacked himself. In it were some presents that he had brought for Rose, costly gold and silver embroideries such as are sold in the bazaar in Cairo, on which he had spent quite as much as he could afford; also an Egyptian necklace. He looked at these things and at an envelope containing such notes as she had written to him, and that pressed rose which she gave him on the day when he had kissed her first, the same day on which she met Dr. Black.

What was he to do with these things? Give them to some one else? He could not. A kind of rage seized him. A small fire burned in the grate of his sitting-room, for it had come on to rain and the afternoon was chilly. He made it up. Then, with an exclamation, or rather a curse, he cast those valuable articles to the flames. When it came to the

letters he paused a while and looked at them, till his eye fell upon a sentence which ran: "Dear Andrew, I am looking forward to your return, and I think about you such a lot that I am afraid I forget other things."

After this he crumpled up the letters and threw them on to the fire with the rest; also another envelope containing the cherished lock of golden hair, which first he kissed wildly. They caught, and the draught being strong, floated, still burning, up the chimney as foreign paper will. Andrew laughed when he saw it and reflected to himself that there were his illusions gone back to their home in heaven withered in a flame of agony. Over the rose, that same rose which had been crushed in a medical work just where appeared the heart of a dissected "subject," he hesitated a little. Who does not, when it comes to cutting the last link? In the end, however, convoyed by a still bitterer curse, it followed the rest into the fire, and all was done. Only the lock of hair, when at length it felt the heat, came out of the burning envelope and withered and twisted like a thing alive, till it, too, shrivelled in the flame. Also it gave out a strong and acrid smell, as human hair does even when it has been cut off for many years, an odour which Andrew never forgot.

During the next few weeks Andrew was a supremely unhappy man. So unhappy was he that he even contemplated the possibility of suicide. At least it is a fact that one night, being unable to sleep, he slipped from the house and making his way to a bridge over the Thames, looked down at the darkling waters beneath and thought how good it would be to end his pain amidst their swirling eddies, where perhaps oblivion might be found. As it happened an observant policeman put a period to this dangerous contemplation as to the advantages of oblivion over memory, if such were to be won which remained doubtful, and in an effectual fashion, as very politely he saw him off the bridge. But that even the idea should have occurred to a person of religious tendencies, for in his way Andrew was religious, suffices to show how keenly he suffered at this period of his life.

In the end, recognizing an interposition of Providence on his behalf, he presented the worthy policeman with half a sovereign as a kind of thank-offering, and went back to bed. Fortunately, next day he found himself involved in a great deal of business connected with his succession to the title which, although it bored him, served to occupy his mind. In the issue he discovered that in addition to that titular ornament, he might count on a clear income of about £1500 a year, or say £2000 if the London house were sold satisfactorily, which was quite as much or more than he wanted.

For the rest, he did not know what to do with his life. It was suggested to him that he should take his seat in the House of Lords, but for Andrew the House of Lords had no attractions. Indeed hitherto

one of his chief objects had been to secure its total abolition; that is to say, he had attended Socialistic meetings where this was urged and even made fiery speeches in favour of such a change in the Constitution. So it happened that only once did he appear there to take the accustomed oath, after which he shook its gilded dust from off his feet for quite a long while, although Clara, whom he saw occasionally, was very indignant on the subject.

In truth, Andrew's only real ambition was to continue the practice of medicine and he made several attempts in this direction by entering into negotiations for partnerships. On each occasion, however, so soon as his identity was disclosed, those concerned treated the matter as a joke and with much politeness and many "my lord's," bowed him off the premises. Evidently a practising peer was considered impossible.

At length, in despair, he determined to find out whether his old friend, Dr. Watson, would not take him back under an alias, say as Brother West, and one evening about half-past six when, knowing the doctor's habits, he thought that he would find him disengaged, he went to Red Hall to discuss the matter. Receiving no answer to his ring, as the door was open he entered and walked into the sitting-room to await the doctor's arrival. At this time of day the room, of which the windows were not large, was in shadow, so much so indeed that Andrew thought that it was empty. Not until he had closed the door behind him and advanced half of its length towards the windows, did he observe that it had an occupant. Then he saw a lady seated upon one of the doctor's principle treasures, a beautiful, double-ended couch of the Jacobean period, which stood against the wall opposite to the famous Elizabethan table. The lady did not see him, for the reason that her face was buried in her hands, and she did not hear him either because his step was very light, or her own thoughts absorbed her.

There she sat and there was an air of pathos, even of desolation, in her attitude, all alone in that large, dusky room which struck him at once, although he could see so little of her. He paused in his advance and in so doing knocked the stick he carried against the side of the table, making a noise which caused the lady to drop her hands from her face and glance up. Then he saw that it was Rose, looking, as he thought, more beautiful than she had ever done before.

His first thought was of flight; indeed, he turned to go. But it was too late, she had recognized him.

"Am I so dreadful, Lord Atterton," she said sadly in her soft voice, "that you wish to run away from me? Once--once----" and with a catch of the breath she stopped.

He stood irresolute, hesitating, and while he hesitated this fair woman's mastery of him reasserted itself. His heart began to beat, the blood rushed through his veins and made him giddy. He remembered that often he had kissed her on that couch, and now he longed to kiss her

again. Everything else was forgotten except this overmastering impulse of nature which told him that she was his and that he should kiss her again. Yes, even her sin and treachery were forgotten; only the madness of his burning love remained. How beautiful she looked there, seated with bent head, like to a drooping lily, her delicate hands pressed together as though in prayer.

By instinct, as it were, she read what was passing in his mind. Although she might be shallow, Rose had all a woman's faculties and insight. With a quick little motion she pointed to the sofa beside her and, accepting the invitation, he sat down, but at a distance from her.

"I know that I have behaved badly to you," she went on in that soft voice which always thrilled his nerves like music, "but I am not--not a leper that you should avoid me. For whatever I have done, I have paid, and am paying. Perhaps you won't believe me, but I did not really understand what I was doing. Young girls don't always, you know. I was tempted and flattered and I did so long to be rich, who had been poor all my life."

"I suppose that if you had known that I had what are called prospects, it might have made a difference," he said bitterly.

"I dare say; at any rate it was foolish of you not to tell me, and as for the others who knew and held their tongues, I will never forgive them. I don't try to make out any case for myself, Andrew; I have none. I have been a wicked and foolish girl, and the worst of it is that I who thought that I should not mind, mind horribly. No, there is a worse behind the worst. I believed that you were only flirting with me, as you would with any pretty girl who came your way, that you would get over it in a month or so. But now it seems that you really cared and that I have done you a great injury--and oh! it breaks my heart."

"Then there are two broken hearts," replied Andrew in the same bitter voice, "for I shall never get over it--quite. You have not only robbed me of what I desired more than anything on the earth, you have destroyed my belief in woman. I do not suppose that I shall ever again quite believe in any woman. If you had fallen in love with another man, I should not have minded so much, I should have lost the race, that is all. But, as it is, according to your own story--well, things are very dreadful."

He paused, and she sat looking at him, twisting those beautiful hands of hers one over the other, until suddenly she caught sight of her wedding-ring and ceased, hiding it from view. Andrew too, saw that wedding-ring and it warned him, causing him to remember.

"However," he went on, "it is all done with now and you have your husband to think of, who is a very good fellow, a man I respect and do

not wish to harm."

"My husband," she broke in. "Oh! yes, he is good, though sometimes I think otherwise. He is hard in his way, you know. He has cut himself off from me entirely. I don't mind that, indeed I am glad, but I have to bear his jokes, each of them with a sting in it--even his laughter has a sting. Then in a fashion he mocks me. He knows that I like fine dresses and jewels and there is scarcely a day passes but he brings me something fresh, not to give me pleasure, but to hurt me. I have more necklaces and bracelets and rings than I know what to do with--and I tell you, Andrew, I hate the sight of them. I would like to throw them out of the window. Only to-day, when he gave me the last thing, a ruby heart with a diamond arrow through it, he told me some dreadful story about a king called Croesus who loved gold and whose enemies when they caught him gave him gold to eat and drink. I know it was to torment me in some way, although I am not clever. I tell you, Andrew," she went on with gathering passion, "that I should value a broken sixpence that you had given me, more than all these jewels that are worth thousands."

"I brought you some presents from Egypt," said Andrew confusedly, for he felt his head swimming, "but I burned them that day after we met--with your letters and the lock of hair." Then he stopped, shuddering at the memory of that writhing hair of which the odour rose suddenly in his nostrils.

"You burned them all? Is there nothing left which I can keep in memory of you? What is that ring upon your finger? The blue thing, shaped like a beetle. Unless it was a present from some one else, will you not give it to me? Don't be afraid, I shouldn't wear it except perhaps when I am asleep and no one sees."

"It is a scarabæus," he said, "and it came off a mummy. I bought it in Egypt with a piece of a dead lady's finger in it. Well," he added grimly, "in a way I am a mummy too, so you may as well have it," and drawing it from his finger he threw it into her lap, whence it rolled on to the floor. Stopping, she picked it up humbly enough and hid it away somewhere in the bosom of her dress.

"Thank you," she said. "I cannot tell you how much I shall value something that reminds me of happier days. They are done with, you know," she added in another little outburst which he felt to be very genuine. "Oh! Andrew, Andrew, I am so wretched that sometimes I feel as though I should like to make away with myself. Indeed, I think I would if I wasn't afraid, not only of dying, but of all the dreadful things which they say may happen to one afterwards."

"Yes," interrupted Andrew hastily. "I have thought of that too, but it is almost as bad to murder oneself as to murder anyone else, and murder is a horrible crime."

"You! Why should you dream of such a thing? You are not--stained as I am. You are a man with rank and fortune, and all the world before you. There's hardly a woman in London who wouldn't give you her love if you asked her for it. Oh! whatever you may feel, remember that I suffer a hundred times more."

"Your bargain does not seem to have come off," remarked Andrew, speaking more to himself than to her.

Then Rose broke down, honestly enough, poor girl. She looked at him with her big pathetic eyes and by degrees he saw them fill with tears. They filled till they seemed like blue flowers brimming with dew, and at last began to overflow. It was too much for him. It would have been too much for any man so situated. His head went entirely. He lost himself in a mist of unreason, all he knew was that there before him sat the lovely woman whom he had loved and still loved, notwithstanding the woes she had brought upon his head. These he forgave since love forgives everything, and for the rest--there she sat!

There is a Paulian saying, not always confirmed by experience, to the effect that we are never tempted beyond our strength of resistance, though doubtless this is true when we are normal and have the opportunity of weighing matters. Probably, indeed, the axiom refers to such conditions and not to those which are abnormal, when the reason is in abeyance. Now, at the moment, Andrew's case fell within this second category; in short, he no more knew what he was doing than a madman does. So, very deliberately, he bent towards Rose and stretched out his arms with the object of embracing her, while for her part she sighed and sat quite still.

It was at this moment, most fortunately for both of them, that they heard voices in the passage, and into the room walked Dr. Watson and Arabella.

Even in his own confusion, with a kind of sixth sense Andrew noticed at once that the pair seemed rather disturbed, or at any rate elated. Obviously, too, they were thinking so much about something else, that it did not strike them as in the least odd that they should find him and Rose seated there upon the couch, if indeed either of them observed that they were so seated before he rose to greet them.

"How do you do, Brother Andrew, or Brother Atterton, I ought to say," said the doctor when he recognized him. "Come to tea, I suppose. How do you do, Rose, my dear? Looking prettier than ever, I see. Marriage has certainly agreed with her, hasn't it, Arabella?"

"I don't know," answered Arabella, as she shook hands with Rose rather stiffly, "but it hasn't agreed with my father. I think he looks ten years older."

"At all events," interrupted Andrew, nervously anxious to change the subject, "the doctor here looks ten years younger, and so do you--oh! I shouldn't say that to you. But what has happened to him?"

"I think I may as well tell you," replied Dr. Watson, looking shy as a schoolgirl. "It is a good opportunity, isn't it, Arabella?"

That classical-looking young woman turned her head away as though to avoid the sight of Rose who, forgetting her own griefs, sat mildly expectant on the sofa, as with a furtive hand she rubbed a tear-drop from the front of her dress.

"Well, my dear," went on the doctor effusively, as is the manner of nervous men who desire to get something off their minds, "you know since you determined to get married in that sudden fashion----" here he looked at Andrew and some idea seemed to strike him which caused his thoughts to wander for a moment. Recovering, he continued, "Since that event, which surprised me very much, naturally this house has been very lonesome. So--well, to cut it short, I have determined to follow your excellent example and been fortunate enough to find a lady who--shares my views on the subject," and with a quite youthful playfulness, he patted Arabella on the head, adding, "don't you, Arabella my love?"

"Yes, I suppose so," replied that lady frigidly, "but please be careful of my hair."

Then followed a silence, in the midst of which Rose uttered one of her long-drawn "oh's." As for Andrew, his nerves, already screwed almost to breaking-point, he now gave way entirely, with the result that he burst into a fit of unseemly giggling.

"What do you find so amusing, Lord Atterton?" asked Arabella, with cold yet rather anxious interest.

"Nothing, nothing," he said, trying to stifle his paroxysm, "but it is rather funny, isn't it? The doctor's daughter marries your father, and her father is going to marry his daughter--a kind of Cox and Box arrangement. Well, I am sure I hope you will all be very happy and Mrs. Black will have something to tell her husband when she gets home."

"Thank you," said Arabella, "but I think that I will inform my father myself of a matter that concerns me more than anyone else."

"Of course," ejaculated Andrew, "that's most natural. I wonder what he will say? Well, good-bye. I have an appointment with a lawyer--no, I mean I have to go down to the House of Lords to pay some fees. Good-bye, Brother Watson. Good-bye, Miss Black. Good-bye, Mrs. Black," and he was gone.

Next morning Andrew started suddenly for the North to visit his estates and stopped there for three months, fishing and making the acquaintance of the tenantry and neighbourhood.

## CHAPTER XII

## CLARA GOES ANGLING

When at length Andrew returned to town, just as everyone else was leaving it for the autumn holiday, he went to see Clara, whom he found still resident in Cavendish Square.

"Hullo! my dear," he said, "what are you doing here? The lawyers wrote to me that they had sold this family mausoleum, and extremely well, although they did not mention the figure."

"Yes, Andrew," replied Clara, who, he noted, was looking quite attractive, "I bought it for the sake of its associations."

"Did you! That's a queer taste of yours. Well, I imagine that you might have got it cheaper."

"Thank you, Andrew, but I paid what I thought the place worth to me, as I can well afford to do."

She did not add that she had given about four times its market value, being desirous of adding to Andrew's resources in a way which would not excite his suspicions. Here it may be said that this manoeuvre was quite successful, since he never took the trouble to inquire further about the matter. Nor need too much credit be given to Clara over this transaction. She was a keen business woman, but in a way she had a conscience. She knew that she had acquired at least nine-tenths of Andrew's inheritance and that nothing she could say or do would ever induce him to receive one farthing of it back again by way of charity, although she had pointed out, as did his lawyers, that he had good grounds for contesting his uncle's will at law.

She knew moreover that she had done this wittingly. Had she taken a different line with the late Lord Atterton when he was mad with grief over the loss of his son and blindly enraged with Andrew, this injustice might have been prevented, or at the least mitigated. But she had done nothing of the sort, although she was sure that this great fortune hung in the balance. Also she was aware that the issue lay between Andrew and herself, since her uncle had no other relations and was not a man who would wish to benefit charities.

Yet when he vilified Andrew, swearing that he would cut him off with a

shilling, or rather without the shilling, with nothing but what he must have, she had merely put in a /pro forma/ defence of her absent cousin, whom she knew to be totally innocent. In short, she had let judgment go by default and instead of sending for the doctor, which was what he needed, had allowed her uncle to visit the lawyer and change his will in her own favour, as she was certain that he would.

All of these things Clara, who had a singularly pellucid and judicial mind, saw clearly enough. To say that they troubled her conscience would be too much, for the reason that, to use an Americanism, she did not bank on conscience. Religion and its trimmings were to Clara matters for decent, outward observance, parts of the conventions that made up the modern code in certain sections of society, something to be put on with her Sunday clothes, and to be stretched or clipped in accordance with the company in which she found herself. She was a woman of her world and never did she pretend to be more or less. Even into this little act of reparation, which she carried through by giving much more than its value for the freehold of a London house, entered other motives. She did not wish Andrew to be an out-of-elbows peer. That would reflect on her as well as on him, especially as some one in the lawyer's office seemed to have been talking, or perhaps it may have been the doctor.

At any rate, the story of her uncle's dementia, for to this it amounted, in the course of which she supplanted his lawful heir, had become the subject of comment even in society papers of the lower class. She was quite willing to make over a large sum to her cousin, as indeed she had offered to do. But here his peculiarities barred the way for which she was sorry, especially as she would have been left with as much as she could spend, and the income from the spirit business was increasing every year. So she did what she could on the quiet, and purposed to do more by similar methods.

Also this cool and very level-headed young lady had other ends in view. Something in one of Andrew's careless notes had given her a clue which she had followed up with patience and industry. Thus she went to Justice Street, ostensibly to obtain his address which was not forthcoming at the House of Lords, and there fell into conversation with Mrs. Josky, from whom she extracted more than that good woman could have imagined. Further, she went to consult Dr. Black about some trifling ailment of her own, and with him she had more conversation. She was even so fortunate as to meet Mrs. Black and, taking an opportunity, suddenly to spring Andrew's name upon her as that of one whom she knew to be an old friend of her own, and watch the result.

A second visit to Mrs. Josky, this time about a lustre tea-pot she had seen in her little shop, filled in the details.

In short, she had the whole story at her finger-ends, and it came to this: That Andrew had been jilted by a pretty fool who did not in the least understand what she was doing, but who, happily for him, was now

safely married and out of the way.

Clara was so pleased that in acknowledgment she would gladly have done Rose any good turn in her power, and did in fact take the trouble to introduce her to a most talented and exclusive dressmaker who only worked for a few very distinguished people at equally distinguished prices.

As may have guessed, it was Clara's intention to marry Andrew. That had always been her intention ever since she knew that Algernon could not live. Hitherto, however, there had been some obstacle in her path which, as she now discovered, was the well-favoured but second-rate young person called Rose, who through some curious folly had lost her chance. Now the coast was clear and all was plain sailing, since in such a matter Andrew himself scarcely counted. It was merely a question of how he was handled.

Still, Clara did make a few preparations. For instance, although they bored her extremely, she read certain works on Socialism; she even joined a famous society that advocated some form of this cult, and attended a few of the lectures, where she became acquainted with Dr. Watson and his wife Arabella. Also she worked up interest in medical science and research, on which she perused more text-books. Thus when Andrew finally reappeared from the North she was, as it were, triply armed for the forthcoming encounter.

After all, she reflected, one must marry some one, and he was infinitely the least disagreeable man she knew. Also undoubtedly he had great abilities, which, if well directed, might take him a long way, and with him herself.

Andrew stopped to lunch at Cavendish Square. Although there was no other guest it was a particularly charming lunch, simple, but exquisitely served and cooked. The wine, too, was of the very best, and Andrew, who had been living in an inn and was an abstemious person, drank several glasses. When the meal was finished they went to take coffee in a delightful room that Clara had furnished with great taste as her boudoir, since, having privately given orders that she was not at home, here she knew that they would not be disturbed.

"Andrew," she said presently, after a little pause in the conversation which she feared might herald his departure, "what makes you so sad? Is it the loss of our uncle's fortune, which, of course, you ought to have had?"

"Good gracious! no," he answered. "I have never thought twice about it, and why should I? I've got all I want, and a great deal more than I deserve."

"Still, you are sad and I wish you would tell me why. After all, you and I are cousins who have no other relatives, and we have always been

friends and trusted each other. You see, I might be able to help you. Forgive me and don't answer unless you like, but is it anything about a woman?"

"Wouldn't you be sad, Clara, if you found your career suddenly brought to an end through no fault of your own, just because you had the misfortune to become a peer?"

"But why should it come to an end?" she inquired, opening her innocent blue eyes, "for I suppose you mean your doctoring? Why should you not go on working with Dr. Black, even though you have the misfortune to be a peer?" she added, with a faint tinge of sarcasm.

"With Black! It is impossible," he exclaimed, colouring.

Clara opened her eyes still wider and looked bewildered, but said nothing.

"There are circumstances," went on Andrew awkwardly--and stopped.

"Of course I have no idea to what you allude, Andrew, but I have observed that, where a man is concerned, 'circumstances' generally means something to do with a lady."

"Your power of observation was always good, Clara," blurted out Andrew, "and if you want to know the truth, I am no exception to the rule. My 'circumstances' have to do with Mrs. Black."

"Oh! Mrs. Black! I was introduced to her the other day when I went to see the doctor about my glands. She is a very pretty young woman and dresses well, almost a beauty indeed, if she had more animation. Have you been following the fashion, Andrew, and falling in love with your neighbour's wife?"

"No, my neighbour fell in love with my wife, or rather with the woman who should have been my wife. I was engaged to Rose Watson, and while I was away she married Black. That's all the story."

"Indeed! What wonderful escapes some men have; it makes one believe in a watching Providence."

"What on earth do you mean, Clara?"

"What I say, that you have had a wonderful escape. When I think of you with all your ability and prospects married to a pretty, empty-headed doll who is not even a lady--for you know she isn't quite--well, it makes me shiver."

"Don't abuse her, Clara. I loved her.

"I have no doubt you did. It is the sort of thing you would have done.

But how did this come about? Was she forced into marriage with that old doctor?"

"No. He was rich and I was poor, that's all. You see, she never understood I had any kind of prospects."

"And you never told her, I suppose. Just like you again. Well, you ought to go down on to your knees and thank Heaven for your deliverance. Oh! it makes me angry that a man should waste another thought upon a woman who played him a trick like that--for money. Why, except that she is infinitely worse, what is the difference between her and, well--never mind? I can only say that if I had done such a thing from so base a motive I should never dare to look any honest person in the face again, and goodness knows I don't set up for any particular virtue. Can't you see it yourself?"

"Yes, only I try not to judge hardly. We all have our weak points, even you may have some somewhere, and might give way if we chance to be tempted on them. Indeed I dare say we have, or shall. You see, hers happened to be money and jewels."

Almost imperceptibly Clara winced, though this Andrew never saw. Then she said in a rather gentler voice:

"I agree, and if it were anything else, love, or even passion, or to help others, oh! anything, I should not dare to condemn. But to sell herself body and soul for money to a man almost old enough to be her grandfather, when she had promised herself to /you/----"

"Well, Clara, did you never do anything for money?" (Here she winced, and again he did not notice.) "I have. I took Algernon abroad for money, thinking it would help me with Rose. So I can make excuses."

"Andrew, that isn't true. You took Algernon to Egypt because he would go with no one else, and you thought it might save his life. By accusing yourself falsely, you only make her conduct the blacker by contrast. Anyway, it is all done with. You are not going to run after her now she is married, are you, though I dare say she wouldn't mind, having found out who you are? You haven't been seeing her, have you?"

"I have met her twice, by accident both times."

"Then I beg of you as one who is your true friend, and who has no one else to--be interested in, not to allow any more such accidents to happen. Pray, pray keep out of scandals. They are so vulgar and degrading."

"I mean to, Clara. That's why I went up North, and have neither seen nor heard of her since. But I tell you straight out that she hit me very hard; everything one believed in and the rest--all gone at a swoop."

"Of course she did, you poor dear Andrew, and oh! I am so sorry for you" (here the blue eyes filled with tears), "so sorry that I will not try to say how much, lest I should make a fool of myself."

"It is awfully good of you to care so much about me and my follies, and I tell you I shan't forget it, Clara," said Andrew, who was touched as any young man would have been under the circumstances.

"Of course I care, dear," she went on. "Who wouldn't have where a--a cousin was concerned? And I am sorry for that poor girl, too, knowing--what she has lost."

"Oh! you mean the title. Well, I would make her a present of it if I could, for it is no use to me. In fact, it is a hindrance. Now I must be going."

History does not reveal what Clara felt within at such remarks as these. Undoubtedly, however, it was something definite and strong. To hear a young man mock at the possession of a peerage, especially an inherited peerage for which everybody knew he had not paid a sixpence, directly or indirectly, was to her little short of blasphemy. Indeed, sooner could she have forgiven blasphemy itself, since in the tolerant world to which she belonged all have a right to their opinions on religious matters. These are far away, but peerages are extremely near.

Still, to her credit she concealed her feelings, and answered:

"I can quite understand your indifference to rank and money. Indeed, sometimes I feel like that myself, for after all, where do they lead?"

"I shouldn't wonder if our uncle is thinking something of that sort to-day," mused Andrew, who had religious convictions of a sort.

"Our uncle is dead, so let him rest in his grave," said Clara, looking rather shocked.

"Quite so. I'm sure I didn't want to bring him out of it, who, as I hope, has been transported to the Isles of the Blest across an ocean of whisky. Well, good-bye."

"Wait one minute, Andrew, for you know you are only going to a museum or something of that sort. I want to give you a lecture. Sit down and take another cigarette."

"Fire away," said Andrew, obeying.

"I think," remarked Clara, standing over him and shaking a slim finger above his curly head, "I think that you are a reprehensible and even a wicked young man."

"Hear hear," said Andrew. "Agreed, if that is all you have to say. I could tell you about things I have done which would make that neat hair of yours come down."

Clara smiled, having perfect confidence in her coiffure and powers of resisting shock. Then she continued:

"Now I'll show you why. You have great opportunities in the world, if you wish to use them. With your position everything is open to you to which most men only attain thirty or forty years later in life, when they have grown old and their chances have gone by."

Andrew became interested, and asked:

"What can I do? If you will show me anything I can do that is worth the doing, I'll bless you and call you my guardian angel."

"The question is, what can't you do with your brains? You can govern this country, if you like, or take a large share in its government. You can advance the cause of the People and help to establish a true democracy. You can make thousands happy who are now wretched. You can leave the nation stronger than you found it, and purer and better, and with it a name that will shine for generations. All these things are in your hands, and many more, such as the furthering of the science which you love."

"You talk like a book, Clara, but if you will show me how to do these things, or any of them, by the help of a small smattering of knowledge, extremely moderate abilities, a title floated on whisky and about £1500 a year on which to keep it up, I shall be much obliged to you."

"I will, Andrew. If you have no engagement, come to dinner to-morrow night, and we will begin, as we have talked enough for to-day."

"All right. As I have no friends, except a few medical people who are busy men, of course I have no engagements, so I'll come, and you shall expound your plans for my regeneration and that of the country. By Jove, Clara, I never knew you thought of such things--imagined that you gave your mind to dresses and dinner-parties and society, and all that empty bosh. You are coming out in a new light with a vengeance."

"You mean that you are beginning to see my humble light, such as it is, Andrew. Hitherto you have been dazzled by another which has led you into a nice trouble, and then gone out," and she nodded her little head at him gravely, adding, "Well, good-bye, dear, till to-morrow night at eight, and don't walk to the British Museum or wherever you are going, via Harley Street, for the sake of the family as well as your own."

"Clara has a deal more in her than ever I imagined," reflected Andrew to himself, as he strolled away aimlessly, "and what's more, she was awfully good to me, although she did say some hard things about Rose. Oh! Rose, Rose, to think that you should have put it into the power of others to say hard things of you, and with justice!"

Andrew dined at Cavendish Square on the following night as he, or rather Clara, had arranged, and that young lady delivered her promised lecture. It cost her a good deal of thought during the intervening hours, also some reference to text-books with which she refreshed her memory. The results, however, were satisfactory, for really she filled the rôle of fair monitress very well indeed. At times she was shy and appealed to his superior knowledge and male judgment, while once or twice she gave way to bursts of enthusiasm for which afterwards she apologized. Although somehow he seemed to have heard it all before, Andrew was much impressed and even dazzled, especially by a last coruscating effort in which she shadowed forth all that might be worked in this imperfect world by one (or two) earnest, devoted souls who chanced to be blest with health, youth, station, and financial advantages.

Andrew went home reflective and touched with a new enthusiasm. For the first time during a whole year or so he did not think of Rose throughout several consecutive hours, and when he did she only filled a bit of his mind instead of overflowing it on every side into space as was customary.

This mental attitude of his grew and gathered during several other /tête-à-tête/ dinners, to say nothing of a course of lectures on the higher Socialism which they attended together, whereat Clara made careful notes of the best points. Truth compels this chronicler to add that when at last she reached the privacy of her chamber, Clara hurled those notes into the paper-basket and, to relieve her soul, delivered herself of the following monologue:

"I can't stand much more of this, I can't indeed! That long-haired donkey who lectures about things he does not in the least understand to a pack of vain idiots full of their own self-importance, is rapidly driving me mad. Cannot they see that if his doctrines were put in practice, within ten years civilization would cease to exist, and the world would become a lunatic asylum in which the stronger maniacs would prey upon the weaker imbeciles until all were destroyed, or some sane people rose up to rule them? How can Andrew swallow such stuff? If he does really swallow it, which I doubt. Well, if so, it is only a phase. Still, this business must come to a head, one way or another, since not for him or anyone else can I endure more of those lectures. Once I am married the word Socialism shall be taboo in my house, or I will know the reason why."

The long-suffering Clara, as it happened, was not called upon to take further notes about the regeneration of mankind by help of the newest

nostrums which involved, incidentally, the seizure of everybody's property for the benefit of everybody else. For it came about that as Andrew walked towards Justice Street after his very next dinner at Cavendish Square, he was aware, it might almost be said painfully aware, that in some strange and nebulous way he had become engaged to Clara.

He tried to recall exactly how it happened. There had been the usual dissertation on what might be done in the world, and it was agreed that money would be necessary to make a beginning. He had remarked that so far as he was concerned the filthy lucre was lacking, and Clara answered with a sigh that she had more than she knew what to do with. Thereon he had suggested that she should take the field, to which the reply was that one weak and lonely woman could not attempt this great adventure, though if he were with her (there he remembered that she had sighed and looked down) it might be different.

"Then we had better get married," he said, by way of a joke.

"Do you mean it, Andrew? No, that's impertinent, for you would not have said it if you did not. You are not a man who would jest with a woman on such a solemn matter."

"Of course not," he had replied feebly. "I hadn't really considered the business much, but since it has been mooted, do you think you could take me as a husband, Clara? You know my unhappy story, and it is my duty to beg you to bear it in mind before you answer."

"Yes, I know, Andrew, and I give it weight. But mutual trust and strong affection based upon esteem and a common purpose in life will outwear any passion for one who, you must forgive me for saying, has proved herself not to be worthy. I do not fear to put myself in competition with such a woman, whatever advantages she may have over me," and she held out her hands.

After this there was nothing to be done except take them and imprint a timid embrace upon Clara's cool forehead.

Then it was all over, and having returned the embrace, she had told him that he had better go away and give her time to compose herself, returning to lunch upon the morrow. So he went--to tell the truth, with no great reluctance, doubtless because he also needed to compose himself. Why, when his mind should be so very differently occupied, oh! why could he think of nothing save the faithless and passionate Rose (for such to him she was, or seemed to be) seated on the sofa at Red Hall with eyes that said, "Take me, for I am thine"?

## CHAPTER XIII

Andrew's engagement followed a perfectly normal course. When once she had seen to its accurate publication in the proper quarters, and had supplied the society papers with a few paragraphs suitable to the social importance of the persons concerned, Clara, dreading more Socialistic lectures, also the return of Mrs. Black who was, she had ascertained, on a holiday, remarked that town was hot, and that she could no longer repress her longings for sylvan shades.

"Literally," she said, "I dream of the country and green leaves and dew upon the grass and the gold of the ripening crops. You see, I was born there."

"Yes," answered Andrew, "but I didn't know you had ever lived there since. Where are you going to?"

Clara, who had not made up her mind on this point, reflected for a moment and then suggested Scarborough.

"Scarborough! You don't call that country, do you, dear? Why, it is a fashionable watering-place with miles of sea front."

"I remember a green hill and some gardens, Andrew. But if you don't like Scarborough, what other place would you prefer? I am quite willing to fall in with your tastes."

"My tastes, dear! Why, I'm not going to the country. I've just come back from it. I'm going to do some work at my hospital, where, as the big men are away, they are quite willing to take me on for a bit--you see, I was one of their house surgeons for a few weeks. But why don't you try Atterton itself? The north of Yorkshire is rural enough for anybody."

"Really, Andrew, you are foolish. How can I possibly go to Atterton, which is your place, without you, or with you either, for the matter of that, before we are married? And as for working at a hospital, I hoped that you would accompany me somewhere, living in a different part of the town or village, so that I might be able to see something of you, as is usual in our circumstances."

"Oh!" answered Andrew, without any particular enthusiasm, for he had set his heart upon that hospital work. "I had forgotten the engagement business, and I suppose you can't go to Atterton alone. Also, as the nearest neighbour is five miles off, you might be rather dull. It almost seems as though the best thing to do would be for us to get married first. Then I suppose we could go together."

Upon hearing this, Clara's first impulse was to exclaim "Absurd!" Quickly, however, she reflected that Andrew's idea, or rather random suggestion, had points. To begin with, it would finally rule out Mrs.

Black, of whom she lived in some dread. Also so hurried a marriage would have a romantic air. A few hints in suitable directions would suffice to circulate an attractive story of a lifelong attachment that had begun when first their cradles were set side by side, now made possible of fulfilment by the death of an obstructive relative. Of this opportunity, naturally enough, immediate advantage had been taken by two ardent lovers. Then the whole thing would be so unusual; a quiet but carefully advertised autumn marriage when people were out of town (for, after all, reporters never went out of town). No lists of wedding presents (because probably these would not be forthcoming in sufficient numbers at such short notice)--altogether something quite new for people in their position.

"Of course, love," she said, looking down shyly, "that would be delightful, and though I see great inconveniences and it is usual to wait longer, as you are set on it and I know that men hate being engaged, well, dearest, I should like to give you your wish and myself with it, because, as you know, it is you I think of in everything."

"That's awfully good of you. Really, Clara, you are a perfect angel to sacrifice yourself on the altar in this way, or rather at it," replied Andrew with high-sounding, if hollow enthusiasm. "Well, if you will arrange the business and tell me what day you fix, I'll be ready."

"To share in the sacrifice at the altar," suggested Clara with gentle sarcasm, for after all she was a woman and felt in her heart that something was lacking. Indeed, although her imagination was not active, at the moment she did wonder whether, if the second-rate Rose Black had been concerned and it were a question of his sudden marriage to her, Andrew might not have been more demonstrative in language, or otherwise. However, having made up her mind to this step, she must take him as he was and make the best of things. After all, as a woman of the world she was well aware that the holy state of matrimony was one that has imperfections, since if marriages are made in heaven, they have to be carried through on earth.

After a brief interchange of modified endearments, Andrew departed to attend some particular operation at the hospital, to which the great surgeon Clinton, who it may be remembered had approved of an heroic effort of his own in the same line, had especially invited his attendance.

"Very well, dear," he said, as he vanished, "I leave everything to you, as you are so much more competent than I am, and I'll order a new frock-coat to-morrow, for that is the thing to be married in, isn't it? And now I must be off to see that poor woman operated on. I expect to learn a great deal from her case."

If Andrew would attend a little more to women's hearts and a little less to the rest of their interior economy, it might be better for us both in the long run, reflected Clara rather bitterly as the door

closed behind him. Really, if he had been hiring a new housemaid, he could not take things more coolly.

Still, being a lady of determination, having once, after ample thought, put her hand to the plough, any such deficiencies on the part of the steed she had to steer did not give her pause. After all, she remembered, they were more apparent than real, and once she had him in the traces she would know how to drive a straight furrow.

So it came about that in due course this wealthy and distinguished pair were united in the bond that is so easy to tie and so extremely difficult to loose. After all, although town was rather empty, the event proved fashionable and as there was little else at the moment with which to fill them, the notices in the papers were full and long. Also, quite a number of presents arrived, most of them sent by people of whom Andrew had never even heard, an the church was filled with sightseers, while Clara's bridesmaids were young ladies of the most aristocratic birth. (Andrew's best man, it may be remarked, was a fellow-student from the hospital, whose birth was not aristocratic.)

As they were walking down the aisle after the conclusion of the ceremony, Andrew's glance, wandering vaguely over the sea of unfamiliar faces, suddenly fell upon one that was familiar enough, namely, that of Rose. She smiled and nodded to him as though to convey good wishes, but he noted that she was white and that her features were drawn as though with pain; also that she looked as though she had been crying. This fleeting vision upset him very much; indeed, he closed his eyes to be rid of the sight of it, with the result that he blundered into his bride and trod upon her lovely dress which was torn, much to her annoyance.

Such was his last meeting with Rose. That chapter in his life was closed. It seemed an empty, aimless chapter; yet it was not so, because of its effects on him, to whom it gave so much pain and was the cause of such bitter disillusionment.

Here it may be added that immediately after Andrew's return to London, subsequent to their honeymoon in the north, on the placard of an evening paper he saw printed as a minor item of news, "Sudden death of well-known physician." Something made him buy the paper and search until he found a paragraph headed: "Inquest on Dr. Somerville Black. Verdict of death by misadventure from overdose of veronal."

The paragraph told the rest of the story. According to the evidence of Mrs. Black, her husband slept very badly and, as she believed, took narcotics. One morning she was called to his room, which was in a different part of the house to her own, and found him dead with a bottle of veronal tablets beside him. That was all she had to say about the occurrence, except that they lived on affectionate terms and

that under his will she was left joint heiress with his daughter, Mrs. Watson, to his large estate. Then came the verdict, and so this "fashionable consultant" vanished from the world and was forgotten.

Andrew was staggered both by the death of Black, to whom he was attached, and at the thought that if he had waited a little he might after all have married Rose. And yet, did he wish to marry Rose? He could not tell; all he knew was that if they had both been free he would have married her, because, well, just because she was Rose, that Rose whom he had trusted and who had wrecked his life for money. For after all, what creature is there quite so forgiving as a man, especially if the first affections of his youth are involved?

For the rest, to finish the tale of Rose, within a year she married again, choosing as her second husband a large, fresh-faced and peculiarly bucolic person of almost inconceivable stupidity, a baronet who shot two days a week and hunted three, and possessed great estates in the south of England. By this excellent man she became the mother of a considerable family, and so ends the Book of Rose.

If either of them could have been induced to tell the truth upon the matter, both Andrew and Clara would have confessed that the honeymoon at Atterton did not attain even to their separate modest expectations. To begin with, the house was huge and gorgeous, at least £100,000 of the profits of West's whisky had been spent upon its evolution from a quiet country gentleman's residence into a palace not in the best of taste. Then there were few neighbours, and Clara, always anxious to do the right thing, felt that she ought not to ask a party to assist at the first flowering of her nuptial joys. Therefore she preferred that these should blush unseen. Also, it rained persistently for a whole month, which made the river unfishable and for shooting Andrew did not care.

So he wandered about through those gilded chambers, which included a great library almost without books, reflecting that if he could, he would burn the place down, and at any rate that he never wanted to see it again. Also he purchased a pair of tame rabbits and some pigeons, but just as these became interesting it was time to return to town and he had to give them away to an under-gardener. In fact, there was nothing left to do except converse with Clara, which soon proved a somewhat unexhilirating employment, since her enthusiasm for those subjects that attracted him, first lessened, and then evaporated. Now it is difficult to sit opposite to a lady whom you are expected to call "dearest" at every third sentence, and talk mostly of the weather, especially when this remains of a continual badness, in the intervals of pretending to consume elaborate and wonderfully cooked meals which you do not want.

Somehow he never seemed to get any nearer to Clara, and after her

first efforts, which involved the study of Socialistic works which she had now burned because she hated them so much, she never tried to get any nearer to him. Andrew was Andrew and she was Clara, just as the North Pole and the Equator are different places, and there was an end of it, though on the whole she was glad that she had made the marriage, since he was quite an amenable person, always willing to let her do what she wanted, so long as he was not bothered.

So it came about that though Andrew lamented the rabbits, which he had named Dr. Watson and Arabella, neither of them wept when the time came to depart from those stately halls in the company of twelve servants. The only trouble was that Andrew hated the mausoleum in Cavendish Square even more than he did Atterton, where at least there were trees and flowers and all the other sights and sounds of Nature. Still, with some astuteness he managed to mitigate the terrors of the former establishment by keeping on his rooms in Justice Street upon the plea that they were handy to his hospital, where he had arranged to work upon bacteriological research. At Justice Street accordingly he lunched, or at any rate took tea most days in the congenial company of Mrs. Josky, and sometimes of certain medical friends.

Once Clara, who had conceived doubts about this arrangement, descended upon one of these tea-parties, but when she found three earnest young men engaged in examining a particularly unpleasant-looking preparation from the human body and all talking at the same time, with Mrs. Josky and Laurie playing the part of admiring audience in the background, she retreated in haste and never repeated the experiment. Andrew, she reflected, was mad and there was an end of it, since his insanity took a harmless form. Even after she discovered that on certain occasions, when she was on visits to fashionable friends whither he excused himself from accompanying her, he was in the habit of sleeping at Justice Street, she did not remonstrate. If he liked to spend his week-ends in that fashion, what was there to say?

Soon after their marriage a great opportunity arose for the betterment of the Whitechapel slum population, by the building of an enormous block of up-to-date workmen's dwellings upon an excellent site of which an option had been secured. Needless to say this scheme was introduced to Andrew's notice by his old friends, Dr. Watson and Arabella, the latter having become even more enthusiastic on such matters than her husband. Indeed, her enthusiasm had a very practical side, since she proposed to subscribe £20,000 towards its expense out of the private fortune which she had just inherited from her father.

Andrew was much interested for here seemed a chance of doing some real good, only unfortunately he was not in a position to find the £100,000 which was absolutely necessary to set the enterprise upon its feet. He bethought him of Clara and of their pre-nuptial conversations on such matters. Now she had an opportunity of putting her views into practice, which doubtless she would be glad to take. That very night he expounded the business to her with an animation that had become

unusual in him, keeping her up, to her great annoyance, for an hour after her usual bedtime in order that she might listen to him and examine the plans. Also he pointed out to her that really it would not matter to her if she had £100,000 more or less, a statement at which she opened her eyes very wide indeed. In the end she rose, saying that she was tired but would make inquiries and tell him what she thought.

Clara did make inquiries through her lawyers and house-agent, and two days later informed Andrew very plainly that nothing would induce her to touch the business.

"I am advised," she said, "that the whole affair is visionary and totally uneconomic. The £100,000 you wish me to invest would probably be lost, or at the least would earn no income. Further, the people who have conceived the idea are Socialistic cranks with whom no sensible person would have dealings."

There was something in her tone that annoyed Andrew, who in his open fashion did not attempt to conceal his irritation.

"You disappoint me, Clara," he said. "I had hoped that you would not look at the thing from the point of pounds, shillings and pence, but rather from that of raising and bettering your fellow-creatures, as with your great resources it is a duty to do. West's whisky has done them so much harm, that some reparation seems to be owing to them," he added sarcastically.

Now Clara grew cross in her turn, for if there was one thing that angered her, it was Andrew's constant allusions to the fiery source of the family fortunes.

"Then, my dear Andrew," she said bitterly, "may I suggest that you should make what contribution you like to this wild-cat venture out of your private resources, which, I may add, you also owe to West's whisky, as indirectly you do your rank."

He was deeply hurt and left the room, but the nett result of the affair was that never again did he ask Clara to subscribe a single farthing to any philanthropic object. He gave what he could out of his own pocket, often leaving himself with barely enough money for his personal needs, but from his wife he would take nothing, even if she offered to contribute, which she did sometimes as a matter of policy. The result was that although he seemed to live in splendour, Andrew was really a poor man, although Clara charged herself with the upkeep of their costly establishments. Heartily did he wish that he were poorer still and allowed to earn a modest livelihood by the practice of his profession. But this Clara would not suffer, because she considered it derogatory to his rank and an indirect reflection upon herself.

Soon she became very outspoken on all these points, telling him that

it was his duty to make the most of his position. When he replied that he did not care about his position, which neither he nor anyone else had done anything to earn, she answered that at least /she/ did care and that if he would do nothing for his own sake, at least he might do something for hers.

"What?" he inquired.

"Attend the House of Lords regularly, of course, and make yourself an authority on some subject, which, it does not matter. Heaven knows it should be easy enough, for you have brains and powers of memory while most peers are very stupid people and as idle as they are stupid. You have a chance to your hand, Andrew, which thousands would be glad to buy at the price of ten years of life, and it makes me wild to see you letting it slip through your fingers."

"All right," he said, "I'll try, though I hate the place which I don't approve of in theory, who think that there shouldn't be any lords. Nor do I know anyone there."

So he did try, taking his seat on an Opposition bench, since a Unionist Government was in power and he imagined himself to be a Radical. As it chanced, at about his third attendance a debate arose upon Egyptian matters, in an almost empty House. Now, when he was in Egypt, Andrew had done his best to study the conditions of the country; also he had kept up and improved his knowledge by subsequent reading. Therefore the spirit moved him to correct sundry mistakes which had been made in the course of the debate, and to deliver a strongly imperialistic speech, for it never occurred to him that in doing so he was flying straight in the face of his Party who, for their own ends, were responsible for the said misstatements. At its conclusion he was loudly cheered by the Unionists, delighted at the appearance of this Daniel come to judgment, while his remarks were received in glum silence by those about him.

As a matter of fact it was quite a good speech, since although he had never practised the art of oratory outside the walls of a hospital debating society, Andrew had some gifts that way, to which were added a sympathetic voice and appearance and a power of getting at the truth of things. At any rate, it made a considerable impression and was fully reported in the Press, where he was spoken of as a young peer of great promise. Moreover, although on this occasion he had gone against them, it was noted by the leaders of his own Party, who came to the conclusion that he was worth roping in and cultivating, lest he should stray to the other fold. The upshot of it was that in addition to those which had to do with medicine and public health, Andrew made a speciality of Empire and Colonial affairs, on which by dint of study and reading he soon became an authority, with the result that when, a while later, his Party came into power, he was offered the post of Under-Secretary for the Colonies.

Of course he wished to refuse, but here Clara put her foot down, so that in the end he found himself in office. There he did very well indeed, till a few years later an incident occurred which ended his career as a Party politician.

Its details do not in the least matter, but in their sum they amounted to this. Andrew, being authorized thereto, had passed the word of the Government upon a point connected with Labour in a certain Dependency. This decision unexpectedly caused agitation in the ranks of Labour at home and threatened the loss of many votes. Thereupon the spokesman of the Government in the other House "gave him away" in the interests of the Party, suggesting that what he had said was of his own mere motion and not a Government view. Andrew at once resigned and, although pressure was brought to bear upon him, together with hints of immediate promotion, persisted in that course. His proposed action came, or rather was brought to the ears of Clara, who intervened with all her strength. But here he was adamant, for the reserve of character which lay beneath his rather casual and nonchalant manner came into play.

He told her straight out that he would have nothing to do with people who, by making it appear that he had said the thing which was not, had cast a reflection upon his honour.

She was furious in a kind of icy fashion, for she saw her ambitions baulked by his absurd scruples, jut when they were at the point of harvest. For the first time they came to a really serious quarrel, but all the same Andrew stuck to his guns and resigned, at the same time refusing the proffer of another office and, what is more, gave his reasons in a personal statement which did his Party no good.

From this time forward his relations with Clara became somewhat strained, at any rate for a while.

For this, too, there was a further reason of an intimate and personal sort. When they had been married about eighteen months a daughter was born to them. Clara was not particularly attracted to this infant, whose appearance in the world was connected in her mind with much physical discomfort. Also she was angry because it was not a boy who could inherit the title. Andrew, on the other hand, adored the child, upon whom he poured out all the secret wealth of his starved and pent-up nature. From its first babyhood it was his joy, and when it began to speak and walk it became an obsession with him. What this little golden-haired Janet, so named after his mother, did and said and thought was the chief topic of his domestic conversation and interested him a great deal more than all the affairs of all the Empire. Again he would spend most of his spare time in her company and, when she was asleep at night, would sit at her cot-side and read by a shaded lamp. He had even been known to excuse himself from attending a great official dinner; yes, and one that was not official, that he might indulge this strange fancy.

"What do you do it for?" asked the indignant Clara, returning from some festivity alone and finding him so employed. "Is there not a nurse?"

"She likes to get off duty sometimes," replied Andrew hazily.

"And if she does, hasn't she got an under-nurse, to say nothing of all the rest of the idle creatures? I repeat--what do you do it for, especially when the child is quite well?"

"Oh! I don't know. Perhaps because it pleases me. Perhaps because in her sleep her soul talks to mine and I want to make the most of it while she is near," he replied, with a curious flash of his dark eyes.

"Really, Andrew, I think that you are going mad. Anyway, that settles me. I'll have no more children for you to make a fool of yourself over; not even to get an heir to the peerage will I go through all that suffering again."

"I never thought you would, Clara, and as for the peerage, what does it matter? West's whisky will continue."

The climax came, however, one Sunday when, walking with some very distinguished friends in the Park, suddenly Clara came upon Andrew wheeling the perambulator with not the ghost of a nurse in sight. With one hand he wheeled and with the other waved a flower in front of Janet which, crowing delightedly, she tried to catch. Clara cut him dead, nor did Andrew attempt any sign of recognition.

Unhappy, however, a motherly old Duchess who was of the company, recognized him and rushed up, calling out at the top of her high voice:

"Oh! Lord Atterton, how early Christian and delightful!"

"I don't know about its being early Christian, but it is certainly delightful, Duchess," replied Andrew in a reflective voice, as he wheeled his perambulator off down a side path, adding over his shoulder, "If you meet that nurse, tell her not to trouble. You'll know her by her red nose. Two's company, you see, and three's none."

Her Grace departed, roaring with laughter, and told the tale all over London, with the result that under the heading of "A Pretty Story about a Political Peer," presently it appeared in various journals and was even cabled to America.

After this the relations between Clara and her husband grew even more formal than before.

Here it may be well to add the sad sequel to this pure romance of

parental love.

When Janet was five, and so sweet a child that Andrew could never look at her without terror, since instinct warned him that "of such are the kingdom of Heaven," he was called away for a week on some pressing matter at Atterton, to which Clara insisted he must attend in person. On his return, after a night journey, the first question he asked was as to the whereabouts of Janet, for he did not see her in her downstair playroom and the hour was earlier than that at which generally she went out.

"Oh!" said Clara, "she's in bed. Nurse said she thought she had better keep her there, as she has been a little flushed and husky for the last day or two."

"Have you had the doctor?" asked Andrew, with a sudden change of face.

"No, Nurse said she didn't think it worth while, and she is very experienced."

"Damn Nurse and her experience!" exclaimed Andrew, as thrusting past her he went upstairs.

The child heard him coming, and rose in her bed, stretching out her little arms towards him, and saying, "Dad, Dad, so glad you're back, Dad darling," in a thick voice.

He kissed her and made a rapid examination; then fetching a thermometer from his own room next door, took her temperature.

Just then Clara strolled in, saying:

"Well, she's all right, isn't she?"

"Oh! yes," he answered in a quiet voice, "or soon will be, I expect. She has diphtheria."

"Diphtheria! For goodness' sake be careful----"

"Yes, diphtheria. She caught it in those mews where one of your precious women took her when she went to see some one there, and left her to play with the children outside. Now clear out of this."

Everything possible was done, but too late. A few days later the child died. Just before she passed her mind seemed to clear, and she whispered a few words.

"I am going away, Dad darling. Somebody's fetching me. You'll come soon, won't you?"

"Yes, dearest. Promise you will wait for me."

She smiled very sweetly:

"For ever and ever, Dad. For ever and ever, Amen."

Then she died.

## CHAPTER XIV

## HIS EXCELLENCY

This terrible blow of the loss of all he loved fell on Andrew while he was still in office. What he suffered was known to God and himself alone, for of it he said no word to any human creature, and least of all to Clara. For a while he felt weak and ill and even hoped that he had contracted Janet's disease, against which he would take no precaution whatsoever. But that was not to be his fortune, since doctors rarely catch such ailments to which they seem to become inured. So the period of incubation went by and left him scatheless.

Andrew imagined that he had made acquaintance with grief when Rose betrayed him and even when his mother died, but now for the first time in his life he learned what sorrow can mean to man. Indeed, it was not sorrow he suffered, but mental agony of a sort which only those who are of a like nature and have endured it can appreciate. The thing was terrible to him; it was as though the heart had been torn out of his breast, leaving a void peopled by all the devils of torture. His mother's loss was one that after all must befall everyone in the course of time, and therefore of a sort that Nature knows how to assuage. His betrayal by a woman, bitter though it might be, was mingled with the passion of sex, and passion dies. Only the unworthiness of her that caused it remained in remembrance, with perchance some jealousy and wounded pride. But this anguish was different, far surpassing both. Not only was he the physical father of that child; he was also, as he believed with some mystic sense, the appointed means of drawing down its soul from heaven to the earth, and now heaven had taken it again and he was left desolate.

Always he had felt that it would be so: that this treasure was but lent to him for a little while. From day to day he had rejoiced that it still remained to him; yet looked forward from the sunlight of that presence into the advancing darkness of its loss, he who knew well that such communion was too holy and too perfect to endure upon the earth. And now, now the sword of Damocles had fallen, and what was left to him? He was sure, moreover, that this torment was not of a character that could pass away, or even become dim with the passage of time, which is so falsely said to heal all such hurts. He knew that it would but grow with the growing years; that never a day of his life could dawn in which his wound would not bleed afresh; hardly ever an

hour would pass unhaunted by those sweet memories.

And yet, although all this was true enough, he did not foresee the balm which would be poured upon that wound. It never occurred to him to imagine that a time could come when he would rejoice that this sweet flower had been plucked from the gross soil of earth to grow and bloom eternally elsewhere in a realm of peace, even if this were named the Garden of Sleep. Nor did he foresee that far-of development, when night by night he would find himself in closer communion with this departed spirit which had left his arms unstained by any earthly vileness, than could possibly have chanced had it remained in this world. For then it would have grown up and grown away, and in the course of Nature have acquired an atmosphere and interests of its own. But now it was his and his only, or rather God's and his, and so must eternally remain. Yes, until the stars crumbled and grew again a thousand times, God and he were sole partners in its ownership, God from whom it came, and he to whom it had been given for a little while. No, he did not foresee these things, who as yet wandered only in the dark night of suffering, and wherever his blind eyes stared caught no hint of distant dawn.

For the rest, Andrew went on with his work, to all appearance unaltered, except that perhaps he was a little more /distrait/ than he had been. He never spoke of the child; indeed, unless he was driven to it, her name never crossed his lips, although his heart repeated it with every beat. Least of all did he speak of her to Clara, the mother who bore her, though sometimes she would talk of their "lost darling" with a gentle and becoming sigh, and take the opportunity to add that never again could she face another trial of the sort. Then he would shrug his shoulders and say any banal thing that came to his lips about a play, or a picture, or a jewel, or whatever it might be. For of a truth he did not care. He wanted no more children. He desired that all the love of whatever kind he was capable should be concentrated in one tremendous and powerful ray, such as he hoped might pierce our surrounding darkness and find its object in the abysses of the Infinite. Afterwards he came to think differently on this matter under conditions that shall be told, but then it is one of the mercies of life that in it absolute consistency is scarcely possible. Moreover, for aught we know, these very seeming inconsistencies may be necessary to the building up of the perfect whole.

After Andrew left office his only resource was scientific research at his hospital and elsewhere. This he pursued with ardour and very considerable success, living in order to do so at greater convenience, much more at Justice Street than he did at Cavendish Square. Indeed, his name became well-known as that of a rising scientist, so much so

that he was elected to a Fellowship of the Royal Society. Then, as usual, something happened to rob him of the fruits of his labour.

Clara saw no advantage, at any rate to herself, in such a career as that into which her husband seemed to be drifting. Andrew might be a clever man and a considerable authority upon germs and bacteriological problems, etc., but there were greater authorities than he whose names already filled the ears of a world that is not wildly interested in such matters. Of course, if he could make some startling discovery, such as an infallible cure for cancer, to take an example, it might be different, for then she would shine with a reflected light and assume a wonderful interest in cancer--at a distance. But as such an event seemed very problematical, really it was scarcely worth the attention of a practical person.

So she set her clever little brain to work in other directions. What could Andrew do which would bring him (and her) prominently before the world? As a politician he was a dead failure. If he started again in that walk of life, the end would be the same. Something would happen to offend his absurd susceptibilities, and he would throw it up and return to his horrible hospital and what were called "bugs."

One day she read in the paper that the Governor-Generalship of a great Dominion was falling vacant. This gave her an idea. Andrew, with her to help him and undertake the social side, would make an ideal Governor-General. A peer of undoubted ability with any amount of money at his back, who had been Under-Secretary for the Colonies--what could be more suitable? Of course he was indolent about things that did not attract him, but then one never knew, he might become interested in the country to which he was sent. And if he did not, it would matter little, since what the Home Government wanted was a figurehead who would not give them trouble or involve them in an awkward questions. Everything else could be managed by herself and a suitable staff.

Clara thought the business over; she always thought everything over very carefully indeed, having had frequent occasion to observe the bad results of giving way to impulse. What is more, she kept her inspiration strictly to herself; not one word did she breathe to anybody, least of all to Andrew, who, as she knew, would probably raise every sort of obstruction, or perhaps adopt some obstinate and mulish attitude. There was only one way to deal with Andrew, to rush him by means of a /fait accompli/. So she just went on thinking while she awaited an opportunity.

Very soon it came. They were bidden to a certain feast of the very elect, not a large feast, but one of the first water. At the last moment Andrew, in his provoking fashion, refused to go. He said that he had dined out three times that week, and had been so progressively bored that nothing would induce him to do so again. He said that it was absolutely necessary for him to be at his hospital at that particular hour, or at any rate at Justice Street. He said that he had

an objection to parties in Lent which, being that way inclined, was perfectly true. Finally he said he was unwell, and that if this dinner were insisted upon, he should go to bed and stop there, at Justice Street for choice, whence he would telegraph a doctor's certificate. In short, on at least four different grounds he flatly refused to go, his real reason being that he knew a certain elevated lady was to be present, who once "when he had taken her in" at his own house had disgusted him by eating too much and becoming mildly inebriated and sentimental.

Clara was furious, but knowing when remonstrance was useless, gave way and telephoned excuse number three, namely, that Lord Atterton was too ill to come. Their prospective host, a genial person, expressed sorrow but said it didn't really matter as a lady had failed them also, that is if she would come as he hoped, since otherwise they would be thirteen at dinner. So Clara went to the party and Andrew, recovered from his ailments, passed a very pleasant and improving evening at Justice Street in the company of Mrs. Josky, Laurie, now grown into a young woman, and several bottles of germs, a trio that Clara icily described as "low company."

At dinner Clara sat next to a Distinguished Person who had much to do with Government patronage, and turned the conversation on to the subject of Andrew. Assuming the part of the anxious wife, she lamented his withdrawal from politics.

"Why," asked the Distinguished Person, "when he has got everything he wants, including----" and he glanced at Clara. "For my part I think he is jolly well right."

"I hate to see abilities wasted which ought to be employed in the service of the country," said Clara.

"Do you, my dear lady? Well, the country can get on without the abilities of most of us, of which I find that it needs continually to be reminded. But what do you want Atterton to do?"

"Well, if the House of Lords doesn't suit him, and I admit that he is no politician, he might serve the Empire abroad. For instance, as I speak it occurs to me that I have heard the Governor-Generalship of Oceania is falling vacant, and with his experience of Colonial affairs----" here she paused.

"Never mind his experience of Colonial affairs," replied the Distinguished Person, "what is wanted in Oceania are rank and money. Well, you have got plenty of both between you. But has anything of the sort occurred to him?"

"Of course not. Nothing ever does; he is quite content to drift."

"Sensible fellow! So would I be in his place. Besides, now I remember

that it won't do. The P.M. wouldn't have it. You see, Garton must be provided for."

"Why is it necessary to provide for Lord Garton, who, I thought, had been making himself disagreeable to you of late?"

"For that very reason, my dear lady, because he must be got rid of. If Atterton wants to be Governor-General of Oceania, he had better make himself more disagreeable than Garton," and with a laugh the Distinguished Person turned to talk to his other neighbour.

"There's many a true word spoken in jest," reflected Clara to herself, as she did likewise.

More, she acted on the reflection. She was aware that within two days there would be a full-dress debate in the House of Lords upon one of the multifarious phases of the Irish Question. Also she knew that Andrew was bitterly opposed to the line of action the Government, of which he had been a junior member, proposed to take; in fact that he felt very strongly about it indeed, which was not usual for him on any public subject. So on the following day she drew attention to this topic, and affecting virtuous wrath said that she thought that now when his tongue was no longer tied, it was his duty to speak out upon the matter. Since the question was one of principle, for once Andrew agreed with her and replied that he would think the thing out and see what he could do.

He did think it out to some purpose, and what is more wrote down his reflections and committed them to his excellent memory. As a result, when the time came he delivered a most telling and incisive speech upon the Government proposals, which was commented on throughout the Empire, and very largely increased the adverse majority against them in the Lords. During the same debate, Garton, the man with whom he was in unconscious competition, thinking to advance his chances, uttered a feeble harangue on the Government side that was not even reported and made no sort of impression.

The Distinguished Person, who was also a peer and what is called a practical politician, listened to both speeches, and afterwards had a talk with his still more distinguished Chief.

"Garton has given himself away," he said, "and in face of his remarks, which are recorded in /Hansard/, if nowhere else, can't do us much harm for some time. Atterton, on the other hand, may become very dangerous. He is indolent, but he has lots of ability and what is more, people who count believe in him. They think him honest who resigned on a point of principle, and there is nothing against him."

"Two great assets," commented the other most Distinguished Person. "I am not sure that we allow enough weight to principle and honesty in politics. You know they tell in the long run with the voting public.

But what's the point?"

"Only that on the whole I believe that it would be wise to give the Governor-Generalship of Oceania, not to Garton, but to Atterton, and so get rid of him out of the country. Once he was in the public service, there would be nothing more to fear from him. He has all the qualifications and lots of money; indeed, the only question is whether he might not be too able. A stupid man is safest, you know."

"Yes, that's true. And--does he want it?"

"I don't know, but his wife does, which is the same thing, for she sounded me. Also she is a very clever woman who would fill the bill."

"I think that's good enough," remarked the most Distinguished Person, and passed on to more important topics.

As a result of this conversation a few days later Andrew, to his great astonishment, received a personal communication so flattering in its terms that, metaphorically, it might have been soaked in melted butter, offering him the Governor-Generalship of Oceania, which it was hoped he would see his way to accept in the interests of the Empire.

"What's the matter?" asked Clara, who had wind of what was coming, and was consequently on the look out.

"Everything," he answered, and threw the letter across to her.

Clara picked it out of the cup of coffee into which it had fallen, and after wiping the paper perused its contents carefully.

"Well," she said, "of all the upsetting nuisances! Andrew, my dear, I am sorry for you, and for myself too for that matter."

"Why? One needn't go."

"That's the worst of it. I mean, Andrew, I am afraid that you /must/. You see, it is a matter of duty. You can guess where this command comes from, or at any rate I can if you are too innocent. Besides, the Empire wants you; you are so evidently the man."

"Confound the Empire!" said Andrew. "It would mean my giving up my work at the hospital to be a figurehead at the other end of the earth, which anyone can do," and he rose to go from the room, leaving his breakfast unfinished.

Clara, who was watching and had been prepared for this, slipped between him and the door, asking, "What are you going to do?"

"Write and decline, of course. Do you suppose I want to be called Your Excellency by a lot of scraping secretaries, and to have people get up

whenever I come into a room, though it might appeal to you?"

"It would not appeal to me at all, Andrew, seeing that I should have to get up also. But for once in your life I beg you to listen to me. You have made a mess of politics, and there is your last chance of doing something useful in the world. For these offers are not repeated."

"I am doing something useful in my own way."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"If the public side of the matter does not appeal to you, Andrew, perhaps you will listen to a word on my own behalf. You will forgive me for saying that I feel myself to be a somewhat neglected woman. I know your thoughts are elsewhere than with your wife, directed towards those you have lost, living or dead. Of me you take little account. Yet I have perhaps some claim to consideration, and, since the rest has gone and I must be content with small things, it would please me, I confess, to be the property of a man who is of some account in his day. I have nothing more to say. Do what you choose, and be sure that you have no reproaches to fear from me."

Andrew returned to the table and made pretence to finish his breakfast. Then he went to the study and without another word of argument, wrote a brief acceptance of the high position with the offer of which he had been honoured. Bringing it to the conquering Clara, who was still breakfasting with a good appetite for, knowing Andrew, she knew also what would happen, he gave it to her to read, saying:

"There you are. Have your own way and let's cry quits for anything I've done, or left undone. But all the same," he added with conviction, "I believe this business will end badly for both of us, so if it does, don't blame me."

"Certainly I shall not; that's a bargain, Andrew, and I always keep bargains."

Then she read the letter with her usual care and though she would have liked to alter it, seeing that it contained all that was essential, thought it wisest not to suggest anything of the sort lest it should be rewritten in another sense.

"That will do very well, I think," she said. "I am driving past Downing Street presently on my way to the Stores, and I'll leave it. I suppose you are going to the hospital."

"Yes," he answered, "I must make the most of my time, like a man who is to be executed," and he went.

"Phew!" said Clara to herself, "that was a tough fight, but I have won

it. It is quite easy to deal with Andrew if you only know how to appeal to his sense of duty and his better feelings, leaving out any allusion to his interest."

The consequences of this morning's work may be dealt with very briefly. In due course Andrew's appointment was announced and quite well received, since no one at home really cares who governs a great Dependency which, as is well known, in fact governs itself. Notices of him with portraits appeared in the illustrated and other papers; he "kissed hands" on his appointment, and was everywhere congratulated as a successful man. Also, in view of the dignity of his office, he was created a G.C.M.G. straight off the reel, an enormous honour which he did not in the least appreciate, and in short everything went as smoothly as it generally does upon these occasions.

Such real business as was necessary Clara attended to herself. She appointed the large and brilliant Staff who were to accompany them, selecting secretaries, chamberlains and A.D.C.'s from among those of her acquaintance who had titles or the prospect of them, and who, she thought, were likely to amuse her during her banishment. Money being no object, all these matters were handled on a most liberal scale, while His Excellency's domestic establishment swelled to a formidable total.

Andrew, it is true, interviewed the high-born secretaries, and asked them if they could spell or do anything useful. Not being at all satisfied with their answers, he then proceeded to make an appointment of his own. At his hospital there was a scrubby little clerk who could do shorthand and typewrite, and whom he employed in his spare hours in connection with scientific research, in which Jacks, for that was his name, took the keenest interest. This person, to Clara's disgust, Andrew nominated assistant-secretary. What is more, to him and him alone would he so much as dictate a letter, and he it was who coached him upon all official subjects, producing those Blue Books that he should read, etc.; and even making a /précis/ of their contents. With the elevated Staff he talked merely of the weather, of matters connected with their health in which he took a professional interest, and occasionally of fishing; all of which drove them so mad, and Clara also, that if they could have murdered that tallow-faced and stubbly-haired Jacks, gladly would they have done so. As it was they pursued him with insults and froze him with neglect. But Jacks, taking not the slightest notice, just went about his business and when necessary, sent them about theirs, since for Andrew he had a blind devotion.

So at last the time came for them to depart, and many were the farewells. That is to say those of Clara were many, but Andrew's were strictly limited in number. He strolled into the Colonial Office, saw his nominal chief and informed him that he was sailing on the morrow.

"All right," was the answer. "I hope you will have a fairly good time, though I am afraid you won't. Instructions? No, we have none to give you, except to do and say as little as you possibly can. The great thing is to avoid giving offence to anybody. You know the office is more social than administrative as in a Crown Colony, and Lady Atterton may be trusted to see to all that. You have just got to do the polite and in case of any difficulty, cable to us. But don't write more despatches than are necessary, since nobody has the time to read them. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," answered Andrew. "Good-bye. I believe there are some very interesting diseases in Oceania, of which I propose to make a special study."

"Excellent! First-rate idea. It will strike quite a distinctive note, only please talk of their beastly diseases with respect in public. Well, good-bye and good luck. I hope you will have a pleasant voyage. You are going by the Cape, ain't you?"

"Yes, it takes longer; also I want to see Table Mountain, and there is a scientific man out there whom I have never managed to meet. Good-bye again," and Andrew strolled out of the room as he had strolled in.

Queer fish that, reflected the Secretary of State, as the door closed behind him. But I expect he will do very well indeed. Lazy sort of fellow who will let things slide, which is what we want, but quite capable of coming out in an emergency.

From the Colonial Office Andrew went to take a tender farewell of Mrs. Josky and Laurie, who was consoled for his departure by the fact that she had become engaged to be married to a Greek in the currant and olive line. Having received Mrs. Josky's fervent blessing and promised to write to her once a month, he adjourned at nightfall to a certain cemetery, whence he returned to find that Clara and most of the brilliant staff with some select friends had been waiting more than half an hour for dinner. Just for the sake of practice, all rose when his prospective Excellency came into the room, whereon he asked them what was the matter.

Such was the manner of Andrew's farewell to his native shores.

## CHAPTER XV

## DISASTER

The ship in which Andrew and his party sailed, by name /Neptune/, was a fine one which ran direct to Oceania via the Cape, and the accommodation reserved and especially decorated for his Lordship, as

may be guessed, was of the best possible. Only for some reason which he did not explain, Andrew rejected the splendid suite which had been placed at his disposal, saying that it was much more suited to his Staff, and sent Jacks on a voyage of discovery. The end of it was that he took up his abode in some roomy and isolated cabins upon the third deck that, when the steamer carried mails, which she did no longer, had served as a sorting-room and for the sleeping places of the officials. The sorting-room he fitted up as an office, while he slept in one of the cabins and Jacks in the other. When Clara made a fuss about the matter, he said that he found these quarters quiet and had decided to stop there. So in them he remained, to the advantage of the Staff, who inherited his newly gilded staterooms in which they made as much noise as they liked.

For the rest, the voyage to the Cape was very pleasant. Andrew appeared on deck at certain hours and talked to all and sundry; also he was most careful to be early at meals, when he attended them at all, so that nobody should have any possible excuse for rising as he entered the saloon. Further, he gave away the prizes at the ship's sports, and did such other things as a Governor should. At the Cape they all stayed at Government House in state and met the local celebrities. Most of these four days, however, he managed to spend with his scientific friend, filling in the rest of the time with a journey up Table Mountain, a visit to Robben Island to see the lepers, whither Clara did not accompany him, and in an inspection of the hospitals.

Departing at length with a send-off suitable to his official dignity, they began their long voyage to Oceania, of which nothing need be told, except the end thereof. As they steamed towards the South Pole the weather grew colder and colder, till Clara wore her thickest and most costly furs even in the saloon, and the highly connected Staff appeared in garments suited to the Arctic regions. The old captain told them that the temperature was far below the normal for those latitudes, from seven to ten degrees, or so he said, but Clara remarked sarcastically that this was the kind of tale one always heard to account for unusual weather.

"To what do you attribute it, Captain?" asked Andrew, taking no notice of her interruption.

"Ice, my lord. One does not usually meet with it here at this time of year, but I expect that some big bergs have got caught up against the coasts of Prince Edward and Marion Islands, which we shall pass to-night a couple of hundred miles or so to the south of them."

"What are the islands like?" asked Andrew idly.

"I don't know, my lord, for I never saw them and don't want to. But once I had a seaman on board who was shipwrecked there in his youth. He told me that they are desolate, mountainous places with a lot of

snow on them; the home of seals and penguins and every other kind of seabird by the thousand. Sealers visit them sometimes for water or for what they can catch, though perhaps not once in a score of years."

"How did the man live?" asked Andrew.

"Oh! quite well, my lord. They found a hut on the island--I forget which of them it was--built, I suppose, by a shipwrecked crew, and provisions in it, left by some passing vessel. Also they killed wild goats and ate them, and as the Kerguelen cabbage grows there, they had plenty of green stuff. So, as it chanced that they were rescued within three months, they did not suffer at all, though of course they might just as well have been there for thirty years."

"It would be a queer life to spend thirty years in a place like that. Better be dead at once," remarked the first A.D.C., who was a very exquisite young man indeed.

"I don't know," said Andrew, "if one had a sufficiency of essential things. At least it would give time for thought, which some of us need very much."

"Supposing the clothes to be available, I wonder whether one would go on dressing for dinner," reflected the A.D.C.

"That, I expect, would depend on whether any ladies were there, Captain de Ferney," interpolated Clara. "I am sure that if the position were reversed----"

At this moment a junior officer appeared in the saloon and whispered something to the captain, in which Andrew, whose hearing was acute, caught the word "ice."

The captain rose quickly, saying as he left the saloon:

"Will your Excellencies excuse me?"

"I hope there's nothing wrong," exclaimed Clara anxiously.

"Oh! dear no," said Andrew, stifling a yawn. "No such luck. I imagine that we are rather safer than we should be in St. Paul's Cathedral, of which the foundations are said to have sunk. When you have finished your wine, Mr. Jacks, would you kindly come to my cabin and bring that small encyclopædia with you? I want to read up Kerguelen cabbage and some other things. Also I am frozen in this ice-house. Goodnight, Clara, my dear. Good night, gentlemen, please do not move."

So Andrew departed to his quarters down below, which, notwithstanding the electric radiator that had been fitted up for him, he found so cold that he put on first a wool waistcoat, then a thick jersey, and last of all a dressing-gown. Here presently Mr. Jacks, very similarly

attired, joined him with the encyclopædia, in which Andrew failed to find anything about Kerguelen cabbage. Throwing it aside, also sundry Blue Books which the industrious Jacks offered to him, Andrew, with his assistance and that of a microscope, continued certain bacteriological researches on which he spent his leisure hours.

Whilst he was thus occupied an officer arrived with the captain's compliments and a message to the effect that they had been passing through some ice, but there was no need for him to be disturbed, since they appeared to be out of it.

Andrew replied that he should not have thought so from the temperature, and offered the officer some whisky, which he declined and departed.

Then the pair continued their researches, which proved very absorbing. At last Andrew looked at his watch and said:

"By George! it is past twelve o'clock. Time to go to bed. I wonder whether we shall get any quiet times to ourselves in Oceania, Jacks."

"I doubt it, my lord. Too many petticoats and politics there, I think, to allow of anything useful and serious."

As the words left his lips something happened. There was a soft grinding noise and the ship, which had been running on a perfectly even keel, seemed to heel over, so much so that the whisky bottle and glasses slid along the table and would have fallen had not Andrew caught them.

"Hullo! What's that?" he said.

"Don't know, my lord. Perhaps we have struck a whale. Shall I go and see?"

"No, it is too dark. If there's anything wrong, they will come to tell us. Help me to put away these preparations."

As they were thus engaged, faintly enough through the various decks, they heard sounds of commotion. Then came other sounds as of heavy masses of iron falling, or being pressed into their places. Also the siren blew loud blasts.

"I believe, my lord," said Jacks imperturbably, but with unusual distinctness, "that they are shutting the watertight doors."

Andrew laughed a little, and answered:

"Then it is rather a bad look out for us, my friend. And the worst of it is I cannot blame anyone, for they warned me that that was the danger of these cabins. There is a way up, though, for they showed it

to me. But I can't remember where it is. It didn't interest me at the time."

"It is interesting now, my lord," remarked Jacks.

"The thing to do on these occasions," said Andrew, "if there is any occasion, is to keep one's head. First let us ascertain if the watertight doors are really shut."

They went out of the cabin and turned to the right, to find themselves confronted by a wall of iron that appeared across the passage way.

"That one is shut right enough," remarked Andrew quietly. "Let's try forward."

So they did, only to be similarly confronted by another wall of iron.

"Now one appreciates the feelings of the proverbial rat in the trap," remarked Andrew, as they returned to the cabin.

"Yes, my lord," said Jacks, "but what's the use of being a Governor-General if your Staff leave you to drown like the rat?"

"None whatsoever, Jacks, but probably the Staff are engaged in looking after themselves. The officers and crew remain, however, and I am quite certain they will not desert us if it can be helped. My word! it is cold here. Give me that fur coat, will you, and take the other yourself."

Scarcely had they put on these garments than the electric light went out.

"Something /has/ happened," said Andrew, "and it is pretty serious too."

"Yes, my lord," replied Jacks through the darkness. "I think we have struck an iceberg and are sinking."

"Then soon we shall learn many things, or--nothing at all. Well, it had to come one day, so what does it matter?" mused Andrew aloud.

Now, except for certain distant noises that sounded like the lowering of boats, though of this, being so deep down in the ship they could not be sure, there followed silence. They also were silent, being engaged with their own earnest reflections.

"Jacks," exclaimed Andrew suddenly, "I remember now how one gets to the upper deck, by the escape stair, also that there is an electric lamp in that corner on the shelf. I used it last night to examine something. Here it is. Now follow me. Stop. Put that bottle of whisky in your pocket, it might be useful. Also the packet of matches."

Jacks obeyed, and leaving the cabin Andrew led the way down a little transverse passage which ended in a bathroom, originally fitted up for the convenience of the post office officials. At the end of this bathroom was a door which looked like that of a cupboard. This door, set there for the sake of privacy when the bathroom was made, opened on to a narrow stair which ran to the upper deck, terminating in a little hooded hatchway.

As they approached the head of the stair the light of the electric torch showed them a terrible thing.

The three-inch teak of the hatchway hood had been swept away, and the opening which it covered was blocked by a mass of green ice of unknown dimensions.

"Now you see why they have not come to rescue us, Jacks," said Andrew quietly. "They dared not open the watertight doors again, or perhaps the machinery wouldn't work, and the hatchway is sealed by a bit of iceberg that has fallen upon the deck and cannot be moved."

"That appears to be so, my lord," assented Jacks, in a faint voice, "so there is nothing to do save say our prayers."

"Quite so," replied Andrew, after which they sat down on the stairs and again were silent.

Thus they remained for a long while, having abandoned hope, how long they never knew, since on such occasions time passes slowly. They heard strange noises as of water moving in the bowels of the great ship, and felt that she was sinking under them, but nothing else, for the screws had ceased to turn. Then came a muffled explosion.

"A boiler blowing up," said Andrew, "or perhaps a bulkhead has gone."

Probably the latter was the true explanation, since from that moment the /Neptune/ began to heel over to starboard. Further and further she heeled, till they thought that she must capsize. Then, when she reached a certain angle this chanced. Suddenly the huge block of ice at the head of the stair slid away; they heard it crash through the bulwarks and fall with a mighty splash into the sea. The hatchway was clear.

"At any rate we shall die in the open! Come along," said Andrew, and they crawled on to the deck.

By this time the electric torch had given out after the fashion of those wretched articles. The stars, however, and a fragment of dying moon showing between clouds, furnished some light, sufficient to show them that the ship seemed to be quite deserted, as indeed the silence told.

"Well, they are all off safely, thank God!" said Andrew.

"Yes, my lord," replied the practical Jacks, "but they have left us behind. Perhaps they are hanging about in boats, and would hear us if we shouted."

So shout they did, but without any result. Here it may be explained that this was not wonderful, since at the moment a huge iceberg half a mile long or more lay to the south between the ship, which was believed to have foundered, and the boats which had been obliged to get away from her in order to avoid destruction. In short, no one was to blame for their seeming desertion, which was brought about by the sudden appearance of this second berg in the darkness of the night.

For a little while the pair crouched there desolate, not knowing what to do. Out of the murk just above their heads suddenly appeared something white and ghost-like floating by them in complete silence.

"What's that?" asked Jacks in a startled voice.

"The big albatross which follows the ship night and day," answered Andrew, looking at it idly.

It vanished, then appeared again, and watching it subconsciously, Andrew noted that it seemed to be circling round a dark object in the water beneath them. Just then a cloud passed and the dying moon shone out faintly, revealing the object.

"It's a boat," exclaimed Andrew. "If only we could get into it; and it must be tied to the ship, or it would have drifted away."

They crept along the bulwarks that were gradually sinking closer to the level of the sea as the ship filled, till they were opposite to the boat. As Andrew had suspected, it was made fast to the ship by one of the falls that for some reason or other had never been unhooked from its prow.

"Now," Andrew said here, "shall we stop here, or shall we try to get into that boat? Which do you say?"

"I say the boat, my lord, for the ship is going. I'll go down the fall first, and see if it is safe."

"Why should you take the risk?" asked Andrew, but before the words were out of his mouth Jacks was sliding awkwardly down the fall.

It was not safe, for beneath his weight the rope ran out of the block, so that Jacks, who was clinging to it, fell for the last few feet, but fortunately into the boat. Scrambling up, he called out:

"Jump, my lord, jump, and I'll catch you. Jump, for by God! she's going."

As he spoke another bulkhead gave with a hollow boom, and the /Neptune/ lurched deeper to starboard. Then Andrew sprang through about twelve feet of space straight at the boat which was beginning to float away. Jacks stood up manfully to receive him, which he did with a vengeance, for Andrew landed full upon the poor little man and together they rolled into the bottom of the boat. Andrew picked himself up practically unharmed. Jacks lay still awhile and groaned.

"Are you hurt, my dear fellow?" asked Andrew.

"No, no, my lord, only knocked breathless," he replied faintly. "If your lordship could get that whisky bottle out of my pocket and give me a little, if it is not broken, I think it would do me good."

By some chance the bottle was not broken, and Andrew managed to uncork it. Then Jacks drank, and he followed his example.

"That's better," said Andrew, after a pull. "I never thought that West's Best would do me a good turn one day," and he laughed in the reaction of their escape from the most immediate peril.

By now the wind or the seas, or both, had caught them, and they were drifting rapidly clear of the stern of the ship. When they had passed it by only a few yards, suddenly the /Neptune/ turned right over and lay thus for a while with her great screws showing in the faint light and water running from her plates. Then came more explosions, and lo, she was not!

"Hang tight," said Andrew, for the boat was oscillating violently and there was evident danger of its being sucked down.

Fortunately, however, it was what is known as a lifeboat of the so-called unsinkable variety, so this did not happen. Indeed, in a little more than a minute all peril had gone by. The great sea had swallowed the /Neptune/, and save for some floating wreckage over which the wide-winged albatross wheeled, all was as before.

## CHAPTER XVI

## ALONE

Andrew and Jacks floated on the ocean in a solitude about which there was something awful. For a while they shouted at intervals in the hope of attracting the notice of other boats, but no answer came. Once, some miles away, against the light of the faint and sinking moon they caught sight of a towering mass which they guessed must be an iceberg,

but soon it vanished into the gloom. Not knowing what else to do they let the boat drift, only keeping her straight before such wind as there was, in the hope that when dawn came they would be discovered and rescued. But before that happened, although they did not know it, they had travelled many miles and when at length the sun rose, it showed them nothing save a vast expanse of sea, for even the iceberg had disappeared amidst the clouds on the horizon.

For an hour or two they still drifted aimlessly, employing the time in overhauling the boat which, to their joy, they found was well provisioned with biscuits, tinned meat, water and a jar of rum. So they ate with gratitude. Indeed, their chief enemy was the Arctic cold which, had they been wet, would probably have killed them. Even this they were able to guard against to some extent by putting on over the warm clothes which they were wearing, tarpaulin overalls that, together with blankets, they found in the boat's lockers among other miscellaneous stores, such as tobacco.

"What are we to do now?" asked Andrew suddenly of his companion, adding, as he observed that Jacks was leaning against the thwarts and looking distressed, "Are you ill?"

"No, my lord, only a little indigestion where I got that knock last night," and vaguely he indicated the middle of his body.

"Indigestion!" said Andrew. "That may mean anything or nothing. The fact is that, like a good fellow, you tried to catch me and were knocked down and hurt. However, it is no use attempting examinations here and in this cold. So I repeat, what are we to do?"

"Die, my lord, I suppose."

"The idea would have many attractions if one had not been brought up in a certain fashion. Has it ever struck you, Jacks, how great are the disadvantages of religious beliefs and instincts?"

Jacks shook his head. Evidently the subject was one on which he had not reflected.

"Also," went on Andrew, "our end would be lingering and of a nature that I prefer to avoid if possible. How extraordinarily tame that albatross is. I think it must know me again, as I have been throwing it food for the last ten days. There! Did you see it take that bit of biscuit?"

"There have been lots of them about the ship, my lord."

"Yes, but I recognise this one; it is half as big again as any of the others, and has blacker wings; also two of the feathers are missing from the right pinion."

"Perhaps it is waiting to pick out our eyes," said Jacks, "after we are dead, I mean."

"I dare say it is filled with some intelligent anticipation of the sort, but meanwhile it is an interesting and companionable fowl and, as I remarked, so tame that one might almost think that it had been brought up by hand. I wonder why it has stuck to us instead of going after the other boats?"

Jacks shook his head and abandoned the problem, for to tell truth, the motives of albatrosses did not interest him much at this juncture in his private affairs.

Then ensued a silence, during which Andrew idly watched the huge seafowl that swept over their little craft, then sailed some hundred yards ahead and returned, repeating the journey again and again.

"Well," said Andrew at length, "since no help seems to be forthcoming and the sea is getting up, since also neither you nor I have any suggestions to make, I think that we had better take that albatross for a pilot. Maybe it will lead us to land. At any rate, the captain said last night that there are some islands about two hundred miles to the north where cabbages grew, and perhaps it will head for them. So help me to get up this mast."

"And perhaps it won't," said Jacks, as he obeyed. "A few thousand miles round is nothing to an albatross."

With some difficulty they raised the heavy mast, for the lifeboat was a large one, and set some canvas. Fortunately, as it happened, Andrew when a lad had learned how to sail a boat on the Scottish firths where he used to stay with his mother's people, and this knowledge now served him in good stead. So presently they were bowling away over the water at seven or eight knots an hour before a steady wind from the south, while, except for a periodic tour of their boat, the great albatross with unwavering wing floated ahead of them. There was a compass in the boat, and watching it, Andrew observed that this bird kept the same direction without change, heading always about one point to the east of north. Evidently, therefore, it was not flying in a circle, and this being so he was content to follow it for lack of a better guide.

Hour after hour they sailed on thus over that illimitable and most lonely sea where, save for the albatross, a spouting whale was the only living creature that they saw. They talked little, since Jacks was too depressed for conversation and Andrew was lost in his own thoughts. He wondered whether, as seemed probable, this was the end of his life's journey. If so, it was in a way a fitting epitome of the business of existence--a long voyage over an icy and lonesome sea in the frail bark of being, whither he knew not. Perhaps at the finish he must sink beneath the sea and vanish as the great ship had done, or

perhaps he would reach, either before or after that disappearance, some unimagined harbour of rest. He did not know, and at length abandoned consideration of the subject, he who was helpless in the hands of Fate.

Next he wondered what had become of the others. He remembered that they might all be drowned, and tried to feel as agonized as he should have done at this probability. But shocking as it was, he could not grieve as he ought. In such circumstances conventions and all the polite imaginings of life are torn away, and men come face to face with realities.

What were they in his case? He was fond of his wife in a fashion, but his feeling for her went no deeper. And as for the rest, the brilliant Staff and the others--well, they were acquaintances, no more, and if they departed from his reach for ever, he would grieve for them, but for himself he could not grieve. In addition to his mother he had loved but two creatures in his life, the woman who had betrayed him and the child who had been taken away from him. The second of these was lost to him for ever in any state of existence which he could imagine, whilst the first and third had trodden that black gate through which all life must pass. Therefore his main interests lay beyond its portal, if there was a beyond as he believed. If not, they lay in an eternal Darkness, and why should he fear to share it, since in deep sleep is rest?

Yet life was strong in him, and he still hoped that there was happiness for man in the world--if it could be found. But if found would it endure? Was man, at any rate man of the higher sort, meant to be happy here? Did not every advance upwards from the level of the animal, imply a lessening of the possibilities of happiness as we know it, which after all is chiefly a product of animal conditions? That sweeping albatross was happy, bit then it never thought of using its wings in any other air than that of earth; its rejoicing was in food and flight and mating and the boundless sea. The savage, too, was happy because his wants were akin to those of the albatross. But for such a creature as himself, still animal, but gifted with aspiring thought or soul, or whatever it might be, was there such a thing as happiness? And if not, might it not be better that all should end, now, at once? Only then might come a hereafter in which all would begin again.

The cold was very great, so great that notwithstanding their many coverings, Andrew wondered whether soon it would not solve this and every other problem so far as they were concerned. Well, if so, it would matter nothing at all to the world. There were plenty of abler men and greater scientists than himself, and dozens who would be glad of his post as Governor-General and fill it better. His loss would really affect no one except himself--not even Clara if she lived.

At length the night closed in and through its long hours, as the wind remained steady behind them and did not rise, they sailed on and on. Once more the day broke, and found them almost frozen, as indeed they would have been save for the plenitude of their garments and of the food in the boat. During those endless hours of the dark, Andrew, who must steer and watch the sail, leaving poor Jacks, who seemed exhausted, to sleep as best he could, felt rather than saw the albatross sailing round them in its unwearying journey. Indeed, once he thought that the tip of its wing touched his face, as might have happened, since although these birds never wet their pinions even when skimming on the surface of the roughest sea, to every wave of which they rise and fall in their magic flight, of human beings they have not a like experience. At least when the dawn came, there it was floating just ahead of, or sometimes behind the boat, with its beady eyes searching for food upon the rough waters, and as before, steering a steady course towards the east of north. Noting this, Andrew made an experiment by turning the boat's head more to the west. For a while the albatross kept on its own course, namely, about one point to the east of north, till it vanished indeed. Then suddenly it reappeared, floated for a while above the boat, and once more headed towards the north. Andrew followed it, since evidently it knew where it was going and he did not. Perhaps it would lead him to land, perhaps to another ship which it had found during the night, perhaps nowhere except over endless leagues of ocean until he perished.

At any rate it was a guide of a sort, and it seemed better to follow something than nothing at all.

So all that day they sailed on before the steady wind at about the same rate of, say, seven knots an hour. It was towards evening that Jacks, who was crouched in the bow because it was higher than the rest of the boat and he found some shelter there, called out:

"There's something ahead, my lord. I think it must be land."

Bidding him hold the tiller, Andrew went forward to look, for in the stern the sail obscured his view. Yes, sure enough, it was land, mountainous land rising out of a bank of mist, and not so very far away, since hitherto it had been hidden by this mist. It seemed a dangerous coast also, for now he could see the breakers falling on its shores. The question was, how to escape shipwreck, since the line of them appeared to be continuous.

Leaving Jacks in the bow Andrew went back to the tiller, keeping a brave face but wondering what on earth he was to do. Perhaps it would be wisest to put about and beat out to sea again. But what could be the use of that? They must try to make the land some time, and if he waited perhaps the weather would change; indeed, he thought that already it was changing. If it came on to blow, certainly they would be lost, whereas now there was--a chance of safety.

While he was pondering this problem and had almost made up his mind to put about, for those breakers looked very perilous, the albatross, which had vanished some time before Jacks first sighted land, suddenly reappeared accompanied by others of its kind and a great company of different seafowl. Andrew knew it at once, because of its large size, its tameness and the gap in its wing feathers. In his perplexity he came to a decision. He would do whatever that albatross did. If it turned out to sea, he would follow it; if it headed for the shore he would still follow it.

"Jacks," he called, "are you superstitious?"

"Not particularly, my lord, except about throwing salt over my shoulder, as my old mother taught me."

"Well, do you believe in luck?"

"No, my lord, for I never had any, that is until I met you. But why?"

"You have a strange idea of luck, though I suppose I should feel flattered," said Andrew. "But as for why I asked it is because I am banking ours upon that albatross. Look here, my friend, it's neck or nothing for us. If we get among those breakers, we shall be drowned, and I see no gap in them. Well, as there is nothing else to follow, I am steering by the albatross."

"Great Heavens!" moaned Jacks. "What does the bird care about breakers when it flies over the top of them?"

"Nothing at all, I imagine. Still, Jacks, if you give your faith to anything, whether it is a woman, or a fowl, or whatever it may be, you must give it wholly. In any event disaster will probably result, but half measures will certainly bring it on your head."

"I prefer to trust to God Almighty," protested Jacks.

"Quite so, but He has been known to work through birds--doubtless you remember the story in Roman history of the geese in the Capitol, and even through women."

"So has the Devil," commented Jacks.

But Andrew was not listening to him, for destruction seemed very near. Indeed he had only jested thus to try to relieve the terrible strain on his mind. There, straight ahead of him, foamed the angry line of surge in which he knew well their boat could not live, and in it he could see no break. What was he to do? Put about for the open sea, for which perhaps there was still time if he and Jacks had the skill and strength, which he doubted? If he succeeded, it meant another night in that cold which they might not survive, and should they do so, the

search for some possible harbour when the light returned. Moreover, there was a gale coming up; he was sure of it from the kind of moan in the rising wind, also because the glass in the boat was dropping steadily, and it would certainly either blow them straight out to sea or on to the rocks. Lastly, he was weary of the struggle and did not care what happened, for his physical forces were ebbing, though it was true that he must consider Jacks, who seemed to be ill, rather than himself. So on the whole, perhaps he had better try to put about instead of following that confounded albatross to certain death amidst those broken waters.

Already he was leaning his weight upon the tiller when as though it divined his intention, the albatross, which was sailing very slowly ahead of the boat much as a frigate-bird does in other seas, put about itself in a very sudden fashion. For instead of flying north, it turned to the west into the eye of the sinking sun. Since it did not matter which way he went, almost instinctively Andrew followed it, with the more readiness because the wind, which was chopping, served him best upon that tack.

The boat came round well and sailed along parallel with the land not more than five or six hundred yards from the first line of breakers. When they had covered half a mile or so of water in this fashion, with a single curve the albatross put about again and once more headed due north. For the second time Andrew followed it, more from habit than for any other reason, with the result that the glare of the sun no longer blinded him. Then it was he saw that they were in the mouth of a narrow bay which had hitherto been hidden from him, owing to the configuration of the coast; further, that the water at its entrance seemed to be deep, since here were no foaming breakers.

Into that bay he sailed, slowly enough because the wind had almost ceased to serve, but with a grateful heart. For the water /was/ deep and the harbour was sheltered by tall surrounding hills, at the foot of which appeared a stretch of rocky beach tenanted by seals and great sea-lions, to say nothing of countless multitudes of birds. Lastly, Jacks, who was watching in the prow, called out of a sudden in an agitated voice:

"My lord, there's a hut, or something like it, about a quarter of a mile away there to the left."

Andrew looked, and sure enough at the head of a little cove in the bay, perceived a dilapidated structure that evidently had been built by man. As his eyes fell on it the albatross, ceasing to fly in front of them, rose in its wondrous fashion without any apparent movement of the wings, and vanished towards the east over the crest of the frowning hills. As Andrew thought afterwards, it left them as a pilot leaves the ship when his work is done.

With great difficulty, because in this sheltered place the wind,

although it moaned above their heads, no longer helped them at all, the two by the aid of oars worked the boat out of the harbour into the little cove, to the astonishment and indignation of a company of seals that were lying on its rocks. Somehow they beached it and climbed to the shore, making it fast to a sharp-pointed fragment of rock. Then very stiffly, they walked to the hut which was on higher ground, not more than thirty yards away. It proved to be a tumbledown place built apparently of wreckage, roofed with old boards and part of the bottom of a boat that had been covered with tarpaulin, now rotted. From many signs it was evident that this delectable habitation had not sheltered men for many a long year, though to judge from its smell other creatures had used it as a refuge. Still, to their delight they found piled in a corner of it certain casks and boxes which appeared to contain stores, and were carefully protected from the weather by means of planks and flat slabs of stone.

"The men who did that years ago had good hearts," said Jacks, "and they knew what it meant to be shipwrecked. God bless them, wherever they are."

Andrew nodded, then bade him help to carry the things from the boat before it grew dark. So, weary as they were, for the next half-hour they worked in the gathering gloom, and before night set in succeeded in removing everything of value into the shelter of the hut. Then tired out, they ate some biscuits, washed down with rum and water, wrapped themselves up in blankets, and choosing the cleanest spot they could find, slept the sleep of exhaustion.

At some time during the night Andrew was awakened by the sound of raving wind. Never had he heard such wind. It moaned upon the sea, dulling the roar of the breakers that furnished a constant undertone. It wailed like a whole family of banshees among the surrounding rocks, and it roared in fullest note between the crests of encircling hills, giving forth in its sum a perfect fantasy of tremendous sounds, such as might be produced by a thousand organs played upon by madmen.

"Great Heavens! what a gale," he said to himself, then shivered as he reflected upon what would have happened to them had they still been at sea in their frail boat; also that save for the albatross which he elected to follow, such would have been their fate. He marvelled also at the practical skill of the sailormen unknown who had chosen such a position for their roughly built hut, that it remained standing through these hurricanes. Then being thoroughly outworn he drew the blankets round him more tightly and went to sleep again.

When he awoke in the morning the gale was still blowing from the north if with somewhat lessened fierceness, and from an eminence above their hut the sea presented a tremendous spectacle, for the wind meeting the rollers that appeared to press in eternally from the south, caused them to spout in sheets of foam towards the heavens.

"We shouldn't have had much chance in that," he shouted to Jacks who had joined him, looking a miserable little object with his pale hair flying and his frail form enveloped in blankets.

"No more than a hailstone in hell fire, as an American friend of mine used to say, my lord," replied Jacks sadly. "However, we are out of it, thanks to your belief in that albatross, though there are more ways of dying than by being drowned."

"Let us go and see if the boat is all right," said Andrew, to change the subject.

So they went, to find that it was anything but all right. To be brief, the waves, or the wind, or both together, had dashed it against the rocks and shattered it to bits. The bow remained still tied by the chain to the point of stone; the rest had vanished or was scattered in fragments on the shore. Jacks wrung his hands when he saw it, and exclaimed:

"However shall we get away from this place now?"

"How should we have got away in any case?" answered Andrew. "Here we must stay until we are rescued, and let us thank our stars that we got the things out of the boat."

"Yes, my lord, but who is going to rescue us? This place isn't Hastings beach where I always spent my summer holiday. Well," he added, with a touch of grim imagination, "those two mountain-tops covered with snow will make first-rate tombstones, the big one for you and the little one for me."

"Perhaps," replied Andrew, with his usual shrug of the shoulders, "for probably Prince Edward's Islands, if we are on them, are not a favourite port of call. But meanwhile I am hungry, so let us breakfast."

So they ate and then made investigations. First they cleaned out the hut and examined it contents. Here they met with a blessed surprise, for the packages within it were full of food. There were tin-lined cases of biscuit, several barrels of salted meat that in this cold climate appeared to be still good, and a couple of small casks of spirits. Further, in other packages were some Snider rifles and shot guns with a large number of cartridges, hatchets, knives, and what were as valuable as anything, a variety of fishing lines with a great supply of hooks, and a well-fitted medicine chest. Also there was tobacco in quantity, and amongst many other sundries were garden implements and packages of vegetable seeds.

"Some cruiser must have been here and left these things; look, there is the broad arrow on them," said Andrew, "and all the rope has the red twist in it; also the tobacco is of the navy brand. But I think it

was a great many years ago--perhaps twenty or more, as Snider rifles have been out of fashion for a long while, and the cartridges look antique."

"I don't know," answered Jacks, "but thank God it did leave them, for now we shan't starve for quite a long while, though I have no experience of shooting and fishing."

All that day went by quite happily for them, engaged as they were in arranging their possessions. They cleaned the hut more thoroughly than they had at first, which it needed after being the haunt of seabirds, also apparently of rabbits, for many a year, and mended it up as best they could, for the roof was leaky and one of the stone walls bulged. For this purpose they made use of slabs of stone and of planks from the broken boat that they were able to saw and nail, as among the stores left by the unknown ship were carpenter's tools and requisites.

When night came they had not finished their task; indeed, it occupied them for several days.

During all this time, in some vague fashion they expected to be rescued. At morning, and at evening, also occasionally during the day, one of them would climb the tallest of the two hills at the back of the hut, and search the sea for smoke or sail, of course without the slightest result. At last Andrew blurted out the truth.

"We are a pair of fools, Jacks," he said. "There is not one chance in ten thousand that anyone will come here during the next twenty years."

"Surely they will search for us, my lord?"

"Why should they search, Jacks? Think of the circumstances. When the passengers and crew left the /Neptune/, she was expected to founder instantly, for otherwise the captain would not have gone. They could not get at us because the watertight doors were closed and in all probability could not be reopened, as the steam and electricity having been cut off, it was impossible to work the machinery. Also our only exit was closed by an immovable mass of ice. Also it was probably believed that we were already drowned down below."

"Perhaps they got the wireless to work," suggested Jacks.

"Probably they did, and sent out S.O.S. messages before they left the ship. If this happened, these may have been caught by other ships, with the result that the boats which would have hung about in the neighbourhood, perhaps under the lee of that iceberg, were picked up before the gale burst on them. There is no chance for us unless they were all lost. If that happened, of course when it is ascertained that the ship has gone, as you may remember the /Waratah/ went, a search will be organized and within a couple of months or so some man-of-war may visit these islands on the chance of finding survivors from the

/Neptune/. But if any of them are saved this will not happen, as we shall be amply accounted for."

"I see," said Jacks. "And to think that within a week or two of this your lordship expected to be His Excellency at Government House in Oceania with all the Staff going full steam."

"Well," answered Andrew with a laugh, "now I am His Excellency here, very much so, since what is more excellent than oneself? And you are the Prime Minister of my Government, and there is the Staff and Household," and he pointed to some fat seals lying on the rocks, also to some extremely foolish-looking penguins which stood in a line along the shore of the bay, resembling caricatures of white-tied flunkeys. "For the rest, I suppose that God is above us and the sea is certainly around, and as yet we are alive."

"It won't be for very long, I think," replied Jacks with a groan which caused Andrew to look at him anxiously.

From that day forward the poor little man began to fail. As Andrew had guessed, he received some internal injury when he fell upon him in the boat, but not one of the sort with which, skilled doctor though he was, he could hope to deal in such surroundings and without anæsthetics. As a result Jacks began to spit blood, to refuse food of the rough and plenteous sort that was available, and to waste away.

Exactly one month after their arrival on the island, he died. His last words were, "Your lordship has been very kind to me, like my own mother. I pray God that your lordship may get out of this and become Governor of Oceania, where I had hoped to serve you faithfully."

"I am not sure that I do," thought Andrew to himself, as he watched the end. "I am not sure that I do not wish I were where you have gone, my poor, true-hearted friend."

Then he closed the sightless eyes and understood what it is to be alone.

## CHAPTER XVII

## EXPLORATION

By the help of a spade and a pick-axe that were among the various stores, Andrew with much labour dug a grave between two rocks on the top of a knoll not far from the hut. He could not finish it in a day as he hoped to do, because of the great stones mixed with the earth, which must be levered out one by one. So when night came on he was

obliged to return to the hut and spend the hours of darkness in the cold company of poor Jacks.

The fellowship was not cheerful. Jacks alive had been a good but commonplace little man not calculated to excite emotion in anyone; but Jacks dead was very different. Somehow, lying beneath that blanket his stillness and smallness as revealed by the light of the candle (for of these, too, as of matches, there was a stock in tin boxes) oppressed him, accustomed though he was as a doctor to the sight of the dead.

All the old problems rose in his mind, those simple, elementary problems which we thrust aside in the busy course of life, that yet have a way of asserting themselves on such an occasion. There lay what had been Jacks, but where was the real Jacks? Had he gone far away and entered on the heritage of some new, unimaginable state, or was he perhaps still here, watching and wondering, but unable to communicate his thoughts because of the wall of mental death that had been built between them?

Or perhaps was this little lump of clay all that was left of Jacks; was his story told, his part in existence finished? Andrew did not know. As a scientist the last seemed to be the most probable solution; for any other he must rely upon faith in religion and miracle. Religion, and to some extent instinct, told him that this miracle happens, that the dead do live again, but in what fashion and where there was no proof. Certainly if they did not, the lot of man was very cruel, doomed as he was to know much trouble and little joy, to be haunted by fears and griefs and at last to suffer the fate which the law decrees for the worst of criminals--to be executed, and often with the complication of prolonged torture. No, no, Jacks must still be living somewhere among the multitudes who had also lived. Perhaps he would meet those whom he, Andrew, had lost, his mother and the beloved child, and be able to tell them all about him. No, that could not be, since with what distress they would listen to such a tale, unless they had reached a state in which feeling had disappeared with every other human attribute. Perhaps they were all asleep and would sleep until everyone whom they had loved had joined them in their sleep. This at least would be more merciful than knowledge. All he could hope was that under new conditions Jacks was happy. If so, he who was left behind did not share that state.

His nerves became affected. He thought of dragging the body outside the hut, but refrained because he felt sure that it was just the kind of thing that Jacks would have resented. Then, being very anxious to ascertain the exact cause of his death, he thought of performing a post-mortem on him which would have been a congenial, professional occupation. Suddenly he remembered, however, that once at the hospital he had heard Jacks say, when some such business was going on, that he hoped no one would ever cut /him/ up and leave bits of /his/ inside about. So Andrew abandoned that idea also and, the society of Jacks becoming intolerable, he left the hut.

Outside it was sleeting and blowing, also sea-elephants, or seals, or both, were roaring, so that altogether the noises were weird and melancholy. Yet they were better than the silence of Jacks, and since it was too cold to keep still, he walked up and down there for hours, listening to them, until the dawn came indeed. Then for a while he stood lost in contemplation of the wild glory of the sea; the dark and limitless ocean, the white lines of ceaseless breakers, the red rays of the sun striking across them or on to the hilly heath-land of the island, the countless flocks of birds screaming upon the rocks or sailing out to sea in wedges and triangles to seek their food from God.

After this he returned to the hut where he noted with a primitive and childlike feeling of surprise that Jacks was exactly as he had left him, found some food which he ate outside, and proceeded to the grave to resume his labours.

It was afternoon before these were finished, which mattered little as he had plenty of time upon his hands. Indeed, but that he did not wish to spend another night in the company of Jacks, he would have prolonged them till the morrow and dug the grave to the orthodox depth. As it was he stopped at about four feet; then having washed himself in a stream of fresh water that ran down the rocks near by, went to fetch the body. His purpose was to bury it clothed as it was, but feeling that there were articles in the pockets, he searched these and extracted from them quite a collection of Jacks' personal belongings.

There were his purse containing twenty-six pounds in gold, his white-handled pocket-knife with which he continually cleaned his nails, his fountain-pens--two of them--and a pencil, his gold chain and watch which had stopped, the keys of the private despatch-boxes and of his--Andrew's--own desk that now lay at the bottom of the sea, and some other sundries. Also in the breast-pocket there was a handsomely bound Church-service printed in small but clear type on India paper, so that it was not bulky, which from the worn state of the morocco binding he concluded Jacks must always have carried about with him, although he had never or seldom spoken of religious matters.

Andrew opened it idly and saw inscribed on the title-page, "To dear Samuel from Jane," while underneath was written in a rather schoolgirlish hand, "I hope, dear, we shall read our prayers out of this book together for all the years of our life. J." There was no date, but in the pocket of the cover was an envelope, and in the envelope a photograph of a young woman with a pretty, rather pathetic little face and fluffy hair, who wore a large locket on her breast, doubtless the picture of Jane.

So Jacks had a romance, although of this, too, he had never said anything. With a strange curiosity Andrew fell to wondering who Jane

might be, also whether she were alive or dead. Was Jacks perchance a widower, or had he mayhap been jilted--like himself? He did not know and he never would know, since Jacks lay there so silent and incapable of answering queries in any voice audible to the world. This was the beginning and the end of something that had been, or still was of intense importance to two insignificant inhabitants of this great earth, living or dead, or living and dead. It was pathetic, but then to those who can feel and see, an infinite minority be it admitted, everything is pathetic, since when it is not merely comic, the world is the home of pathos rounded off by tragedy.

Only the beasts escape, reflected Andrew, since they cannot feel grief and are unaware of the impending tragedy. At this moment a most mournful bellowing close by caused him to look out of the hut. There on a neighbouring rock he saw a sea-lion cow that appeared to be weeping, since he thought he perceived tears running down its cheeks, and was certainly wailing. By its side lay a dead calf that had come to its end he knew not how. Nor was this all, for a little further off a sea-lion bull was engaged in the deliberate and delighted slaughter of another bull, a grey animal that, owing to age and the loss of one tusk, was unable to stand up against its younger adversary. So the beasts also knew the pathos and the pain of life, and as is suggested by their fear of all that is strange and may hurt them, probably are acquainted with its ultimate tragedy.

Filled with such thoughts as these, which came home to him with added force in those sad circumstances and in that solitude, Andrew slowly and with great toil half-dragged and half-carried the body of Jacks up the mound, and by help of a rope let it down into the grave that he had dug.

Then, by an afterthought, he went back and fetched the Prayer Book that he had found in the dead man's pocket, and from it read the Burial Service over him from the first words to the last, throwing earth upon the body at the appropriate moment. He had a good voice and read well and with feeling to an audience of king-penguins which, with their usual tameness and curiosity in a place where they were never disturbed by the cruelties of man, had waddled up to the grave, round which they stood like a circle of white-robed choristers. Very curious was the scene, and very strange sounded the solemn words as to the resurrection and the life and the inspired periods of St. Paul, uttered in that fearful solitude over the dead, unseeing face of his friend, and beneath the enormous arch of the desolate heavens.

At length it was done, and in the dying light, with the wind-driven clouds fired by the sunset drifting over him, he filled in the grave--first a bit of torn sail over the body, then earth, then stones, then more earth, and after it more stones arranged to the accustomed churchyard shape, as well as he could fit them in that gloom.

At last all was done and Andrew went back to the hut, hung up the great-coat in which Jacks had died that he had removed from his body as too valuable to be lost, and by the light of his candle ate some food. After this was finished, utterly exhausted in body and mind, he flung himself down to sleep.

Such was the beginning of Andrew's very strange life upon that desert isle. Of the first two months of it little need be said. He lived, that is all, and indeed in the end became more or less accustomed to his circumstances. To supplement his stores he caught fish, using a kind of mussel for bait. At first he went out to a rock to do this, but there the fish were so big that they carried away his hooks or broke his line and rarely could he land one of them. After this experience, for economy's sake he contented himself with the smaller fry that inhabited the shallower, inshore pools, which after all furnished all he wanted for his food. Also he shot some rabbits with one of the guns from the stores, and occasionally a kid, for there were wild goats upon the island, doubtless the progeny of some that had been left there by a ship perhaps generations before.

On one of these goat-hunting expeditions, to his surprise among some rocks he put up a large cat, which rushed away carrying a kitten in its mouth. Going to the spot he found another kitten, coal-black in hue, that appeared to be about a month old, and caught it with some difficulty. This kitten he carried home in his pocket. At first it refused food and was wild, but ultimately hunger drove it to take some fish, after which Andrew fed it regularly with this and shredded rabbit's flesh. In the end the creature grew very fond of him and became his great companion, its ancestors doubtless having been domesticated. Indeed, it slept on his bed at night and ran about after him like a dog. Having no other society, this cat was soon very dear to him.

Thus week added itself to week and to his surprise Andrew, who had always been a delicate man, found himself growing quite strong and putting on weight. The pure, germless air of that cold place and the simple, natural life he led agreed with him thoroughly. Nor did he suffer so much from the solitude as might have been expected. He had always wanted leisure to think, and here he had time and to spare. He reflected on many things; at first principally on those that had to do with politics and social problems, or on scientific theories that had interested him in the past. By degrees, however, all matters connected with the world from which he was cut off began to lose their interest for him, so that he could only bring his mind to bear on them with difficulty. After all, what did they matter to a kind of Robinson Crusoe cast away upon a desert island? Soon to him what may be called the eternal verities became the only subjects worthy of consideration. He thought of life and death, of God and the ultimate destiny of man. The only book he had was poor Jack's Church-service, but as in

addition to the prayers this contained all the Lessons and, above everything, the Psalms, he found it enough to satisfy his mind in the intervals of his work, musings, and sleep. For here he slept long and soundly, which he had never done before.

In short, on the whole Andrew was not unhappy. At first, in the early morning and at sunset, also at intervals during the day, he would climb the tall hill behind the hut and search the horizon for any sign of a ship. Also he fixed a piece of canvas to an oar and set it up upon the highest point as a signal of distress, till in a fierce gale it was blown away, after which he never troubled to replace it. Indeed, his visits to the hilltop became rarer by degrees, until at length they ceased altogether.

It was a waste of time to look for non-existent ships when he always seemed to be busy; moreover, he began to cease to care about being rescued at all. In that great loneliness he learned how little the world concerned him, and even thought with a shudder of his Governorship and his Staff, yes, and of his daily efforts to make himself agreeable to Clara and to talk to her about matters that did not attract him. Of course he could not say if Clara still existed, or the Staff either, but somehow he thought that this was so. To begin with, it was impossible to imagine her as dead; also, if they had all perished in the shipwreck, he felt sure that search vessels would have visited the island, whereas had they been rescued, as was in fact the case, Jacks and himself being accounted for, no one would have troubled.

The sub-Arctic winter wore away and the spring came. It was a very cold spring, only now rain fell instead of snow, also the screaming sea-birds began to mate and a great herd of seals arrived from somewhere, apparently to produce their young. The brown tussocks of coarse grass too turned green, and in certain spots appeared a fleshy-leaved plant which, from the description the captain had given of it, he recognized as the Kerguelen cabbage. Some of this he took home and boiled, to find that it was excellent, if rather strong in taste. As no ill results followed, he ate largely of this cabbage, which gave a healthy variety to his food of flesh and fish.

One day, when for a marvel it was quite fine, restlessness overcame him, begetting a desire to explore the island. So he started early, carrying his gun which would shoot either ball or shot, and a certain number of cartridges; also he took a bag of food in case he should be benighted, and since he did not like to leave it alone, put the cat into the big inner pocket of his coat, where in fact it was accustomed to travel when he went far afield. Thus laden, guided by his compass, he set out towards the north-east with a view of reaching the other side of the island, if that were possible.

As soon as he gained the higher land Andrew found the going very rough indeed. Either he had to struggle through matted tufts of a shrub-like growth, or he got on to patches of sharp stones and what seemed to be lava rocks, or he came across swamps full of duck and a kind of snipe, which must be skirted round. Indeed, it was midday before he reached the highest point, which was marked by a tall hill with precipitous sides, and then he had travelled but a few miles. Forcing a path along the base of this hill, suddenly he perceived the ocean on the other side of the island and in it, at a distance of twelve or fifteen miles from the shore, other rocky and forbidding-looking land. This made him almost certain that he must be on the Prince Edward Islands, since the captain of the /Neptune/ had spoken of two of them.

At first he was minded to be content with this discovery and to return, but ultimately determined to push right across the island and to come back on the morrow. So having rested a while and fed himself and the cat, which he had named Josky after his landlady in Justice Street, Andrew struggled on, encountering the same obstacles, only of an even worse character.

About four in the afternoon he reached the edge of a plateau whence the ground fell steeply for several hundred feet, terminating in cliffs that enclosed a large, protected, and by comparison, tranquil-looking bay that was bordered by a belt of flat soil of fertile appearance. Beyond this bay was a foaming Race caused, apparently, by the tide rushing between the two islands.

Looking at this prospect Andrew suddenly became aware of a strange thing, namely that a little line of smoke was mounting upwards from this flat land bordered by the rocky beach. The curl of smoke floating on still air is so common a sight that at first it excited no wonder in him, who had come from a land of smoke. Then suddenly he remembered and started so violently that the cat, Josky, mewed in protest in his pocket.

How could there be smoke upon this island? Seals and sea-lions do not make fires; only men make fires, therefore where there are fires there must be men. In short, the place must be inhabited by other human beings besides himself. He felt like Robinson Crusoe when he discovered the footprints upon the sand; indeed, the idea occurred to him, also that the circumstances were not dissimilar, except that Crusoe had been wrecked upon a warm island and he upon one that was cold.

So after all he was not alone; down there by the smoke there would be company. His heart beat with joy at the thought--for a few moments. But then he began to wonder what company, and it stilled again. Probably some rude and brutalized sailors were dwelling there, horrible, coarse-mouthed men. It would be better to continue to live alone than to mix with such as they must be, since once they met he would scarcely be able to escape their society. Retreat was the wisest

policy, and he turned to go before he was discovered. And yet he hesitated. After all, he was human, and those who had made that fire must be human, too, and in his circumstances he said with the ancients that nothing human was far from him. At any rate, he would creep down and look since, because of the overhanging nature of the cliff, he could not see the fire itself; only the smoke was visible.

Andrew found a path down the steep declivity in front of him. It was a difficult path, for in places the weather-worn rocks were almost sheer and there were several hundred feet to go. At length he reached their base in safety and found himself standing amidst bushes which grew high in the rich soil washed down from above, as a result of the decomposition of the lava rocks. To his right was a great projecting elbow of boulders seventy feet long or more, which cut him off from the place whence the smoke rose. He crept to the end of these boulders and peeped round them.

The first thing that he saw was what appeared to be a field of springing corn roughly fenced about with stones. Advancing himself a little, he perceived upon the land side of the corn several goats wandering, one of which seemed to have a stone clog tied to its leg, also a number of penguins sitting solemnly and quite at their ease, and lastly a great black-winged albatross supporting itself awkwardly upon its webbed feet and engaged in preening its feathers with its fierce-looking, hooked beak. It reminded him forcibly of that very sea-fowl which had guided him to the island, especially when it stretched out its wings and he saw that certain of its feathers were missing, although now these seemed to be growing again.

Again he advanced a few steps so as to get a better view, and came to a sudden halt. For there, in front of what seemed to be the mouth of a cave, was the fire, made, he guessed, of dried seaweed which burned brightly with a bluish flame. Nor was this all. By the fire, which here in the gathering gloom of night, for now the sun was setting, shone strongly upon her, knelt a woman clad in skins and apparently engaged in prayer. At any rate, she was speaking in a rich, low voice and her large eyes were lifted towards heaven, like those of one who prayed. Keeping in the shadow of the boulders, he crept nearer with a beating heart, and listened. She /was/ praying, for he caught the words, "Our Father" and "temptation" and "deliver us from evil" spoken in curious, broken English, mixed with certain elementary sounds, as though the speaker were using a language half-forgotten, or with which she was imperfectly acquainted.

The thing was amazing, so much so that he forgot himself and advanced out of the shadow. Soft as were his footsteps upon the damp soil, the woman heard them more quickly than any civilized person would have done, and looked towards him. Now he saw her every feature, and indeed, all the rest of her in the strong light of the seaweed fire, and became aware that she was beautiful exceedingly, quite young also, perhaps one or two-and-twenty years of age. She was a fair woman,

although the weather had tanned her face to a rich and healthy brown, through which shone the colour on her cheeks, much as it does on a russet apple. Also her lips were intensely red. The face itself was rather oval but most feminine, and all about it hung long locks of chestnut-coloured hair. Her eyes were large and very blue and her skin was white as milk, for this he could see between the edges of her fur garment, which was fastened with a thong that had come untied. Her head was small but shapely and the chestnut hair, parted in the middle, grew low down upon her forehead. For the rest she was a tall and finely made woman, though somewhat slender, and straight as an arrow, while about her was an unmistakable air of breeding; for instance, her hands and feet which were bare were delicate and long, though rough from hard use.

In that first glance two other things about her caught his attention. The first of these was that on her rounded neck lay a string of medium-sized but somewhat discoloured pearls, while attached to her robe was a little bunch of flowers, apparently of the geranium tribe. Even then it struck Andrew as strange and touching that in her desolate circumstances this castaway, for such she must be, should still adorn herself with flowers.

Now she saw him clearly and searched him all over with a quick glance of her large eyes, which wore a look like to that of a frightened animal. Then she gave a little scream, as though something about him had alarmed her, and turning swiftly, fled into a cave of which the mouth was behind her, and there vanished.

Andrew stood for a while, not knowing what to do.

"I seem to have intruded here," he said aloud, having contracted the habit of speaking to himself during his long weeks of solitude, "but heavens! what an adventure. I wonder if Lady Crusoe lives alone, or if Robinson will presently appear and attack me. I don't see any sign of him yet, or of the family either."

Then he grew silent and again reflected for a while, till at length he became aware that he was hungry, also growing cold, and that the seaweed fire was very attractive.

"Perhaps she won't mind if I warm myself and eat something," he thought, and in a gingerly and deprecating manner drew near the fire and seated himself upon a flat stone with his back to the cave.

This place he chose with deliberation because he did not want to seem to spy upon its occupant, although it had occurred to him that if Robinson were in that cave, he might have him at a disadvantage. Then he took some food from his bag and began to eat without noticing the taste of it, since his mind was occupied otherwise than with his creature wants. The cat, Josky, in his pocket, being more self-centred, woke up and, smelling the meat, began to mew, whereon he

abstracted it and gave it its portion. Also several of the solemn-looking birds that were seated about, regarding him with an idle but piercing curiosity, drew near as though they too expected to be fed.

"Lady Crusoe seems to keep a menagerie," murmured Andrew to himself.

Just at that moment he heard a sound behind him, a rushing sound of swift feet.

"Robinson, I expect!" he ejaculated.

Before he could do anything, however, he saw a hand thrust past him a round, polished, flat platter of stone on which lay a large baked fish wrapped in rushes. Also two boiled penguin's eggs rolled to his feet. He rose to make his acknowledgments of this delicate and timely attention, but before he could turn round, with another rush the giver had vanished into the blackness of the cave. So he sat down again and, helped by Josky, ate some of the fish, also one of the eggs.

By now the darkness had begun to gather; so that there might be more light, Andrew took the liberty of throwing seaweed on to the fire from a pile which was at hand. Then he filled and lit his pipe, sat down again and waited, his nerves all tingling with excitement.

Would Lady Crusoe come out again, he wondered, or had she perhaps packed herself up for the night, with or without Robinson. If she did not come, upon one point he was clear, he would not go. /J'y suis j'y reste/ should be his motto. There he would stop till the morning--till any number of following mornings if need were--since surely she must emerge at last, unless, indeed, that cave had a back door.

In fact, it was necessary for him to find out about this beauteous young creature clad in skins. Hitherto he had never been a curious man. People and things bored him too much, but now, perhaps for the first time in his life, he felt himself devoured by an insatiable desire for information. Nothing in the world had ever excited him so much, except perhaps to know what happened to us when we went out of the world. Even the problem of the fate of his fellow-passengers on the /Neptune/, which had haunted him day and night, paled in his mind before this new and attractive riddle.

Yes, whatever chanced, however bad the weather might be, there he would remain, or at least in the immediate neighbourhood, until an answer to it was forthcoming.

## CHAPTER XVIII

## MARY

As it chanced no great strain was put upon a patience which Andrew had determined should be infinite, since about ten minutes later he became aware that he was no longer alone--although he heard nothing. For this time there was no rushing, from which he concluded that the approach of Lady Crusoe (if it were she and not Robinson) must have been very stealthy, a fact which suggested that it might be Robinson upon evil purposes intent.

To settle this point he wheeled round swiftly upon his stone, to discover to his relief that his visitor was not of the male sex. For there between him and the cave mouth, standing in the full light of the fire, was the mysterious lady--somehow he never thought of her for a moment as otherwise than a lady--a little changed indeed, since she now wore a more tightly-fitting and closer buttoned, or rather tied, fur coat made from the whitish pelts of young seals. Also her thick chestnut hair had been combed and hung almost to her knees, in great tresses fastened at the ends of with little bows of grass fibre.

"Lady Crusoe in her Sunday best!" thought Andrew, who in his lighter moments had a flippant mind, then sat still admiring the general effect which, in that blue firelight with a background of black rocks, was in its way superb. Finally he rose, took off his hat, always an Englishman's first and last resource when embarrassed by the sudden appearance of a lady, and not knowing what to say, stood still. Indeed, it was she who began the conversation by pointing to Josky sleeping luxuriously before the fire and saying, with a triumphant nod of the head:

"Pussy-cat. Oh! yes, 'member ship, pussy-cat!"

Then she paused as though exhausted by the effort.

Andrew assented to the accuracy of this statement, then feeling that he must say something, added:

"What is your name?"

"What ees your name?" she repeated after him with a curious accent on each word and especially on "name," which she said with a very broad "a." Then, after profound thought, a kind of inspiration seemed to seize her, and flinging up her rounded arms, she exclaimed with a rapturous smile:

"Ma-ary."

Looking at her as she did these things, Andrew was thrilled all through his being and thought to himself that he had never seen so beautiful a creature. Of what did she put him in mind? He could not say, but wild roses and the first light of dawn and the last dying trill of a thrush's song at eve came into his thoughts as instances of

things which were supremely pure and sweet and natural.

So overpowered was he that beyond repeating the word "Mary" after her to show that he understood, he said nothing. She, however, delighted with her success, made a further effort.

"You," she said, pointing an accusing finger at him, "name--what?"

"Andrew," he replied.

"Andrew, Andrew," she murmured several times. Then as though to make sure, began to spell--A n--An, d r u--dru."

"d r e w," he corrected.

"e w," she said, shaking her head. "No 'member 'w.'" Then added, "Old man, he name Tom."

"Indeed," answered Andrew, overcome by this piece of information, "I thought it must be Robinson." Then rising to the occasion and adapting himself to her limited vocabulary, he asked:

"Old man Tom, no see. Where he?" and he looked about him vaguely, then pointed to the cave.

Again she repeated his words to herself and again became filled with angelic inspiration, at least on her beautiful face it looked angelic, as she replied:

"Old man Tom, he----" Here words failed her, and she had recourse to pantomime, "he," and she pointed to the ground, then by an afterthought, up towards the sky.

"Dead," suggested Andrew.

"D e d," she spelt out, "ded! Yes, yes, he /ded/," and she clapped her hands delightedly. Then, as though realizing that this action might be misinterpreted, she sighed from her deep bosom, shook her head sadly and made a movement with her hand as though wiping tears from her eyes.

"I am jolly well glad of it," commented the unfeeling Andrew with a sympathetic sadness of countenance, for somehow he did not seem to wish for the society of "Old man Tom" whoever he might be, or have been.

Here their conversation came to a full stop, hers because language seemed to have exhausted its possibilities, his because he had so much to say and did not know how much she would understand.

As though some instinct told her that the situation was awkward, she

proceeded to relieve it by action. First she collected the remains of the fish which he had been eating, holding them delicately in the rushes, and threw them away towards where the great birds still sat ghost-like in the gloom. Then she picked up the uneaten egg and, as though to show that it must not be wasted, with a movement of extraordinary grace flitted to the mouth of the cave and laid it down. Atalanta could not have lifted the golden apples with more charm, thought Andrew.

Returning, she stooped and stroked Josky, listening with pleasure to its purring and saying:

"An-drew, pussy-cat! Pussy-cat, Andrew!" Then suddenly she became solemn, almost mysteriously solemn.

"Night," she said, "night," pointing with raised hands to the darkness above them in which bright stars appeared. "Night. God in night, say prayer," and down she went upon her knees, motioning to Andrew to do likewise.

"Our Father," she began, and stopped, looking at him.

"Which art in Heaven," he added.

She nodded in her childish delight. Evidently she had forgotten these words which she repeated after him, and wanted him to help her out. So they went through the Lord's Prayer, she pausing wherever her memory failed her and he supplying the omission. It was a most curious and in a way a touching scene. She ended her petition with these words:

"God bless Mary, God bless Old man Tom," then as though by an afterthought she added, "God bless Andrew, God bless pussy-cat."

Really he could have wept when he heard this poor girl saying these things, so sweet did they seem both in their thought and in the broken prattle of her language. Also the simple piety of this lost one, preserved through heaven knew what circumstances, appealed to him.

Her orisons finished, Mary rose and yawned ostentatiously, revealing a most beautiful set of teeth in the firelight.

"Mary sleep," she said doubtfully, looking towards the cave. "Andrew sleep, and pussy-cat sleep," and she looked about her with a vague, interrogative air, obviously inviting suggestions.

Before he could make any, however, for the situation confused him, also he was wondering hard whether Old man Tom was or was not in that cave as her prayer seemed to indicate, she added with a look which was in itself a question:

"Andrew 'fraid bones?"

"Not at all," he replied, shaking his head.

Then once more inspiration seemed to seize her. Running back to the cave she returned presently with some torches made of the stems of dry grass neatly twisted together. Lighting one of them at the fire, she gave him another and beckoned to him to follow. Passing round another corner of rock about twenty yards away, they came to a second cave at the mouth of which she paused and uttered some words in a low voice that he could not understand; they sounded like an invocation or speech made to some one he was unable to see. Then she entered the cave, again beckoning him to follow.

It proved to be of moderate dimensions with a floor of sand which appeared to have been placed there, and at its end were two arms like to those of a cross; clearly like the rest of the place these were hollowed out by the action of water working on strata which were softer than the main rock of the cliff. One of these arms or recesses was closed in with a carefully constructed little fence of dried grass. She conducted him to this fence and pointed, holding down the torch so that he might see. There, lying very grim and solemn, he perceived the skeleton of a man whose grey hair still clung to his skull and whose arms were still clad in a tattered coat with brass naval buttons.

"Old man Tom!" she said, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand.

Andrew started back, then recovered himself, reflecting with an unholy joy that he was glad Old man Tom reposed once and for all in Cave No. 2 and not in No. 1, where he had imagined him as crippled with rheumatism, or possibly drunk.

"Andrew sleep there?" she queried, pointing to the opposite arm of the cave.

"Oh! with pleasure," he answered, again nodding his head, and gathering his assent from this action, she turned and with a swallow-like motion sailed from the cave.

"Good night," he called after her.

She heard, and at its entrance wheeled round.

"Oh yes, 'member now. Good night. Good night, Andrew, good night, pussy-cat." Then, as he could see by the light of the torch which she held up, she smiled in the most heavenly fashion and broke into low, melodious laughter, the happiest he thought that he had ever heard, the sound of which accompanied her as she fled away, till at last it died in the silence like the echo of distant silver bells.

"Well, I'm bothered!" said Andrew. "Whoever would have thought that

desert islands had such possibilities? Now I will go to sleep."

So, having disposed Josky by his side, he lay down on the sand and tried to fulfil this sensible intention. The effort proved quite futile; sleep was far from him. What was near to him was the thought of this wonderful woman whom he had discovered, this mysterious Mary, this beautiful wild rose of a creature, who apparently had lived here so long alone that she had almost forgotten how to speak, and yet remained a lady, refined in her thoughts and manners, English, too, he judged by the words she could utter. How did she come here? he wondered.

Well, the answer to that was clear. Doubtless in the same way that he had himself, as a survivor of a shipwreck. She was an ocean waif. Probably her companion in misfortune had been that Old man Tom who lay in his fenced grave but a few feet away from him. He wished that this girl did not interest him so strangely, since if the interest continued he felt that, circumstanced as they were, it might become awkward for him. He was obliged to confess to himself that had she been old and ugly, or coarse and horrible, or even young, uncomely and commonplace, he would not have felt towards her as he did, even if she proved to be the most estimable of persons.

A terrible idea took him. Supposing that he should fall in love with her--such a thing might chance on a desert island--what would happen then? Well, luckily that was impossible; Rose had made it impossible, since he was sure that no one falls in love twice. Also he was married, that is if Clara still survived, a point on which he had no information, and that made the thing doubly impossible. Therefore, so far as he was concerned, this contingency might be ruled out. Another occurred to him, however; suppose that in her general lack of experience she should chance to develop feelings for him that were warmer than those of mere casual fellowship?

Well, fortunately that too was practically impossible. No one had ever fallen in love with him and he did not suppose that anyone would, even on a desert island. Also on the first occasion, that is as soon as he could teach her to understand him, he would take an opportunity to tell her all about Clara, which would settle the business. And if he were wrong in any of these suppositions, he could go back to his hut and leave her in her cave.

Oh! he would think no more about her and her wonderful eyes and grace and smile. What could he think of? Old man Tom seemed the most imminent subject, much too imminent indeed. Why was he destined to be companioned by the dead in this place? At the hut yonder he had Jacks for a fellow, and here it was Old man Tom, who was not even decently buried, and really a skeleton was not an agreeable bed partner. The cave was not large enough for both of them, and then and there he made up his mind that on the morrow either Tom should go out of it, or he would. He became absurdly nervous, being by nature of that

temperament. He thought that he heard Tom rattling his bones on the further side of the fence, and was not consoled when his agitation spread to Josky which woke up and mewed, and finally insisted upon creeping into his pocket, where however it continued to mew.

As he could not sleep he determined to smoke, reflecting that he could do so without extravagance, since there was a great quantity of tobacco among the stores at the hut, enough for twenty men for a year or more. So he lit his pipe, turning his head towards the cave wall as he did so, for fear, as his conscience told him, although he found other reasons for the act, lest the flare of the match should reveal Tom looking at him over his grass fence. Such thoughts were shameful in a doctor, but what between weariness and emotion his nerves had been upset and there they were. Moreover, the experiment was useless, since he could not taste the tobacco in the dark.

At length he felt that he could bear no more of Tom's society, and rising, by the help of the light of another match, he crept down the cave till he came to its entrance. Here, sheltered by some stones and rough bushes that grew there, he lay down again where he could see the brilliant stars and in the end fell asleep, to dream that the skeleton of Old man Tom arrayed in the tattered naval uniform, was standing over him, while from the bony jaws issued a lecture upon his duty towards this young woman whom chance had brought into his life.

He woke very cold, just as the sun was rising, for its first rays struck upon the snow-tipped peak of the other island which he had noted upon the previous evening. As a matter of fact, it was Prince Edward Island and the one on which they were was Marion Isle, though this he did not know. Walking to the crest of the little ridge that screened the mouth of the cave he found that thence he had a magnificent view of the sea. As the sun rose higher the mist on its surface cleared, and he saw that near to the beach immediately in front of the cave, was a kind of natural harbour protected by a ring of rocks with an entrance in them through which the tide flowed in and out. The water was deep in the centre of this harbour, but appeared to shallow at the edge of the rocks, for there other rocks appeared above its surface.

While he was studying these things, he saw something swimming at a distance of about two hundred yards from where he was standing, which he took to be a seal. Just then, however, a sunbeam struck it, and he perceived that it was no seal but the auburn-haired Mary taking a morning bathe. At first he was frightened for her safety, but remembering that the water was too cold for sharks, also that probably she knew its dangers, he stood still and watched her.

With swift, strong strokes she swam to a certain point in the rocks where, from the motions of her white arms, she appeared to be untying ropes. Then holding these in one hand, she turned and headed shorewards, till presently she disappeared behind an intervening

boulder.

Following her example, Andrew went to the edge of the sea and washed as well as he was able, though to swim he did not attempt because it was too cold. How strong this girl must be, he reflected, that she could immerse herself for so long a time in that icy water at the break of day. Then he went back to the cave mouth and waited a while, till presently he heard the sound of running feet--she always seemed to move at a run--and aglow with health and beauty, Mary appeared round the corner of the rock.

"Morning!" she cried with a little outburst of bubbling, silvery laughter. "Yes, yes, 'member. Morning," and to his dismay she ran to him, halted, and held up her face to be kissed!

For a moment he stood helpless. Then, as she did not move and really explanations were impossible, he took what seemed the only way out of the difficulty, and kissed her lightly on the raised cheek, reflecting confusedly that doubtless such was the habit of Old man Tom.

"Thank you!" she exclaimed in her childlike way; indeed all her innocent actions and prattle were those of a little child. Then she picked up Josky, which was watching these proceedings with a kind of sullen indifference, kissed it, and beckoning to him to follow her, ran off again with Josky in her arms, Andrew trotting behind.

She led him down to the shore of the bay at a point opposite the mouth of her cave but at some distance from it, for between the water and the cave lay the flat stretch of rich land formed by the decomposition of the lava rocks above, which, it would seem, she cultivated. Just here a brook of fresh water ran into the bay, and at its mouth was a deep pool.

Putting down Josky she seized a grass rope which was fastened to a stone, and began to pull, Andrew helping her, till presently on the surface of the water appeared the edge of an undoubted lobster-pot made of the peeled stalks of bushes, which they dragged ashore. In it were three great creatures of the lobster tribe, also two large crabs, at seeing which Mary clapped her hands. Leaving the pot on the shore, again she beckoned him to follow her and went to some more cords tied to a stone. Pulling at these she drew in a net, and in the net a lot of fine fish. It was this net that she had swum out to fetch, it having been set at a certain spot in the bay where fish always travelled and were to be caught.

Andrew had noticed that when they saw her going down to the shore, several penguins waddled after her. Also came the great albatross, which he was sure was the same that had guided him to the island. To these birds, which were quite tame, although some of them did not seem to like the look of Josky, she threw the smaller of the fish, also a larger one to the albatross.

Then, carrying their spoils in a big basket, made like the net, of grass fibre, they returned to the cave. Here Mary, having cleaned one of the fish by help of a sharp stone, much as the cave-dwellers must have done tens of thousands of years ago, went to a trench filled with hot ashes in which she raked a hollow with a stick. Then she took clay, whereof a heap ready damped lay to hand, plastered it over the fish which, when it was prepared, she set in the trench, piling the hot ashes over it.

This done, she visited the cave and returned with an enamelled tin vessel that looked as if it might have been the baler of a boat, which she washed very carefully in the stream, for evidently the article was precious to her. Next she went to that corner of rock round which Andrew had come when first he saw her, and called in a crooning voice, whereon a number of goats appeared. One of these, which like everything else seemed to be perfectly tame, she proceeded to milk into the tin vessel, Andrew, in obedience to her directions which she made by signs, holding its kid which tried to get its head into the bowl.

When she had sufficient milk they returned to the cave mouth and made ready to breakfast. Out of the cave she fetched two flat platters of lava that had been laboriously chipped round the edge to the shape of plates; also a larger platter of the same material that served as a dish, and four roasted penguins' eggs. Then going to the hole she glanced at the sun, presumably to see if she had allowed sufficient time for the cooking of the fish, also at where its rays fell upon the face of the cliff, which, as he discovered afterwards, served her as a clock, and nodding wisely, extracted the fish with the help of the stick and a stone, and proceeded to break away the clay envelope. There inside it lay the fish most wonderfully cooked; indeed, never did Andrew eat anything more delicious than that fish fresh from the sea, washed down with goat's milk. Moreover, Mary made another journey to the cave and reappeared carrying oatcakes. They were rather thick and coarse, but still, to a man who had not tasted anything of the sort for a long while, most excellent.

Their meal finished, she washed up and cleared away. Both processes were elementary, consisting of dipping the platters into the stream and throwing the fragments of the meal, after Josky had partaken, to the expectant birds which sat about like a row of chaperones against a ballroom wall.

Still, reflected Andrew, here were the beginnings of all domesticity. The difference between Mary's establishment on her desert isle and that of a duchess in Park Lane, or, let us say, his own in Cavendish Square, was merely a matter of degree. The same principles pervaded both, except that here the housekeeper was also the cultivator and the catcher of the food. Personally he preferred the simpler form.

Then began the day's busy round. With some broken words and occasional bubblings of laughter, Mary showed him everything. First there was her field of oats, fenced about with a stone wall that must have been built by degrees and with infinite labour, and had bushes set upon its top to break the winds and keep out the goats. This measured about an acre and a half, and in the rich lava soil which, as he learned afterwards, she manured with guano, the oats were springing wonderfully well (later in the day and often afterwards he had the pleasure of assisting to weed them). Attached to this enclosure was another that contained a garden wherein she cultivated the Kerguelen cabbage, which in that soil and situation grew magnificently, as did a large patch of beans, together with some herbs. The most sheltered part of it also was devoted to flowers and ferns, which evidently she had collected from the moors and crannies.

Then came what might be called her farmyard, which consisted of a herd of goats, ten or twelve in number. These had a kraal of their own where they slept during the winter, when they were fed with hay that she made in the summer months, also with dried fish-heads, whereof she showed him a large pile covered over with stones to protect them from sea-birds. At this season of the year, however, they were grazing about on the moor above the cliff. There was a place on a bare rock where she dried fish to make her winter food, cutting them open and leaving them to cure in the sun. This was close to the cave-mouth and ingeniously protected with bushes to keep the sea-birds from stealing the fish. Also there was a pit in which she laid down penguins' eggs together with those of gulls, covering them with sea sand mixed with evaporated brine to serve as salt that she gathered from certain spots. These too were for winter food, and the process of collecting the eggs was now going on.

Thus the morning went by and for Andrew it was full of wonder. About midday they rested a while and for the first time tried to talk. With difficulty he made her understand that he did not care for the society of Old man Tom at night.

She nodded her head sagaciously and went through a kind of pantomime, covering her face with a corner of her robe and uttering blood-curdling groans. Suddenly it struck Andrew that she was trying to convey to him that she supposed him to have seen Tom's ghost, or at least was asking him if this were so. He nodded vaguely in assent, although in fact he had done nothing of the sort, whereon she put her hand to her head and thought for a while. Presently she came to a decision and, pointing first towards his cave and then to the sea, fetched the basket in which she carried fish, together with some of her grass torches, and signed to him to follow her.

Off she ran to the cave, Andrew being under the impression that she meant to collect earth and buy Old Tom therein. This, however, was not

her idea, for when they reached its mouth she indicated that he must light the torches, pointing to his pocket whence she had observed him take matches when he wished to smoke. He did so, she watching the process with delight, and they went into the cave. Arriving at the niche, she pulled away the grass fence and kneeling down solemnly kissed Old Tom's skull. Then she put it in her basket, also his leg and arm bones. The rest of him, namely, his ribs and backbone which the basket would not hold, she made it clear to Andrew that he must carry in the remnants of the coat.

He obeyed though without enthusiasm, and when she had seen that not one scrap of bone was left behind, they went out of the cave carrying their ghastly burden. She led him for some way to a spot where the sea water had eaten into the cliff face, making a shadowed pool which was very deep and still, since the channel connecting it with the bay was quite narrow. Here she emptied her basket of remains on to the rock and made Andrew put down his bundle. This done, with her strong fingers she twisted the gilt buttons with an anchor on them off the rotten garment and placed them in a sealskin pouch she had, whence a few days later they reappeared on a new fur coat of her own. Then, while Andrew watched amazed, she rearranged Old Tom's skeleton very nicely upon a flat piece of rock, making sure that every bone was in its place and smiling at her own cleverness. This completed, once more she knelt down and kissed the dead man's skull, then suddenly threw it into the pool, and after it with great swiftness and accuracy, all the rest of him, finishing up with the decayed coat which floated a little before it sank.

When it had vanished she remarked, as a child does that has finished its food:

"All done! Say prayer," and plumped down on to her knees.

Here, however, Andrew came in. In his pocket was poor Jacks' Church-service. This he produced and, dimly hoping that it might conciliate Old Tom, who after all, being a sailor, should be glad to rest in the deep, for the second time on that island he read the Burial Office over a dead man.

Mary watched and listened, enormously impressed, especially when he collected some dust, and threw it on to the water. This action seemed to puzzle her, but it was clear that she quite understood the rest, since she nodded her head at intervals and from time to time murmured, "Our Father, 'liver us from evil. Amen."

When all was finished, first she sighed, then clapped her hands and laughed as though glad to be rid of an unpleasant business, and trotted off back to Andrew's cave. On her way, however, she took from her store a great double armful of the dried seaweed, making Andrew do likewise. Arriving at the cave she signed to him to relight the torches, and entered. Then she lifted the skins, or what remained of

them, upon which Old Tom had lain, putting dried seaweed underneath and above them, and throwing the grass fence on to the top. When everything was arranged to her satisfaction, she fired the pile and led Andrew from the cave.

About an hour later she returned there with a brush made of rushes and her basket, and by their aid collected the ashes which she threw away outside. Also, with much vigour she brushed out the cave and especially that niche of it where Andrew slept, sprinkling water to keep down the dust. Finally, she ran off and reappeared with a big bundle of sealskins mixed with a few taken from goats, all of which had been in some way brayed soft. These she arranged upon a mattress of dried seaweed into a very comfortable bed, saying triumphantly when she had finished:

"Andrew sleep. Old man Tom, /no/."

All of which things Andrew watched with amazement that amounted wellnigh to stupefaction.

There too he slept in due course, and very snugly indeed, nor did Tom ever return to trouble him.

## CHAPTER XIX

## OLD MAN TOM

Now it may be well to tell Mary's story, as by degrees Andrew extracted it from her when she began to recover the use of her tongue and her half-forgotten knowledge of the English language.

It began, so far as her great adventure was concerned, fifteen years before, as he was able to fix by the date of a Whitaker's Almanack which she proudly produced to show that he was not the only person who possessed a book. Also she showed him fifteen notches cut upon a piece of driftwood that she kept in her cave, each of which she made him understand represented a year that she had been on the island. Her years, by the way, she reckoned by the season when her corn began to grow and the gulls laid their eggs. Also from observation and from what Old Tom had taught her, she had some knowledge of the position of the sun at the various periods of the world's annual journey.

It appeared that she had lived in a large town in England, probably London, for she remembered the streets and the houses. There, when she was about six, she said good-bye to an old lady who cried at parting with her and fastened round her neck the string of pearls which she still wore. After this she was driven in a carriage, together with a woman who would seem to have been a servant, to a big ship, doubtless in the London Docks, where a man dressed in uniform, probably Old Tom

himself, in fact she was sure it was Old Tom, met her and patted her upon the head.

Of the voyage she remembered very little, except that she saw a shark caught in some hot place which Andrew could not quite identify. Her next recollection was of great shouting and confusion, of being wrapped in blankets and carried by Old Tom, who was called Captain, down a rope ladder into a boat at night time. After this all became vague except for an impression of prolonged misery and cold, till at length as in a dream she had a vision of the boat in which were Old Tom, three sailors and herself, approaching the headlands that were at the entrance of the bay, past which ran the Race. Here there was a quarrel between the men, she thought it must have been about the island on which they should land. The end of it was that Old Tom sprang up and hit one of the men over the head with a piece of wood so that he fell into the sea and vanished. Then the other two became quiet and did what he told them.

They came to the shore and found the caves. In that which was now hers she slept with Old Tom, the two sailors occupying the other. She remembered that at first they had very little to eat, but afterwards, when the spring came, they got plenty of eggs and fish.

Again a quarrel arose because the two men wanted to go across the Race to the other island twelve or fourteen miles away, which Old Tom would not do, whereon they threatened to kill him and take her away with them. The end of it was that they stole the boat and went away by themselves. At dawn Old Tom found that it had gone, and hurried with her to a high point, whence in the light of the risen sun they saw the boat rowing out into the Race which rushed fiercely between the islands. Old Tom cried out that they would drown, and presently the boat turned over, and that was the end of it and them.

Then began their life together upon the island. All that had been in the boat was in their cave and left to them. Amongst many useful articles, most of which she still had, such as some knives, tin pannikins, a water-barrel, ropes and the sails, was a bag of oats mixed with barley, beans and peas, some of that which had been used to feed horses that were on the ship. Part of this forage Old Tom sowed. The oats and the beans grew well. The barley and the peas did not flourish. For the rest they caught some kids of the wild goats, for of these there were many on the island, and tamed them, till they too produced young and gave them milk. Also they netted numbers of fish, of which they dried a quantity for winter food, and generally arranged their troglodytic household as Andrew found it in after years.

At first their life was hard, but by degrees, as they grew to understand the peculiarities of the rigorous climate in which they lived, and how to guard against its difficulties and to keep themselves fed and warmed, it came, by comparison, to be quite comfortable. Happily for themselves, when they landed on the island

they had some matches, also a tinder-lighter which Old Tom used for his pipe upon the ship. Being a clever and experienced seaman, he understood that during the long, sub-Arctic winter, and indeed all the year round, their first necessity would be fire.

At the beginning this was fed with driftwood and bushes. Then he made the lucky discovery that a certain kind of seaweed which lay in endless plenty on the shore, if dried, made an excellent fuel, also one that with proper management it was easy to leave at night, and indeed for a great number of hours, without attention. So of this seaweed he and the child collected tons which, when dry, they piled into stacks and from it fed their fire, or rather fires, for another burnt in the cave. Never was a sacred lamp before a shrine watched with more continuous care than were those fires, especially that within the cave which was out of the reach of wind and could not be extinguished by snow or rain. As a last resource there was the flint and tinder arrangement to fall back upon, should it be needed, and this Mary still cherished hidden in a dry spot beneath the stones, though as yet during all those years, save once, she had never been obliged to put it to use. That was after the death of Old Tom, who for some thirty hours before he breathed his last would not allow her to leave his side.

For about six years, till she was a girl of twelve years of age or so, they lived together. At first they made a habit of climbing the cliff behind them morning and evening to look out for ships; also, as Andrew had done, they rigged up a distress signal with the help of the boat's mast and a sail that served as a flag, but as in his own case it blew down in a gale and was never replaced. As he had done they grew tired of searching for vessels which never came.

Nor did they attempt to explore the island, for Old Tom being lame could not walk very far on its rough surface, and refused to allow Mary to make such expeditions alone. Indeed, she had never been more than a mile from the caves on her search for grasses and flowers, or reeds and bushes of which they made their nets, ropes, and baskets, for as it chanced all these grew in plenty within that radius, as did the Kerguelen cabbage and other edible herbs which they domesticated in the garden. They had no gun, and therefore never killed anything except fish, which, with eggs, was their staple food.

For their garments and other purposes, they skinned seals that had been slain in combat with their fellows, especially the young of that species which had perished from one cause or another. Indeed, although at the time she never was sure how they came by their end, a number of these Old Tom used to knock upon the head with a club, saying that he had found them dead. This he confessed to her when he was sick. Thus it came about that before his own decease, he had accumulated a great store of pelts of which she had still many in stock. These skins they tanned by scraping them with sharp stones, after drying them pegged out in the sun, and then rubbing them with the ashes of seaweed and

between their hands till they were quite soft. In these arts Mary was an expert, also in sewing them together into rugs with sinews by help of needles made from the ivory of the sea-lion, of which they split the tusks by burying them in hot ashes.

Thus employed the years went by swiftly enough and, for Mary at any rate, very happily indeed. Nor did she grow up altogether savage as might have been expected, since Tom--she never knew him by any other name--educated her to the best of his ability. They had one book with them, the Whitaker's Almanack which has been mentioned, which was either in his pocket or in that of one of the men at the time of the shipwreck, whereof by the way she never learned the cause, or had been lying in the boat. Out of this during the dark winter days or when it stormed, or after sunset by the help of candles and lamps which they fashioned from the fat and oil of seals, with rushes for wicks, she learned to read and acquired incidentally an enormous amount of miscellaneous information about the countries of the world and other matters which are summarized in those valuable pages. Also, with a sharpened stone of the agate kind, he taught her to write upon thin slabs of soft slate-like rock, of which they secured plenty at a certain place. Further, he instructed her as to the movements of the heavenly bodies of which, as a sailorman, he knew a good deal.

Lastly, she possessed a talent of her own, though for the most part this developed after his death; that of modelling in clay taken from the brook. All the wild life about her gave her plenty of subjects from which to study, such as the seals and sea-lions, the birds and the goats. These models, when they were finished, she would bake in the hot ashes taken from the seaweed fire, thus turning them into a kind of terra-cotta. Although, of course, many broke in the ashes, she had great numbers of them set about in her cave which, when he saw them, Andrew found full of life and spirit. Some of them, indeed, were quite remarkable, and showed that she had a natural gift for sculpture.

Old Tom was, it appeared, a very religious man, and something of a mystic to boot. He told Mary of God and taught her to pray, though the Lord's Prayer was the only one she could remember, and that imperfectly. Further, he discoursed to her much of angels and spirits which, he said, were all about them. In fact it was his habit to communicate with these spirits, which he did seated by himself with his hands upon a piece of wood, and, as he believed, to receive messages from them. Another device of his was to make Mary "scry," as it is called, in a large mother-of-pearl shell filled with pure water, and tell him what she saw there. This gift, real or imaginary, soon she developed to a considerable degree, though of it, for a long while, she would speak little to Andrew.

When she was about eleven Old Tom ceased to sleep in the same place with her, and took up his abode at night in the other cave. At first she felt very lonely during the long hours of darkness, and told him

so. He answered that she must learn to accustom herself to solitude because the Spirits had informed him that soon he would die and join them. She cried when she heard this, but he said that she must not do so, as although he was sorry to leave her, it would be much happier for him. He added that the Spirits had told him also that in the end she too would be happy, for she would not always be left alone upon the island, and that meanwhile they and he would watch over her.

Perhaps the prophecy as to his coming death worked upon Old Tom's mind, and in the end brought about its own fulfilment. At any rate, shortly after he began to occupy the other cave, illness of some kind overtook him, which caused him to grow weak and thin and to complain of pains in his inside. The result was that within a few months, he ceased to be able to bear exertion, so that she carried out all the work of the place under his directions. This, he declared, was good for her, since she must learn to do all these things without assistance. Fortunately her open-air, hardy life had made her stronger, even at that age, than are most full-grown women, so that she tilled their land, caught the fish, collected all that was needful to their simple wants, and in addition to nursing Old Tom, carried on the household work, if so it may be called, without undue fatigue, although she was growing rapidly at the time.

During the ensuing winter Old Tom became very ill, although until within a few days of his death he managed to get out a little every day. At last his strength failed him and he took to his bed, after which she was obliged to sleep in his cave to the end. He died in the spring nine years before her meeting with Andrew.

On the night before his death his mind, which had been clouded, grew quite clear and he spoke to her.

"Dearie," he said, for so he always called her, "I have to go away and leave you, because, you see, my time is up. I've prayed God it might be otherwise, but it is no use. Now you will be alone upon this desert place, and that's a sad fate for one so young, and a girl at that, just living with beasts and birds and as it would seem, none to help you if you should fall sick or meet with accidents. But there, I have comfort for you. You won't fall sick and you won't come to harm in other ways. You'll wonder how I know this. Well, although you mayn't believe me either now or when you grow older, the Spirits told me--for whatever the wise folk may say, there are spirits, Guardian Angels they call them in the Bible, who watch over and try to help us poor creatures, with whom sometimes we can get in touch. If it had not been for them and for the need of looking after you, I should have died long ago in this dreadful place, dearie, as now, when you can fend for yourself, I have got to die, of which, were it not for you, I should be very glad, although, like others, I have plenty of sins to answer for. For instance, I don't think I need have killed that man in the boat because he wanted to disobey me when we were coming to land, but my violent temper got the better of me, who was a captain was not

accustomed to be crossed when I gave orders. And there are many other worse things in my tally-book. Still, were it not for you, I should be glad to go who am as a dead man out of mind in the world, trusting to the mercy of God Who knows whereof we are made.

"And now I want to tell you something sad. I don't know who you are. I have racked my old brain for memory but it won't come. All I can call to mind about you is that you were one of several passengers put in my charge on that last voyage, and that I had to deliver you to some one who would meet you at Sydney in Australia--I think it was your father. Of course, I had his name and yours written down in my private log-book, but that went with the ship. For the rest you were brought aboard by a maid, a pretty girl, who carried on with the second officer, a silly fellow and a poor sailor, who was responsible for our trouble. When disaster came she trusted to him and not to me, and so was drowned with the rest. All I knew about you was that you were a sweet child named Mary whom everybody in the ship loved. I loved you, too, and when we were sinking I sent a bo'sun for you and kept you with me till the end, so that I might take you into my own boat.

"Well, as you know, we got to shore, and after those fools went away and were drowned, as I was sure they would be in the Race, though what they expected to find on that other island I could never understand, here we've lived together these six years, waiting for rescue that never came. And not so badly off either, since God has sent us food and shelter. And now I go to make the longest of all journeys, and you, dearie, must be left alone to do the best you can. But you won't always be alone. When you have grown into a woman some one will come to be with you, a good man in his way, though I am afraid there will be trouble over that as well as joy, for this is a mixed world, and there are all sorts of things in it that you cannot understand. Still, at the blackest, remember this: Everything will come right in the end. I know it because the Spirits have told me. Now, good-bye and God bless you. Keep in mind all I have told you about planting and reaping and fishing, and, above all, don't let the fires go out. Don't get slovenly and idle, either, or let yourself rust, and always say your prayers. For be sure if you do these things you will come to no harm, but grow into a noble woman, although you are alone till that other comes. All these things are written in God's Book, dearie, and good and evil together there's nothing happens in the world without a purpose, although perhaps we can't see what it is until we are out of it. I should like to be buried in the sea, but you won't be able to do that yet awhile. You will need help. So let me lie till then. And now, good night and good-bye, dearie, till we meet again elsewhere. Be sure, although you don't see me, I'll always be watching over you, I and others."

Then he became insensible, and at dawn he died.

Mary told Andrew that to her the shock of his loss was terrible. Except when the sailor was knocked into the sea, this was her first experience of death, and to a quick and sensitive child it seemed a fearful thing. The utter stillness of that form frightened her, yet, and this shows her high spirit, as she had not strength to drag the body to the sea, she found courage by the light of her rude lamps to build up the grass fence about him, working at the task for many hours. Moreover, and this made matters worse, she loved the old sailor as a father; indeed, he was the only father she had ever known, and her loneliness without him could not be described.

Fortunately the warmer season was coming on and during all those summer months, if so they might be called, she must labour incessantly at her endless tasks lest she should starve in the cold, dark winter. The oats must be guarded, weeded and, when the time came, harvested and stored. The fish must be caught and dried, the eggs must be pickled, the oatstraw and other fodder must be laid up as winter food for the goats; these must be milked and herded, and so forth, all of which kept her busy from dawn to sunset. Then when night came she was too tired to think or do anything, except creep to her bed and sleep heavily, till the clamour of the wildfowl without told her that daybreak was at hand and her tasks began again.

It was not until winter returned with its snows and gales and darkness, when by comparison there was little to be done except prepare the land with her rude instruments of driftwood and carry guano on to it in bags to keep it fertile, and feed the goats, that everything came home to her. That first winter, she said to Andrew, was very awful, so much so that she wished that she might die. Only in the blackest trials of her soul always there arose the memory of Old Tom's prophecy that everything would come right in the end, and, believing it implicitly, this gave her the heart to struggle on, till at length once more there was the spring and she forgot her thoughts in endless work.

Thus she grew up full of extraordinary health and strength, so that even the coming of womanhood did not affect her body. Her mind, however, it did affect, and in a very curious fashion. Her intense sense of loneliness first lessened and then to a great extent departed, for the reason that she found companions, and these of very diverse sorts. First, there were the beasts and the birds with which she became wonderfully intimate, so that they felt no more fear of her than once they had of sweet St. Francis of Assisi. She knew them and they knew her, and when she went among them, the shy sea-fowl, as well as a few species that lived upon the land, would wheel about her head and settle on her shoulders. The very seals and sea-lions knew her and would not stir when she passed by them on the rocks, while her difficulty was to prevent the goats and rabbits from following her into her cave.

Her other associates were those of the imagination. This poor child

believed that the spirit of Old Tom visited her at night, and that she made report to him of all that she was doing and took his counsel on this and that. Nor, as she imagined, did he come alone, for at times others accompanied him, one of them a shining form that she thought to be her mother, only she said these never spoke to her or she to them.

To her sight also even the elemental forces of the place took visible form. For instance, she averred that there was a dark and towering shape which appeared before the coming of great tempests, not to harm but to warn her. Thrice in her life, she said, she had seen that shape sweep past her. Once this happened when she was wandering on the moorland far from the cave, looking for a lost kid, or on some such errand. Suddenly the shape swept up and seemed to stand in front of her pointing towards the shore, while something told her that she must hurry home, and at this moment she saw the kid lying on a rock. She picked it up and fled not too soon, for as she reached the cave there came on a great darkness and the most fearful hurricane of wind that she had ever known upon the island, against which it would have been impossible for her to stand up on the moorland. The same thing happened to her once when she was gathering shellfish to make a change in her winter diet, and then the portent was followed by blinding snow which fell for thirty hours without stopping. On the third occasion she was out among the rocks seeing to her nets in calm, still weather, when suddenly she saw the dark shape standing before her, took warning and fled. Before ever she reached refuge she heard a sound, and looking over her shoulder, perceived an enormous wave flowing in towards the land and burying the rocks where she had been fathoms deep in foam. Doubtless, though this she did not know, it was a tidal wave caused by some volcanic disturbance at the bottom of the sea.

Again, there was another shape of misty outline and gentler in its aspect which, she said, appeared at the times when it was best for her to sow her corn, and also to gather it without wet. She declared to Andrew that she never did either until she had seen this shape, and that therefore her little crop and her harvest had always been good. Lastly, there was something tremendous and without form, but with light inside of it, which she would see at times enthroned on the edge of a great precipice of rock. This she worshipped, for she thought that it was God Who had come to show that He had not forgotten her. She added that none of these apparitions frightened her, because she knew that all of them meant her well.

Such from year to year was Mary's life upon the island, while she grew into her perfect and splendid womanhood. Soon all trouble and fear left her, and she became merry-hearted as the wild birds around her, like them seeking her food from God, and alive with beauty though this she did not know.

Still, although she had long ago given up any hope of rescue, always she awaited the fulfilment of the prophecy uttered by Old Tom's dying lips, of the coming of one to be her companion. As to that matter,

indeed, she did not tell Andrew all the truth at first.

But one thing weighed upon her. She knew that she was losing the use of speech and her knowledge of the English tongue. Even her thoughts went on in some queer language of her own, and when she tried to talk aloud, often she found herself uttering the cries of the various birds which she could imitate to perfection, or sometimes making noises like the beasts. When she sang, too, it was the song of the land-thrushes or whatever they were, and the larks, that came most easily to her lips. This distressed her, and she tried to counteract it by continually reading the Whitaker's Almanack and writing upon her slates, though even then she found herself putting down words that were not English, although to her they had a meaning.

Such was the story of Mary of Marion Isle, for that was the real name of the place, during the long years of her solitude and waiting.

## CHAPTER XX

## THE TROGLODYTES

On the afternoon of the day following that of his arrival, when for a little while her many tasks seemed to be finished, Mary showed Andrew the wonders of her cave. It was much larger than his own, three times the size indeed, with sundry smaller caves opening out of it which she used as storehouses. Near to its mouth, but round a corner so that it could not be seen from outside, burned the second fire in a kind of pit. Like the other it was fed with the dried seaweed that gave off aromatic fumes with great heat and little smoke.

In the storehouse caves, some of which were large, she kept her hay and oat straw, also tanned sealskins, grain, the candles which she made, a great pile of dried stockfish, her few tin vessels that had come originally from the boat, grass nets, fishing lines made of seal sinews with rude hooks on them laboriously cut and rubbed out of the ivory of sea-lion tusks, a tin bucket taken from the boat, a cauldron that with much trouble Old Tom had fashioned out of a block of soapstone, which she used when melting blubber into oil, and lastly, among other articles, the water-cask, also from the boat, in which the oil was stored.

In other places were her piles of slates covered with writing, some of which Andrew found of interest in after days; her stock of skin rugs and sealskin robes beautifully sewn with sinew (poor Mary had no other garments save some skin petticoats which she used when it was very cold or she was fishing or at work upon the land in summer); and large shells in which she kept water and goat's milk, also a kind of cheese

which she made, and her little store of oatcake.

The main cave was adorned with her baked clay models, arranged tastefully enough upon the floor, singly or in groups according to the subject. Also standing on a block of stone by her bed, together with a lamp and the cherished Whitaker's Almanack, there was a rough pot made by herself from baked clay, in which vessel were some sprays of blossoming heath from the moor mixed with ferns and wild geraniums. Set in that place by this untaught girl, Andrew thought those flowers very touching; indeed, the sight of them brought the tears to his eyes. How, he wondered, in the midst of such wild surroundings, had she managed to retain such instinctive love of beauty?

All these things she showed him with a pride which she could not conceal, and occasional outbursts of her charming childish laughter. Then suddenly she grew solemn, and with a portentous effort and an air of interrogation, emphasized by the lifting of her arched eyebrows, she said:

"Andrew sleep here?"

With many gestures he disclaimed any such intention.

"Mary sleep Old man Tom. Mary love Old Tom," she went on by way of explanation.

Again he declined, trying to make it clear that he also loved Old Tom now that this worthy was at the bottom of the pool, and they left the cave.

That evening went by much as the one before, except that Andrew began to make studied efforts at conversation, to find that Mary understood a great deal better than she could speak. Thus he was able to explain to her that like herself he was a shipwrecked person; also that he lived upon the other side of the island.

"Come live here?" said Mary.

He looked doubtful, whereupon she made another suggestion.

"Mary come live you?"

He pointed to her garden and cave and shook his head. So the matter rested for that night which, as has been said, he passed peaceably enough in Old Tom's sepulchre, as he hoped Old Tom himself did in his new abode at the bottom of the sea. Mary escorted him to bed as before, but to his relief did not ask to be kissed. He hoped she had abandoned this dangerous habit, but next morning was undeceived. Evidently it had been Old Tom's habit only to kiss her in the morning, and she was keeping up the tradition.

What on earth was he to do, he wondered. Really the position with only Josky for a chaperon was most difficult. Yet he could not leave her here alone, nor, with such charming society only a few miles off, could he return to dwell in solitude at the hut. That sacrifice to the proprieties was too great. The only way out that he could see was to adopt the rôle of Old Tom and become a second father to her, and this, not without many inward qualms, he determined to try.

At any rate it was necessary that he should revisit the hut since his tobacco had given out; also there were many things in it which would be most useful at the caves. All this he tried to tell her after the matutinal embrace on the following morning, but at first the only idea he succeeded in conveying to her mind was that he proposed to desert her, whereon, to his horror, she burst into tears. These could only be quelled by patting her hand affectionately, together with a very pantomime of demonstration in which the sun played a great part, to indicate to her that before it set he would return. So after a hurried breakfast off he went, accompanied for a while by the doubting Mary, who in turn was followed by her goats and a large assortment of her friends the seafowl. At a certain spot on the moor she halted (afterwards he discovered that Old Tom had forbidden her to go beyond that limit) and once more showed signs of bursting into tears. Then a thought struck her, and suddenly she snatched up Josky which had walked after them.

"Mary keep pussy-cat," she said. "Andrew love pussy-cat, Andrew come back pussy-cat!"

"Yes, yes," he answered, and departed at a run for fear he should do or say something foolish, while she stood watching him, beautiful and forlorn, like a second Dido, till he vanished over the brow of the moor.

Knowing his road he reached the hut in half the time that it had taken him to travel to the caves. So much seemed to have happened since he left that somehow he was quite surprised to see it looking exactly as it had done; the sole difference that he could find anywhere was that a little moor flower had come into bloom on some turf which he had put over Jacks's grave. Then he set to work to collect his stores, only to find that it was utterly impossible for him to carry half the things he needed. So he made a selection, thinking that he could come for the rest another time, and started back again.

The return was a very different business to the outward journey, slung round as he was with household articles like the White Knight in /Alice through the Looking-Glass/, but with no horse save his own legs, between which dangled a spade that he had tied round his neck, together with a rake that poked him in the back. Taken altogether he calculated that he must be carrying sixty or seventy pounds weight in addition to his clothes, which to a tired man was no small burden over such terrible ground. Indeed, he would have stopped and slept upon the

moor had not the thought of Mary watching and waiting and convinced that she was deserted, prevented him. So he struggled on manfully, and just at sunset reached the neighbourhood of the caves.

Yes, there she was standing on the brow of the hill, the red light flaming on her auburn hair. She saw him and sped forward at such a pace that her train of goats was forced to gallop to keep up with her. She arrived with open arms, reminding him forcibly of Leighton's picture of Eurydice welcoming Orpheus to the Shades, and as he felt sure, was about to embrace him, garden implements, bags and bulging pockets and all. To avoid this development he had recourse to artifice, and taking advantage of a weariness which was not feigned, sank with a clatter to the ground in front of her. Her distress knew no bounds, she uttered moans and little inarticulate cries, and the next thing he knew was what she was plucking him of his gear as a fowl is plucked of its feathers. In a trice the spade and the rake and the axe and the garden-fork that he had artistically arranged on a collar of rope, were over her own head. The medicine chest was on her arm, various well-filled bags hung from her shapely shoulders; she had a great parcel in each hand, and even carried another of considerable weight, for it contained cartridges, on her head, holding the band of the bag in her teeth, while she looked regretfully at his bursting pockets, as though wondering if she could not manage to stow their contents about her person. Then she put her arms about him and helped him up, and thus affectionately supported and wondering how a woman could possibly be so strong, he descended the cliff to the caves.

What a meal they had afterwards! No dinner at Claridge's or the best of clubs could equal its delights. But then the comparative merits of meals depend very much upon the company, that is, to some diners.

Now that she had some one to talk to Mary's English came back to her with a rush, especially as in every spare moment she read Whitaker's Almanack with renewed vigour, also poor Jacks's Church-service, that was in itself an education. Very soon she could talk quite well, which was a relief to her, for having been silent for so long she had a great deal to say. What conversation was hers! It resembled the bubbling of a brook, thought Andrew, and was as sweet and pure and natural. Also, at any rate for a long while, it had the same continuous flow. She talked mostly of herself, giving him a diary of the life that might very truly have been called simple, which she had led ever since she arrived upon the island.

Her memory, he noted, was perfectly marvellous. She could tell him the details of the weather for each of those fifteen years, what she had sown, what she had reaped; the history of the catching of the wild kids, of their taming and rearing and of the progeny of each of them when they came to maturity. In the same way she remembered all Old Tom's sayings and repeated them at length with veneration, till at last Andrew came to the conclusion that Old Tom must have been a kind of nautical Dr. Johnson, and almost as big a bore.

The truth was, although he did not admit this to himself, that he was jealous of Old Tom whom Mary still held to be much wiser than himself. The fact that she believed herself to have some peculiar communion with the shade of this departed and most worthy person rather accentuated his feeling upon the matter. As Old Tom was dead Andrew wished that he would recognize the fact that he had had his day, and remain dead. It annoyed him when any project was mooted to see Mary shake her beautiful head and to hear her remark that she would find out what Old Tom thought about the matter, especially as Old Tom's ideas, according to her, often proved to differ from his own.

Secretly he concluded that Mary was obstinate, and took this method of getting her own way.

Then she would tell him the individual history of many of the beasts which lived about them, of fights that sea-elephants and seals had together, of which she had been witness, and of how she knew them again by their scars; of when the seals left the islands for unknown places and when they returned again; yes, the same seals, for many of them she had marked while they were babies. It was the same story with quite a number of the penguins and other wildfowl, round whose legs she tied bands of sinew when they were young, so that she might recognize them.

"See that big bird," she said one day, pointing to the great black-winged albatross, which was always hanging about the cave during the nesting season to receive fish refuse that Mary gave it, or floating on the water near at hand, "I its mother, yes, I its mother."

"Really?" said Andrew, "I don't see any family resemblance either physical or moral," a remark which she did not in the least understand.

"I say, I its mother," she repeated with emphasis, as she suspected him of laughing at her. "That old he-goat, him with the white beard, go near nest of its real mother, and she bite him on nose. Then he, who have wicked temper like Satan, put down his head and jump in air and hit her with his horns, so that she die. But first she pick out his eye. Look, he only got one, and when he see big--what you call him--albatross, he 'member and always run away now. Well, she leave two young and I take them. One die, but other--that fellow--grow up eight year ago, and always know me for his mother. He go away for month on month, but come back again in spring when he want wife. His nest over there, but he care little about wife, always sit here and ask for fish because he is lazy and not want trouble to catch them. Also he love Mary. He come back this year, let me see, yes, one hundred and twenty-two days before I find Andrew. I write it down on my slate."

"You mean before Andrew found you."

"I mean before I find Andrew, only you not understand what I mean," she replied, with her most obstinate air.

Then he told her all the story of that albatross, of how it had followed the ship he was in for a vast distance and of how, after the vessel was sunk, it had guided his boat to the island; also why he knew it for the same. Mary nodded her head wisely and did not seem in the least astonished.

"Very clever bird that," she said. "He know Mary 'lone and want one live with, because Mary often tell him. So he go look and when he find you, he bring you here."

"He might have brought some one else," suggested Andrew.

"Oh! no, no. He know who bring. Mary tell him."

Then, as though it occurred to her that she had said too much, she sprang up and departed at her usual run on some errand which she did not explain.

Andrew looked at her retreating form, which was so full of power mingled with an extraordinary grace, and reflected that it was high time she should have found a companion of some sort, since clearly her loneliness was beginning to affect her brain. It was not possible that she could talk to beasts and birds, or at least that they should be able to understand what she said, though it was true that he had never known or heard of anyone whose communion with the animal creation was so close. Also, what did she mean about having told the albatross whom it was to find and bring, and by sundry other dark sayings of the sort? He had not the slightest idea and she did not appear inclined to enlighten him, but evidently she seemed to be satisfied with that ferocious old bird's selection.

What was to be the end of it all? She was growing very intimate with him; except over certain agricultural matters, he was beginning to take the place of Old Tom in her regard and mind. And, after all, he was not Old Tom, but a man only approaching middle life; one, too, who seemed to have grown younger as well as infinitely stronger since he reached the island. He felt sure that it would pain her very much if he left her now. And--this was a new idea--what would he feel about that matter himself? Would it not pain him also? Now that he came to think of it, he was sure it would. He was extremely happy with Mary, happier than he could remember ever having been with any human being, except perhaps with his mother as a boy.

Although her mind was only reawakening, somehow it seemed to be in complete accord with his own, while its freshness was full of an infinite variety and charm. Also she was beautiful to look on clad though she was in rough skin garments; never had he seen any woman

quite so beautiful, no, not even Rose. Rose was lovely in her way, but hers was, so to speak, a shallow, surface loveliness that drew nothing from within. Much of Mary's feminine splendour, for no other word can describe it, came, he felt, from a fire of soul which shone through her great, dark blue eyes and expressed itself in every movement of her noble countenance. Rose was the product of civilization, as Clara was the product of fashion, and out of both of them all that was elemental had been winnowed; but Mary might have been the young Eve as she appeared in glory to the enraptured eyes of Adam, full of the potentialities of passion and of motherhood, and yet sweet as the wild flower and pure as the snow upon the mountain peaks.

He understood with a pang that the thought of leaving her was already horrible to him. And yet, how could he stay with her, he who was married--at least, he supposed that he was married. It depended upon whether Clara still survived. If not--oh! he would not pursue that line of thought; it was too dangerous.

The best thing that could happen to them both was that they should be rescued. But how were they to be rescued from an island which apparently no big ship sighted more than once in a generation? He looked at the great albatross preening its powerful black wings which, as he knew, could bear it over thousands of miles of sea without stay or weariness. There was a messenger, if only he knew how to give it the message. As to this, no inspiration came to him, and of it he was glad. He might as well face it at once; the truth was that he was very happy on this island and did not in the least wish to go away now that he had found a friend--no, not to be Governor-General of Oceania, or for the matter of that, King of the whole earth.

This strange pair had a wonderful summer together, if such the season could be called in that wintry climate. As it chanced, the months were warm for that latitude so that the oats and beans throve and having now after many years become acclimatized, yielded plentifully; also Andrew, on one of his visits, for he made several, brought from the hut some garden seeds there were in a box among the stores, of which some, such as cabbage and turnips, grew so well that they had a fine supply of vegetables. It is only under such circumstances, he reflected, that one learns to appreciate the fundamental value of a garden.

Fish, too, were plentiful that year, so that they had an ample diet and dried more than they could possibly want during the winter. They laid up great numbers of eggs, made hay for the goats, and cheeses from their milk that were not a bad imitation of Gruyère. This was Andrew's idea, for he had once stopped on a Swiss farm where they produced this kind of cheese, and remembered something of the method of its manufacture.

Thus it came about that they lacked for nothing, nor were likely to do so, while, owing to the saucepans and other tin vessels which Andrew

procured from the hut, Mary was able to vary her cooking, and consequently their meals also. For example, now they ate their eggs boiled as well as roasted, and very excellent were those of the plover which swarmed upon the island.

At length harvest was over. Their skin sacks full of oats and beans were safely stored, undamaged by frost or wet; their seaweed for fuel was stacked; their dried fish was set away in piles, and everything was made ready for the winter. Most of the seals and sea-lions vanished mysteriously, whither they knew not; but this did not matter to them, since combats between those animals had been frequent that year and they had been able to skin as many as they wanted, also to obtain a sufficient quantity of oil and blubber. The birds, too, were going, except some sorts which wintered there.

Among the last to leave was the great black-winged albatross, which for some mornings in succession wheeled about the cave mouth.

"He always does that before he goes," said Mary. "He come to say good-bye to me his mother. Perhaps he have other friends far away in the world, or perhaps he sail about the sea till spring."

"Perhaps," said Andrew. Then idly enough he told her how it had occurred to him that this bird might be used as a messenger, if only there were something on which the message could be conveyed.

Mary thought, and pointed to a piece of tin, it was the lid of a biscuit box, and said:

"Might write on that."

"Great idea," said Andrew, and with the punch at the back of his knife he perforated the following words upon the tin:

"Lord Atterton, survivor /Neptune/, cast away on one of two islands some hundreds of miles north where /Neptune/ sank. Atterton."

To this he added the date. Then he cut off all the superfluous tin so that only a piece remained about three inches square, or less, and bored two holes through the top, turning in the tin on both these and all round, so that its edges should not cut. Through these holes he passed twisted strings of strong knotted seal sinews, and all was ready.

Next, Mary went to the albatross, which to her was as tame as a fowl, and fed it with fish, while Andrew, creeping up behind, slipped a skin bag over its head, whereon it became quite quiet, not struggling at all. After this, everything was easy. Between them, they tied the tin disk about the great bird's neck, for extra security knotting the sinew cord over its back behind the wings, and doing all in such fashion that the tin could not impede it in flight, or in feeding, or

be torn off by the great hooked beak, or, so far as they could judge, cause the bird inconvenience in any way. Then Andrew pulled the bag from its head and they both stepped back.

With an indignant scream, the albatross waddled along till its wings could get a bite of the air. It rose, wheeled once angrily about Mary's head, then sailed away to the south and vanished.

Mary laughed.

"He very cross and would bite us if he dare. But that writing stop on him till he come back next spring."

"Perhaps he will never come back," said Andrew. "Perhaps some one will see the tin and shoot him."

"Oh!" replied Mary, "I never think of that."

"It seems to me," said Andrew with perturbation, "that there are several things we did not think of. For instance, the message may be read and some interfering people may send a ship and find us."

"Yes, Andrew," and she looked at him doubtfully, awaiting explanation.

"Well," he went on, "I don't want to be found. Do you?"

"No," answered Mary, in a very thoughtful voice, "for then p'raps they wish take you away."

"Then they would certainly take us both away."

"No, no," she exclaimed, "this Mary's home. Who feed goats, who grow corn? We both stop here, always."

At this point all the horrible possibilities that might result from what they had done came home to her, and she began to look very disturbed indeed.

"Mary," said Andrew, "we have been fools. I thought that I ought to do this for your sake, at least I thought it once, and now I am not sure."

Then of a sudden she grew angry.

"For me, Andrew. Do I want to go away from here? Never, never. Here I live, here I die. I help you for your sake, because I see you want to go away and leave Mary, who tire you--what you call it--big bore, stupid, wild girl, wear nothing under skin coat 'cause got nothing to wear. Talk to birds and beasts and see ghosts. Oh! yes, mad, quite mad, only good swim, catch fish and cook for Andrew."

"I say, Mary," he broke in, "supposing you stop."

"Why stop? Plenty more say, all same sort."

"Because I don't like it; because it isn't true; because such words make me unhappy."

"Mary make Andrew unhappy? Then glad make him unhappy--like that."

Next she looked up with a sudden radiance of the eyes that reminded him of sunlight breaking through a cloud, and asked innocently, "Andrew not want leave Mary? Andrew love Mary as much, as much as--pussy-cat Josky?"

"Of course, and a great deal more. Josky is a selfish little beast," he added by way of explanation.

She nodded, though whether in acceptance of the first or second statement did not appear. Then she advanced her inquiries.

"Andrew love Mary as much as Mary love Andrew?" she asked, her with head on one side like a bird and looking at him.

"Of course, but that wouldn't be much, would it?"

"Don't know. P'raps Andrew know best. P'raps Andrew not understand what he say."

Again she returned to the charge in her insatiable search for information as to the exact extent of Andrew's affection.

"Andrew love Mary as much as he love Mrs. Andrew, if she dead?"

"Oh! yes. You see, one can't compare such things."

"Compare," she repeated after him, then nodded, having caught his sense, and went on, "Andrew love Mary as much as he love Mrs. Andrew, if she /not/ dead?"

"I say, you mustn't ask such questions," he gasped, turning scarlet through his tan.

She watched him narrowly, to all appearance not without some satisfaction.

"All right," she said, bursting into one of her merry fits of laughing, "Mary not ask any more. What good ask when Mary know. Mary not cross now, see," and promptly in her childish fashion she held up her face to be kissed.

Andrew nearly burst in two, or so it seemed to him, and it was with

very great physical difficulty that he kept his arms straight down by his side, for they seemed to have a natural tendency towards Mary's gracious form. But to his credit, be it said, he did it somehow and then rushed off and indulged in an hour's hard manual labour, which Mary told him afterwards was quite unnecessary, since he had only done things that he should have left undone. When he returned, she said:

"If the albatross come back, I catch him and cut that plate off his neck."

"So will I," said Andrew, "but it is too much to hope."

"Long time before he get anywhere, perhaps he pull off plate, or perhaps no one see it. Yes, yes, long time, make most of time," she said by way of consolation.

"It can't be too long," groaned Andrew. "I hope that blessed bird will eat the tin and choke itself."

"That not kind. Andrew and Mary ought to eat tin, half each, because they both silly and do what they no want do. Why Andrew write his name At--ter-ton on plate?"

"Oh! because people call me that."

"Why call Andrew that?" she pursued remorselessly.

"Oh! because I am a peer."

"Peer? What a peer?"

"Peers," said Andrew, "are people who, or whose relations, have acquired or inherited something that makes silly fools think them bigger than other men; because they are called 'my lord' and are richer than most of them. You will find lots of them in Whitaker's Almanack."

Mary considered all this, then asked:

"Are you rich, my lord?"

"No, I don't think so, not very, but my wife is, or was, and she may have left property, though I don't think that either."

"What is riches, Andrew?"

He pointed to the oats stored in their skin sacks and to the piles of dried fish and to the seaweed fuel, and answered:

"These are riches. These and health and love and children. All the rest is nothing at all."

## CHAPTER XXI

## FLIGHT

The winter came, a terrible winter with dark and rushing clouds, and gales and snow, with little sun. Still, this pair took little account of it. The main difference to them was that they sat by the fire inside the cave instead of by the fire outside, with a curtain they had made of the sailcloth from Andrew's boat, eked out with skins, drawn across the entrance to the recess in which this inner fire burned. Out of doors in that weather there was little to be done, though on fine days certain great penguins which Mary had reared, that never seemed to leave the island, flew out to sea to fish. Moreover, they did not always fish for themselves, since Mary tied bands of sinew round their throats so that they could not swallow their prey. Therefore they brought it home to her, knowing that they would be rewarded with the heads and offal. Thus fresh fish was seldom lacking to them, and with their porridge, oatcake, preserved eggs, etc., and a certain amount of milk, they got on very well indeed and kept in splendid health.

Still, the season with so much ice about, for the sea was full of floes and great bergs floated down the Race between the islands, was long, cold and dreary. What then, reflected Andrew, must it have been during past years for this girl in her utter loneliness? No wonder that she saw ghosts and thought that she conversed with spirits. The marvel was that she had not gone mad.

Mary, however, was anything but mad, as Andrew soon discovered when, taking advantage of their ample leisure, he began her education in earnest. Never was there so apt a pupil. With the help of the old Whitaker's Almanack and the Church-service that had belonged to Jacks, soon he taught her to read perfectly; also to write. Then with the Whitaker for a text-book, he lectured to her upon all the countries of the earth, so far as his information went, especially upon the few that he had visited, such as Egypt and South Africa, which interested her very much indeed, particularly Egypt, with its history of ancient things.

There she would sit by the fire, wrapped in her skin cloak down which her long hair fell in glittering streaks, her arms about her knees and her great intelligent eyes fixed earnestly upon his face, while he talked and talked, and occasionally she interrupted with her shrewd questions. There was scarcely a subject in the sky above or the earth beneath or the waters under the earth of which he did not discourse during those long months, nor did Mary ever grow tired of listening to him as he sat there upon a stone, his back resting against the wall of the cave and a pipe, generally out, in his hand, and held forth to his

class of one with Josky curled up asleep between them.

On medicine he was particularly eloquent, since that and scientific research were his trade, although his remarks induced her to ask at length why people were ill.

"Mary," she exclaimed, "never ill!"

"Nor would the rest of the world be if they lived like Mary," answered Andrew, "and their ancestors before them had done the same. I have never been ill since I came to this island although the climate is so horrid."

"Why does God make people ill?" asked Mary, a question to which he could return no satisfactory answer.

Thus they drifted off to the matter of religion, also into social questions. The subject of matrimony attracted Mary's attention, and proved difficult to deal with.

Why did people marry? Why did men have only one wife now when in the Bible they had so many, and why did the Turks have more than one wife, were some of the posers she put to him with which he fenced as best he could, drawing analogies from the wild life about them.

So the winter months wore away and before they were gone Mary could talk perfectly well, although she still used queer idioms and abbreviations, and for a long while retained the habit of speaking of herself and Andrew by name in the third person. It was always "Mary will do so and so." Further, she had learned a great deal and was now quite as well-informed as are the majority of young women, except, of course, on current topics which did not exist for them who lived in a little world of their own. History repeated itself, too, for like Eve before her, with the advent of knowledge she became dissatisfied with her garments and tried to manufacture herself some underclothing, a matter on which, to his intense embarrassment, she insisted upon consulting Andrew. These articles she put together out of the softest skins; also she cut down some sailors' trousers that Andrew found among the stores, to wear beneath her sealskin robe. The results were not satisfactory, since these new vestments irritated her skin and in the end she gave them up.

"Mary is a wild girl and Mary must stop wild," she said with decision, pointing to a little heap of discarded apparel.

"All right," answered Andrew, "you are very nice as you are."

"Is Mary nice?" she asked.

"Yes, beautiful."

"Is Mary beautiful?"

"If you want to know--yes, the most beautiful woman I ever saw."

She laughed happily and exclaimed:

"Mary so glad, because Andrew like her better."

"Who told you that I should like you better because you are beautiful?"

"No one," she answered, "Andrew not say so and no one else to tell." Then she reflected and added, "Perhaps God tell Mary; perhaps her heart tell her."

"That's about it, I expect," said Andrew, and laughed the matter off.

Although the underclothing proved such a failure, from that time forward Mary took to adorning herself in various ways. She made bracelets of beautiful iridescent sea-shells, which with infinite pains she bored and strung together on sinews. She found feathers from the wings of a kind of sea-eagle, white feathers tipped with black, and fashioned of them a sort of crown with imitations of wings on each side, something like a Norse helmet, which she set upon her head and appeared in suddenly, for all this she had done in secret.

The effect was really magnificent since this glossy crown, shaped with wondrous natural taste, added to her considerable height and made her look very stately, so much so that Andrew gasped when he saw her standing thus arrayed in the blue light of the burning seaweed fire.

"You look like a queen of men," he said.

She was very pleased and replied:

"Mary does not want to be a queen of men; Mary only wants to be queen of Andrew."

"Well, you are that already," he answered, "and of all this island, too, and of the beasts and birds and of everything you can see. Now let us get on with our work."

Encouraged by this experiment Mary made others. She tried new ways of dressing her hair which, for the most part, hitherto had flowed loose about her, only combed with the spiny shell of a sort of sea-urchin, and brushed with a kind of sponge. She arranged its abundance in massive plaits and looped these up round her ears, or gathered it in coils upon her head. Moreover, on the island flourished a certain bulbous plant which when the year began to turn, produced little waxy

flowers, in colour of the most brilliant blue, which flowers appeared in sheltered places among the melting snows. As soon as their season came, she went out to collect them. Then she wove them into garlands or coronals which she set about her neck or on her brow.

Thus did Mary try to make herself attractive by such means as lay to her hand, with a success that would have startled her had she known all the truth. Lastly, that she might learn the effect, she took to examining her reflection after the fashion of Narcissus, in a certain still and limpid pool of water which served her as a looking-glass, for twice Andrew came on her thus engaged.

The inner meaning of these developments was not hard to divine. The full tide of Nature was swelling in her young heart, and it set straight and strong towards a single object. Utterly innocent though she was, instinct showed her the path and led her feet to a goal that she did not see or understand. She adored the man whom Fate had brought to her with all the intensity of a deep heart that had never found anything upon which to lavish its affections, neither mother nor father, nor sister nor brother, nothing except Old Tom, who now had been dead for years.

Her passion went through the usual course. Thus, although this would seem impossible under the circumstances, she even managed to become jealous of Andrew. By degrees she wormed out of him the story of his relationships with other women of whom he had been fond. About his mother she did not mind. Of Mrs. Josky and her child Laurie she disapproved but let them pass. Rose Watson, however, was another matter. By slow but certain steps she possessed herself of every detail concerning this young lady and hated her with remarkable vigour, as she said because she had deceived Andrew, but really because Andrew had put himself in a position to be deceived by her.

"Mary would like to kill Rose," she said one evening with a fierce directness that was amazing in one of such a gentle nature.

"Good gracious! Why?" he asked.

"Because she cheat Andrew, and he think too much about her."

He burst out laughing and answered:

"You little savage! Well, there's no need to kill her, for to me she is dead already, dead as that," and he pointed to a fish which had been washed up by the waves, for they were walking on the seashore.

She searched his face to learn whether he were speaking the truth, and coming to the conclusion that he was, said:

"Yes, but the fish still smell. Well, Mary glad; Mary think no more of Rose, like Andrew."

Of Clara, however, she was not jealous. She accepted her existence, if she still existed, that was all, thus unconsciously reflecting Andrew's own mind in the matter. Nor was she jealous of his dead child, Janet. Indeed, of this departed little one she grew intensely fond. Oddly enough, Andrew, who since the death of his beloved had seldom mentioned her name to anyone else, would talk of her freely to Mary, recalling her every word and trait and describing all that he had suffered on her account, and still suffered. Mary would listen intently, remembering every word and, as it were, rebuilding the child in her own mind.

"Don't be sad, Andrew," she said to him once, "perhaps Janet come back one day. Mary /think/ Janet come back."

"What on earth do you mean?" he asked, but she would give no answer.

Only she would borrow the miniature of the child painted on ivory which Andrew wore in a gold locket, and study it intently until she knew her every feature.

Here in the island itself there was nothing of which Mary could be jealous except the cat Josky. This animal was greatly attached to Andrew, as he was to it, but for Mary it did not particularly care. Perhaps Josky also suffered from the passion of jealousy. At any rate, the relations between them were strained, so much so that unless it were very hungry Josky would not take its food from her, while Mary thought Andrew's attachment to the creature much exaggerated, and would tell him so when she considered that she had been neglected that he might attend upon the wants, or whims, of Josky.

Yet all this while Mary was quite ignorant of the cause of these emotions. She did not know that she was in love with Andrew in the general acceptance of the phrase, nor whither that love was leading her. But her inner consciousness, or instinct, knew well enough, and soon her body knew also, since for the first time in her life she began to pine and fall sick. Andrew's medical eye noted the change at once and, with a man's desire to avoid the real issue which concerned himself, set to work to find some physical cause.

Finally, he concluded Mary needed a change of diet after the long winter, and that if she could be taught to eat meat she would soon be well again. So one day he took his gun and went on to that part of the moor where he knew the wild goats fed in a sheltered spot. Here, after some stalking, he shot a young goat, scarcely more than a kid, which he thought would be tender to eat and make good soup. Having opened and cleaned this animal, he carried and dragged it down the cliffside to the caves where he proposed that it should be cooked. As he passed round the point of rock he met Mary who in fact had heard the shot, to her a new sound, and as he did not return, fearing that it meant some evil to Andrew, was setting out to search for him. She uttered an

exclamation of delight at seeing him safe, and was beginning to ask the cause of the noise when she caught sight of the carcase of the goat that naturally was disagreeable to look on.

She seemed to freeze and her eyes filled with horror.

"What that?" she asked.

"A kid that I shot for you to eat," replied Andrew, "as I think you live too much on fish."

"You murder that poor goat which I know well, for Mary to eat?" she said slowly in grieving accents. "You wicked and cruel and Mary hate you."

Then she uttered a loud scream, went into hysterics or something very like them, and turning, fled into the cave.

Andrew, deeply distressed at this unexpected result of his well-meant efforts, did not know what to do. Collecting his wits he dragged the goat back behind the point and left it in a place where he knew the gulls and sea-eagles would soon devour it, since he was certain that Mary would never partake of soup made from its flesh. Then he washed himself very carefully and even changed his outer garment lest the blood or perhaps the small of the creature should cling to it, and went back to the cave, for by now it was time for their evening meal.

There was no Mary to be seen. He peeped into the cave, and after a pause and calling without result, even went up it and glanced at her bed. It was unoccupied. She had gone. Andrew grew terrified, for what might not an hysterical woman do? To such in his medical career he had known strange things happen. He cursed the goat, he cursed himself and his own stupidity, he cursed female susceptibilities, and then he went out to look for her.

Fortunately the full moon was rising which made the place like day, and in its light he ran up and down those desolate shores, shouting "Mary" till he was hoarse. At length he made up his mind that she must have taken to the moorland above, if indeed she had not gone into the sea from the cliff-edge, a thought at which he shuddered and turned sick. So to the moor he must make his way.

As, in order to do so, Andrew, who now was quite as distracted as Mary could be, passed for the third time that little bay in the cliff where was the pool into which they had cast the bones of Old Tom, he thought that in the silence he heard a faint sound of sobbing. Following this sound he went along the narrow gut at the bottom of which the sea-water flowed into the pool, and there, by the edge of the pool, seated on a stone with her hair flowing all about her and weeping, he perceived Mary. Now, in his intense relief, he flew into a rage as nine out of ten men would have done, and scolded her soundly.

"You must have heard me calling," he said.

"Yes," she replied between her sobs, "Mary hear; all island hear, and other island, too, I think. Birds fly away and not come back any more if Andrew make such ugly noise."

"Then why in Heaven's name didn't you answer when you knew I was so frightened about you?"

"Because Andrew wicked murderer, like Cain, and Mary no want to speak to him. Andrew frighten poor goat much worse than Mary frighten Andrew, and p'raps he want kill Mary next."

Now the unfortunate Andrew became almost inarticulate with indignation. He argued, he explained, he demonstrated that there was no difference between killing a kid and killing fish. At this point Mary intervened:

"The Lord He catch fish and eat them too; He no shoot goat. Mary not like murderers and come sit here with Old Tom."

"Damn Old Tom," said Andrew. "I understand that he killed seals."

"He did not shoot them," said Mary.

Before such argument as this Andrew collapsed. Then suddenly he became aware of the overmastering beauty of this woman seated there upright and still upon that stone by the silent pool, with the moonlight glinting on her hair and on her snowy arms and breast, and filling with mystery her big blue eyes from which the slow tears trickled. His anger left him, everything left him except this sense of beauty that had smitten him like a magic wand. In an instant she felt the change and looked at him with a dreamy smile.

"Andrew sorry," she said, "and commit no more murder?" As he made no answer, taking silence for consent, she went on, "Then Mary sorry too. Andrew come kiss Mary and make friend."

He tried to say No; he tried to go away, but he could not. On the contrary he came and kneeling down before her, kissed her uplifted cheek. Nor this time did he stop there, because he could not. Throwing his arms about her he drew her to his breast, he kissed her everywhere; hair and eyes and lips, he kissed them all. And she, catching his fire, kissed him back, then lay in his arms crooning happily.

"Mary forget all about goat now," she said at length, "and not angry any more. Time for Andrew come to supper."

So they went to supper, but of it Andrew could not eat much because of

the flame that burned within him, though Mary seemed to be quite happy and for the while satisfied. Only her eyes looked larger than before and in them was a new light.

Saying that he was tired Andrew went to bed early and without any further demonstration of affection. When he reached his cave he lit his rude lamp and sat down to think. What was to be done? The position had become impossible, as in a dim way he had always foreseen that it must. He could not go on living with this lovely, loving creature on their present footing. Human nature has its breaking strain and this he had reached, or rather they both had reached it, although one of them did not know that it was so. Therefore he was face to face with an alternative. Either he must stay and take the natural consequences, to do which the temptation was almost overwhelming, or he must go. Now he knew well that were Mary in his sight he could never find the strength to leave her. Therefore if he went at all, it must be when she was absent, which meant immediately. Yet why should he go when there was so much against such a course? For one reason only--from a sense of duty.

Andrew was a man of upright and indeed rather puritanical mind, not one who would ever set out deliberately to gratify an impulse however human. If he did so it would be when his reason was overborne by the primary forces of nature--when he was no longer master of himself. Now, sitting alone, he knew that he loved Mary devotedly, and that there was nothing that he desired more, or indeed one-tenth so much in the whole world, as that they should belong to each other. What was there against it? Just this one thing--that he did not know whether his wife were alive or dead. If she were dead a marriage ceremony could be dispensed with, since under the circumstances it was impossible. But if she were alive, to say nothing of the consequences to himself, what would such a course make of this innocent Mary, who did not know what she was doing?

The risk seemed too great to take. Therefore he must face the alternative and go away. It would grieve Mary, of course, but that was better than bringing her to ruin. And he must go at once, before he saw her any more. He loved her so well that he must leave her.

In his cave Andrew had some of the slates which they manufactured, that he used to make notes upon and to keep a kind of diary. Taking one of these, with pain and grief he wrote the following letter:

"Dear, dear Mary,

"I must leave you for your own sake" (had he but known it this was the worst possible argument he could have used to her. If he had said that he must leave her for /his/ own sake, the remark would have had more weight). "You do not understand what I mean and it is quite impossible for me to explain it to you. The only

hint I can give to you is to remind you that perhaps I am still a married man. But the truth is that I have grown too fond of you and perhaps you have grown too fond of me, as may be natural since you have seen no other men. At any rate, we cannot go on living side by side as we have done for nearly a year and not be more to each other than we are. Even if you do not understand, you must accept what I say as the truth, since I say it for your sake. Do not seek for me. I shall be able to get on quite well alone, as I know you can, especially as you have plenty of everything you need. Therefore, unless you should fall really ill, do not seek for me. Indeed, it would be useless for you to do so for I am going to hide away. Best love and good-bye. Thanks, too, for all your goodness. God bless you, dearest Mary.

"Andrew."

When he had finished this epistle, of which on re-reading it he felt rather proud, Andrew collected a few articles almost at hazard, and left the cave with more pangs of regret than he had felt on departing from the finest home he had ever inhabited, or even from his lodgings in Justice Street to be married. Taking the cat Josky with him he crept to the mouth of Mary's cave. There he tied Josky to a stone, wishing to leave it to be a companion to Mary, and set the slate with the letter in a position where she could not fail to see it.

After this he fled away, like a fugitive running from justice, and by the bright moonlight soon gained the moor.

## CHAPTER XXII

## RETURN

When Andrew had walked some little distance upon the moor, suddenly it occurred to him that he did not know whither he was going. In the urgency of his present predicament he had found no time to make plans for the future. All that he had realized was the necessity of immediate flight; therefore he, the sinner, had fled, pursued by the policeman, Love, upon whom as yet he could not gain a single yard.

Now the question arose--whither away? To which there seemed to be only one possible answer--the place whence he had come, namely, the hut.

So to the hut he made his path, arriving there extremely tired rather late on the following morning, since when the moon grew low he had lost his road among those terrible hills and marshes, and had moreover fallen into a bog that was concealed by a crust of snow. On the edge of this bog, wet through, chilled to the bone and without shelter from the bitter wind, he had been obliged to sit till dawn, after which,

getting his bearings in the light, he slowly floundered onwards to the hut.

It proved to be a desolate abode enough, for by this time he had removed the most of its contents to the caves, and, worse still, all the matches. Moreover, in his agitation he had forgotten to bring any with him, so there he was fireless and with nothing to eat save some dry biscuits. He had his gun, indeed, and might have shot a seal or a goat, but if he did, he could not devour raw flesh, and the same applied for fish. Therefore all that day he lived upon biscuits, and not many of these, for his stomach turned against them. That night he developed a feverish chill. The chill came probably from his immersion and the fever from his state of mind; at any rate, there they were, and he had no medicine with him and could do nothing except try, without success, to keep himself warm.

Towards morning he felt very bad indeed, and it occurred to him that unless he got better soon, probably he would die in this lonely place. Well, perhaps that was the best way out of his difficulties, only then poor Mary would once more be left utterly alone on the island, which distressed him terribly. All his thought went out to her. He wondered what she was doing and how she had borne his desertion. Was she angry with him, or was she lost in grief? Perhaps he ought to have stayed. Had he been a stronger man he should have stayed and overcome temptation, as a hero in a book would have done, but his nature was too weak and human and therefore they must both pay the penalty.

Thus he thought and thought till with the light the fever took him again, but more violently, till at length his mind left him. The last thing he could remember before he sank into unconsciousness or delirium was an intense desire to see Mary again, if it were only once before he died.

Andrew's senses returned and the first thing that occurred to him was that he must be dead and in heaven. For this reason: there, close to him, was Mary on her knees watching him, while coiled up on his bed was the cat Josky, and where Mary was, there was heaven for him. Only it seemed improbable that this very dilapidated hut would also have removed itself to the celestial regions where of all the many mansions it would certainly have been the most disreputable. Perhaps, then, he was in the other place! No, that was impossible, since Mary was there, Mary who was certainly good, and Josky also, an upright cat in its way. It came to this, then--he was still on earth and with him was Mary, or a vision of her.

He moved his head. Instantly she saw and bent forward to examine his face, for it was dark in that hut, although he perceived that now the fire burned outside the door just as it used to do when he lived here alone. Her long hair fell all over him and he felt her breath upon his brow. Then their eyes met, and he saw the doubt and gloom fade out of hers to be replaced by the light of a great joy. She slipped away from

him, silently as a fish through water, and he began to think that he had dreamed. But no, for in a minute she was back and holding to his lips milk in a large shell. He drank it thankfully, and with the draught strength seemed to return to him, after which he dozed a while.

When he woke again there still was Mary, and this time she gave him baked fish to eat, which now that his fever had left him he did with appetite, although as he was yet very weak. He wished to speak, but she would not allow him to do so, laying her cool fingers on his lips in token that he must be silent. Then again he fell into a natural sleep which must have lasted all the night, as he knew by the position of the sun when he awoke. But still there was Mary with more food ready for him to eat.

After this, his recovery from the pneumonia, or whatever it may have been, was rapid, but it was not until he was comparatively strong and had risen from his bed that she would let him talk of what was nearest to his mind.

"How did you find me? Tell me the story," he said at last.

Then she told him this tale.

"That bad night," she said, "Mary thought she heard some one move outside her cave, since she not sleep well, but believe it only one of the birds, or perhaps the ghost of Old Tom come to watch over her, so do nothing. Just before daybreak she hear Josky crying and go to look. Then she see Josky tied up and by him Andrew's letter on the stone, which she read, but not quite understand, though she guess something. Now she feel very ill, as though something break in her here," and she touched her breast, "and wonder what to do. She think she go to look for Andrew, then she read letter again and see that Andrew not want her, and that she must not trouble him. So she do her work and think, and think, and think, but Josky she keep tied up because she knew that if she let him loose, he run away after Andrew.

"That night Mary begin to feel that Andrew in trouble and want her, and next day she seem to hear him call her in a new voice, 'Mary! Where are you, Mary? Come to me, Mary.' Then she get some things, matches, oats for porridge, dried fish, but 'member that she not know where Andrew go. So she think and think, and while she think, Josky cry again. Then she take a string and tie it to Josky and get two goats what give milk with their kids, and drive them before her for a little way, till they follow her of themselves. She go up the cliff to where she meet Andrew when first he come back from the hut, and there she set Josky on the ground. Josky began to run and to pull with his nose towards the setting sun, and where Josky go, she follow, and the goats they come after her.

"So, at last," she ended in a matter-of-fact way, "Mary find Andrew in

the hut, because Josky know where he go."

"You clever woman!" gasped Andrew, when he had heard this amazing tale.

"No, Mary not clever, Josky clever. Mary only use Josky, because she know he go straight home, while perhaps she walk for days and days. Josky hate Mary and love Andrew and want to go after Andrew--like Mary. Also sometimes Mary see Andrew's footsteps and so know that Josky right."

"Well," said Andrew, trying to swallow down a lump which seemed suddenly to arise in his throat, "and what then?"

"Not much. Mary find Andrew very sick indeed. Red like lobster fish after it boiled, and shaking his arms and talking much of lady called Rose, and--other woman, forget her name; no fire in hut, no food except biscuit hard as stone, nothing. If Mary not come, Andrew going to die just like Old Tom. Andrew should thank Josky very much."

"Andrew does," he murmured, and thrust Josky down off the bed which it was monopolizing.

"Mary find wood and other stuff and make big fire; also she give Andrew milk to drink, and do what she can. Then when he get quiet and fall asleep, she run back to caves, fetch things and drive goats here, because if not milked, they burst--those two of them whose kids die."

"Run back to caves!" gasped Andrew.

"Yes, she do it in six hours both ways. Those goats never go so fast before. They get here their mouths open and can't say /baa/; also give very little milk that night. Mary find Andrew just waking up, so no harm done. After that she stop here and nurse him, two weeks and three days, but not know if he live or die, and when she can, go catch fish for food. At end he live, that all. Now Mary must go milk goats."

And she went before he could say a word, though afterwards she added that she had even thought of carrying him back to the cave, but gave up the idea because she knew that it was beyond her strength, and that she would let him fall.

Andrew's reflections upon all this history can, in the hackneyed phrase, be better imagined than described. He pictured to himself all that she had told him; her hesitation to inflict her presence on him, her mysterious sense that he was in trouble; the use which she made of the instinct of the half-wild animal that loved him, which no one would have done who had not watched the ways of beasts and birds. Her arrival at the hut just in time with the goats, whose milk saved his life; her patient nursing of him through his dangerous sickness and delirium; her swift journey back to the caves to fetch necessaries,

running like a trained athlete through wild weather and over that terrible ground; her return with the exhausted goats; her ceaseless vigil, notwithstanding the weariness which must have afflicted even her splendid physique; her desperate scheme of carrying him back to the caves, abandoned only for fear of the consequences to him, should her strength fail her; her thought for everything, and the rest. Whence came the almost divine power which had enabled this girl to conceive and do these things, and to speak of them afterwards as a mere matter of course? An answer arose in his heart which caused his pale face to blush. The power came from Love and the love was for him, unworthy. Then and there he swore within himself that come what might he would devote the rest of his life to Mary living, or to her memory if she died. That was his plain duty, even if it involved his earthly ruin and retribution in states unknown. But of all this, as yet, he said nothing to her.

When, by comparison, Andrew was quite strong again, of a sudden Mary, who had been somewhat silent for several days, spoke to him thus:

"Andrew quite well now, so Mary go back to cave. What Andrew wish to do? Stay here or come back live cave? Mary must go," she added by way of explanation, "see after oats and everything."

Andrew looked about him despairingly, his heart fluttering in his breast. Then he looked at Mary's great steady eyes.

"I don't know what to answer," he said. "If I leave you harm might come to you."

"That not matter," interrupted Mary.

"Or harm might come to me living here alone," he went on.

"Yes, you not very strong yet; silly also, take no thought for morrow like child, and not able look after yourself. That matter much," and again she waited.

"See here, Mary," he said in desperation, "I can't explain things to you, but it is impossible that we should go on living together as we have done, so near and yet so far from each other. It is not good for you, or for me either. That is," he added, dropping his eyes, "if I am right in supposing that you care about me."

"Care about you?" replied Mary. "Not know what 'care-about' means. Is 'care-about' other word for love?"

He nodded.

"Then," she continued quite quietly, "Mary 'care-about' very much. Let

her see how much!" She looked around her and went on, "There sea all made up drops of water, and there shore, all made up little grains sand, and there sky all full stars. Well, Andrew count them every one, and then he learn how many 'care-abouts' Mary have for Andrew."

"You dear!" he muttered to himself, "what have I done to earn this?" and perhaps she heard him, for she coloured a little.

"If only you understood," he added aloud.

"Mary great fool," she answered, "but think she understand something. No one tell her, so perhaps God teach her. Something like this. Perhaps Andrew married, if wife not drowned. First part of Bible say man may have many wives as he like, second part seem say he may only have one unless he quite sure other drowned. So if Andrew come back caves and Mary his wife, he think that sin and God angry with him."

"I am thinking more of you than of myself," blurted out Andrew. "If I am still married and we ever went off this island, you would be despised; people would not speak to you."

"Mary understand, but why go off island? Island very nice place, plenty to eat, quite happy here. Oh! she see, perhaps Andrew want to. Andrew what called rich peer."

"No, I don't," he answered, "but all sorts of things might happen. You remember that albatross and the tin plate?"

"Yes, and he not come back yet."

Then there was silence between them for a while, which she broke at length, saying:

"Think Mary better go away now, want reach cave before dark. P'raps if Andrew let her she come see him sometimes, once every moon, or p'raps better not. Mary bring him things and put them on stone," and as she spoke her big eyes filled with tears.

"Stop," said Andrew hoarsely, "I want to tell you something. I love you with as much love as there is water in the sea and sand on the shore and light in the sky," he went on, adopting her similes.

"Then Mary very happy, who only hope for quite a little."

"Loving you so much," he continued, "I who am but a man, cannot go on living with you as we have done. It is weak and wrong of me, but I cannot do it."

"Mary weak and wrong too, both sick together."

"Therefore, Mary, either we must stop apart, which seems unnatural and

also wrong, or we must go back to the caves--together."

"Yes, that what we talk about all this time."

"Mary," he went on wildly, "I cannot leave you."

"No leave me, only stop here. I leave, and quick before I cry. Only want say this. If Andrew come and get tired of Mary, or want to go away in ship or something, she never say No. Mary not wish to be trouble, she only Andrew's here, and always easy die."

That was the end, he could bear no more. That day they went back to the caves together, he leaning on her strong arm.

Then began the happy, happy life of these poor sinners, if such they were. There in their caves they lived together, a perfectly mated pair in body and mind and spirit. They rose with the sun and carried through their daily toil, laughing the hours away, and when the sun sank they went back to their cave and slept thankful and rejoicing until he came again.

The summer passed, the winter returned, but for them it had no terrors who were both strong and healthy. Spring drew on once more, and with the spring came Mary's child.

Andrew had been much perturbed about the arrival of this in fact, which must take place in the absence of the ordinary conveniences, although as a doctor, of course, he knew all that should be done. He was an anxious-minded man, especially where those he loved were concerned, and carefully enough he thought out every contingency and made preparation for every danger, so far as the means at his disposal allowed. As it turned out he might have spared himself the trouble. Mary went on doing her work just as usual to the very day of the occurrence, which caused him to think that the date had been miscalculated. So it happened that he departed on some daily round, it was connected with skinning a seal that lay dead at a distance, and returned to find that there was no supper cooked. While he was wondering over the cause of this omission, he heard Mary calling him from the cave. Entering he found her lying on her bed, looking a little pale, but smiling. Presently she threw back the skin rug and showed him a babe, a most beautiful and perfect girl.

"Janet come back," she said. "I always tell you Janet come back!"

In a week she was perfectly well again and wished to get up, even showing temper when he would not allow her to do so. In fact, to her who from childhood had led a primitive and natural life, this business was nothing, as it is nothing to a savage woman. Nor was there any trouble about the child or any necessity of supplementing its natural food. The mother bloomed and grew even more beautiful than before, and the child was strong and healthy as a young seal. Also he observed

with a kind of wonder that daily it became more like his lost Janet.

So now there were three at the caves instead of two, and that was all the difference. Mary did her work as before, only with her babe, which by her wish Andrew had christened Janet, slung in a skin upon her back, as an Esquimaux woman does, the sole change being that Andrew must swim out and attend to the nets, which she declared he did very badly.

So the time went on. Janet was a strong and forward child who soon found her sturdy little feet; indeed, at a year old she could toddle about, gurgling in a jolly fashion, and a few months later could say "Dad and Mum" and other words. Ailments she had absolutely none, since there were no germs to infect her, and she cut her teeth with ease.

So, as has been said, they were absolutely happy, or would have been were it not for the fact that there are always flies in every human pot of ointment, and theirs was no exception, since in it buzzed and struggled two veritable bluebottles. The larger of these, which particularly affected Andrew's side of the pot, was a moral insect. In his way he was a strict sort of man who might do wrong, but whose conscience always called upon him to pay the price full measure, pressed down and running over. Now that conscience told him that his conduct in the matter of Mary was of a questionable order. He knew that if he had acted in any other way, not only would it have been contrary to the earnest desires and most natural impulses of both of them, but that the issue in all probability would have been their deaths, since it was scarcely possible, fretting as they would have done, that they could have continued to live solitary and separated on that narrow island. Accidents would have happened, and one of them would have given up the struggle, and then, broken-hearted, the other would have followed. Still, there was the strict letter of the law, the potent law which had been inculcated in him since childhood, which says that a man may not marry again unless he is absolutely sure that his wife is dead. And of this Andrew was by no means sure. Simply he could not tell, nor indeed did he wish her to be dead. Only if she were alive, what then was his position and that of Mary; also that of their beloved child?

While they remained undiscovered upon that island all these things, it was true, mattered little, since he felt quite sure that the world believed him to be dead, and no doubt by this time had forgotten him altogether. Probably, if she were still alive, Clara, who was not a person of deep affections or one likely to waste time mourning over any husband, had also forgotten him. Indeed, she might have married again if any quite suitable alliance came her way, as he devoutly hoped she had, especially as she would have done so in perfect innocence.

But, and here was the second fly, a very Beelzebub of a fly: suppose that she had not, and suppose that accursed albatross to which in his

folly he had tied the tin plate, had fallen into the hands of men in some part of the civilized world. Then the whole earth would buzz with the romance of the business, and as he was a peer and worse still, a big officer of the State at the time of his disappearance, the Government would send a man-of-war to look for him. Or if it did not, some enterprising newspaper in search of advertisement and good copy would organize a relief expedition. Some one or other would surely come. And then--the shame of it all, and what was almost as bad, the ridicule, of which it made him cold even to think. Well, on one thing he was determined, nothing would induce him to abandon Mary. He would tell Clara that he was sorry and that she must take her remedy, looking upon him as one dead.

For her part Mary did not trouble so much about these dangers. It seemed to her right and natural that she and Andrew who loved each other so devotedly, should live together as man and wife. On that point her conscience did not prick her. But she who could read him like a book, knew what was passing in his mind, although of it he said little or nothing, and this in turn affected hers, since what Andrew suffered, she must also suffer. So it came about that notwithstanding their mutual joy in each other, they lived in great dread; the wide wings of that fatal albatross overshadowed them, even while they kissed and thanked God for the child whom they both adored, as they adored each other. For in fact, they never doubted but that this bird would fulfil its ill-omened mission. The chances against it might be a thousand to one, and yet they were sure that the evil lot would fall out of all that were in the sack.

When for the fourth time the pale spring came since the sending off of the albatross--making Andrew's fifth upon the island, although there was no sign of it among the hosts of migratory fowl which came there to nest, it is true that hope grew strong in them, and they took comfort. But still in their hearts they knew that the hope was vain and that though Fate might delay its stroke, surely it would fall. Here it may be well to state what happened to this bird.

It flew away for thousands of miles and, probably irked to death by the tin plate tied about its neck of which it could not be rid, ultimately perished upon a wild part of the shore of Western Australia. There it lay and rotted till, by a strange chance, a man engaged in prospecting for minerals walked along this beach which was rarely trodden, seeking for outcrops among the cliffs. While he was thus engaged his trained eye caught the glitter of something in the midst of a pile of bones and feathers. Thinking that this might indicate the presence of mineral he walked to the spot and there found the plate, much rusted but still quite legible. Ultimately he carried it to Perth and showed it to a newspaper man who, fearful of a hoax, submitted it to the Authorities. Within forty-eight hours the strange news, made more romantic still by the rank of the castaway and the manner of its discovery, was printed in almost every paper of the earth, and for a few hours Andrew was the most talked of among living

men.

## CHAPTER XXIII

## THE FATAL ALBATROSS

For once in her life Lady Atterton met with a piece of bad luck and, what afflicted her still more, was put into a ridiculous position. As Andrew had guessed, she escaped from the shipwreck, for be it known that no one had come to harm when the ship was lost. Within a few hours of the foundering of the /Neptune/, a sister ship of the same line which had received her S.O.S. message found the boats and picked up everybody, except Andrew and Jacks, who, for very good reasons, were believed to be drowned.

On her return to London, Clara, dressed in most becoming widow's weeds, received many condolences on the loss of a high official position and also on that of her husband. The only person who did not condole was Mrs. Josky with whom she had a tumultuous interview.

That good lady, seconded by Laurie, "made bold" to tell her outright that she had not done what she might to rescue Andrew, or to search for him after he was supposed to be drowned. In vain did Clara assume the cold and haughty peeress for their benefit. Mrs. Josky in her indignation alleged in vulgar, Whitechapel language that she did not "care a damn for peeresses," adding that all women were the same under their clothes, with this difference, that some had a heart and some had a dried walnut where that organ ought to be. Clara, still imperturbably calm, rang the bell and requested the footman to show these persons out. So they went, but at the door Laurie, who had brought her baby with her, fired a parting shot in an interval of her mother's invectives. It was to this effect:

"If his lordship's dead, there's this comfort for him, that he's well rid of you, who never cared a brass halfpenny about him like mother and I did."

They departed, leaving Clara, who objected to the primary emotions in action, somewhat perturbed. The worst of it was that they seemed to have generated a certain antagonistic atmosphere in that lordly mansion. Perhaps they conversed then, or afterwards, with the footman and the butler, who had also been shipwrecked on the /Neptune/. At any rate Clara observed a coldness in the demeanour of these and other menials which the passage of time did not efface, or even lessen. The truth was that everyone in West House loved Andrew, whereas their sentiments for Clara were of a different order.

By degrees Clara shed her widow's weeds and once more bloomed into the brilliant Society lady, as her rank, wealth, and cleverness gave her a

right to do. But now, as before, her ambitions being unquenched, she found that she needed a man to help her in her climbing. So, having persuaded the Court of Probate to "presume" Andrew's death, she set to work to find another husband. In due course a perfectly suitable person presented himself, a dried-up and childless widower whose rank was superior to that of Andrew, who was also a member of the Government and one who thought that her great fortune would be very helpful in his career.

Now came the bad luck. This engagement in high life was announced, with suitable prominence and polite allusions to the lady's former tragic bereavement, in /The Times/, /Morning Post/, and other papers upon a certain morning. In those that appeared in the afternoon was printed the sensational cable from Australia which told of the finding of the tin plate amongst the bones of an albatross upon an antipodean beach. Naturally Clara, chancing to read the paragraph in an early edition of the /Westminster Gazette/, was much disturbed.

"Really," she said to herself, "this is just like Andrew. If he meant to turn up, in common decency he might have done so before--or at least on any other day."

Then she sat down to think a while and as a result determined, like a wise woman, to do nothing without consulting her lawyer. So having caused a telephone message to be sent to that eminent solicitor to tell him to expect her, she dressed and started.

But here again bad luck pursued her, for when she reached her door, in front of which quite a little crowd had gathered, since many had read the news or seen the headings on the placards, whom should she meet rushing up but Mrs. Josky and Laurie, each of them waving a halfpenny paper.

"What did I tell you, my lady," screamed Mrs. Josky. "He's living after all!"

"And you going to be married again," vociferated Laurie, always an uncontrolled person. "Well, I'd have waited a while, I would."

"Even if I hadn't stopped to look for him," added Mrs. Josky.

Then Clara drove off, leaving the pair explaining everything to an interested and ever-increasing crowd.

The end of it was that, with the assistance of her lawyer, Clara wrote a most discreet letter to the noble Viscount to which she had promised herself /en secondes noces/, saying that under the circumstances, painful as they were unexpected, everything must rest in abeyance until the facts were ascertained. She added that, as he would understand, her "poor woman's heart" was "torn in two."

His lordship answered by special messenger that he quite agreed with her, since bigamy, even if accidental, was an awkward business.

About her poor woman's heart he said nothing at all, contenting himself with the dubious finale of "Yours in mingled hope and fear."

"The wretch!" ejaculated Clara. "Within three months he will be married to that odious Lady Atkins." And he was!

On further reflection Clara saw that in order to obliterate this ridiculous interlude in her career from the public mind, it was necessary that she should do something interesting which would awaken sympathy for herself. To explain her woes on any and every occasion and to demonstrate the raptures of her hope were not enough. No, she herself must head the relief expedition to search for Andrew, and be careful that the fact was well advertised in the Press. She did not in the least wish to undertake any such adventure, having had quite enough of the sea, especially in the neighbourhood of those horrible islands. Andrew was a past episode in her life. Long ago she had written him off her account. As a husband he had disappointed her, and it was probable that if he reappeared, he would continue to do so. The truth was that she felt as much annoyed with that albatross as, had she but known it, Andrew did himself, and devoutly wished that the tin plate had never been found.

Of course the chances were that after all this fuss no Andrew would be discovered. For the message seemed to have been sent off some years ago, and it was most unlikely that he could have lived so long upon a desert island in an extremely inclement climate. At least no one else would have done so, but of Andrew she was not so sure, since he was a man who had a way of achieving the unexpected, of doing those things which he ought not to do, and of leaving those things which he ought to do, undone.

Who else, for instance, would have managed to get himself bottled up below in that inaccessible part of the ship which he insisted upon inhabiting and thus giving everybody the impression that he was finally and romantically drowned? Who else, being thus bottled up, would have managed to emerge and to reach an uninhabited island? Who else would have bethought him of tying a tin plate to the neck of an albatross?--a most unexampled expedient. If he could do these things, it was quite possible that he would manage to exist in circumstances under which anybody else would have died, and to reappear after he had been officially declared deceased. Also--this was a new and dreadful thought--if that should be so, what would he be like after four years alone on an iceberg? He was peculiar enough before, now he would be positively mad. Still, as a philosopher Clara recognized that in life the rough must be taken with the smooth, and that therefore she must go to look for him, leaving the issue to Providence. Perhaps she would find his bones and be able to bring them home for burial, a ceremony that must attract much attention.

So she communicated with the Admiralty and found "my Lords" most kind. Indeed, they promised to place a small cruiser which was attached to the Cape station at her disposal, with orders to give her a passage and to search any and every uninhabited island within a thousand miles radius of the spot where the /Neptune/ had gone down. Also she communicated with the Government, and from it obtained a half-promise that when the man who had been appointed to the Governorship of Oceania upon the supposed death of her husband, resigned, as it was expected that he would do very shortly, the post should again be offered to Andrew.

There was foresight in this move of hers, since she had made up her mind that if he should chance to be rescued and to prove too impossible, she could always allege ill-health and allow him to go to Oceania alone. Then, with indignation in her breast and a wistful look of hope deferred carefully stamped upon her attractive countenance, Clara, suitably attended by servants, took the mail steamer to the Cape, and there in due course embarked upon the cruiser which she found abominably uncomfortable, especially as there was no one on the ship who was in touch with her world, or who interested her at all.

Once more on Marion Isle the long winter was merging into spring. As usual it had been a happy winter for the three inhabitants of that desolate place, except that during it the fear, which he always felt, seemed to grip Andrew's heart more closely than it had ever done before, and from him had spread to that of Mary. Still, of this they said little to each other and now were engaged upon their usual task of making ready their land for sowing.

One morning early, Mary, leaving little Janet in Andrew's charge, went out to see to her fish-nets, and in due course returned with the fish but looking very disturbed.

"What is the matter, dear?" asked Andrew, who saw at once that something was wrong. "Has the new net been carried away?"

"I don't quite know, Andrew," she answered gravely. (By now she had lost the habit of speaking in the third person.) "Last night I dreamed that Old Tom came to me and told me that something very bad was about to happen, he would not say what. He did say, however, that I must 'keep a stiff upper lip'--he always used those funny words about meeting trouble--since if I did so everything might come right at last, as he had always told me it would."

"Well, there isn't much in dreams," said Andrew cheerfully, "and at any rate this one had a good ending. Is that all?"

"No, Andrew. When I was on the rocks yonder a squall came up and

covered me. Then suddenly in the mist and drift I saw the Shape----"

"What shape?"

"That I told you about which three times warned me of danger and saved my life before you came. Since then I have never seen it till this morning."

"Well," said Andrew, "what did it look like?"

"It looked very terrible, Andrew. It looked like Death. It came upon me suddenly and passed away against the wind out on to the Race between the islands, pointing to the Race where it vanished. Andrew, some one is going to die there in that Race."

"Then pray God it may be me," he answered in words that were startled out of him, "though I don't see how I should get into the Race where no man can swim and live for long."

"No," she answered, "pray God it may be Mary."

"Don't say that, don't say that!" he cried and kissed her.

"Why not?" she asked. "We have been very happy, haven't we? And I do not fear death since my heart tells me that in death we really find all we think we lose."

"Look here, Mary," said Andrew. "Rightly or wrongly you believe in this shape which, you say, has three times saved your life. Why then should it come a fourth time to take away your life, or to tell you that it will be taken away?"

"I don't know, Andrew. Perhaps it did not. But some one is going to die, and there are only us three and of the three--oh! I pray God to let me die."

Then she set about her tasks and said not another word of the matter.

The day was calm and fine, and the weather being suitable to their purpose, they put damp seaweed on to the fire to make smoke in which they hung fresh fish to cure lightly. In the afternoon they both went into the cave to store some of the fish which they had kippered, leaving Janet by the fire, where she was playing contently with the cat, Josky, of which she was very fond. Presently they heard the child calling to them.

"Oh! Dad, Mum. Oh! Mum, Dad, come look, something big upon the sea."

They ran out of the cave, and there, a mile or more from them, anchored just where the Race ran into the open ocean, they perceived a British man-of-war, for she flew the Ensign. Even as they watched

amazed, a boat left her side and rowed swiftly for the mouth of their little bay.

The pair looked at each other with horror in their eyes.

"This is the work of the albatross," gasped Andrew.

Mary nodded and, in her agitation, answered in the old childish language:

"Yes, that bird pay us back because we tie things to its neck. What do now? Run away?"

"No, dear, for it is useless. They would hunt the island till they found us. The smoke has betrayed us. Let us stop here and go on with what we are doing."

So they did, mechanically, Andrew cleaning more fish and throwing the insides to the watching penguins, while Mary fixed them to a string in the smoke.

"There is a woman in that boat," said Mary presently in a cold voice, for her eyes were those of a hawk and she had seen her. "She too wears a coat of skin."

The boat, skilfully steered, came to the shore, but Andrew and Mary went on working with their backs to it.

"Mary," said Andrew, "I want you to understand something. If by any chance that woman should be--my wife--I am not going to leave you for her, because you are more to me than everything else in the world. And unless they take us by force, I am not going to leave this island."

She gave him a look of her beautiful eyes and said:

"Thank you." Then she was silent.

Now they heard voices behind them and were forced to turn round. There they stood against a background of the smoke, Andrew to the right, Mary to the left, and between them the lovely child. Perhaps a stranger-looking trio could not be imagined. They were all clad in skins, for Andrew's clothes, except a suit which he sometimes put on for Sundays, or what they believed to be Sundays, were worn out. On their feet, too, were skin mocassins which they made themselves. Andrew's curling hair was long and hung down upon his shoulders; as it protected his neck from the cold winds he left it thus. Now, too, he had a really fine beard which also curled. Finally, his sealskin robe was stained with the work upon which he was engaged and his hands were red with fish's blood. For the rest he was a splendid-looking man, tall, handsome and much broader and bigger than he used to be.

Mary also was clothed in skins down which flowed her glorious hair, a young matron of startling beauty who moved with the grace of a deer; and the child, as has been said, was lovely, with dark eyes like to those of her father, and her mother's milk-white skin.

Three people were coming towards them--the others had stopped with the boat--a young officer whose eyes were nearly starting out of his head, a person in civilian dress who appeared to be a manservant, and the lady. Even at a little distance Andrew knew her at once; it was Clara, richly clothed in furs and, so far as he could see, not in the slightest degree changed from what she was when he had last seen her on board the /Neptune/. The advancing party halted at a distance of about five paces, whereon the young officer, suddenly recovering himself and becoming aware of a great opportunity, lifted a hand camera which he was carrying and snapped the three with the fire and the cave mouth for a background.

The click of the camera and perhaps the thought of the resulting picture in the English papers, seemed to sting Clara into action.

"Are you Andrew?" she asked. "There seems to be a resemblance----" and she paused.

"I was so christened," he replied, and also paused.

"And who is that woman?" she asked again.

"Her name is Mary."

"Mary! Mary what?"

"I do not know, nor does she. Like myself she is a castaway. She came to this island with a man who is dead."

"Oh!" exclaimed Clara, "that explains a great deal. And what is the name of the little girl?"

"Janet. If you are Clara, it is one that you will remember."

She winced at this, then replied:

"/If/ I am Clara? Have you any doubt upon the point?"

"Not much," he answered, "but you know that we all change; time tells upon us."

"Certainly it or something else has told upon you, Andrew. But--could we have a word apart? What we have to say to each other would scarcely interest this--young woman, even if she happens to understand English. I am sorry I cannot offer to shake hands with you," she added, "or to greet you in any way, since you seem to be all over blood."

"Yes, Clara, I have been cleaning fish. It is part of my daily round. You who eat the fish, may not be aware that they must first be cleaned."

"Then perhaps your cook can continue the operation for a little while. If necessary, the manservant will help her, although it is not his business."

Then they walked aside round the point of the rock, Mary watching them with wondering eyes. Janet tried to run after her father, but Mary caught her and drew her back.

"Now, Andrew," said Clara, when they were out of sight, "tell me the meaning of all this. What is that woman to you?"

"She is the mother of my child."

"I guessed as much and--let us clear the air at once. I am not straitlaced and I do not blame you in the least, especially as she seems to be a rather beautiful savage. But you will understand that this episode must end, which can be done without difficulty. The woman must go somewhere else, and as there was another man upon the island, it will be easy to account for the child who can be provided for in a suitable manner."

"I too want to clear the air, Clara," he replied. "What you call an episode is not going to come to an end, if I can help it. I love that lady who, amongst other things, saved my life, and we mean to spend the rest of our days together. Your claim upon me ended when you left me upon the sinking ship."

"I did not leave you, Andrew, until I was assured that you were lost, but perhaps I had better tell you exactly what happened," and she did, putting her own colouring upon that story and all the following events. She even mentioned in a fearless fashion what she knew must soon certainly reach his ears, that she was about to marry again when the news that he had escaped reached her.

"Thank you for telling me that," said Andrew, "for it makes matters easier. We can now discuss things on a business basis. But perhaps first you would like to hear briefly what happened to me."

Then he told his tale.

"It would all be very interesting in a novel," she said when he had finished, "but we have to do with the facts of real life, have we not, and wise people avoid scandals. You must remember, although in your present costume and after your recent experiences it may naturally be difficult to you, that you are Lord Atterton, and I may add, the Governor-General designate of Oceania, since the man who succeeded you

is resigning and I have the promise of the appointment for you, should you still survive."

"This is the only island of which I shall ever be Governor-General," replied Andrew with a little laugh. "Now, Clara, let us strike a bargain. I am dead, and I mean to remain dead."

"Then why on earth did you go tying tin plates to albatrosses?" she inquired with irritation.

"For the sake of the lady yonder, if you want to know. The position was growing difficult."

"So I gather--overwhelmingly difficult. By the way, that child is painfully like you, and some one else," she added with another little wince. "It would have been far better to face the inevitable at once, but you were always foolishly fond of half-measures, Andrew."

"At any rate I have conquered the weakness now, Clara. Go away and lead your own life and leave me to lead mine."

"It is impossible, Andrew. There are too many witnesses, the whole shipload of them, for these people have tongues in their heads, to say nothing of the camera which that donkey of a naval officer carries about with him. Look here, by all means let us make a bargain. The child is not years, but the other man's, as to the exact date of whose decease no inquiries need be made. You befriended the helpless people whom you found starving on an island, that is all. But subsequently the husband died. Well, we all go to England and the pretty savage vanishes--where to I shall not trouble myself to inquire, for, as I have said, I am not straitlaced. West House is large enough for both of us and if you care to keep on your rooms in Justice Street as well, that is no affair of mine," she added with emphasis.

"I think that Mary would soon die in Justice Street, and the child also. The change would be too drastic. Also the idea of leading a double life does not appeal to me."

"Am I to understand that it is your intention to stay in this God-forsaken place, Andrew?"

"Certainly. I like it better than London."

"You mean that you like your savage woman better than you do me? At any rate it is not complimentary of you to say so so plainly."

"I never said anything of the sort, but as politeness is in question it is not complimentary of you to call that lady a savage woman. Look here, Clara, since our child's death we have practically lived apart and I propose that we should continue to do so, especially now when I have another child. My fate does not seem to have disturbed you until

the matter got into the papers; indeed, you tell me that you were on the point of marrying again. This you can still do if you wish, since, as you know well, you can take your remedy against me."

For a while they looked at each other and, after her fashion, Clara coolly summed up the situation in her mind. Evidently Andrew was much altered. Hitherto she had always been able to get her own way with him, but now this seemed more difficult. Something, or some one, had brought about a change in him. However, she did not despair; perhaps in a day or two he would see matters differently.

"You are mad, Andrew," she said, "but I make allowances for you, because such a life as you have been leading during all these years does not tend to sanity. To-morrow, or soon, you may take another point of view, so let us drop this very unpleasant conversation for the present. It can always be resumed. Meanwhile, don't you think you had better wash your hands, that is if you do wash in this place? As I am here I shall take a little walk and study your interesting surroundings," and without waiting for an answer she went back to the caves.

Andrew, overcome with misery, stopped where he was, lost in thought and wondering what would be the end of it all. Then he looked at his stained hands, hardened with toil, and reflected that he would take Clara's advice and wash before he confronted that naval officer and the others. So he went to a certain sheltered spot on the shore of the bay and more to consume time than for any other reason, stripped himself, after all a simple process, and swam in the pool, after which he set to work to clean the spots off his sealskin robe, rubbing them with sand and seaweed.

Meanwhile Clara had reached the caves, where she found Mary still going about her tasks in a dazed way, the little girl Janet clinging to her robe, while the manservant studied the penguins and the young naval officer studied Mary with the most evident admiration. Clara went to Mary and said:

"Can you speak English?"

"Yes," answered Mary. "Where is Andrew? I must go to him."

"I think that he is washing and will be here presently. Can you give me some water to drink? I am thirsty."

"I have milk in the cave," said Mary, and went for it, followed by Clara, who was curious to see the place that was inhabited by this beautiful person clad in sealskins and a discoloured pearl necklace. Also she wished to study Mary, who, she noted at once, was no common woman; indeed, had she been so she knew well that Andrew would never have cared for her. Her whole bearing, to say nothing of that pearl necklace, told another tale.

Inside the cave Mary gave her goat's milk in a fine shell, while Clara, seated on a stone near the fire, looked about her curiously.

"May I talk with you a little?" she said presently in her most winning voice, "It seems best that we should understand each other."

Mary, standing before her, bowed her head.

"You are fond of my husband," Clara went on.

Again Mary bowed her head and answered:

"Yes. Does not this show it?" and she touched Janet.

Clara shrugged her shoulders, and went on, "I do not wish to be hard, but you know you are living with him in sin, do you not?"

"No," answered Mary, "my heart does not tell me that. My heart tells me that it is right to live with him. You left him to drown upon the ship, but I saved him when he was dying and God gave him to me."

"Let us leave God out of it and all the rest, too. Do you know that you are ruining him?"

"Ruining. What is that?"

"This. Although he may never have told you so, he is a great man. His name is Lord Atterton. He is very wealthy, that is to say he commands large fortunes. Also he is, or would be, the Governor, I mean the head officer under the Crown, of an important part of the British Empire. He was going out to take up that office when he was wrecked, and it is now waiting for him again. Well, in England we are what is called moral people, that is to say there must be no open talk about any man living with a woman to whom he has not been married in church. If there is such talk, then he is ruined. I mean that no one would speak to him, and that he can hold no public office. He is finished. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, I think that I understand. You mean that if Andrew and I and Janet go on living together, then people will spit at him, and he will be what you call ruined."

"Yes, I mean that. You must make him separate from you, though perhaps," Clara added, watching her, "you might sometimes see him afterwards."

"Separate--that is leave me, is it not? Well, Andrew, he will never do that. You see, there is this strange thing, that he love this poor wild Mary. Yes, I who lose everything have this that he love me to-day, to-morrow, always," here her breast heaved and her eyes

flashed, "that he love me for ever and ever, much while I live and more when I dead, that he love me as he never love anything else, or any other woman, not even one called Rose, except perhaps a little Janet who is gone and a little Janet here who is part of me."

"I dare say all this may or may not be true," began Clara, with a chilly smile, but waving her hand imperiously, Mary stopped her.

"There is only one bigger thing than Andrew's love for Mary, and that is Mary's love for Andrew. She love him so well that never, never will she ruin him, she who can wait wherever she go, till he come to find her, which will not be very long."

Now Clara looked at Mary and Mary looked at Clara, who of a sudden understood.

This woman means to kill herself, she reflected. Shall I stop it? No, what affair is it of mine? She must form her own judgment on such a matter. I am not responsible, and if she does vanish it will simplify things. Also I dare say she is merely acting.

Such were the thoughts that flashed through Clara's brain, but she only said with a tired sigh:

"Well, I suppose that this sad trouble will settle itself somehow. I hope I have said nothing to pain you, but believe me, I can quite understand your position and indeed am very sorry for you. Such things happen to ignorant girls when they come in contact with men who are not too scrupulous. I grieve that my husband should have wronged you and I wish to make you any amends in my power, but still you must remember that he /is/ my husband, not yours, and that he has wronged me more than he has wronged you."

Then for the first time Mary grew angry.

"What that you say?" she asked. "Andrew do me wrong? Never, never. He run away from me, I--I go find him and bring him back. If any wrong, I do it, and if any sin, I pay. What more, I sorrier for you than you for me, since he mine, mine, not yours; mine for ever and ever. But what that matter to you who have no heart, nothing but bone and flesh with stain on it" (Clara rouged), "and fine things such as I never see on flesh. Now we talk no more together, but you think on what I say always when alive and when dead," and sweeping the child to her breast with a kind of royal gesture, she went from the cave, whence presently Clara followed her with such dignity as she might.

Outside they found the officer who had been talking to Andrew and telling him some of the news of the world in which he seemed to take no more than a polite interest.

"Lady Atterton," said the officer, "it is time that we went back to

the ship, as it will be dark in half an hour and these waters are treacherous for a rowing boat. Do--do--this lady and gentleman and the child accompany us?"

"Really I cannot say," she answered with a shrug, "they must tell you themselves."

The officer looked at Andrew who exclaimed:

"No, we stay here."

"Of course," said Clara, "you have much to see to, things to pack up, I dare say; and you could scarcely appear in that costume, could you? To-morrow morning I will come back and bring you some clothes, also what I can collect for Mrs.--I am sorry, I forget the name--and her child. Come, let us go, I am afraid of the sea in an open boat when it is dark."

"Perhaps you would like to stop here for the night," said the officer doubtfully.

"No, no. I have no sleeping things and I detest caves and raw fish. Good night, Andrew, mind that you have everything ready by the morning. Good-night, Mrs.--Mrs. Smith. Good night, little one," and without waiting for any answer she led the way towards the boat.

"Well, they are gone at last," said Andrew as the oars began to splash in the water.

"Yes," answered Mary, "but they will come back. Only if they are wise they will do so early, since to-morrow there will be a great gale. Look at that cloud over the other island, it only comes before a great wind following on a still night in spring."

## CHAPTER XXIV

## WHAT THE GALE GAVE

"What are we going to do?" said Andrew presently in rather a hopeless voice. "As you say, they will be back to-morrow and if we refuse to leave they may declare that we are mad and take us by force. To hide is useless, since they would hunt the island for us."

"In the Bible it is said, Andrew, that its evil is enough for the day," she answered, looking him in the face with brave eyes; "also that the morrow must look after itself. To-night we are going to be happier than we ever were before, and to-morrow will look after itself. That man who was with your wife has left a basket behind; he said that in it were things you might like to eat and drink. Let us

see them."

So they opened the basket. It contained two bottles of champagne, also some bread, tinned meats, sardines and packets of tea and sugar. Andrew explained the use of these comestibles to Mary; it relieved his mind to talk of such matters, and he proceeded to make her some tea which she had never tasted, at any rate since she was a tiny child. Mary did not like it much, or perhaps she would not drink anything that seemed to be a gift from Clara, though as a matter of fact it was nothing of the sort; the food and drink had been brought by the manservant on his own account in case they should have to picnic on the island, for he was a well-trained and provident person. At any rate, she just touched it with her lips to please Andrew, then put it aside and drank water. Janet, however, ate a lump of sugar with glee and cried when at last she was refused any more.

Andrew, too, opened one of the bottles of champagne and drank most of it with their meal. He had never cared much for wine, but on this night of trouble he seemed to need its stimulus and was thankful that it was there. After so long an abstinence from any sort of alcoholic drink, the champagne made him talkative. He spoke of the great happiness which they had enjoyed together and which he proposed they should continue to enjoy. He unfolded to Mary a scheme which he had conceived.

"If they take us to England," he said, "or anywhere else, we are free people and they cannot keep us there. We will go away to the backwoods of Canada which are beautiful, for I have heard all about them, and there we will build a house far from anyone in some lovely place, and live our lives. You will like the climate, too, since it is cold in winter as it is here, only brighter and much less stormy."

Then he went on to tell her all he knew about Canada, while she listened attentively and said that it seemed to be a very nice place indeed. After this once more he began to talk of their love and to explain to her his views upon the eternity of all true love in a way that he rarely spoke. Now she hearkened with real and vivid interest, drinking in every word.

"Do you think, Andrew," she asked, "that when those who have loved each other, oh! with all their hearts full, are dead, they will still go on loving each other somewhere in the stars, even if they have been sinners?"

"Yes, I do think so, dear, since love is the mightiest thing in the universe and as I believe the only true thing that has life. It cannot die, or if it dies, then all dies and there is nothing left but darkness."

"I am glad," she said, "for so I believe also."

After this he grew sleepy, for the champagne took effect on him and he had gone through much that day. So they went to bed and soon he was lost in slumber. When she saw that he was fast, Mary unlocked her arms from about him and slipped from the bed, stepping over the child that lay on its pile of skins alongside. Then going to the recess near the entrance of the cave where the second fire burned, she lit a lamp and wrote a letter on some slates which she had made ready. This letter gave her a great deal of trouble and took her several hours, for twice or thrice she put aside those slates which she had written and re-wrote it on fresh ones. At last it was finished, and at the end of it there fell a great tear by way of a full stop. Now she crept up the cave again and finding that Andrew was still sleeping very soundly, placed the slates upon his bed where she knew he must see them when he awoke, and kneeling down, prayed awhile. After this she kissed first him and then the child very gently. Then she unfastened the pearl necklace she always wore and laid it upon Janet's bed. This done she held out her hands in blessing over them both, and fled from the cave weeping bitterly.

It was very dark, for there was no moon and though the night was still, all the stars were clouded over. So dark was it indeed that in spite of knowing every rock of the place, soon Mary was obliged to sit down and wait for the coming of the light. There she sat thinking and sobbing softly, for in this darkness her courage left her, and oh! what lay before her was awful.

"For his sake!" she kept murmuring to herself. "For his sake, I must, I must. Never shall that woman say that I ruined him and brought shame upon his head. And if I do not leave him he will never leave me."

At length the dawn came, a strange and ominous dawn. The sun did not show in the east, yet a red light glowed throughout the sky. As yet there was no wind, still the air seemed to be full of unnatural sounds. Moreover, as she knew long before she reached its shore, the Race between the islands was running with unusual violence, the result, perhaps, of disturbances further south which pressed the weight of water before them as a herald of their coming.

Now Mary was on the shore and that which was to be done must be done quickly. Once more she knelt down and prayed, but all she could remember was the Lord's Prayer and much in the same broken language that Andrew had heard her use when first his eyes fell upon her. Twice or thrice she repeated it, dwelling upon the words, "Forgive us our trespasses."

Then she rose, threw off her sealskin robe so that she was only clad in the short skirt about her middle, and waded out into the deep water.

For this was her terrible object--to swim to the heart of the Race, and there die fighting against the furious tide, for so she thought

the end would come more easily.

Now the sky was light above, for suddenly the wind had begun to blow in fierce gusts that tore up from the south, but as yet the murk lay on the face of the water, since these gusts seemed to fly high in an abnormal fashion. So deep was that murk that she could not see the ship anchored on the edge of the Race, half a mile or more to the south of her, and still less a boat putting off rapidly from its side. As she reached the deep water, of a sudden the gale began to blow in earnest, driving waves in front of it which foamed and curved as they met the rush of the Race tearing from north to south.

Andrew slept till the first light that morning, and then it was the child who awakened him, saying:

"Where Mummy? Where Mummy? Janet want Mummy give her milk."

"Outside, dearie, I expect," he said sleepily. "Go and look for her." Then as he moved in the bed the pieces of slate rattled together, and by the light that crept up the cave he saw them. Taking them up he perceived that they were written on in Mary's large and rather childish hand. He leapt from the bed, threw on his thick sealskin robe and drew his skin buskins on to his feet. Then he ran to the mouth of the cave where there was more light, and read the writing. It ran:

"Andrew, dearest Andrew,

"Your wife has told me that if we go on living together it will bring you, who are a great lord, to shame and ruin. But while we both live it must be together, since nothing could keep us apart. Therefore, that you may be saved I must die. This, I know, will shock and grieve your heart, but I am sure it is best for both of us, since if I hid away from you I should still die, if more slowly. Our darling I know that you will care for, and you need not tell her that you are her father. Give to her the necklace that I always wore, and let her also always wear it. If I have done wrong, I hope that God in heaven, Who made us men and women as we are, will forgive me. If I go on living anywhere outside the world and can do so, I will be near you till you die, and then I will be with you always, for like you I believe that nothing can keep those who love each other apart, and I know that you will always go on loving me. And now I go to swim into the Race and make an end, and you can say that I have fallen by accident into the sea, and go on to the great ship and sail to England, or to rule the country of which your wife spoke to me. But you will often think of our life upon the island, will you not? Also, you will care for and love our little Janet who will grow into a beautiful woman of whom you need not be ashamed, and who will soon

forget all about her poor mother. Good-bye, dearest Andrew. You will never find anyone to love you better than this wild Mary who, you see, never loved anyone else except Old Tom, whom she will see presently, and our child, though both of them in another way. I will try to die bravely, swimming, as a wild woman should.

"I wish to tell you now that when first we met I knew you at once, since often I had looked at your face in the water in which I used to see things, also in dreams. So although I did not know it, I loved you, oh! much, much, long before you loved me.

"Your Mary."

Andrew finished this terrible epistle and put it down. Then, choking the horror in his heart, he began to think swiftly as a man does in an emergency.

"Baby," he said to Janet, for so he still called her, "Dad go to find Mum. There Baby's milk, she sit here by fire and drink it and not move. If Baby move, fire go out. She promise?"

"Yes, Dad, Baby talk to big penguin and pussy. Daddy come back soon."

He nodded, walked till he passed a rock which hid him, and then ran as he never ran before. In writing of the Race, Mary had given him a clue, since he knew that there was but one spot near by whence she could swim into it, and for that he headed. What passed through his tortured heart as he ran cannot be told, since it is beyond the power of language to describe. It was an agony unutterable. He feared that he must be too late, and if so, what then? To swim out after her into the Race and find her dead if not living, the divine creature who was sacrificing herself for him--that seemed the only way. But then there was the child. Well, they would come from the ship and discover her and in common mercy she would be looked after. And yet--oh! God help him! he knew not what to do. No hell could have torments equal to those that he suffered.

He became aware that a great gale had risen all at once, as though at the waving of a magician's wand. It blew from the south-east right into his face and was so fierce that once or twice it almost stopped him in his stride. In great leaps he reached the shore at the point he sought, certain rocks which stretched out into the bay, lying between low cliffs. He was right in his guess, for there on a stone lay Mary's skin robe.

He looked about him for one short moment. Yonder was the cruiser. She was blowing her steam-whistle as though signalling, and appeared to be getting up her anchors, perhaps because she feared that the gale would drive her ashore. Nor was this all, for on the sea was a boat; he could see it from time to time as the rising waves tossed it aloft.

Apparently it headed for the beach. No, it turned, or tried to turn, and a man stood up in it, waving his arms and pointing. Something had happened on that boat, but what it was he could not see because of the spume of the waves and the flying spindrift.

Oh Heaven! it was overturned, the seas had caught it broadside on and it had overturned. Men were climbing on to its bottom, and it drove in shore before the gale.

A ray of red light which appeared between the torn clouds caught the crest of a great sea, and on it he saw something that glinted as did nothing else but Mary's hair. Three hundred yards away or more that hair glinted. He rushed into the water and began to swim. Again a great wave far away and on it the glinting hair, and near it another form tossed up suddenly. The two seemed to come together and grow confused. From time to time he saw them both as the seas threw them up. Then he saw only one swimming shoreward with the gale and the waves behind, but on that one was the glint as of Mary's hair.

He swam outwards and onwards, breasting the waters as best he might. Again a great wave, and not thirty yards away from him the glinting hair, and underneath it seen in the clear water another shape. Now through a thin veil of water he saw the face beneath the hair. It was that of Mary, white and strained and set, swimming doggedly shorewards with one hand--the other seemed to be gripping that which was beneath the water.

She saw him also and through the scream of the gale that gathered moment by moment, he heard her voice cry faintly, "Help her!"

Oh, thank God! it was Mary, and Mary alive. Now if she drowned, he could drown with her!

With frantic efforts he drove himself forward against the sea and wind, and at last amidst the crest foam of a great comber they met. Then he saw that Mary had her left hand twisted in the hair of another woman, a senseless woman whom she was dragging with her through the water. She was almost spent, but still she did not leave go, but struggled forward with slow strokes. Their bodies knocked together. He ranged himself alongside of her and with his left hand gripped the arm of the senseless woman. As he did so, she turned over and he saw her face. It was that of Clara still clad in her heavy furs.

Had it not been that the seas and the ever-growing gale were behind them, driving them onwards, never could they have come to the shore, but as it was, more dead than living, they reached it at last and staggered through the shallowing water, dragging Clara between them and clinging to rocks to save themselves from being swept seawards again by the backwash of the waves. They reached the little spit of sand where was the stone on which lay Andrew's skin robe with Mary's. They pulled Clara from the water and then fell in a heap exhausted,

spitting foam from their mouths. Presently Andrew raised himself upon his knees and looked at Clara as a doctor does. She was still and white with her mouth and eyes open.

"I think that she is dead," he gasped.

"I tried to save her," said Mary in a kind of choking wail. "I went to lose myself and found /her/, washed from the boat."

Then Mary rose also and made as though she would re-enter the sea. With a spring he was upon her, flinging his arms about her body.

"No!" he cried. "If you move I will stun you."

Now muttering, "I did my best, I did my best to save her!" she sank down in a heap upon the sand.

"Swear that you will not," and he pointed to the sea. "Swear by God Who has given you back your life."

"I swear," said Mary, and her head fell upon her breast.

Then he brought the robe into which she slowly thrust her arms, while he also clothed himself, for the wind was bitter. They tottered to Clara, and he did all that his skill taught him should be done to those who seemed to be dead from drowning, at least all that he could there, pressing the water from her lungs.

Still she did not stir.

"We must get her to the caves," said Andrew. "Help me if you can."

So with frightful efforts, between them they dragged and carried her over that rocky road, and at last laid her down by the fire. Here Andrew renewed his attempts to revive her. For two hours he worked although the blood from a cut in his head almost blinded him, but without avail.

Clara's tale was told. She was dead. Towards the end of the time they saw men standing before them, the survivors of the boat's crew, for only one had been drowned; the rest had clung to it and, being a lifeboat, it did not sink, but at last was washed ashore. They helped as best they could, and from them Andrew learned the story.

During the night the glass had begun to fall so rapidly that before dawn the captain had said that if Lady Atterton wished to fetch the people from the island, she must do so as soon as it was light, as he feared a gale was coming up which would force him to put out to the open sea within a few hours. Clara consented unwillingly, as Andrew guessed, because she knew that no one except herself could persuade him to leave that place, and that if the sailors were told to bring

him by force, a course of which perhaps she thought, that he would run away and hide with the woman and child, or fight them. So she went, thinking doubtless, as the captain did, that there was plenty of time before the gale came. As it happened this rose with startling suddenness when the boat, with Clara on board, had only been a few minutes in the water. With her siren the ship signalled to them to return. As they were putting about Clara grew frightened and stood up in the boat. At this moment a big sea struck them and washed her overboard. Again they turned and tried to follow her, with the result that the boat was overset. Soon afterwards they saw that a woman was trying to save her. Then they saw no more, for they and the boat were blown far away from the pair and great seas rose between them. That was all, except that in their confusion and emergency they believed that Mary had swum out to rescue Clara and for no other purpose. Nor did anyone undeceive them.

To these men Andrew gave what food and clothes he had, and sent them to live in the other cave until such time as the cruiser, that had beat out to sea to escape shipwreck, should return again.

The gale was hellish, though fortunately it was but beginning when Mary in her holy madness had met it in the Race. Even so she must have perished, weighted as she was with the senseless Clara, had not her native strength and daily practice for many years enabled her to swim like a seal and to dive through breaking waves. It blew and blew with hurricane strength, turning over great rocks and, for the first time since it had been lit, carrying away the fire in front of the cave, to the last glowing ash.

There in the shelter of that cave and with their child, the two lay exhausted, listening to its raging. At length, when the wind abated somewhat, Andrew went out and with the assistance of the seamen dug a deep grave at that very spot round the protecting corner of rock where he and his wife had talked together on the previous day. In this grave he laid Clara, and there for the third time read the Burial Service on Marion Isle, as now he learned that it was called.

Then Andrew returned to the cave and spoke alone with Mary, for night was falling, and the child had been put to sleep.

"I suppose that we are both sinners," he said, "but if so, I hope and believe that the agony which we have passed has paid the price. When you tried to take your life this morning, Mary, you did a thing as wrong as it was noble, not understanding that if you had succeeded, the penalty would have fallen on me for whose sake it was done, as well as on you, since then I believe that I also should have died, and our darling would have been orphaned. Even as it is I feel as though what I have endured and what I know you have suffered, had made an old man of me. Well, whatever Power rules us intervened and, as it

chanced, in attempting to save the life of another, you preserved your own and mine, and therefore our days are left to us to spend together in uprightness and atonement, for which, let us thank God, as I think God for His gift to me in you."

She listened with bowed head, then crept to him and kissed him.

"All Mary did," she whispered in her old childish talk, "Mary did because she loves Andrew, and God Who is good knew that and saved Mary in the Race--though," she added doubtfully, "God took Clara."

Now suddenly she dropped upon her knees and began to repeat the Lord's Prayer, just as she said it when first he saw her, a lonely waif upon the desert isle; just as she said it before for love's sake she committed her body to the deep and her soul to its Creator.

"Forgive us our trespasses," she murmured, "as we forgive them that trespass against us, and keep us from the evil, Amen."

Then once more Mary kissed him and he kissed her, after which she took the pearl necklace and tied it about Janet's neck. Herself she would wear it no more, because of all the agony of which it reminded her.