HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

A GIRL OF THE COMMUNE

George Henty
A Girl of the Commune

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I

Jeremiah Brander was one of the most prominent personages in the Cathedral town of Abchester. He inhabited an old-fashioned, red brick house near the end of the High Street. On either side was a high wall facing the street, and from this a garden, enclosing the house, stretched away to a little stream some two hundred yards in the rear; so that the house combined the advantage of a business residence in front, with those of seclusion, an excellent garden, and an uninterrupted view behind.

Jeremiah Brander enjoyed, in a very large degree, the confidence and respect of his fellow-townsmen. His father and his grandfather had been, like himself, solicitors, and he numbered among his clients most of the county families round. Smaller business he left to the three younger men who divided between them the minor legal business of the place. He in no way regarded them as rivals, and always spoke of them benevolently as worthy men to whom all such business as the collection of debts, criminal prosecutions, and such matters as the buying and selling of houses in the town, could be safely entrusted. As for himself he preferred to attend only to business in his own line,

and he seldom accepted fresh clients, never, indeed, until a newcomer had taken his place among the accepted society of the county.

In the public business of the city, however, he played a very important part. He was Town Clerk, treasurer of several societies, solicitor to the Abchester County and City Bank, legal adviser of the Cathedral Authorities, deacon of the principal Church, City Alderman, president of the Musical Society, treasurer of the Hospital, a director of the Gas Company, and was in fact ready at all times to take a prominent part in any movement in the place.

He was a man of some fifty years of age, inclined to be stout, somewhat florid in complexion, and always dressed with scrupulous care. There was nothing about him to indicate that he belonged to the legal profession. His talk as a rule was genial and almost cheery, but his manner varied according to the circumstances. In his capacity as treasurer he was concise and business-like; in matters connected with the Church he was a little given to be dogmatic, which, considering the liberality of his subscriptions to all the Church objects and charities was but natural.

As president of the Musical Society he was full of tact, and acted the part of general conciliator in all the numerous squabbles, jealousies, and heart-burnings incidental to such associations. In every one of the numerous offices he filled he gave unbounded satisfaction, and the only regret among his

fellow-townsmen was that he had on three occasions refused to accept the honor of the Mayoralty, alleging, and with a fair show of reason, that although ready at all times to aid to the utmost in any movement set afoot for the advantage of the city, it was impossible for him to spare the time required to perform properly the duties of Mayor.

Jeremiah Brander had married the daughter of a gentleman of an old county family which had fallen somewhat in circumstances. It was rumored at the time that he had lent some assistance to the head of the family, and that the match was scarcely a willing one on the lady's part. However that might be, no whisper had ever been heard that the marriage was an unhappy one. It was regarded as rather a come-down for her, but if so she never showed that she felt it as a fall. The marriage had certainly improved his standing in the county. His wife formed a sort of link between him and his clients, and he occupied a considerably better position among them than his father had done, being generally accepted as a friend as well as a legal adviser.

It is not to be supposed that so successful a man had no detractors. One of his legal brethren had been heard to speak of him contemptuously as a humbug. A medical practitioner who had failed to obtain the post of House Surgeon at the Hospital, owing to the support the President had given to another competitor for the post, had alluded to him bitterly as a blatant ass; and a leading publican who had been fined before the

magistrates for diluting his spirits, was in the habit of darkly uttering his opinion that Jerry Brander was a deep card and up to no good.

But as every great man has his enemies, the opinion of a few malcontents went for nothing in the general consensus of admiration for one who was generally regarded as among the pillars of Abchester society, and an honor to the city.

"It is high time you did something, Jerry," his wife said to him one morning after their three daughters had left the breakfast-table.

"In what way, Eliza?" Mr. Brander said, looking up from his newspaper; "it seems to me I do a good deal."

"You know what I mean," she said, sharply. "You know you promised me a hundred times that you would give up all this miserable business and settle down in the county. The girls are growing up, Mary has just left Girton and is of an age to go into society."

"She may be of age," Mr. Brander said, with an irritability unusual to him, "but it strikes me that society is the last thing she is thinking of. We made a mistake altogether in giving way to her and letting her go to that place; she has got her head full of all sorts of absurd ideas about woman's mission and woman's duties, and nonsense of that sort, and has got out of hand altogether. You have not a shadow of influence over her, and I can't say that I have much more. Thank goodness her sisters don't take after her in any way."

"Well, that is all true," Mrs. Brander said, "and you know we have agreed on that subject for a long time, but it is no answer to my question. I have been content to live all these years in this miserable dull place, because I was fool enough to believe your promise that you would in time give up all this work and take a position in the county."

"To some extent I kept my promise," he said. "There is not a week that we don't drive half-a-dozen miles, and sometimes a dozen, to take part in a dull dinner."

"That is all very well so far as it goes, but we simply go to these dinners because you are the family lawyer and I am your wife."

"Well, well, you know, Eliza, that I was in treaty for the Haywood's Estate when that confounded mine that I had invested in went wrong, and fifteen thousand were lost at a blow—a nice kettle of fish we made between us of that."

"We," she repeated, scornfully.

"Yes, we. You know perfectly well that before I went into it I consulted you. The mine was paying well then, and at the rate I bought in would have paid twenty per cent on the investment. I told you that there was a certain risk always with these mines, and that it was either a big addition to our income or a total loss."

"Yes, but you said that coal mines were not like other mines."

"And as a rule they are not," he said, "but there was first that great strike, then a fall in the price of coal, and then just when things began to look better again we came upon that fault that nobody had dreamt of being there, and then the whole thing went

to smash. You must not be impatient. I am as anxious as you are, Eliza, to have done with all this, and I hope by the time Clara and Julia are ready to come out, I may be able to carry out the plans we have always had—I as much as you. Tancred takes a great deal of the work off my hands now, and I can see that he has the confidence of most of my people. In another couple of years I shall have no fear of the business falling off if I hand it over to him entirely. You know he has only a fifth share, and I have no doubt he will be glad to arrange to pay me half or perhaps three-fifths when I retire. Now I must be going across to the office."

The office was situated in a smaller house standing opposite the lawyer's residence. In his father's time a portion of the ground floor of the house was devoted to business purposes, but after his marriage Jeremiah Brander had taken the house opposite and made it his place of business.

About twelve o'clock a gig drew up at the door; a moment later a young clerk came in.

"Doctor Edwards wishes to speak to you, Mr. Brander."

"Show him in."

"Well, doctor," he said, as his visitor entered, "it is seldom that I see you here, though we meet often enough elsewhere. Come you to buy or to sell, or do you want a will prepared or a patient sued? If so you know that's altogether out of my line."

"I quite understand that, Brander," the other said, as he took the armchair the lawyer pointed out to him. "No, I have come to tell you something you will be very sorry to hear. I have just

come in from Fairclose. I had a note from Hartington last night asking me to go over first thing this morning."

"He does not look like a man who would require professional services, doctor; he is sixty, I suppose, but he could tire out most of the younger men either across country or after the partridges."

"Yes, he looks as hard as iron and sound as a roach, but appearances are deceptive. I should have said as you do yesterday if anyone had asked me. I have come to tell you to-day in confidence that he has not many months, perhaps not many weeks to live."

The lawyer uttered an exclamation of surprise and regret.

"Yes, it is a bad business," the doctor went on, "he told me that when he came back from hunting yesterday he went upstairs to change when suddenly the room seemed to go round. Fortunately he had just sat down on a couch and taken off his top boots, and he fell sideways on to it. He says he was insensible for about half an hour; the first thing he was conscious of was the servant knocking at the door, to say that dinner was ready; he told the man that he did not feel well and should not go down; he got off his things and lay down for an hour and then felt well enough to write the note to me. Of course I made a thorough examination of him, and found that, as I feared, it was a bad case of heart disease, probably latent for a long time, but now I should say making rapid progress. Of course I told him something of the truth.

"'Is it as bad as that?' he said. 'I have felt a lot of palpitation

lately after a hard run with the hounds, and fancied something must be wrong. Well, say nothing about it, doctor; when it comes it must come, but I don't want my affairs to be discussed or to know that every man I meet is saying to himself 'poor old buffer, we shan't have him long among us.'

"Then he said more seriously, 'I would rather it should be so than that I should outgrow my strength and become a confirmed invalid. I have enjoyed my life and have done my best to do my duty as a landlord and as a magistrate. I am as prepared to die now as I should be twenty years on. I have been rather a lonely man since I lost my wife. Cuthbert's ways are not my ways, for he likes life in London, cares nothing for field sports. But we can't all be cast in one groove, you know, and I have never tried to persuade him to give up his life for mine, why should I? However, though I wish you to tell no one else, I should be glad if you will call on Brander and ask him to drive over. I made my will years ago, but there are a few matters I should like to talk over with him.'"

"This is sad, indeed," the lawyer said, sympathetically. "The Squire—everyone about here calls him the Squire, you know, though there are men with broader acres than his in the neighborhood—will be terribly missed. Dear, dear, it will make a sad gap indeed: how long do you think he is likely to last?"

"He might go at any moment, Brander; but as he has rallied from this shock it may be some little time before he has another. I should give him perhaps a couple of months. By the way, I think his son ought to be informed of it."

"I will ask him about it," the lawyer said. "Of course Cuthbert ought to know, but may be the Squire will keep it entirely to himself. I should say there is nothing that would upset him more than the thought of being fretted over, and I am not sure that he is not right. Of course I shall drive over there this afternoon."

After Dr. Edwards had left, Jeremiah Brander sat for a long time in deep thought. Once the clerk came in to ask for instructions about a deed that he was drawing up, but he waved him away impatiently. "Put it aside," he said, "I cannot see to it just now, I am busy, and not to be disturbed for the next hour, whoever comes."

It was evidently a difficult problem Jeremiah Brander had to solve. He took out his bank-book and went through his payments for a long while back and then went through some bundles of old checks. One of these he took off the file; it was for the sum of fifteen thousand pounds, made payable to self.

"It is lucky now," he muttered, "that I drew it, as I didn't want it known even in the bank what I was putting the money into," then from a strongbox with the name "J. W. Hartington," he took out a bundle of documents, many of which were receipts for money signed by the Squire, carefully examined the dates and amounts, and put them down on a piece of paper.

"There would be no difficulty about the signature," he said; "none whatever; a child could imitate it."

Laying one of the sheets before him he wrote on a sheet of foolscap "J. W. Hartington" a score of times, imitating the

somewhat crabbed handwriting so accurately that even an expert would have had some difficulty in detecting the difference; he then tore the sheet into small pieces, put them into the heart of the fire, and watched them shrivel up to nothing.

"I think it could be done without the slightest risk," he said to himself, "if one managed the details carefully." Then he sat down and remained for half an hour without stirring. "It can be done," he said at last, "it is well worth trying; the property ought to be worth seventy thousand, but at a forced sale it might go for fifty-five or sixty. I reckoned last week that I could sell out my stocks for twenty-six thousand, which, with the fifteen thousand, would bring it over forty, and I could raise the balance on the estate without difficulty; then with the rents and what I shall draw for this business, I shall be in clover." He locked up the papers carefully, put on his hat, and went across the road to lunch.

There was no trace in his face or manner of the grave matters that had occupied his thoughts for the last two hours. He was cheerful and even gay over the meal. He joked Mary about the advancement of women, told the other girls that he intended that they should take lessons in riding, gave them an amusing account of the meeting of the Musical Society he had attended the evening before, and told his wife that she must dress specially well at the dinner they were going to that evening, as he had heard that most of the county big-wigs would be there.

Mr. Brander was always pleasant in the bosom of his family, occasionally sharp words might pass when he and his wife were

alone, but when the girls were present he was always the genial father. There is no better advertisement for a man than his children's talk. They are unconsciously his best trumpeters, and when Mr. Brander's name was mentioned and his many services to his townsmen talked over, the fact that he was one of the best and kindest of men in his family circle, and that his girls positively worshipped him, was sure to be adduced as final and clinching evidence of the goodness of his character.

After lunch he went down to the bank and had a private interview with the manager.

"By the bye," he said, after a short talk, "I have a client who wants to buy fifty shares."

The manager glanced sharply at him.

"They stand at a premium," Mr. Brander went on, as if not noticing the glance; "though they have fallen thirty shillings lately. It is not an investment I should myself recommend, but at the same time, for various reasons, I did not care to endeavor to dissuade him; it would scarcely do for it to be reported that I had said anything to the disadvantage of this institution, standing as I do in the position of its solicitor. I think you mentioned the other day that you held rather more shares than you cared for, perhaps you could let me have some?"

The other nodded. "I could part with fifty," he said, dryly.

"Let me think, when was the last board meeting?"

"This day fortnight."

"I have rather neglected the matter in the pressure of

business," Mr. Brander said, quietly, "and my client thinks the matter is already concluded, so perhaps it would be as well to date the transfer on the day after the board meeting, and I will date my check accordingly."

"It will be all the same to me," the manager said, "shall I draw out the transfer at once?"

"Do so. The shares stand at six pounds ten, I think, so I will draw you out a check for three hundred and twenty-five pounds. That will be right, I think," and he wrote a check and handed it across to the manager.

"What name shall I put in as the purchaser, Mr. Brander?"

"James William Hartington."

The manager lifted his brows and hesitated for a moment, but then, without a remark, filled in the transfer, dating it as requested.

"I must get two of the clerks to witness my signature," he said.

The lawyer nodded.

Two young clerks were fetched up by the messenger.

"I only want you to witness my signature," the manager said, as he signed his name. "Please to sign here, Mr. Karford; now Mr. Levison, you sign underneath." He held his finger to the spot where they were to sign in such a way that they could not even if they wished read the name inserted in the body of the document.

"I will take it away with me and obtain Hartington's signature," Mr. Brander said, after they had left the room, "I am going over to see him now. I will send it in to you before the next board

meeting, and by the way it would be as well when you get it stamped to pass it in with several others. I know how these things are done, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the directors don't even glance at the names on the transfers. Of course they are nothing to them, they have other things to think about, but there might possibly be some remark at your transferring some of your shares just at the present moment. By the way," he said, carelessly, "I don't think if I were you I would make any further advances to Mildrake. Of course, he has a big business, and no doubt he is all right, but I have learned privately that they are not doing as well as they seem to be, and I know the bank is pretty deep there already."

The manager turned somewhat paler, but said, though with manifest effort—

"They are perfectly safe, Mr. Brander, as safe as a bank."

"No doubt, no doubt, Mr. Cumming, but you know all banks are not perfectly safe. Well, I dare say you can manage that for me."

"Certainly, there can be no difficulty whatever about it. I have ten or twelve other transfers, and there will doubtless be some more before next board meeting. The affixing the stamp is a purely mechanical business."

After the lawyer had left Mr. Cumming sat for some time passing his hand nervously over his chin.

"Brander evidently has an idea that all is not right," he thought to himself. "Of course he cannot know how things really stand

or he would never have let Hartington take shares. It is a curious transaction altogether, and I cannot make head nor tail of it. However, that is no business of mine. I will cash the check at once and send the money to town with the rest; if Mildrake can hold on we may tide matters over for the present; if not there will be a crash. However, he promised to send me forty-eight hours' notice, and that will be enough for me to arrange matters and get off."

Returning to his office the lawyer found his gig waiting at the door, and at once drove over to Fairclose, Mr. Hartington's place.

"I am grieved, indeed, to hear the news Edwards brought me this morning," he said, as he entered the room where the Squire was sitting.

"Yes, it is rather sudden, Brander, but a little sooner or a little later does not make much difference after all. Edwards told you, of course, that I want nothing said about it."

"That is so."

"Nothing would annoy me more than to have any fuss. I shall just go on as I have before, except that I shall give up hunting; it is just the end of the season, and there will be but two or three more meets. I shall drive to them and have a chat with my friends and see the hounds throw off. I shall give out that I strained myself a bit the last time I was out, and must give up riding for a time. Have you brought my will over with you?"

"Yes, I thought you might want to add something to it."

"That is right, there are two or three small legacies I have

thought of; there is a list of them."

Mr. Brander took out the will and added a codicil. The legacies were small ones of ten or twenty pounds to various old people in the village, and the work occupied but a few minutes. The housekeeper and one of the men were called up to witness the signature, and when they had retired Mr. Brander sat chatting for half an hour on general topics, Mr. Hartington avoiding any further allusion to the subject of his illness. Mr. Brander got back in time to dress comfortably for dinner.

"Really, Mary," he said, when he went into the drawing-room where his wife and Mary were waiting ready for him, "I do think you might dress yourself a little more brightly when we are going to such a house as we are to-night. I don't say that that black silk with the lace and those white flowers are not becoming, but I think something lighter and gayer would be more appropriate to a young girl."

"I don't like colors, father, and if it hadn't been for mamma I should never have thought of getting these expensive flowers. I do think women lower themselves by dressing themselves as butterflies. No wonder men consider they think of nothing but dress and have no minds for higher matters."

"Pooh, pooh, my dear, the first duty of a young woman is to look as pretty as she can. According to my experience men don't trouble themselves much about the mind, and a butterfly after all is a good deal more admired than a bee, though the bee is much more useful in the long run."

"If a woman is contented to look like a butterfly, father, she must be content to be taken for one, but I must say I think it is degrading that men should look upon it in that light. They don't dress themselves up in all sorts of colors, why should we."

"I am sure I can't tell you why, Mary, but I suppose it is a sort of instinct, and instincts are seldom wrong. If it had been intended that women should dress themselves as plainly and monotonously as we do, they would not have had the love of decorating themselves implanted almost universally among them. You are on the wrong track, child, on the wrong track altogether, and if you and those who think like you imagine that you are going to upset the laws of nature and to make women rivals of men in mind if not in manner, instead of being what they were meant to be, wives and mothers, you are althogether mistaken."

"That is only another way of putting it, father, that because woman have for ages been treated as inferiors they ought always to remain so."

"Well, well, my dear, we won't argue over it. I think you are altogether wrong, but I have no objection to your going your own way and finding it out at last for yourself, but that does not alter my opinion that on an occasion of a set dinner-party in the county where everybody will be in their fullest fig, that dress, which is pretty and becoming enough in its way, I admit, can hardly be considered as appropriate."

Mary did not answer, but gave an almost imperceptible shrug

of her shoulders, expressing clearly her absolute indifference to other people's tastes so long as she satisfied her own. Mary was indeed decided in most of her opinions. Although essentially feminine in most respects, she and the set to which she had belonged at Girton, had established it as a principle to their own satisfaction, that feminine weaknesses were to be sternly discouraged as the main cause of the position held relatively to men. Thus they cultivated a certain brusqueness of speech, expressed their opinion uncompromisingly, and were distinguished by a certain plainness in the fashion of their gowns, and by the absence of trimmings, frillings, and similar adornments.

At heart she was as fond of pretty things as other girls of her age, and had, when she attired herself, been conscious that she felt a greater satisfaction at her appearance than she ought to have done, and doubted whether she had not made an undue concession to the vanities of society in the matter of her laces and flowers. She had, however, soothed her conscience by the consideration that she was at home but for a short time, and while there she might well fall in with her parents' views, as she would be soon starting for Germany to enter upon earnest work. Her father's remarks then were in a sense satisfactory to her, as they showed that, although she had made concessions, she had at least gone but half-way.

The dinner passed off well. Mary was fortunate in being taken down by a gentleman who had advanced views on the necessity

of British agriculturists adopting scientific farming if they were to hold their own against foreign producers, and she surprised him by the interest she exhibited in his theories. So much so, that he always spoke of her afterwards as one of the most intelligent young women he had ever met.

Mr. Brander was in remarkably good spirits. On such occasions he entirely dropped his profession, and showed a keen interest in all matters connected with the land. No one would that evening have supposed that his mind was in the smallest degree preoccupied by grave matters of any kind.

CHAPTER II

As his father had said, Cuthbert Harrington's tastes differed widely from his own. Cuthbert was essentially a Londoner, and his friends would have had difficulty in picturing him as engaged in country pursuits. Indeed, Cuthbert Hartington, in a scarlet coat, or toiling through a turnip field in heavy boots with a gun on his shoulder, would have been to them an absurd anomaly.

It was not that he lacked strength; on the contrary, he was tall and well, if loosely, built. Grace is not a common manly attribute, but he possessed it to an eminent degree. There was a careless ease in his manner, an unconscious picturesqueness in his poses, a turn, that would have smacked of haughtiness had there been the slightest element of pride in his disposition, in the curve of the neck, and well-poised head.

His life was chiefly passed among artists, and like them as a class, he affected loose and easy attire. He wore turn-down collars with a carelessly-knotted necktie, and a velvet jacket. He was one of those men whom his intimates declared to be capable of doing anything he chose, and who chose to do nothing. He had never distinguished himself in any way at Harrow. He had maintained a fair place in his forms as he moved up in the school, but had done so rather from natural ability than from study. He had never been in the eleven, although it was the general opinion he would have certainly had a place in it had he

chosen to play regularly. As he sauntered through Harrow so he sauntered through Cambridge; keeping just enough chapels and lectures to avoid getting into trouble, passing the examinations without actual discredit, rowing a little, playing cricket when the fit seized him, but preferring to take life easily and to avoid toil, either mental or bodily. Nevertheless he read a great deal, and on general subjects was one of the best informed men of his college.

He spent a good deal of his time in sketching and painting, art being his one passion. His sketches were the admiration of his friends, but although he had had the best lessons he could obtain at the University he lacked the application and industry to convert the sketches into finished paintings. His vacations were spent chiefly on the Continent, for his life at home bored him immensely, and to him a week among the Swiss lakes, or in the galleries of Munich or Dresden, was worth more than all the pleasures that country life could give him.

He went home for a short time after leaving the University, but his stay there was productive of pleasure to neither his father nor himself. They had not a single taste in common, and though Cuthbert made an effort to take an interest in field sports and farming, it was not long before his father himself told him that as it was evident the life was altogether distasteful to him, and his tastes lay in another direction, he was perfectly ready to make him an allowance that would enable him either to travel or to live in chambers in London.

"I am sorry, of course, lad," he said, "that you could not make

yourself happy with me here, but I don't blame you, for it is after all a matter of natural disposition. Of course you will come down here sometimes, and at any rate I shall be happier in knowing that you are living your own life and enjoying yourself in your own way, than I should be in seeing you trying in vain to take to pursuits from which you would derive no pleasure whatever."

"I am awfully sorry, father," Cuthbert had said. "I heartily wish it had been otherwise, but I own that I would rather live in London on an almost starvation income than settle down here. I have really tried hard to get to like things that you do. I feel it would have been better if I had always stayed here and had a tutor; then, no doubt, I should have taken to field sports and so on. However, it is no use regretting that now, and I am very thankful for your offer."

Accordingly he had gone up to London, taken chambers in Gray's Inn, where two or three of his college friends were established, and joined a Bohemian Club, where he made the acquaintance of several artists, and soon became a member of their set. He had talked vaguely of taking up art as a profession, but nothing ever came of it. There was an easel or two in his rooms and any number of unfinished paintings; but he was fastidious over his own work and unable from want of knowledge of technique to carry out his ideas, and the canvases were one after another thrown aside in disgust. His friends upbraided him bitterly with his want of application, not altogether without effect; he took their remonstrances in perfect good temper, but

without making the slightest effort to improve. He generally accompanied some of them on their sketching expeditions to Normandy, Brittany, Spain, or Algiers, and his portfolios were the subject of mingled admiration and anger among his artist friends in St. John's Wood; admiration at the vigor and talent that his sketches displayed, anger that he should be content to do nothing greater.

His days were largely spent in their studios where, seated in the most comfortable chair he could find, he would smoke lazily and watch them at work and criticise freely. Men grumbled and laughed at his presumption, but were ready to acknowledge the justice of his criticism. He had an excellent eye for color and effect and for the contrast of light and shade, and those whose pictures were hung, were often ready enough to admit that the canvas owed much of its charm to some happy suggestion on Cuthbert's often ready part.

Every two or three months he went home for a fortnight. He was greatly attached to his father, and it was the one drawback to the contentment of his life that he had been unable to carry out the Squire's wishes, and to settle down with him at Fairclose. He would occasionally bemoan himself over this to his friends.

"I am as bad as the prodigal son," he would say, "except that I don't get what I deserve, and have neither to feed on husks nor to tend swine; but though the fatted calf would be ready for me if I were to return I can't bring myself to do so."

"I don't know about being a prodigal," Wilson, one of the

oldest of his set would grumble in reply, "but I do know you are a lazy young beggar, and are wasting your time and opportunities; it is a thousand pities you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth. Your father ought to have turned you adrift with an allowance just sufficient to have kept you on bread and butter, and have left you to provide everything else for yourself; then you would have been an artist, sir, and would have made a big name for yourself. You would have had no occasion to waste your time in painting pot-boilers, but could have devoted yourself to good, honest, serious work, which is more than most of us can do. We are obliged to consider what will sell and to please the public by turning out what they call pretty pictures—children playing with dogs, and trumpery things of that sort. Bah, it is sickening to see a young fellow wasting his life so."

But Cuthbert only laughed good-temperedly, he was accustomed to such tirades, and was indeed of a singularly sweet and easy temper.

It was the end of the first week in May, the great artistic event of the year was over, the Academy was opened, the pictures had been seen and criticised, there was the usual indignation at pictures being hung generally voted to be daubs, while others that had been considered among the studios as certain of acceptance, had been rejected. Two or three of Cuthbert's friends were starting at once for Cornwall to enjoy a rest after three months' steady work and to lay in a stock of fresh sketches for pictures for the following year.

"I will go with you," Cuthbert said when they informed him of their intention, "it is early yet, but it is warm enough even for loafing on the rocks, and I hate London when it's full. I will go for a fortnight anyhow," and so with Wilson and two younger men, he started for Newquay, on the north of Cornwall. Once established there the party met only at meals.

"We don't want to be doing the same bits," Wilson said, "and we shall see plenty of each other of an evening." Cuthbert was delighted with the place, and with his usual enthusiasm speedily fixed upon a subject, and setting up his easel and camp-stool began work on the morning after his arrival. He had been engaged but a few hours when two young ladies came along. They stopped close to him, and Cuthbert, who hated being overlooked when at work, was on the point of growling an anathema under his fair drooping mustache, when one of the girls came close and said quietly—

"How are you, Mr. Hartington? Who would have thought of meeting you here?"

He did not recognize her for a moment and then exclaimed—

"Why, it is Mary Brander. I beg your pardon," he went on, taking off his soft, broad-brimmed hat, "I ought to have said Miss Brander, but having known you so long as Mary Brander, the name slipped out. It must have been three years since we met, and you have shot up from a girl into a full-grown young lady. Are your father and mother here?"

"No, I came down last week to stay with my friend, Miss

Treadwyn, who was at Girton with me. Anna, this is Mr. Cuthbert Hartington. Mr. Hartington's place is near Abchester, and he is one of my father's clients."

Miss Treadwyn bowed and Cuthbert took off his hat.

"We have known each other ever since we were children," Mary went on, "that is to say ever since I was a child, for he was a big boy then; he often used to come into our house, while Mr. Hartington was going into business matters with my father, and generally amused himself by teasing me. He used to treat me as if I was a small sort of monkey, and generally ended by putting me in a passion; of course that was in the early days."

"Before you came to years of discretion, Miss Brander. You were growing a very discreet damsel when I last saw you, and I felt rather afraid of you. I know that you were good enough to express much disapproval of me and my ways."

"Very likely I did, though I don't remember it. I think I was very outspoken in those days."

"I do not think you have changed much in that respect, Mary," Miss Treadwyn said.

"Why should one say what one does not think," Mary said, sturdily, "it would be much better if we all did so. Do you not agree with me, Mr. Hartington?"

"It depends upon what 'better' means; it would be awful to think of the consequences if we all did so. Society would dissolve itself into its component parts and every man's hand would be against his neighbor. I do not say that people should say what they

do not think, but I am sure that the world would not be so pleasant as it is by a long way if every one was to say exactly what he did think. Just imagine what the sensation of authors or artists would be if critics were to state their opinions with absolute candor!"

"I think it were better if they did so, Mr. Hartington; in that case there would be fewer idiotic books written and fewer men wasting their lives in trying vainly to produce good paintings."

"That is true enough," Cuthbert laughed, "but you must remember that critics do not buy either books or paintings, and that there are plenty of people who buy the idiotic books and are perfectly content with pictures without a particle of artistic merit."

"I suppose so," she admitted, reluctantly, "but so much the worse, for it causes mediocrity!"

"But we are most of us mediocre—authors like Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot are the exception—and so are artists like Millais and Landseer, but when books and paintings give pleasure they fulfil their purpose, don't they?"

"If their purpose is to afford a livelihood to those that make them, I suppose they do, Mr. Hartington; but they do not fulfil what ought to be their purpose—which should, of course, be to elevate the mind or to improve the taste."

He shook his head.

"That is too lofty an ideal altogether for me," he said. "I doubt whether men are much happier for their minds being improved or their tastes elevated, unless they are fortunate enough to have

sufficient means to gratify those tastes. If a man is happy and contented with the street he lives in, the house he inhabits, the pictures on his walls, and the books he gets from a library, is he better off when you teach him that the street is mean and ugly, the house an outrage on architectural taste, the wall-papers revolting, the pictures daubs, and the books trash? Upon my word I don't think so. I am afraid I am a Philistine."

"But you are an artist, are you not, Mr. Hartington," Miss Treadwyn said, looking at the sketch which had already made considerable progress.

"Unfortunately, no; I have a taste for art, but that is all. I should be better off if I had not, for then I should be contented with doing things like this; as it is I am in a perpetual state of grumble because I can do no better."

"You know the Latin proverb *meliora video*, and so on, Mr. Hartington, does it apply?"

"That is the first time I have had Latin quoted against me by a young lady," Cuthbert said, smilingly, but with a slight flush that showed the shaft had gone home. "I will not deny that the quotation exactly hits my case. I can only plead that nature, which gave me the love for art, did not give me the amount of energy and the capacity for hard work that are requisite to its successful cultivation, and has not even given me the stimulus of necessity, which is, I fancy, the greatest human motor."

"I should be quite content to paint as well as you do, Mr. Hartington," Anna Treadwyn said. "It must add immensely

to the pleasure of travelling to be able to carry home such remembrances of places one has seen."

"Yes, it does so, Miss Treadwyn. I have done a good deal of wandering about in a small way, and have quite a pile of portfolios by whose aid I can travel over the ground again and recall not only the scenery but almost every incident, however slight, that occurred in connection therewith."

"Well, Anna, I think we had better be continuing our walk."

"I suppose we had. May I ask, Mr. Hartington, where you are staying? I am sure my mother will be very pleased if you will call upon us at Porthalloc. There is a glorious view from the garden. I suppose you will be at work all day, but you are sure to find us in of an evening."

"Yes, I fancy I shall live in the open air as long as there is light enough to sketch by, Miss Treadwyn, but if your mother will be good enough to allow me to waive ceremony, I will come up some evening after dinner; in the meantime may I say that I shall always be found somewhere along the shore, and will be glad to receive with due humility any chidings that my old playmate, if she will allow me to call her so, may choose to bestow upon me."

Anna Treadwyn nodded. "I expect we shall be here every day; the sea is new to Mary, and at present she is wild about it."

"How could you go on so, Mary," she went on, as they continued their walk.

"How could I?" the girl replied. "Have we not agreed that one of the chief objects of women's lives should not only be to raise

their own sex to the level of man, but generally to urge men to higher aims, and yet because I have very mildly shown my disapproval of Cuthbert Hartington's laziness and waste of his talents, you ask me how I can do it!"

"Well, you see, Mary, it is one thing for us to form all sorts of resolutions when we were sitting eight or ten of us together in your rooms at Girton; but when it comes to putting them into execution one sees things in rather a different light. I quite agree with our theories and I hope to live up to them, as far as I can, but it seems to me much easier to put the theories into practice in a general way than in individual cases. A clergyman can denounce faults from the pulpit without giving offence to anyone, but if he were to take one of his congregation aside and rebuke him, I don't think the experiment would be successful."

"Nathan said unto David, thou art the man."

"Yes, my dear, but you will excuse my saying that at present you have scarcely attained the position of Nathan."

Mary Brander laughed.

"Well, no, but you see Cuthbert Hartington is not a stranger. I have known him ever since I can remember, and used to like him very much, though he did delight in teasing me; but I have been angry with him for a long time, and though I had forgotten it, I remember I did tell him my mind last time I saw him. You see his father is a dear old man, quite the beau-ideal of a country squire, and there he is all alone in his big house while his son chooses to live up in London. I have heard my father and mother

say over and over again that he ought to be at home taking his place in the county instead of going on his own way, and I have heard other ladies say the same."

"Perhaps mothers with marriageable daughters, Mary," Anna Treadwyn said with a smile, "but I don't really see why you should be so severe on him for going his own way. You are yourself doing so without, I fancy, much deference to your parents' opinions, and besides I have heard you many a time rail against the soullessness of the conversation and the gossip and tittle-tattle of society in country towns, meaning in your case in Abchester, and should, therefore, be the last to blame him for revolting against it."

"You forget, Anna," Mary said, calmly, "that the cases are altogether different. He goes his way with the mere selfish desire to amuse himself. I have set, what I believe to be a great and necessary aim before me. I don't pretend that there is any sacrifice in it, on the contrary it is a source of pleasure and satisfaction to devote myself to the mission of helping my sex to regain its independence, and to take up the position which it has a right to."

"Of course we are both agreed on that, my dear, we only differ in the best way of setting about it."

"I don't suppose Mr. Hartington will take what I said to heart," Mary replied serenely, "and if he does it is a matter of entire indifference to me."

The subject of their conversation certainly showed no signs of

taking the matter to heart. He smiled as he resumed his work.

"She is just what she used to be," he said to himself. "She was always terribly in earnest. My father was saying last time I was down that he had learned from Brander that she had taken up all sorts of Utopian notions about women's rights and so on, and was going to spend two years abroad, to get up her case, I suppose. She has grown very pretty. She was very pretty as a child, though of course last time I saw her she was at the gawky age. She is certainly turning the tables on me, and she hit me hard with that stale old Latin quotation. I must admit it was wonderfully apt. She has a good eye for dress; it is not many girls that can stand those severely plain lines, but they suit her figure and face admirably. I must get her and her friend to sit on a rock and let me put them into the foreground of one of my sketches; funny meeting her here, however, it will be an amusement."

After that it became a regular custom for the two girls to stop as they came along the shore for a chat with Cuthbert, sometimes sitting down on the rocks for an hour; their stay, however, being not unfrequently cut short by Mary getting up with heightened color and going off abruptly. It was Cuthbert's chief amusement to draw her out on her favorite subject, and although over and over again she told herself angrily that she would not discuss it with him, she never could resist falling into the snares Cuthbert laid for her. She would not have minded had he argued seriously with her, but this was just what he did not do, either laughing at her theory, or replying to her arguments with a mock seriousness

that irritated her far more than his open laughter.

Anna Treadwyn took little part in the discussions, but sat an amused listener. Mary had been the recognized leader of her set at Girton; her real earnestness and the fact that she intended to go abroad to fit herself the better to carry out her theories, but making her a power among the others. Much as Anna liked and admired her, it amused her greatly to see her entangled in the dilemma, into which Cuthbert led her, occasionally completely posing her by his laughing objections. Of an evening Cuthbert often went up to Porthalloc, where he was warmly welcomed by Anna's mother, whose heart he won by the gentle and deferential manner that rendered him universally popular among the ladies of the families of his artist friends. She would sit smilingly by when the conflicts of the morning were sometimes renewed, for she saw with satisfaction that Anna at least was certainly impressed with Cuthbert's arguments and banter, and afforded very feeble aid to Mary Brander in her defence of their opinions.

"I feel really obliged to you, Mr. Hartington," she said one evening, when the two girls happened to be both out of the room when he arrived, "for laughing Anna out of some of the ideas she brought back from Girton. At one time these gave me a great deal of concern, for my ideas are old-fashioned, and I consider a woman's mission is to cheer and brighten her husband's home, to be a good wife and a good mother, and to be content with the position God has assigned to her as being her right and proper one. However, I have always hoped and believed that she would

grow out of her new-fangled ideas, which I am bound to say she never carried to the extreme that her friend does. The fact that I am somewhat of an invalid and that it is altogether impossible for her to carry out such a plan as Miss Brander has sketched for herself, and that there is no opportunity whatever for her to get up a propaganda in this quiet little Cornish town, has encouraged that hope; she herself has said but little on the subject since she came home, and I think your fights with Miss Brander will go far to complete her cure."

"It is ridiculous from beginning to end," Cuthbert said, "but it is natural enough. It is in just the same way that some young fellows start in life with all sorts of wild radical notions, and settle down in middle age into moderate Liberals, if not into contented Conservatives. The world is good enough in its way and at any rate if it is to get better it will be by gradual progress and not by individual effort. There is much that is very true in Miss Brander's views that things might be better than they are, it is only with her idea that she has a mission to set them right that I quarrel. Earnestness is no doubt a good thing, but too much of it is a misfortune rather than an advantage. No doubt I am prejudiced," he laughed, "because I am afraid that I have no particle of it in my composition. Circumstances have been against its growth, and there is no saying what I might be if they were to change. At present, at any rate, I have never felt the want of it, but I can admire it among others even though I laugh at it."

A month passed, and Wilson and his two companions moved

further along the coast in search of fresh subjects, but Cuthbert declined to accompany them, declaring that he found himself perfectly comfortable where he was, at which his companions all laughed, but made no attempt to persuade him further.

"Do you know, Mary," Anna said, a few days later, "you and Mr. Hartington remind me strongly of Beatrice and Benedict."

"What do you mean, Anna?" Mary asked, indignantly.

"Nothing, my dear," Anna replied, demurely, "except that you are perpetually quarrelling."

"We may be that," Mary said, shortly, "but we certainly shall not arrive at the same kind of conclusion to our quarrel."

"You might do worse, Mary; Mr. Hartington is charming. My mother, who is not given to general admiration, says he is one of the most delightful men that she ever met. He is heir to a good estate, and unless I am greatly mistaken, the idea has occurred to him if not to you. I thought so before, but have been convinced of it since he determined to remain here while those men he was with have all gone away."

"You will make me downright angry with you, Anna, if you talk such nonsense," Mary said, severely. "You know very well that I have always made up mind that nothing shall induce me to marry and give up my freedom, at any rate for a great many years, and then only to a man who will see life as I do, become my co-worker and allow me my independence. Mr. Hartington is the last man I should choose; he has no aim or purpose whatever, and he would ruin my life as well as his own. No, thank you.

However, I am convinced that you are altogether mistaken, and Cuthbert Hartington would no more dream of asking me to be his wife than I should of taking him for a husband—the idea is altogether preposterous."

However, a week later, Cuthbert, on going up to Porthalloc one morning, and catching sight of Mary Brander in the garden by herself, joined her there and astonished her by showing that Anna was not mistaken in her view. He commenced abruptly—

"Do you know, Miss Brander, I have been thinking over your arguments, and I have come to the conclusion that woman has really a mission in life. Its object is not precisely that which you have set yourself, but it is closely allied to it, my view being that her mission is to contribute to the sum of human happiness by making one individual man happy!"

"Do you mean, is it possible that you can mean, that you think woman's mission is to marry?" she asked, with scorn, "are you going back to that?"

"That is entirely what I meant, but it is a particular case I was thinking of, rather than a general one. I was thinking of your case and mine. I do not say that you might not do something towards adding to the happiness of mankind, but mankind are not yearning for it. On the other hand I am sure that you could make me happy, and I am yearning for that kind of happiness."

"Are you really in earnest, Mr. Hartington?"

"Quite in earnest, very much so; in the six weeks that I have been here I have learnt to love you, and to desire, more earnestly

certainly than I have ever desired anything before, that you should be my wife. I know that you do not credit me with any great earnestness of purpose, but I am quite earnest in this. I do love you, Mary."

"I am sorry to hear it, and am surprised, really and truly surprised. I thought you disapproved of me altogether, but I did think you gave me credit for being sincere. It is clear you did not, or you could not suppose that I would give up all my plans before even commencing them. I like you very much, Cuthbert, though I disapprove of you as much as I thought you disapproved of me; but if ever I do marry, and I hope I shall never be weak enough to do so, it must be to someone who has the same views of life that I have; but I feel sure that I shall never love anyone if love is really what one reads of in books, where woman is always ready to sacrifice her whole life and her whole plans to a man who graciously accepts the sacrifice as a matter of course."

"I was afraid that that would be your answer," he said gravely. "And yet I was not disposed to let the chance of happiness go without at least knowing that it was so. I can quite understand that you do not even feel that I am really in earnest. So small did I feel my chances were, that I should have waited for a time before I risked almost certain refusal, had it not been that you are on the point of going abroad for two years. And two years is a long time to wait when one feels that one's chance is very small at the end of that time. Well, it is of no use saying anything more about it. I may as well say good-bye at once, for I shall pack up and go.

Good-bye, dear; I hope that you are wrong, and that some day you will make some man worthy of you happy, but when the time comes remember that I prophesy that he will not in the slightest degree resemble the man you picture to yourself now. I think that the saying that extremes meet is truer than those that assert that like meets like; but whoever he is I hope that he will be someone who will make you as happy as I should have tried to do."

"Good-bye, Cuthbert," she said, frankly, "I think this has all been very silly, and I hope that by the time we meet again you will have forgotten all about it."

There was something in his face, as she looked up into it, that told her what she had before doubted somewhat, that he had been really in earnest for once in his life, and she added, "I do hope we shall be quite good friends when we meet again, and that you will then see I am quite right about this."

He smiled, gave her a little nod, and then dropping her hand sauntered into the house.

"It is the most foolish thing I have ever heard of," she said to herself, pettishly, as she looked after him. "I can't think how such an idea ever occurred to him. He must have known that even if I had not determined as I have done to devote myself to our cause, he was the last sort of man I should ever have thought of marrying. Of course he is nice and I always thought so, but what is niceness when he has no aims, no ambitions in life, and he is content to waste it as he is doing."

Five minutes later Anna Treadwyn joined her in the garden.

"So I was right after all, Mary?"

"How do you know, do you mean to say that he has told you?"

"Not exactly, but one can use one's eyes, I suppose. He said nothing last night about going away, and now he is leaving by this afternoon's coach; besides, although he laughed and talked as usual one could see with half an eye that it was forced. So you have actually refused him?"

"Of course I have, how can you ask such a question? It was the most perfectly absurd idea I ever heard of."

"Well, I hope that you will never be sorry for it, Mary."

"There is not much fear of that," Mary said, with a toss of her head, "and let me say that it is not very polite, either of you or him, to think that I should be ready to give up all my plans in life, the first time I am asked, and that by a gentleman who has not the slightest sympathy with them. It is a very silly and tiresome affair altogether, and I do hope I shall never hear anything of it again."

CHAPTER III

Cuthbert Hartington had been back in town but two days when he received a letter from Mr. Brander apprising him of the sudden death of his father. It was a terrible shock, for he had no idea whatever that Mr. Hartington was in any way out of health. Cuthbert had written only the day before to say that he should be down at the end of the week, for indeed he felt unable to settle down to his ordinary course of life in London. He at once sent off a telegram ordering the carriage to meet him by the evening train, and also one to Mr. Brander begging him to be at the house if possible when he arrived.

Upon hearing from the lawyer that his father had been aware that he might be carried off at any moment by heart disease, but that he had strictly forbidden the doctor and himself writing to him, or informing anyone of the circumstances, he said—

"It is just like my father, but I do wish it had not been so. I might have been down with him for the last three months of his life."

"The Squire went on just in his usual way, Cuthbert. I am sure that he preferred it so. He shrunk, as he said, from knowing that people he met were aware that his days were numbered, and even with me after our first conversation on the subject, he made no allusion whatever to it. He was as cheery and bright as ever, and when I last met him a week ago, even I who knew the

circumstances, could see no difference whatever in his manner. I thought he was wrong, at first, but I came to the conclusion afterwards that his decision was not an unwise one. He spared you three months of unavailing pain; he had no fear of death, and was able to go about as before to meet his friends without his health being a subject of discussion, and in all ways to go on as usual until the call came. His death was evidently painless; he sat down in his easy arm-chair after lunch for his usual half-hour's nap, and evidently expired in his sleep. The servant found him, as he believed, still asleep when he came in to tell him that the carriage was at the door, and it was only on touching him he discovered what had happened. They sent the carriage off at once to fetch Dr. Edwards. He looked in at my office and took me over with him, and I got back in time to write to you."

The shock that the Squire's sudden death caused in Abchester, was, a fortnight later, obliterated by the still greater sensation caused by the news that the bank had put up its shutters. The dismay excited thereby was heightened when it became known that the manager had disappeared, and reports got about that the losses of the bank had been enormous. The first investigation into its affairs more than confirmed the worst rumors. For years it had been engaged in propping up the firm not only of Mildrake and Co., which had failed to meet its engagements on the day preceding the announcement of the bank's failure, but of three others which had broken down immediately afterwards. In all of these firms Mr. Cumming was found to have had a large interest.

On the day after the announcement of the failure of the bank, Mr. Brander drove up to Fairclose. He looked excited and anxious when he went into the room where Cuthbert was sitting, listlessly, with a book before him.

"I have a piece of very bad news to tell you, Mr. Hartington," he said.

"Indeed?" Cuthbert said, without any very great interest in his voice.

"Yes; I daresay you heard yesterday of the failure of the bank?"

"Dr. Edwards looked in here as he was driving past to tell me of it. Had we any money in it?"

"I wish that was all, it is much worse than that, sir. Your father was a shareholder in the bank."

"He never mentioned it to me," Cuthbert said, his air of indifference still unchanged.

"He only bought shares a comparatively short time ago, I think it was after you were here the last time. There were some vague rumors afloat as to the credit of the bank, and your father, who did not believe them, took a few shares as a proof of his confidence in it, thinking, he said, that the fact that he did so might allay any feeling of uneasiness."

"I wonder that you allowed him to invest in bank shares, Mr. Brander."

"Of course I should not have done so if I had had the slightest idea that the bank was in difficulties, but I was in no way behind

the scenes. I transacted their legal business for them in the way of drawing up mortgages, investigating titles, and seeing to the purchase and sales of property here in the county; beyond that I knew nothing of their affairs. I was not consulted at all in the matter. Your father simply said to me, 'I see that the shares in the bank have dropped a little, and I hear there are some foolish reports as to its credit; I think as a county gentleman I ought to support the County Bank, and I wish you to buy say fifty shares for me.'"

"That was just like my father," Cuthbert said, admiringly, "he always thought a great deal of his county, and I can quite understand his acting as he did. Well, they were ten pound shares, I think, so it is only five hundred gone at the worst."

"I am afraid you don't understand the case," Mr. Brander said, gravely; "each and every shareholder is responsible for the debts of the bank to the full extent of his property, and although I earnestly hope that only the bank's capital has been lost, I can't disguise from you that in the event of there being a heavy deficiency it will mean ruin to several of the shareholders."

"That is bad, indeed," Cuthbert said, thoroughly interested now. "Of course you have no idea at present of what the state of the bank is."

"None whatever, but I hope for the best. I am sorry to say I heard a report this morning that Mr. Hislop, who was, as you know, the chairman of the bank, had shot himself, which, if true, will, of course, intensify the feeling of alarm among the

shareholders."

Cuthbert sat silent for some time.

"Well," he said, at last, "this is sudden news, but if things are as bad as possible, and Fairclose and all the estate go, I shall be better off than many people. I shall have that five thousand pounds that came to me by my mother's settlement, I suppose?"

"Yes, no doubt. The shares have not been transferred to my name as your father's executor. I had intended when I came up next week to go through the accounts with you, to recommend you to instruct me to dispose of them at once, which I should have done in my capacity of executor without transferring them in the first place to you. Therefore, any claim there may be will lie against the estate and not against you personally."

"That is satisfactory anyhow," Cuthbert said, calmly. "I don't know how I should get on without it. Of course I shall be sorry to lose this place, but in some respects the loss will be almost a relief to me. A country life is not my vocation, and I have been wondering for the last fortnight what on earth I should do with myself. As it is, I shall, if it comes to the worst, be obliged to work. I never have worked because I never have been forced to do so, but really I don't know that the prospects are altogether unpleasant, and at any rate I am sure that I would rather be obliged to paint for my living than to pass my life in trying to kill time."

The lawyer looked keenly at his client, but he saw that he was really speaking in earnest, and that his indifference at the risk of

the loss of his estates was unaffected.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "I am glad indeed that you take it so easily; of course, I hope most sincerely that things may not be anything like so bad as that, and that, at worst, a call of only a few pounds a share will be sufficient to meet any deficiency that may exist, still I am heartily glad to see that you are prepared to meet the event in such a spirit, for to most men the chance of such a calamity would be crushing."

"Possibly I might have felt it more if it had come upon me two or three years later, just as I had got to be reconciled to the change of life, but you see I have so recently and unexpectedly come into the estate that I have not even begun to appreciate the pleasures of possession or to feel that they weigh in the slightest against the necessity of my being obliged to give up the life I have been leading for years. By the bye," he went on, changing the subject carelessly, "how is your daughter getting on in Germany? I happened to meet her at Newquay three weeks ago, and she told me she was going out there in the course of a week or so. I suppose she has gone."

"Yes, she has gone," Mr. Brander said, irritably. "She is just as bent as you were, if you will permit me to say so, on the carrying out of her own scheme of life. It is a great annoyance to her mother and me, but argument has been thrown away upon her, and as unfortunately the girls have each a couple of thousand, left under their own control by their mother's sister, she was in a position to do as she liked. However, I hope that a year or two

will wean her from the ridiculous ideas he has taken up."

"I should doubt whether her cure will be as prompt as you think, it seemed to me that her ideas were somewhat fixed, and it will need a good deal of failure to disillusionize her."

"She is as obstinate as a little mule," Mr. Brander said shortly. "However, I must be going," he went on, rising from his chair. "I drove over directly I had finished my breakfast and must hurry back again to the office. Well, I hope with all my heart, Mr. Hartington, that this most unfortunate affair will not turn out so badly after all."

Cuthbert did not echo the sentiment, but accompanied his visitor silently to the door, and after seeing him off returned to the room, where he reseated himself in his chair, filled and lighted his pipe, put his legs on to another chair, and proceeded to think the matter out.

It was certainly a wholly unexpected change; but at present he did not feel it to be an unpleasant one, but rather a relief. He had for the last ten days been bemoaning himself. While but an heir apparent he could live his own life and take his pleasure as he liked. As owner of Fairclose he had duties to perform—he had his tenants' welfare to look after, there would be the bailiff to interview every morning and to go into all sorts of petty details as to hedges and ditches, fences and repairs, and things he cared not a jot for, interesting as they were to his dear old father. He supposed he should have to go on the Bench and to sit for hours listening to petty cases of theft and drunkenness, varied only by

a poaching affray at long intervals.

There would be county gatherings to attend, and he would naturally be expected to hunt and to shoot. It had all seemed to him inexpressedly dreary. Now all that was, if Brander's fears were realized, at an end, even if it should not turn out to be as bad as that, the sum he would be called upon to pay might be sufficient to cripple the estate and to afford him a good and legitimate excuse for shutting up or letting the house, and going away to retrench until the liabilities were all cleared off. Of course he would have to work in earnest now, but even the thought of that was not altogether unpleasant.

"I believe it is going to be the best thing that ever happened to me," he said to himself. "I know that I should never have done anything if it hadn't been for this, and though I am not fool enough to suppose I am ever going to turn out anything great, I am sure that after a couple of years' hard work I ought to paint decently, and anyhow to turn out as good things as some of those men. It is just what I have always been wanting, though I did not know it. I am afraid I shall have to cut all those dear old fellows, for I should never be able to give myself up to work among them. I should say it would be best for me to go over to Paris; I can start on a fresh groove there. At my age I should not like to go through any of the schools here. I might have three months with Terrier; that would be just the thing to give me a good start; he is a good fellow but one who never earns more than bread and cheese.

"There isn't a man in our set who really knows as much about

it as he does. He has gone through our own schools, was a year at Paris, and another at Rome. He has got the whole thing at his fingers' ends, and would make a splendid master if he would but go in for pupils, but with all that he can't paint a picture. He has not a spark of imagination, nor an idea of art; he has no eye for color, or effect. He can paint admirably what he sees, but then he sees nothing but bare facts. He is always hard up, poor fellow, and it would be a real boon to him to take me for three months and stick at it hard with me, and by the end of that time I ought to be able to take my place in some artist's school in Paris without feeling myself to be an absolute duffer among a lot of fellows younger than myself. By Jove, this news is like a breeze on the east coast in summer—a little sharp, perhaps, but splendidly bracing and healthy, just the thing to set a fellow up and make a man of him. I will go out for a walk and take the dogs with me."

He got up, went to the stables, and unchained the dogs, who leapt round him in wild delight, for the time of late had been as dull for them as for him; told one of the stable boys to go to the house and say that he would not be back to lunch, and then went for a twenty mile walk over the hills, and returned somewhat tired with the unaccustomed exertion, but with a feeling of buoyancy and light-heartedness such as he had not experienced for a long time past. For the next week he remained at home, and then feeling too restless to do so any longer, went to town, telling Mr. Brander to let him know as soon as the committee, that had

already commenced its investigations into the real state of the bank's affairs, made their first report.

The lawyer was much puzzled over Cuthbert's manner. It seemed to him utterly impossible that anyone should really be indifferent to losing a fine estate, and yet he could see no reason for Cuthbert's assuming indifference on so vital a subject unless he felt it. He even discussed the matter with his wife.

"I cannot understand that young Hartington," he said; "most men would have been completely crumpled up at the news I gave him, but he took it as quietly as if it had been a mere bagatelle. The only possible explanation of his indifference that I can think of is that he must have made some low marriage in London, and does not care about introducing his wife to the county; it is just the sort of thing that a man with his irregular Bohemian habits might do—a pretty model, perhaps, or some peasant girl he has come across when out sketching."

"He never did care particularly about anything," Mrs. Brander said, "and it may be he is really glad to get away from the country."

"That would be possible enough if he had a good income in addition to Fairclose, but all that he will have is that five thousand that came to him from his mother, and I should say he is likely enough to run through that in a couple of years at the outside, and then where will he be?"

"I can't think, Jeremiah, how you ever permitted his father to do such a mad thing as to take those shares."

"I know what I am doing, my dear, don't you worry yourself about that. You have been wanting me for a very long time to give up business and go into the country. How would Fairclose suit you?"

"You are not in earnest," she exclaimed, with an excitement very unusual to her. "You can't mean that?"

"I don't often say what I don't mean, my dear, and if Fairclose comes into the market, more unlikely things than that may come to pass; but mind, not a word of this is to be breathed."

"And do you really think it will come into the market?" she asked.

"As certain as the sun will rise to-morrow morning. We only held our first meeting to-day, but that was enough to show us that the directors ought all to be shut up in a lunatic asylum. The affairs of the bank are in a frightful state, simply frightful; it means ruin to every one concerned."

"It is fortunate, indeed, that you did not hold any shares, Jeremiah."

"I was not such a fool," he said, shortly, "as to trust my money in the hands of a body of men who were all no doubt excellent fellows and admirable county gentlemen, but who knew no more of business than babies, and who would be mere tools in the hands of their manager; and I had the excellent excuse that I considered the legal adviser of a bank should have no pecuniary stake whatever in its affairs, but be able to act altogether without bias."

There was an ironical smile on his lips, and his wife said, admiringly—

"How clever you are, Jeremiah."

"It did not require much cleverness for that," he said, with some complacency. "You can reserve your compliments, my dear, until we are established at Fairclose. All I ask is that you won't ask any questions or allude to the matter until it is settled, but leave it entirely in my hands. So far things are working in the right direction."

"Perhaps it will be a good thing for Cuthbert Hartington after all," she said, after sitting for some minutes in silence.

"No doubt it will," he said. "At any rate as he does not take it to heart in the slightest degree, we need not worry ourselves over him."

"It is funny," she said, "but sometimes the idea has occurred to me that Cuthbert might some day take a fancy to one of our girls, and I might see one of them mistress at Fairclose; but I never dreamt I might be mistress there myself, and I can't guess, even now, how you can think of managing it."

"Don't you trouble to guess, at all, my dear; be content with the plum when it falls into your mouth, and don't worry yourself as to how I manage to shake the tree to bring the fruit down."

Three weeks later it became known definitely that after calling up the remainder of the bank's capital there would be a deficiency of nearly a million, and that every shareholder would be called upon to contribute to the full extent of his ability, to cover

the losses. One or two letters from Mr. Brander had already prepared Cuthbert for the final result of the investigation, and he had already begun to carry out the plan he had marked out for himself. He had, as soon as he had returned, astonished his friends by informing them that he found that instead of coming into his father's estates, as he had expected, it was not likely he would ever touch a penny from them, as his father had been a shareholder in the Abchester Bank, and so he believed everything would be swept away.

"Fortunately," he went on, "I have got enough of my own to keep my head above water, and, I dare say you fellows won't believe me, but I mean to go to work in earnest."

The announcement was made to a dozen men who were smoking in Wilson's studio, he having returned the day before from Cornwall.

"Well, youngster, I won't commiserate with you," he growled. "I have been wondering since I heard from King last night what had kept you away, what on earth you would do with yourself now you have come into your money. I often thought it was the worst thing in the world for you that you had not got to work, and if you are really going to set to now, I believe the time will come when you will think that this misfortune is the best thing that ever happened to you."

"I am not quite sure that I do not think so already," Cuthbert replied. "I am not at all disposed to fancy myself a martyr, I can assure you. I mean to go over to Paris and enter an Art School

there. I know what you fellows are. You would never let me work."

There was a general chorus of indignation.

"Well, how much do you work yourselves? You potter about for nine months in the year, and work for four or five hours a day for the other three."

"Saul among the prophets!" Wilson exclaimed. "The idea of Cuthbert Hartington rebuking us for laziness is rich indeed," and a roar of laughter showed the general appreciation of the absurdity.

"Never mind," Cuthbert said, loftily. "You will see; 'from morn till dewy eve,' will be my idea of work. It is the way you men loaf, and call it working, that has so far kept me from setting to. Now I am going to burst the bonds of the Castle of Indolence, and when I come back from Paris I shall try to stir you all up to something like activity."

There was another laugh, and then Wilson said, "Well, it is the best thing you can do to go abroad. I don't believe you would ever make a fresh start here."

"I have made fresh a start, Wilson; our respected brother Terrier here, has undertaken to teach me the rudiments, and for the next three months his studio doors will be closed to all visitors from ten to five."

"Is that so? I congratulate you, Cuthbert; that really looks like business, and if Terrier can't teach you how to use the brush and put on color no one can. Gentlemen, we will drink the health

of the new boy. Here is to Cuthbert Hartington, and success to him." Glasses were raised and the sentiment heartily echoed.

For three months Cuthbert worked steadily; to his own surprise, not less than to that of his instructor, he found the hours none too long for him. During that time he had received a letter from Mr. Brander that surprised him.

"Dear Mr. Hartington,—In accordance with your instructions I at once informed the Receiver of the bank that you were prepared to hand over the Fairclose estates for the benefit of the creditors, instead of waiting for the calls to be made, and that you wished the matter to be arranged as speedily as possible as you were shortly going abroad. The necessary deeds will in a few days be prepared. You will doubtless be surprised to hear that I have arranged with the Receiver for the purchase of the estates by private treaty. I have long been intending to retire from business, and have been on the lookout for an estate in the county. I hope this arrangement will not be displeasing to you."

As Mr. Brander had the reputation of being a wealthy man, and his wife's wishes that he should retire from business and purchase an estate in the county were public property, Cuthbert was not surprised, but at the same time he was not altogether pleased. He had never liked the lawyer. He had no particular grounds for not doing so, but he had as a boy an instinctive notion that he was a humbug.

"I wonder," he said to himself, "whether he has all along had an eye to Fairclose, and whether he really did his best to dissuade

my father from making that disastrous investment. At any rate, it does not make any difference to me who is there. It might have been some stranger, some manufacturing fellow; I would rather think of Mary being at the old place than a man of that sort. He would have been more likely than Brander to be hard on the tenants, and to have sold off all the things and have turned the place inside out. I don't say that under ordinary circumstances I should choose Brander as a landlord, but he will know well enough that there would be nothing that would do him more harm in the county than a report that he was treating the Squire's tenants harshly. Well, I suppose I had better write him a line saying that I am glad to hear that he has bought the place, as I would naturally prefer that it should be in his hands than those of a stranger."

A fortnight later, Cuthbert, in looking over the "Abchester Guardian," which was sent to him weekly, as the subscription was not yet run out, read the following paragraph: "We understand that our greatly respected townsman, Mr. J. Brander, has purchased the house and estate of Fairclose, which has come into the market owing to the failure of the Abchester Bank, in which the late Mr. Hartington was most unfortunately a shareholder, and which has involved hundreds of families in ruin. The greatest sympathy is everywhere expressed for Mr. Cuthbert Hartington. We understand that the price given by Mr. Brander was £55,000. We believe that we are correct in stating that Mr. Brander was the holder of a mortgage of £15,000 on the estate."

"Mortgage for £15,000," Cuthbert repeated, "impossible. Why should my father have mortgaged the place? He could have no occasion to raise the money. His tastes were most simple, and I am sure that he never lived beyond his income. He paid me a handsome allowance, but, thank God, I never exceeded it. What in the world can this mean! I will write to Brander at once. No, I won't, I will write to the liquidator. If there was such a thing he is certain to have looked into it closely, for it was so much off the sum available for assets."

By return of post Cuthbert received the following letter:

"Dear Mr. Hartington—In reply to your question I beg to confirm the statement in the newspaper cutting you send to me. Mr. Brander was the holder of a mortgage for £15,000 on your father's estate. I looked into the matter very closely, as it came as a surprise upon us. Everything was in proper order. Mr. Brander's bank-book showed that he drew out £15,000 on the date of the mortgage, and the books of the bank confirm his book. Notice had been given to them a week previously that he would require that sum in notes and gold, and it was so paid over to him. His books also show payment of the interest, and his receipts for the same were found among Mr. Hartington's papers. There was, therefore, no shadow of a doubt possible as to the genuine nature of the mortgage.—Yours truly, W. H. Cox."

Although satisfied that for some reason or other his father had borrowed this sum on mortgage from his lawyer, Cuthbert was no less puzzled than before as to the purpose for which it had

been raised, or what his father could possibly have done with the money. He, therefore, wrote to Mr. Brander, saying that though it was a matter in which he had himself no pecuniary interest, he should be glad if he would inform him of the circumstance which led his father to borrow such a sum.

"I thought," he said, "that I knew everything about my father's money affairs, for he always spoke most openly about them to me, and he never let drop a word as to the mortgage or as to any difficulty in which he had involved himself, or any investment he had thought of making; and I am, therefore, entirely at a loss to understand how he could have required such a sum of money."

The lawyer's answer came in due course.

"My dear Mr. Hartingon,—I was in no way surprised at the receipt of your letter, and indeed have been expecting an inquiry from you as to the mortgage. It happened in this way: Some three years ago your father said to me, 'I want to raise £15,000 on the estate, Brander.' I was naturally greatly surprised, for acting for him as I did, I was, of course, aware that he lived well within his income. He went on, 'Of course you are surprised, Brander, but as you must know well most men have a skeleton in a cupboard somewhere. I have one, and as I am getting on in life I want to bury it for good. It makes no difference to you what it is, and I have no intention of going into the matter. It suffices that I want £15,000.' 'Of course there is no difficulty about that, sir,' I said, 'the estate is unencumbered, and as there is no entail you are free to do with it as you like. 'But I want it done quietly,' he

said, 'I don't want it talked about that I have mortgaged Fairclose. The best plan by far would be for you to do it yourself, which I have no doubt you can do easily enough if you like.' I said that I would much rather have nothing to do with it, as I have always considered it a mistake for lawyers to become principals in money transactions with their clients, and had always refused to do anything of the sort. However, he put the matter so strongly that he at last induced me, against my better judgment, to consent to advance the money, and at his earnest request I handed him the money in notes, so that no one, even at the bank, should be aware that such a sum had passed between us. Of course the mortgage was drawn up in the usual form and duly executed and witnessed, and I have no doubt that the liquidator of the bank will be happy to show you your father's receipt for the money and the receipts given by me to him for the interest. As you say the matter does not pecuniarily affect you now, but at the same time I am naturally anxious you should satisfy yourself thoroughly that the transaction was in every respect a bona fide one."

Cuthbert sat for some time with the letter before him.

"I suppose the dear old dad must have got into some scrape or other years ago," he said to himself. "What it was it is no use wondering, still less inquiring about. I am surprised he never told me, but I suppose he could not wind himself up to the point, and I have no doubt he intended to tell me some day, and would have done so if he hadn't been carried off so suddenly. Anyhow, he knew me well enough to be sure that when I heard of this

mortgage, and learned how it had been done that my love and respect for him would be sufficient to prevent my trying to search into his past. He little thought that the mortgage would not affect me to the extent of a penny. Well, there is an end of it, and I won't think any more about the matter the secret is dead and buried; let it rest there. And now it is time to be off to my work."

CHAPTER IV

A year later Cuthbert Hartington was sitting in a room, somewhat better furnished than the majority of the students' lodgings, on the second floor of a house in Quartier Latin. The occupant of the room below, Arnold Dampierre, was with him. He was a man three or four years Cuthbert's junior, handsome, grave-eyed, and slightly built; he was a native of Louisiana, and his dark complexion showed a taint of Mulatto blood in his veins.

"So you have made up your mind to stay," he said.

"Certainly, I intend to see it through; in the first place I don't want to break off my work, and as you know am ambitious enough to intend to get a couple of pictures finished in time for the Salon, although whether they will hang there, is another matter altogether."

"Don't pretend to be modest, Cuthbert. You know well enough they will be hung, and more than that, they will be a success. I would wager a hundred dollars to a cent on it, though you haven't as yet settled on the subjects. You know that you are Goudé's favorite pupil and that he predicts great things for you, and there is not one of us who does not agree with him. You know what Goudé said of the last thing you did. 'Gentlemen, I should be proud to be able to sign my name in the corner of this picture, it is admirable.'"

"It was but a little thing," Cuthbert said, carelessly, but

nevertheless coloring slightly, "I hope to do much better work in the course of another year." Then he went back to the former subject of conversation.

"Yes, I shall see it through. We have had a good many excitements already—the march away of the troops, and the wild enthusiasm and the shouts of 'À Berlin!' I don't think there was a soul in the crowd who was not convinced that the Germans were going to be crumpled up like a sheet of paper. It was disgusting to hear the bragging in the studio, and they were almost furious with me when I ventured to hint mildly that the Prussians were not fools, and would not have chosen this time to force France into a war if they had not felt that they were much better prepared for it than Napoleon was. Since then it has been just as exciting the other way—the stupor of astonishment, the disappointment and rage as news of each disaster came in; then that awful business at Sedan, the uprising of the scum here, the flight of the Empress, the proclamation of the Republic, and the idiotic idea that seized the Parisians that the Republic was a sort of fetish, and that the mere fact of its establishment would arrest the march of the Germans. Well, now we are going to have a siege, I suppose, and as I have never seen one, it will be interesting. Of course I have no shadow of faith in the chattering newspaper men and lawyers, who have undertaken the government of France; but they say Trochu is a good soldier, and Paris ought to be able to hold out for some time. The mobiles are pouring in, and I think they will fight well, especially the Bretons. Their officers

are gentlemen, and though I am sure they would not draw a sword for the Republic, they will fight sturdily for France. I would not miss it for anything. I am not sure that I shan't join one of the volunteer battalions myself."

"You have nothing to do with the quarrel," his companion said.

"No, I have nothing to do with the quarrel; but if I were walking along the streets and saw a big lout pick a quarrel with a weaker one and then proceed to smash him up altogether, I fancy I should take a hand in the business. The Germans deliberately forced on the war. They knew perfectly well that when they put up a German Prince as candidate for the throne of Spain it would bring on a war with France. Why, we ourselves were within an ace of going to war with France when Guizot brought about the Spanish marriage, although it was comparatively of slight importance to us that Spain and France should be united. But to the French this thing was an absolutely vital question, for with Germany and Spain united their very existence would be threatened, and they had nothing for it but to fight, as Germany knew they would have to do."

"But the candidature was withdrawn, Hartington."

"Withdrawn! ay, after the damage was done and France in a flame of indignation. If a man meets me in the street and pulls me by the nose, do you think that if he takes off his hat and bows and says that he withdraws the insult I am going to keep my hands in my pockets? Twice already has France been humiliated and has

stood it? Once when Prussia made that secret treaty with Bavaria and Baden, and threw it scornfully in her face; the second time over that Luxembourg affair. Does Germany think that a great nation, jealous of its honor and full of fiery elements, is going to stand being kicked as often as she chooses to kick her? You may say that France was wrong in going to war when she was really unprepared, and I grant she was unwise, but when a man keeps on insulting you, you don't say to yourself I must go and take lessons in boxing before I fight him. You would hit out straight even if he were twice as big as yourself. That is what I feel about it, Dampierre, and feeling so I fancy that when the thing begins here I shall get too hot over it to help joining in. Ah, here come some of the lads."

There was a clatter of feet on the staircase, and a moment later half a dozen young Frenchmen ran in in a state of wild excitement.

"They have entered Versailles, a party of their horsemen have been seen from Valerian, and a shot has been fired at them. They have fled."

"Well, I should think they naturally would," Cuthbert said. "A handful of horsemen are not likely to remain to be made targets of by the guns of Valerian."

"It is the beginning of the end," one of the students exclaimed. "Paris will assert herself, France will come to her assistance, and the Germans will find that it is one thing to fight against the armies of a despot, and another to stand before a free people in

arms."

"I hope so, René, but I own I have considerable doubts of it. A man when he begins to fight, fights because he is there and has got to do it. If he does not kill the enemy he will be killed; if he does not thrash the enemy he will be thrashed; and for the time being the question whether it is by a despot or by a Provisional Government that he is ruled does not matter to him one single jot. As to the Parisians, we shall see. I sincerely hope, they will do all that you expect of them, but in point of fact I would rather have a battalion of trained soldiers than a brigade of untrained peasants or citizens, however full of ardor they may be."

"Ah, you English, it is always discipline, discipline."

"You are quite right, René, that is when it comes to fighting in the open; fighting in the streets of a town is a very different thing. Then I grant individual pluck will do wonders. Look at Saragosa, look at Lucknow. Civilians in both cases fought as well as the best trained soldiers could do, but in the field discipline is everything. Putting aside the great battles where your feudal lords, with their brave but undisciplined followers, met our disciplined bow and billmen, look at the Jacquerie, the peasants were brave enough, and were animated by hate and despair, but they were scattered like chaff by mere handfuls of knights and men-at-arms. The Swiss have defended their mountains against the armies of despots, because they had mountains to defend, and were accustomed to scaling the rocks, and all good shots, just as the people of a town might hold their streets. I believe that you

will hold Paris. I doubt whether the Germans will ever be able to enter your walls, but famine will enter, and, defend yourselves as obstinately as you may, the time must come when food will give out."

"As if we should wait to be starved," another of the students said scoffingly. "If the time comes when there's nothing to eat, we would set Paris on fire and hurl ourselves every man upon the Germans, and fight our way through. Do you think that they could block every road round Paris?"

"I know nothing about military affairs, Leroux, and therefore don't suppose anything one way or the other. I believe the Parisians will make a gallant defence, and they have my heartiest good wishes and sympathy, and when all you men join the ranks my intention is to go with you. But as to the end, my belief is that it will be decided not by Paris but by France."

"Bravo, bravo, Cuthbert," the others exclaimed, "that shows, indeed, that you love France. René said he thought you would shoulder a musket with us, but we said Englishmen only fought either for duty or interest, and we did not see why you should mix yourself up in it."

"Then you are altogether wrong. If you said Englishmen don't fight for what you call glory, you would be right, but you can take my word for it that in spite of what peace-at-any-price people may say, there are no people in the world who are more ready to fight when they think they are right, than Englishmen. We find it hard enough to get recruits in time of peace, but in time of war

we can get any number we want. The regiments chosen to go to the front are delighted, those who have to stay behind are furious. Glory has nothing to do with it. It is just the love of fighting. I don't say that I am thinking of joining one of your volunteer battalions because I want to fight. I do so because I think you are in the right, and that this war has been forced upon you by the Germans, who are likely to inflict horrible sufferings on the city."

"Never mind why you are going to fight," Leroux said, "you are going to fight for us, and that is enough. You are a good comrade. And your friend, here, what is he going to do?"

"I shall join also," Dampierre said. "You are a Republic now, like our own, and of course my sympathies are wholly with you."

"Vive la Republique! Vive l'Americain!" the students shouted.

Cuthbert Hartington shrugged his shoulders.

"We were just starting for a stroll to the walls to see how they are getting on with the work of demolition. Are any of you disposed to go with us?"

They were all disposed, being in so great a state of excitement that anything was better than staying indoors quietly. The streets were full of people, carts were rumbling along, some filled with provisions, others with the furniture and effects of the houses now being pulled down outside the *enciente*, or from the villas and residences at Sèvres Meudon and other suburbs and villages outside the line of defence.

Sometimes they came upon battalions of newly-arrived mobiles, who were loudly cheered by the populace as they

marched along; sturdy sunburnt peasants with but little of the bearing of soldiers, but with an earnest serious expression that seemed to say they would do their best against the foes who were the cause of their being torn away from their homes and occupations. Staff officers galloped about at full speed; soldiers of the garrison or of Vinoy's Corps, who had come in a day or two before, lounged about the streets looking in at the shops. No small proportion of the male population wore kepis, which showed that they belonged either to the National Guard or to the battalions that were springing into existence.

"Why do we not register our names to-day!" René exclaimed.

"Because a day or two will make no difference," Cuthbert replied, "and it is just as well to find out before we do join something about the men in command. Let us above all things choose a corps where they have had the good sense to get hold of two or three army men, who have had experience in war, as their field officers. We don't want to be under a worthy citizen who has been elected solely because he is popular in his quarter, or a demagogue who is chosen because he is a fluent speaker, and has made himself conspicuous by his abuse of Napoleon. This is not the time for tomfoolery; we want men who will keep a tight hand over us, and make us into fair soldiers. It may not be quite agreeable at first, but a corps that shows itself efficient is sure to be chosen when there is work to be done, and will be doing outpost duty, whilst many of the others will be kept within the walls as being of no practical use. Just at present everything is

topsy-turvy, but you may be sure that Trochu and Vinoy, and the other generals will gradually get things into shape, and will not be long before they find what corps are to be depended on and what are not."

Crossing the river they made their way out beyond the walls. Even the light-hearted students were sobered by the sight beyond. Thousands of men were engaged on the work of demolition. Where but ten days since stood villas surrounded by gardens and trees, there was now a mere waste of bricks and mortar stretching down to the Forts of Issy and Vanves. The trees had all been felled and for the most part cut up and carried into Paris for firewood. Most of the walls were levelled, and frequent crashes of masonry showed that these last vestiges of bright and happy homes would soon disappear. A continuous stream of carts and foot-passengers came along the road to the gate—the men grim and bitter, the women crying, and all laden with the most valued of their little belongings. Numbers of cattle and herds of sheep, attended by guards, grazed in the fields beyond the forts.

"By Jove, Dampierre," Cuthbert said, "if I hadn't made up my mind to join a corps before, this scene would decide me. It is pitiful to see all these poor people, who have no more to do with the war than the birds in the air, rendered homeless. A good many of the birds have been rendered homeless too, but fortunately for them it is autumn instead of spring, and they have neither nests nor nestlings to think of, and can fly away to the woods on the slopes below Meudon."

"What a fellow you are, Hartington, to be thinking of the birds when there are tens of thousands of people made miserable."

"I fancy the birds are just as capable of feeling misery as we are," Cuthbert said quietly, "not perhaps over trivial matters, though they do bicker and quarrel a good deal among themselves, but they have their great calamities, and die of thirst, of hunger, and of cold. I remember during a very hard frost some years ago our garden was full of dying birds, though my father had bushels of grain thrown to them every day. It was one of the most painful sights I ever saw, and I know I felt pretty nearly as much cut up at it as I do now. I hate to see dumb animals suffer. There is a sort of uncomplaining misery about them that appeals to one, at any rate appeals to me, infinitely. These poor fellows are suffering too, you will say. Yes, but they have their consolation. They promise themselves that as soon as they get into Paris they will join a corps and take vengeance on those who have hurt them. They may think, and perhaps with reason, that when the trouble is over, they will find their cottages still standing, and will take up life again as they left it. They have at least the consolation of swearing, a consolation which, as far as I know, is denied to animals and birds."

"You are a rum fellow, Hartington, and I never know when you are in earnest and when you are not."

"Let us go back," René Caillard, who, with the others, had been standing silently, said abruptly. "This is too painful; I feel suffocated to think that such a humiliation should fall on Paris.

Surely all civilized Europe will rise and cry out against this desecration." He turned and with his comrades walked back towards the gate. Cuthbert followed with Arnold Dampierre.

"That is just the way with them," the former said, "it would have been no desecration had they encamped before Berlin, but now, because it is the other way, they almost expect a miracle from Heaven to interpose in their favor. Curious people the French. Their belief in themselves is firm and unshakable, and whatever happens it is the fault of others, and not of themselves. Now, in point of fact, from all we hear, the Germans are conducting the war in a very much more humane and civilized way than the French would have done if they had been the invaders, and yet they treat their misfortunes as if high Heaven had never witnessed such calamities. Why, the march of the Germans has been a peaceful procession in comparison with Sherman's march or Sheridan's forays. They have sacked no city, their path is not marked by havoc and conflagration; they fight our men, and maybe loot deserted houses, but as a rule unarmed citizens and peasants have little to complain of."

"That is true enough," the other agreed reluctantly.

"My opinion is," Cuthbert went on, "that all these poor people who are flocking into Paris are making a hideous mistake. If they stopped in their villages the betting is that no harm would have come to them; whereas now they have left their homes unguarded and untenanted—and it would not be human nature if the Germans did not occupy them—while in Paris they will

have to go through all the privations and hardships of a siege and perhaps of a bombardment; besides there are so many more hungry mouths to feed. In my opinion Trochu and the Provisional Government would have acted very much more wisely had they issued an order that no strangers, save those whose houses have been destroyed, should be allowed to enter the city, and advising the inhabitants of all the villages round either to remain quietly in their homes, or to retire to places at a distance. Fighting men might, of course, come in, but all useless mouths will only hasten the date when famine will force the city to surrender."

"You seem very sure that it will surrender sooner or later, Hartington," Dampierre said, irritably. "My opinion is that all France will rise and come to her rescue."

"If Bazaine cuts his way out of Metz they may do it, but we have heard nothing of his moving, and the longer he stays the more difficulty he will have of getting out. He has a fine army with him, but if he once gives time to the Germans to erect batteries commanding every road out of the place, he will soon find it well-nigh impossible to make a sortie. Except that army France has nothing she can really rely upon. It is all very well to talk of a general rising, but you can't create an army in the twinkling of an eye; and a host of half-disciplined peasants, however numerous, would have no chance against an enemy who have shown themselves capable of defeating the whole of the trained armies of France. No, no, Dampierre, you must make up your mind beforehand that you are going in on the losing side.

Paris may hold out long enough to secure reasonable terms, but I fancy that is about all that will come of it."

The other did not reply. He had something of the unreasoning faith that pervaded France, that a Republic was invincible, and that France would finally emerge from the struggle victorious.

"We shall try and find out to-night about the corps," René Caillard said, as the others overtook them some distance inside the gates. "After what we have seen to-day we are all determined to join without delay. I heard last night from some men at Veillant's that they and a good many others have put their names down for a corps that is to be called the Chasseurs des Écoles. They said they understood that it was to be composed entirely of students. Not all art, of course, but law and other schools."

"That would be just the thing," Cuthbert said, "if they can only get some good officers. One likes the men one has to work with to be a little of one's own class. Well, if the officers are all right you can put my name down. I suppose there is no occasion for me to go myself."

"Of course there is occasion, lazy one. You have to be sworn in."

Cuthbert nodded. "I suppose we shan't have to give up work altogether?"

"I should think not," René said. "I suppose we shall have two or three hours' drill in the morning and nothing more till the time for action comes. Of course the troops and the mobiles will do the work at the forts and walls, and we shall be only called out if

the Prussians venture to attack us, or if we march out to attack them."

"So much the better. I came here to work, and I want to stick to it and not waste my time in parades and sentry duty. Well, we shall meet at the studio in the morning and you can give us your news then."

Some fifteen young men met on the following morning at Goudé's studio.

"Now, gentlemen," said the artist, a short man, with a large head, and an abundant crop of yellow hair falling on to his shoulders, "please to attend to business while you are here. Paint —you have plenty of time outside to discuss affairs."

M. Goudé was an artist of considerable talent, but of peppery temper. He had at one time gone to war with the Hanging Committee of the Salon because one of his paintings had been so badly hung that he declared it to be nothing short of an insult, and had forthwith proceeded to publish the most violent strictures upon them. The result was that on the following year his pictures were not hung at all, whereupon, after another onslaught upon them, he had declared his determination never again to submit a picture to the judgment of men whose natural stupidity was only equalled by their ignorance of art.

This vow he had for eight years adhered to, only occasionally painting a picture and selling it privately, but devoting himself almost entirely to the studio he had opened, when he ceased exhibiting. He was an admirable teacher and his list of pupils was

always full. He was an exacting master and would take none but students who showed marked ability. As a preliminary picture had to be presented to him for examination, and at least three out of four of the canvases sufficed to ensure their authors' prompt rejection.

It was, therefore, considered an honor to be one of Goudé's pupils, but it had its drawbacks. His criticisms were severe and bitter; and he fell into violent passions when, as Leroux once observed, he looked like the yellow dwarf in a rage. Cuthbert had heard of him from Terrier, who said that Goudé had the reputation of being by far the best master in Paris. He had presented himself to him as soon as he arrived there; his reception had not been favorable.

"It is useless, Monsieur," the master had said, abruptly, "there are two objections. In the first place you are too old, in the second place you are a foreigner, and I do not care to teach foreigners. I never had but one here, and I do not want another. He was a Scotchman, and because I told him one day when he had produced an atrocious daub, that he was an imbecile pig, he seized me and shook me till my teeth chattered in my head, and then kicked over the easel and went out."

"You may call me an imbecile pig if you like," Cuthbert said with his quiet smile, "it would hurt me in no way. I have come over to learn, and I am told you are the best master in Paris. When a man is a great master he must be permitted to have his peculiarities, and if he likes to treat grown-up men as children,

of course he can do so, for are we not children in art by his side."

Monsieur Goudé was mollified, but he did not show it.

"Have you brought any canvases with you?"

"I have brought the last two things I did before leaving London."

"Well, you can bring them if you like," the master said, ungraciously, "but I warn you it will be useless. You English cannot paint, even the best of you. You have no soul, you are monotonous, but you may bring them."

An hour later Cuthbert returned to the studio, which was now occupied by the students.

"You are prompt," the master said, looking round from the student whose work he was correcting with no small amount of grumbling and objurgation. "Put your things on those two spare easels, I will look at them presently."

Seeing that several of the other students were smoking, Cuthbert filled and lighted his pipe, calmly placed the pictures on the easels without taking off the cloths in which they were wrapped, and then put his hands into the pockets of his velvet jacket and looked round the room. After his experience of some of the luxuriously arranged studios at St. John's Wood, the room looked bare and desolate. There was no carpet and not a single chair or lounge of any description. Some fifteen young fellows were painting. All wore workmen's blouses. All had mustaches, and most of them had long hair. They appeared intent on their work, but smiles and winks were furtively exchanged, and the

careless nonchalance of this tall young Englishman evidently amused them. In four or five minutes M. Goudé turned round and walked towards the easels. Cuthbert stepped to them and removed the cloths. The master stopped abruptly, looked at them without speaking for a minute or two, then walked up and closely examined them.

"They are entirely your own work?" he asked.

"Certainly, I did not show either of them to my master until I had finished them."

They were companion pictures. The one was a girl standing in a veranda covered with a grapevine, through which bright rays of sunshine shone, one of them falling full on her face. She was evidently listening, and there was a look of joyous expectancy in her face. Underneath, on the margin of the canvas, was written in charcoal, "Hope." The other represented the same figure, darkly dressed, with a wan, hopeless look in her face, standing on a rock at the edge of an angry sea, over which she was gazing; while the sky overhead was dark and sombre without a rift in the hurrying clouds. It was labelled "Despair."

For two or three minutes longer M. Goudé looked silently at the pictures and then turning suddenly called out, "Attention, gentlemen. Regard these pictures, they are the work of this gentleman who desires to enter my studio. In the eight years I have been teaching I have had over two hundred canvases submitted to me, but not one like these. I need not say that I shall be glad to receive him. He has been well taught. His technique is

good and he has genius. Gentlemen, I have the honor to present to you Monsieur Cuthbert Hartington, who is henceforth one of you."

The students crowded round the pictures with exclamations of surprise and admiration. It was not until M. Goudé said sharply "to work," that they returned to their easels.

"You will find canvases in that cupboard if you like to set at work at once. Choose your own size and subject and sketch it out in chalk. I should like to see how you work. Ah, you have a portfolio. I will look through your sketches this afternoon if you will leave it here."

Cuthbert chose a canvas from a pile ready stretched, selected a sketch from his portfolio of a wayside inn in Normandy, pinned it on the easel above the canvas, and then began to work. M. Goudé did not come near him until the work was finished for the morning, then he examined what he had just done.

"You work rapidly," he said, "and your eye is good. You preserve the exact proportions of the sketch, which is excellent, though it was evidently done hastily, and unless I mistake was taken before you had begun really to paint. You did not know how to use color, though the effect is surprisingly good, considering your want of method at the time. I will look through your portfolio while I am having my lunch. In an hour we resume work." So saying he took up the portfolio and left the room. The students now came up to Cuthbert and introduced themselves one by one.

"You see our master in his best mood to-day," one said. "I never have seen him so gracious, but no wonder. Now we have no ceremony here. I am René, and this is Pierre, and this Jean, and you will be Cuthbert."

"It is our custom in England," Cuthbert said, "that a new boy always pays his footing; so gentlemen, I hope you will sup with me this evening. I am a stranger and know nothing of Paris; at any rate nothing of your quarter, so I must ask two of you to act as a committee with me, and to tell me where we can get a good supper and enjoy ourselves."

From that time Cuthbert had been one of the brotherhood and shared in all their amusements, entering into them with a gayety and heartiness that charmed them and caused them to exclaim frequently that he could not be an Englishman, and that his accent was but assumed. Arnold Dampierre had been admitted two months later. He had, the master said, distinct talent, but his work was fitful and uncertain. Some days he would work earnestly and steadily, but more often he was listless and indolent, exciting M. Goudé's wrath to fever heat.

Among the students he was by no means a favorite. He did not seem to understand a joke, and several times blazed out so passionately that Cuthbert had much trouble in soothing matters down, explaining to the angry students that Dampierre was of hot southern blood and that his words must not be taken seriously. Americans, he said, especially in the south, had no idea of what the English call chaff, and he begged them as a personal favor

to abstain from joking with him, or it would only lead to trouble in the studio.

CHAPTER V

There was no more talk after the master had given the order for work. Most of the easels were shifted round and fresh positions taken up, then there was a little pause.

"She is late," M. Goudé said, with an impatient stamp of the foot. The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the door opened and a girl entered.

"Good-morning, messieurs," and she made a sweeping courtesy.

"You are five minutes late, Minette."

"Ma foi, master, what would you have with the Prussians in sight and all Paris in the streets—five minutes mean neither here nor there. I expected praise for having come at all."

"There, there," the artist said hastily, "run into your closet and change, we are all waiting."

She walked across the room to a door in the corner, with an expression of careless defiance in her face, and reappeared in five minutes in the dress of a Mexican peasant girl attired for a fête. The dress suited her admirably. She was rather above the middle height, her figure lithe and supple with exceptionally graceful curves; her head was admirably poised on her neck. Her hair was very dark, and her complexion Spanish rather than French. Her father was from Marseilles and her mother from Arles.

Minette was considered the best model in Paris, and M. Goudé

had the merit of having discovered her. Three years before, when passing through a street inhabited by the poorer class of workmen in Montmartre, he had seen her leaning carelessly against a doorway. He was struck with the easy grace of her pose. He walked up the street and then returned. As he did so he saw her spring out and encounter an older woman, and at once enter upon a fierce altercation with her. It was carried on with all the accompaniment of southern gesture and ceased as suddenly as it began; the girl, with a gesture of scorn and contempt turning and walking back to the post she had left with a mien as haughty as that of a Queen dismissing an insolent subject.

"That girl would be worth a fortune as a model," the artist muttered. "I must secure her; her action and gesture are superb." He walked up to her, lifted his broad hat, and said "Mademoiselle, I am an artist. My name is Goudé. I have an academy for painting, and I need a model. The work is not hard, it is but to sit or stand for two or three hours of a morning, and the remuneration I should offer would be five francs a day for this. Have I your permission to speak to your parents?"

There was an angry glitter in her eye—a change in her pose that, slight as it was, reminded the artist of a cat about to spring.

"A model for a painter, monsieur? Is it that you dare to propose that I shall sit without clothes to be stared at by young men? I have heard of such things. Is this what monsieur wishes?"

"Not at all, not at all," Mr. Goudé said hastily. "Mademoiselle would always be dressed. She would be sometimes a Roman lady,

sometimes a Spanish peasant, a Moorish girl, a Breton, or other maiden. You would always be free to refuse any costume that you considered unsuitable."

Her expression changed again. "If that is all, I might do it," she said; "it is an easy way of earning money. How often would you want me?"

"I should say three times a week, and on the other three days you would have no difficulty in obtaining similar work among artists of my own acquaintance. Here is my card and address."

The girl took it carelessly.

"I will speak to my father about it this evening when he comes home from work. You are quite sure that I shall not have to undress at all?"

"I have assured mademoiselle already that nothing of the sort will be required of her. There are models indeed who pose for figure, but these are a class apart, and I can assure mademoiselle that her feelings of delicacy will be absolutely respected."

The next day Minette Dufaure appeared at the studio and had ever since sat for all the female figures required. The air of disdain and defiance she had first shown soon passed away, and she entered with zest and eagerness upon her work. She delighted in being prettily and becomingly dressed. She listened intelligently to the master's descriptions of the characters that she was to assume, and delighted him with the readiness with which she assumed suitable poses, and the steadiness with which she maintained them.

There was nothing of the stiffness of the model in her attitudes. They had the charm of being unstudied and natural, and whether as a bacchanal, a peasant girl, or a Gaulish amazon, she looked the part equally well; her face was singularly mobile, and although this was an inferior consideration to the master, she never failed to represent the expression appropriate to the character she assumed.

Her reputation was soon established among the artists who occasionally dropped into Goudé's studio, and her spare time was fully occupied, and that at much higher rates of pay than those she earned with him. After the first two or three months she came but twice a week there, as that amply sufficed for the needs of the studio. On his telling her that he should no longer require her to come three times a week, as his pupils had other things to learn besides drawing the female figure, the master said—

"I must pay you higher in future, Minette. I know that my friends are paying you five francs an hour."

"A bargain is a bargain," she said. "You came to me first, and but for you I should never have earned a penny. Now we have moved into a better street and have comfortable lodgings. We have everything we want, and I am laying by money fast. You have always treated me well, and I like you though your temper is even worse than my father's. I shall keep to my agreement as long as you keep to yours, and if you do not I shall not come here at all."

With the students Minette was a great favorite. In the pause

of five minutes every half-hour to allow her to change her position, she chatted and laughed with them with the frankest good temper, more than holding her own in the sallies of chaff. When they occasionally made excursions in a body into the country to sketch and paint, she was always of the party, going in the capacity of comrade instead of that of a model, contributing a full share to the lunch basket, but ready to pose as a peasant girl with a fagot on her head, a gleaner, or a country-woman with a baby on her lap, according to the scene and requirements. It was a matter of course that Minette should be present at every supper party or little fête among the students, always being placed in the seat of honor at the head of the table, and joining in all the fun of those merry reunions. For a time she treated all alike as comrades, and accepted no compliments save those so extravagant as to provoke general laughter. Gradually, however, it came to be understood among the students that Minette made an exception in the case of Arnold Dampierre, and that on occasions when they happened to break up in pairs he was generally by her side.

"One never can tell what women will do," René Caillard said one evening, when five or six of them were sitting smoking together. "Now, Minette might have the pick of us."

"No, no, René," one of the others protested, "most of us are suited already."

"Well, several of us, then. I am at present unattached, and so are André, and Pierre, and Jean; so is Cuthbert. Now, putting

us aside, no woman in her senses could hesitate between the Englishman and Dampierre. He has a better figure, is stronger and better looking. He is cleverer, and is as good-tempered as the American is bad; and yet she takes a fancy for Dampierre, and treats all the rest of us, including the Englishman, as if we were boys."

"I fancy women like deference," Pierre Leroux said. "She is a good comrade with us all, she laughs and jokes with us as if she were one of ourselves. Now the American very seldom laughs and never jokes. He treats her as if she were a duchess and takes her altogether seriously. I believe he would be capable of marrying her."

The others all burst into a laugh.

"What are you laughing at?" Cuthbert asked, as he entered the room at the moment.

"Pierre is just saying that he thinks the American is capable of marrying Minette."

"I hope not," Cuthbert said, more seriously than he generally spoke. "Minette is altogether charming as she is. She is full of fun and life; she is clever and sparkling. There is no doubt that in her style she is very pretty. As to her grace it needs no saying. I think she is an honest good girl, but the idea of marrying her would frighten me. We see the surface and it is a very pleasant one, but it is only the surface. Do you think a woman could look as she does in some of her poses and not feel it? We have never seen her in a passion, but if she got into one, it would be terrible.

When she flashes out sometimes it is like a tongue of flame from a slumbering volcano. You would feel that there might be an eruption that would sweep everything before it. As you know, I gave up painting her after the first two months, but I sketch her in every pose; not always her whole figure, but her face, and keep the sketches for use some day. I was looking through them only yesterday and I said to myself, 'this woman is capable of anything.' She might be a Joan of Arc, or Lucraetzia Borghia. She is a puzzle to me altogether. Put her in a quiet, happy home and she might turn out one of the best of women. Let her be thrown into turbulent times and she might become a demon of mischief. At present she is altogether undeveloped. She is two and twenty in years, but a child, or rather a piquant, amusing young girl, in manner, and perhaps in disposition. She is an enigma of which I should be sorry to have to undertake the solution. As she seems, I like her immensely, but when I try to fathom what she really is, she frightens me."

The others laughed.

"Poor little Minette," Pierre Leroux said. "You are too hard upon her altogether, Cuthbert. The girl is a born actress and would make her fortune on the stage. She can represent, by the instinct of art, passions which she has never felt. She can be simple and majestic, a laughing girl and a furious woman, a Christian martyr and a bacchanal, simply because she has mobile features, intelligence, sentiment, emotion, and a woman's instinct, that is all. She is a jolly little girl, and the only fault I

have to find with her is that she has the bad taste to prefer that gloomy American to me."

"Well, I hope you are right, Pierre, though I hold my own opinion unchanged—at any rate I sincerely trust that Dampierre will not make a fool of himself with her. You men do not like him because you don't understand him. You are gay and light-hearted, you take life as it comes. You form connections easily and lightly, and break them off again a few months later just as easily. Dampierre takes life earnestly. He is indolent, but that is a matter of race and blood. He would not do a dishonorable action to save his life. I believe he is the heir to a large fortune, and he can, therefore, afford to work at his art in a dilettante sort of manner, and not like us poor beggars who look forward to earning our livelihood by it. He is passionate, I grant, but that is the effect of his bringing up on a plantation in Louisiana, surrounded by his father's slaves, for though they are now free by law the nature of the negro is unchanged, and servitude is his natural position. The little white master is treated like a god, every whim is humored, and there being no restraining hand upon him, it would be strange if he did not become hasty and somewhat arrogant.

"Not that there is any arrogance about Dampierre—he is unaffected and simple in his tastes, except in the matter of his lodgings. I question if there is one of us who spends less than he does, but he no more understands you than you understand him; he takes your badinage seriously, and cannot understand that it is

harmless fun. However, he is better in that respect than when he first came over, and in time, no doubt, his touchiness will die out. God forbid that he should ever spoil his life by such a hideous mistake as marrying Minette. Except on the principle that people are always attracted by their opposites, I can't account for his infatuation for this girl, or for her taking up with him. He has never alluded to the subject to me. I don't know that her name has ever been mentioned between us. I agree with you that I think he is in earnest about her, but my conclusion is certainly not formed on anything he has ever said himself. I have often thought that a good deal of his irritability arises from his annoyance at her fun and easy way with us all. He never comes to any of our little meetings. If he is really in earnest about her, I can understand that it would be a terrible annoyance to him to see her taking a lead in such meetings and associating so freely with your, let us say, temporary wives. I have seen him on some of our sketching excursions walk away, unable to contain his anger when you have all been laughing and joking with her."

"I consider that to be an insolence," René said hotly.

"No, no, René, imagine yourself five years older, and making a fortune rapidly by your art, in love with some girl whom you hope to make your wife. I ask you whether you would like to see her laughing and chatting *en bonne camarade* with a lot of wild young students. Still less, if you can imagine such a thing, joining heart and soul in the fun of one of their supper parties. You would not like it, would you?"

"No," René admitted frankly. "I own I shouldn't. Of course, I cannot even fancy such a thing occurring, but if it did I can answer for it that I should not be able to keep my temper. I think now that you put it so, we shall be able to make more allowances for the American in future."

To this the others all agreed, and henceforth the tension that had not unfrequently existed between Dampierre and his fellow-students was sensibly relaxed.

"You were not here last week, Minette," M. Goudé said, as he went up on to the platform at the end of the room to arrange her pose.

"I did not think that you would expect me, master," she said, "but even if you had I could not have come. Do you think that one could stand still like a statue for hours when great things were being done, when the people were getting their liberty again, and the flag of the despot was being pulled down from the Tuileries. I have blood in my veins, master, not ice."

"Bah!" M. Goudé exclaimed. "What difference does it make to you, or to anyone as far as I see, whether the taxes are levied in the name of an Emperor or of a Republic? Do you think a Republic is going to feed you any better and reduce your rents, or to permit Belleville and Montmartre to become masters of Paris? In a short time they will grumble at the Republic just as they grumble at the Emperor. It is folly and madness. The Emperor is nothing to me, the Government is nothing to me. I have to pay my taxes—they are necessary—for the army has to be kept up

and the Government paid; beyond that I do not care a puff of my pipe what Government may call itself."

"You will see what you will see," said the girl, sententiously.

"I dare say, Minette, as long as I have eyes I shall do that. Now don't waste any more time."

"What am I to be, master?"

"A Spanish peasant girl dancing; hold these slips of wood in your hand, they are supposed to be castanets; now just imagine that music is playing and that you are keeping time to it with them, and swaying your body, rather than moving your feet to the music."

After two or three changes she struck an attitude that satisfied the master.

"That will do, Minette, stand as you are; you cannot improve that. Now, gentlemen, to work."

She was standing with one foot advanced, as if in the act of springing on to it; one of her arms was held above her head, the other advanced across her body; her head was thrown back, and her balance perfect.

Cuthbert looked up from his work, took out a note-book, and rapidly sketched the figure; and then, putting his book into his pocket again, returned to his work, the subject of which was a party of Breton mobiles, with stacked arms under some trees in the Champs Elysée. He had taken the sketch two days before and was now transferring it on to canvas.

"I should not be surprised," he thought to himself, "if the girl

is right, and if there is not serious trouble brewing in the slums of Paris.

"As soon as these fellows find out that they are no better off for the change, and that a Republic does not mean beer and skittles, or, as they would like, unlimited absinthe and public workshops, with short hours and high pay, they will begin to get savage, and then there will be trouble. The worst of it is one can never rely upon the troops, and discipline is certainly more relaxed than usual now that the Emperor has been upset, and every Jack thinks himself as good as his master. Altogether I think we are likely to have lively times here before long. I am not sure that the enemies within are not likely to prove as great a danger to Paris as the foe without. It was a happy idea of mine to come to Paris, and I am likely to get subjects enough to last for a life-time, though I don't know that battle scenes are altogether in my line. It does not seem to me that I have any line in particular yet. It is a nuisance having to decide on that, because I have heard Wilson say an artist, like a writer, must have a line, and when he has once taken it up he must stick to it. If a man once paints sea pieces the public look to get sea pieces from him, and won't take anything else. It is the same thing if he accustoms them to Eastern, or Spanish, or any other line.

"It maybe that this war will decide the matter for me, which will be a comfort and relief, though I doubt if I shall ever be able to stick in one groove. Goudé said only yesterday that I had better go on working at both figure and landscape. At present he could

not give an opinion as to which I was likely to succeed in best, but that he rather fancied that scenes of life and action, combined with good backgrounds, were my forte, and battle scenes would certainly seem to come under that category."

After work was over Cuthbert went out by himself and spent the afternoon in sketching. He was engaged on a group of soldiers listening to one of their number reading a bulletin of the latest news, when his eye fell on a young lady walking with a brisk step towards him. He started, then closed his note-book suddenly, and as she was on the point of passing, turned to her and held out his hand.

"Have you dropped from the skies, Miss Brander?"

There was surprise, but neither embarrassment nor emotion on her face as she said, frankly—

"Why, Cuthbert Hartington, this is a curious meeting. I did know you were in Paris, for I had heard as much from my father, but I had no idea of your address and I have wondered many times since I came here, five weeks ago, whether we should run against each other. No, I have not dropped from the clouds, and you ought to have known I should be here; I told you that I was going to have a year in Germany and then a year in France. My year in Germany was up two months ago. I went home for a fortnight, and here I am as a matter of course."

"I might have known you would carry out your programme exactly as you had sketched it, but I thought that the disturbed state of things over here might have induced you to defer that

part of the plan until a more appropriate season. Surely Paris is not just at present a pleasant abode for a young lady, and is likely to be a much more unpleasant one later on."

"I think there could hardly be a more appropriate time for being here, Mr. Hartington; one could have no better time for studying social problems than the present when conventionalities have gone to the winds and one sees people as they are; but this is hardly the place to talk. I am boarding with a family at No. 15 Avenue de Passy. Will you come and see me there?"

"Certainly I will, if you will allow me. What will be a convenient time?"

"I should say three o'clock in the afternoon. They are all out then, except Madame Michaud and her little daughter, and we shall be able to chat comfortably, which we could not do if you came in the evening, when the father is at home and two boys who are away at school during the day. Will you come to-morrow?"

"Yes, my afternoons are free at present."

She held out her hand and then walked away with a steady business-like step. Cuthbert stood watching her till she had disappeared in the crowd.

"She has no more sentiment in her composition at present," he said to himself with a laugh that had some bitterness in it, "than a nether millstone. Her mind is so wrapped up in this confounded fad of hers that there is no room in it for anything else. I might have been a cousin, instead of a man she had refused, for any embarrassment or awkwardness she felt at our sudden meeting.

It clearly made no impression at all upon her. She remembers, of course, that she met me at Newquay. I don't suppose she has really forgotten that I asked her to be my wife, but it was a mere incident, and affected her no more than if I had asked her to buy a picture and she had refused. I wish to goodness I had not met her again. I had got fairly over it, and was even beginning to wonder how I ever could have wanted to marry anyone so different in every way from the sort of woman I fancied I should have fallen in love with. How foolish of her coming over to Paris at this time. Well, I daresay it has all saved a lot of trouble. I suppose at that time Brander would have been delighted at the prospect, but it would have been a very different thing after the failure of the bank. I don't think he would have made a pleasant father-in-law under the present circumstances. He is an old fox. I always thought so, and I think so more than ever now. It has been a queer affair altogether. I wonder what Mary thinks of it all. I suppose she will talk to me about it to-morrow afternoon. By the way, I have to go this evening with René and the others to be sworn in or attested, or whatever they call it, at the Mairie. Their report as to the officers is satisfactory. I have heard that Longfranc was an excellent officer before he came into some money, cut the army and took up art. I have no doubt he will make a good major, and he understands the men better than most army men would do. They say the Colonel is a good man, too, and was very popular with his regiment before he retired from the service."

CHAPTER VI

On inquiry of the concierge at No. 15 Avenue de Passy, Cuthbert was informed that Madame Michaud lived on the third floor. On ascending and ringing the bell the door was opened by an elderly servant.

"I have called to see Mademoiselle Brander, is she at home?"

"She is, sir."

"Would you give her my card, if you please?"

"Mademoiselle is expecting you," the servant said, and led the way at once into a sitting-room.

It was of the usual type of such room—of good size but bare, with bee's-waxed flooring, plainly frescoed walls, and a ceiling colored gray and bordered with painted arabesques. Two or three small rugs relieved the bareness of the floor. An oval table on very thin legs stood in the middle; the chairs and couch seemed to have been made to match it, and had an eminently bare and uncomfortable appearance; a vase of flowers stood on a spindle-legged little table in front of one of the windows which opened down to the ground. Some colored prints in frames of stained wood hung on the walls, and some skimpy curtains draped the windows.

Mary Brander was seated with a writing-pad on her knee at the window unoccupied by the vase and its support. She put the writing-pad and a book, evidently a large diary, down on the

floor.

"You are punctual to the minute, Mr. Hartington. I should never have credited you with that virtue."

"Nor with any other virtue, I imagine, Miss Brander," he said, with a smile.

"Oh, yes, I do. I credit you with numbers of them. Now draw that chair up to the window—it is not comfortable, but it is the best of them—and let us talk. Now, in the first place you don't know how sorry, how dreadfully sorry I have been about what has happened at home. I was shocked, indeed, at the news of the sudden death of your dear father. He was always so kind when he came to see us, and I liked him so much, I felt for you deeply. It must have been an awful shock for you. I heard it a few days after I got to Dresden. Then came the other news about that terrible failure and its consequences. It seemed too shocking altogether that you should have lost the dear old place, but I do think I was most shocked of all when I heard that my father had bought it. Somehow it did not seem to be right. Of course it must have been, but it did not seem so to me. Did it to you, Cuthbert?" and she looked at him wistfully.

"I have no doubt it was all right," he said, "and as it was to be sold, I think I preferred it should be to your father rather than anybody else. I believe I rather liked the thought that as it was not to be my home it would be yours."

She shook her head.

"It does not seem to me to be natural at all, and I was miserable

all the time I was there the other day."

"Your father respected my wishes in all respects, Mary. I believe he kept on all the old servants who chose to stay. He promised me that he would not sell my father's hunters, and that no one should ride them, but that they should be pensioners as long as they lived; and the same with the dogs, and that at any time, if I moved into quarters where I could keep a dog or two, he would send up my two favorites to me."

"Yes, they are all there. I went out and gave cakes to the dogs and sugar to the horses every day, and talked to them, and I think regularly had a cry over them. It was very foolish, but I could not help it. It did all seem so wrong and so pitiful. I could not learn much about you from father. He said that you had only written once to him on business since things were finally settled; but that you had mentioned that you were going to Paris, and he said, too —" and she hesitated for a moment, "that although you had lost Fairclose and all the property, you had enough to live upon in a way—a very poor way—but still enough for that."

"Not such a very poor way," he said. "There is no secret about it. I had five thousand pounds that had been settled on my mother, and fortunately that was not affected by the smash, so I have two hundred a year, which is amply sufficient for my wants."

"It is enough, of course, to live upon in a way, Cuthbert, but so different from what you were accustomed to."

"I don't suppose you spend two hundred a year," he said, with

a smile.

"Oh, no, but a woman is so different. That is just what I have, and of course I don't spend anything like all of it; but as I said, it is so different with you, who have been accustomed to spend ever so much more."

"I don't find myself in any way pinched. I can assure you my lodgings in the Quartier Latin are not what you would call sumptuous, but they are comfortable enough, and they do not stand me in a quarter of what I paid for my chambers in London. I can dine sumptuously on a franc and a half. Another franc covers my breakfast, which is generally *café au lait* and two eggs; another franc suffices for supper. So you see that my necessaries of life, including lodgings and fuel, do not come to anything like half my income, and I can spend the rest in riotous living if I choose."

The girl looked at him earnestly.

"You are not growing cynical, I hope, Cuthbert?"

"I hope not. I am certainly not conscious of it. I don't look cynical, do I?"

"No," she said, doubtfully. "I do not see any change in you, but what do you do with yourself?"

"I paint," he said.

"Really!"

"Really and truly, I have become what you wanted me to become, a very earnest person indeed, and some day people may even take to buying my pictures."

"I never quite know when you are in earnest, Cuthbert; but if it is true it is very good news. Do you mean that you are really studying?"

"I am indeed. I work at the studio of one M. Goudé, and if you choose to inquire, you will find he is perhaps the best master in Paris. I am afraid the Prussians are going to interrupt my studies a good deal. This has made me angry and I have enlisted—that is to say, been sworn in as a member of the Chasseurs des Écoles, which most of the students at Goudé's have joined."

"What! You are going to fight against the Germans!" she exclaimed, indignantly. "You never can mean it, Cuthbert."

"I mean it, I can assure you," he said, amused at her indignation. "I suppose you are almost Germanized, and regard their war against the French as a just and holy cause."

"Certainly I do," she said, "though of course, I should not say so here. I am in France and living in a French family, and naturally I would say nothing that would hurt the feelings of the people round me, but there can be no doubt that the French deserve all the misfortunes that have fallen upon them. They would have invaded Germany, and all these poor young Germans have been torn away from their friends and families to fight."

"So have these young Frenchmen. To my mind the war was deliberately forced upon France, but I think we had better agree to differ on this subject. You have been among Germans and it is not unnatural that you should have accepted their version. I have been living among Frenchmen, and although I do not say that it

would not have been much wiser if they had avoided falling into the pit dug for them, my sympathies are wholly with them, except in this outburst of folly that has resulted in the establishment, for a time at any rate, of a Republic. Now, I have no sympathy whatever with Republics, still less for a Republic controlled by political adventurers, and like many Frenchmen I am going to fight for France, and in no way for the Republic. At any rate let us agree to avoid the subject altogether. We shall never convince each other however much we might argue it over."

The girl was silent for two or three minutes, and then said—

"Well, we will agree not to quarrel over it. I don't know how it is that we always see things so differently, Cuthbert. However, we may talk about your doings without arguing over the cause. Of course you do not suppose there will be much fighting—a week or two will see the end of it all."

"Again we differ," he said. "I believe that there will be some sharp fighting, and I believe that Paris will hold out for months."

She looked at him incredulously.

"I should have thought," she said, after a pause, "you were the last person who would take this noisy shouting mob seriously."

"I don't think anything of the mob one way or the other," he said. "I despise them utterly; but the troops and the mobiles are sufficient to man the forts and the walls, and I believe that middle-class corps, like the one I have entered, will fight manfully; and the history of Paris has shown over and over again that the mob of Paris, fickle, vain-headed, noisy braggadocios as

they are, and always have been, can at least starve well. They held out against Henry of Navarre till numbers dropped dead in the streets, and until the Spaniards came at last from the Netherlands and raised the siege, and I believe they will hold out now. They have courage enough, as has been shown over and over again at the barricades, but they will be useless for fighting because they will submit to no discipline. Still, as I said, they can starve, and it will be a long time indeed before the suffering will become intense enough to drive them to surrender. I fear that you have altogether underrated the gravity of the situation, and that you will have very severe privations to go through before the siege is over."

"I suppose I can stand it as well as others," she laughed, "but I think you are altogether wrong. However, if it should come it will be very interesting."

"Very," he said, shortly, "but I doubt if you will see it quite in the same light when it comes to eating rats."

"I should not eat them," she said, decidedly.

"Well, when it comes to that or nothing, I own that I myself shall eat rats if I can get them. I have heard that the country rat, the fellow that lives in ricks, is by no means bad eating, but I own to having a doubt as to the Paris rat."

"It is disgusting to think of such a thing," she said, indignantly, "the idea is altogether ridiculous."

"I do not know whether you consider that betting is among the things that woman has as much right to do as man; but if you do,

I am ready to wager it will come to rats before Paris surrenders."

"I never made a bet in my life," she said, "but I will wager five francs with you that there will be nothing of the sort. I do not say that rats may not be eaten in the poor quarters. I do not know what they eat there. I hear they eat horse-flesh, and for anything I know they may eat rats; but I will wager that rats will never be openly sold as an article of food before Paris surrenders."

"It is a bet," he said, "and I will book it at once," and he gravely took out a pocket-book and made an entry. "And now," he said, as he replaced the book in his pocket, "how do you pass your time?"

"I spend some hours every day at the Bibliothêque. Then I take a walk in this quarter and all round the Boulevards. One can walk just as freely there as one could in Germany, but I find that I cannot venture off them into the poorer quarters; the people stare, and it is not pleasant."

"I certainly should not recommend you to make experiments that way. In the great thoroughfares a lady walking by herself passes unnoticed, especially if she looks English or American. They are coming to understand that young women in those countries are permitted an amount of freedom that is shocking to the French mind, but the idea has not permeated to the lower strata of society.

"If you are really desirous of investigating the ways of the female population of the poorer quarters, I shall be happy to escort you whenever you like, but I do not think you will be

altogether gratified with the result of your researches, and I think that you would obtain a much closer insight into French lower class life by studying Balzac and some of the modern writers—they are not always savory, but at least they are realistic."

"Balzac is terrible," she said, "and some of the others I have read a little of are detestable. I don't think you can be serious in advising me to read them."

"I certainly should not advise you to read any of them, Miss Brander, if you were a young lady of the ordinary type; but as you take up the cause of woman in general it is distinctly necessary that you should study all the phases of female life. How else can you grapple with the question?"

"You are laughing at me again, Mr. Hartington," she said, somewhat indignantly.

"I can assure you that I am not. If your crusade is in favor only of girls of the upper and middle classes, you are touching but the fringe of the subject, for they are outnumbered by twenty to one by those of other classes, and those in far greater need of higher life than the others."

"It seems rather hopeless," Mary Brander said, despondently, after a pause, "one is so unable to influence them."

"Exactly so. You are setting yourself to move a mountain. When the time comes there may be an upheaval, and the mountain may move of its own accord; but the efforts of a thousand or ten thousand women as earnest as yourself would be no more use in proportion, than those of a colony of ants working

to level the mountain."

"Don't discourage me, Cuthbert," she said, pitifully. "I do believe with all my heart in my principles, but I do often feel discouraged. The task seems to grow larger and more difficult the more I see of it, and I own that living a year among German women was rather crushing to me."

"That I can quite understand," he said, with a smile, "the average German woman differs as widely in her ideas—I do not say aspirations, for she has none—from your little group of theorists at Girton as the poles are apart."

"But do not think," she replied, rallying, "that I am in the least shaken because I see that the difficulty is greater than I have looked for. Your simile of ants is not correct. Great things can be done by individuals. Voltaire and Rousseau revolutionized French thought from the top to the bottom. Why should not a great woman some day rise and exercise as great influence over her sex as these two Frenchmen did? But do not let us talk about that any more. I want to hear more about what you are doing. I have thought of you so much during the past year—it has all seemed so strange and so sad. Are you really working hard—I mean steadily and regularly?"

"You evidently think that impossible," he laughed, "but I can assure you it is true. If you doubt me I will give you Goudé's address, and if you call upon him and say that you have an interest in me—you can assign any reason you like, say that you are an aunt of mine and intend to make me your heir—and beg him to

inform you frankly of his opinion of my work and progress, I feel sure that he will give you an account that will satisfy your doubts."

"I don't think I could do that," she said, seriously. "There, you are laughing at me again," she broke off as she looked up at him. "Of course I could not do such a thing, but I should very greatly like to know about you."

"I do think, Miss Brander, I am working hard enough and steady enough to satisfy even you. I did so for six months in England with a fellow named Terrier. He was just the master I wanted. He had not a shadow of imagination, but was up in all the technical details of painting, and in six months' hard work I really learnt to paint; previous to that I knew nothing of painting. I could make a colored sketch, but that was all, now I am on the highway to becoming an artist. Goudé will only receive pupils whom he considers likely to do him credit, and on seeing two of the things I had done after I had been working with Terrier, he accepted me at once. He is a splendid master—out and away the best in Paris, and is really a great artist himself. He is a peppery little man and will tolerate no nonsense, and I can assure you that he is well satisfied with me. I am going to set to work to do a couple of pictures on my own account for next year's Salon. I should have waited another year before trying my wings, if he had not encouraged me to venture at once, and as he is very much opposed to his pupils painting for exhibition until they are sufficiently advanced to begin with a success, it is proof that he

has at least some hopes of me."

"I am glad indeed, Cuthbert. I shan't be quite so sorry now as I have been about your losing Fairclose. It is so much nobler to work than it is to fritter away a life doing nothing. How tiresome it is," she said, "that you have taken this unfortunate idea in your head of joining a French corps. It will unsettle you altogether."

"Really," he broke in with a laugh, "I must protest against being considered so weak and unstable. You had a perfect right in thinking me lazy, but I don't think you have any right in considering me a reed to be shaken by every passing wind. I can assure you that I am very fixed in my resolves. I was content to be lazy before simply because there was no particular reason for my being otherwise, and I admit that constitutionally I may incline that way; but when a cataclysm occurred, and, as I may say, the foundations were shaken, it became necessary for me to work, and I took a resolution to do so, and have stuck to it. Possibly I should have done so in any case. You see when a man is told by a young lady he is a useless idler, who does but cumber the earth, it wakes him up a little."

"I am sure I didn't say that," Mary said, indignantly, but with a hot flush on her cheeks.

"Not in those precise words, but you spoke to that effect, and my conscience told me you were not far wrong in your opinion. I had begun to meditate whether I ought not to turn over a new leaf when I came in suddenly for Fairclose; that of course seemed to knock it all on the head. Then came what we may call the

smash. This was so manifestly an interposition of Providence in the direction of my bestirring myself that I took the heroic resolution to work."

Mary felt that it was desirable to avoid continuing the subject. She had long since come to regard that interview in the garden as a sort of temporary aberration on his part, and that although, perhaps, sincere at the moment, he had very speedily come to laugh at his own folly, and had recognized that the idea was altogether ridiculous. Upon her it had made so little impression that it had scarcely occurred to her when they met, that any passage of the sort had taken place, and had welcomed him as the lad she had known as a child, rather than as the man who had, under a passing impulse, asked her to marry him.

"I think," she said suddenly, "I will fetch Madame Michaud in. It will be nice for you to come here in the evening sometimes, and it would be better for her to ask you to do so than for me. These French people have such funny ideas."

"It would certainly be more pleasant," he agreed, "and evening will be the time that I have most leisure—that is to say, when we do not happen to be on duty, as to which I am very vague at present. They say the sailors will garrison the forts and the army take the outpost duty; but I fancy, when the Germans really surround us, it will be necessary to keep so strong a force outside the walls, that they will have to call out some of us in addition. The arrangement at present is, we are to drill in the morning and we shall paint in the afternoon; so the evening will be the only

time when we shall be free."

"What do you do in the evening generally? You must find it very lonely."

"Not at all. I have an American who is in our school, and who lodges in the same house as I do. Then there are the students, a light-hearted, merry set of young fellows. We have little supper-parties and go to each other's rooms to chatter and smoke. Then, occasionally, I drop into the theatre. It is very much like the life I had in London, only a good deal more lively and amusing, and with a great deal less luxury and a very much smaller expenditure; and—this is very serious I can assure you—very much worse tobacco."

The girl laughed merrily.

"What will you do about smoking when you are reduced to the extremity you prophesy?"

"That point is, I confess, troubling me seriously. I look forward with very much greater dread to the prospect of having to smoke dried leaves and the sweepings of tobacco warehouses, than I do to the eating of rats. I have been making inquiries of all sorts as to the state of the stock of tobacco, and I intend this evening to invest five pounds in laying in a store; and mean to take up a plank and hide it under the floor, and to maintain the most profound secrecy as to its existence. There is no saying whether, as time goes on, it may not be declared an offence of the gravest character for any one to have a private store of any necessary. If you have any special weaknesses, such as chocolate or tea, or

anything of that sort, I should advise you not to lose a moment in laying in a good stock. You will see in another week, when people begin to recognize generally what a siege means, that everything eatable will double in price, and in a month only millionaires will be able to purchase them."

"I really will buy some tea and chocolate," she said.

"Get in a good stock," he said. "Especially of chocolate. I am quite serious, I can assure you. Unfortunately, you have no place for keeping a sheep or two, or a bullock; and bread, at the end of a couple of months, could scarcely be eaten; but, really, I should advise you to invest in a dozen of those big square boxes of biscuits, and a ham or two may come in as a welcome addition some day."

Mary laughed incredulously, but she was much more inclined than before to look at matters seriously, when, on fetching Madame Michaud in, that lady, in the course of conversation, mentioned that her husband had that morning bought three sacks of flour and a hundred tins of preserved meats.

"He is going to get some boxes," she said, "and to have the flour emptied into them, then the baker will bring them round in a cart, so that no one will guess it is flour. He says it is likely that there will be an order issued that everything of that sort is to be given into a public store for general distribution, so it must be brought here quietly. He tells me that every one he knows is doing the same thing. My servant has been out this morning eight times and has been buying eggs. She has brought a hundred each

time, and we are putting them in a cask in salt."

"Do you really think all that is necessary, madame?" Mary asked, doubtfully.

"Most certainly I do. They say everything will go up to such prices as never were heard of before. Of course, in a month or two the country will come to our rescue and destroy the Prussians, but till then we have got to live. Already eggs are fetching four times as much as they did last week. It is frightful to think of it, is it not, monsieur?"

"If I were in your place, madame, I would not reckon too surely on relief in a month. I think that there is no doubt that, as you say, there will be a prohibition of anyone keeping provisions of any sort, and everything will be thrown into the public magazines. Likely enough every house will be searched, and you cannot hide your things too carefully."

"But why should they insist on everything being put in public magazines?" Mary asked. "It will not go further that way than if people keep their own stocks and eat them."

"It will be necessary, if for nothing else, to prevent rioting when the pinch comes, and people are starving in the poorer quarters. You may be sure if they have a suspicion that the middle and upper classes have food concealed in their houses, they will break in and sack them. That would only be human nature, and therefore in the interest of order alone a decree forbidding anyone to have private stores would have to be passed; besides it would make the food go much further, for you may be sure that

everything will be doled out in the smallest quantities sufficient to keep life together, and before the end of the siege comes each person may only get two or three ounces of bread a day."

Madame Michaud nodded as if prepared to be reduced even to that extremity.

"You are right, monsieur, I am going to get stuff and to make a great number of small bags to hold the flour; then we shall hide it away under the boards in many places, so that if they find some they may not find it all."

"The idea is a good one, madame, but it has its disadvantages. If they find one parcel they will search so closely everywhere that they will find the rest. For that reason one good hiding-place, if you could invent one, would be better than many."

"One does not know what is best to do," Madame Michaud said, with a gesture of tragic despair. "Who could have thought that such a thing could happen to Paris!"

"It is unexpected, certainly," Cuthbert agreed, "but it has been foreseen, otherwise they would never have taken the trouble to build this circle of forts round Paris. They are useful now not only in protecting the city but in covering a wide area, where the cattle and sheep may feed under the protection of the guns. I don't think we are as likely to be as badly off for meat as for bread, for after the flocks and herds are all eaten up there are the horses, and of these there must be tens of thousands in Paris."

"That is a comfort, certainly," the Frenchwoman said, calmly, while Mary Brander made a little gesture of disgust.

"I have never tried horseflesh myself, at least that I know of, but they say it is not so bad; but I cannot think that they will have to kill the horses for food. The country will not wait until we are reduced to that extremity."

"Mr. Hartington has joined one of the regiments of volunteers, Madame Michaud."

"That is good of you, monsieur; my husband is in the National Guard, and they say every one will have to take up a musket; but as you are a foreigner, of course this would not apply to you."

"Well, for the time being I consider myself a Parisian, and as a German shell is just as likely to fall on the roof of the house where I live as on any other, I consider myself to be perfectly justified in doing my best in self-defence."

"I trust that you will call whenever you are disposed in the evening, monsieur," Madame Michaud said, cordially; "it will give my husband pleasure to meet an English gentleman who is voluntarily going to fight in the cause of France."

"Thank you, madame. I shall be very glad to do so. Mademoiselle's father is a very old friend of our family, and I have known her ever since she was a little child. It will be pleasant to me to make the acquaintance of monsieur. And now, Miss Brander, I must be going."

CHAPTER VII

As he sauntered back into the city, Cuthbert met an English resident with whom he had some slight acquaintance.

"So you are not among the great army of deserters, Mr. Phipson?"

"No, I thought it better to stay here and see it out. If the Germans come in I shall hang out the English flag and I have no doubt that it will be all right. If I go away the chances are that I should find the place sacked when I return."

"Then, of course, you will keep your place open."

"It will be closed to the public to-morrow—to the public, mind you. My English customers and friends, if they come to the little door in the Arcade, and give two knocks, and then three little ones with their knuckles on the door, will find it open, and can be served as long as there is any liquor left; but for the last three days I have been clearing out nearly all my stock. The demand has been tremendous, and I was glad enough to get rid of it, for even if the place isn't looted by the mob all the liquors might be seized by the authorities and confiscated for public use. I shall be glad when the doors are closed, I can tell you, for these people are enough to make one sick. The way they talk and brag sets my fingers itching, and I want to ask them to step into the back room, take off their coats, those uniforms they are so proud of, and stand up for a friendly round or two just to try what they

are made of.

"I reckon if a chap can't take one on the nose and come up smiling, he would not be worth much when he has to stand up against the Prussians. I thought I understood them pretty well after having been coachman here for over twenty years, but I see now that I was wrong altogether. Of course I knew they were beggars to talk, but I always thought that there was something in it, and that if it came to fighting they would show up pretty well; but to hear them going on now as to what France will do and doing nothing themselves, gives one a sickener. Then the way as they blackguard the Emperor, who wasn't by any means a bad chap, puts my monkey up I can tell you. Why there is not one in fifty of them as is fit to black his boots. He had a good taste in horses too, he had; and when I hear them going on, it is as much as I can do not to slip in to them.

"That is one reason why I am stopping. A week ago I had pretty well made up my mind that I would go, but they made me so mad that I says to myself, I will stop and see it out, if it is only for the pleasure of seeing these fellows get the licking they deserve. I was out yesterday evening. There was every café crowded; there was the singing-places fuller than I ever saw them; there were drunken soldiers, who ought to have been with their regiments outside the walls, reeling about the streets. Any one as seed the place would have put it down that it was a great fête-day. As to the Prussians outside no one seemed to give them a thought. If you went from table to table you heard everyone saying that

the Germans would be destroyed, and that every one who talked of peace now was a traitor."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.