ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

KENELM CHILLINGLY — COMPLETE

Эдвард Джордж Бульвер-Литтон
Kenelm Chillingly — Complete

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=35008921
Kenelm Chillingly — Complete:

Содержание

BOOK I 5
CHAPTER I 5
CHAPTER II 10
CHAPTER III 18
CHAPTER IV 21
CHAPTER V 27
CHAPTER VI 30
CHAPTER VII 32
CHAPTER VIII 36
CHAPTER IX 46
CHAPTER X 54
CHAPTER XI 57
CHAPTER XII 61
CHAPTER XIII 66
CHAPTER XIV 74
CHAPTER XV 83
BOOK II 89
CHAPTER I 89
CHAPTER II 90
CHAPTER III 99
CHAPTER IV 114
CHAPTER V 118
CHAPTER VI 126

CHAPTER VII 130
CHAPTER VIII 140
CHAPTER IX 149
CHAPTER X 161
CHAPTER XI 164
CHAPTER XII 169
CHAPTER XIII 183
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. 187

Edward Bulwer-Lytton
Kenelm Chillingly
— Complete

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

SIR PETER CHILLINGLY, of Exmundham, Baronet, F.R.S. and F.A.S., was the representative of an ancient family, and a landed proprietor of some importance. He had married young; not from any ardent inclination for the connubial state, but in compliance with the request of his parents. They took the pains to select his bride; and if they might have chosen better, they might have chosen worse, which is more than can be said for many men who choose wives for themselves. Miss Caroline Brotherton was in all respects a suitable connection. She had a pretty fortune, which was of much use in buying a couple of farms, long desiderated by the Chillinglys as necessary for the rounding of their property into a ring-fence. She was highly connected, and brought into the county that experience of fashionable life acquired by a young lady who has attended a

course of balls for three seasons, and gone out in matrimonial honours, with credit to herself and her chaperon. She was handsome enough to satisfy a husband's pride, but not so handsome as to keep perpetually on the *qui vive* a husband's jealousy. She was considered highly accomplished; that is, she played upon the pianoforte so that any musician would say she "was very well taught;" but no musician would go out of his way to hear her a second time. She painted in water-colours —well enough to amuse herself. She knew French and Italian with an elegance so lady-like that, without having read more than selected extracts from authors in those languages, she spoke them both with an accent more correct than we have any reason to attribute to Rousseau or Ariosto. What else a young lady may acquire in order to be styled highly accomplished I do not pretend to know; but I am sure that the young lady in question fulfilled that requirement in the opinion of the best masters. It was not only an eligible match for Sir Peter Chillingly,—it was a brilliant match. It was also a very unexceptionable match for Miss Caroline Brotherton. This excellent couple got on together as most excellent couples do. A short time after marriage, Sir Peter, by the death of his parents—who, having married their heir, had nothing left in life worth the trouble of living for—succeeded to the hereditary estates; he lived for nine months of the year at Exmundham, going to town for the other three months. Lady Chillingly and himself were both very glad to go to town, being bored at Exmundham; and very glad to go back to Exmundham,

being bored in town. With one exception it was an exceedingly happy marriage, as marriages go. Lady Chillingly had her way in small things; Sir Peter his way in great. Small things happen every day; great things once in three years. Once in three years Lady Chillingly gave way to Sir Peter; households so managed go on regularly. The exception to their connubial happiness was, after all, but of a negative description. Their affection was such that they sighed for a pledge of it; fourteen years had he and Lady Chillingly remained unvisited by the little stranger.

Now, in default of male issue, Sir Peter's estates passed to a distant cousin as heir-at-law; and during the last four years this heir-at-law had evinced his belief that practically speaking he was already heir-apparent; and (though Sir Peter was a much younger man than himself, and as healthy as any man well can be) had made his expectations of a speedy succession unpleasantly conspicuous. He had refused his consent to a small exchange of lands with a neighbouring squire, by which Sir Peter would have obtained some good arable land, for an outlying unprofitable wood that produced nothing but fagots and rabbits, with the blunt declaration that he, the heir-at-law, was fond of rabbit-shooting, and that the wood would be convenient to him next season if he came into the property by that time, which he very possibly might. He disputed Sir Peter's right to make his customary fall of timber, and had even threatened him with a bill in Chancery on that subject. In short, this heir-at-law was exactly one of those persons to spite whom a landed proprietor would, if single, marry

at the age of eighty in the hope of a family.

Nor was it only on account of his very natural wish to frustrate the expectations of this unamiable relation that Sir Peter Chillingly lamented the absence of the little stranger. Although belonging to that class of country gentlemen to whom certain political reasoners deny the intelligence vouchsafed to other members of the community, Sir Peter was not without a considerable degree of book-learning and a great taste for speculative philosophy. He sighed for a legitimate inheritor to the stores of his erudition, and, being a very benevolent man, for a more active and useful dispenser of those benefits to the human race which philosophers confer by striking hard against each other; just as, how full soever of sparks a flint may be, they might lurk concealed in the flint till doomsday, if the flint were not hit by the steel. Sir Peter, in short, longed for a son amply endowed with the combative quality, in which he himself was deficient, but which is the first essential to all seekers after renown, and especially to benevolent philosophers.

Under these circumstances one may well conceive the joy that filled the household of Exmundham and extended to all the tenantry on that venerable estate, by whom the present possessor was much beloved and the prospect of an heir-at-law with a special eye to the preservation of rabbits much detested, when the medical attendant of the Chillinglys declared that 'her ladyship was in an interesting way;' and to what height that joy culminated when, in due course of time, a male baby was safely enthroned in

his cradle. To that cradle Sir Peter was summoned. He entered the room with a lively bound and a radiant countenance: he quitted it with a musing step and an overclouded brow.

Yet the baby was no monster. It did not come into the world with two heads, as some babies are said to have done; it was formed as babies are in general; was on the whole a thriving baby, a fine baby. Nevertheless, its aspect awed the father as already it had awed the nurse. The creature looked so unutterably solemn. It fixed its eyes upon Sir Peter with a melancholy reproachful stare; its lips were compressed and drawn downward as if discontentedly meditating its future destinies. The nurse declared in a frightened whisper that it had uttered no cry on facing the light. It had taken possession of its cradle in all the dignity of silent sorrow. A more saddened and a more thoughtful countenance a human being could not exhibit if he were leaving the world instead of entering it.

"Hem!" said Sir Peter to himself on regaining the solitude of his library; "a philosopher who contributes a new inhabitant to this vale of tears takes upon himself very anxious responsibilities —"

At that moment the joy-bells rang out from the neighbouring church tower, the summer sun shone into the windows, the bees hummed among the flowers on the lawn. Sir Peter roused himself and looked forth, "After all," said he, cheerily, "the vale of tears is not without a smile."

CHAPTER II

A FAMILY council was held at Exmundham Hall to deliberate on the name by which this remarkable infant should be admitted into the Christian community. The junior branches of that ancient house consisted, first, of the obnoxious heir-at-law—a Scotch branch named Chillingly Gordon. He was the widowed father of one son, now of the age of three, and happily unconscious of the injury inflicted on his future prospects by the advent of the new-born, which could not be truthfully said of his Caledonian father. Mr. Chillingly Gordon was one of those men who get on in the world with out our being able to discover why. His parents died in his infancy and left him nothing; but the family interest procured him an admission into the Charterhouse School, at which illustrious academy he obtained no remarkable distinction. Nevertheless, as soon as he left it the State took him under its special care, and appointed him to a clerkship in a public office. From that moment he continued to get on in the world, and was now a Commissioner of Customs, with a salary of L1500 a year. As soon as he had been thus enabled to maintain a wife, he selected a wife who assisted to maintain himself. She was an Irish peer's widow, with a jointure of L2000 a year.

A few months after his marriage, Chillingly Gordon effected insurances on his wife's life, so as to secure himself an annuity of L1000 a year in case of her decease. As she appeared to be a

fine healthy woman, some years younger than her husband, the deduction from his income effected by the annual payments for the insurance seemed an over-sacrifice of present enjoyment to future contingencies. The result bore witness to his reputation for sagacity, as the lady died in the second year of their wedding, a few months after the birth of her only child, and of a heart-disease which had been latent to the doctors, but which, no doubt, Gordon had affectionately discovered before he had insured a life too valuable not to need some compensation for its loss. He was now, then, in the possession of L2500 a year, and was therefore very well off, in the pecuniary sense of the phrase. He had, moreover, acquired a reputation which gave him a social rank beyond that accorded to him by a discerning State. He was considered a man of solid judgment, and his opinion upon all matters, private and public, carried weight. The opinion itself, critically examined, was not worth much, but the way he announced it was imposing. Mr. Fox said that 'No one ever was so wise as Lord Thurlow looked.' Lord Thurlow could not have looked wiser than Mr. Chillingly Gordon. He had a square jaw and large red bushy eyebrows, which he lowered down with great effect when he delivered judgment. He had another advantage for acquiring grave reputation. He was a very unpleasant man. He could be rude if you contradicted him; and as few persons wish to provoke rudeness, so he was seldom contradicted.

Mr. Chillingly Mivers, another cadet of the house, was also distinguished, but in a different way. He was a bachelor, now

about the age of thirty-five. He was eminent for a supreme well-bred contempt for everybody and everything. He was the originator and chief proprietor of a public journal called "The Londoner," which had lately been set up on that principle of contempt, and we need not say, was exceedingly popular with those leading members of the community who admire nobody and believe in nothing. Mr. Chillingly Mivers was regarded by himself and by others as a man who might have achieved the highest success in any branch of literature, if he had deigned to exhibit his talents therein. But he did not so deign, and therefore he had full right to imply that, if he had written an epic, a drama, a novel, a history, a metaphysical treatise, Milton, Shakspeare, Cervantes, Hume, Berkeley would have been nowhere. He held greatly to the dignity of the anonymous; and even in the journal which he originated nobody could ever ascertain what he wrote. But, at all events, Mr. Chillingly Mivers was what Mr. Chillingly Gordon was not; namely, a very clever man, and by no means an unpleasant one in general society.

The Rev. John Stalworth Chillingly was a decided adherent to the creed of what is called "muscular Christianity," and a very fine specimen of it too. A tall stout man with broad shoulders, and that division of lower limb which intervenes between the knee and the ankle powerfully developed. He would have knocked down a deist as soon as looked at him. It is told by the Sieur de Joinville, in his Memoir of Louis, the sainted king, that an assembly of divines and theologians convened the Jews

of an Oriental city for the purpose of arguing with them on the truths of Christianity, and a certain knight, who was at that time crippled, and supporting himself on crutches, asked and obtained permission to be present at the debate. The Jews flocked to the summons, when a prelate, selecting a learned rabbi, mildly put to him the leading question whether he owned the divine conception of our Lord. "Certainly not," replied the rabbi; whereon the pious knight, shocked by such blasphemy, uplifted his crutch and felled the rabbi, and then flung himself among the other misbelievers, whom he soon dispersed in ignominious flight and in a very belaboured condition. The conduct of the knight was reported to the sainted king, with a request that it should be properly reprimanded; but the sainted king delivered himself of this wise judgment:—

"If a pious knight is a very learned clerk, and can meet in fair argument the doctrines of the misbeliever, by all means let him argue fairly; but if a pious knight is not a learned clerk, and the argument goes against him, then let the pious knight cut the discussion short by the edge of his good sword."

The Rev. John Stalworth Chillingly was of the same opinion as Saint Louis; otherwise, he was a mild and amiable man. He encouraged cricket and other manly sports among his rural parishioners. He was a skilful and bold rider, but he did not hunt; a convivial man—and took his bottle freely. But his tastes in literature were of a refined and peaceful character, contrasting therein the tendencies some might have expected from his

muscular development of Christianity. He was a great reader of poetry, but he disliked Scott and Byron, whom he considered flashy and noisy; he maintained that Pope was only a versifier, and that the greatest poet in the language was Wordsworth; he did not care much for the ancient classics; he refused all merit to the French poets; he knew nothing of the Italian, but he dabbled in German, and was inclined to bore one about the "Hermann and Dorothea" of Goethe. He was married to a homely little wife, who revered him in silence, and thought there would be no schism in the Church if he were in his right place as Archbishop of Canterbury; in this opinion he entirely agreed with his wife.

Besides these three male specimens of the Chillingly race, the fairer sex was represented, in the absence of her ladyship, who still kept her room, by three female Chillinglys, sisters of Sir Peter, and all three spinsters. Perhaps one reason why they had remained single was, that externally they were so like each other that a suitor must have been puzzled which to choose, and may have been afraid that if he did choose one, he should be caught next day kissing another one in mistake. They were all tall, all thin, with long throats—and beneath the throats a fine development of bone. They had all pale hair, pale eyelids, pale eyes, and pale complexions. They all dressed exactly alike, and their favourite colour was a vivid green: they were so dressed on this occasion.

As there was such similitude in their persons, so, to an ordinary observer, they were exactly the same in character

and mind. Very well behaved, with proper notions of female decorum: very distant and reserved in manner to strangers; very affectionate to each other and their relations or favourites; very good to the poor, whom they looked upon as a different order of creation, and treated with that sort of benevolence which humane people bestow upon dumb animals. Their minds had been nourished on the same books—what one read the others had read. The books were mainly divided into two classes,—novels, and what they called "good books." They had a habit of taking a specimen of each alternately; one day a novel, then a good book, then a novel again, and so on. Thus if the imagination was overwarmed on Monday, on Tuesday it was cooled down to a proper temperature; and if frost-bitten on Tuesday, it took a tepid bath on Wednesday. The novels they chose were indeed rarely of a nature to raise the intellectual thermometer into blood heat: the heroes and heroines were models of correct conduct. Mr. James's novels were then in vogue, and they united in saying that those "were novels a father might allow his daughters to read." But though an ordinary observer might have failed to recognize any distinction between these three ladies, and, finding them habitually dressed in green, would have said they were as much alike as one pea is to another, they had their idiosyncratic differences, when duly examined. Miss Margaret, the eldest, was the commanding one of the three; it was she who regulated their household (they all lived together), kept the joint purse, and decided every doubtful point that arose: whether they should

or should not ask Mrs. So-and-so to tea; whether Mary should or should not be discharged; whether or not they should go to Broadstairs or to Sandgate for the month of October. In fact, Miss Margaret was the WILL of the body corporate.

Miss Sibyl was of milder nature and more melancholy temperament; she had a poetic turn of mind, and occasionally wrote verses. Some of these had been printed on satin paper, and sold for objects of beneficence at charity bazaars. The county newspapers said that the verses "were characterized by all the elegance of a cultured and feminine mind." The other two sisters agreed that Sibyl was the genius of the household, but, like all geniuses, not sufficiently practical for the world. Miss Sarah Chillingly, the youngest of the three, and now just in her forty-fourth year, was looked upon by the others as "a dear thing, inclined to be naughty, but such a darling that nobody could have the heart to scold her." Miss Margaret said "she was a giddy creature." Miss Sibyl wrote a poem on her, entitled, "Warning to a young Lady against the Pleasures of the World." They all called her Sally; the other two sisters had no diminutive synonyms. Sally is a name indicative of fastness. But this Sally would not have been thought fast in another household, and she was now little likely to sally out of the one she belonged to. These sisters, who were all many years older than Sir Peter, lived in a handsome, old-fashioned, red-brick house, with a large garden at the back, in the principal street of the capital of their native county. They had each L10,000 for portion; and if he could have married

all three, the heir-at-law would have married them, and settled the aggregate L30,000 on himself. But we have not yet come to recognize Mormonism as legal, though if our social progress continues to slide in the same grooves as at present, Heaven only knows what triumphs over the prejudices of our ancestors may not be achieved by the wisdom of our descendants!

CHAPTER III

SIR PETER stood on his hearthstone, surveyed the guests seated in semicircle, and said: "Friends,—in Parliament, before anything affecting the fate of a Bill is discussed, it is, I believe, necessary to introduce the Bill." He paused a moment, rang the bell, and said to the servant who entered, "Tell Nurse to bring in the Baby."

Mr. CHILLINGLY GORDON.—"I don't see the necessity for that, Sir Peter. We may take the existence of the Baby for granted."

Mr. MIVERS.—"It is an advantage to the reputation of Sir Peter's work to preserve the incognito. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico*."

THE REV. JOHN STALWORTH CHILLINGLY.—"I don't approve the cynical levity of such remarks. Of course we must all be anxious to see, in the earliest stage of being, the future representative of our name and race. Who would not wish to contemplate the source, however small, of the Tigris or the Nile! —"

MISS SALLY (tittering).—"He! he!"

MISS MARGARET.—"For shame, you giddy thing!"

The Baby enters in the nurse's arms. All rise and gather round the Baby with one exception,—Mr. Gordon, who has ceased to be heir-at-law.

The Baby returned the gaze of its relations with the most contemptuous indifference. Miss Sibyl was the first to pronounce an opinion on the Baby's attributes. Said she, in a solemn whisper, "What a heavenly mournful expression! it seems so grieved to have left the angels!"

THE REV. JOHN.—"That is prettily said, Cousin Sibyl; but the infant must pluck up its courage and fight its way among mortals with a good heart, if it wants to get back to the angels again. And I think it will; a fine child." He took it from the nurse, and moving it deliberately up and down, as if to weigh it, said cheerfully, "Monstrous heavy! by the time it is twenty it will be a match for a prize-fighter of fifteen stone!"

Therewith he strode to Gordon, who as if to show that he now considered himself wholly apart from all interest in the affairs of a family who had so ill-treated him in the birth of that Baby, had taken up the "Times" newspaper and concealed his countenance beneath the ample sheet. The Parson abruptly snatched away the "Times" with one hand, and, with the other substituting to the indignant eyes of the *ci-devant* heir-at-law the spectacle of the Baby, said, "Kiss it."

"Kiss it!" echoed Chillingly Gordon, pushing back his chair —"kiss it! pooh, sir, stand off! I never kissed my own baby: I shall not kiss another man's. Take the thing away, sir: it is ugly; it has black eyes."

Sir Peter, who was near-sighted, put on his spectacles and examined the face of the new-born. "True," said he, "it has black

eyes,—very extraordinary: portentous: the first Chillingly that ever had black eyes."

"Its mamma has black eyes," said Miss Margaret: "it takes after its mamma; it has not the fair beauty of the Chillinglys, but it is not ugly."

"Sweet infant!" sighed Sibyl; "and so good; does not cry."

"It has neither cried nor crowed since it was born," said the nurse; "bless its little heart."

She took the Baby from the Parson's arms, and smoothed back the frill of its cap, which had got ruffled.

"You may go now, Nurse," said Sir Peter.

CHAPTER IV

"I AGREE with Mr. Shandy," said Sir Peter, resuming his stand on the hearthstone, "that among the responsibilities of a parent the choice of the name which his child is to bear for life is one of the gravest. And this is especially so with those who belong to the order of baronets. In the case of a peer his Christian name, fused into his titular designation, disappears. In the case of a Mister, if his baptismal be cacophonous or provocative of ridicule, he need not ostentatiously parade it: he may drop it altogether on his visiting cards, and may be imprinted as Mr. Jones instead of Mr. Ebenezer Jones. In his signature, save where the forms of the law demand Ebenezer in full, he may only use an initial and be your obedient servant E. Jones, leaving it to be conjectured that E. stands for Edward or Ernest, —names inoffensive, and not suggestive of a Dissenting Chapel, like Ebenezer. If a man called Edward or Ernest be detected in some youthful indiscretion, there is no indelible stain on his moral character: but if an Ebenezer be so detected he is set down as a hypocrite; it produces that shock on the public mind which is felt when a professed saint is proved to be a bit of a sinner. But a baronet never can escape from his baptismal: it cannot lie *perdu*; it cannot shrink into an initial, it stands forth glaringly in the light of day; christen him Ebenezer, and he is Sir Ebenezer in full, with all its perilous consequences if he ever succumb to those

temptations to which even baronets are exposed. But, my friends, it is not only the effect that the sound of a name has upon others which is to be thoughtfully considered: the effect that his name produces on the man himself is perhaps still more important. Some names stimulate and encourage the owner; others deject and paralyze him: I am a melancholy instance of that truth. Peter has been for many generations, as you are aware, the baptismal to which the eldest-born of our family has been devoted. On the altar of that name I have been sacrificed. Never has there been a Sir Peter Chillingly who has, in any way, distinguished himself above his fellows. That name has been a dead weight on my intellectual energies. In the catalogue of illustrious Englishmen there is, I think, no immortal Sir Peter, except Sir Peter Teazle, and he only exists on the comic stage."

MISS SIBYL.—"Sir Peter Lely?"

SIR PETER CHILLINGLY.—"That painter was not an Englishman. He was born in Westphalia, famous for hams. I confine my remarks to the children of our native land. I am aware that in foreign countries the name is not an extinguisher to the genius of its owner. But why? In other countries its sound is modified. Pierre Corneille was a great man; but I put it to you whether, had he been an Englishman, he could have been the father of European tragedy as Peter Crow?"

MISS SIBYL.—"Impossible!"

MISS SALLY.—"He! he!"

MISS MARGARET.—"There is nothing to laugh at, you

giddy child!"

SIR PETER.—"My son shall not be petrified into Peter."

MR. CHILLINGLY GORDON.—"If a man is such a fool—and I don't say your son will not be a fool, Cousin Peter—as to be influenced by the sound of his own name, and you want the booby to turn the world topsy-turvy, you had better call him Julius Caesar or Hannibal or Attila or Charlemagne."

SIR PETER, (who excels mankind in imperturbability of temper).—"On the contrary, if you inflict upon a man the burden of one of those names, the glory of which he cannot reasonably expect to eclipse or even to equal, you crush him beneath the weight. If a poet were called John Milton or William Shakspeare, he could not dare to publish even a sonnet. No: the choice of a name lies between the two extremes of ludicrous insignificance and oppressive renown. For this reason I have ordered the family pedigree to be suspended on yonder wall. Let us examine it with care, and see whether, among the Chillinglys themselves or their alliances, we can discover a name that can be borne with becoming dignity by the destined head of our house—a name neither too light nor too heavy."

Sir Peter here led the way to the family tree—a goodly roll of parchment, with the arms of the family emblazoned at the top. Those arms were simple, as ancient heraldic coats are,—three fishes *argent* on a field *azure*; the crest a mermaid's head. All flocked to inspect the pedigree except Mr. Gordon, who resumed the "Times" newspaper.

"I never could quite make out what kind of fishes these are," said the Rev. John Stalworth. "They are certainly not pike which formed the emblematic blazon of the Hotofts, and are still grim enough to frighten future Shakspeares on the scutcheon of the Warwickshire Lucys."

"I believe they are tenches," said Mr. Mivers. "The tench is a fish that knows how to keep itself safe by a philosophical taste for an obscure existence in deep holes and slush."

SIR PETER.—"No, Mivers; the fishes are dace, a fish that, once introduced into any pond, never can be got out again. You may drag the water; you may let off the water; you may say, 'Those dace are extirpated,'—vain thought!—the dace reappear as before; and in this respect the arms are really emblematic of the family. All the disorders and revolutions that have occurred in England since the Heptarchy have left the Chillinglys the same race in the same place. Somehow or other the Norman Conquest did not despoil them; they held fiefs under Eudo Dapifer as peacefully as they had held them under King Harold; they took no part in the Crusades, nor the Wars of the Roses, nor the Civil Wars between Charles the First and the Parliament. As the dace sticks to the water and the water sticks by the dace, so the Chillinglys stuck to the land and the land stuck by the Chillinglys. Perhaps I am wrong to wish that the new Chillingly may be a little less like a dace."

"Oh!" cried Miss Margaret, who, mounted on a chair, had been inspecting the pedigree through an eye-glass, "I don't see a

fine Christian name from the beginning, except Oliver."

SIR PETER.—"That Chillingly was born in Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate, and named Oliver in compliment to him, as his father, born in the reign of James I., was christened James. The three fishes always swam with the stream. Oliver!—Oliver not a bad name, but significant of radical doctrines."

Mr. MIVERS.—"I don't think so. Oliver Cromwell made short work of radicals and their doctrines; but perhaps we can find a name less awful and revolutionary."

"I have it! I have it!" cried the Parson. "Here is a descent from Sir Kenelm Digby and Venetia Stanley. Sir Kenelm Digby! No finer specimen of muscular Christianity. He fought as well as he wrote; eccentric, it is true, but always a gentleman. Call the boy Kenelm!"

"A sweet name," said Miss Sibyl: "it breathes of romance."

"Sir Kenelm Chillingly! It sounds well,—imposing!" said Miss Margaret.

"And," remarked Mr. Mivers, "it has this advantage—that while it has sufficient association with honourable distinction to affect the mind of the namesake and rouse his emulation, it is not that of so stupendous a personage as to defy rivalry. Sir Kenelm Digby was certainly an accomplished and gallant gentleman; but what with his silly superstition about sympathetic powders, etc., any man nowadays might be clever in comparison without being a prodigy. Yes, let us decide on Kenelm."

Sir Peter meditated. "Certainly," said he, after a pause,

“certainly the name of Kenelm carries with it very crotchety associations; and I am afraid that Sir Kenelm Digby did not make a prudent choice in marriage. The fair Venetia was no better than she should be; and I should wish my heir not to be led away by beauty but wed a woman of respectable character and decorous conduct.”

Miss MARGARET.—“A British matron, of course!”

THREE SISTERS (in chorus).—“Of course! of course!”

“But,” resumed Sir Peter, “I am crotchety myself, and crotchets are innocent things enough; and as for marriage the Baby cannot marry to-morrow, so that we have ample time to consider that matter. Kenelm Digby was a man any family might be proud of; and, as you say, sister Margaret, Kenelm Chillingly does not sound amiss: Kenelm Chillingly it shall be!”

The Baby was accordingly christened Kenelm, after which ceremony its face grew longer than before.

CHAPTER V

BEFORE his relations dispersed, Sir Peter summoned Mr. Gordon into his library.

"Cousin," said he, kindly, "I do not blame you for the want of family affection, or even of humane interest, which you exhibit towards the New-born."

"Blame me, Cousin Peter! I should think not. I exhibit as much family affection and humane interest as could be expected from me,—circumstances considered."

"I own," said Sir Peter, with all his wonted mildness, "that after remaining childless for fourteen years of wedded life, the advent of this little stranger must have occasioned you a disagreeable surprise. But, after all, as I am many years younger than you, and in the course of nature shall outlive you, the loss is less to yourself than to your son, and upon that I wish to say a few words. You know too well the conditions on which I hold my estate not to be aware that I have not legally the power to saddle it with any bequest to your boy. The New-born succeeds to the fee-simple as last in tail. But I intend, from this moment, to lay by something every year for your son out of my income; and, fond as I am of London for a part of the year, I shall now give up my town-house. If I live to the years the Psalmist allots to man, I shall thus accumulate something handsome for your son, which may be taken in the way of compensation."

Mr. Gordon was by no means softened by this generous speech. However, he answered more politely than was his wont, "My son will be very much obliged to you, should he ever need your intended bequest." Pausing a moment, he added with a cheerful smile, "A large percentage of infants die before attaining the age of twenty-one."

"Nay, but I am told your son is an uncommonly fine healthy child."

"My son, Cousin Peter! I was not thinking of my son, but of yours. Yours has a big head. I should not wonder if he had water in it. I don't wish to alarm you, but he may go off any day, and in that case it is not likely that Lady Chillingly will condescend to replace him. So you will excuse me if I still keep a watchful eye on my rights; and, however painful to my feelings, I must still dispute your right to cut a stick of the field timber."

"That is nonsense, Gordon. I am tenant for life without impeachment of waste, and can cut down all timber not ornamental."

"I advise you not, Cousin Peter. I have told you before that I shall try the question at law, should you provoke it, amicably, of course. Rights are rights; and if I am driven to maintain mine, I trust that you are of a mind too liberal to allow your family affection for me and mine to be influenced by a decree of the Court of Chancery. But my fly is waiting. I must not miss the train."

"Well, good-by, Gordon. Shake hands."

“Shake hands!—of course, of course. By the by, as I came through the lodge, it seemed to me sadly out of repair. I believe you are liable for dilapidations. Good-by.”

“The man is a hog in armour,” soliloquized Sir Peter, when his cousin was gone; “and if it be hard to drive a common pig in the way he don’t choose to go, a hog in armour is indeed undrivable. But his boy ought not to suffer for his father’s hoggishness; and I shall begin at once to see what I can lay by for him. After all, it is hard upon Gordon. Poor Gordon; poor fellow! poor fellow! Still I hope he will not go to law with me. I hate law. And a worm will turn, especially a worm that is put into Chancery.”

CHAPTER VI

DESPITE the sinister semi-predictions of the *ci-devant* heir-at-law, the youthful Chillingly passed with safety, and indeed with dignity, through the infant stages of existence. He took his measles and whooping-cough with philosophical equanimity. He gradually acquired the use of speech, but he did not too lavishly exercise that special attribute of humanity. During the earlier years of childhood he spoke as little as if he had been prematurely trained in the school of Pythagoras. But he evidently spoke the less in order to reflect the more. He observed closely and pondered deeply over what he observed. At the age of eight he began to converse more freely, and it was in that year that he startled his mother with the question, "Mamma, are you not sometimes overpowered by the sense of your own identity?"

Lady Chillingly,—I was about to say rushed, but Lady Chillingly never rushed,—Lady Chillingly glided less sedately than her wont to Sir Peter, and repeating her son's question, said, "The boy is growing troublesome, too wise for any woman: he must go to school."

Sir Peter was of the same opinion. But where on earth did the child get hold of so long a word as "identity," and how did so extraordinary and puzzling a metaphysical question come into his head? Sir Peter summoned Kenelm, and ascertained that the boy, having free access to the library, had fastened upon Locke on

the Human Understanding, and was prepared to dispute with that philosopher upon the doctrine of innate ideas. Quoth Kenelm, gravely, "A want is an idea; and if, as soon as I was born, I felt the want of food and knew at once where to turn for it, without being taught, surely I came into the world with an 'innate idea.'"

Sir Peter, though he dabbled in metaphysics, was posed, and scratched his head without getting out a proper answer as to the distinction between ideas and instincts. "My child," he said at last, "you don't know what you are talking about: go and take a good gallop on your black pony; and I forbid you to read any books that are not given to you by myself or your mamma. Stick to 'Puss in Boots.'"

CHAPTER VII

SIR PETER ordered his carriage and drove to the house of the stout parson. That doughty ecclesiastic held a family living a few miles distant from the Hall, and was the only one of the cousins with whom Sir Peter habitually communed on his domestic affairs.

He found the Parson in his study, which exhibited tastes other than clerical. Over the chimney-piece were ranged fencing-foils, boxing-gloves, and staffs for the athletic exercise of single-stick; cricket-bats and fishing-rods filled up the angles. There were sundry prints on the walls: one of Mr. Wordsworth, flanked by two of distinguished race-horses; one of a Leicestershire short-horn, with which the Parson, who farmed his own glebe and bred cattle in its rich pastures, had won a prize at the county show; and on either side of that animal were the portraits of Hooker and Jeremy Taylor. There were dwarf book-cases containing miscellaneous works very handsomely bound; at the open window, a stand of flower-pots, the flowers in full bloom. The Parson's flowers were famous.

The appearance of the whole room was that of a man who is tidy and neat in his habits.

"Cousin," said Sir Peter, "I have come to consult you." And therewith he related the marvellous precocity of Kenelm Chillingly. "You see the name begins to work on him rather too

much. He must go to school; and now what school shall it be? Private or public?"

THE REV. JOHN STALWORTH.—"There is a great deal to be said for or against either. At a public school the chances are that Kenelm will no longer be overpowered by a sense of his own identity; he will more probably lose identity altogether. The worst of a public school is that a sort of common character is substituted for individual character. The master, of course, can't attend to the separate development of each boy's idiosyncrasy. All minds are thrown into one great mould, and come out of it more or less in the same form. An Etonian may be clever or stupid, but, as either, he remains emphatically Etonian. A public school ripens talent, but its tendency is to stifle genius. Then, too, a public school for an only son, heir to a good estate, which will be entirely at his own disposal, is apt to encourage reckless and extravagant habits; and your estate requires careful management, and leaves no margin for an heir's notes-of-hand and post-obits. On the whole, I am against a public school for Kenelm."

"Well then, we will decide on a private one."

"Hold!" said the Parson: "a private school has its drawbacks. You can seldom produce large fishes in small ponds. In private schools the competition is narrowed, the energies stinted. The schoolmaster's wife interferes, and generally coddles the boys. There is not manliness enough in those academies; no fagging, and very little fighting. A clever boy turns out a prig; a boy of feebler intellect turns out a well-behaved young lady

in trousers. Nothing muscular in the system. Decidedly the namesake and descendant of Kenelm Digby should not go to a private seminary."

"So far as I gather from your reasoning," said Sir Peter, with characteristic placidity, "Kenelm Chillingly is not to go to school at all."

"It does look like it," said the Parson, candidly; "but, on consideration, there is a medium. There are schools which unite the best qualities of public and private schools, large enough to stimulate and develop energies mental and physical, yet not so framed as to melt all character in one crucible. For instance, there is a school which has at this moment one of the first scholars in Europe for head-master,—a school which has turned out some of the most remarkable men of the rising generation. The master sees at a glance if a boy be clever, and takes pains with him accordingly. He is not a mere teacher of hexameters and sapphics. His learning embraces all literature, ancient and modern. He is a good writer and a fine critic; admires Wordsworth. He winks at fighting: his boys know how to use their fists; and they are not in the habit of signing post-obits before they are fifteen. Merton School is the place for Kenelm."

"Thank you," said Sir Peter. "It is a great comfort in life to find somebody who can decide for one. I am an irresolute man myself, and in ordinary matters willingly let Lady Chillingly govern me."

"I should like to see a wife govern *me*," said the stout Parson.

"But you are not married to Lady Chillingly. And now let us

go into the garden and look at your dahlias."

CHAPTER VIII

THE youthful confuter of Locke was despatched to Merton School, and ranked, according to his merits, as lag of the penultimate form. When he came home for the Christmas holidays he was more saturnine than ever; in fact, his countenance bore the impression of some absorbing grief. He said, however, that he liked school very well, and eluded all other questions. But early the next morning he mounted his black pony and rode to the Parson's rectory. The reverend gentleman was in his farmyard examining his bullocks when Kenelm accosted him thus briefly,—

"Sir, I am disgraced, and I shall die of it if you cannot help to set me right in my own eyes."

"My dear boy, don't talk in that way. Come into my study."

As soon as they entered that room, and the Parson had carefully closed the door, he took the boy's arm, turned him round to the light, and saw at once that there was something very grave on his mind. Chucking him under the chin, the Parson said cheerily, "Hold up your head, Kenelm. I am sure you have done nothing unworthy of a gentleman."

"I don't know that. I fought a boy very little bigger than myself, and I have been licked. I did not give in, though; but the other boys picked me up, for I could not stand any longer; and the fellow is a great bully; and his name is Butt; and he's the son of a

lawyer; and he got my head into chancery; and I have challenged him to fight again next half; and unless you can help me to lick him, I shall never be good for anything in the world,—never. It will break my heart."

"I am very glad to hear you have had the pluck to challenge him. Just let me see how you double your fist. Well, that's not amiss. Now, put yourself into a fighting attitude, and hit out at me,—hard! harder! Pooh! that will never do. You should make your blows as straight as an arrow. And that's not the way to stand. Stop,—so: well on your haunches; weight on the left leg; good! Now, put on these gloves, and I'll give you a lesson in boxing."

Five minutes afterwards Mrs. John Chillingly, entering the room to summon her husband to breakfast, stood astounded to see him with his coat off, and parrying the blows of Kenelm, who flew at him like a young tiger. The good pastor at that moment might certainly have appeared a fine type of muscular Christianity, but not of that kind of Christianity out of which one makes Archbishops of Canterbury.

"Good gracious me!" faltered Mrs. John Chillingly; and then, wife-like, flying to the protection of her husband, she seized Kenelm by the shoulders, and gave him a good shaking. The Parson, who was sadly out of breath, was not displeased at the interruption, but took that opportunity to put on his coat, and said, "We'll begin again to-morrow. Now, come to breakfast." But during breakfast Kenelm's face still betrayed dejection, and

he talked little and ate less.

As soon as the meal was over, he drew the Parson into the garden and said, "I have been thinking, sir, that perhaps it is not fair to Butt that I should be taking these lessons; and if it is not fair, I'd rather not—"

"Give me your hand, my boy!" cried the Parson, transported. "The name of Kenelm is not thrown away upon you. The natural desire of man in his attribute of fighting animal (an attribute in which, I believe, he excels all other animated beings, except a quail and a gamecock) is to beat his adversary. But the natural desire of that culmination of man which we call gentleman is to beat his adversary fairly. A gentleman would rather be beaten fairly than beat unfairly. Is not that your thought?"

"Yes," replied Kenelm, firmly; and then, beginning to philosophize, he added, "And it stands to reason; because if I beat a fellow unfairly, I don't really beat him at all."

"Excellent! But suppose that you and another boy go into examination upon Caesar's Commentaries or the multiplication table, and the other boy is cleverer than you, but you have taken the trouble to learn the subject and he has not: should you say you beat him unfairly?"

Kenelm meditated a moment, and then said decidedly, "No."

"That which applies to the use of your brains applies equally to the use of your fists. Do you comprehend me?"

"Yes, sir; I do now."

"In the time of your namesake, Sir Kenelm Digby, gentlemen

wore swords, and they learned how to use them, because, in case of quarrel, they had to fight with them. Nobody, at least in England, fights with swords now. It is a democratic age, and if you fight at all, you are reduced to fists; and if Kenelm Digby learned to fence, so Kenelm Chillingly must learn to box; and if a gentleman thrashes a drayman twice his size, who has not learned to box, it is not unfair; it is but an exemplification of the truth that knowledge is power. Come and take another lesson on boxing to-morrow."

Kenelm remounted his pony and returned home. He found his father sauntering in the garden with a book in his hand. "Papa," said Kenelm, "how does one gentleman write to another with whom he has a quarrel, and he don't want to make it up, but he has something to say about the quarrel which it is fair the other gentleman should know?"

"I don't understand what you mean."

"Well, just before I went to school I remember hearing you say that you had a quarrel with Lord Hautfort, and that he was an ass, and you would write and tell him so. When you wrote did you say, 'You are an ass'? Is that the way one gentleman writes to another?"

"Upon my honour, Kenelm, you ask very odd questions. But you cannot learn too early this fact, that irony is to the high-bred what Billingsgate is to the vulgar; and when one gentleman thinks another gentleman an ass, he does not say it point-blank: he implies it in the politest terms he can invent. Lord Hautfort denies

my right of free warren over a trout-stream that runs through his lands. I don't care a rush about the trout-stream, but there is no doubt of my right to fish in it. He was an ass to raise the question; for, if he had not, I should not have exercised the right. As he did raise the question, I was obliged to catch his trout."

"And you wrote a letter to him?"

"Yes."

"How did you write, Papa? What did you say?"

"Something like this. 'Sir Peter Chillingly presents his compliments to Lord Hautfort, and thinks it fair to his lordship to say that he has taken the best legal advice with regard to his rights of free warren; and trusts to be forgiven if he presumes to suggest that Lord Hautfort might do well to consult his own lawyer before he decides on disputing them.'"

"Thank you, Papa. I see."

That evening Kenelm wrote the following letter:—

Mr. Chillingly presents his compliments to Mr. Butt, and thinks it fair to Mr. Butt to say that he is taking lessons in boxing; and trusts to be forgiven if he presumes to suggest that Mr. Butt might do well to take lessons himself before fighting with Mr. Chillingly next half.

"Papa," said Kenelm the next morning, "I want to write to a schoolfellow whose name is Butt; he is the son of a lawyer who is called a serjeant. I don't know where to direct to him."

"That is easily ascertained," said Sir Peter. "Serjeant Butt is an eminent man, and his address will be in the Court Guide."

The address was found,—Bloomsbury Square; and Kenelm directed his letter accordingly. In due course he received this answer,—

You are an insolent little fool, and I'll thrash you within an inch of your life.

ROBERT BUTT.

After the receipt of that polite epistle, Kenelm Chillingly's scruples vanished, and he took daily lessons in muscular Christianity.

Kenelm returned to school with a brow cleared from care, and three days after his return he wrote to the Reverend John,—

DEAR SIR,—I have licked Butt. Knowledge is power.

Your affectionate KENELM.

P. S.—Now that I have licked Butt, I have made it up with him.

From that time Kenelm prospered. Eulogistic letters from the illustrious head-master showered in upon Sir Peter. At the age of sixteen Kenelm Chillingly was the head of the school, and, quitting it finally, brought home the following letter from his Orbilius to Sir Peter, marked "confidential":—

DEAR SIR PETER CHILLINGLY,—I have never felt more anxious for the future career of any of my pupils than I do for that of your son. He is so clever that, with ease to himself, he may become a great man. He is so peculiar that it is quite as likely that he may only make himself known to the world as a great oddity.

That distinguished teacher Dr. Arnold said that the difference between one boy and another was not so much talent as energy. Your son has talent, has energy: yet he wants something for success in life; he wants the faculty of amalgamation. He is of a melancholic and therefore unsocial temperament. He will not act in concert with others. He is lovable enough: the other boys like him, especially the smaller ones, with whom he is a sort of hero; but he has not one intimate friend. So far as school learning is concerned, he might go to college at once, and with the certainty of distinction provided he chose to exert himself. But if I may venture to offer an advice, I should say employ the next two years in letting him see a little more of real life and acquire a due sense of its practical objects. Send him to a private tutor who is not a pedant, but a man of letters or a man of the world, and if in the metropolis so much the better. In a word, my young friend is unlike other people; and, with qualities that might do anything in life, I fear, unless you can get him to be like other people, that he will do nothing. Excuse the freedom with which I write, and ascribe it to the singular interest with which your son has inspired me. I have the honour to be, dear Sir Peter,

Yours truly, WILLIAM HORTON.

Upon the strength of this letter Sir Peter did not indeed summon another family council; for he did not consider that his three maiden sisters could offer any practical advice on the matter. And as to Mr. Gordon, that gentleman having gone to law on the great timber question, and having been signally beaten

thereon, had informed Sir Peter that he disowned him as a cousin and despised him as a man; not exactly in those words,—more covertly, and therefore more stingingly. But Sir Peter invited Mr. Mivers for a week's shooting, and requested the Reverend John to meet him.

Mr. Mivers arrived. The sixteen years that had elapsed since he was first introduced to the reader had made no perceptible change in his appearance. It was one of his maxims that in youth a man of the world should appear older than he is; and in middle age, and thence to his dying day, younger. And he announced one secret for attaining that art in these words: "Begin your wig early, thus you never become gray."

Unlike most philosophers, Mivers made his practice conform to his precepts; and while in the prime of youth inaugurated a wig in a fashion that defied the flight of time, not curly and hyacinthine, but straight-haired and unassuming. He looked five-and-thirty from the day he put on that wig at the age of twenty-five. He looked five-and-thirty now at the age of fifty-one.

"I mean," said he, "to remain thirty-five all my life. No better age to stick at. People may choose to say I am more, but I shall not own it. No one is bound to criminate himself."

Mr. Mivers had some other aphorisms on this important subject. One was, "Refuse to be ill. Never tell people you are ill; never own it to yourself. Illness is one of those things which a man should resist on principle at the onset. It should never be allowed to get in the thin end of the wedge. But take care of your

constitution, and, having ascertained the best habits for it, keep to them like clockwork." Mr. Mivers would not have missed his constitutional walk in the Park before breakfast if, by going in a cab to St. Giles's, he could have saved the city of London from conflagration.

Another aphorism of his was, "If you want to keep young, live in a metropolis; never stay above a few weeks at a time in the country. Take two men of similar constitution at the age of twenty-five; let one live in London and enjoy a regular sort of club life; send the other to some rural district, preposterously called 'salubrious.' Look at these men when they have both reached the age of forty-five. The London man has preserved his figure: the rural man has a paunch. The London man has an interesting delicacy of complexion: the face of the rural man is coarse-grained and perhaps jowly."

A third axiom was, "Don't be a family man; nothing ages one like matrimonial felicity and paternal ties. Never multiply cares, and pack up your life in the briefest compass you can. Why add to your carpet-bag of troubles the contents of a lady's imperials and bonnet-boxes, and the travelling *fourgon* required by the nursery? Shun ambition: it is so gouty. It takes a great deal out of a man's life, and gives him nothing worth having till he has ceased to enjoy it." Another of his aphorisms was this, "A fresh mind keeps the body fresh. Take in the ideas of the day, drain off those of yesterday. As to the morrow, time enough to consider it when it becomes to-day."

Preserving himself by attention to these rules, Mr. Mivers appeared at Exmundham *totus, teres*, but not *rotundus*,—a man of middle height, slender, upright, with well-cut, small, slight features, thin lips, enclosing an excellent set of teeth, even, white, and not indebted to the dentist. For the sake of those teeth he shunned acid wines, especially hock in all its varieties, culinary sweets, and hot drinks. He drank even his tea cold.

"There are," he said, "two things in life that a sage must preserve at every sacrifice, the coats of his stomach and the enamel of his teeth. Some evils admit of consolations: there are no comforters for dyspepsia and toothache." A man of letters, but a man of the world, he had so cultivated his mind as both that he was feared as the one and liked as the other. As a man of letters he despised the world; as a man of the world he despised letters. As the representative of both he revered himself.

CHAPTER IX

ON the evening of the third day from the arrival of Mr. Mivers, he, the Parson, and Sir Peter were seated in the host's parlour, the Parson in an armchair by the ingle, smoking a short cutty-pipe; Mivers at length on the couch, slowly inhaling the perfumes of one of his own choice *trabucos*. Sir Peter never smoked. There were spirits and hot water and lemons on the table. The Parson was famed for skill in the composition of toddy. From time to time the Parson sipped his glass, and Sir Peter less frequently did the same. It is needless to say that Mr. Mivers eschewed toddy; but beside him, on a chair, was a tumbler and a large carafe of iced water.

SIR PETER.—"Cousin Mivers, you have now had time to study Kenelm, and to compare his character with that assigned to him in the Doctor's letter."

MIVERS (languidly).—"Ay."

SIR PETER.—"I ask you, as a man of the world, what you think I had best do with the boy. Shall I send him to such a tutor as the Doctor suggests? Cousin John is not of the same mind as the Doctor, and thinks that Kenelm's oddities are fine things in their way, and should not be prematurely ground out of him by contact with worldly tutors and London pavements."

"Ay," repeated Mr. Mivers more languidly than before. After a pause he added, "Parson John, let us hear you."

The Parson laid aside his cutty-pipe and emptied his fourth tumbler of toddy; then, throwing back his head in the dreamy fashion of the great Coleridge when he indulged in a monologue, he thus began, speaking somewhat through his nose,—

"At the morning of life—"

Here Mivers shrugged his shoulders, turned round on his couch, and closed his eyes with the sigh of a man resigning himself to a homily.

"At the morning of life, when the dews—"

"I knew the dews were coming," said Mivers. "Dry them, if you please; nothing so unwholesome. We anticipate what you mean to say, which is plainly this, When a fellow is sixteen he is very fresh: so he is; pass on; what then?"

"If you mean to interrupt me with your habitual cynicism," said the Parson, "why did you ask to hear me?"

"That was a mistake I grant; but who on earth could conceive that you were going to commence in that florid style? Morning of life indeed! bosh!"

"Cousin Mivers," said Sir Peter, "you are not reviewing John's style in 'The Londoner;' and I will beg you to remember that my son's morning of life is a serious thing to his father, and not to be nipped in its bud by a cousin. Proceed, John!"

Quoth the Parson, good-humouredly, "I will adapt my style to the taste of my critic. When a fellow is at the age of sixteen, and very fresh to life, the question is whether he should begin thus prematurely to exchange the ideas that belong to youth for

the ideas that properly belong to middle age,—whether he should begin to acquire that knowledge of the world which middle-aged men have acquired and can teach. I think not. I would rather have him yet a while in the company of the poets; in the indulgence of glorious hopes and beautiful dreams, forming to himself some type of the Heroic, which he will keep before his eyes as a standard when he goes into the world as man. There are two schools of thought for the formation of character,—the Real and the Ideal. I would form the character in the Ideal school, in order to make it bolder and grander and lovelier when it takes its place in that every-day life which is called Real. And therefore I am not for placing the descendant of Sir Kenelm Digby, in the interval between school and college, with a man of the world, probably as cynical as Cousin Mivers and living in the stony thoroughfares of London."

MR. MIVERS (rousing himself).—"Before we plunge into that Serbonian bog—the controversy between the Realistic and the Idealistic academicians—I think the first thing to decide is what you want Kenelm to be hereafter. When I order a pair of shoes, I decide beforehand what kind of shoes they are to be,—court pumps or strong walking shoes; and I don't ask the shoemaker to give me a preliminary lecture upon the different purposes of locomotion to which leather can be applied. If, Sir Peter, you want Kenelm to scribble lackadaisical poems, listen to Parson John; if you want to fill his head with pastoral rubbish about innocent love, which may end in marrying the miller's

daughter, listen to Parson John; if you want him to enter life a soft-headed greenhorn, who will sign any bill carrying 50 per cent to which a young scamp asks him to be security, listen to Parson John; in fine, if you wish a clever lad to become either a pigeon or a ring-dove, a credulous booby or a sentimental milksop, Parson John is the best adviser you can have."

"But I don't want my son to ripen into either of those imbecile developments of species."

"Then don't listen to Parson John; and there's an end of the discussion."

"No, there is not. I have not heard your advice what to do if John's advice is not to be taken."

Mr. Mivers hesitated. He seemed puzzled.

"The fact is," said the Parson, "that Mivers got up 'The Londoner' upon a principle that regulates his own mind,—find fault with the way everything is done, but never commit yourself by saying how anything can be done better."

"That is true," said Mivers, candidly. "The destructive order of mind is seldom allied to the constructive. I and 'The Londoner' are destructive by nature and by policy. We can reduce a building into rubbish, but we don't profess to turn rubbish into a building. We are critics, and, as you say, not such fools as to commit ourselves to the proposition of amendments that can be criticised by others. Nevertheless, for your sake, Cousin Peter, and on the condition that if I give my advice you will never say that I gave it, and if you take it that you will never reproach me if it turns

out, as most advice does, very ill,—I will depart from my custom and hazard my opinion."

"I accept the conditions."

"Well then, with every new generation there springs up a new order of ideas. The earlier the age at which a man seizes the ideas that will influence his own generation, the more he has a start in the race with his contemporaries. If Kenelm comprehends at sixteen those intellectual signs of the time which, when he goes up to college, he will find young men of eighteen or twenty only just *prepared* to comprehend, he will produce a deep impression of his powers for reasoning and their adaptation to actual life, which will be of great service to him later. Now the ideas that influence the mass of the rising generation never have their well-head in the generation itself. They have their source in the generation before them, generally in a small minority, neglected or contemned by the great majority which adopt them later. Therefore a lad at the age of sixteen, if he wants to get at such ideas, must come into close contact with some superior mind in which they were conceived twenty or thirty years before. I am consequently for placing Kenelm with a person from whom the new ideas can be learned. I am also for his being placed in the metropolis during the process of this initiation. With such introductions as are at our command, he may come in contact not only with new ideas, but with eminent men in all vocations. It is a great thing to mix betimes with clever people. One picks their brains unconsciously. There is another advantage, and not a

small one, in this early entrance into good society. A youth learns manners, self-possession, readiness of resource; and he is much less likely to get into scrapes and contract tastes for low vices and mean dissipation, when he comes into life wholly his own master, after having acquired a predilection for refined companionship under the guidance of those competent to select it. There, I have talked myself out of breath. And you had better decide at once in favour of my advice; for as I am of a contradictory temperament, myself of to-morrow may probably contradict myself of to-day."

Sir Peter was greatly impressed with his cousin's argumentative eloquence.

The Parson smoked his cutty-pipe in silence until appealed to by Sir Peter, and he then said, "In this programme of education for a Christian gentleman, the part of Christian seems to me left out."

"The tendency of the age," observed Mr. Mivers, calmly, "is towards that omission. Secular education is the necessary reaction from the special theological training which arose in the dislike of one set of Christians to the teaching of another set; and as these antagonists will not agree how religion is to be taught, either there must be no teaching at all, or religion must be eliminated from the tuition."

"That may do very well for some huge system of national education," said Sir Peter, "but it does not apply to Kenelm, as one of a family all of whose members belong to the Established Church. He may be taught the creed of his forefathers without

offending a Dissenter."

"Which Established Church is he to belong to?" asked Mr. Mivers,—"High Church, Low Church, Broad Church, Puseyite Church, Ritualistic Church, or any other Established Church that may be coming into fashion?"

"Pshaw!" said the Parson. "That sneer is out of place. You know very well that one merit of our Church is the spirit of toleration, which does not magnify every variety of opinion into a heresy or a schism. But if Sir Peter sends his son at the age of sixteen to a tutor who eliminates the religion of Christianity from his teaching, he deserves to be thrashed within an inch of his life; and," continued the Parson, eying Sir Peter sternly, and mechanically turning up his cuffs, "I should *like* to thrash him."

"Gently, John," said Sir Peter, recoiling; "gently, my dear kinsman. My heir shall not be educated as a heathen, and Mivers is only bantering us. Come, Mivers, do you happen to know among your London friends some man who, though a scholar and a man of the world, is still a Christian?"

"A Christian as by law established?"

"Well—yes."

"And who will receive Kenelm as a pupil?"

"Of course I am not putting such questions to you out of idle curiosity."

"I know exactly the man. He was originally intended for orders, and is a very learned theologian. He relinquished the thought of the clerical profession on succeeding to a small landed

estate by the sudden death of an elder brother. He then came to London and bought experience: that is, he was naturally generous; he became easily taken in; got into difficulties; the estate was transferred to trustees for the benefit of creditors, and on the payment of L400 a year to himself. By this time he was married and had two children. He found the necessity of employing his pen in order to add to his income, and is one of the ablest contributors to the periodical press. He is an elegant scholar, an effective writer, much courted by public men, a thorough gentleman, has a pleasant house, and receives the best society. Having been once taken in, he defies any one to take him in again. His experience was not bought too dearly. No more acute and accomplished man of the world. The three hundred a year or so that you would pay for Kenelm would suit him very well. His name is Welby, and he lives in Chester Square."

"No doubt he is a contributor to 'The Londoner,'" said the Parson, sarcastically.

"True. He writes our classical, theological, and metaphysical articles. Suppose I invite him to come here for a day or two, and you can see him and judge for yourself, Sir Peter?"

"Do."

CHAPTER X

MR. WELBY arrived, and pleased everybody. A man of the happiest manners, easy and courteous. There was no pedantry in him, yet you could soon see that his reading covered an extensive surface, and here and there had dived deeply. He enchanted the Parson by his comments on Saint Chrysostom; he dazzled Sir Peter with his lore in the antiquities of ancient Britain; he captivated Kenelm by his readiness to enter into that most disputatious of sciences called metaphysics; while for Lady Chillingly, and the three sisters who were invited to meet him, he was more entertaining, but not less instructive. Equally at home in novels and in good books, he gave to the spinsters a list of innocent works in either; while for Lady Chillingly he sparkled with anecdotes of fashionable life, the newest *bons mots*, the latest scandals. In fact, Mr. Welby was one of those brilliant persons who adorn any society amidst which they are thrown. If at heart he was a disappointed man, the disappointment was concealed by an even serenity of spirits; he had entertained high and justifiable hopes of a brilliant career and a lasting reputation as a theologian and a preacher; the succession to his estate at the age of twenty-three had changed the nature of his ambition. The charm of his manner was such that he sprang at once into the fashion, and became beguiled by his own genial temperament into that lesser but pleasanter kind of ambition which contents

itself with social successes and enjoys the present hour. When his circumstances compelled him to eke out his income by literary profits, he slid into the grooves of periodical composition, and resigned all thoughts of the labour required for any complete work, which might take much time and be attended with scanty profits. He still remained very popular in society, and perhaps his general reputation for ability made him fearful to hazard it by any great undertaking. He was not, like Mivers, a despiser of all men and all things; but he regarded men and things as an indifferent though good-natured spectator regards the thronging streets from a drawing-room window. He could not be called *blase*, but he was thoroughly *desillusionne*. Once over-romantic, his character now was so entirely imbued with the neutral tints of life that romance offended his taste as an obtrusion of violent colour into a sober woof. He was become a thorough Realist in his code of criticism, and in his worldly mode of action and thought. But Parson John did not perceive this, for Welby listened to that gentleman's eulogies on the Ideal school without troubling himself to contradict them. He had grown too indolent to be combative in conversation, and only as a critic betrayed such pugnacity as remained to him by the polished cruelty of sarcasm.

He came off with flying colours through an examination into his Church orthodoxy instituted by the Parson and Sir Peter. Amid a cloud of ecclesiastical erudition, his own opinions vanished in those of the Fathers. In truth, he was a Realist, in religion as in everything else. He regarded Christianity as a type

of existent civilization, which ought to be reverenced, as one might recognize the other types of that civilization; such as the liberty of the press, the representative system, white neckcloths and black coats of an evening, etc. He belonged, therefore, to what he himself called the school of Eclectical Christiology; and accommodated the reasonings of Deism to the doctrines of the Church, if not as a creed, at least as an institution. Finally, he united all the Chillingly votes in his favour; and when he departed from the Hall carried off Kenelm for his initiation into the new ideas that were to govern his generation.

CHAPTER XI

KENELM remained a year and a half with this distinguished preceptor. During that time he learned much in book-lore; he saw much, too, of the eminent men of the day, in literature, the law, and the senate. He saw, also, a good deal of the fashionable world. Fine ladies, who had been friends of his mother in her youth, took him up, counselled and petted him,—one in especial, the Marchioness of Glenalvon, to whom he was endeared by grateful association, for her youngest son had been a fellow-pupil of Kenelm at Merton School, and Kenelm had saved his life from drowning. The poor boy died of consumption later, and her grief for his loss made her affection for Kenelm yet more tender. Lady Glenalvon was one of the queens of the London world. Though in the fiftieth year she was still very handsome: she was also very accomplished, very clever, and very kind-hearted, as some of such queens are; just one of those women invaluable in forming the manners and elevating the character of young men destined to make a figure in after-life. But she was very angry with herself in thinking that she failed to arouse any such ambition in the heir of the Chillinglys.

It may here be said that Kenelm was not without great advantages of form and countenance. He was tall, and the youthful grace of his proportions concealed his physical strength, which was extraordinary rather from the iron texture than the

bulk of his thews and sinews. His face, though it certainly lacked the roundness of youth, had a grave, sombre, haunting sort of beauty, not artistically regular, but picturesque, peculiar, with large dark expressive eyes, and a certain indescribable combination of sweetness and melancholy in his quiet smile. He never laughed audibly, but he had a quick sense of the comic, and his eye would laugh when his lips were silent. He would say queer, droll, unexpected things which passed for humour; but, save for that gleam in the eye, he could not have said them with more seeming innocence of intentional joke if he had been a monk of La Trappe looking up from the grave he was digging in order to utter "memento mori."

That face of his was a great "take in." Women thought it full of romantic sentiment; the face of one easily moved to love, and whose love would be replete alike with poetry and passion. But he remained as proof as the youthful Hippolytus to all female attraction. He delighted the Parson by keeping up his practice in athletic pursuits; and obtained a reputation at the pugilistic school, which he attended regularly, as the best gentleman boxer about town.

He made many acquaintances, but still formed no friendships. Yet every one who saw him much conceived affection for him. If he did not return that affection, he did not repel it. He was exceedingly gentle in voice and manner, and had all his father's placidity of temper: children and dogs took to him as by instinct.

On leaving Mr. Welby's, Kenelm carried to Cambridge a mind

largely stocked with the new ideas that were budding into leaf. He certainly astonished the other freshmen, and occasionally puzzled the mighty Fellows of Trinity and St. John's. But he gradually withdrew himself much from general society. In fact, he was too old in mind for his years; and after having mixed in the choicest circles of a metropolis, college suppers and wine parties had little charm for him. He maintained his pugilistic renown; and on certain occasions, when some delicate undergraduate had been bullied by some gigantic bargeman, his muscular Christianity nobly developed itself. He did not do as much as he might have done in the more intellectual ways of academical distinction. Still, he was always among the first in the college examinations; he won two university prizes, and took a very creditable degree, after which he returned home, more odd, more saturnine—in short, less like other people—than when he had left Merton School. He had woven a solitude round him out of his own heart, and in that solitude he sat still and watchful as a spider sits in his web.

Whether from natural temperament or from his educational training under such teachers as Mr. Mivers, who carried out the new ideas of reform by revering nothing in the past, and Mr. Welby, who accepted the routine of the present as realistic, and pooh-poohed all visions of the future as idealistic, Kenelm's chief mental characteristic was a kind of tranquil indifferentism. It was difficult to detect in him either of those ordinary incentives to action,—vanity or ambition, the yearning for applause or

the desire of power. To all female fascinations he had been hitherto star-proof. He had never experienced love, but he had read a good deal about it; and that passion seemed to him an unaccountable aberration of human reason, and an ignominious surrender of the equanimity of thought which it should be the object of masculine natures to maintain undisturbed. A very eloquent book in praise of celibacy, and entitled "The Approach to the Angels," written by that eminent Oxford scholar, Decimus Roach, had produced so remarkable an effect upon his youthful mind that, had he been a Roman Catholic, he might have become a monk. Where he most evinced ardour it was a logician's ardour for abstract truth; that is, for what he considered truth: and, as what seems truth to one man is sure to seem falsehood to some other man, this predilection of his was not without its inconveniences and dangers, as may probably be seen in the following chapter.

Meanwhile, rightly to appreciate his conduct therein, I entreat thee, O candid reader (not that any reader ever is candid), to remember that he is brimful of new ideas, which, met by a deep and hostile undercurrent of old ideas, become more provocatively billowy and surging.

CHAPTER XII

THERE had been great festivities at Exmundham, in celebration of the honour bestowed upon the world by the fact that Kenelm Chillingly had lived twenty-one years in it.

The young heir had made a speech to the assembled tenants and other admitted revellers, which had by no means added to the exhilaration of the proceedings. He spoke with a fluency and self-possession which were surprising in a youth addressing a multitude for the first time. But his speech was not cheerful.

The principal tenant on the estate, in proposing his health, had naturally referred to the long line of his ancestors. His father's merits as man and landlord had been enthusiastically commemorated; and many happy auguries for his own future career had been drawn, partly from the excellences of his parentage, partly from his own youthful promise in the honours achieved at the University.

Kenelm Chillingly in reply largely availed himself of those new ideas which were to influence the rising generation, and with which he had been rendered familiar by the journal of Mr. Mivers and the conversation of Mr. Welby.

He briefly disposed of the ancestral part of the question. He observed that it was singular to note how long any given family or dynasty could continue to flourish in any given nook of matter in creation, without any exhibition of intellectual powers beyond

those displayed by a succession of vegetable crops. “It is certainly true,” he said, “that the Chillinglys have lived in this place from father to son for about a fourth part of the history of the world, since the date which Sir Isaac Newton assigns to the Deluge. But, so far as can be judged by existent records, the world has not been in any way wiser or better for their existence. They were born to eat as long as they could eat, and when they could eat no longer they died. Not that in this respect they were a whit less insignificant than the generality of their fellow-creatures. Most of us now present,” continued the youthful orator, “are only born in order to die; and the chief consolation of our wounded pride in admitting this fact is in the probability that our posterity will not be of more consequence to the scheme of Nature than we ourselves are.” Passing from that philosophical view of his own ancestors in particular, and of the human race in general, Kenelm Chillingly then touched with serene analysis on the eulogies lavished on his father as man and landlord.

“As man,” he said, “my father no doubt deserves all that can be said by man in favour of man. But what, at the best, is man? A crude, struggling, undeveloped embryo, of whom it is the highest attribute that he feels a vague consciousness that he is only an embryo, and cannot complete himself till he ceases to be a man; that is, until he becomes another being in another form of existence. We can praise a dog as a dog, because a dog is a completed *ens*, and not an embryo. But to praise a man as man, forgetting that he is only a germ out

of which a form wholly different is ultimately to spring, is equally opposed to Scriptural belief in his present crudity and imperfection, and to psychological or metaphysical examination of a mental construction evidently designed for purposes that he can never fulfil as man. That my father is an embryo not more incomplete than any present is quite true; but that, you will see on reflection, is saying very little on his behalf. Even in the boasted physical formation of us men, you are aware that the best-shaped amongst us, according to the last scientific discoveries, is only a development of some hideous hairy animal, such as a gorilla; and the ancestral gorilla itself had its own aboriginal forefather in a small marine animal shaped like a two-necked bottle. The probability is that, some day or other, we shall be exterminated by a new development of species.

"As for the merits assigned to my father as landlord, I must respectfully dissent from the panegyrics so rashly bestowed on him. For all sound reasoners must concur in this, that the first duty of an owner of land is not to the occupiers to whom he leases it, but to the nation at large. It is his duty to see that the land yields to the community the utmost it can yield. In order to effect this object, a landlord should put up his farms to competition, exacting the highest rent he can possibly get from responsible competitors. Competitive examination is the enlightened order of the day, even in professions in which the best men would have qualities that defy examination. In agriculture, happily, the principle of competitive examination is not so hostile to the

choice of the best man as it must be, for instance, in diplomacy, where a Talleyrand would be excluded for knowing no language but his own; and still more in the army, where promotion would be denied to an officer who, like Marlborough, could not spell. But in agriculture a landlord has only to inquire who can give the highest rent, having the largest capital, subject by the strictest penalties of law to the conditions of a lease dictated by the most scientific agriculturists under penalties fixed by the most cautious conveyancers. By this mode of procedure, recommended by the most liberal economists of our age,—barring those still more liberal who deny that property in land is any property at all,—by this mode of procedure, I say, a landlord does his duty to his country. He secures tenants who can produce the most to the community by their capital, tested through competitive examination in their bankers' accounts and the security they can give, and through the rigidity of covenants suggested by a Liebig and reduced into law by a Chitty. But on my father's land I see a great many tenants with little skill and less capital, ignorant of a Liebig and revolting from a Chitty, and no filial enthusiasm can induce me honestly to say that my father is a good landlord. He has preferred his affection for individuals to his duties to the community. It is not, my friends, a question whether a handful of farmers like yourselves go to the workhouse or not. It is a consumer's question. Do you produce the maximum of corn to the consumer?

"With respect to myself," continued the orator, warming

as the cold he had engendered in his audience became more freezingly felt,—"with respect to myself, I do not deny that, owing to the accident of training for a very faulty and contracted course of education, I have obtained what are called 'honours' at the University of Cambridge; but you must not regard that fact as a promise of any worth in my future passage through life. Some of the most useless persons—especially narrow-minded and bigoted—have acquired far higher honours at the University than have fallen to my lot.

"I thank you no less for the civil things you have said of me and of my family; but I shall endeavour to walk to that grave to which we are all bound with a tranquil indifference as to what people may say of me in so short a journey. And the sooner, my friends, we get to our journey's end, the better our chance of escaping a great many pains, troubles, sins, and diseases. So that when I drink to your good healths, you must feel that in reality I wish you an early deliverance from the ills to which flesh is exposed, and which so generally increase with our years that good health is scarcely compatible with the decaying faculties of old age. Gentlemen, your good healths!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE morning after these birthday rejoicings, Sir Peter and Lady Chillingly held a long consultation on the peculiarities of their heir, and the best mode of instilling into his mind the expediency either of entertaining more pleasing views, or at least of professing less unpopular sentiments; compatibly of course, though they did not say it, with the new ideas that were to govern his century. Having come to an agreement on this delicate subject, they went forth, arm in arm, in search of their heir. Kenelm seldom met them at breakfast. He was an early riser, and accustomed to solitary rambles before his parents were out of bed.

The worthy pair found Kenelm seated on the banks of a trout-stream that meandered through Chillingly Park, dipping his line into the water, and yawning, with apparent relief in that operation.

"Does fishing amuse you, my boy?" said Sir Peter, heartily.

"Not in the least, sir," answered Kenelm.

"Then why do you do it?" asked Lady Chillingly.

"Because I know nothing else that amuses me more."

"Ah! that is it," said Sir Peter: "the whole secret of Kenelm's oddities is to be found in these words, my dear; he needs amusement. Voltaire says truly, 'Amusement is one of the wants of man.' And if Kenelm could be amused like other people, he

would be like other people."

"In that case," said Kenelm, gravely, and extracting from the water a small but lively trout, which settled itself in Lady Chillingly's lap,—"in that case I would rather not be amused. I have no interest in the absurdities of other people. The instinct of self-preservation compels me to have some interest in my own."

"Kenelm, sir," exclaimed Lady Chillingly, with an animation into which her tranquil ladyship was very rarely betrayed, "take away that horrid damp thing! Put down your rod and attend to what your father says. Your strange conduct gives us cause of serious anxiety."

Kenelm unhooked the trout, deposited the fish in his basket, and raising his large eyes to his father's face, said, "What is there in my conduct that occasions you displeasure?"

"Not displeasure, Kenelm," said Sir Peter, kindly, "but anxiety; your mother has hit upon the right word. You see, my dear son, that it is my wish that you should distinguish yourself in the world. You might represent this county, as your ancestors have done before. I have looked forward to the proceedings of yesterday as an admirable occasion for your introduction to your future constituents. Oratory is the talent most appreciated in a free country, and why should you not be an orator? Demosthenes says that delivery, delivery, delivery, is the art of oratory; and your delivery is excellent, graceful, self-possessed, classical."

"Pardon me, my dear father, Demosthenes does not say delivery, nor action, as the word is commonly rendered; he

says, 'acting, or stage-play,'—the art by which a man delivers a speech in a feigned character, whence we get the word hypocrisy. Hypocrisy, hypocrisy, hypocrisy! is, according to Demosthenes, the triple art of the orator. Do you wish me to become triply a hypocrite?"

"Kenelm, I am ashamed of you. You know as well as I do that it is only by metaphor that you can twist the word ascribed to the great Athenian into the sense of hypocrisy. But assuming it, as you say, to mean not delivery, but acting, I understand why your debut as an orator was not successful. Your delivery was excellent, your acting defective. An orator should please, conciliate, persuade, prepossess. You did the reverse of all this; and though you produced a great effect, the effect was so decidedly to your disadvantage that it would have lost you an election on any hustings in England."

"Am I to understand, my dear father," said Kenelm, in the mournful and compassionate tones with which a pious minister of the Church reproves some abandoned and hoary sinner,—"am I to understand that you would commend to your son the adoption of deliberate falsehood for the gain of a selfish advantage?"

"Deliberate falsehood! you impertinent puppy!"

"Puppy!" repeated Kenelm, not indignantly but musingly, —"puppy! a well-bred puppy takes after its parents."

Sir Peter burst out laughing.

Lady Chillingly rose with dignity, shook her gown, unfolded her parasol, and stalked away speechless.

"Now, look you, Kenelm," said Sir Peter, as soon as he had composed himself. "These quips and humours of yours are amusing enough to an eccentric man like myself, but they will not do for the world; and how at your age, and with the rare advantages you have had in an early introduction to the best intellectual society, under the guidance of a tutor acquainted with the new ideas which are to influence the conduct of statesmen, you could have made so silly a speech as you did yesterday, I cannot understand."

"My dear father, allow me to assure you that the ideas I expressed are the new ideas most in vogue,—ideas expressed in still plainer, or, if you prefer the epithet, still sillier terms than I employed. You will find them instilled into the public mind by 'The Londoner' and by most intellectual journals of a liberal character."

"Kenelm, Kenelm, such ideas would turn the world topsy-turvy."

"New ideas always do tend to turn old ideas topsy-turvy. And the world, after all, is only an idea, which is turned topsy-turvy with every successive century."

"You make me sick of the word 'ideas.' Leave off your metaphysics and study real life."

"It is real life which I did study under Mr. Welby. He is the Archimandrite of Realism. It is sham life which you wish me to study. To oblige you I am willing to commence it. I dare say it is very pleasant. Real life is not; on the contrary—dull," and

Kenelm yawned again.

"Have you no young friends among your fellow-collegians?"

"Friends! certainly not, sir. But I believe I have some enemies, who answer the same purpose as friends, only they don't hurt one so much."

"Do you mean to say that you lived alone at Cambridge?"

"No, I lived a good deal with Aristophanes, and a little with Conic Sections and Hydrostatics."

"Books. Dry company."

"More innocent, at least, than moist company. Did you ever get drunk, sir?"

"Drunk!"

"I tried to do so once with the young companions whom you would commend to me as friends. I don't think I succeeded, but I woke with a headache. Real life at college abounds with headache."

"Kenelm, my boy, one thing is clear: you must travel."

"As you please, sir. Marcus Antoninus says that it is all one to a stone whether it be thrown upwards or downwards. When shall I start?"

"Very soon. Of course there are preparations to make; you should have a travelling companion. I don't mean a tutor,—you are too clever and too steady to need one,—but a pleasant, sensible, well-mannered young person of your own age."

"My own age,—male or female?"

Sir Peter tried hard to frown. The utmost he could do was to

reply gravely, "FEMALE! If I said you were too steady to need a tutor, it was because you have hitherto seemed little likely to be led out of your way by female allurements. Among your other studies may I inquire if you have included that which no man has ever yet thoroughly mastered,—the study of women?"

"Certainly. Do you object to my catching another trout?"

"Trout be—blessed, or the reverse. So you have studied woman. I should never have thought it. Where and when did you commence that department of science?"

"When? ever since I was ten years old. Where? first in your own house, then at college. Hush!—a bite," and another trout left its native element and alighted on Sir Peter's nose, whence it was solemnly transferred to the basket.

"At ten years old, and in my own house! That flaunting hussy Jane, the under-housemaid—"

"Jane! No, sir. Pamela, Miss Byron, Clarissa,—females in Richardson, who, according to Dr. Johnson, 'taught the passions to move at the command of virtue.' I trust for your sake that Dr. Johnson did not err in that assertion, for I found all these females at night in your own private apartments."

"Oh!" said Sir Peter, "that's all?"

"All I remember at ten years old," replied Kenelm.

"And at Mr. Welby's or at college," proceeded Sir Peter, timorously, "was your acquaintance with females of the same kind?"

Kenelm shook his head. "Much worse: they were very naughty

indeed at college."

"I should think so, with such a lot of young fellows running after them."

"Very few fellows run after the females. I mean—rather avoid them."

"So much the better."

"No, my father, so much the worse; without an intimate knowledge of those females there is little use going to college at all."

"Explain yourself."

"Every one who receives a classical education is introduced into their society,—Pyrrha and Lydia, Glycera and Corinna, and many more of the same sort; and then the females in Aristophanes, what do you say to them, sir?"

"Is it only females who lived two thousand or three thousand years ago, or more probably never lived at all, whose intimacy you have cultivated? Have you never admired any real women?"

"Real women! I never met one. Never met a woman who was not a sham, a sham from the moment she is told to be pretty-behaved, conceal her sentiments, and look fibs when she does not speak them. But if I am to learn sham life, I suppose I must put up with sham women."

"Have you been crossed in love that you speak so bitterly of the sex?"

"I don't speak bitterly of the sex. Examine any woman on her oath, and she'll own she is a sham, always has been, and always

will be, and is proud of it."

"I am glad your mother is not by to hear you. You will think differently one of these days. Meanwhile, to turn to the other sex, is there no young man of your own rank with whom you would like to travel?"

"Certainly not. I hate quarrelling."

"As you please. But you cannot go quite alone: I will find you a good travelling-servant. I must write to town to-day about your preparations, and in another week or so I hope all will be ready. Your allowance will be whatever you like to fix it at; you have never been extravagant, and—boy—I love you. Amuse yourself, enjoy yourself, and come back cured of your oddities, but preserving your honour."

Sir Peter bent down and kissed his son's brow. Kenelm was moved; he rose, put his arm round his father's shoulder, and lovingly said, in an undertone, "If ever I am tempted to do a base thing, may I remember whose son I am: I shall be safe then." He withdrew his arm as he said this, and took his solitary way along the banks of the stream, forgetful of rod and line.

CHAPTER XIV

THE young man continued to skirt the side of the stream until he reached the boundary pale of the park. Here, placed on a rough grass mound, some former proprietor, of a social temperament, had built a kind of belvidere, so as to command a cheerful view of the high road below. Mechanically the heir of the Chillinglys ascended the mound, seated himself within the belvidere, and leaned his chin on his hand in a thoughtful attitude. It was rarely that the building was honoured by a human visitor: its habitual occupants were spiders. Of those industrious insects it was a well-populated colony. Their webs, darkened with dust and ornamented with the wings and legs and skeletons of many an unfortunate traveller, clung thick to angle and window-sill, festooned the rickety table on which the young man leaned his elbow, and described geometrical circles and rhomboids between the gaping rails that formed the backs of venerable chairs. One large black spider—who was probably the oldest inhabitant, and held possession of the best place by the window, ready to offer perfidious welcome to every winged itinerant who might be tempted to turn aside from the high road for the sake of a little cool and repose—rushed from its innermost penetralia at the entrance of Kenelm, and remained motionless in the centre of its meshes, staring at him. It did not seem quite sure whether the stranger was too big or not.

"It is a wonderful proof of the wisdom of Providence," said Kenelm, "that whenever any large number of its creatures forms a community or class, a secret element of disunion enters into the hearts of the individuals forming the congregation, and prevents their co-operating heartily and effectually for their common interest. 'The fleas would have dragged me out of bed if they had been unanimous,' said the great Mr. Curran; and there can be no doubt that if all the spiders in this commonwealth would unite to attack me in a body, I should fall a victim to their combined nippers. But spiders, though inhabiting the same region, constituting the same race, animated by the same instincts, do not combine even against a butterfly: each seeks his own special advantage, and not that of the community at large. And how completely the life of each thing resembles a circle in this respect, that it can never touch another circle at more than one point. Nay, I doubt if it quite touches it even there,—there is a space between every atom; self is always selfish: and yet there are eminent masters in the Academe of New Ideas who wish to make us believe that all the working classes of a civilized world could merge every difference of race, creed, intellect, individual propensities and interests into the construction of a single web, stocked as a larder in common!" Here the soliloquist came to a dead stop, and, leaning out of the window, contemplated the high road. It was a very fine high road, straight and level, kept in excellent order by turn pikes at every eight miles. A pleasant greensward bordered it on either side, and under the belvidere

the benevolence of some mediaeval Chillingly had placed a little drinking-fountain for the refreshment of wayfarers. Close to the fountain stood a rude stone bench, overshadowed by a large willow, and commanding from the high table-ground on which it was placed a wide view of cornfields, meadows, and distant hills, suffused in the mellow light of the summer sun. Along that road there came successively a wagon filled with passengers seated on straw,—an old woman, a pretty girl, two children; then a stout farmer going to market in his dog-cart; then three flies carrying fares to the nearest railway station; then a handsome young man on horseback, a handsome young lady by his side, a groom behind. It was easy to see that the young man and young lady were lovers. See it in his ardent looks and serious lips parted but for whispers only to be heard by her; see it in her downcast eyes and heightened colour. "'Alas! regardless of their doom,'" muttered Kenelm, "what trouble those 'little victims' are preparing for themselves and their progeny! Would I could lend them Decimus Roach's 'Approach to the Angels'!" The road now for some minutes became solitary and still, when there was heard to the right a sprightly sort of carol, half sung, half recited, in musical voice, with a singularly clear enunciation, so that the words reached Kenelm's ear distinctly. They ran thus:—

"Black Karl looked forth from his cottage door,
He looked on the forest green;
And down the path, with his dogs before,
Came the Ritter of Neirestein:

Singing, singing, lustily singing,
Down the path with his dogs before,
Came the Ritter of Neirestein."

At a voice so English, attuned to a strain so Germanic, Kenelm pricked up attentive ears, and, turning his eye down the road, beheld, emerging from the shade of beeches that overhung the park pales, a figure that did not altogether harmonize with the idea of a Ritter of Neirestein. It was, nevertheless, a picturesque figure enough. The man was attired in a somewhat threadbare suit of Lincoln green, with a high-crowned Tyrolese hat; a knapsack was slung behind his shoulders, and he was attended by a white Pomeranian dog, evidently foot-sore, but doing his best to appear proficient in the chase by limping some yards in advance of his master, and sniffing into the hedges for rats and mice, and such small deer.

By the time the pedestrian had reached to the close of his refrain he had gained the fountain, and greeted it with an exclamation of pleasure. Slipping the knapsack from his shoulder, he filled the iron ladle attached to the basin. He then called the dog by the name of Max, and held the ladle for him to drink. Not till the animal had satisfied his thirst did the master assuage his own. Then, lifting his hat and bathing his temples and face, the pedestrian seated himself on the bench, and the dog nestled on the turf at his feet. After a little pause the wayfarer began again, though in a lower and slower tone, to chant his

refrain, and proceeded, with abrupt snatches, to link the verse on to another stanza. It was evident that he was either endeavouring to remember or to invent, and it seemed rather like the latter and more laborious operation of mind.

"'Why on foot, why on foot, Ritter Karl,' quoth he,
'And not on thy palfrey gray?'

Palfrey gray—hum—gray.

"'The run of ill-luck was too strong for me,
'And has galloped my steed away.'

That will do: good!"

"Good indeed! He is easily satisfied," muttered Kenelm. "But such pedestrians don't pass the road every day. Let us talk to him." So saying he slipped quietly out of the window, descended the mound, and letting himself into the road by a screened wicket-gate, took his noiseless stand behind the wayfarer and beneath the bowery willow.

The man had now sunk into silence. Perhaps he had tired himself of rhymes; or perhaps the mechanism of verse-making had been replaced by that kind of sentiment, or that kind of revery, which is common to the temperaments of those who indulge in verse-making. But the loveliness of the scene before him had caught his eye, and fixed it into an intent gaze upon

wooded landscapes stretching farther and farther to the range of hills on which the heaven seemed to rest.

"I should like to hear the rest of that German ballad," said a voice, abruptly.

The wayfarer started, and, turning round, presented to Kenelm's view a countenance in the ripest noon of manhood, with locks and beard of a deep rich auburn, bright blue eyes, and a wonderful nameless charm both of feature and expression, very cheerful, very frank, and not without a certain nobleness of character which seemed to exact respect.

"I beg your pardon for my interruption," said Kenelm, lifting his hat: "but I overheard you reciting; and though I suppose your verses are a translation from the German, I don't remember anything like them in such popular German poets as I happen to have read."

"It is not a translation, sir," replied the itinerant. "I was only trying to string together some ideas that came into my head this fine morning."

"You are a poet, then?" said Kenelm, seating himself on the bench.

"I dare not say poet. I am a verse-maker."

"Sir, I know there is a distinction. Many poets of the present day, considered very good, are uncommonly bad verse-makers. For my part, I could more readily imagine them to be good poets if they did not make verses at all. But can I not hear the rest of the ballad?"

"Alas! the rest of the ballad is not yet made. It is rather a long subject, and my flights are very brief."

"That is much in their favour, and very unlike the poetry in fashion. You do not belong, I think, to this neighbourhood. Are you and your dog travelling far?"

"It is my holiday time, and I ramble on through the summer. I am travelling far, for I travel till September. Life amid summer fields is a very joyous thing."

"Is it indeed?" said Kenelm, with much *naivete*. "I should have thought that long before September you would have got very much bored with the fields and the dog and yourself altogether. But, to be sure, you have the resource of verse-making, and that seems a very pleasant and absorbing occupation to those who practise it,—from our old friend Horace, kneading laboured Alcaics into honey in his summer rambles among the watered woodlands of Tibur, to Cardinal Richelieu, employing himself on French rhymes in the intervals between chopping off noblemen's heads. It does not seem to signify much whether the verses be good or bad, so far as the pleasure of the verse-maker himself is concerned; for Richelieu was as much charmed with his occupation as Horace was, and his verses were certainly not Horatian."

"Surely at your age, sir, and with your evident education—"

"Say culture; that's the word in fashion nowadays."

"Well, your evident culture, you must have made verses."

"Latin verses, yes; and occasionally Greek. I was obliged to

do so at school. It did not amuse me."

"Try English."

Kenelm shook his head. "Not I. Every cobbler should stick to his last."

"Well, put aside the verse-making: don't you find a sensible enjoyment in those solitary summer walks, when you have Nature all to yourself,—enjoyment in marking all the mobile evanescent changes in her face,—her laugh, her smile, her tears, her very frown!"

"Assuming that by Nature you mean a mechanical series of external phenomena, I object to your speaking of a machinery as if it were a person of the feminine gender,—*her* laugh, *her* smile, etc. As well talk of the laugh and smile of a steam-engine. But to descend to common-sense. I grant there is some pleasure in solitary rambles in fine weather and amid varying scenery. You say that it is a holiday excursion that you are enjoying. I presume, therefore, that you have some practical occupation which consumes the time that you do not devote to a holiday?"

"Yes; I am not altogether an idler. I work sometimes, though not so hard as I ought. 'Life is earnest,' as the poet says. But I and my dog are rested now, and as I have still a long walk before me I must wish you good-day."

"I fear," said Kenelm, with a grave and sweet politeness of tone and manner, which he could command at times, and which, in its difference from merely conventional urbanity, was not without fascination,—"I fear that I have offended you by

a question that must have seemed to you inquisitive, perhaps impertinent; accept my excuse: it is very rarely that I meet any one who interests me; and you do." As he spoke he offered his hand, which the wayfarer shook very cordially.

"I should be a churl indeed if your question could have given me offence. It is rather perhaps I who am guilty of impertinence, if I take advantage of my seniority in years and tender you a counsel. Do not despise Nature or regard her as a steam-engine; you will find in her a very agreeable and conversable friend if you will cultivate her intimacy. And I don't know a better mode of doing so at your age, and with your strong limbs, than putting a knapsack on your shoulders and turning foot-traveller like myself."

"Sir, I thank you for your counsel; and I trust we may meet again and interchange ideas as to the thing you call Nature,—a thing which science and art never appear to see with the same eyes. If to an artist Nature has a soul, why, so has a steam-engine. Art gifts with soul all matter that it contemplates: science turns all that is already gifted with soul into matter. Good-day, sir."

Here Kenelm turned back abruptly, and the traveller went his way, silently and thoughtfully.

CHAPTER XV

KENELM retraced his steps homeward under the shade of his "old hereditary trees." One might have thought his path along the greenswards, and by the side of the babbling rivulet, was pleasanter and more conducive to peaceful thoughts than the broad, dusty thoroughfare along which plodded the wanderer he had quitted. But the man addicted to revery forms his own landscapes and colours his own skies.

"It is," soliloquized Kenelm Chillingly, "a strange yearning I have long felt,—to get out of myself, to get, as it were, into another man's skin, and have a little variety of thought and emotion. One's self is always the same self; and that is why I yawn so often. But if I can't get into another man's skin, the next best thing is to get as unlike myself as I possibly can do. Let me see what is myself. Myself is Kenelm Chillingly, son and heir to a rich gentleman. But a fellow with a knapsack on his back, sleeping at wayside inns, is not at all like Kenelm Chillingly; especially if he is very short of money and may come to want a dinner. Perhaps that sort of fellow may take a livelier view of things: he can't take a duller one. Courage, Myself: you and I can but try."

For the next two days Kenelm was observed to be unusually pleasant. He yawned much less frequently, walked with his father, played piquet with his mother, was more like other

people. Sir Peter was charmed: he ascribed this happy change to the preparations he was making for Kenelm's travelling in style. The proud father was in active correspondence with his great London friends, seeking letters of introduction for Kenelm to all the courts of Europe. Portmanteaus, with every modern convenience, were ordered; an experienced courier, who could talk all languages and cook French dishes if required, was invited to name his terms. In short, every arrangement worthy a young patrician's entrance into the great world was in rapid progress, when suddenly Kenelm Chillingly disappeared, leaving behind him on Sir Peter's library table the following letter:—

MY VERY DEAR FATHER,—Obedient to your desire, I depart in search of real life and real persons, or of the best imitations of them. Forgive me, I beseech you, if I commence that search in my own way. I have seen enough of ladies and gentlemen for the present: they must be all very much alike in every part of the world. You desired me to be amused. I go to try if that be possible. Ladies and gentlemen are not amusing; the more ladylike or gentlemanlike they are, the more insipid I find them. My dear father, I go in quest of adventure like Amadis of Gaul, like Don Quixote, like Gil Blas, like Roderick Random; like, in short, the only people seeking real life, the people who never existed except in books. I go on foot; I go alone. I have provided myself with a larger amount of money than I ought to spend, because every man must buy experience, and the first fees are heavy. In fact, I have put fifty pounds into my pocket-book

and into my purse five sovereigns and seventeen shillings. This sum ought to last me a year; but I dare say inexperience will do me out of it in a month, so we will count it as nothing. Since you have asked me to fix my own allowance, I will beg you kindly to commence it this day in advance, by an order to your banker to cash my checks to the amount of five pounds, and to the same amount monthly; namely, at the rate of sixty pounds a year. With that sum I can't starve, and if I want more it may be amusing to work for it. Pray don't send after me, or institute inquiries, or disturb the household and set all the neighbourhood talking, by any mention either of my project or of your surprise at it. I will not fail to write to you from time to time. You will judge best what to say to my dear mother. If you tell her the truth, which of course I should do did I tell her anything, my request is virtually frustrated, and I shall be the talk of the county. You, I know, don't think telling fibs is immoral when it happens to be convenient, as it would be in this case.

I expect to be absent a year or eighteen months; if I prolong my travels it shall be in the way you proposed. I will then take my place in polite society, call upon you to pay all expenses, and fib on my own account to any extent required by that world of fiction which is peopled by illusions and governed by shams.

Heaven bless you, my dear Father, and be quite sure that if I get into any trouble requiring a friend, it is to you I shall turn. As yet I have no other friend on earth, and with prudence and good luck I may escape the infliction of any other friend.

Yours ever affectionately,
KENELM.

P. S.—Dear Father, I open my letter in your library to say again "Bless you," and to tell you how fondly I kissed your old beaver gloves, which I found on the table.

When Sir Peter came to that postscript he took off his spectacles and wiped them: they were very moist.

Then he fell into a profound meditation. Sir Peter was, as I have said, a learned man; he was also in some things a sensible man, and he had a strong sympathy with the humorous side of his son's crotchety character. What was to be said to Lady Chillingly? That matron was quite guiltless of any crime which should deprive her of a husband's confidence in a matter relating to her only son. She was a virtuous matron; morals irreproachable, manners dignified, and *she-baronety*. Any one seeing her for the first time would intuitively say, "Your ladyship." Was this a matron to be suppressed in any well-ordered domestic circle? Sir Peter's conscience loudly answered, "No;" but when, putting conscience into his pocket, he regarded the question at issue as a man of the world, Sir Peter felt that to communicate the contents of his son's letter to Lady Chillingly would be the foolishest thing he could possibly do. Did she know that Kenelm had absconded with the family dignity invested in his very name, no marital authority short of such abuses of power as constitute the offence of cruelty in a wife's action for divorce from social board and nuptial bed could prevent Lady Chillingly

from summoning all the grooms, sending them in all directions with strict orders to bring back the runaway dead or alive; the walls would be placarded with hand-bills, "Strayed from his home," etc.; the police would be telegraphing private instructions from town to town; the scandal would stick to Kenelm Chillingly for life, accompanied with vague hints of criminal propensities and insane hallucinations; he would be ever afterwards pointed out as "THE MAN WHO HAD DISAPPEARED." And to disappear and to turn up again, instead of being murdered, is the most hateful thing a man can do: all the newspapers bark at him, "Tray, Blanche, Sweetheart, and all;" strict explanations of the unseemly fact of his safe existence are demanded in the name of public decorum, and no explanations are accepted; it is life saved, character lost.

Sir Peter seized his hat and walked forth, not to deliberate whether to fib or not to fib to the wife of his bosom, but to consider what kind of fib would the most quickly sink into the bosom of his wife.

A few turns to and fro on the terrace sufficed for the conception and maturing of the fib selected; a proof that Sir Peter was a practised fibber. He re-entered the house, passed into her ladyship's habitual sitting-room, and said with careless gayety, "My old friend the Duke of Clareville is just setting off on a tour to Switzerland with his family. His youngest daughter, Lady Jane, is a pretty girl, and would not be a bad match for Kenelm."

"Lady Jane, the youngest daughter with fair hair, whom I saw

last as a very charming child, nursing a lovely doll presented to her by the Empress Eugenie,—a good match indeed for Kenelm."

"I am glad you agree with me. Would it not be a favourable step towards that alliance, and an excellent thing for Kenelm generally, if he were to visit the Continent as one of the Duke's travelling party?"

"Of course it would."

"Then you approve what I have done; the Duke starts the day after to-morrow, and I have packed Kenelm off to town, with a letter to my old friend. You will excuse all leave taking. You know that though the best of sons he is an odd fellow; and seeing that I had talked him into it, I struck while the iron was hot, and sent him off by the express at nine o'clock this morning, for fear that if I allowed any delay he would talk himself out of it."

"Do you mean to say Kenelm is actually gone? Good gracious."

Sir Peter stole softly from the room, and summoning his valet, said, "I have sent Mr. Chillingly to London. Pack up the clothes he is likely to want, so that he can have them sent at once, whenever he writes for them."

And thus, by a judicious violation of truth on the part of his father, that exemplary truth-teller Kenelm Chillingly saved the honour of his house and his own reputation from the breath of scandal and the inquisition of the police. He was not "THE MAN WHO HAD DISAPPEARED."

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

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

Here he paused, and looked around and above. It was the very height of summer. The sun was just rising over gentle sloping uplands. All the dews on the hedgerows sparkled. There was not a cloud in the heavens. Up rose from the green blades of corn a solitary skylark. His voice woke up the other birds. A few minutes more and the joyous concert began. Kenelm reverently doffed his hat, and bowed his head in mute homage and thanksgiving.

CHAPTER II

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Remain

"Yours faithfully;

"But am,

"With profound consideration,
"Your obedient humble servant."

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

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

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

"Why the devil do you interfere?" cried the stout man, his eyes glaring and his lips foaming with rage. "Ah, are you the

villain? yes, no doubt of it. I'll give it to you, jackanapes," and still grasping the boy with one hand, with the other the stout man darted a blow at Kenelm, from which nothing less than the practised pugilistic skill and natural alertness of the youth thus suddenly assaulted could have saved his eyes and nose. As it was, the stout man had the worst of it: the blow was parried, returned with a dexterous manoeuvre of Kenelm's right foot in Cornish fashion, and *procumbit humi bos*; the stout man lay sprawling on his back. The boy, thus released, seized hold of Kenelm by the arm, and hurrying him along up the field, cried, "Come, come before he gets up! save me! save me!" Ere he had recovered his own surprise, the boy had dragged Kenelm to the gate, and jumped into the gig, sobbing forth, "Get in, get in, I can't drive; get in, and drive—you. Quick! Quick!"

"But—" began Kenelm.

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

"Young gentleman," then said Kenelm, "perhaps you will have the goodness to explain."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Is it possible? What is he?"

"An uncle."

"Hum! uncles are proverbial for cruelty; were so in the

classical days, and Richard III. was the only scholar in his family."

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes."

"And to whom are you going?"

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

Kenelm directed the pony's head towards Tor-Hadham, and

the boy ceased to sob.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“TO-MORROW NIGHT THEATRE OPENS

“RICHARD III. Mr. COMPTON.”

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

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

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

“Stop,” said the boy; “don’t you think that would suit us? it looks quiet.”

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

Kenelm.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Not even a glass of beer?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

appear?"

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

"Yes. About what? Mutton-chops?"

"No. Cauliflowers and rice-pudding."

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

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

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

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

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

"A-h!" said Kenelm.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

for the baby to send up some more chops."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The young face that encountered Kenelm's dark eye became

very flushed, but set and defiant in its expression.

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

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

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

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

"I will take your note," said Kenelm.

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

CHAPTER IV

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

"Where does he lodge?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

fixed upon Kenelm a very brilliant pair of dark eyes, which soon dropped before the steadfast look of that saturnine adventurer.

"Are you in the confidence of the writer of this letter?" asked Mr. Compton, rather confusedly.

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

"Protector!"

"Protector."

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

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

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

"Certainly not, certainly not; quite the contrary," exclaimed Mr. Compton, with genuine animation. "Say I will call in half an hour."

"I will give your message," said Kenelm, with a polite inclination of his head; "and pray pardon me if I remind you that I styled myself the protector of your correspondent, and if the slightest advantage be taken of that correspondent's youth and inexperience or the smallest encouragement be given to plans of abduction from home and friends, the stage will lose an ornament

and Herbert Compton vanish from the scene." With these words Kenelm left the player standing aghast. Gaining the street-door, a lad with a band-box ran against him and was nearly upset.

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

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

CHAPTER V

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

"You saw him?"

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

"Was he alone?"

"No; at supper with his wife."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, I promise that."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ask who composed the words?"

"They are mine," replied the singer.

"And the air?"

"Mine too."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What! the folly is so popular?"

"Does not your own heart tell you so?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"To sing again?"

"Yes."

"And on the subject I suggest?"

"No, indeed."

"What! love, again?"

"I am afraid so."

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

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

"Fiddle-de-dee," said Kenelm.

CHAPTER VI

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

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

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

"Yes," was the scarce audible answer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No, no."

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

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

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

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

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

"What! you leave me here—alone?"

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VII

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

relation, to that relation transfer your charge."

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

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

"Why not?" asked Kenelm.

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

"I will now, Uncle."

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

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

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

Kenelm was gone.

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

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

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

CHAPTER VIII

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

over with the finger and thumb of the left hand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and lives in Exeter."

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

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

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

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

"Where are the girls?" asked the farmer.

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

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

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

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

question, “if your daughters are like their mother, you can’t say that they are not dangerous.”

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

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

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

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

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

“We must not disturb the Missis or we shall get no supper. I’ll

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

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

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

"You are quite a stranger in these parts?"

"Quite."

"You don't even know my name?"

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

"My name is John Saunderson."

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

"By gosh! I never heard that before."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IX

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

our own place on the ladder."

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

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

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

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

"Well said!" cried the farmer.

Not deigning to notice that interruption, the son took up

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"But I should have supposed it wiser to keep your son apart from them. I saw him in the thick of those nymphs."

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

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

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

"Very much better, I take it, sir. Adam was as good as gold, and never had a qualm of conscience or stomach till Eve seduced

him into eating raw apples."

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

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

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

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

"Looking at your dress and—and—"

"The two shillings you gave me? Yes—"

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

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

"Pooh! I don't want to know more of a man's affairs than he thinks fit to tell me. Stay and finish the haymaking. And I say,

lad, I'm glad you don't seem to care for the girls; for I saw a very pretty one trying to flirt with you, and if you don't mind she'll bring you into trouble."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Passing through the garden, Kenelm encountered the junior Saunderson.

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

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

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

"I wish I did joke, but that is a thing I could never do since I came upon earth. Even in the cradle, I felt that life was a very serious matter, and did not allow of jokes. I remember too well my first dose of castor-oil. You too, Mr. Bob, have doubtless imbibed that initiatory preparation to the sweets of existence. The corners of your mouth have not recovered from

the downward curves into which it so rigidly dragged them. Like myself, you are of grave temperament, and not easily moved to jocularity,—nay, an enthusiast for Progress is of necessity a man eminently dissatisfied with the present state of affairs. And chronic dissatisfaction resents the momentary relief of a joke."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, in the towns, but not in these obsolete rural districts; and that brings me to the point. I feel lost, thrown away here. I have something in me, sir, and it can only come out by collision with equal minds. So do me a favour, will you?"

"With the greatest pleasure."

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

"Why Manchester?"

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

"Mr. Bob Saunderson, I will do my best to promote your wishes. This is a land of liberty, and every man should choose his own walk in it, so that, at the last, if he goes to the dogs, he goes to them without that disturbance of temper which is naturally occasioned by the sense of being driven to their jaws by another man against his own will. He has then no one to blame but himself. And that, Mr. Bob, is a great comfort. When, having got into a scrape, we blame others, we unconsciously become unjust, spiteful, uncharitable, malignant, perhaps revengeful. We indulge in feelings which tend to demoralize the whole character. But when we only blame ourselves, we become modest and penitent. We make allowances for others. And indeed self-blame is a salutary exercise of conscience, which a really good man performs every day of his life. And now, will you show me the room in which I am to sleep, and forget for a few hours that I am alive at all: the best thing that can happen to us in this world, my dear Mr. Bob! There's never much amiss with our days, so long as we can forget about them the moment we lay our heads

on the pillow."

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

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

CHAPTER X

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

yet stay, perhaps after all she likes him."

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"A farrier, sir."

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

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

"And what made you hate him?"

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

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

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

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

heart to like?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“No, no, no; he’s as steady and good a lad as ever lived. But—but—”

“Yes; but—”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XII

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

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

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

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

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

"As pretty as yourself?"

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

"Humph!" said Kenelm, incredulously.

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

"What are you sighing for?—tell me."

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

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

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

"What shop do you mean?"

"There!"

"Where? I see no shop."

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

post-office is."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Who be you?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fighting Tom sulkily shook hands.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The spectators pressed round him in terror. They thought he

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XIII

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

He stooped his head, and stepped over the threshold.

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

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

The cottage was very tidily kept, as it is in most village homes where the woman has it her own way. The deal dresser opposite the door had its display of humble crockery. The whitewashed walls were relieved with coloured prints, chiefly Scriptural subjects from the New Testament, such as the Return of the Prodigal Son, in a blue coat and yellow inexpressibles, with his stockings about his heels.

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

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

"I beg your pardon for intruding at this hour, Mrs. Somers," said Kenelm, who had been too familiar with peasants from his earliest childhood not to know how quickly, when in the presence of their household gods, they appreciate respect, and how acutely they feel the want of it. "But my stay in the village is very short,

and I should not like to leave without seeing your son's basket-work, of which I have heard much."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To Kenelm's surprise, it was a work on Pompeii, and

contained woodcuts of the implements and ornaments, mosaics and frescos, found in that memorable little city.

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

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

"Did she? Good heavens!" exclaimed Kenelm.

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

"Why did not you do it?"

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

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.