LUCY & AMADES

ESTHER MEYNELL

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GRAVE FAIRYTALE

QUINTET

TIME'S DOOR

THE LITTLE CHRONICLE OF MAGDALENA BACH

BACH (*Duckworth's "Great Lives"*)

SUSSEX COTTAGE

BUILDING A COTTAGE

LUCY AND AMADES

BY

ESTHER MEYNELL

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FOR

LAWRENCE DAVID PEPLER

August 1st, 1937

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NOTE

This book is not a sequel to *Time's Door*, though Lucy and Amades appeared in the earlier novel of which Giovanni Cavatini was the hero.

The poems on pages 256, 269 and 271 are by John Clare, whose character is faintly indicated in that of John Medlicott.

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The Clarendon Press for the sonnet on page 256 and the extract from *The Progress of Rhyme* on page 269, both from the Oxford Miscellany edition of Clare's poems edited by Arthur Symons.

Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons for the verse from *Summer Images* on page 271, quoted from the two-volume edition edited by J. W. Tibble.

Book One

Withers St. Mary

On a pleasant July afternoon in the year 1859 two gentlemen were driving in a light curricle along the road from Steeple Langford in Wiltshire. They had duly inspected the fourteenth-century church and the altar tomb of the Mompesson family, also the early sepulchral slab of Purbeck marble with its curious figure of a huntsman. They enjoyed the charming prospects of the Wylye Valley, the water-meadows, the villages and churches, the Downs covered with flocks of sheep, the great fields of corn. A rich and prosperous-looking country, with something aloof and strange in the Downs themselves.

As they drove along they came to a long park wall, beyond which could be seen the rolling slopes, the massed and noble trees, the ornamental waters, of a gentleman's estate. As the swift-moving horse proceeded with high-stepping hooves along the road, a mansion, distantly embowered among the foliage, was glimpsed for a moment, rising white and many-windowed into view.

"Whose seat is that respectable residence?" the younger of the two gentlemen, who held the reins, enquired.

The other picked up Gary's *Traveller's Companion* which lay upon his knee, and turned a page or two.

"It is the mansion and parklands of Hall Place, the seat of Julian Withers Govoni, Esquire."

"Govoni? That is not an English name—I have met with it once or twice on my Italian travels. How excessively curious. I should like to enquire further into the matter."

But the curricle rolled rapidly away in a light cloud of summer dust on its way to Warminster, and other objects of interest engaged the attention of the two occupants who were making their little summer driving tour in Wiltshire.

§ 1

Julian John Withers had always regarded himself as fortunate in being the second son of his father. When he was four years old and his brother Gilbert Fitzmaurice was five and a half, the two boys were painted on a large canvas

by Sir Thomas Lawrence. In those so youthful days the difference between them was as marked in looks and temperament as it was when they each reached their majority, and afterwards. As the heir, Gilbert stood a little forward, one chubby hand clutching the collar of a large hound, his round, red-cheeked face full, even at five years old, of pleasant satisfaction with himself and his world. Behind him towered the brown umbrageous trees of his father's park, and in the distance the remote white ghost of the great house, while at his side was a broken marble column, draped with a negligent length of blue satin, and seated on this outspread satin, half in shadow, was the younger son, Julian, attired in long blue satin trousers buttoned over a white shirt, and with a white frill round his neck. His small dark face had none of the babyish roundness of his elder brother's—the chin was sharp and the eyes thoughtful, even at his small age of four years. But the high lights of the picture were not concentrated on Julian. It was a portrait of his heir that his father desired—his satisfactory, solid, healthy, red-cheeked Gilbert, who bore upon his youthful countenance all the signs of the complete English country gentleman.

It was a curious classical convention which set the broken column at his side and trailed upon the sedate English grass that exotic length of satin.

A STRONGHOLD

When the picture was completed it was framed in heavy carven gilt, and suspended by gilt chains over the cold great fireplace of Italian marble in the cold great entrance hall of the mansion. No member of the Withers family had ever found comfort, or a sense of welcome, in that echoing sarcophagus of stone and marble, paved with large squares of grey and black marble, with its arched alcoves each enshrining a forbidding bust of a Roman Emperor. Its coldness was that of the tomb—as the retainers who sheltered as well as might be from its shuddering draughts in the vast hooded leather chair knew in their bones. But it befitted the dignity of the house and the family, and gave the correct impression to all visitors that here was a stronghold held by something as difficult to pass as the old drawbridge and portcullis of an earlier day.

From this stately entrance hall rose a marble staircase with curved and sweeping balustrade of elaborately wrought iron that had been brought from Italy by the grandfather of Gilbert and Julian—the complicated ironwork and cold marble replacing the lovely twisted oaken balusters of the Wren period which had once stood there, and which were relegated to the servants' wing. But each succeeding head of the house, wealthy, and full of

his own importance, brought Hall Place into line with the architectural fashion of his day. Building was an inherited taste.

The original Hall of the village of Withers St. Mary had been a stone-built Norman structure, simple, severe, with small windows high up, and possible of defence against armed assault. It had been originally built in the days of the Conqueror’s son. Portions of it still existed in the late eighteenth century, though it had become a place for the storage of carts and timber waggons. When the family of Withers, through fortunate adventure, rose to wealth and importance in the early years of Elizabeth’s successor, they turned their backs on this stone structure, and built a beautiful mansion in brick and stone, with many glittering diamond-paned windows, set in brick mullions, with quoins of stone, and a square jutting porch of elaborate brick-work adorned with a great carved coat of arms. It was a spacious and dignified house, and for a century or more sufficed the Withers family, with some lesser alterations and additions.

But when the wave of Palladian architecture swept over the country it became too out-moded to be endured in this building family, and the Withers of that day ripped the lovely Jacobean front off his house and faced it again with the cold regularity of the classic taste. White and blank and haughty it now looked out on the swelling parklands. A wide stone terrace, with stone balustrade and vases on pediments, replaced the long walk of rosy brick, and the knot-garden, and the rosemary grown into great gnarled bushes. Inside, all the important parts of the house were also remade in the new mode—low panelled parlours were replaced by high and stately rooms, amply lit by tall sashed windows, adorned with carved marble fireplaces, with moulded ceilings, and gilded cornices. The expense of this reconstruction was so vast, and the lengthy discomfort of it so prolonged, that the Withers who had intended to rebuild his mansion entirely, desisted after he had transformed the entrance hall and staircase, the principal reception-rooms and bed-chambers, and left parts of Jacobean and earlier building out of sight in the back regions.

REBUILDING

After all, he never drove up to the back entrance, or walked up the back staircase of carved black oak, or slumbered in the dark panelled rooms down narrow passages that still survived. They were good enough for men-servants and maid-servants, these chambers that had housed the Quality in Stuart days.

They were also good enough for children. His great-grandson Julian John found much that enthralled him in the parts of the house that his ancestor had relegated to oblivion.

§ 2

Julian was by nature distinctly inclined to solitude. He was also interested in a number of things in which nobody else seemed to take any thought. He constantly wandered into the one room in the house that was musty with misuse, where rows upon rows of volumes in dark honey-coloured calf or silvery vellum stood upon classically carved mahogany shelves, divided into bays and sections by fluted mahogany pilasters reaching to the ornate plaster ceiling.

It was difficult for the child to abstract any of the heavy volumes, and when he had succeeded, those that were bound in vellum or pigskin were so stiff and warped with disuse that they would hardly open, and the backs of the calf-bound volumes cracked and crumbled and left siftings of dry powder behind them.

At his first explorings in the deserted library Julian was unable to read, but when he was fortunate, some of the volumes he tugged out of the shelves would have pictures—brown engravings of great and fascinating detail, where the ink was so thick it stood in ridges under his exploring finger, woodcuts very strange and sometimes alarming. He gazed and wondered silently—the pictures seemed to bear no relation to anything he knew, anything that existed in his world, but he felt, nevertheless, that they were full of stories with which he much desired to be acquainted. He was too secretive to ask anybody, and he also had a feeling that in the big house which was his home, with its population of servants, of grooms and kennel-men and gamekeepers, housekeeper, butler, and inferior men-servants, still-room maids and chamber-maids, not to speak of his father, his brother, and the aunt who took his dead mother's place, there was nobody who could tell him the things he wanted to know. Large numbers of the servants could not even read, and his father had never been seen with a book in his hand except the stud-book.

Very early in his life the sense of isolation descended upon Julian, and drove him to make for himself an inner world in which he could move more happily than in the visible world about him.

One day he found a volume that opened of itself at a picture which showed something he had already beheld with his own eyes—a great Circle of dark Stones. He stared in amazement—there, in the book, was the thing he had seen standing up on the rough grass in a way that had frightened him for days after, and

STONEHENGE

made him dream at night that the Stones had left their Circle and were coming after him.

A number of people had gone in carriages to the place where the Stones were, and there had been exciting food in hampers which James and Timothy, the footmen, had laid out on white cloths on the grass, and everybody had sat round on cushions, and eaten, and laughed and talked, and the Stones had stood behind them like dumb giants holding up the sky. Julian had wanted to eat the nice things, the long drive had made him very hungry, but he felt that one of the Stones was watching him, and he had choked, and hidden his face in his aunt's skirts, and Gilbert had jeered at him and eaten his share of the good things. He remembered the occasion vividly, though it was over a year ago, and he had recovered from his fright, and felt that now he could stand quite boldly in front of the Stones.

As he was looking minutely at the engraving of Stonehenge, his brother passed the opened door of the library and Julian called to him, "Come here, Gilbert, I want to show you something."

Gilbert entered with the little swagger of the shoulders that was inseparable from him, and stood with his legs wide apart in imitation of his father, whom he not only resembled, but admired.

"Well," he said, "I'm sure there is nothing I want to see in this old place."

"Look," his brother pointed to the engraving, "Do you remember that?"

"Oh, that place where you cried, and wouldn't eat, you silly baby. And Boxer caught a hare behind one of the stones."

That was all Stonehenge meant to him. He turned to Julian with a mixture of contempt and pity, "Come out of this stuffy place," he said, "Come to the stables with me—Felicity has a new foal. What you want with these old books——" He could not be troubled to finish the sentence in his haste to depart to more congenial regions.

§ 3

Stonehenge took a strong hold of Julian's imagination from the day of his first childish sight of the great prehistoric Circle. He continually asked questions, receiving most inadequate answers from his immediate family and friends, but getting occasionally from some stranger a hint, a vista of the

past, a fluttering glimpse of Druid robes. It was all mysterious and vague, and because of this, fascinating to his inquiring and rapidly expanding mind. It may be said that it was the Druids who urged him to acquire the art of reading, when his elder brother was still stuck in words of one syllable—Gilbert would have gladly given up the unnatural struggle to acquire a modicum of learning, only it was essential that he should go to Sherborne, as all his forbears had gone.

But when the printed book began to reveal its secrets to Julian—and the interval between his spelling primer and his perusal of half-understood folios was surprisingly short—he asked no further questions about Stonehenge. Instead he searched the shelves of the quiet library, and found there a store of books on the subject. He was fortunate in that his grandfather had been not only proud of his Wiltshire birth and landed estate, but an antiquarian and an early member of the Society of Antiquaries. In those thick volumes of *Archæologia* Julian found engravings of Stonehenge, dark and sombre and threatening, with their heavy engraved lines and shading, which deeply impressed his imagination. In the same volume he read how Mr. Maton, in the year 1797, had given an account of the fall of one of the great Stones. On the third of January in that year, wrote Mr. Maton,

BACKWARD TIME

> “Some people employed at the plough, full half a mile distant from Stonehenge, suddenly felt a considerable concussion, or jarring of the ground, occasioned, as they afterwards perceived, by the fall of two of the largest stones and their imposts.”

Julian looked at the dark engravings in the volume of Stonehenge before and after the fall of those stones, and wished that he could have stood by and watched the strange event. Why did those great stones, which had stood for so many centuries that no man knew when they were first erected, suddenly fall at that day and time? In the first large folio volume of Camden’s *Britannia: or a Chorographical Description of Great Britain*, he found another fascinating engraving of Stonehenge, in which the great stones had all the air of shrouded figures, who, circling in a colossal dance have suddenly been frozen into immobility by the little human forms that, like flies, wander enquiringly within the Circle. Julian sometimes looked at this picture so long that he almost thought he saw a wavering movement in the great forms.

And after looking at these engravings he would mount his brown pony and ride to Stonehenge—it was a journey from Withers St. Mary that took him nearly two hours—and walk round and about in the Circle, touching the stones and looking at them, till he knew exactly the shape and position of each one, sitting on a fallen Blue Stone, with his chin cupped in his hands, gazing about him and wondering.

An occasional shepherd came by and had a word or two with him, sometimes telling him queer tales about the stones, and what the country people thought of them. An old, old man camped against one of the trilithons, and spread his humble meal upon the great flat prostrate stone in front of it. “The Blood Stone” he called it, and told Julian how “They” cut the throats of their victims upon it with a curved knife of silver—he sliced his own bread and bacon upon it indifferently as he told this.

“I would not like to eat my luncheon off it, then,” said Julian, gazing with a rather horrified admiration at the old man munching away in the mumbling manner of the toothless.

“Eh, what matter be it?” the ancient man replied, “We all got to die when zo be the time comes, and ’twas zuch a mort of time ago—happen it were bevore Noah’s Flood. Though there be times at nights when I do think as I hear cries—but none of ’em ever hurts I.”

His pale eyes, retreated deep into his head, looked as if they were long past alarms.

He told many tales and legends to Julian, and as Julian grew older and more developed in his historic sense, he saw with excitement how antique these garbled tales were, all twisted and misshapen from their origins, but undoubtedly growing on their authentic roots.

§ 4

GRAND TOUR

One of these tales he told again himself on an occasion that was to remain long in his memory, though he was only nineteen when he told it. He was about to depart on the Grand Tour which was to complete his education, and the day before he left Withers St. Mary he rode over to Stonehenge to say farewell to the place which had always possessed a strange hold on his imagination. It was an afternoon of early summer, and the great rolling Plain, with its acres of young corn, its vast stretches of pasturing sheep, its small thatched hamlets

tucked away in curves and folds of the spacious landscape, was looking its most benign. As Julian gazed about him from the saddle he thought his brother had been wise in flatly refusing to leave his native Wiltshire to undertake the Grand Tour—it was certain that he had no education to complete save that obtained in the stables, the hunting-field, and the boxing ring.

"What do I want with demned foreigners and their mouldy cities?" enquired this sporting specimen of young English manhood, standing with his legs wide apart, and tapping his calf with a riding crop.

His father thought this a very proper sentiment, having unpleasant memories of what he himself had suffered when undergoing the purgatorial Tour the year before he came of age. "Julian can go," he said, feeling that would be a sufficient sacrifice to the Withers dignity and correctitude.

"Yes, Julian can go," agreed Gilbert. "He likes those kind of mouldy affairs."

All books, learning, and foreign places were mouldy to Gilbert Fitzmaurice Withers.

But Julian had intellectual curiosities and hidden enthusiasms which made the thought of the Grand Tour of Europe a quiet exultation in his mind, of which he knew it was entirely useless to speak to either his father or his brother. Even with visions of Rome before his inward eye, he felt and obeyed the impulse to pay a last visit to Stonehenge before departing on his European travels.

As his horse bore him through that English scene, with the wide arch of summer sky above his head, and the rolling stretches of the Plain all round, he thought that Europe could not show him anything more satisfying than this Wiltshire in which he had been born and bred. A new young pride in his heritage dawned within his breast—perhaps his brother was right, and it was foolish to search in foreign lands for anything other than what England could bestow. Stonehenge itself, as he knew, was unique in the world, and when the solitary Circle of the Stones broke on his expectant eye, he felt once again the stir of excitement and awe that spectacle had always brought him, since his childish days.

When he was within the ditch he jumped lightly from his horse and knotted the reins so that they should not trail—the horse would stand as long as he wished, patient and docile. As he turned from doing this, and passed inside the Circle, he was surprised to discover another horse, bearing a side-saddle but no rider, quietly pulling tufts of grass.

He soon saw the rider—a young woman seated upon a fallen trilithon, eating an apple. She was wearing a scarlet riding habit, with a white Cavalier hat, plumed with a long white feather. She looked up with a slightly startled air as he came into view, then, as her clear grey eyes encountered Julian's, she suddenly smiled in an enchanting way, and with the most natural manner in the world, as though they had been long acquainted, spoke to him.

"Do you like these Stones too?" she said.

EVE'S APPLE

"Yes," Julian answered, "I think they are the most wonderful—and the strangest—things in England."

"Strange?—yes, they look strange, especially when the sun is setting. I sometimes come to look at them then, but I gallop away before it gets dark, for they frighten me, it makes me have cold fingers down my spine! That is partly why I come!"

She shivered and laughed.

"Do you like to be frightened, then?" asked Julian.

"Sometimes. I like to touch strange things and have strange thoughts—life is so safe and smooth."

She paused and frowned a little.

"Have an apple?" she questioned, and handed him one from a little basket on her lap.

"Thank you, Eve," said Julian, feeling as though he had known her for a long time.

She looked surprised. "How did you know my name was Eve?"

"Is it?" he asked, equally surprised.

"Oh, stupid—of course, the apple! But it is Eve, or that is what I am called, though really it is Evalina."

"Evalina what?" Julian asked.

"That does not matter," she replied, looking away from him. "Tell me something about these stones in return for my apple."

"I implore your pardon for my ill-bred question. Will you forget it?"

"If you will tell me a story."

She smiled, and looked him straight in the eyes. Julian thought her very lovely, not the less because he recognised that she was older than himself, and had an assured air that suggested she was at home in the great world. Yet there was something fresh and eager in her clear eyes and direct speech.

"If you like Stonehenge you should come at sunrising, as well as sunset," Julian said to her. "Midsummer sunrise, to which this avenue is said to point, and then you could think of the Druids waiting for the rim of the sun to appear, and chanting hymns to its golden globe."

"Did the Druids build this, then?" she asked, waving her hand at the encircling Stones.

"It is believed so," Julian answered, "though of course there are all sorts of queer tales, for nobody really knows quite why they are here, or where the stones came from, and so they make up tales."

"Well, tell me some of the tales," she said, settling herself more comfortably on her stone seat, and looking as eager as a child.

Julian remembered the story the old man who used to camp at Stonehenge told him when he was a small boy, and which he had made him repeat so often that he had it engraved almost word for word upon his youthful memory.

"An old man told this tale to me," he began, "and you can believe just as much of it as you please."

"If it's a nice tale I'll believe it all," she said, with a little smile at him, thinking what an interesting dark face he had, obviously very young, but with a thoughtful brow and serious eyes, and a self-possession that came from being absorbed in other things than himself.

§ 5

PARCEL OF STONES

"MERLIN seems to have had a great deal to do with Stonehenge," Julian began. "At least the stories I have heard often bring him in—and the Devil, of course."

He smiled, and she smiled back at him.

"The Devil is usually responsible for any strange thing in this country," she said. "But tell me your story."

“Well, as Merlin was wishful to have a Parcel of Stones, which grew in an odd sort of farm in a backyard belonging to an old woman in Ireland, brought to Salisbury Plain, he engaged the Devil upon this work. So the Devil dressed himself like a gentleman, and took a large bag of money in his hand, and called upon the good woman. She requested him to sit down, and he quickly acquainted her of the purchase he was wishful to make, at the same time pouring out his bag of money on the table before her, and offering her as much for her stones as she could count while he should be taking them away.

“The money was all in odd sorts of coins, such as fourpenny-halfpenny pieces, ninepenny pieces, and thirteenpenny-halfpenny pieces and the like, but the Devil’s proposal seemed so advantageous, that notwithstanding the difficulty there would be in reckoning the money, the old woman decided to comply with it, as she imagined the removal of her stones by this one gentleman would be a work of considerable time, and that she should be able to tell as much money while it should be about as would make her rich as a princess.”

“People always think being rich means being happy,” said Evalina, with a quick sigh.

Julian looked at her—though even when his eyes were turned away he saw her, all the time—but went on with the story without comment.

“So the bargain was agreed. But the old woman had no sooner laid her finger upon a fourpenny-half-penny coin, than the Devil with an audible voice, cried out ‘Hold!’ and said, ‘The stones are gone!’ The old woman, however, disregarding what he said, peeped out into her backyard, and to her great amazement, it was even as the Devil had said, for in an instant he had taken down the stones as they stood in the backyard, bound them up in a withy, and so conveyed them with ease to Salisbury Plain. But just before he got to his destination, the withy slackened, and as he was crossing the river Avon at Bulford, one of the stones dropped down into the water, where it lies to this very hour. But the rest of the stones were raised up on the spot destined by Merlin for them, and the Devil, pleased with the cleverness of his work in outwitting the old woman and obtaining the stones for fourpence-halfpenny and bringing them to Salisbury Plain all the way from Ireland, declared aloud, as he was fixing the last stone, that no man should be able to tell how that fabrick, or any of the parts of it, came there.

“A friar, who had lain all night concealed and watching these proceedings, when he heard the Devil’s boast replied, ‘That is more than

thou canst tell.’ This put the Devil into such a passion, that he snatched up a great stone and hurled it at the friar, with an intention to bruise him to dust. But the friar, running for his life, the stone only touched his heel, the mark of which appears in that pillar even to this day.”

The tale was ended.

§ 6

“How gravely you tell the tale,” said Evalina. “Almost one might think that you believed it!”

QUESTIONS

“ ’Tis as easy to believe as most of the tales the learned men tell of this place,” Julian answered. “They do not know overmuch, and so they talk the more deeply. To me it seems the work of some greater race than ours.”

“You are young to think so much on these matters. Do you care nothing for hunting and games of chance?”

“I have a brother who cares for these things in my stead—but I like to think of what was happening in this country long ages ago.”

“A student? Ah, well, those matters are not for women. I must be gone now, but I thank you for your tale.”

She rose, and moved towards her horse.

He assisted her to the saddle, and then with a hand on her bridle, asked, “May I have the honour to escort you?”

She pulled off her left gauntlet—her right hand was already bare—to adjust a strap, and he saw a gold circlet on her third finger, guarded by a large and costly emerald. He looked at the rings with surprise and distaste.

“I thank you for your courtesy,” she said, “but a groom awaits me a quarter of a mile away. I am only allowed out on a chain.”

Her smile was clouded, but merriness came back to it as she touched her horse with her heel and called over her shoulder, “Don’t let the Devil find you alone among the Stones!”

He stood and watched her riding away, a wild regret suddenly rising in his young mind. Why was she married? And who was she?

Then he saw a groom on a tall brown horse ride up, and fall in behind her. He recognised the livery. It was old Sir Joshua Vansittart's. So that gay young woman was the wife of that wealthy, worn-out old buck. He clenched his fists, and leaned his forehead against the great stone by which he stood. Anger and sorrow poured through him in waves. After a while it seemed as though the stone itself sent waves of feeling through him, telling him how old was the grief of the world.

A certain melancholy inherent in his nature was definitely deepened by that episode at Stonehenge.

§ 7

WHEN JULIAN returned from his Grand Tour of Europe—which had meant, in his case, Paris, a few French cathedrals, Cologne, Florence, Naples, Venice, and Rome—he experienced a shock of astonishment to find Wiltshire and Withers St. Mary exactly as he had left them. A couple of new hunters in the stables, and dogs that had been tumbling puppies grown to full doghood, seemed the only changes. His father and Gilbert were, if possible, a little more red and russet in countenance—perhaps it was by contrast with the olive skins he had been living with—but otherwise seemed exactly as he had left them.

His father slapped him proudly on the shoulder.

"Well, my boy, glad to get back to a civilised country, after all those demned foreigners, and hear a decent language again?"

A BETROTHAL

"Italian is a beautiful tongue," said Julian, who had learned to speak it easily after a winter in Rome. When he reached Rome he fell so completely under the spell of the City on the Seven Hills that he would not leave it to go elsewhere.

"Well, you can talk it if you wish, so long as you did not lose your heart to a dark-eyed Italian damsel."

Julian smiled: "I found the churches and monuments more interesting than the Italian ladies, I'm afraid."

"Demned sensible! But that reminds me, your Aunt has something to tell you, and here she comes." Julian's aunt, Miss Caroline Withers, thin, and with a rather fluttering manner which yet concealed a good deal of decision, floated up to him, and took his arm, and saluted him somewhere in the region of his ear.

“My dear boy, I am so glad to have you *safely* back. I always feel foreign countries are so *dangerous*. I was always so *thankful* when I was a girl that young ladies were not required to make the Grand Tour. But I have something to tell you about a young lady which is very *important*, so we will postpone the discussion of your travels——” At this point Julian’s father and brother looked at each other rather sheepishly and retreated from the room. “Come and sit by me here, and I will tell you *all* about it.”

Julian smiled at his aunt. He was very fond of her, so long as he had not to stay too continuously in her company, and he sat down on the settee at her side.

“Well, what has been happening while I have been away, Aunt Caroline?”

“Prepare yourself for a *shock*, dear Julian—your brother Gilbert is affianced!”

“Gilbert?” Julian was quite sufficiently surprised.

“Oh, but most *suitable*, I assure you. After all, he is quite old enough, and he is the *heir*. It is hard on you, Julian, of course, but these things are in the hand of Almighty God, and we must accept His will.”

“I never wanted to be the heir, Aunt Caroline, I assure you.”

“That shows your good heart. But as Gilbert is the heir it is very *necessary* that he should marry—the line must be carried on. There is only Gilbert and you between the *extinction* of the name.”

The family of Withers, its history and importance, was her abiding preoccupation and interest.

“Surely that is sufficient?” said Julian, smiling at her lined, delicate-featured face.

“Well, the time has happily arrived for Gilbert to marry, and his choice has fallen *most* suitably——” she paused, enjoying the moment before she revealed upon whom it had fallen.

“Who is the fair and fortunate lady?” Julian questioned, as was expected of him. He knew that to his aunt any girl who by marriage became a Withers was fortunate.

“Lavinia Bellairs!” There was definite triumph in Miss Withers’ voice.

Julian recognised the reason of the triumph. Lavinia Bellairs was not only a considerable heiress, being her father’s only child, but the Bellairs’

estate, though not so large, marched with that of Withers St. Mary. The two estates together would make one of almost princely proportions, and the Withers' name and honour be thereby considerably augmented. An obvious and beneficent arrangement of Providence.

"I had always thought and hoped—I may even say *prayed*—that this might come about," Miss Withers continued. "Ever since that beautiful little girl came here to a Twelfth Night Party when you were all children. But since she grew up she has been here so *little*, and I feared the fashionable life of Town——" She sighed at the thought of past agitations, and then brightened. "But they met in the hunting-field, and Gilbert looks so handsome on a horse, and so does she, and sooner than I could have *hoped* Gilbert had requested her hand of her father. It was all arranged with the most delightful *speed*, there were no *obstacles*, and now we can all enjoy the comfort of a well-suited connection, and if I may live to see the wedding-day I shall die in peace!"

ANCESTRAL DUTY

"Oh, you must live longer than that, Aunt. You must live to see the birth of the heir!"

"Fi!" His aunt tapped his arm archly. "We do not speak of such things at this stage of a matrimonial arrangement."

"But that is just what you did speak of," Julian insisted. "The heir, his necessity and importance!"

"Oh, of course, the heir to the Withers St. Mary estate is extremely important," said his aunt inconsequently. "And dear Lavinia dines here to-morrow afternoon. I knew you would be *most* anxious to see your brother's betrothed—and take care of your own heart, she is very beautiful!"

She smiled archly up at him, then rose, and kissed him. "Do tell Gilbert that you are vastly pleased," she admonished him.

"Oh, I am immensely pleased that it is Gilbert and not me who is sacrificing himself on the altar of ancestral duty!" said Julian quizzing her.

He offered his arm and escorted her to the door. Then he turned back and stood at one of the tall windows, looking out at the broad sweep of parkland, and the massing of noble trees against the near horizon. "It is lovely," he thought. "Essentially English and full of peace. One might even make sacrifices for such a heritage. But I am glad that is not necessary. When Gilbert is married I shall go back to Rome."

His mind wandered to studies and excavations. There was a certain Italian professor who had shown him things not ordinarily to be seen, who had promised to let him take part in some very important excavations when he should return. There was no pressing hurry, they would be going on for years. He could give time to his father, and Withers St. Mary, and his brother's wedding, it was odd to think of Gilbert as a married man, and then go back to Rome and settle down to the archæological and studious life which so attracted his mind and temperament. How fortunate that he had an elder brother!

§ 8

MISS LAVINIA BELLAIRS had been a very beautiful little girl, and she grew up into an extremely handsome young woman. From an early age she had been fully aware of the advantages bestowed upon her in her looks, her social position, and her potential wealth as her father's only child. He was a widower who had buried his heart in his wife's grave, so Lavinia was not haunted by the fear of being supplanted by a stepmother and that stepmother's possible son. He lavished on Lavinia an indulgent affection, giving her everything she desired, but leaving her moral training in the hands of nurses and governesses whom he imagined must be good because they were highly paid. Lavinia's education was so skilfully accomplished that after she passed from the hands of her finishing governess she never voluntarily opened a book, unless perhaps, the *Companion to the Ball Room* of Thomas Wilson, the dancing master of the King's Theatre Opera House, or *The Vase of Fancy, being an Elegant Collection of Riddles and Charades*. She had more interesting things to do than reading books.

YOUNG LADY OF FASHION

Her father had found his best consolation after his wife's death in his archæological researches and in forestry schemes for his area of woodlands. He did not understand the upbringing of little girls—still less that of the handsome young woman who suddenly burst upon him, complete and finished and ready for the great world. He looked at the charming creature in her high-waisted dress, the calculated disarray of her yellow curls setting off the straight thick line of her dark eyebrows and dark-lashed blue eyes. The rose colour of her mouth hid the extreme firmness of its line. Her nose was a shade too long, but none would notice that as they gazed at the peach-bloom of her cheek. It took more than a father's or a lover's partial eye to perceive that Lavinia Bellairs had the makings of a formidable woman.

She was avid for gaiety and for conquests. She was a complete flirt, and put a high value on herself, being so well endowed by all the gifts of fortune. Withers St. Mary had little to hold her, and she spent most of her time at the house of an aunt in Town, who moved in the first circles, and had the coveted entry to Almack's. At that fashionable paradise in King Street, St. James's, Lavinia danced elegantly in Grecian and Circassian quadrilles to the music of Weippert's famous band, and there acquired her passion for card games. She became a Toast. She had many offers of marriage, and refused them all because she expected something better. She made a practice of refusals, and began to look upon each one as a further jewel in the coronet of her attractions. It began to be said that the beautiful Miss Bellairs would not succumb to anyone under the rank of a viscount. Then one winter, when she was making one of her somewhat rare visits to Wiltshire, she met again in the hunting-field the little boy she had known in her childhood, now grown to just the type of masculine good looks that most appealed to her taste. Gilbert looked superb upon a horse. Suddenly she decided that here was the man she would marry. She had grown a little weary of the long succession of routs and assemblies in Town; Ranelagh no longer charmed. A small seed of doubt had been planted in her breast that very year by seeing a girl younger and far less beautiful than herself—a pale slip of a creature—achieve the great match which she had almost decided would satisfy her ambition. It was true, unfortunately, that Gilbert had no title, but his family was a sufficiently ancient one, older than her own, and their lands, which so conveniently adjoined, would make a very handsome estate united. Mrs Withers, of Withers St. Mary, would be a very important personage.

She glanced sideways at Gilbert as he rode beside her. His big body, his handsome head, his wind-reddened countenance, entirely appealed to her. He was not clever: she would rule him. Gilbert turned to her with a smile that showed his magnificent teeth, thinking what an excessive pretty girl she was, and far and away the best feminine rider in the field. He did not know he was as doomed as the fox that runs home to find his earth stopped up.

Lavinia's father gave his consent to the match without any difficulty—he had never refused her anything she had demanded of him.

"I could have wished, though," he said a little wistfully, "that it had been the other brother, Julian. I should have liked him for a son-in-law—I can talk to him about a number of things."

Lavinia looked at him in astonishment. "But Julian is not the heir!" she exclaimed. "My dear Papa, one must place one's affections suitably. Besides, I find Julian vastly tedious."

§ 9

WEDDING PREPARATIONS

Preparation for the wedding was begun at once on an extensive scale. Lavinia had suddenly grown tired of her single state, and meant to leave it with a fanfare of trumpets. Wiltshire at least should be fully conscious that Miss Bellairs was becoming Mrs Gilbert Withers. Her father's house overflowed with sempstresses and mantua-makers, though the wedding-dress itself was to come from Town. Lavinia's first thought was that her wedding should take place there, from her aunt's house in Hanover Square, but on this matter Gilbert displayed a firmness that surprised her—he was Wiltshire born, and so was she, they would be married in the church of Withers St. Mary that belonged to them both, where ornate marble slabs on the simple walls commemorated in high-flown words the virtues and honours of the Withers and Bellairs families. So Lavinia decided, after a moment's swift thinking, that in this matter she would give him his way, seeing in her mind's eye that a large gathering of gratified tenantry would add a feudal quality to the ceremony it could not have in London. But having given way over this important matter, she exacted a complete deference to her wishes in all other things—and she looked to every detail herself with a surprising competence.

Miss Withers was amazed at her abilities—and secretly disappointed that her age and experience were so little consulted. But to Gilbert she had nothing save words of praise for the beauty and spirit of his betrothed. Her family hopes were so completely satisfied that her personal feelings, in so far as they were slightly thwarted, were of no account. She made every preparation in her power to forward the wedding, and her fingers worked feverishly at the elaborate stitchery of a wedding waistcoat for Gilbert. Into the ornate silken roses and myrtle sprigs she stitched all the Past as she knew it—and to her the history of England was the history of the family of Withers—and all the Future as she hoped it.

But he never wore the waistcoat. Three days before the marriage morning, he was brought home on a hurdle with his neck broken. He had been thrown by a fiery young hunter he was training. It seemed incredible that a neck so sturdy and muscular as that of Gilbert Fitzmaurice Withers should have been broken by a fall from a horse.

§ 10

RAVAGED HOPES

To Julian it always remained a mystery by what steps he had come to take his brother's place as Lavinia's bridegroom. The fact that by Gilbert's death he became the heir never occurred to him as the explanation.

"His neck is broke!" The cry had sounded with a knell-like note in Lavinia's mind, just as she, like a princess, was about to step into her kingdom. The shock was great, but it was not a shock to her affections. Her expected and becoming prostration was for the loss of the thing that really mattered to her—the cup of a distinguished and wealthy marriage snatched from her lips. If Gilbert had to die how much more suitable and fortunate had it been after the wedding, instead of before it. As the important young widow her lot would have been tolerable. Shut in her room, in the seclusion of supposed grief, she raged against her ill-fortune till she looked so picturesquely ravaged that it was a hard heart that could behold her unmoved—her cheeks pale, her eyes enlarged by shadows. For two days and nights she remained invisible, abandoned to her disappointed hopes. Then she arose, and looked at herself in her mirror, pleased to perceive that sorrow—as she called it—had only given a pathetic and appealing quality to her good looks. A thought had been growing in her mind. She had her head dressed, in a grave and quiet manner, unlike her usual style, conscious how the broad black riband became her bright hair. She slipped into the black gown, with its long tight sleeves, its full, bunched, plainly hanging skirt, its close bodice, into which was tucked a fine white lawn neckerchief. She looked the very model of Lovely Grief. So Romney might have painted her.

She sent a message that Julian should attend on her. He hastened to obey, his heart aching for her distress, leaving his father, who in reality was much more in need of his care, having been smitten with an apoplexy from the shock of Gilbert's death.

Julian was amazed at the change in Lavinia. "She must have really loved him," he thought, surveying the waxen cheek, the downcast eye, the trembling lip. All that abounding vitality and self-content, which had never attracted him, seemed swept away. A trembling hand was held out to him, blue eyes seen through tears looked up at him for a moment, and looked down again.

He stammered condolences, regrets.

"My life is broken," she said simply. "I have nothing now to live for. I have only one request to make to you, dear brother of my dearest Gilbert"—her hand went to her heart in a gesture of which Mrs Siddons need not have

been ashamed—"Will you accompany me to visit his corpse? I need your support and help."

Her tears fell, and she looked at him through them without attempting to wipe them away.

Julian was filled with pity and tenderness for this fair, bereft creature. He too had been shaken by Gilbert's violent and unexpected end—a young man so abounding in life and enjoyment, so unprepared for death. He was anxious, too, about his father's collapse. It had not even dawned upon his pre-occupied mind that he himself was now the heir to Hall Place and all its acres, and to the village and farms of Withers St. Mary.

UNTIMELY DEATH

With much gentleness he escorted Lavinia to the tall chamber, its walls hung in black, its great bed draped like a hearse, the gloom dimly illuminated by candles in silver sconces against the walls, wherein the body of his brother lay. Death had hardly paled those features, for the ruddy painting of wind and sun was ingrained and still coloured the countenance, though with a more purplish hue. There was something very strange in his unmoving stillness, he who had always been in active movement—even in sleep, as Julian remembered from their childish habitation together, he was never still, turning, flinging out an arm, twitching, giving little snorts and cries, as dogs do.

Lavinia gazed in silence for a moment or two, seeing, not a young man untimely dead, but the wreck of all her satisfactions and ambitions. With a sob of self-pity she swayed a little sideways. Julian caught her, she slipped into his arms and wept. His heart wrenched with pity for her grief, Julian, hardly knowing what he did, kissed her very chastely on the forehead—was she not almost his sister?—and murmured pity in her ear.

§ 11

Lavinia conducted the affair with considerable skill. She had hooked her fish, but too great an urgency to land him might result in his breaking away. The legend that she was heartbroken by the death of his brother had to be maintained. Yet if all the decencies of delay were followed, there was great likelihood of Julian escaping.

But fate, in the shape of Julian's father, played a good card into her hands. In her new quest of a place in the Withers family, in her new part of

the almost-daughter, she made it her business to visit and sit with the bedridden man. She exerted all her charm on him, till one day he said how bitter a disappointment it was to him, not only that his son was dead, but that she was not his daughter-in-law.

"Fine grandsons you'd have brought me," he said, looking at her admiringly from his bloodshot eyes.

Lavinia blushed, and murmured some suitable reply.

Mr Withers lay still for a few moments, then: "By Gad, and why not?" he suddenly exclaimed. He seized his bell and rang it violently.

"Send Mr Julian to me," he said, when his man-servant appeared, "And look sharp about it!"

Lavinia's gaze was rather startled, but a gleam appeared in her eye.

Julian came, with an approving smile as he saw Lavinia's daughterly attendance.

"You sent for me, sir? Is there anything I can do?"

"Do?" said his father, pulling himself up on his pillows. "Do? Of course there is! If you'd half the guts of your brother you'd not have to wait to be told. You can marry that charmin' creature sittin' there, and carry on the family name. Damn it, sir, we shall die out if you don't do your duty!"

Julian was quite aghast. Such an idea had not dawned on his mind, in spite of his now gentle feeling towards Lavinia, and his admiration of her beauty and her courage.

"Sir," he exclaimed, "you insult the tender feelings of grief. Her heart is buried in the grave of my brother."

"Fiddlesticks!" cried his irate sire, working himself into an empurpling look which much alarmed the unhappy Julian. "Fiddlesticks! What have that blooming cheek and swelling bosom to do with graves! Marry her, and beget me some fine grandsons, or, by Gad, I'll marry her myself!"

MR WITHERS INTERVENES

Julian stood dumbfounded, utterly at a loss—in fear both at the risk of another apoplexy should he oppose his father, and at the distressing onslaught to the sensibility of Lavinia.

On her side Lavinia thought rapidly, her head bent with becoming modesty and grace. This was help to her wishes she had hardly hoped so plainly and so soon. But its very plainness and outspokenness put her in a

difficulty with Julian. She had some idea how unseemly would appear in his eyes any eagerness for a new marriage, and she also had a very clear idea that should a suitable interval of grief elapse, Julian himself would have retreated beyond her reaching.

A little sob escaped her—a genuine little sob of vexation at the tantalising position in which a young lady of breeding found herself.

"Come here, my dear," said Mr Withers.

She rose obediently.

"Here, Julian," he called more sharply.

Julian moved to the bedside.

He put Lavinia's yielding hand into his son's.

"There!" he said triumphantly. "No more nonsense! Since Julian is such a ninny he cannot say it for himself, I request that you will honour him with your hand, and make an old man happy, whose eldest son is dead, and who soon will follow him."

Still Julian said nothing, though he held her hand and looked down at her pityingly.

A cold rage rose in Lavinia's little heart. "Oh, I will make him pay for this!" she thought. But she gazed at him with large eyes and said—since perforce one of them must speak—"Dear Julian, if you will be patient with me I will learn to love you, if it will make your father happy. I will try to be a good wife——" She faltered prettily.

Julian lifted her hand to his lips. "I thank you, Lavinia. I fear I can never fill Gilbert's place in your heart, but I will do all I may."

Mr Withers sank back with a satisfied smile. "Excellent, by Gad! We cannot let that little bitch run away from the family, Julian. Good stock, good stock! Ring for a bottle of port, and let us toast the bride!"

§ 12

Miss Withers proved a surprising support to Lavinia. She entered her brother's room to find Lavinia leaning gracefully against Julian's shoulder, and Mr Withers sitting up in bed with a cheerful countenance, and a ruby-filled glass in his hand.

"Ha!" he exclaimed. "You are just in time to toast your new niece—another glass, Simpson."

"Does this mean?—Oh, *can* it mean? Oh, my dear Julian, what an arrangement of *Providence*! Certainly we are *watched over*. Dearest Lavinia, so you are to become a Withers after all, and your stricken heart will find a home!"

She gasped, and collapsed into tears, far more moved than anyone else in the room.

"I am not crying," she protested, patting her eyes. "It is only the thought of how *rejoiced* poor Gilbert will be, his anxieties now at an *end*. I had not dared to *hope* for such a happy ending to our sad loss."

"Yes," said her brother, looking more like himself than at any time since Gilbert's death, "you'll be able to dandle my grandsons on your knee yet, which is all you care for, I know."

GRANDSONS

It was really these unborn children who brought Lavinia's plans and hopes to a triumphant conclusion. The broad remarks of her father-in-law to be, though received by her with all the blushes that modesty required, were yet in some subtle way amplified and stressed to both Mr Withers himself and his sister. There was only the precious life of Julian—"Dear Julian, she had always been rather afraid of him, he was so clever and bookish, but he was so sympathetic and kind, perhaps he *understood* some feelings better even than dearest Gilbert"—between the Withers family and extinction. One would have liked to wait, to mourn upon that untimely tomb, but perhaps one had a *duty*, did Aunt Caroline think——?

Aunt Caroline very emphatically thought so.

"A most heroic girl," she told Julian. "She has no *thought* of herself, and her devotion to your father is vastly touching."

Julian wondered whether it required heroism to marry him. After sudden midnight hours of rebellion—he had always planned his life as that of a scholar and antiquarian, not as the head of a family—he became passive. It was his obvious duty to marry, a duty that he now could hardly avoid, though he might have hoped to postpone it for a while. But perhaps he could combine the pursuit of scholarship with the conduct of a wife and a big estate. And Lavinia was certainly beautiful, and much gentler than he had imagined her to be. Grief, perchance, had brought out her tenderer qualities. He had been inclined to think her somewhat hard and assured, which had

never pleased him, even when combined with handsome looks. But girls were difficult to know, in any case, and fortunately there were plenty of feminine pursuits and amusements to occupy them. He, no doubt, would find ample leisure for his own studies, and fortunately the estate was still in his father's hands, and would be for many years, as he was making a good recovery from his alarming attack.

He was both correct and kind in his attentions to Lavinia. At first he made some slight effort to enlist her interest in those archæological and classic matters that had so vivid an appeal to him, but found it difficult to evoke any spark, though Lavinia was painstaking to conceal her yawns. Why were young women so trivially educated? It ever he had a daughter ——

On one matter, that of architecture, he met with some response. He was showing Lavinia a collection of Palladian drawings he had brought with him from Rome. She had just turned over his cherished Piranesi engravings, with their marvellous detail, their amazing mastery of perspective, their strong romantic feeling, with cool fingers, and a cold eye. They meant nothing to her.

"You must have these prints framed, dear Julian, to hang on your library walls. They will look very respectable. You gentlemen always like something gloomy—old buildings, or battles!"

But a drawing of a great portico of stone, consisting of Ionic columns supporting an impressive entablature, roused her to genuine enthusiasm.

"Why, that is the very example of the portico that the Marquis of Witlington has built to his house near Bath!" she cried. "His Lady showed me the drawings of it but last winter. She said the consequence of the house was so excessively increased that they were obliged to take on two more footmen."

ARCHITECTURA
L CONSEQUENCE

"How very pleasing!" said Julian, smiling at her sparkling face.

"Yes, was it not?—though, of course, no great matter to a marquis." Lavinia was beginning to regret that the name of Withers, though old and long established and wealthy, carried no title. "Julian, could we not do the same at Hall Place? I do not consider the entrance front worthy of the rest of the mansion—and the front is so vastly important. It would look much more genteel if it were like this," and she tapped the engraving with an eager hand.

“You forget, my dear, Hall Place is my father’s property, and the only additions he would be likely to sanction are additions to the stables.”

“Oh!” said Lavinia with a little gasp. For the moment she had thought of Mr Withers as deceased, and herself as undisputed mistress of Hall Place, and all its men-servants and its maid-servants, and all that it contained.

§ 13

THIS happy consummation was not delayed so long as she had feared. It was only a little over four years after her marriage to Julian that her father-in-law died, ostensibly of a chill from getting very wet, but partly because his hold on life had been weakened by his son’s wife. At his own request Julian and Lavinia lived with him: Miss Withers contentedly retiring to the little Dower House on the edge of the park nearest to the village of Withers St. Mary.

“You are mistress here now, my dear Lavinia,” Mr Withers had said to the bride.

She soon began experimenting to discover how much of this polite saying was true. She did not find Julian very exciting, but then she had not expected that she would. Gilbert was the kind of man she admired, and Julian was so extremely unlike him. It was other things than love she expected from her marriage.

Her wedding-day had been entirely satisfactory. With a sense of artistic fitness that was one of her many gifts, she had discarded the superb dress in which she had intended to appear as Gilbert’s bride. She was still the bride of the heir of Withers St. Mary, but she paid a graceful tribute to the deceased in the simplicity of her white taffeta gown, her black sandals with silver ribands, her white chip bonnet, with its one creamy plume and its little floating veil of Mechlin. She had never looked more beautiful—the inclination to flamboyance, which had appealed to Gilbert, being on this occasion subdued and chastened. Julian’s thin dark face and tall figure were an ideal contrast to her fairness. If he did not appear quite so joyful a bridegroom as might have been expected with so charming a bride, his gravity was easily explained by thoughts of the dead brother whose place he took on that day.

Within so short a space the Hall had seen processions of such extremes—the procession that had set forth at night, bearing Gilbert’s costly, pall-enshrouded coffin to the vault of his ancestors, followed by a long retinue

bearing torches that flared in the windy darkness, through the plumed trees of the park. Each torch-bearer carried in his other hand a sprig of rosemary that was thrown into the coffin at the end.

WEDDING-DAY

But now the hatchment was taken down and hung anew in the church, the festal table was spread in the house of mourning. The smiling bride mounted the marble steps of the perron on the arm of her bridegroom, and stood graciously before the balustrade to receive the tribute of the cheers of the assembled tenantry, who were shortly to enjoy beef and mutton pies and beer from great barrels under the trees.

Lavinia looked out on her domain and thought it very satisfactory, and determined that she would enjoy all the benefits of so well suited a connection as she had made by this marriage, to the full. She glanced at Julian, between a smile and a curtsey to some distinguished guest—"Your servant, madam!"—and wondered for a fleeting moment what he felt. Not that she anticipated many difficulties with him; he was quiet and retiring, and shared her father's curious taste for old books and old buildings. They were to lie at Salisbury the next night, and she supposed that she would be dragged to look at the cathedral, vastly dull, but happily her chief bridesmaid, Belinda Mellors, would be with them, and there would be someone with whom she could talk about reasonable things, while Julian gazed at ecclesiastical architecture.

She looked round her with considerable content—this was her future kingdom. Mr Withers had been insistent that the wedding festivities should take place at his house, instead of that of her father.

"Dash it all, Mrs Lavinia, 'tis nearer to the church should it rain, and Caroline is all in a dance to see to the soups and the jellies and the syllabubs, and I've some sherry wine and some old brandy that badly wants drinkin'!"

Lavinia was agreeable—she always yielded gracefully when it suited her. She had a due respect for Aunt Caroline's housewifely abilities, and knew that everything would be as lavishly done as even she could desire. Hall Place was a better setting in every way—it was long since there had been any entertaining on a large scale at her father's house.

It did not rain. It was a perfect wedding-day.

§ 14

IMMEDIATELY, on her return from the wedding tour, which she had found distinctly boring, Lavinia began to make herself felt. She intended to be the great lady of that part of Wiltshire—within twenty-five miles of her there was no hostess so young, so handsome, or with a more easy command of money. The ballroom at Hall Place would accommodate thirty couples with ease, but its great sweeping window curtains were faded, and not hung in the latest mode; while in the morning-room, and the breakfast parlour, and her boudoir, and the green-panelled withdrawing-room, she could not abide the bulk of the furniture, heavy old stuff, some of it going back, it was said, to the days of Elizabeth, and high cane-seated chairs with carved legs, and other things that were vastly out of the mode. She swept it all away to the housekeeper's room, or inferior bedrooms, or the rambling great attics that lay over the oldest part of the house, and shining mahogany with delicate inlays of brass, console tables of Italian marbles, with richly wrought trimmings of bronze and ormolu, slender settees, took the place of things that had been in the rooms for generations. Lavinia was gratified at the modish appearance of the different apartments. Then she turned her attention to the long dining-room.

MODISH CHANGES

"Mr Withers," she said one morning, finding her husband's father in this room, "I was thinking these chairs and table are not in the best fashion—it would be well to change them."

"Change 'em?" Mr Withers' countenance darkened perceptibly. "Nay, madam, I'll not have them changed. They were made for my father by Thomas Chippendale, when I was a boy, and here they will stay till I'm under ground."

Lavinia was surprised at the decision with which he spoke, and at a certain not-too-pleasant gleam in his eye.

"Have your gilt chairs and your French gewgaws where you fancy 'em elsewhere," he went on. "But I'll thank you to leave the dining-parlour alone, and my gun-room, and my bed-chamber."

"La!" said Lavinia, concealing her chagrin with a cold little laugh. "Who would think of making your gun-room look pleasing!"

She received a similar check from her husband concerning his library—not a chair, or a book, or a print, would he have touched.

She was so astonished to find him resisting her wishes that she hardly displayed the annoyance she felt was amply justified. After all, her fashionable friends would not frequent so dreary a room as Julian's library.

Let him have it. All the really important parts of Hall Place were hers to do as she wished with, and her abounding energy and power of enforcing her will, had ample scope in her first year of marriage in bringing the house and gardens into step with the latest mode. She was determined to make Julian rebuild the entrance front with the great portico and pillars that had so taken her fancy, so soon as his father, as he had coarsely expressed it, was "under ground." She often thought, with distaste, that Mr Withers talked like a groom. But inevitably there were drawbacks in marriage, though she was determined to put up with as few as might be.

§ 15

LONG before the first year of Julian's marriage was completed, his father was asking him awkward questions. "When's the filly goin' to foal?" he kept enquiring. And he told his daughter-in-law straight out that the only piece of new furniture Hall Place really required was a cradle.

"You shall have one of gold, if you fancy it," he said.

It was a year and a half before Lavinia gave any sign of fulfilling the family hopes. And then, though she had been as healthy all her life as she was handsome, she became sick and peevish and irritable, had constant attacks of the vapours and the spleen, and made the lives of all about her as difficult as she possibly could.

Julian was so filled with pity for her spoilt looks and pinched, peevish face, that he came nearer to tenderness than he had ever felt for her, in spite of the fact that she pushed him fretfully away, and much preferred the companionship of her woman. Her father-in-law avoided her on all possible occasions, though he was lavish in gifts and vicarious attentions.

"Women are queer cattle," he told his son, "especially at these times, though I must say your mother took her fences with plenty of spirit. There'd have been more boys than you now, if she'd not died." He sighed. The shortage of male Withers troubled him. "However, it'll be all right when your son gets himself into the world."

"TAKE IT AWAY"

But it was a daughter, not a son, whose puling cry first broke on the expectant air. Lavinia had gone down to the gates of death, and fetched back the wrong kind of child. It was the first serious mistake she had ever made in her successful

life. Nobody in the household, from the kitchen-maid upwards, had ever thought of anything but a boy.

"Damn it!" cried old Mr Withers, when told the dire news. "A girl! Might as well be a kitten—you'd better drown it. Oh, damn, damn!" His ruddy face had gone quite white with the shock. The idea that his grandchild might be a girl had never entered his mind.

Had he known it, he was expressing exactly Lavinia's feelings. After the agony and the danger, and the miserable months before, to learn that she had produced a girl, to know that she had failed to crown her marriage with the expected and necessary heir, was the bitterest blow her self-esteem had ever experienced. In imagination—a faculty in which she was not strong except when it concerned herself—she heard the comments among her neighbours, and in the hunting-field, where she had always been so admired a figure, she felt the pitying patronage of successful mothers of sons. She writhed among her pillows. She would not even look at the infant which had cost her so much. "Take it away, I don't want to see the little wretch," she cried, with weak anger.

Her anger and disappointment, as much as her physical condition, retarded her recovery. She did not wish to arise and face her world. For a time she was quite dangerously ill, but when her good health showed signs of coming back to her, she remained listless and peevish, and would not move further than the boudoir adjoining her bed-chamber. It was with difficulty she was induced to glance at the baby, for which it had been necessary to get a wet-nurse—a placid, cow-like young village woman, whose husband, a woodman, had been killed by the fall of a tree, and whose posthumous little son was only a week or two older than the daughter of Hall Place.

"These peasants can get sons," thought Mr Withers, looking hungrily at the infant boy. "But my fine lady must have a daughter. However, maybe she will do her duty next time."

When he learned that there never would be a next time, that this girl was the only child that could be born to Julian and Lavinia, he received a blow that broke his own hold on life, by destroying his hopes. The continuity of his race was ended. Like his daughter-in-law he almost hated the baby. Miss Withers felt the same despair, but her empty spinster heart could not entirely close its doors on a thing so small and helpless, even if it were so unfortunately female.

The child was christened with due ceremony. Her father chose all her names, her mother refused to take any interest in the matter, only insisting that her own name should not be bestowed on the child, who was christened Lucy Claudia Caroline. Lucy had been the name of Julian’s mother.

§ 16

INFANT YEARS

Lucy’s infant years left little impress on the life of Hall Place. On the abundant breast of her foster-mother she throve and grew like a kitten. Her first affections were fixed on the simple creature who to her meant warmth and motherhood. Being healthy and well nourished she seldom cried, and in the stately rooms of her home there was no evidence that a child existed. She learned to take her first uncertain steps in the great stone-floored kitchen, surrounded by an admiring circle of household servants, the housekeeper, the cook, the chamber-maids, the still-room maid, her own nurse and under-nurse, her mother’s woman, with a sprinkling of idle men-servants in the background. When she could walk with ease and security she explored with lonely delight all the rambling Elizabethan attics and crooked rooms and passages hidden away in the oldest parts of Hall Place. She dressed up in ancient garments she found in chests and presses, and trailed and tripped up in solitary grandeur. She spent much time in the stables with the gentle horses, and the grooms, and was tossed on to the back of a Shetland pony and learned to ride as easily as she had learned to walk. She was afraid of nothing and nobody, except her mother. She had a natural grace and gravity—no one played childish games with her, she found her amusements in the daily pursuits and works of grown-up people. All the servants were her friends, but in another part of the house, a part to which she was occasionally conducted by her nurse, with her hair violently brushed, her hands and face washed with stinging soap, and dressed in a stiff frock of embroidered India muslin, there were people she did not know very well, called “Papa and Mamma.” She bobbed a little curtsey, as she had been taught, and stood in front of them while they said things to her. It did not last very long, the lady called Mamma always said quite soon, “There, take her away, Nurse.” So she bobbed her curtsey again and went away quickly, holding her nurse’s hand. Sometimes Papa and Mamma were sitting at a long table with fruit and tall glasses and silver upon it, and sometimes Papa gave her a peach. But it was not any nicer than the peaches the gardeners gave her, which, if not quite so large, were always warm from the wall.

Occasionally there were lots of ladies and gentlemen like Papa and Mamma, all talking and laughing, and Nurse dressed her in her grandest frock, and brushed her hair till her head was sore, and the ladies said, “La! what a little angel!”

There was an old man who walked stiffly and had red eyes, which rather frightened her. If she saw him—she always ran away if she could—he stood and stared at her and said, “Hey! Why weren’t you a boy?” She could not answer. She did not know why she was not a boy, so she just stood and looked at him, which she did not like doing, as she did not think he looked nice, and said nothing. Then her grandfather would dismiss her, “Little idiot, get back to your nurse.”

Besides these people there was Great-Aunt Caroline. That Lucy was not a boy had been shattering to her family hopes and pride. Like her brother, she had thought she would never recover. But being a woman, faced with an infant, even of the wrong sex, she had been drawn into an at first reluctant affection. When the child was two years old she was completely devoted to it. Whenever possible she snatched it away to her Dower House in the great park, cuddling it on her thin knees, as the two chair-men shambled along. The small Lucy was enchanted with her Great-Aunt’s sedan chair—no one else used one, but it had been the usual mode of conveyance for ladies over short distances in Caroline Withers’ youth, and she still clung to it.

SEDAN CHAIR

“So *convenient*,” she explained. “It seems quite unnecessary to have out the horses to come across the park, yet much too far to *walk*. Oh, I know ’tis not the mode,” as Lavinia was looking scornful. “But then who sees it, save our own people. And a *Withers* can do what they choose, I would hope!”

She was quite as proud as Lavinia.

So Lucy rode on her knee to the Dower House, and was there regaled with rich chocolate in tall china cups that were all gold inside, and cakes made of marchpane, and honey biscuits. She was often sick when she came home from her great-aunt’s, but it was worth it.

As the charms of the child grew upon her spinster heart, Miss Withers tried to induce her brother to recognise that there were delights in having a granddaughter. She never tried to make Lavinia recognise anything. In much less than a year she had realised that nothing would make Lavinia do anything she was not inclined to—one defeat at the hands of nature she had inescapably suffered, but her will must prevail in all other matters. But even with her brother her success was small.

“Healthy little brute,” he would concede, looking at the radiant skin, transparent to the glow of the blood beneath, the clear innocent eyes, the rich mop of corn-coloured curls. “Healthy little brute, but why was she not a boy?”

It was his only thought and his only remark when he looked upon Lucy.

§ 17

His own health was undermined by gout, produced by his own hard drinking, as well as that of his ancestors, by the stroke of apoplexy caused by Gilbert’s death, by the strain of living with the daughter-in-law he had chosen, and having no compensation for this daily fret in the hope of future heirs to the name and estates. Life seemed to offer him less and less. He could not hunt any more, only jog heavily to a Meet, and watch younger men at a game he could no longer play, which was poor sport. A hand at cards, a main of cocks, seemed all that was left to him.

One wet day he had been to the home farm to look at a sick pedigree bull of which he was very proud—like many gentlemen of his time, he followed in the footsteps of Coke of Norfolk, and farmed in an up-to-date and expensive manner. He had lost his temper violently with the head cowman, accused him of gross neglect, and dismissed him from his post. He had ridden home in heavy rain, knowing that he had been a fool, and that the man was doing his best with the bull. Not wishing to see anyone he had gone to his gun-room, bolted the door, and thrown himself into his chair before a dying fire. He fell asleep, the fire went out, and when at last the cold awoke him, he was hot and shivering by turns.

“THE POOR GENTLEMAN”

Lucy heard nothing about her grandfather until two days later, when her nurse being nowhere to be seen, she stole down the long stone passage to the kitchen to see if by chance cakes were being baked, and perhaps she would be given some sugared plums or candy-stick. But there was no baking going on—instead, the big kitchen seemed full of servants, and cook, who had been longer than any of them with the family, had her apron over her head, and was sobbing and crying, amid the exclamations and condolences of the other servants.

“Oh, the poor gentleman! To be took like that, and She caring nought except to look proper——” Cook had no love for her young mistress, though she “knew her place,” and meant to keep it. “If somebody ’ad only a-

knocked at ’is door to mend the fire perhaps he’d not a-been took with this pneumony. And now there’s only Mr Julian, and no one to foller ’im, and I never thinks as he looks like making old bones, not if you ask me.”

Sobs choked further utterance, and the other servants repeated her remarks in slightly varied forms, like a chorus.

Lucy stood unheeded, till her nurse saw and snatched her up angrily, and asked what she was doing there. She was too young to realise what had happened. She only knew that she was put into a black frock, and had a black riband in her hair instead of a blue one, and that she never saw any more the old gentleman with the red face and the bloodshot eyes. She did not really mind—he was not nearly so nice as many of the servants.

When the official period of mourning had elapsed Mrs Withers went to stay with her aunt in Hanover Square. The country, even in her handsome mansion, was excessively dull, unless one could entertain, or during the hunting season. She had made Julian agree to the rebuilding of the entrance front of Hall Place, and he had said he would go to Rome, to look for an Italian craftsman to paint the walls of the ballroom at the same time. If the expenditure of money would content his wife, he was quite willing to expend it. Also, he was more than willing to return to Italy, alone. Indeed, so content were Mr and Mrs Withers with the mutual arrangement that it was a matter of nearly two years before they came together again at Hall Place.

Then the rebuilding began, but after a little while Lavinia professed herself unable to endure the noise and the dust.

“My dear Mr Withers, I am sure you would not wish to expose me to such excessive discomfort, and all these common workmen everywhere. I declare one can scarce look out of one’s bed-chamber without seeing them.”

“But it was your desire to have this Ionic portico, and the enlargement of the ballroom.”

“Certainly it was my desire, but I fail to see why I should be discommoded while it is being done. I shall return to my aunt’s. She was vastly sorry to part with me, and she moves in circles of the best fashion.”

Julian was well enough pleased with this arrangement. The passion for building of his forbears had arisen within his breast, and he determined to watch the architectural alterations from their beginning to their completion. The house was amply large enough to provide refuge in parts remote from the entrance front. His library, which was in one of the older, though not the oldest, part of the mansion, was in any case not being touched. It did not

belong to those portions of Hall Place which appeared to Lavinia as important.

§ 18

DISCOVERING A DAUGHTER

It was during this architectural interlude that Julian discovered his daughter.

One morning he went into his library to find the child seated on the floor, her back to him, crouching over an illustrated folio she had managed to pull out of a lower shelf.

Julian looked at her. Something stirred in his heart. He suddenly saw a vision of himself, only a year or two older, sitting on the floor of that same room, turning the pages of a book he was unable to read, wondering, wanting to know, with no one to tell him. He had grown, he had acquired knowledge and some wisdom—though not sufficient wisdom to save him from making a futile and foolish marriage. But marriage had given him this child—this child of whom he knew nothing. How pretty she was, what a picture in her long frilled frock, with her childish gravity and absorption in what she was doing. Mr Romney might have painted her, just as she was. She, too, would grow up, become a woman, marry. She would be an heiress, and heiresses were not apt to marry very happily. Ought he not to do something about it, give her some notion of the things that really mattered in life? Her mother never would.

"Lucy," he said, "what are you looking at in that big book?"

Lucy jumped up.

"I beg your pardon, Papa," she said, with the funny little bob which was her curtsey.

"Do not look alarmed, child. I am pleased to see you looking at a book."

"Nurse said——" Lucy rubbed one small sandalled foot behind the other and hesitated.

"What did your nurse say?"

"Nurse said little girls did not go in their Papas' lib'ries, books were only for gentlemen."

"What nonsense your nurse talks. Books are for everybody who likes them."

He glanced at the folio lying open on the floor, and saw with a little jump of the heart that it was one of the volumes which had first enthralled his own childhood, open at an engraving of Kit's Coty House. In the name of Heaven was it possible that this child was going to like the same things that he did, that she had a *mind*? He suddenly felt as though in a dusty desert he had found a little spring of water.

He sat down, he drew Lucy to him. He wondered how to reach that small mind—he knew nothing of children. Then he remembered his own young days, his unaided gropings after knowledge—Lucy should not be stranded like that if he could help her.

"What do you think that picture looks like?" he asked.

"It's like a little house," she answered.

"It is a little house. When people die they must have somewhere to go comfortably to sleep, so the friends who are fond of them build them little houses——" he paused, he did not know what the child might realise of death.

Lucy cheerfully filled the pause: "Like Grandpapa's little house." She had been shown the door of the family vault by her nurse, and told that her grandfather was "very comfortable" inside. He interested her much more in there than he had ever done in life. "To go and see Grandpapa" was a request she frequently made, and a mangled flower or half a currant bun was often deposited by her at the door of the vault, much as she did at the door of the big kitchen-dog's kennel. Only Grandpapa was a dog who did not come out.

EARLY LESSONS

Julian was relieved to find that the idea of death held no perturbations, and proceeded to tell Lucy something about the lives of prehistoric people, and what much finer houses they built for their dead than they lived in themselves, and how they hunted and cooked and clothed themselves, and had only flint knives and hammers (he showed her some from a cabinet in the library) with which to do all these things. He had an uncomfortable feeling that her sense of remoteness did not go further than "when Nurse was a little girl," and wondered whether she would see that worthy woman in her youth as clothed in skins and eating her dinner with a flint knife. However, he thought he would risk it, he found it so curiously pleasant to tell things to this small person who was his daughter—a charming stranger he was meeting for the first time. She knew nothing—she was well dressed and cared for, but she knew nothing. He was rather abashed at her ignorance, she did not even

know the letters of the alphabet. For the first time it dawned on him that a care for her education could not be left to servants, themselves ignorant. But her mind was quick, she recognised and remembered. She was eager to learn —very teachable.

When her nurse at last discovered her, and came to the library door, shocked and apologetic, Lucy's tears of protest at being torn away were curiously sweet to Julian.

"Bring Miss Lucy here again at this time to-morrow," he told the woman.

Lucy's tears ceased. She dragged back from her nurse's hand and looked at her father. Their eyes smiled at each other.

§ 19

THE daily hour he had meant to devote to Lucy spread to two—he found her education the most enthralling thing he had ever undertaken. But it was not only her education—to see her mind opening to the knowledge he could give her, and which no one before in his life had desired so thirstily—it was that her actual companionship itself began to matter to him. At first she ate her breakfast bread and milk in his company as a special treat on Sundays—in a very short time they had their breakfast together every day. He discovered that though no one had taught her to read, the grooms had taught her to ride fearlessly and well. The biggest horses did not frighten her, and on her own small pony she rode astride like a boy, which would have shocked her mother, had she known. But she had certainly inherited some gift of horsemanship from Lavinia. So Julian took her riding with him about the estate and over the country and made history walk their familiar fields—earthwork and barrow were things she could spell on the ground before she was sure of them on the printed page. The letters of Stonehenge and Avebury and Silbury Hill are so large. But she learned to read and write with surprising ease, it was no toil to her. It was just as if she had been waiting to be shown. And when she could read she would read anything, for the mere pleasure of the words, even when she did not a quarter understand what she read. One day Julian found her buried in Gibbon.

"But you cannot know what it is about!" he exclaimed.

"No, Papa," she admitted, rather abashed, "but I like the big words."

He took the book away from her nevertheless: “Little girls will have to grow older before they read that, but if you like the sound of words then I think poetry is the thing for you.”

FAIRY POETRY

He looked along his shelves. He felt almost nervous—what should he give this child? He supposed there were special books for children, but he had never seen them. Here in his library was only authentic stuff, food of men’s minds—was it fit for babes? Well, he could but try.

“Let us see if you like poetry, Lucy,” he said. He searched his shelves for the calf-bound *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* which had enchanted his own childhood. He turned the pages rapidly, and felt the savour of past days leap out at him as he turned—he had not opened the volumes since he was a grown man, “Sir Patrick Spens,” the “Not-Brown Maide,” the “Dragon of Wantley”—not these for Lucy yet. Then his eye fell on “The Fairies’ Farewell,” and the “Fairy Queen.” This was the poetry for his little daughter. He pulled her on his knee and began to read:

“Come, follow, follow me,
You, fairy elves that be:
Which circle on the greene.”

He read through the poem to the last verse:

“On tops of dewie grasse
So nimbly do we passe,
The young and tender stalk
Ne’er bends when we do walk;
Yet in the morning may be seen
Where we the night before have been.”

“Oh, yes, Papa,” said Lucy, and he felt the thrill of her small body, like a taut violin string. “There is a big fairy ring outside the dairy. Polly showed it to me. She said her granny, when she was small, saw the fairies dancing there. I wish I could, only Nurse never lets me stay long enough up in the night.”

“Oh,” said her father, “it would not do for you to stay till the ‘glow-worm lights us home to bed’.”

“When I am big I shall! Please, Papa, read the next one. I like poetry,” she said, snuggling to his shoulder contentedly.

So Julian read:

“Farewell, rewards and fairies!
Good housewives now may say:
For now foule sluts in dairies,
Doe fare as well as they;
And though they sweepe their hearths no less
Than mayds were wont to doe,
Yet who of late for cleanliness
Finds sixe-pence in her shoe?”

When he had finished it Lucy simply said, “Please, Papa, read it again.”

Three times he had to read it aloud, until he felt as if its curious rhythm had almost woven a spell around him and his daughter. When at last she let him draw breath, “You do not know a bit what it all means,” he said, thinking of the history embedded in Bishop Corbet’s verses. Lucy shook her head solemnly: “I like it,” was all she said.

HAPPINESS

Finding he had a daughter who liked poetry, Julian himself resumed his reading among the English poets, searching for things he could read with Lucy, and in the search finding himself much enriched. He could hardly wait for her growth. When she was too young for understanding he read to her from the majestic Milton who spoke most closely to his mind of all his native poets. He read “L’Allegro” and “Il Penseroso” and “Lycidas.” Sometimes Lucy was asleep at the end of these readings, but though half heard and less than half understood, the magic of those cadences, the beauty of those words, had entered deep into her childish mind, and brought with them gleams and shadows and the mystery of beauty. Her mind, young though it was, began to open like a plant feeling the dew and the sun. And the more her mind expanded, the more she clung to her father—he was the source from which all came. Everything that he liked, she would like, and everything that he said was true. Julian would have been afraid could he have seen how god-like he had become to his little daughter.

One thing he did know—for the first time since his marriage he had tasted happiness.

§ 20

When the alterations to Hall Place were at last completed, and Lavinia for a portion of the year took up a more or less settled residence there, the bond

between Lucy and her father was too close to be broken. Lavinia lifted her eyebrows when she discovered the attachment between them: she thought it somewhat absurd and quite unnecessary, and said so.

"My dear Mr Withers, you spoil the child. She is better in the company of her excellent nurse. In a year or so she will be old enough for a governess. As it happens, Lady Winworth told me but recently that I can have the reversion of hers, a really genteel and accomplished woman, who has always lived in respectable establishments."

Julian's brow darkened. He looked at his wife, so elegant in her modish attire, so handsome, and—as he realised after the long absence from her—so hard. Was she really the mother of Lucy, that creature so innocent and sensitive? One thing he was quite determined upon—he would keep control of his daughter and her education; she should not be handed over to the care of a governess, however genteel.

He told Lavinia this, with a quiet emphasis that surprised her. She looked at him acutely. He really meant it. If she wished her own way in this matter it would mean a struggle, and the responsibility for the child might be thrust upon her, which she by no means desired—she had far more important things to do. What was the use of a really well-equipped and improved mansion unless one could show it to one's acquaintance, and arouse the tribute of envy from the less wealthy? Of course, when Lucy was older she would have to be taken in hand, and trained for her place in the polite world, but that time, fortunately, was a good few years ahead. The child was healthy, and had the promise of beauty, if Julian chose to fill her head with dull book-learning it hurt nobody.

So to Julian's surprise the steely combative look faded from his wife's eyes, and she said that if those were his wishes, she would not engage Lady Winworth's governess, and that Lucy was fortunate to have so fond a father.

Julian felt like someone who had been preparing his strength to break down a door, and finds it yield at a touch. His balance was overset. Lavinia very quickly perceived this—she rarely missed anything that could be used to her own advantage—and told him they must give a ball in the enlarged and new-decorated ballroom, and that he must at once order for her a new barouche—she was ashamed to be seen in the one she now had.

THE FESTIVE SCENE

To both these demands Julian agreed. If he had his daughter, Lavinia might have as many balls and chariots as she desired.

The impressiveness of the new portico, the handsomeness of the appointments, and the lavishness of the hospitality at Hall Place, were continually discussed through half Wiltshire. Lavinia, as she intended to be, was the envy of all her friends, and the little matter of the failure of an heir was almost forgotten. Her father-in-law's unexpected decease was really a considerable blessing, not only to Lavinia herself, but to all the marriageable young ladies and their mammas of the neighbourhood. There had been nothing like Lavinia's amount and quality of entertaining at Hall Place in old Mr Withers' day.

Julian appeared upon the festive scene exactly as much as was required —he had a due sense of his position. And he had his own retreats. Lucy's appearances were very fleeting. Occasionally Mrs Withers sent a hasty command that she be brushed and clad in fine muslins and a broad blue riband sash, and brought forth. But if some rash matron exclaimed archly, "And when is the little darling going to have a small brother?"—a remark sometimes caused by malice, and sometimes by ignorance—Lucy could be sure that her presence in the crowded rooms would not be wanted for some time to come.

Such remarks were the one fly in the ointment of Lavinia's successful existence. The remote terms on which she and Julian lived did not disturb her—anything closer would have been vastly boring.

§ 21

BUT the parties and entertainments did not continue all the year at Hall Place. For months at a time Lavinia must refresh herself with the modish air of Town, and the fashionable waters of Bath. It had been Julian's habit at these periods either to devote himself to the care of his estate, or to travel, usually in Italy, with a prolonged stay in Rome, which, since he had first seen it, had been to him the supreme city of the world. But now he felt he would not return to Rome till Lucy was old enough to go with him. To go without her he had no inclination. He preferred to stay in Wiltshire and tell her of Rome, turn her mind to appreciate and understand what she would see when she arrived there.

In his library was a round table with a mosaic top, a fruit of his travels. It had come out of a Roman palace, and had been a great care and anxiety to bring home to England undamaged. The whole top, done in the finest mosaic work set in chestnut wood, with a centre pedestal and spreading lion

feet of carved chestnut, was a picture book of Rome. The centre medallion, which was about five inches across, was a view of St. Peter's, with the colonnade in front of it, on which walked tiny figures of priests and pilgrims and beggars, with here and there a cardinal's coach and lacqueys. Surrounding this central medallion were six others, slightly smaller, set in an elaborate tracery of vine and flowers. Each held a picture of some Roman scene. There was the Colosseum, grim even on this miniature scale; next to that was the Temple of Vesta, and then the Forum of Nerva, the Arch of Titus, Trajan's Column, and, completing the circle round the inlaid table, the Piazza Narvoni.

ROMAN PICTURE BOOK

This table was Lucy's picture book of Rome. It so fascinated her that Julian formally presented it to her. "Only," he said smiling, "I would rather you kept it in my library till you are older, or Nurse might spill hot chocolate on it!"

Lucy had never before seen a table whose top was all coloured pictures, with tiny people walking about.

"Is this you, Papa?" she asked, touching with an eager finger-tip the figure of a man in a blue coat who, with an upraised arm, was pointing to the Column of Trajan.

"Most probably," said Julian smiling, "I have a coat just like that, and I remember there was an artist painting the last time I looked at Trajan's Column."

Lucy found the figure of her father in all the pictures, which was one reason they so fascinated her. She asked endless questions. She had to know who was the large man at the top of the Column, and why the windows of the house behind had green curtains outside them, instead of inside, why some of the men wore long frocks and big black hats, why there were goats walking about, why the Colosseum was full of holes, why the people hung their washing on the Temple of Vesta, and why little bushes grow on its conical roof? No minutest detail was missed by her sharp childish eyes—Julian at times almost needed a microscope to follow her discoveries.

But her favourite of all the pictures was that of the Piazza Narvoni, not in particular for its own sake, but because of what her father told her he had seen there in the summer when Rome was very hot.

"There are three splendid fountains in this square," he told her, "and in the hot summer evenings the outlets where the water runs away are shut up,

so that the water flows into the square and makes a shallow lake. Then all the grand people come in their carriages, and drive about in the lake, and the water is splashed up by the horses' feet and makes the air nice and cool. And the horses like it too, sometimes they try to lie down in the water, and the ladies scream, if it is the horses in their carriage, and everybody laughs and thinks it great fun. And they all talk to each other while they are driving about in the water, and their footmen bring them nice things to eat and drink."

"I wish the horses were in this picture," said Lucy, leaning over the table.

"Well, you see that picture was probably done in the winter, and they only have the water drives in the summertime."

But the Piazza Narvoni also had its winter festival, at the season of Epiphany, when a great fair, lasting for the eight days of the Octave, was held there, and people bought toys and sweetmeats. On Twelfth Night everybody, from princes to beggars, danced in the great square, wearing masks, and scattered confetti, and blew trumpets. Julian told his daughter all about this festival, and how the little Italian children put out their shoes at that time, so that the Three Kings, as they passed by, might leave gifts in them.

"Long, long ago," he went on, "when the Three Kings first set out on their journey to find the Child Jesus, as they went along the roads and through the villages, they told everybody Whom they were seeking, and the people left their work and their play to join in the joyful search. But in one village there was a very cross old woman called Dame Befana, who believed nothing that anybody told her, and was very careful not to waste her money. When she saw all the people running after the Three Kings, she said she was not going on such a foolish journey—she would wait till the Kings came back, and then she could find out if it was worth the trouble of undertaking. But the Three Kings went back by another road, and when it was too late, Befana set out by herself—but she never found the Holy Child, for she did not know the way."

THE THREE KINGS

By means of the picture table, and also, a little later, by means of the enthralling detail of the great portfolio of Piranesi's engravings of Rome, which he spread before her, Julian taught Lucy much Roman history, without her being conscious that she was learning it, and made her so

familiar with the aspect of Rome that she could tell him without hesitation the name of every church, bridge, and ancient monument in any picture.

With her increase of knowledge, and her eagerness for it, their companionship grew and strengthened.

He told her not only of the Romans in Italy, but of the Romans in Britain, of the roads they made, the cities they built, of Aqua Sulis, and the Great Wall. He taught her a little Latin, and more Italian. Lucy thought this a great joke: “When I want to say things to you that I do not want anyone else to know!” she cried.

“Exactly!” said Julian.

§ 22

THEY had many what Julian called “Roman holidays” together, when on fine days they set out on horseback, with a little basket of food, to look at interesting places like Stonehenge, or “something Roman.” Julian’s passion for Rome, her civilisation, her literature, was deepened by all this teaching of his daughter.

“Do not forget that you have Roman names,” he would tell her, and often would call her Claudia, or, if he felt that name too stately as he looked at her childish roundness, then he would say Lucia instead—that was soft enough and sweet enough even for her.

He insisted on nothing but bread and fruit in their picnic basket, rejecting the game pies and spiced meats the housekeeper would press upon him.

“We must be as simple as Seneca, Lucia,” he would say, as they tethered their horses and reclined themselves in the shade to eat. “He said that if he had bread and figs, then figs served him for dessert, and if figs only then they were his bread.”

He broke his roll and ate it slowly, looking about him at the beech-trees in whose shade he lay, and the open champaign beyond smiling in the sunshine. Another thought of Seneca’s came to his memory. “The mind is never greater than when it frees itself from the world and creates its own peace by fearing nothing, and its own wealth by desiring nothing.”

He looked at Lucy, placidly munching—she had the gift of remaining silent when he did not feel like speaking—and wished that her young life

need not be forced into the set mould that his had been, by the mere burden of wealth and great possessions. How hard to win peace by fearing nothing, and wealth by desiring nothing, when the whole world in which that child would have to play her part, was always desiring more of everything—more possessions, more honours, more consequence. And he had given a mother to his child whose whole ambitions were fixed upon these things.

He sighed, and sat up.

MARRIAGE AND LOVE

"Lucy," he said, "promise me you will not marry anybody unless you love him."

Lucy laughed: "I don't want to marry anybody, Papa. I'm going to stay with you, and see that your gruel is nice and thin, like Mrs Dickson down at the lodge likes it, and that the warming-pan for your bed is really hot, and read to you when your eyes are wore out."

"Worn out, Lucy," Julian corrected unconsciously.

"Well, Mrs Dickson says hers are wore out."

Mrs Dickson was the oldest servant on the estate, and very interesting to Lucy in consequence, who visited her with her nurse periodically, taking her packets of used tea-leaves, from which she brewed herself a much appreciated beverage.

Lucy had suggested taking the old woman "new tea," but Nurse had shaken her head.

"Fresh tea is for the Quality, not for the likes of her," she had announced. "It costs twelve shillings a pound, you can't waste it on the poor."

"Well, that is very kind of you, Lucy," said her father, studying this touching picture of his decrepitude, "and I hope no handsome young man will deprive me of your services, which I shall evidently so sorely need! But what I want you to remember is that however handsome the young man, or however rich, you must not marry him unless you love him, whatever people say to you. That is the only proper reason for getting married."

"Do you love Mamma?" Lucy asked innocently.

"That is a question I cannot answer till you are older," said Julian. He rather hastily pulled a little volume from his coat pocket. "Now, read a little Virgil to me, there is the place we had reached."

He handed the volume to her, open at the Second Book of the Georgics, and Lucy in a clear childish voice, with a careful enunciation, began—

“Agricola incurvo terram dimovit aratro: hinc anni labor, hinc patriam parvosque nepotes sustinet, hinc armenta boum meritosque iuvencos,” she read, until she came to the end of the Second Book with “Sed nos immensum spatiis confecimus aequor, et iam tempus equum fumantia solvere colla.”

“Enough for to-day,” said her father.

“Please tell me what it means,” Lucy requested.

This was always the reward of her reading—the sound of the Latin, so carefully and correctly pronounced, from her tongue gave her father peculiar pleasure.

“It means,” said Julian, taking the book from her hand and glancing down the page, “It means that the husbandman, which is an old name for the farmer, has been turning the ground with his crooked plough, from which comes the food for his little grandsons, for his herds and his good bullocks. He cannot stop his work, for the fruit comes, and the baby animals, and the sheaves of Ceres’ corn, filling his barns. Then winter arrives, and the corn is ground in the mill, and the swine come home full of acorns, and the vintage is mellow. His dear children wait for his kisses, the cows give rich milk, and for a time the husbandman and his friends keep holiday and offer a libation to the rural gods. Such was the life the old Sabines once lived, and Remus and his brother, and Rome became the fairest of all cities, enclosed with a single wall on her seven hills. Even golden Saturn once lived such a life on earth in the good old days. But we have traversed a large space, and the time has come to lift the yoke from the necks of our tired steeds.”

He closed the Georgics, and looked at his daughter.

“Is it too bad, my little Lucy, making you read Latin to me? Am I like the blind Milton, insisting that his daughters read to him in tongues they do not understand?”

“But I do know some of the words,” said she proudly. “And you tell me. And why was Milton blind, and were his daughters so old as I am? Tell me!”

Julian told her. One thing was always leading to another with Lucy.

§ 23

DISILLUSION

WITHOUT this daughter, Julian Withers would have found his personal life very empty. She was his one close

human contact. The only thing Lavinia wished of him was that he should keep at a distance, provide her with all the money she desired, and interfere with none of her schemes and amusements. There was no longer the slightest pretence of affection on her part. In a burst of temper she had told him how much she would have preferred Gilbert as a husband. Julian fully realised how a handsome face and a parade of sorrow had tricked him to a marriage profoundly unsuitable. In a remote cold way he was sorry for his wife—she, too, was missing something Gilbert could have given her, and it was perhaps the lack of that which made her grow, year by year, harsher and more worldly. So he gave her every material thing that lay in his power, and opposed none of her wishes, so long as she left his own seclusion undisturbed—the seclusion that included Lucy.

Mrs Withers looked at the growing girl with an indifferent eye—time enough to take her in hand when she was a few years older. Then she would see that Lucy gave up this browsing among her father's musty books, and this wandering about old ruins with him. She should be trained in the social graces, and taught something better than the ridiculous simplicity which now characterised her manners—she should be dressed and adorned, and taken about, and shown in suitable houses, to suitable people. She was determined that Lucy should marry young and marry well. The feather in her head-dress waved in a militant manner as she took her place at the card-table to play ombre. Let Julian have the child in these unimportant years if it amused him. It certainly would not amuse her to be plagued with the company of an immature young creature like that. Whatever they found to talk about together for hours on end——! But she picked up her cards, and gave her mind to more important matters.

If she found satisfaction in cards, Julian found—and had found, long before he realised Lucy—consolation in other inanimate objects. When the tendency to depression of spirit which was inherent in his nature, overcame him, when he felt that his life was meaningless and wasted, he would find strange comfort in a megalithic monument, a worked flint, a Romano-British potsherd. As he looked at or handled them he felt that the hands and hearts which had shaped these perdurable things, had known sorrows, fears, sufferings, but now they were sunk into a deep silence. Time and its peace had swept over them like a river. They and their troubles had gone, as one day he would go. He drew austere sustenance from the thought, and he, so essentially aloof from most human contacts, was enlarged by this contact with his kind so infinitely remote and unknown. In such moods Stonehenge and its company of the barrows of the dead, the silent mystery of Silbury Hill, and ruined

REMOTE SOLACE

Avebury, were the places where he felt most at peace. By those majestic, time-shattered stones, those dumb earthworks, human life took on a new proportion, a new patience.

To Lucy, one day in childish despair over some disappointment, he proffered this unchildish solace.

"See," he said, taking down a little dish of smooth red ware from a shelf in his library, "See, this was made for a little Roman girl, who lived in Wiltshire, to eat from. She cried, just like you, when she did not get what she wanted—more honey in her bread and milk, a new necklace of bright beads. But it does not matter now, she has been comforted a long time."

"Who comforted her?" asked Lucy, leaning her curly head upon his shoulder.

"God, I suppose," said her father, a little doubtfully.

"Is God kinder than Mamma?" Lucy questioned.

"Hush, my dear, that is not respectful to your Mamma."

Lucy accepted the reproof, with a slight droop of the head.

After a moment's pause, she went on, "But tell me, please, about the little girl, did she live here, in this house?"

So Julian told her. That was one of the earliest of his "once upon a time long ago" talks with her, explaining something of Roman life in Britain, and the next day he took her to see the remains of a Roman villa, she riding her white pony on a leading rein. He showed her pieces of tessellated pavement, and told her that was what little Roman girls had for carpets, but that they were not cold, even in the winter time, for all the floors were warmed underneath with pipes—he found some broken pieces of the old hypocaust system for her to look at.

But he never knew how the sense of time worked in a child's mind—what was her aspect of remoteness. She was so receptive and intelligent, so eager to listen to all he told her, that he sometimes forgot, and talked to her as if she were of his own age—there were few people of any age to whom he could talk of those things so dear to his inner mind. He had one or two antiquarian friends in Rome, and a few in London, with whom he corresponded at length on archæological matters. Once a year, when his wife was away, he had a gathering of his own friends, and they would ride or drive to inspect and discuss Wiltshire antiquities—in particular Stonehenge and Avebury. His mind was much refreshed by these meetings and

discussions with kindred spirits. He wrote an occasional paper for the learned journals, but he knew that his dream of becoming an antiquary of some eminence had died on the day he assumed the burden of the Withers' estate and married Lavinia Bellairs. This feeling of a lost vocation had lain heavy on his spirit for years, till he discovered that his daughter liked to listen to the things that he could tell her.

§ 24

BIRD-BOY

THEY walked and rode together all over the surrounding country. They visited neighbouring farms, where they were received with deference and delight, the new calves and the new chickens shown to Lucy, while her father discussed the price of corn and other agricultural matters with the farmers. Jellies and syllabubs, plum cakes of a massive richness, and lardy cakes that dripped with their own goodness, were offered, or if a delicious-smelling batch of bread had just come out of the warm cave of the brick oven, a piece of the "kissing crust" was pulled off—never must it be cut—for Lucy and spread thickly with yellow butter, which melted and soaked into its warmth. Lucy liked this even better than the dark plumcake.

"What lovely things they have to eat in farms!" she said after one of these feasts.

But not everybody on farms lived richly, as she discovered one day. She and her father were riding home on a cold spring afternoon, both thinking it would be very pleasant to get away from the nipping easterly wind into fireside comfort. The ridges of the arable land were grey with the dry bleak wind.

Suddenly they saw a very small boy slowly trudging across the plough-land in a faded blue smock too small for him, a wooden clapper in his hand.

"What is he doing?" asked Lucy.

"He is a bird-boy," her father answered. "He walks up and down to scare the birds from the crops."

"It is very cold for him, and he looks tired—how long does he walk up and down?"

"All day, I expect."

"Oh, he is too young for that. Call him and ask him, please, Papa."

Julian signalled to the boy, who was drawing to their end of the furrow.

“How old are you?”

The boy looked alarmed and said nothing, but on the question being repeated, said he was seven years old.

“And how long do you work?”

“From zun-up to zun-down, Master.”

Julian was rather taken aback, looking at the child’s peaked face and thin frame.

“How do you get your dinner?”

“Me dinner’s in me bag”—he showed a little canvas sack, “I’ve ate it all now,” he added regretfully.

“What did you have for your dinner to-day?” Lucy asked him.

“Piece o’ bread an’ a turnup.”

“Oh, Papa,” she cried, “how dreadful! Can’t we give him something?”

Julian produced a packet of sandwiches they had not eaten, and a shilling, and gave them to the boy, who pulled his forelock and stared dumbly at these riches from on high.

“What was it you were singing when you were at the other side of the field?” Julian asked.

“It were the Bird-Boy’s song.”

“If you sing it to us I will give you another shilling.”

The boy gulped, and then in a thin little voice began—it was more of a croak than singing—

> “We’ve ploughed our land, we’ve zowed our zeed,
> We’ve made all neat and gay;
> Zo take a bit, and leave a bit,
> Away, birds, away!”

Julian looked at the child, and at the cold furrows behind him, which hardly looked gay on that cheerless afternoon. He felt sorry for him, but it was the law of nature that the children of the poor must work.

He leaned from the saddle and put the second shilling into the grubby little palm, which closed avidly on this

unheard-of riches. A whole month's wages.

"Good-bye, poor boy," Lucy said gently, and they rode home to their dinner and their blazing fires.

The bird-boy stood in the searching wind and stared after them as if they were beings from another world—as indeed they were. Grinding toil and unremitting poverty would be his lot until his rheumatism-twisted bones returned to the earth on which he laboured. But little he cared or thought of the future. He had four weeks' wages in his hand, and something to eat. "Hullocky!" said the bird-boy. He fell upon the ambrosial sandwiches like a wolf.

§ 25

On Lucy's eleventh birthday Julian gave to the village church of Withers St. Mary a tenor bell which had melted silver in its metal to make its voice sweet. In fine deep letters on this bell was engraved the words "Santa Lucia" and the date of Lucy's birth. A full peal was rung to celebrate this event—Lucy and her father watching the ringers with proprietary pride as they stood at their ropes on the floor of the belfry, Lucy running out now and again into the churchyard to listen to the notes floating away into the tall elm-trees. Then largesse was bestowed upon the ringers, with the order that they go and quench their natural thirst at the "Barley Mow." With pulling of forelocks, and many "Thank 'ee kindly, zir," and "Thank 'ee kindly, missy," they stamped heavily away in their round-frocks.

Lucy and her father stood alone in the deserted church.

"It is nice being in church when it's not Sunday," said Lucy.

"Would you like to come up in the belfry?" her father asked.

"Oh, Papa! I have always wanted to do that ever since I could walk! But I thought girls might not do such things?"

"Not unless their papas are with them! But I've seen you climb a ladder to the hayloft, so I think you can manage this."

Lucy had never been so high up in the world before, and she leaned fascinated on the coping—leaned so far indeed that Julian somewhat anxiously kept a firm clutch on her broad sash—and saw the village far below with its thatched roofs, which from that height and distance looked like bee skeps, and the little river round which Withers St. Mary was built

winding under its stone fifteenth-century bridge, and the graceful trees and spreading lawns of the park surrounding the massed irregular roofs and broad white Palladian front of her home. Standing on the ground that impressive Palladian front hid all the irregularities of the older portions of the mansion, but from the church tower they could all be seen. Lucy found the spectacle fascinating. And she could see, beyond the great wall which bounded the park, more distant villages and landmarks she knew, and on the golden far horizon the sharp slender spire of Salisbury Cathedral.

"Where is Rome?" Lucy suddenly asked.

Julian looked at her in surprise.

"I mean if you walked to Rome, like the pilgrims walked, which way would you walk?"

Julian pointed out the track, and the direction.

SOMEDAY

"All roads, as they say, lead there. Some day, when you are a little older, I will take you there, to that city which is the heart of the world. That is a joy to come for both of us, my Lucy. But you shall not walk there on your own feet, as the pilgrims walked, you would be much too tired!"

He planned in his mind that he would take her to Rome when she was twelve.

But before Lucy's twelfth birthday came round her father was dead.

He had, however, prepared her as perfectly for her destiny, as though he had been granted foreknowledge of what her destiny would be.

Book Two

Foreign Places

§ 1

DURING one of his later visits to Rome after his marriage, Julian Withers had attended a small party at the palace of a musical *contessa*. To Julian music was not one of the major interests of life—possibly because his contacts with music had been small—but he was sufficiently a connoisseur to appreciate quality when he met it. The only thing that really appealed to him at this musical party was the pianoforte playing of a boy—Julian guessed him to be about twelve or thirteen years old—whose name was Amades Govoni.

In the first place he was an arresting-looking youth. He had a great deal of rather light hair, which was conspicuous among the dark Italian heads, surrounding him. His complexion was also naturally fair, but his skin was darkened by the sun, so that his hair and his eyes stood out in a greater contrast than nature had intended. His eyes appeared to be a light cold blue, that somehow recalled the blue of glacier ice—they were set very straight in his head, under brows so level they looked as though drawn with a ruler, and were wide apart and narrow, beneath a broad brow with the characteristic musical bulges. The upper part of the head was very mature and formed, while the nose had still a childish air, and the wide mouth, in contradiction to the eyes, was easily good-tempered.

The odd, contradictory face caught Julian's interest, even more than the extraordinary facility of the fingers engaged upon some brilliant piece of pianoforte fireworks which meant very little to Julian, and, as he imagined, very little to the performer, judging from the nonchalant expression on his face as he watched his own fingers rushing up and down the keyboard. His eyes were half closed, he looked a little bored, and as if, somewhere at the back of his mind, he was faintly amused.

A rather odd look on so young a face, Julian thought, and even as he thought it, the boy suddenly looked across at him, and the look seemed to say, "You do not like this kind of music"—his hands moved in flying arpeggios across the keyboard—"Nor do I. Wait, and you shall hear something that is different."

The Countess and her friends appeared to like it. Vigorous applause greeted its conclusion, and ejaculatory comments of admiration.

Govoni bowed, smiled his wide smile, showing strong and perfect teeth, glanced again at the tall form of Julian leaning against a polished marble pillar, and began to play once more. His fingers were the same, the keyboard was the same, but with what a different voice he now spoke! Beauty and sorrow, gaiety and a sense of desolation all floated together in the air, and entered such hearts as were open to them. Julian no longer thought of the skill of those fingers, he only wondered how one so young could know such things.

“You liked that better?”

He turned surprised, to find Govoni at his elbow, smiling, looking very young, and a little shy.

“Ah, yes, much better. It was beautiful. But how have you the experience to play such music in that way?”

TWO BROTHERS

“I have no experience—I am but a child in knowledge.” A mischievous look flashed across his face. “My brother over there, he wish I were still a child in body! That music, I am but the interpreter—it is the composer speaks, not I. But one day I will be a musician—you shall see!”

He smiled, bowed, and slipped away, for the dark man he had indicated as his brother, to Julian’s surprise, for he looked fifteen or twenty years older, and had no physical resemblance, was beckoning to him furiously.

He watched them depart together, the dark man gesticulating and talking excitedly, while the fair boy said nothing.

He was sufficiently interested in the ill-matched pair to ask questions.

“Ah, yes, poor Signor Govoni—they are brothers, though there are many years between them. Orphans, and he has cared for the young Amades, made great sacrifices, paid for the best teachers. He will tell you of his devotion to his so-gifted young brother. As a child he caused a great musical sensation—Rome flocked to hear him, he has a marvellous gift for improvisation. But of course, now, he becomes a little old. It is most difficult for his brother, and Amades is extremely headstrong.”

Julian felt, somehow, that he had not heard the whole story.

§ 2

THE brother of Amades had made a very handsome income for a number of years from the gifted child. He had spent a certain amount of money—though much less than he declared—on music masters, who were rapidly proved to be little more than well-intentioned hens trying to teach a duck to swim. Amades was of an unruffled good temper on all matters that did not relate to music, but he very early discovered that he understood a great deal more about music than any of the people with whom he was brought in contact. He yielded musical obedience to none, unless he recognised some quality in them which rarely came his way.

He was born with the natural pianist's hand—square, broad in the palm, powerful yet sensitive fingers, the stretch from thumb to little finger-tip remarkable even in his childhood; as he grew older tenths and twelfths lay within the compass of his hand like lambs within a fold. He was a tremendous worker—he was endowed with an unfailing spring of vital energy and good health—and the technical difficulties of his instrument were a sheer joy to him, something to overcome and exult in. But he overcame them so fast that he found it difficult to discover music whose manual difficulties gave him any bone to bite on.

Then one day he met an old musician whose memories reached back to a personal knowledge of Mozart, and who listened sombrely to his playing.

"Acrobat!" was all he said. He took a pinch of snuff, and walked away.

Amades watched the thin bent old back retreating. "Acrobat!" He was furiously angry. His anger kept him awake most of the night, but when he got up next morning he had learned something that no "School of Velocity" could teach him. Had he but known it, that was his greatest gift from Heaven—the power to learn. He learned from all that befell him, good and bad; disaster and success both taught him things. He also knew when he had no more to learn from certain people, and also when he was on a wrong road. That one word "Acrobat"—unpalatable and scornful word!—had shown him that he was by way of becoming a pianist, but not a musician. Should he become the finest pianist in the world, but not a musician, he would fail in what he meant to be. He suddenly realised that his education had been badly neglected while his brother towed him about to the capitals of Europe as a child prodigy, turning his gifts into gold—of which only the smallest amount was doled out into the young hands that had earned it.

"ACROBAT!"

Then, as Amades grew, out of childhood into awkward and clumsy adolescence, the profits became much smaller. Amades refused to go on playing the brilliant and showy stuff that had come so astonishingly from his

childish fingers. His mind was growing as fast as his body, seeking for spiritual difficulties, instead of purely technical ones. But his audiences were not interested in the growth of underground roots, they wanted a show of bright blossom.

"You are a fool! You lose them, and there is no money!" said his brother angrily. "We shall starve!"

"I may, but you won't!" said Amades, with a gleam in his eye—he was no longer a child. "Anyway, I cannot help being the size I am. Even if I starve it won't make me into the nice little boy trotting to the pianoforte and playing so prettily to all the kind ladies and gentlemen! Bah! Nature is making me grow up, whether I wish or no. I've done with all this business—I may have lost my audiences, but I'm going to find myself!"

"Ingrate! After all I have done for you, my unceasing toils, the good money I have spent with a liberality so rash for your welfare——!" Indignation rendered him temporarily speechless.

"Who has earned that good money?" began Amades with equal heat. Then suddenly he started to laugh, he buried his head in his hands on the table, and his shoulders shook.

These spasms of vast laughter became very characteristic of him in later years. No one knew when they would come—humorous happenings would often leave him quite grave, while some little thing that no one else had noticed would send him off. Fits of anger would sometimes dissolve in laughter, the storm-clouds blowing themselves away on the gusts of that gale. His brother had always disliked Amades' laughter, he so often did not know what it was about, and he stared blackly now at his convulsed shoulders.

"Very well, Amades," he said angrily, "we will not dispute further about money. Henceforth you support yourself—I wash my hands completely of your ingratitude so base!"

Amades looked up, shook his disordered hair from his eyes, and spoke with sudden gravity: "Yes, in future I will support myself, and look to you for no more of your so generous assistance."

He flung up his head and walked from the room with it held high and stiffly. He was very young.

§ 3

FIRST MEETING

LUCY WITHERS had been not quite eight years old when her father saw and spoke with Amades Govoni in Rome. He had not mentioned the little episode on his return to Wiltshire—there was no reason why he should do so, there was no one that it would interest, and it had made no particular impression on his own recollection. It was not for music he went to Rome, but for antiquities, for art—to release his mind from the thought of the secret failure of his own life, by the contemplation of that ancient greatness, so majestic, so impressive in its decay. Man's happiness was so fragile a thing that it could be destroyed for ever by the wrong word spoken, but the work of his hands in stone, in marble, in metal, so enduring. The impersonal and serene quality of ancient architecture was full of consolation.

It was close on ten years after her father's meeting with Amades—Julian had been dead for nearly six years—that Lucy first met him.

She was within two months of her eighteenth birthday, when her mother decided that she would spend part of the winter in Italy. She was feeling bored. Six years of her own way as complete mistress of the Withers estate, had not added appreciably to her content—indeed, the exercise of her autocratic will had hardened and aged her still handsome features in a manner that even the most flattering mirror could not disguise from her, though she little enough suspected the cause. But she was definitely conscious that the proximity of Lucy's youth and Lucy's softness of colouring and gentle docility of expression, were not becoming to her. She did her duty by her daughter as she saw it. Lucy had been trained in all the social graces and accomplishments. She had dancing masters, who came with a little kit fiddle and put her through all the fashionable steps, under suitable feminine chaperonage. She had music masters, who found that she had a "facile finger" on the harpsichord. She could maintain a polite conversation in a French adequate for all social purposes, though her French was not so good as her Italian, which she had learned almost unconsciously in her childhood from her father.

She had a lavish supply of elegant and pretty clothes, but none of her clothes were so pretty as herself. Her hair was a soft brown, with golden lights in it, wherein she combined the dusky colouring of her father with the gold that had adorned her mother's head. Her complexion had the delicate translucence of the wild rose; her eyes were hazel. She was small and slight in build—an inclination to droop her shoulders in a deprecating way had been largely corrected by a liberal use of the back-board.

“I will have no round-backed chit trailing after me,” said her mother, who had an excessively dignified carriage of her fine, and now rather stout, figure.

So nature and art had combined to ripen this peach-like girl whom her mother intended to dispose of as early and as advantageously as might be. Lucy was a prospective heiress, and she was, apparently, incurably gentle and unworldly, with no proper values—far too much sensibility to have any sense. The natural prey of adventurers. That being so, it was the intention of Lavinia Withers to see her settled in a safe and suitable marriage as soon as might be. A few months of foreign travel would give Lucy a little experience of a world other than that of Withers St. Mary, give her a little more poise and self-confidence, before she was fully launched upon the social scene where Mrs Withers was so completely at home.

FOREIGN TRAVEL

So to Italy they travelled. It was an immense and cumbrous undertaking, for Mrs Withers travelled in the English style. Two travelling carriages—one for herself and Lucy, and one for her entourage—with horses to match, had to be conveyed abroad. The roof of the larger, but less important, vehicle in which the servants journeyed, was piled to danger point with luggage, corded down under an immense tarpaulin.

There was Mrs Withers’ own woman—very severe and tight-lipped with all the foreign world, of which she heartily disapproved; a younger and much repressed maid for Lucy; a courier; a man-servant; and the postillions. Male escort was distinctly desirable when travelling on Italian roads—but had it not been to some extent a necessary protection Mrs Withers would still have surrounded herself with a sufficiency of servants, both for comfort, and to emphasise her social consequence.

None of the servants liked the journey abroad. They were all—with the exception of the courier—Wiltshire bred, and had no taste for foreign parts, which they would not have been surprised to find inhabited by cannibals and men whose heads did grow beneath their shoulders. But into none of their thoughts did it enter to refuse to go. They were born and brought up on the Withers St. Mary estate, and almost as much bound to it as if they had been Domesday villeins. To lose their places was to lose all they had, and Mrs Withers brooked no faintest murmur. Indeed, it never occurred to her that the lower orders thought of murmuring—they did what they were told. So the servants chosen for Italy bade farewell to their fellow servants and to their relatives, with but the faintest hope of ever seeing them again. Their only consolation in this desolate situation was that there were several of them—

they were not being sent to this alarming exile alone. Barnett, Mrs Withers' woman, was more indifferent than the others, entrenched in her greater maturity, and her ingrained contempt for anything outside the circle of Hall Place. But Lucy's maid was in a state of barely suppressed tears and terror during the early days of the tour, and Lucy's kind, though necessarily somewhat furtive efforts, under the eyes of her mother and Barnett, to cheer the girl, had at first little result.

To Lucy herself this journey to Italy was the fulfilment of a long-held hope and dream, little as she had thought to see Rome without her father's companionship. But she was young, and six years had largely healed the wound of his loss—which at the time had cleaved her world in two, as with the crevasse of an earthquake, on one side of which she stood desolate and weeping, unable to reach him who stood on the other. When she had somewhat recovered from the shock, she continued very secretly and quietly to read the books of which he had talked to her, and to explore further the silent shelves in that silent library where no one frequented save herself, except the servants who came to clean and polish. The library was a sanctuary in which she grew, and where she felt her father's influence still about her. On the walls hung his large Piranesi engravings of the Rome he had so much loved, and Lucy stood before each one in turn, and looked at them with a slow concentration till the lines of the buildings and monuments, as set down with Piranesi's own unique combination of detailed accuracy and fantastic imagination, his darks and lights, his architecture wedded to romance, had grown into her mind, and made Rome, with all its melancholy magnificence, a place where she walked as in her own thatched Wiltshire village. And the coloured inlaid Roman round table had lost none of its enchantment. On it she propped her books to read, and thus, whatever might be the subject she perused, it had a Roman background.

§ 4

PRELUDE TO ROME

EVERYTHING she saw on the journey, interesting and wonderful as it all seemed to her, was but a prelude to the arrival in Rome. The whole romantic journey, with its excitements, its unavoidable discomforts of Alpine cold and southern heat, its marvellous and perpetually changing vistas, new lands, new people, was in itself an experience that she almost silently absorbed. Her mother did not encourage conversation, still less youthful ecstasies. To her there was no pleasure in the journey—small annoyances

quickly wiped out a great view, and mountains were things of horror. Her wish was to arrive, as quickly and easily as might be, at civilised towns where she might enjoy the society of people of her world, even if some of them had the misfortune to be foreigners. She too, for her own social reasons, wished to reach Rome, where she had a number of acquaintances and several important introductions. There was young Lord William Markwick in Rome, son of an old friend of her father's, on whom she had set her mind as a very suitable husband for Lucy. It would be highly satisfactory to marry the girl well in Rome that winter—and with Lucy's curious passion for Rome, the matrimonial cage would be nicely baited, a moonlight visit to the Colosseum or Tivoli would certainly be most useful—and then to return without her to England in the spring, and be able to watch with cool interest other mothers of her circle trying to place their daughters to advantage. Fortunately, Lucy was both pretty and biddable—she anticipated no difficulty.

So Lucy at last saw Rome; at last could gaze upon the blue dome of St. Peter's floating on the radiant air, could see the windings of the yellow Tiber, and the tumbled ruins of the Forum where the cows grazed on the grass that engulfed pillar and entablature and plinth. Trajan's Column beckoned to her, and the Arch of Severus, and the Colosseum grinned at her through its broken arches like a colossal skull.

But whatever the sights of Rome, tragic or beautiful, Lucy was given small opportunity to see them. That she should go out alone was obviously impossible, and her own maid was no suitable and efficient chaperone. Any timid suggestion that her mother should show her the sights of Rome, all the famous things of which she had heard, was received with astonishment.

"Really, Lucy, do you imagine I came here to trail about dusty ruins with you? I have much more important things to do. You should consider yourself sufficiently fortunate to be in Rome—you will see all that is necessary when we go for our daily drives in the Pincio. I cannot imagine what more you require. You had better go and lie down for an hour, so that you may look fresh for our *conversazione* to-night."

But Lucy did not lie down. She knelt on a stool by the window, and looked through the slats of the shutters—which had been rigorously closed by Barnett—at what she could see of Rome and of Roman life in the streets. A tear squeezed itself past her eyelids, as she thought how different it would all have been had Papa been there.

ENGLISHWOMAN ABROAD

Like many other English people abroad, Mrs Withers planned to spend her days as nearly as might be as she would have spent them had she been in London. Her social interchanges were with English people of similar position to herself, and with certain wealthy and important Italian families. The morning was spent in paying calls; very occasionally instead of calls, a party was organised to visit some famous ruin; the mid-day hours were given to rest, correspondence with English friends; then dressing, dinner, the daily drive, and evening parties for cards, music, and conversation. Lucy, perforce, did as her mother did, and had to content herself with little snatched glimpses of a Rome that, as she thought with a childish disappointment, seemed further away from her than it had seemed in her father's library, when he was there to answer her every question, to show her his many prints and aquatints, his bronzes and statues.

Lord William Markwick had duly appeared upon the Roman scene which he was so elegantly fitted to adorn. He had bowed over Mrs Withers' hand, and paid agreeable compliments to Lucy, who had responded with a simplicity and lack of archness that had vastly annoyed her mother. "Just like a milkmaid!" Mrs Withers had thought contemptuously.

However, that socially desirable young man had displayed sufficient interest in Lucy to encourage her hopes, and she felt considerable satisfaction when he proposed that on the night of the full moon he should conduct a small party to view the Colosseum by that light which had shone down on it for so many centuries.

"No doubt you have seen the spectacle before, Mrs Withers, but as this is your fair daughter's first visit to Rome, it may please her."

Mrs Withers professed an enthusiasm for the ruins of antiquity she was far from feeling, and declared that Lucy had a great taste for such things.

"My husband was a scholar, and he taught the child—I was a little loathe, I feared lest too great a seriousness——" she paused, waiting.

Lord William promptly supplied what she expected: "Such seriousness is but an additional grace among the many she possesses. I assure you, an enchanting creature!"

Nothing could be more promising. The majestic, if sinister, ruins, the shadowed rows of arches so black against the radiant moonlight. Mrs Withers displayed an insatiable desire for the company and conversation of the *Contessa* and her daughter—fortunately definitely unattractive—who made up the party. The Colosseum was most conveniently planned for a

young couple (actually Lord William was thirty-six, a very good settled age, Mrs Withers thought) to get lost in.

Lucy did manage to get lost—but not in the company of Lord William Markwick. He returned, after what Mrs Withers, who had been valiantly holding the conversational fort, had been regarding as a promising half-hour, to the group of the older ladies, to see if Lucy was with them. Everyone displayed a natural alarm, though Mrs Withers' alarm was not so great as her vexation, which turned to a cold anger when Lucy was discovered at last, sitting on a block of stone, talking to a Franciscan friar.

FRANCISCAN FRIAR

Lucy saw the fury gleaming in her mother's eye. She jumped up nervously.

"I am so sorry, Mamma. I got lost, and I was rather frightened, and this kind Father spoke to me, and then we began to talk——"

Finding the old Franciscan so gentle and sympathetic, she had answered his question as to whether this was her first visit to Rome, by telling him all about her father. Their conversation became most interesting, Lucy felt as if she had known him a long time. And she was amazed, after a few minutes, to see dark shadowy forms with green eyes creeping out of the ruined arches. The Franciscan had an old canvas bag filled with scraps of food, which he spread before the starved company of cats, who in his presence were quiet and peaceable, some of them even emitting a rusty purr as they arched their backs and rubbed against him. Lucy was enchanted, and the friar was just beginning to tell her of St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio, when her angry mother descended on them.

She seized Lucy by the shoulder, and gave her a by no means gentle shake.

"What do you mean by behaving in this way? And talking to a dirty monk!"

Fortunately she spoke in English, which Lucy could only hope the friar would not understand.

Mrs Withers dragged her daughter away, casting a contemptuous look at the old Franciscan, who stood in astonished silence.

Then Lucy did a brave thing. She broke away from her mother's hand, and ran back to the figure in the brown habit.

“I am so sorry,” she said. She slipped a little gold locket from her neck, and dropped it at his feet. “For your cats,” she added. She made him her deepest and best curtsey, and returned to her mother.

Mrs Withers was putting a pretty gloss on “the foolishness of the child,” to Lord William, and because of his ameliorating presence Lucy escaped any further public reproof. But her mother made up for it later on in the seclusion of her bed-chamber, and Lucy cried herself to sleep. But in the widening intervals between her sobs, as the peaceful face of the Franciscan came back to her, and the content of the feeding cats, she thought it had been worth while.

For two days after this little adventure Lucy was bidden to keep her room, where she saw no one save the tight-lipped Barnett, who twice daily brought her a bowl of bread and milk and some figs. Mrs Withers intended that her displeasure should not be forgotten. It was also convenient that for the ensuing few days Lord William Markwick was temporarily absent from Rome.

§ 5

At the end of this depressing period Lucy was formally forgiven. Too much moping would damage the child’s looks, and Mrs Withers did not desire that. Lord William had returned to Rome, and there was a very important diplomatic and musical party taking place at the Palazzo Spalatio, at which he would be present, as well as the fine flower of Roman society, with a certain sprinkling of the distinguished and important of other countries. It was expected that the famous pianist, Amades Govoni, would play and also a friend of his, a violinist who had the distinction of having been a pupil of Paganini’s, and who was attracting the attention of the musical *cognoscenti* in Rome. Mrs Withers had no feeling for music, but she liked to hear and see anyone of whom people were talking.

PARTY FROCK

So this important party was the cause of Lucy’s penance being shortened. Mrs Withers even went so far as to pat Lucy’s shoulder and tell her she must look her prettiest, and promised to lend her a necklace of pearls at the end of which hung a turquoise locket. Her dress was to be apple-blossom pink, her broad sash, with its big bow, was blue. Her sandals were blue, and a blue riband peeped here and there among her soft brown ringlets. Even Barnett vouchsafed a word of praise when she stood thus arrayed.

“You needn’t look prettier, not if it was your wedding-day,” she said.

Lucy blushed. She had not begun to think of wedding-days as a possibility in connection with herself. She had seen nobody.

Mrs Withers’ dress was of an impressiveness suited to the occasion. It was a maroon satin, stiffly brocaded with great golden flowers, and she wore a turban of gold tissue and maroon velvet, in which an aigrette clasped with diamonds tossed proudly. She had bracelets on both arms and a necklace to match of very fine cameos set in superb diamonds. The tortoiseshell sticks of her French-painted fan were also set with diamonds. She was still very handsome, if matronly. Mrs Withers, of Withers St. Mary, was not going to yield anything to Italian and French ladies of long titles and old families. She had a shrewd idea that when it came to income she could equal two or three of the Italian nobility, put together, while the Bellairs and the Withers families were old enough to hold up their heads with anybody.

It was the largest and most important party to which Lucy had ever been taken, and she was at once shy and excited—which, all unknown to herself, gave a curious shining to her youthful charm. Mrs Withers looked at her approvingly. Lord William Markwick would surely find himself attracted that night. She had never wanted a daughter, but she could almost find it in her heart to feel affection for a daughter so satisfactorily pretty as this, who promised so quickly to be established in a marriage so suitable.

Lucy felt that Mamma, for some reason, was pleased with her, and in an unusually benignant mood, so she herself became more radiant—more like a rose, and less like the violet to which her mother’s training so often reduced her.

The lofty golden rooms of the Palazzo, opening one out of the other in a stately vista, softly, yet brilliantly lit with masses of wax candles in silver candelabra that showed the richness of the ceilings painted by Pietro di Cortona, the tall windows wide open to the marble balconies and flights of steps that descended to a formal garden dropping down a hillside, where there was the soft murmur and splash of many fountains—all this seemed to Lucy like the setting for the entry of a princess in a fairy tale. Like a child she looked round for this fairy tale princess, but she found there were so many lovely creatures, so many actual princesses, about her, that she could not decide who was to be the very special one for whom this scene was set.

She followed in the wake of Mrs Withers’ impressive progress, paused when she paused to greet or be greeted, curtseying when she was presented by her mother, listening to what was said, saying hardly a word herself.

KREUTZER SONATA

There was no need. The air was vibrant with voices, laughter, little cries of recognition and enjoyment, far more vocal than a similar English crowd would have been—the soft Italian speech sliding like water; the shriller, sibilant French voices, staccato and vivid; here and there a throaty German, and the slower English enunciation.

But suddenly, through all this surf of voices falling on the shores of intercourse, was heard a clear, lovely phrase drawn by a bow of exquisite precision and power from a violin. It came from a room beyond that in which Lucy and her mother stood. There was a sudden cessation of conversation, broken by little murmurs—“Ah, the new violinist, and, of course, Govoni”; “Cannot we get a little nearer?” “I want to see the violinist.” “Born in Rome, they say”; “He was Paganini’s pupil”;—subsiding into a complete silence as the Kreutzer Sonata gathered momentum for its journey to the stars.

Lucy was wedged between a very stout gentleman wearing a broad riband across his chest, and her mother. It was quite impossible to get any glimpse of the players—they were in the further salon, and in any case she was surrounded by people most of whom were much larger and taller than herself. But if she could not see, she could hear, and that was sufficient. She had never heard music like that before—Haydn, Johann Christian Bach, Scarlatti, had been the repertoire of her Great-Aunt Caroline, and in consequence, hers. All those gay and delicate weavings of music suddenly seemed like thistle-down by the side of this passion and mystery and sadness—her little heart was tossed among the stars she glimpsed through the tall open window beside her, the hands on the piano keys seemed as though they were at her throat. She felt choked, she felt gloriously happy. She felt that she was no longer Lucy Withers.

The sonata came to its appointed end. The applause broke out, the conversation began again, and in the general movement Mrs Withers’ purposeful progress—she was looking for Lord William Markwick who had not yet appeared to greet her—brought them to the next salon wherein stood the long piano in its ebony and ivory case. But the piano seat was empty. Lucy gazed eagerly round, but she had no idea what either the violinist or the pianist looked like, and could not distinguish them from all the people gathered together in conversational groups. She could only hope that once more they would play. Her mother had fortunately found a seat and was being effectually entertained by a distinguished compatriot, and Lucy hoped

that perhaps they would stay where they were till the musicians returned. She made herself as small as possible behind her mother's chair.

She had not very long to wait. A little lane opened between the clustering guests, and the Princess herself appeared accompanied by a broad-shouldered, very fair young man, with narrow light eyes under remarkably straight brows, who, after a few moments of laughing conversation with his hostess, sat himself down at the pianoforte.

He looked at the keyboard for a silent moment, while the room sank into the quietness he expected. Then it seemed as though he let loose a flight of birds whose wings glittered with the swiftness of their flight. The delicate exultant loveliness of it stopped Lucy's breath. She lost all consciousness of herself, and ceased to exist save as ears that listened, eyes that watched the magic hands which sped so swiftly about the keyboard, while yet retaining an extraordinary stillness of poise. The flying delicate arpeggios, the swirl of notes like foam, broke now and again into strangely lovely chords, poignant, deep. Then came the delicate decision, the evenly woven contrapuntal strands of an unusual fugue. It was old music that Amades Govoni was playing, but it was new to Rome—it was the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue written by that half-forgotten Cantor of Leipzig, Johann Sebastian Bach, and there was nobody then living who played it as Govoni played it.

AN INTRODUCTION

Lucy did not know whether it was a long or a short space after the music was finished, that the pianist and his hostess were standing before her mother and herself. The Princess presented him, made a few graceful remarks, and moved away. Govoni began at once to talk to Mrs Withers with ease and freedom. He said nothing to Lucy, and she said nothing to him after her first shy greeting, but he kept giving her glances with his extraordinary light eyes, glances so startled and so tender—as though he had known her for a long while—that she dropped her own eyes and felt like swooning. But though her eyes were cast down, she felt Govoni's glances go through her—it was as though he spoke to her in a voice that only she could hear. Her heart seemed to beat in her throat, her cheek went as white as a lily, she clung to the back of her mother's chair. She did not hear a word that he was saying to Mrs Withers, but at last she heard—and thankfully—her mother remark, "Lucy, my dear, I think it is time we considered our departure."

Mrs Withers would have been prepared to stay much later, but she had just heard that Lord William Markwick was absent owing to a fever he had suddenly contracted, and as soon as he was sufficiently recovered intended to return straightway to England. She herself was beginning to feel the onset

of a *tic-douloureux* which occasionally disturbed her excellent health. She suddenly longed for her apartment, to remove her heavy gold turban, and make Barnett slowly brush her hair for half an hour. She had certainly no wish to talk any longer to this Italian pianist, however brilliant he might be. She had an innate contempt for all foreigners, even when they were people of title, position, and wealth. When they were foreign musicians—well, they hardly existed. If they played remarkably—as certainly this Govoni person did, she recognised that—one listened for a little while, one graciously applauded, one said a few pleasant words, if necessary. And then one forgot.

She suddenly perceived that Lucy looked extremely pale. Perhaps the child was a little disappointed at Lord William's absence, and distressed by his illness. An agreeable thought. She would prefer that Lucy should easily accept her plans, though if there were reluctance she would know how to deal with it.

She was arrested in her passage through the doorway of the second salon by the greetings of an important English dowager. Lucy followed in her wake, and stayed when she stayed. In the doorway she suddenly turned her head and looked back into the room they had just left. So far as she was concerned it might have been empty of all save one figure. For a shattering instant her eyes met those of Amades Govoni.

On the ornate architrave of the tall doorway in which she stood was carved a gilded Cupid, who pointed his feathered bow straight downward, as though aiming at her tender breast.

§ 6

"PICTURE OF LOVE"

LUCY slept little that night. Govoni's music, but much more Govoni's eyes, his strange manner of looking at her, seemed to float her away into a world where all values were altered, where everything wore an air of moonshine and dream. "Whoever loved, that loved not at first sight?"

Marlowe's words crept suddenly into her mind and stood there looking at her.

Before he died her father had given her a Shakespeare in three little volumes which he had ordered to be specially bound for her in morocco—the Histories in green, the Comedies in pale blue, and the Tragedies in night blue. On each volume was her name in gold on the cover, just "Lucy."

“You will keep that name all your life,” her father had said to her. “You will probably change the name of Withers for some other—but whatever your new name may be, keep these volumes always with you, I do not say for my sake, but for your own. You can never outgrow them. I can bequeath you nothing better. Being a girl child you will probably weep over *Romeo and Juliet* before you laugh in the Forest of Arden with Rosalind and Touchstone. I could wish that life would make you a Rosalind, rather than a Juliet. But, remember, in that play is the picture of love—do not be content with anything less.”

His words, his very voice and look, came back to her, as though he stood by her bedside: “There is the picture of love”—ah, and again that tender cadence, “Whoever loved, that loved not at first sight?”

She turned over and buried her face in the pillow. She trembled. She dared not think. That look of Govoni’s—it could not have meant what it seemed to say. How mad, how immodest and unmaidenly of her to imagine for a moment that it meant anything. He had strange eyes—a shivering took her at the memory of those eyes—and they could not help looking like that. She had no experience of how men looked, she was a fool. She wept.

The next morning her mother was in a very bad temper, and when she was in a bad temper all those about her knew it. In the afternoon her head did not permit her to drive out, she lay in the darkened salon. At first she would have Lucy sit with her, then the girl’s pale looks irritated her.

“One would think that you had the migraine. You had better go to the Borghese Gardens with Barnett for an hour.”

Lucy was glad to go out, even with Barnett. To sit in that shuttered room with Mamma, and realise more and more clearly that yesterday was only a dream and that she was most unlikely ever to see Amades again, was inexpressively miserable.

In the Borghese Gardens a lady whom Lucy did not know came up to her and enquired about her mother. After a few suitable remarks, she drew Lucy slightly aside from Barnett and said quickly, “Does your maid understand Italian?”—nobody could possibly have mistaken Barnett for anything but an Englishwoman. When Lucy, rather surprised, answered that she did not, the lady said in a low voice, “Amades Govoni will see you again, and do not be afraid.” She patted Lucy’s hand, smiled, and passed on. Barnett had stood by with a stony countenance. She hated all this foreign jabber which she could not understand, and heartily wished her mistress would travel back to Withers St. Mary.

When Lucy returned, her mother said, “You look better for your walk. You can now read aloud to me, as my head is somewhat recovered. The English news-sheets have arrived, so read me the Fashionable Intelligence.”

MORNING CALL

Next day, much to Mrs Withers’ surprise—a surprise which she took little trouble to conceal—she received a morning call from Govoni. His behaviour was easy, assured, and gay. Mrs Withers’ cold manner had no apparent effect upon him. He enquired after her health, which he had been desolated to hear had been affected by the fatigues of the party at the Palazzo Spalatio. But he realised that a lady like Mrs Withers would never spare herself when it was a question of the duties of her social position. After the first greeting, he took no visible notice of Lucy for the first ten minutes, while he carried on his almost single-handed conversation with Mrs Withers with a cheerful valour that petrified Lucy—already hard pressed to conceal the palpitation of her heart in his disturbing presence. That strange message yesterday in the Borghese Gardens, of which she had been thinking ever since. Had it really come from him?—what did it mean? He could not be interested in her, he did not speak to her, or look at her.

At that moment Govoni swung round to her.

“Is the Signorina, perchance, interested in music?” he asked, his eyes holding hers.

“Yes,” faltered Lucy. “I thought what you played most beautiful.”

“I give a small private concert with my friend the violinist, Signor Cavatini, at the apartment of an aunt.” He turned to Mrs Withers with a bow. “If you and your daughter would honour me with your presence——?”

Mrs Withers took a sudden decision. This young man was beginning to make himself a nuisance. He apparently regarded himself as on her own social level—she even had a curious feeling that in some way he felt he had the advantage over her, that in some incredible manner he was laughing at her. She admitted that he had a dangerous attraction; his upright powerful figure, the challenging way he carried his fine head, above all his magnetic eyes. Not at all a suitable acquaintance for an inexperienced young girl.

“Excessively kind of you, Signor Govoni, but I regret we are leaving Rome almost immediately. Advices from my bailiff necessitate my presence in England.”

Lucy’s heart sank at these words. It was the first she had heard of their imminent departure. Then it rose again a little as Govoni said, “That is most

regrettable. Rome will be bereft without you. But perhaps we may meet later in England."

Mrs Withers thought it most unlikely. In fact, if necessary, she would take steps to guard against such a possibility. But she refrained from saying so.

§ 7

THE only people who rejoiced at the haste of their uprooting from Rome were Barnett and the other English servants, who longed to return to a civilised country where they could get good beer, and talk to people in a decent language again. The courier regretted the departure, he was doing very well, as all the financial transactions were in his hands. But he knew that when Mrs Withers gave direct orders, they must be obeyed, and quickly. So the cumbersome travelling carriages were dragged out again, the wheels oiled and the cushions beaten. There was much preparation of cold viands, for fear of starvation or poisoning on the journey. The postillions donned their white buckskin breeches, and high boots, and short jackets, which had grown a little tight with their lazy living of the past weeks. The horses were extra groomed and fed. The trunks were packed. All was ready.

DEPARTURE

Lucy's feelings and wishes were not consulted. She was not allowed without the house, except in her mother's company. For some reason she could not explain—there certainly seemed little enough ground for it—Mrs Withers was alarmed. That was why she was leaving Rome so hurriedly, with half her plans and engagements unfulfilled. For a day her two tall footmen were delivering notes of farewell and apology at the stately portals of Roman hostesses—the unexpected urgency of her affairs, her regrets. Once on British soil she was conscious that she would feel safe—once within the great park walls, behind the tall well-guarded iron gateways of Hall Place, none could come near her whose presence she did not desire. She smiled to herself. She summoned her courier, and demanded in an icy manner the reason that certain preparations were not already accomplished.

Without accident, without any disagreeables save those inevitable to foreign travel, Mrs Withers and Lucy and her entourage returned safely to Withers St. Mary. At the port of disembarkation the heavy travelling carriage was abandoned, and Mrs Withers transferred herself and her daughter to her own chaise, which was awaiting them. They drove

comfortably behind the four beautiful horses through the peaceful English country. When they reached Withers St. Mary the dutiful villagers stood by the roadside, or at their cottage doors, the men in clean smocks, the women in clean aprons, and bobbed curtsies and touched forelocks. Mrs Withers, with a sharp eye for any shortcomings, acknowledged these greetings. Lucy smiled shyly.

The bustle of settling down, of inspecting slight changes in the house and gardens, and new arrivals in the form of puppies and calves, and a ginger foal, of paying a visit to Great-Aunt Caroline at the Dower House, distracted Lucy's thoughts for a day or two. Then a singular blankness came over her—there seemed nothing to do. All her former loved pursuits failed her. The elegant satin-wood harpsichord, with its double rows of keys, where the natural notes were ebony, and the sharps or flats ivory, at which she had passed so many contented hours in the morning parlour, had lost its appeal—the brief plucked note sounded childish to her ear after the resonance and power of the pianoforte under the hands of Amades Govoni. She might still have been in Rome, listening to him, perhaps speaking with him, had it not been for her mother's sudden and inexplicable determination to return—she knew that their Roman visit had originally been intended to last much longer. If she wandered into the quiet library to stare at the Piranesi engravings of Rome upon the walls, it only increased her depression. He was in Rome, and here was she in Wiltshire. With restless fingers she pulled book after book from the shelves, looking for distraction, for consolation. Even that beloved didactic poem of Hayley's, "The Triumphs of Temper," failed to comfort her, though deep in her heart she knew that for her, as for the admirable Serena,

> "Far from ambitious pride and envious care,
> To love and to be loved was all her prayer."

SOLITARY THOUGHTS

And then, even as she read, the idea that she had so much as thought of love in connection with a young man she had seen but twice, and that so briefly, dyed her cheek a deeper colour, even though there were none to behold her blushes save the tall trees of the park where she wandered alone with her hound Flash, or the gentle speckled deer, who came close and looked at her with such large liquid eyes, she could almost imagine they filled with sympathising tears.

She was left more alone than normally would have been the case, for on her return Mrs Withers had found herself involved in tiresome litigation

about an old right-of-way, which for years had been peaceably closed up, that a new land-owner of the smaller sort, lately come to the neighbourhood, had taken upon himself to re-open. Such insolence threw Mrs Withers into a fine frenzy, and she was searching for ways to punish it, which proved more difficult than she expected, as the offender was a middle-aged man of independent means, owning his own house and land, and with no wife or daughters who might be made to feel the social displeasure of the lady of Hall Place. Because of all this, her plans for some impressive entertainments to which Lord William Markwick would be invited—for he, too, had returned to England—were temporarily in abeyance. Her temper was very short. The lower servants thanked their good fortune that they never came in contact with her, and the upper servants, who did, walked delicately in her presence. Lucy was left very much to herself.

§ 8

One peaceful afternoon, having endured a painful dinner with her mother, when every timid remark she made had its extreme foolishness coldly pointed out to her, when her father had been sneeringly criticised for his ridiculous ways of educating her, which, said Mrs Withers, may have resulted in sensibility, but had produced very little sense, Lucy had with difficulty restrained her tears to the end of a meal whose delicious viands tasted like ashes in her young mouth.

Wishing to put as great a distance as might be between herself and her mother, she had fetched her greyhound, whose uncritical and delighted companionship was specially welcome, and wandered away through the gardens, across the little bridge that spanned the stream, into the further stretches of the park. There she sat herself down in the small stone Temple that crowned the highest slope of the park, looking across the swelling slopes of sward towards the stately Palladian front of the house, set against masses of tall plumed trees, which admirably enhanced the architectural balance and dignity of this garden façade of the house—all the ancient irregularities of earlier building being hidden away in the east wing.

Lucy looked at it with a detachment that had grown upon her since she had been reft away from Rome and from Govoni. She felt that her life would be set like that in a stiff pattern, conforming, as her father had taught her, to certain Orders of architecture, and not to the needs of those who lived in the house, as did the thatched cottages and farmhouses that lay beyond the park wall. Of course

DREAM COME TRUE

the needs of those people were humble—but oh, thought Lucy, how much better to be humble and happy, than live the formal, stately existence that was hers. She had realised, young though she was, that her father had felt it a burden. He wanted his books, that were all of his possessions he really cared for, and he wanted to be free to travel. Lucy suddenly felt, in a wild rush of revolt which shocked, even while it astonished her, that she wanted nothing save to see Govoni again, to go with him—anywhere. Away from all this, away from Mamma, to know some freedom of life and breathing.

She could stay no longer in the little formal Garden Temple—that sham-classical little Temple which in the future was to be the scene of the sudden dawn of another love. She decided restlessly that she would go further on into the beech woods, where she could not see the house, where she could feel more alone. The sky was tingeing with faint colours that heralded the sunset, the company of the quiet trees was comforting. Flash walked beside her with soundless airy footsteps.

Suddenly Flash bounded away from her, and was quickly out of sight.

"Flash! Flash!" Lucy called, fearing for the life of hare or rabbit—that was the only drawback to dogs. For a moment or two the usually obedient Flash did not return. Then he came back to sight, and with him was somebody, a man—Amades Govoni.

Lucy's heart turned over in her breast—it could only be her secret longing visualised in a dream. A little whispering cry issued from her lips, "You?—you, from Italy!"

Then darkness took her seeing.

Amades was almost as startled as she was, but there was no fear, only a passionate joy. After his long journey, after the difficulties with which this fairy princess was set about, the fierce dragons of wealth, of inherited position, of walls and gates and many servants, and—fiercest dragon of all—her mother, here she was come to his hand like a dove to her nest. He had known it would be so from the first moment his eyes had alighted on her face at the Palazzo Spalatio. He had felt an extraordinary confidence, an unshakable conviction that Lucy was his, that their two destinies were one. And this moment of renewed meeting proved it. He looked at the tender little face on his arm, so white and helpless. He laid her gently down on the edge of a small bubbling spring, and with water cupped in his hands laved her neck and forehead. He must restore her quickly: he had much to say to her in this time together—which would probably be brief—that had been so wonderfully vouchsafed them.

Lucy sighed, and stirred, and looked at him without any of her first surprise. In her moments of unconsciousness she had accepted his presence, though she did not understand it. Amades kissed her very gently, and she lay and smiled at him. Then suddenly her long training awoke in her, she fluttered like a caught bird, “Oh, what would Mamma say!—I must go. Please let me go!”

“I shall never let you go again,” said Amades.

Lucy gazed at him, still lying in his arms as he knelt by her on the ground: “But, but—I hardly know you. I have seen you only twice before!”

The childish protest was brushed aside. Govoni looked at her gravely.

“And how often have you thought of me?”

“YOUR HAND IN MARRIAGE”

She could not answer. Her eyes fell before the searching look of his, her colour returned, and deepened, in her pale cheek.

“Look up, my Lucy, for you are my Lucy. I will tell you what this means—it means that I am going to marry you.”

Lucy trembled. “But Mamma——!” she cried.

Amades sat down on the ground beside her, put an arm about her shoulders, and made her lean against him.

“Now, my sweet Lucy—*my* Lucy, you understand?—you must listen carefully to what I have to say. There may be very little time like this. I will say all the nice and proper things about love when we are married—but first we must become married. I have journeyed from Rome solely with that object. I come to this place, and find you shut up in a fortress. I climbed that forbidding wall of yours, hoping that I may discover something or somebody to guide me. By the grace of Our Lady I find you. To-morrow I shall not climb that wall. I shall walk through the gates and demand to see your mother——”

Lucy turned against his shoulder. “Oh,” she said in a trembling tone, “that is useless, she will not see you!”

“She will see me,” Govoni went on. “Have no fear. I shall ask your hand in marriage——”

Lucy broke in with a little sob: “She will not listen to you, she would never, never, hear of such a thing!”

"You are probably right. I do not expect to be received with open arms. I am not at all the sort of son-in-law your mother desires." He laughed. "But, nevertheless, I am the son-in-law she is going to have!"

The confidence, the gaiety, of his manner, began to infect Lucy with a little courage.

"But what do you mean to do?" she asked with a child-like sort of simplicity that made Govoni pause to look at her with adoring eyes and bestow several kisses on the little hand he held in his big one.

Then he resumed: "We agree, do we not, that she will reject my honourable advances? Well, then, there is nothing left for us to do save run away and get married. I have made all the arrangements—all you have to do is to meet me here to-morrow night. On the other side of the wall will be a chaise with fast horses. I will even provide you with a female chaperone until you have taken my name."

Lucy went so pale again he thought she was going to faint.

"To-morrow night? Oh, I cannot!"

Amades put his hand under her chin, and turned her face up so that he could look into her eyes.

"Do you love me, Lucy? Do you love me enough to trust your life to me?"

There was a pause, while her soft brown eyes gazed into his light, compelling ones.

She sighed, a little shiver ran through her.

"Yes," she said, "I love you. I will do as you tell me."

"Oh, the beloved child! I knew she had courage, as well as sweetness."

He kissed her with rapture, but briefly, for he saw the sunset colours were declining, and he feared, with the dusk coming on, that Lucy would be missed and searched for. He pulled her to her feet, and with his arm round her, walked a little nearer to the edge of the wood, where, still sheltered from view, they could see the house in the distance, and its possible emissaries.

Clearly, plainly, he told Lucy what she must do on the morrow's night. He told her twice over, and made her repeat it to him. He held both her hands to his heart: "My dear love, if you fail me, my life is undone."

"I will not fail you," said Lucy. There was a new note in her voice. There was no time for more, for suddenly a maid and a footman emerged from the house, carrying wraps.

"Go to meet them," said Amades. "And to-morrow our true lives will begin."

He disappeared into the beech wood. Lucy walked calmly forward to meet her maid and accept the cloak she brought against the evening air.

§ 9

MRS WITHERS AMAZED

It was with some difficulty that Amades Govoni obtained his interview with Lucy's mother the next morning. It was with complete amazement that Mrs Withers received the information that he requested the honour of seeing her, and her swift reaction was to send word that she was unable to permit herself that pleasure. Govoni countered this, which was the message he expected, by saying that as he had come all the way from Rome with the express purpose of seeing her, he intended to stay in Withers St. Mary until Mrs Withers found herself at liberty. This in no manner suited Mrs Withers. The last thing she desired was to have this Italian pianist, so provokingly attractive, as she could not deny, hanging about within possible reach of Lucy. So, after sending Barnett to keep strict watch on Lucy in her own apartments—she would have no risk of an accidental meeting—Govoni was ushered into her presence.

The interview was brief. Govoni, in a very direct manner, with very bright eyes, came straight to the point, and requested Mrs Withers' permission to pay court to her daughter, and if he should be fortunate enough to gain her affection, to marry her.

"I can keep her in comfort," he said simply. "Though not, of course, in the luxury to which she has been accustomed. But as she is young, that may not greatly distress her."

Mrs Withers had never been more amazed in her life, but with her amazement was mingled a reluctant admiration of the valour and self-confidence of the young man before her. Almost she wished that he had been adorned with the necessary trappings of rank and wealth, so that she might have considered his proposals as possible. Had she been gifted with any imagination she might have seen him as young David confronting the

Goliath of entrenched social position which she so ably represented. But she had never suffered from the weakness of imagination, though she went so far as to resist the impulse baldly to call him a fortune-hunter—something in the level gaze of his eyes as he stood there (she had not offered him the courtesy of a seat) and looked at her with a kind of bold tranquillity, forbade the abuse that rose to her tongue's tip. But the restraint only made her manner more icy. There was no possibility of doubt as to the completeness and finality of her refusal of Govoni's request for her daughter's hand.

He bowed: "Then there is nothing more to be said."

THE DOOR IS SHUT

His satisfactory acceptance of her dismissal slightly softened Mrs Withers, so that she enquired, "Are you making any stay in England?"

"No," said Govoni. "I am leaving England to-night. There is nothing to stay for."

This was highly commendable, and just what Mrs Withers desired to know.

Govoni, afterwards, was always slightly surprised at his own conduct of this affair. Fortune had played into his hands in such a way that he could have eloped with Lucy, without Mrs Withers even knowing that he was in England. It would have been simpler and safer. But some obscure impulse bade him give Mrs Withers the opportunity of knowing his purpose—if she showed any signs of a conciliatory temper he did not wish to snatch Lucy away like a thief. If the door was shut in his face and bolted, then he would be free to pursue his own plans.

The door was shut in his face.

So soon as he had gone Mrs Withers pulled the bell vigorously and ordered a glass of wine. To her own astonishment she was trembling slightly. She sipped the wine, and looked out of the window down the long beech avenue, where she had watched Govoni's retreating figure and heard the big iron gates clang to behind him. She would have word sent to both the lodge-keepers that he was never again to be admitted, and also tell Jevons. She was taking no risks. She had to admit that he had not seemed particularly depressed by his failure. Of course, even he, foreign adventurer though he was, could hardly imagine that Lucy would be his just for the asking. Perhaps he had heard she was fatherless, and thought that with two unprotected females he might charm them into agreement. She tossed her handsome head in an habitual gesture. She could imagine the fantastic way

Julian might have behaved had he been living—asked the Italian to breakfast, as like as not, and said that Lucy's feelings must be consulted. As if feelings had anything to do with a serious matter like matrimony and the imperative necessity of securing a suitable establishment in life. Well, fortunately, it was she who was controlling Lucy's destiny, and the little fool was safely occupied upstairs, ignorant of the unheard-of impertinence of this visit. She would take her up to London in a week or two, so soon as this tiresome right-of-way business was settled, and see that she had a little amusement. She had been appearing somewhat depressed of late.

Mrs. Withers felt better for her glass of port, and definitely better for her victorious little contest with Govoni. She found herself thinking of him almost kindly.

§ 10

If things begin well, they are apt to go on well. Govoni's magnificent confidence that Fate and Time conspired to give Lucy to his arms, was justified in the result. He staked everything on the slender courage of this girl, this timid, sheltered girl, who had never brushed her own hair, or laced the ribbons of her own sandals, this girl whom he had spoken with but three times, and only once in solitude, yet in that short while had so imbued with the strength of his own love, that he felt convinced she would not fail him.

THE ELOPEMENT

She did not. A few minutes after the appointed hour—they had been anguishingly long minutes to the waiting Amades—she had come gliding over the grass in the dark cloak he had bidden her wear. As he had also bade her, she came with empty hands. "Bring nothing with you," he had told her, "I would provide all your needs."

He greeted her with a kiss, and "Good girl!" He was so calm and merry that Lucy's agitations and tremblings left her. Amades had thought of everything. There was a little ladder to help her over the high wall that her lover had scaled with difficulty the previous night, and she sat on the top of the wall, clutching his arm, while he dropped the ladder down the other side, picked her up, and carried her down it. In the road a chaise was standing, the shining backs of the horses gleaming in the lamplight. In the chaise was a nice motherly Italian woman-servant.

"You can say what you like to me in your native tongue," said Amades, smiling down at Lucy's pale face. "Benetta does not understand English."

But Lucy had little to say. She had so concentrated on keeping her emotions in check, so that through the difficult day her mother should notice nothing strange in her manner, and on following exactly Govoni's instructions, down to the last detail, that now the deed was done, she felt passive, exhausted. She trembled a little when he put his arm round her; a curious happiness she had never known welled up in her at the tender contact. But she was so tired she could not think very much, only rest, and listen to the rhythmical beat of the horses' hooves. In a little while her head fell against Amades' shoulder. She slept.

Amades looked down at the small, white face, the tumbled, brown ringlets, and felt as though his heart would burst with joy and pity. It was as though a fragile, palpitating, yet confiding bird, had flown into his hand. She seemed as helpless, and as brave. What did she really know of him, that at his bidding she should leave her home and her country, and embark on a life of which she was completely ignorant? Almost he thought to check the horses, take her back, lay her under a tree, and let her wake and think it all a dream. But she loved him—little as she knew of him, she knew everything, because she loved him. And for himself he knew that something had befallen him when he first beheld her that evening in Rome which had altered his whole life and nature. Before, he had played a little at love, though not with any deep seriousness, as always his music had been so much the most important. But this was not playing, it was destiny, fate, and he felt it the more because of the almost ridiculous ease with which he had stormed the guarded citadel of his little princess, and carried her off from her formidable mother. There was a purpose in it—from the very first he had been armed in strange confidence, and had never feared that he would fail.

The horses were good. In a few hours they had put many miles between Lucy and Withers St. Mary. In a few more hours they were at sea, and then on foreign soil, and, after a religious ceremony of which she only clearly understood the part which wedded her to Amades, Lucy found that she had become in some miraculous way Lucy Claudia Govoni, a married woman, the wife of the incomparable, the adored Amades.

He held her at arms' length and looked at her.

"Now, Mrs Govoni, we are really going to have a proper meal, instead of the snatched trifles we have been subsisting on for the last twenty hours, and then I am going to buy you some clothes, you poor shorn lamb! Oh," he suddenly laughed and clutched her to him, "to think that I can now buy you clothes!"

§ 11

DESERTED BEDCHAMBER

According to Govoni's instructions Lucy had left a note, written in a very shaky hand, pinned to her pillow, saying that she had gone away, and would write to her mother when she was married.

There it was found the next morning by her maid when she came to call and dress her. She stared at the empty bed and the note on the pillow, as though she had found a snake coiled there. No more than if it had been a snake, did she dare to touch it. She fetched Mrs Barnett, who was just preparing to enter her lady's bed-chamber.

"Will you please to come to Miss Lucy's room, ma'am?" she quavered.

At no time was Mrs Barnett's temper remarkable for blandness, least of all in the morning, and with the younger servants.

"Can't you see I'm busy, you little fool? Do you want me to wake your Miss Lucy for you?"

"She isn't there to wake!" said the girl, beginning to gurgle hysterically.

Mrs Barnett pushed her roughly out of the way and hurried down the passage to Lucy's room.

The flowered dimity curtains were drawn back, for Lucy always liked to look out when she woke in her high bed, at the view of the park and the trees, and beyond that the farm lands stretching to the slopes of the uncultivated Downs, scattered with moving flocks of sheep.

The morning sunshine lay like a benediction on the beautiful pastoral scene which Lucy's eyes had loved since childhood. But Mrs Barnett's eyes saw nothing except the bed, which apparently had been slept in, and the note, which she unpinned from the pillow. Then she saw that Lucy's ivory brushes lay upon the little satin-wood dressing cabinet, and that her sandals lay under a chair.

"Silly little fool!" she cried, turning on the girl. "Miss Lucy's only gone for one of them walks of hers."

Lucy and her father had often gone out together in the early morning before the household was awake.

Then the little folded paper fell open in her hand and she read what was written there.

Her sallow skin turned slightly green. She had guessed something was up yesterday, though Mrs Withers was too tight-lipped to communicate much, even to as indispensable a servant as Barnett. And even Barnett, hard encased though she was, did not relish the thought of taking that note in to her mistress. However, it had to be done, and, of course, she knew nothing of what it contained. She folded the edges together again—Lucy had not stayed for a wafer—and took it in to Mrs Withers, saying stiffly that Miss Lucy had gone out, and left that note.

She did not like her mistress, but she admired her, and she never admired her so much as when she covertly, with an undercurrent of cruel pleasure—even the Quality had disagreeable things happen to them sometimes—watched her read the note. She saw one hand clutch the sheet, she saw a sudden spot of hard colour appear on each cheek, but after a bare moment's pause Mrs Withers turned to her and spoke in her usual impatient voice, "What are you standing there for? Get me my chocolate."

"Now that's what I call a Lady," said Barnett to herself, as she went away to get the chocolate.

MRS WITHERS' REFLECTIONS

As she drank it, her hand quite steady on the cup, Mrs Withers easily put together what had happened. The only thing she could not understand was how Govoni had communicated with Lucy. After his dismissal, Lucy had been in the house all day, sewing or reading; they had eaten their dinner together at five o'clock, and drank tea, as usual at ten, when Lucy had taken her bedroom candlestick and retired to bed. What possible chance had there been for Govoni to communicate with Lucy in such a day? Unless he had smuggled in a note. But that seemed somewhat incredible, and in any case all the details of an elopement could hardly be settled by a surreptitious note.

These thoughts and surmises sped through her mind, and behind it, like the Bore coming up the Severn, full of darkness and fury, was the knowledge that she, Lavinia Withers, who in all her life had never brooked opposition, had been tricked—tricked by her chit of a daughter and an Italian pianist. There was nothing that she could do. The night was past—they were no longer in England, she knew.

She pulled her bell violently. In a few minutes a groom on the fastest horse in the Hall Place stables was riding into Salisbury to fetch the family solicitor.

§ 12

Married woman though she was, and happier than she had imagined any mortal could be, it yet was with a trembling heart that Lucy Govoni sat down to write the promised letter to her mother. The shadow of her mother's cold disapproval—that "displeasure" which had lain like a cloud, taking all colour out of the landscape across so many of her youthful days—seemed as though it stretched out from England and dimmed even this golden sunshine of her life with Amades.

"I wish I did not have to write this letter to Mamma," she said, laying down her quill, and looking at her husband with a threatening quiver of her round chin.

"God! what a baby she looks!" Amades thought, his heart nipped with compunction for his little love.

"My Angel," he said, leaning over her and kissing the back of her neck, which gleamed between the ringlets of her down-dropped head, "you shall not do a thing you do not wish. I myself will write to your mother, explain to her everything, and very politely beg for her blessing. If she is a sensible woman she will accept what cannot be undone."

"You do not know Mamma," Lucy answered soberly. She again picked up the quill, and went on with the letter with a gentle decision that enchanted Amades as a new light on the yielding little creature who was his wife, and who had already proved herself to have courage, "Darling Amades, it is I who must write this letter, not you."

So it was written, and despatched to England. When the time came that an answer might be looked for, Lucy displayed nervous agitation. "I shall never dare to open Mamma's letter," she protested.

But there was no letter to open. After a long interval, an epistle, beautifully written on crackling paper in a clerkly hand, arrived from the old-established firm of solicitors at Salisbury, saying that Mrs Withers desired no further communication with her daughter, and that any letters written to her would be returned unopened through the firm who had the honour to be her most obedient, humble Servants. The capital S of the "Servants" had a most arrogant expression.

Lucy turned very pale. She sat silently for a few moments, then flung herself into Amades' arms.

"NOBODY BUT YOU"

"Now, I have nobody but you."

“Do you desire anybody but me?”

“No, oh, no—only you in the whole world!”

He held her away from him that he might look at her with a strange, adoring, seeking look in his face—to look and look, and ask and ask, for what no mortal woman could give him. Yet he believed she could, and so the gift was his. After a few moments he dropped her gently into a chair, shook himself, and began to laugh.

“Behold! The fortune-hunter defeated! Snatches the heiress from ancestral mansion and finds he has left all the bags of gold behind! What a triumph for your mother. So now, my Lucy, you will have to live in a garret with your impoverished pianist. Musicians always starve, you know!”

“I think it will be lovely to be poor,” said Lucy.

Amades did not realise that the way they lived seemed like poverty to her, and that she adored it, and its freedoms and learning to do things for herself, instead of the slavery of being waited upon hand and foot.

For a while they travelled about, visiting again for two blissful weeks the Rome where they had first met. Then they paid a visit to Amades’ great friend at Leipzig, the Italian violinist, Giovanni Cavatini. Lucy liked the dark, rather shy young man, who was by nature grave and quiet, but who expanded and glowed in the company of Amades, and laughed helplessly when Amades was in one of his fooling moods of high spirits. Lucy was at first amazed, and then enchanted at her husband’s capacity for laughter. Mamma never laughed—she had not that disposition, and considered it ill-bred—and was certainly not the cause of laughter in other people. Lucy’s father had never found much in life to laugh at after he married Lavinia. Lucy had loved his society more than that of any other in her young world, but he never teased and played with her. So Amades’ capacity for finding fun in life was a new thing in her experience, and she responded to it as a flower to sunshine, revealing under her gentleness a natural gaiety that enchanted her husband.

“Angel! do not get any sweeter, or I shall expire of loving you!”

But though Amades found food for laughter even in things that other people would regard as vexations, on the subject of music he was entirely grave. It seemed to Lucy that at the very mention of the word, at the name of Beethoven or Bach, a new Govoni appeared. Her own musical education, though not despicable, owing to the little gleam from Haydn that her Great-Aunt cherished in her withered heart, had been limited, and restricted to a

certain late eighteenth century elegance—of the earlier Sebastian Bach she knew nothing, of the later Beethoven very little. But in her new life she soon discovered that these were the names of gods, and indeed, she was ready enough to worship the name and the works of Bach, for it was a certain Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue of his that she had first heard Amades play in Rome. She continually besought him that he would play it to her, and each time, as the delicate skein of notes swirled about the keyboard, she would be shaken with surprise and joy to think that between her first hearing and this one, the miracle had been achieved that Amades had loved her and married her.

BACH AND BEETHOVEN

The time that they were in Leipzig was spent entirely in the company of Giovanni Cavatini, who lived alone in a narrow little old house bequeathed him by his grandfather. All the talk was of music, of the authenticity of the artist's experience. Giovanni and Amades were both young, not yet fully come to their spiritual growth, and the creative powers which Amades was later to develop. Amades had a peculiarly strong and passionate understanding of the music of Beethoven, and a power of interpreting it which marked him out from all other pianists. Beethoven had been living when he was a boy, and he would often quote Beethoven's saying: "I must despise the world which has no conception of the truth that music is a higher revelation than all the wisdom of all the philosophers."

So of music they talked, and the talk was never completed, for one or other of them would cry, "Come, let us try that movement," and the lid of the pianoforte would be raised, and the fiddle picked up from its wrapping. Or sometimes Govoni, with his arm round his wife's waist, would declare himself too comfortable to move, and would demand that Giovanni should play the Chaconne. Lucy was amazed at that Chaconne—that one little fiddle could sound so orchestral, could say so much. "Oh, old Bach knew a thing or two!" her husband would remark.

It was an enchanting time, and the limitations of Hall Place seemed to have sunk below her horizon. The careless ease and gaiety and simplicity of it all, were so new to her. Love, and music, were teaching her many things.

But this life of idleness could not continue for ever. Govoni had his "Master Class" at Vienna Conservatory awaiting his return and attention in some not too remote future.

"If I do not work, my Lucy, you will have nothing to wear, perhaps nothing to eat!"

She laughed. He picked her up with his powerful arm, swinging her feet off the ground.

"You think that funny, my silly little angel? You have never been hungry—but I have. 'Tis part of the necessary education of a musician, I understand. But I should hate it very much that you should be hungry, so we will abandon this idle life, and set off for Vienna."

§ 13

LUCY lost her heart to Vienna. If no longer quite the Vienna of the *Biedermeirzeit* known to Beethoven and Schubert and Grillparzer, it was to her a city of a lovely gaiety—though, indeed, with such a spring of happiness in her own heart, no place could have seemed dull.

Govoni gave up his old apartment and took one, as he said, more fitted to "Mrs Withers." He always called her Mrs Withers when, as he said, she was getting above herself, and had to be reminded of the miserable existence from which he had rescued her.

Lucy found her Viennese home enchanting, with its big white china stoves in the *Wohnzimmer* and the sleep-chamber, and the largest room of all, which was to be the music room. To reach it one went up an outside staircase and along a little gallery that was hung with the twisted branches of an old wistaria. "It's just like a picture in a fairy book," she cried, dancing along the gallery where the wistaria made lovely leaf patterns upon the white-washed wall. Amades thought she looked like something out of a fairy tale herself, with the new sparkle and joyousness that had come into her face.

VIENNESE INTERIOR

Then there was the adventure of furnishing their home, for all the furniture Govoni possessed was a magnificent Streicher pianoforte, a far from magnificent narrow bedstead, a table, and a chair or two. Lucy had never before known the fun of buying things herself. She had been born into a most amply furnished world, where everything that could possibly be required by either necessity or luxury was already there. Her clothes had always been chosen and ordered by her mother—she was provided with all that was needed by a young lady of fashion, but as to colour and cut she was not consulted.

When it came to choosing cooking pans and dishes for the kitchen Lucy was completely at a loss, for since she was a small child she had never been inside a kitchen. But here the Italian woman, Benetta, who had chaperoned her elopement in so motherly a manner, and who had now taken charge of the domesticities of their establishment, came to her aid.

When it was a matter of choosing the more decorative details she was at no loss. A round table of cherry-wood, and cherry-wood chairs with slender curved backs and seats of bright Tyrolese embroidery. An elegant sofa, a hanging carved cupboard, full of gay china. A picture of flowers; some little "shadow-portraits" of famous Viennese characters of an earlier age, a bust of Beethoven, a solemn clock in a black alabaster case, with a golden cupid a-tiptoe on the top. These were some of the things with which Lucy adorned her home.

She bought with the eagerness of a child, and Amades, remembering the stately decorum of Hall Place, said to her, "One would think that you had never had anything before!"

She looked at him with surprise: "But I never had anything before!"

In the midst of her ecstatic buying she would suddenly be smitten with qualms, and would come running to her husband, "Can we afford it? Ought we not to do without it?"

It enchanted her to ask this. It enchanted Amades to afford her anything she desired. He was only slightly surprised at the simplicity of her wishes. "Your wealthy upbringing seems to have slipped off you, like water off the duck's back," he said.

Lucy thought if this was being poor, she could not imagine why anyone desired to be rich.

How much more amusing it was to go out to the morning market with a basket, and choose just the things that she and Amades liked to eat, than to have stately meals announced, with footmen standing behind her mother's chair.

She, of course, knew nothing about cooking, but Benetta was a magician, and could produce the most savoury dishes from what appeared to be nothing, so long as she had the macaroni and spaghetti which it much amused Lucy to watch her making. With an Italian husband and an Italian cook, she learned to like Italian fare, though there were many delicious Austrian dishes that Benetta also made with great success.

COSMOPOLITAN SCENE

And it was not only the cosmopolitan dishes, but the cosmopolitan life of Vienna that so enchanted her. To walk about the streets of Vienna was like walking on the stage of an opera house. The crowded Kohlmarkt, the Graben, with its gushing rococo fountain, its tall houses with their rusticated quoins, their ornate windows, their bulging iron balconies, the statues guarding some of the entrance doors, or looking down from the parapet upon the parading cosmopolitan crowd below. As Lucy threaded her way among the people, a small basket on her arm to give her housewifely importance, and Benetta, carrying a larger one, beside her, she saw not only the Viennese themselves, but Italians, and Turks, and Greeks, and Croatians, selling onions and cheeses, and Slovaks selling rush covers, and Salami sellers, and the simnel bakers, and the market-women, who were so ready with chaff, and with abuse equally ready, if called for. Sometimes Benetta had a noisy argument with these women, but on Lucy's childish face they always smiled, and gave her the reddest cherries and the cabbage with the best heart to it.

These were the early morning household shoppings, but in later leisured hours Amades took her walking in the Prater, where, under the shade of great spreading trees, she could watch both the rich and the poor enjoying themselves, and when they desired something more sylvan and secluded slip away down a glade where stags and fawns wandered happily. With an arm linked in hers Amades would warn her not to be startled should they meet Pan himself, with his goat-hooves and his pipes. But if the goat-god never quite materialised, Lucy saw plenty of folk-fairy tales, for Amades took her on several occasions to see the fairy-plays, which immediately enchanted her, at the Leopoldstadther-Theatre. The gaiety and simplicity of the adventures of Edouard and Armine, and Florian and Miranda in the *Diamant des Geisterskönigs*, were entirely to her taste, though she loved even more *Das Mädchen aus der Feenwelt*. Sometimes, as she sat in the theatre, enchanted with the scene upon the stage, her hand secretly clasped in that of her husband, it suddenly would seem to her that Withers St. Mary and all it stood for, was a dream, and that her real life had always been with Amades in Vienna.

To improve her German she read aloud to Amades from the *Arme Spielmann* of Grillparzer, and the Austrian idylls of Adalbert Stifter. She was so enamoured of "Stiftermenschen" that Amades declared himself jealous, and warned her that she was now Italian, and not Austrian, as she was doing her best to pretend.

"And really I am English!" Lucy cried. "How queer that sounds—I do not feel a bit like it!"

"What you really are is a little chameleon!" Amades said. "Had you married an Esquimaux you would have been convinced that sealskin was the only wear, and blubber the only tolerable eating!"

But Vienna had partly won her love because it was the scene of her first home with Amades. And its native *Gemütlichkeit* and gaiety completed the spell.

There was always some festival taking place, it seemed to Lucy, and on the faintest excuse the population, which seemed to live in the streets, streamed out and danced in circles on the grass by the light of the moon, and let off fireworks, and sang, and played all kinds of instruments. Music hung in the air of Vienna—light music and great music. There seemed no hour when it was entirely silenced.

§ 14

A LISTENER

ALWAYS, of course, there was Govoni's music. That was the very centre of his life, and therefore it became the very centre of Lucy's life too. As she went about the household tasks which she found so curiously amusing, rubbing the furniture till it shone, washing the gay china, from the music room would come the voice of the pianoforte speaking its soul under the powerful, sensitive hands of Govoni. Lucy would quietly hurry with her work, and then, like a mouse, creep into the room to listen.

The first time she did this, Amades, with an expression she had never seen on his face before, stopped playing and said abruptly, "What do you want?"

"To listen to you playing," Lucy answered, surprised and suddenly brought to a pause by his tone.

"Look here," Amades began, and then seeing her face, he held out his arm, and changed it to, "Come here. Do you really think you will like listening to me when I'm working? I'm not used to having anyone with me then."

"I would love it—but not, of course, if it is going to trouble you. Shall I go away?"

She looked so forlorn that Amades made a real sacrifice to his love.

"No, stay. But do not speak to me. I would like it, if you will just sit and sew something, then I can feel that you have your occupation, as I have mine."

After that Lucy always kept a bit of embroidery or other needlework, in the music room, and soon Amades came to feel her silent, listening presence necessary to his content. She found it no strain to keep silence, and in that, as in other ways, was the right mate for Govoni, who himself, when in the mood, was a full and flowing talker, and therefore, as he said with a smile, well suited by "a silent wife."

In thus listening for hours to her husband, Lucy's real musical education began, and she developed a sure and responsive taste for the finest things. When, to his delight, he discovered this—for it was a further perfection he felt he had hardly a right to expect from one born English—Amades would sometimes amuse himself by playing, with a great show of impressiveness, some second-rate thing by a second-rate composer.

"What do you think of that, now?" he would ask, his eyes gleaming enigmatically.

Lucy would look at him gravely: "I do not like it—it pretends."

He would jump up with a laugh and give her one of his bear-like hugs. "You are infallible, you little witch! You would make me tremble, were I a composer."

"But you would never pretend, Amades, you might be bad, but you would be yourself."

"Well, I have always thought there must be something in me, since you married me!"

Lucy looked at him with an adoring expression. The way he could laugh and make love in the same breath—catch her into heaven with a side-long glance of his eyes, even as he teased her, was a thing new and exciting each day. She was convinced that such a lover had never walked the earth before, and she felt as though her very existence depended on his loving her, as though, should he cease to love her, she would cease to be. She could envisage no future without him.

BEETHOVEN'S GRAVE

While he was yet free of his work at the Vienna Conservatory, while he was yet untroubled by the activities of the *Gesellschaft der Musik-Freunde*,

Amades showed her some of the musical shrines of the city, told her some of its musical history. He showed her the funeral card which was among his musical treasures, the invitation to Beethoven's *Leichenbegängnis*, which spoke of the "irretrievable loss to the world of music of the celebrated Tone-Master," and was signed "L. van Beethoven's Worshippers and Friends." He told her how an old musician he knew had accompanied that coffin, on its procession from the Schwarzspanierhaus to the grave, accompanied by the torch-bearers, one of whom was Schubert, himself to die the following year: how he had heard Grillparzer's funeral oration recited, which said, "Who is there to come near him? His genius irradiates to this day every dwelling and every street in the town, and the houses, hills and vales of the Wienwald."

Amades took her to Beethoven's grave, and they stood in the cemetery at Wühring hand in hand, looking at that simple pyramid bearing a lyre on its face, and the one eloquent word "Beethoven"—"Nothing else is needed, nothing could add to the majesty of that name," as Amades said.

They looked at Schubert's grave close by, bearing on its stone the words of Franz Grillparzer: "Here the Art of Music has buried a rich possession, but still greater hopes."

Lucy's eyes had tears in them as she turned to Amades, "But you are alive!"

He looked at her with an uprush of affection for her innocent simplicity: "My Angel, you are absurd, though very sweet. My name does not exist in the presence of these great ones. There is but one name to be spoken with Beethoven's."

"That composer of your friend the violinist?—Bach?"

"That composer of the world, as Giovanni believes, and I with him, Johann Sebastian Bach."

"Is he, too, buried here?" Lucy asked.

"No, not here, in Leipzig where he died—but they have forgotten where they buried him."

Lucy considered this was very shocking, though she had at this time heard but little of his music.

"Is it not strange to think those composers are dead, when you play their music every day, Amades?"

"That is what I am here for. No musician is dead whose music is played to living ears."

In his mind was the thought that one day he would write some music that should be remembered. But not yet—he had much to learn, to experience, before then. Besides, it was necessary that he make money. He would not have Lucy, and the child that a miraculous fortune was promising them, go short of any comfort. His hands could provide—he looked at them with a certain detached interest and pride—all that was needed for the welfare of his wife and family.

§ 15

LUCY's first child was a boy, a dark and rather delicate baby, who, while he resembled his father in features—when features began to emerge from the plastic mask of infancy—was not endowed with his father's vigour of constitution. The blind blue infant gaze turned not to the curious ice-blue of Amades' eyes, but to brown eyes, and there was little of the laughter that shot like lightning from his father's orbs. He was a grave baby, and a grave child.

A GODFATHER

Amades' first thought was that his beloved friend Giovanni Cavatini must be godfather to his son. Giovanni accepted this responsibility with slightly nervous gratitude, and the request that the child should be christened Sebastian, being the name that he held in most honour in this world, so Sebastian Giovanni were the names that the Govonis bestowed upon their first-born. To Cavatini, Amades meant the closest friendship he possessed, and as his heart was given to so inconceivably remote a love, he knew that he would never have a child of his own—after that unfolded vision no living woman could appeal to him as a wife. So he felt that a child of Amades' was the best substitute existence could offer him.

It was impossible for him to come to the christening, so his place had to be taken by proxy. When he was able to visit the Govoni family, and look upon the face of the little Sebastian, the baby had passed from the less attractive stages of early infancy, and had a grave charm, and Lucy was blooming and gay. She quickly grew attached to the friend of her husband, and wished him such happiness—though it was not, of course, possible that it should be of the same perfection—as that with which they were blessed.

"Why," she asked Amades, "does not your Giovanni betroth himself and marry?"

“Probably, my Sugar Lamb,” said Govoni, looking down at her eager face, “because you are no longer free!”

She smiled and put this aside: “But you can see he is lonely. There he is living by himself in Leipzig with an old housekeeper—how can he be happy?”

“He has his music, his beautiful Stradivarius, the works of Bach, whom he so worships—to some men that is enough. He becomes a great violinist—maybe he will become a better fiddler than I shall be a pianist. I sometimes doubt that happiness is good for musicians.”

Lucy looked at him, tears rose in her gentle eyes: “You mean because of me and darling little Bambino?”—the name his father had given the infant—“You mean if we were not here——?”

He snatched her to him: “My heart’s Angel, my Cabbage, I mean nothing of the kind. Were you not here I would throw myself from the spire of St. Stefan—you are the centre of all my music.”

He was so passionately in earnest that Lucy’s heart was comforted.

“Has, then, Giovanni, loved someone in vain?” she questioned.

“Never saw him look at anything in petticoats—except you! I’ve seen many women look at him, but he simply does not see them.”

Deep as was the friendship between the two musicians, Amades knew nothing of that secret core to Giovanni’s life—he had told it to no living person save that Dominican, Father Sebastian Narni, knowing, and comforted by the knowledge, that with him it was as safe as if given under seal of the confessional. The Dominican’s words were never far from his mind: “The thought is always greater than the thing. As this is a thought, a spiritual apprehension, your flower unopened that blossoms in a dream, you have it in a strange perfection which no earthly love can know.”

But Lucy and Amades had no cognisance of this thing.

BUDDING FIDDLER

The baby’s natural gravity seemed to feel the natural gravity of Giovanni Cavatini, and from infancy onwards the tie between them grew and strengthened as the child grew. When he reached the earliest suitable age Cavatini gave him a violin of a size fitted to his undeveloped hands, and his first lessons.

“Poor little beggar!” Amades remarked, watching these proceedings. “When I made you his godfather I doomed him to be a fiddler! And he

might have been a pianist!”

“He has a true fiddler’s hand,” said Cavatini proudly, looking at the fingers, which even at this stage of growth were long and supple, “not your square paws, Amades, I’m thankful to see. Even you would hardly claim that your Hammerclavier was a more perfect instrument than the violin?”

He paused, smiling at his friend.

“Not more perfect,” said Amades, “but more complete. Your fiddle alone is forlorn, she needs support, encouragement of other instruments—” he paused, for Cavatini was humming the opening bars of the Chaconne under his breath, with a teasing expression on his face—“Oh, well, Bach, of course! But you know in general it is true what I say. In no ordinary manner can you get this orchestral effect with a fiddle.”

And he sat down at his instrument and brought forth the tremendous opening chords of the Hammerclavier Sonata.

“Go on, go on!” urged Giovanni, when he showed signs of breaking off, “I will grant you anything—only play.”

So Amades gave himself up to Beethoven, and held his listeners’ hearts with the deep mysterious melancholy of the slow movement of that sonata.

Lucy had crept silently into the room with the baby in her arms—for by this time the small Sebastian had a brother—and the older boy lay full length on the rug, his face propped in his hands, and listened. There was no doubt he was born music’s child.

Once the two friends really got going they would play for hours, if leisure served, separately, and together, in sonatas and partitas of Beethoven and Bach. On one occasion Amades played the whole of the Emperor Concerto, while Giovanni shadowed forth from the score a brilliant suggestion of the orchestra that was not there. They were both so excited at the close that they fell on each other’s necks, crying, “Bravo, bravissimo!” to each other. It was like the early days in Leipzig when they had first met and played together, and argued, and quarrelled, and rejoiced, over the achievements of their two gods, Bach and Beethoven.

Giovanni’s visits to the Govoni household in Vienna were as frequent as circumstances allowed, but his and Amades’ musical ways did not often converge in those days. Govoni had his “Master Class” at the Conservatory—more and more besieged by eager pupils. But the technical standard was so exacting—and it was not brilliance alone that he required, but some quality of soul as well—that many were tried, and few chosen. Also, at

times, he departed on concert tours in different parts of Europe. He protested that these tours were a burden to him—for one thing, it usually meant leaving Lucy behind, which they both found ill to endure, but as they now had three children, Sebastian, a second boy who had been named Julian after his grandfather, and a lovely little girl who was christened Gillian, Amades said that sheer pressure of necessity drove him forth on those concert tours, in order to obtain money for their shoes and schooling.

SCHUMANN'S WORDS

But it was something more vital than money, of which his teaching alone brought him a tolerable sufficiency, which made him give recitals in the different capitals. It was the urge to express what was within him, to show what great music could say at his hands. He was at the full maturity of his powers, and there were few to challenge the position he held as a pianist.

Schumann had said to him on one occasion, "Before I injured my hand I had thought to be a great pianist, but I would never have been as great as you, Amades Govoni."

"But to be an executant is as nothing to being a composer," Amades had said.

"The composers would be very badly off if there were no performers to play their music," Schumann had answered him. "The majority of people, as you must know, cannot hear music with their eyes."

§ 16

JULIAN, the second son of Lucy and Amades, was quite unlike his elder brother. He was a chubby child, vigorous and strong, a good eater, a good sleeper, contented with life from his very first experience of it. "The finest child in Vienna!" said Amades, who was immensely proud of him and his imperturbable good temper.

After he was born, Lucy said unexpectedly to her husband leaning over the cradle, "Mamma would have given anything to have a son—and now I have two!"

It was the first time she had mentioned her mother for a long time.

When the first child was born she had written to tell Mrs Withers, thinking that such news might soften that silence. But no answer, or

response of any kind, had come back from Wiltshire. The announcement of the births of the two following children had fallen into the same void.

"Even if we achieve twenty children, my loved one," Amades had said, "it will not cause your mother to ameliorate her attitude."

He was angry, not for himself, but for his Lucy.

Twenty children! Lucy laughed at the fantastic vision—but there would be room for them all at Hall Place, in those large and many rooms, in that spreading park, and the quiet Downs behind. She suddenly began to cry, and flung herself into her husband's arms, and he kissed and consoled her, and felt still more angry with his mother-in-law.

But Lucy's happy nature soon forgot that sudden vision of Withers St. Mary in the occupation of bringing up her three children, feeding, clothing, teaching and playing with them. In her bed-chamber at Hall Place had hung a coloured stipple engraving by Adam Buck which bore the title, "Mamma at Romps," and depicted a charming young female in the flowing classic draperies of the first years of the nineteenth century, her dark tresses bound up in a Grecian snood, playing with a delightful little daughter with pink cheeks and a mop of yellow curls, who joyfully swung outwards from her mother's hands. Lucy had loved the picture when she was little, though its title puzzled her—mammas were not at all like that in her experience. But as she now romped with her own small daughter, the picture suddenly came back to her. Amades would have made her romp with the children, had the impulse not already been in her heart—he was enchanted with them all, and abandoned himself with his whole heart to games with them, letting them climb all over him, clutch at his hair, ride on his back. In these games Gobbo, the nondescript black and white dog which had adopted him on a long-past walking tour in Thuringia, joined with ardour, till sometimes it was difficult to tell which was dog, which child, and which the eminent pianist, Amades Govoni.

"EXTRAORDINARY CHILDREN"

In the midst of all the uproar he would suddenly sit up, push back his tumbled mane of hair, and say seriously to Lucy, "Do you really feel that we are the parents of these extraordinary children?"

The extraordinary children grew and flourished. Sebastian became stronger after he had passed his seventh year, and began to display a real talent and passion for the violin. "His career is plainly cut out for him," as Amades said.

Julian, though named after Lucy's father, was not in the least like him, but was, had she but known it, the surprising image of her father's elder brother Gilbert, who, save for the slip of a horse, would have married her mother. Him, of course, she had never seen, but had the portrait of the two brothers as children painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence, which hung at Hall Place, made any impression upon her youthful memory, she would have recalled the startling resemblance to the sturdy, red-cheeked boy of that picture—the heir to Withers St. Mary, whom Lawrence's brush had brought into suitable prominence in the canvas. But she had grown up with the picture and it had made no special impression on her, especially as it hung in a part of the house she did not like, the cold marble hall.

Julian, though intelligent, displayed no marked musical ability. He had a sweet, childish voice, and liked to sing, but was quickly bored by any serious musical teaching. He adored Gobbo—indeed anything in the shape of a dog, or other animal, and as soon as his fat legs could carry him any distance, was always trying to run off to the Prater to see the deer. He always wanted to be out of doors.

The little daughter Gillian, the baby of the family, was her mother over again.

"Now I know how delicious you were as a little girl!" said Amades, looking from his wife to his daughter, "and so have you twice over, in your youth, and in the old age which is so rapidly overtaking you!" He kissed her blooming cheek, and pulled out the coil of a brown ringlet on his finger.

§ 17

A young Italian painter, Francesco Bernardi, was at that time in Vienna, and one day Amades announced that he had engaged him to paint Lucy and her children. He was immensely excited about it, and insisted on choosing Lucy's dress, deciding that nothing she possessed was good enough, and that a new one must be made. He would be content with no one save the most celebrated mantua-maker in Vienna. "The cost is no matter," he declared to Lucy's protests. She it was who now was careful of money, and he who would spend it easily. His teaching fees were by this time very high, so that, as Lucy knew, he might have a liberal margin above his necessities for her and the children, and to teach, unpaid, certain pupils where musical gifts were their only capital.

He was determined that Lucy's dress should be beautiful. What in any case, he asked her, was the price of a dress, compared with what he would pay the painter for the picture? He wished, also, that the dress should be pink. That was the colour of the dress she wore when he first beheld her, and the colour in which he continued to admire her more than in any other. While the dress, its material and make, was still under discussion, he rushed in impetuously one day with a bunch of roses which he threw into Lucy's lap.

PORTRAIT FROCK

"There is your gown, my Angel!" he cried. "Pink, a flush of gold, and the brown of the stems repeated in your hair and eyes."

And with a wide-spreading skirt, stiffened at the hem with whalebone and horsehair, of golden satin veiled in crepe of the softest pink, with sleeves *à la jardinière*, with a tucker of blonde from which her delicious shoulders emerged coyly, with a little satin belt clasped with pink topazes, Lucy looked as near a rose as was no matter.

"Why, you look as lovely as on that first day in Rome, in spite of all the cares of matrimony, and these three bouncing children!" Amades cried, when she presented herself thus attired for his inspection and approval. "Nay, more beautiful—your face happier, the Saints be thanked!"

"Who would not be happy with you, Amades? And you have made me laugh so much that my old girdles will not meet by two inches!"

The painter, Bernardi, was pleased when he was presented to his prospective sitters.

They were to be painted in Govoni's music room, with a window open behind them to show the slender fretted Gothic spire of St. Stefan's—and thus seal the picture as painted in "our dear Vienna." Lucy, in her heart-of-a-rose dress, the two boys in their short blue coats and long white pantaloons, and little Gillian in white, with a pink sash.

The children were so enthralled with the painter, with his broad palette and sheaf of brushes, his fascinating tubes of juicy colour, that they posed as happily as lambs in a meadow, and day after day clamoured to renew the experience. And Amades often came and played—"To keep my Lucy's expression soft," he said smiling. "I would not see upon her face, for ever perpetuated in paint, the hard, hard stare of boredom."

When the portrait group was completed, and, after the necessary interval, delicately varnished, handsomely framed, and hung upon the wall of his

music room, Amades surveyed it with pride and satisfaction. "There you behold the family Govoni," he cried, with a dramatic hand outstretched, "settled in much contentment and handsome looks."

§ 18

LUCY and Amades had completely come to think of Vienna as their home and abiding place. All their married life together had been lived there, with but brief holidays and musical journeys to other places. In the first year or two Amades had thought longingly now and again of his native and deeply loved Rome. But Rome did not offer him the same richness of musical opportunity as Vienna—and his master Beethoven had not lived and died in Rome. In Vienna he could literally walk in those footsteps.

UNWISHED INHERITANCE

Then, soon after the Bernardi picture was completed, advices came out from England to Lucy that her mother was deceased.

"What does this mean?" Amades asked her, with an anxious line across his brow. The idea of Lucy as an heiress had completely faded from his mind, and he knew little, or nothing, of English laws of entail. He hoped passionately that as she had run away and married an Italian, there would be some suitable male next-of-kin to take over the burden of that great estate.

But before very long they learned that Hall Place, with its park, farms, woods, and nearly the whole of the village of Withers St. Mary, had descended to Lucy as the only child of Julian Withers, deceased. Mrs Withers had but a life-interest in the estate, according to her marriage settlements, should she not bear a son. Her own private fortune, and certain lands that had come to her on the death of her father, all of her jewels that were her personal property, she had willed away from Lucy. She had died, as she had lived, unforgiving—a character all of a piece, with no weak places, no crack in its hard veneer. But she had no power to dispose of the Withers estate, so it came, complete, to Lucy.

When the magnitude of the disaster was revealed to the Govonis, they were overwhelmed. Lucy threw herself into her husband's arms and wept.

"Cannot we sell it? Cannot we give it away?" Amades enquired hopefully. "Or, better still, let us turn it into a Home for Incompetent Musicians—it's big enough to take most of them!"

But they found they could do none of these things.

"It has taken us prisoner!" Lucy whispered.

"And not only us," Amades said, looking gloomily at his eldest son. "He is now the heir, poor little Sebastian. He will have to go to England, and be brought up to face his future."

That was very much the view of the family solicitors, Messrs Attlee and Beresford. This foreign marriage of Miss Withers was a deplorable affair—the only satisfactory thing about it was that there was a son, two sons, in fact, who were young enough, with proper training, with such background as Sherborne and Oxford—the traditional school and university of the Withers—would give them, to wipe out their rather deplorable origins. In an atmosphere of thick Turkey carpet, solid mahogany furniture, brown wire blinds, and shiny black deed-boxes, places like Vienna and Rome did not sound respectable. Messrs. Attlee and Beresford could not help regretting that Lucy was not a widow. It would have simplified matters considerably, as the necessary male issue was provided. However, being a conscientious firm, who for many generations had dealt with the legal affairs of the Withers family, they determined to make the best they could of a difficult situation.

Lucy's presence in England was essential, and that of her sons. Fears of separation stared her in the face. How could she go without Amades? How could Amades leave his work in Vienna? How bitterly she longed to cast away her inherited wealth and inherited position—how happy she had been without them. She had a horrid vision of her sons in England—there was no doubt Messrs Attlee and Beresford meant to get hold of the boys—and her husband in Austria, herself homeless and unhappy between them.

RUNNING AWAY

Then in one magnificent gesture Amades solved difficulties and soothed her griefs. His poor little Lucy was in no state to be troubled in this manner—in six months there would be a fourth child in the Govoni family.

"My Angel," he told her, "there shall be no separation. This morning I told the Conservatory that at the end of this season I shall teach there no more for the present. We shall all of us go together to your ancestral home, and dwell there in much content. You shall have the pleasure to behold your husband transformed into an English country gentleman! It is evident that Nature intended me for the part, for, behold, though an Italian by birth, I yet am fair!"

He grinned at her, and rumpled his hand through his ashen-yellow mop.

“Oh, Amades, Amades!” Lucy cried, tears and laughter on her face, “I would again run away with you, if it were necessary!”

“We will again be running away together—and this time to England, which is much braver!”

Book Three

Conversation Piece

§ 1

WHEN the owners of estates within driving distance of Hall Place realised that Lucy and her foreign husband and children, were coming back to live there, consternation and curiosity were equally met in their minds. Govoni was usually referred to as the "Italian fiddler," or the "Italian organ-grinder"—the fact that he was a musician having been definitely established at the time of the elopement, these seemed the most suitable musical instruments to which he might be attached.

"What can a fellow like that do down here? I don't suppose he's ever been on a horse in his life!" said Vice-Admiral Melton, himself a remarkably bad rider, "Or would know a fox from a hound!"

"But perhaps," his wife broke in hopefully, "he might give Amelia some cheap singing lessons—it would save escorting her to Town."

Mrs Melton loathed exertion in any form, her tongue being the only member she really exercised, but as her daughter Amelia was not well dowered in the matter of good looks, maternal stress was being laid on her possession of quite a pleasant voice.

As nobody in Wiltshire had ever seen Amades Govoni—save Barnett, the late Mrs Withers' woman—there was great speculation as to what he would look like. Being the hero of a romantic elopement the young ladies were inclined to imagine him handsome, but amongst their parents it was generally agreed that he would be short, probably fat, with greasy black curls.

The matrons who were more or less Lucy's contemporaries shuddered agreeably, "How *could* Lucy Withers?" they asked each other, and their own strictly correct English husbands acquired, temporarily, a fictitious value that brightened up the dullness of use and wont.

It was considered certain among them that Govoni would, in a very short time, "run through" the Withers estate. He was sure to drink and gamble, and probably had a large illegitimate family hidden away somewhere. There was no doubt that Lucy's ancestral roof would be sold over her head. The matrons' husbands pointed out that as the Withers estate was strictly entailed

it would hardly be possible for Govoni, however immoral his character, thus to dissipate it away. But it made no difference to the fair Cassandras. Lucy Withers had become a romantic heroine by running away all those years ago—nothing so dull as security and content could be permitted her. It was manifestly unfair that Lucy should enjoy the thrills of elopement and a foreign lover, combined with anything approaching domestic bliss. It was not only unfair, but such a bad example to the daughters who were so carefully taught that virtue and obedience were rewarded with a respectable establishment, while romantic folly ended invariably in disaster.

§ 2

FAMILY SOLICITOR

MR ATTLEE himself had met Mr and Mrs Govoni at Salisbury on their arrival by post-chaise. His mind had prepared itself for a shock in making acquaintance for the first time with the Italian husband of his late client's daughter—something, possibly, romantic to the female mind, but quite definitely undesirable, was what he expected. Fortune-hunting foreigner—the alliteration gave an emphasis that pleased him—were the words he would have used. He was prepared, in his dry cautious way, for a shock, and he received it. But not the kind of shock he was looking for.

"Upon my soul," he said afterwards to Mr Beresford. "He might have been taken for an Englishman! And spoke English as if he were one." This had been a distinct relief, for Mr Attlee's French was stiff and musty—"In my young days," he would say, "we did not trouble to speak their language, Nelson could do something better than that!"—and his Italian non-existent.

Mr Attlee would never have admitted to such a weakness as curiosity, but the truth was that his eyes paid but a hurried tribute to Lucy, plump and pretty—his mind registered how well and how happy she looked—to a thin, dark boy, a shorter, remarkably English-looking second boy, and a charming little girl, who clustered round her. His real attention, in the midst of his stiffly courteous greetings, was concentrated upon the figure of Lucy's husband. Tall, with noticeably good shoulders, and definitely fair. Mr Attlee had always thought all Italians were dark, but though Govoni's skin was an out-door brown, his hair was light, and his eyes such a curious pale colour—impossible to say whether grey or cold blue—that they quite surprised Mr Attlee. Strange eyes—they looked at you, and did not look, they had an appearance of being half-shut, and yet seemed to see everything. They did not always laugh when the mouth laughed, though they could abandon

themselves to uproarious amusement. Mr Attlee did not realise all this on his first meeting with Govoni, it slowly grew upon him as time went on. He summed it up to his partner in the words “You never can tell what he’s thinking.”

Which was probably quite true, as Mr Attlee was not the kind of person to whom Amades confided his inner thoughts.

Mr Beresford was unfortunately unable to be present when the Govoni family arrived at Salisbury, owing to an attack of gout which made him far too irascible for any company save his own. But Mr Attlee did the honours, and while the horses were changed for the final journey to Withers St. Mary, he offered his best sherry and ratafia biscuits, with frumenty and seed cake for the children.

“I thought perhaps sherry was hardly suited to the palates of the young,” he said, with an unaccustomed smile, that made his face look like a portrait on which the varnish was cracking. Lucy declared that she too would prefer frumenty to sherry, delighted to taste once more that luxury of her nursery days.

So Mr Attlee drank a glass of sherry with Mr Govoni alone, and they parted with complete good will when the horses were ready.

In the course of time Mr Attlee and Amades had many conferences together over the affairs of Lucy’s estate, and grew to have a genuine respect for each other, though Mr Attlee never quite recovered from his surprise at discovering that a musician could have so much practical ability, and, as he called it, “solid sense.”

“I do not suppose it was for that Mrs Govoni married him,” he said to Mr Beresford. “But I am coming to the conclusion she might have made a worse choice, and if our late respected client could only have seen her way to ameliorating her attitude in the matter, and have agreed to meet her son-in-law, I venture to predict that she might have come to share my opinion.”

He took a pinch of snuff thoughtfully, and flicked the fallen grains away from the broad brown lapels of his coat with a heavy Indian silk handkerchief.

§ 3

WHEN LUCY and Amades, with their three children, first stood together within the marble portals of Hall Place, they took hands and looked at each other, regardless of the housekeeper, the butler, and Barnett, waiting to receive them, and the hovering of a couple of footmen in the background. Their only recognition of alien presences was that they spoke Italian.

LUCY'S RETURN

"Darling," said Lucy, glancing round at the familiar scene, that yet appeared so remote and strange, "I do hope you will not hate being here?"

"I think that with you, and with these"—Amades glanced at the children—"we shall make this place into something it has never been before."

He then gallantly advanced and shook hands with the housekeeper and Barnett and the butler—he even would have shaken hands with the footmen, only they hurriedly, with startled faces, removed themselves. They had a healthy respect for Mr Jevons, the butler.

"I have had a fire lit in your bedroom, Madam," said the housekeeper, "and in the small dining parlour, and the blue drawing-room."

The late afternoon was beginning to have a touch of chill.

"Light a fire, a big log fire, in the library," commanded Lucy, who felt no desire for the cold formal spaces of the blue drawing-room, and to whom the library had always been the heart of the home when her father was alive.

Barnett stepped forward: "Shall I take your keys, Miss Lucy?"

Suddenly Lucy knew that she had ceased to fear Barnett—the dragon had become harmless.

She clasped her husband's arm with one hand, and with the other took Gillian's.

"Come, darlings, we must find where you are all going to live and sleep. Oh, Amades, is it not queer to think you have never been up this staircase before, and now it is all ours, and we are going to live here, and there is nothing to be afraid of any more?"

She had nearly said, "No Mamma to be afraid of," but had checked on the thought. Poor Mamma—it seemed such a pity she had hated them all so much.

So Amades Govoni mounted the wide staircase of Hall Place for the first time with his wife and children. He professed himself humorously overcome at the spacious upstairs corridors, the carved Adam doorways of the

principal bed-chambers, the numerous servants who glided about carrying cans of hot water, and fuelling the fires.

"I shall have to tie a thread to you and keep one end in my hand," he said to Lucy, "otherwise, if I once lose sight of you in this labyrinth of rooms I am undone!"

The children, having been shown the rooms allotted to them—"If you do not like them, they shall be changed to-morrow," Lucy had told them—were exploring the whole house, upstairs and down, with excited interest.

"PERFECT ENGLISH GENTLEMAN!"

Amades stood by the fire in his wife's bedroom, watching her combing out her ringlets. Barnett, hovering in would-be attendance, had been sent away till a later hour.

"Darling," said Lucy, sidling up to him, "do you think it is going to be very difficult? I'm sure we have shocked all the servants already, and I shall feel so stupid, not doing things for myself after all these years!"

"Those miserable years of being a poor musician's wife!" said Amades, looking at her tenderly.

"Such happy years—I am afraid of all this, for fear it spoils it, for fear you do not like it."

"I feel in my bones that I am going to make a perfect English gentleman!" said Amades gaily. "Once I get used to those footmen!—but I resent them being dressed so much more magnificently than I am myself. Why should they wear white silk stockings and buckled shoes and plush breeches, while I wear nankeen trousers?"

"Well, if you don't like them, you can tell them to go," Lucy answered smiling.

"Can I? That equalises the position a bit—makes me feel I can stand up to them better."

They both sat in one chair, and looked at the fire.

"It is rather nice to see an English fire again," Lucy murmured in a small contented voice.

"A sort of English speciality. Better than a charcoal brazier, or a German stove."

"Of course it is home to me—I cannot help feeling that, though I have never been so happy as in those Vienna years. But you, Amades, you? What

will you feel?—Can it be your home?”

“Angel—I have never had a home, except what you have made for me. Vienna was not my home, nor Austria my country. Even in my Roman birthplace I have lived so little. I am, like many musicians, I suppose, cosmopolitan. But I think there is peace in this Wiltshire of yours, and I think I am tired of wandering. Anyway, if I want to travel, there is space enough in your mansion to satisfy my exploring instincts for a long time!”

Lucy protested at his calling it her mansion, she had never built it, and would much rather live in Aunt Caroline’s Dower House, and in any case, what was hers was also his.

“You have never met Great-Aunt Caroline, Amades. She is still alive, I asked Mr Attlee; but she must be rather old.”

At this point their fireside conversation was interrupted by the firm entrance of Barnett, who informed Mrs Govoni that dinner would be served in half an hour, and stood waiting.

Lucy jumped up with a childish look of guilt.

“We will have to dress, Amades—I had forgotten.”

Such formality had only happened in Vienna on particular occasions.

“Your things are unpacked in your dressing-room, sir,” Barnett said primly, “and Thomas is waiting you.”

Amades gave his wife a glance of humorous despair, and vanished.

§ 4

NEW GOWNS

“I SHALL be obliged to purchase some new gowns, darling Amades,” Lucy said rather soberly, when after dinner they were once more alone in the library, whose sombre comforts of panelling and shelved walls loaded to the ceiling with volumes in calf and morocco and yellowed vellum, were looking very friendly in the leaping flames of the log fire burning on the wide stone hearth.

“Well, my beloved,” Amades answered, strolling round the room with his hands in his pockets and looking at things with an interested eye, “I imagine we can afford it, though I am sure it will take you some time to realise that fact.” He grinned at her, and then suddenly became grave. “My

Angel, I am just beginning to understand how much you gave up when you ran away so valiantly with me ten years ago."

Lucy jumped up from her seat by the fire and went to him. "Amades, Amades, you are not to say that, you are not to think that!" She beat upon his breast like a furious little wren. "I gave up nothing but being unhappy when I eloped with you. I hated this place after Papa died, and I shall hate it now unless you will love it. But if you cannot love it, then we will go away. I do not care what Mr Attlee says—I did not marry Mr Attlee!" she concluded with a little quiver in her voice.

"Most fortunately for me you did not—in any case he is a little old for this rosebud of a person."

Lucy was wearing her pink portrait frock.

"Was not this gown grand enough for Barnett?" he went on, desiring to distract Lucy's thoughts, as she looked a little tearfully inclined.

Lucy stroked her dress with appreciative fingers.

"Oh, I think Barnett was satisfied with this one. I thought it was rather grand for just when we are alone, but Barnett sniffed so over my others. That is why I said I think I will want some new dresses. My green spencer is no longer in the mode, and the fur lappets are shabby. And the feather in my leghorn bonnet is a little wilted."

"And now," said Amades smiling at her, "you are no longer the Beggar Maid—a part that I confess suits you—but Mrs Withers of Hall Place!"

"I am not Mrs Withers—I am Mrs Amades Govoni!"

"I am sure all the people about here will think of you as young Mrs Withers. Who ever heard of a landed Wiltshire lady with an Italian name?"

"And who," said Lucy, capping him valiantly, "ever heard of the name of Withers outside Wiltshire? Whereas all Europe has heard of Amades Govoni!"

His eyes gleamed mischievously at her: "I think perhaps Wiltshire will hear of him too!"

Amades was beginning to feel rather exhilarated by this adventure. Many aspects of life had he experienced, and many things in life interested him beyond the one central passion of music. But one part in life he had never expected to play—that of an English country gentleman.

§ 5

JULIAN GOVONI, who in a bare two months' time would attain his eighth birthday, woke up on his first morning at Hall Place refreshed like a young giant from his night's oblivion of sleep. He lay a moment, remembering all the exciting things that the new day promised. He jumped from his bed, and rushed to the window, and gazed in round-eyed astonishment at the park, faintly mist-veiled in its hollows, at the vista of tall windows on either hand of the window at which he stood, at the terrace below, with its carven balustrades and marble, flower-filled urns, on which he looked down.

FIRST MORNING

He saw a man scything the grass in the middle distance; he saw a man with a gun under his elbow and a dog at heel, disappearing into the nearest outlying wing of wood. He must get out and talk to those people. He scrambled into his clothes, hesitating whether to waken Sebastian, who was lying in an adjacent bed fast asleep. No, he could not wait for Sebastian.

He ran down the two wide flights of stairs, past a couple of mob-capped chamber-maids, who looked much surprised to see him, and out of the first door he came to. The more interesting man with the dog and gun had disappeared from view, but the man with the scythe was still swishing coolly through the grass with a long, measured swing of his arms. For a moment or two Julian watched him in silence, fascinated by the rhythmic sweep of the great crescent blade. The mower stopped to whet his scythe.

“ ’Morning,” he said, “And who may you be, young sir?”

“I’m Julian.”

“Eh? Be you the grandson o’ Mrs Withers that was, then?”

“My Mamma and Papa, and Sebastian and Gillian, have come to live here,” Julian answered, standing with his legs wide apart and his hands in his pockets.

“Eh, I remembers Miss Lucy well, but you be a lot more like the old Squire, than what you be like her.”

This did not interest Julian. “May I cut the grass?” he asked.

“No, that you mayn’t. Cut your two legs off, belike. You’d better be getting away, I’ve got my work to do.”

The old man bent again to his rhythmic swinging of the scythe.

At that moment a stable-lad leading a leash of dogs appeared, and in a brief passage of minutes Julian had struck up a fast friendship with him and was being led off to the stables to be introduced to the most important inhabitants of Hall Place. There his father found him an hour later, sitting on an old saddle, and breakfasting off bread and cold bacon with the stable-men.

They jumped up rather uneasily at sight of their new master. They had been discussing him earlier among themselves, with no particular friendliness. He was a "furriner," and they could not see what he'd do in "these parts." But there was no "furriner" about the little chap, that they'd stake their wages on.

So they stood furtively and awkwardly, as Govoni greeted his son and asked what he had been doing. Then he gave a cheerful collective greeting to the men, and said he was coming to look at the horses later on in the morning. A dog suddenly appeared, and at once made for Govoni, leaping round him and trying to lick his hands. He pulled her ears and called her "Old Girl." She immediately started to follow him as he walked away with Julian.

The stable-men stared after the trio. "And him a furriner!" said one of them. "Must say 'e don't look it," said another, who evidently had a very definite idea in his mind as to what foreigners would look like, though it was doubtful if he had ever seen one, as he had never been further than Salisbury in his life. "And see old dorg, she don't behave that way with strangers, not most times, she doan't."

HORSEMANSHIP

Govoni's later visit to the stables confirmed the first impression. The keen judges there assembled quickly saw that he knew the points of a horse as well as they did. And a shy sick mare, off her feed, was soon persuaded, with dainty questing nostrils testing its quality, to consume a particular mash he ordered for her. "She'll be better after that, you'll see," Govoni said, patting her satin neck, which arched friendlily against his shoulder.

"I thought he were a *musician*?" said the head groom afterwards, with a puzzled expression. He did not know that Govoni had lived for months with the Hungarian gipsies, and learned from them how to ride any horse bare-backed, and how to break and train it. More than the Hall Place grooms were astonished by his horsemanship when he first appeared in the hunting-field with the Tedworth. Admiral Melton, an ardent though imperfect horseman, had not much time to observe it, as he and Govoni were not long in sight of

each other. But that did not prevent his having a good deal to say on the subject after his first bottle of port—and his remarks were not so complimentary as might have been expected. It was shocking bad form, a foreigner making himself so conspicuous by the way he took his fences. The hunting-field was not a circus.

Happy as Govoni had always been with horses—as with dogs—to have a stable full at his disposal was a new, and very pleasant, experience. He rode every day, and soon had acquainted himself very thoroughly with that part of Wiltshire. The bare simplicity of the Downs, the wide stretches of Salisbury Plain, with the great Stone Circle and the barrows of the dead that stood there, a dumb mystery of unguessed time, made a deep impression upon his poetic mind. Something in him responded strangely to that country which by ties of blood and culture was by no means his. He rode, he walked, and when evening came with her studious lamp, he pulled ancient tomes on ancient Wiltshire out of his father-in-law's bookshelves, and sank himself so deep in them that sometimes even Lucy's entry would hardly pull him out of the past. A new side of his nature was awakening.

One day he came in from a long ride, his fair hair darkened by the dew of a mist that had come down when he was miles from home, his eyes bright with enjoyment of the exercise. Lucy ran to him almost before he had dismounted.

"Amades, your pianoforte has at last arrived. I told them to put it in the morning parlour."

Amades paused, pushing back his damp hair from his forehead. His pianoforte! He had not thought of it for several weeks—indeed, not since he came to Withers St. Mary. It was true that until the arrival of his Streicher there had been no pianoforte at Hall Place, only a harpsichord. But he had felt no need of it, no impulse to play.

He looked at Lucy with a slightly guilty smile. "I feel a little as though a discarded mistress had somewhat inconveniently turned up!" he said.

"Oh, Amades!" Lucy cried, genuinely shocked, not at the simile, but at the implication.

She led him into the morning parlour, where the long length of the pianoforte stood.

Govoni looked at it for a moment, then his expression changed, he flung back the lid, sat down, and began to play a sarabande from a Bach suite. Lucy stood by, hushed in the ordered peace of it, memories of past music

A RESEMBLANCE

flowing by her like water. Amades looked at her brooding face.

"Ah, there is the centre of all things," he said, his hands resting on the silent keys. "I must get back to it, I must get back to it. But the instrument is shaken out of tune with the journey, and my fingers are stiff."

"They did not sound so," said Lucy.

"I doubt, my love," Amades answered, kissing her cheek, "that your ear is as critical as mine!"

§ 6

EVEN so brief a truancy to music as Govoni's did not befall his elder son, Sebastian. He was quite unlike his brother Julian, thinner, darker, with an Italian look about him that Amades himself did not possess, bearing, indeed, a certain resemblance to his godfather, Giovanni Cavatini. Amades sometimes teased Lucy about this, saying that he was not of a suspicious nature, but that really the resemblance was strong enough to rouse his jealousy! Lucy would blush and lay a finger on his lips. "No, no, Amades, not even in fun must you say things like that!"

"I will not, my lily-white girl—till next time the likeness strikes me!"

He laughed, and kissed her hand in mock repentance.

Then one day, when they had not been living very long at Hall Place, and he had by no means finished his interested explorations of its many rooms and possessions, he came on a small oil painting tucked away in a dark passage—to which it had been relegated by Lavinia soon after her husband's death.

Govoni unhooked it from its chains, and took it down to look more closely at it. Surely it was a face he had seen before, known somewhere?

As he stood gazing at the portrait, which he had taken up to a window, Lucy came to him. She gave a little cry, "Papa's picture! I have not seen that for years—it used to hang in the blue parlour. When he died I wanted it in my own room, but Mamma seemed so annoyed when I asked her permission that I dared not pursue it."

"Your father?" said Amades slowly. "Was he ever in Rome?"

"But yes—many times. Before he married, and afterwards. He was going to take me there with him when I was twelve years old, only——" she paused.

"He died. But I have seen him, and spoken with him."

Lucy stared at him: "You, Amades! But that is not possible!"

"Not only possible, but true, my Angel. I played at a concert in Rome when I was a boy, and he was there. I remember how he stood by a pillar—he was tall, Lucy?"

"Yes, tall, and thin, and dark," she answered eagerly.

"I was attracted to his face, though he did not like the stuff I was playing to a bad audience. So I played some different music—to him. Also I spoke to him afterwards. I liked your father, my Lucy."

"And he would have liked you, loved you, I know."

She pressed his arm and leaned her cheek upon it.

Suddenly Amades began to laugh. He put down the portrait, and turned to his wife with a sweeping bow—the sort of bow he bestowed on applauding audiences.

"Madame," he said, his hand to his heart, "I withdraw all the aspersions on your character! I now perceive whence my elder son draws his distinguished lineaments, which so singularly fail to reflect my own plebeian countenance. It is from his grandfather—you are as innocent as Desdemona!"

HANDSOME APOLOGY

Lucy dropped him a mock curtsey: "I am happy to be restored to my lord's favour!" Then she seized his arm again and cried, "But of course it is Papa! Why did I never see it before? We have given him the wrong name—it is he who should be Julian!"

As she had never seen her Uncle Gilbert, she did not know how closely her two boys had repeated the physical characteristics of the Withers brothers of a generation earlier. It was in Gillian that the colouring of Amades appeared.

§ 7

If Sebastian resembled his grandfather in looks, he had added to them a musical passion which was no Withers inheritance. A certain physical

delicacy in his childhood had withdrawn him from any great participation in strenuous childish activities, and in quite early years his fiddle became the centre of his existence. He would rather play the fiddle, once he had overcome the early technical difficulties, which he did with a natural ease, than do any other thing, unless it was listening to his father. When his godfather paid visits to the Govoni household in Vienna, which he did at regular intervals, he desired nothing more of life than to hear the glorious music they made together, to have intensive lessons from Cavatini, to practise till Lucy, for his health's sake, came gently but firmly to take away his violin. When he was permitted to play second fiddle in a quartet in which Cavatini was the first violin, he felt that Heaven itself could offer no greater joys. Lucy was at times alarmed by the intensity, the kind of consuming quality of his musical feelings, and communicated her alarms to her husband, who looked at her with a curious gravity—the ordinary affairs of life seldom made him grave.

"It is destiny, my Angel," he said. "We must not interfere. You are not a musician yourself, but you are the mother of a musician."

"And the wife of one!" said Lucy, looking at him with her dove's eyes.

"Soon you will be claiming to be one yourself, my sweet child! But let me tell you that does not happen to lovely English maidens, brought up on the knee of comfort, in ancestral mansions—not thus are musicians made!"

The ancestral mansion had very little permanent effect on Sebastian. He did not lose his heart to it as his younger brother had done at once, for his heart was already lost to some bits of varnished wood and catgut put together by a certain poor German called Stainer, which had been bestowed upon him on his ninth birthday by his godfather.

Partly infected by his brother's enthusiasm, so abounding and full of compulsion, he had explored the spreading rooms, the staircases and galleries, the attics and kitchens—so surprising and extensive—of Hall Place. He had visited the stables, the great walled kitchen-garden, the home farm, the gardens, the park, and the village. But when he had seen it all, he had no desire, as Julian had, to see it all over again immediately. One or two places in the park, the little Garden Temple—an excellent spot in which to practise out of all hearing—and one or two of the rooms in the older part of the house, specially appealed to Sebastian, and these he adopted into his affections. All the world might have all the rest.

The servants soon came to the conclusion that though Master ’Bastian was the heir, Master Julian was the one who really mattered—“As English a little chap as ever I did see,” said Jevons, the butler, pontifically.

Every one was quite content, which was the important thing.

“We are so complete in ourselves, a microcosm of a world, that we need nothing from outside,” Govoni said contentedly soon after their arrival at Withers St. Mary.

Lucy looked at him a little wistfully. “There are the neighbours,” she said, “who will very soon pay us morning visits. There is Lady Garraway, and Admiral and Mrs Melton, and Sir Joseph and Lady Worthington, and Justice Frinton and his daughter. Great-Aunt Caroline was telling me of them but yesterday—they are all consumed with curiosity about you, Amades!”

He grinned: “Possibly I may survive their scrutiny, if you will hold my hand—I got hardened to being stared at in my early youth. And if any of them are as nice as your Great-Aunt Caroline, I shall be well content.”

§ 8

Amades had been an immense success with Miss Withers. The very day after they reached Hall Place, Lucy and he had been strolling arm in arm on the broad lawns surveying their domain in the sunshine, when Amades’ quick eye perceived afar off in the park a peculiar object approaching.

“What may that be?” he asked. “It seems somewhat like a yellow beetle with brown legs!”

“Oh!” cried Lucy with delight. “It is Great-Aunt’s yellow sedan chair—she is coming to welcome us.”

“Heavens, Lucy, you never informed me that you possessed a Great-Aunt who travelled about in a sedan chair! Had you done so I doubt if I would have had the courage to marry you. I feel in my bones that it is no benevolent Great-Aunt, but a wicked witch coming to wave her wand over us, and all the pageantry will fade away like smoke, and we shall find ourselves begging our bread in the streets of Vienna! However, let us go bravely to meet our fate!”

They strolled towards the approaching chair, and as they reached it Miss Withers put an incredibly wrinkled little face, crowned with a large satin

turban, out of the window. Her repressed, but still deeply sentimental heart, had almost stopped with shock for a moment, as she looked at them side by side in the sunshine, so beautiful did she think them. Lucy was plumper, rounder, a ripened peach, with a lovely bloom and poise that happiness had given her. The eyes she turned on her husband told their own tale.

As for Amades, the old lady thought she had never seen a face so vital, so expressive of life and power, a look so conquering and yet so simple. A remote breath of her own youth stirred within her.

She leaned out of the window as the two chair-men came to a stop. “My dear children,” she said. She embraced Lucy. Amades kissed her hand, and then, in response to her look, her withered but still soft cheek.

GREAT-AUNT

“I am not in the least surprised at you, Lucy,” she said. “I would have done it myself if he had but asked me!”

“Madam,” Govoni answered, “the opportunity was denied me, or do not imagine my eyes would have strayed elsewhere!”

She loved him from that moment.

They walked beside her chair to the house, and Miss Withers told Amades how she used to steal Lucy away in her sedan chair to the Dower House.

“And she gave me such lovely things to eat that I was always sick when I came home again!” said Lucy.

“That was not my food, child, but your greediness! However, you must dine with me to-morrow, and I will see if your husband has taught you better manners.”

The children completed Miss Withers’ captivation. She at once saw Sebastian’s resemblance to Julian Withers, and told Lucy how her boy Julian was the image of the uncle she had never seen. She was deeply moved and gratified by these family likenesses, though like the rustle of dried grasses in the wind of memory was the thought, “If but their name were Withers!” However, the charms of the small girl who was almost ludicrously her father, with an indescribable feminine grace added, pushed every regret aside.

She looked round her, and tears trembled in her old eyes, “This,” she said. “This is what Hall Place has always needed—children! Oh, Lucy, you are blest!”

“I am blest indeed,” said Lucy.

A little later her eyes fell on Govoni’s Streicher pianoforte. “Will you play to me?” she asked. “I care for music.” She drew herself up. “I knew Joseph Haydn!”

“I am honoured,” Govoni said, “to play for one who knew Joseph Haydn.”

He sat down and played music of Haydn to her.

The old lady was really trembling with joy.

“It is too much!” she cried. “Too much. Tell them to take me home.”

§ 9

The sedan chair, as Amades quickly discovered, typified the attitude of his new great-aunt to life and its conduct. Though living in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, her vital interests and approvals were fixed at the end of the eighteenth century and the early years of its successor. Her clothes, beautiful and rich, were of the period of her chair, made by a woman almost as old as herself whom she had taken permanently into her service, who had been a mantua-maker in Paris, and had fled thence to England when the red Phrygian cap had been the only wear. Miss Withers continued to take a great interest in her clothes, which were only old in fashion, never in their material. Her thin figure was still elegant and upright—the back-board by which her youthful spine had been severely drilled had made it impossible for her to lounge, she always sat in a stiff hard chair, without any cushions, her beautiful hands, laden with antique rings, folded composedly on her lap. She was like one of the ladies of Thomas Gainsborough, with their narrow figures, their slender necks, and small heads, grown old.

“She is quite enchanting,” said Amades to Lucy. “I foresee myself developing the grand passion for your Great-Aunt!”

“I think she has already developed one for you. So long as you do not elope together I will try to bear it!”

THE DOWER HOUSE

The Dower House was a fitting casket for this lady of a past time. It was grey stone—unspoilt, unaltered Jacobean. Being but the Dower House, where widows or spinsters of the Withers family retired to end their days, it had escaped alteration, and fashionable eighteenth century

"improvement." No new mode had laid hands upon it. The beautiful austerity of its stone-mullioned windows, with dripstones above them, its simple square entrance porch, adorned only with the Withers arms cut in a stone panel, was exactly as when the builders finished it.

"I always think I would rather live here than at Hall Place," Lucy said, as she and her husband arrived to dine with Miss Withers, whose dinner-hour was still four o'clock.

But if austere outside, the Dower House was almost exclamatory within, so expressive was it of its occupant. On a foundation of the old family furniture which had been there since the roof was raised, Miss Withers had added her own possessions and garnerings of time. She had collected everything that bore upon the history of the family, remote, or of the immediate day. Upon the walls hung ancient, and generally bad, oil paintings, though among them was a Zoffany "Conversation Piece," and a famous mare of the Withers stables painted by George Stubbs. There were also old varnished estate maps, delightful in their detail, with curious ark-like cows dotted over the fields to indicate grazing, and a plough in one corner for arable. The graceful Hepplewhite furniture that Lavinia Withers had discarded in her fashionable re-furnishing, was there, together with heavy dark oak of a much earlier period. Day beds in cane and carved pine on which a Kneller lady might have reposed her luxurious limbs stood in the same room as a solid Cromwellian oaken cradle. China, snuff-boxes, painted fans, that had belonged to dead men and women of Withers ancestry, were there, in every room. There was no discrimination, yet the general impression, in spite of much over-crowding, was charming. The rooms, so right in their proportions, with the deep windows, received and harmonized all that dwelt within them with the benignity of age.

"Will not the children love this place!" said Amades.

"Just as I used to love it," Lucy answered.

Then Miss Withers entered, her thin old cheeks almost touched to youthfulness by the flush of pleasure upon them.

"My dear Lucy!" she kissed her affectionately.

Amades bowed and kissed her lace-mittened, bejewelled hand.

She looked at him: "That recalls the days, now, alas, departed, when the gentlemen had *manners*. Your father, Lucy, I had thought the last of them, till I had the pleasure of meeting your husband. Though you must remember,

sir," she turned to him smiling, "that we may dispense with *formality*, as I shall claim you as my nephew."

Govoni bowed again, "I am much honoured, though I cannot but doubt whether you have a sufficiency of years for the part of aunt."

"La!" she cried, delighted, "I perceive you are a flatterer! Remember, I am your *Great-Aunt*!"

"Impossible!" said Amades with his wide grin.

MEETING WITH HAYDN

Then dinner was announced, and he offered his right arm to Miss Withers and his left to his wife, and they proceeded to the dining-parlour, he finding himself, as he said, in as happy a situation as any man might wish.

At the conclusion of the meal Miss Withers said to them, "We will sit in the yellow parlour, for I have some things there which I think will interest you both."

The first object Amades beheld as they entered was a harpsichord in pale satin-wood, and above the harpsichord an engraving by Facius of Hoppner's portrait of Haydn. Laid across the frame of the portrait was a delicately wrought wreath of laurel leaves in gilded bronze.

Miss Withers indicated it with a gesture of her hand, "The great Joseph Haydn."

"Whom you knew?" asked Govoni respectfully.

"Whom twice I met."

"Will you tell us about him?"

Miss Withers was enchanted. In the course of years her meeting with Haydn had grown to be the outstanding episode in her personal life. Haydn might almost have been born a Withers, so deep was the interest she took in all that concerned him. She had collected and cherished any little Haydn relics she could obtain. She played his music—within a limited range she was a fair musician—and in her younger days had heard The Creation and the Symphonies on every occasion that offered.

"I will tell you all I can remember," she said, when Lucy was seated on a little Empire settee beside her husband, and she herself was installed in her high-back carved chair, with her two small feet set precisely on an embroidered footstool. "You may know that he came to London in the year 1791, and stayed in England for a year and a half on that first visit, and that

at the Hanover Square Rooms he conducted a series of concerts of his own music. An uncle of mine had a cultivated musical taste, and he procured tickets for himself and for me—I remember that my ticket was red, while the gentlemen’s tickets were black. The impression made upon my mind by that first Haydn symphony was *immense*—it has remained with me even to this day. Perhaps because it came from his own hand—there he was, seated at the harpsichord, so very neat, with his grey, curled wig and pigtail, not, of course, quite in the mode, but he never changed the fashion of his hair, with eyes so large and bright. I think his presence inspired all the band, for they played with great sensibility, and the audience was so overcome with the slow movement that it was encored. I split the palm of my white kid glove by clapping, and my uncle said he would show that to Mr Haydn as a sign of the *ardour* of English ladies for music! He was acquainted with Mr Salomon, who was the promoter of those concerts, and also the leader of the violins, and at the conclusion of the concert he obtained a presentation for himself and me to Mr Haydn. He insisted that I show my glove, and the composer said he must salute the hand that had so damaged itself for his benefit, I still have the glove. Lucy, please to fetch me that carved box over there.”

Lucy returned to her Great-Aunt bearing an elaborately carved and painted box.

Miss Withers took a small key from her reticule and opened the box. Within lay a long, yellowed kid glove that had once been white, stiffened and wrinkled with age, its palm split open with applause for music that had sounded something over half a century ago. Amades took it up and turned it over in his hand with an odd little feeling of reverence.

MUSICAL MEMORIES

“Here are some other little things,” she went on, picking up a faded blue riband in the centre of which the word “Haydn” was embroidered in tarnished gold.

“I wore that in my hair,” she said, “at all the Salomon concerts. They were specially woven for the admirers of the composer.”

She showed them a programme or two, a little silhouette profile, cut out in black paper and pasted on to a gold background, a quill pen the composer had used, and last of all a little card.

“This was given to me by a musical friend. He called upon Haydn when he was old and ill, and was unable to see him, but this card was handed to him.”

She gave it to Amades, who read aloud—

“Hin ist alle meine Kraft;
Alt und schwach bin ich.”

“ ‘Gone is all my strength, Old and weak am I,’ ” Miss Withers said quietly. “That was to what the great Haydn came in the end, now it is true of me—to that we all come.”

Lucy squeezed her Great-Aunt’s hand affectionately, but from that universal doom she felt that she and Amades, by some talisman of their love, were preserved.

Amades said gravely, “But you have memories like this—you have known Joseph Haydn.”

“Yes,” Miss Withers replied, “I have known Joseph Haydn. And now you shall play me some of his music.”

Amades rose, and looked round the room.

“There is no pianoforte,” said Miss Withers, “but that harpsichord is by Schudi, and a fine instrument.”

“I do not profess to be a harpsichord player, any more than I am an organist,” Amades answered. “Though I have the rashness to play on both instruments at times.”

He sat down and played delightfully.

§ 10

Lucy Withers, though she had taken to herself the name of Govoni, could not expect to escape the social attentions of the local gentry of her part of Wiltshire. Amades had not been trained to the country life in England of the well-connected and comfortably established. At first it amused him, and then began to bore him.

“They have nothing to talk about, my Lucy, except foxes, horse-racing, and the price of wheat. They have read nothing, even of their own classics, and as for music——!” He threw up his hands in an expressive gesture.

But a morning call from Lady Garraway, a neighbour who lived about six miles off in a great ugly stucco mansion called Weston Plashett, did afford him some measure of amusement. Lady Garraway was a wealthy and

childless widow, whose three sources of happiness were fine clothes, fine horses, and local gossip. She had been vastly excited by Lucy's runaway marriage, and had promptly called on Mrs Withers in order to gather particulars of the elopement—but Lavinia had presented an invulnerable front, and she had come away exactly as wise as she entered Hall Place. Then the news of Lucy's return, with her foreign musical husband and three presumably Italian children promised much entertainment. She wished to see and hear at first hand, so she was among the first to visit Hall Place.

DASHING EQUIPAGE

One fine morning Amades Govoni was approaching the house after a long ramble in the park, when he saw a curious equipage dashing up the drive—a very high, lightly built curricle drawn by two curveting and distinctly skittish horses. But the really remarkable thing about this affair was the fact that the driver was a woman—a stout, handsome woman, lavishly attired, with a vast feathered hat perched upon her rolls and curls of hair.

Just as the curricle drew level with him a scurry of fallen leaves blew up under the horses' noses, and the near horse displayed a strong tendency to stand up on his hind legs. There was much play of reins and whip on the part of the lady, but the horse got more excited, and infected his companion. She saw Govoni and leaned down with a flushed countenance.

"Catch hold of the near horse, my man," she said in a peremptory manner.

Govoni did so in a quick and efficient way, and in a moment or two had both horses soothed and quiet.

From her high seat the lady watched him with approval: "You seem to know something of horses, my man. What is your name?"

"Govoni," he answered, a smile in his eyes as he looked up at the florid lady.

"Govoni!" She paused. "Not the Mr Govoni who married Miss Withers?"

"The same," he replied, with a particularly low bow.

"My dear Mr Govoni, I must apologise for my error. But my eyes were on the horses—I just perceived you as a man who could help. Any port in a storm, you know!"

“I am delighted to have been of use,” he bowed again, and was making to walk away, but Lady Garraway checked him.

“Mr Govoni, do not desert me, or I shall think you bear me a grudge. I was about to pay a visit to your wife, whom I have known since she was a child—I am your neighbour, Lady Garraway. We are close to the house, perhaps you will summon a groom to walk the horses.”

Amades did so, and assisted her descent from the airy vehicle, which rocked like a ship at sea when released from her substantial weight.

Lady Garraway was in no hurry to enter the house. This fortunate opportunity to talk alone to the foreign husband was not to be wasted. Her eye caught a splash of gay colour against the further lawn.

“Let us inspect that parterre,” she said.

Lady Garraway’s idea of conversation was a series of questions following each other in such rapid succession that there was barely time to insert answers in the gaps between the questions. This did not matter very much, as in any case she hardly listened to the answers.

She gave a brief glance at the flowers. “Vastly pretty,” she said. “Tell me where did you first meet Lucy?”

“In Rome,” Govoni answered.

“And fell in love with her at once?” she proceeded.

“Immediately!”

“And did she fall in love with you?”

“Well, she married me!”

“I perceive you are a wit! What did Lucy’s mother say about it?”

CURIOSITY AT LARGE

“She said, ‘No!’ ”

“So you eloped with the heiress! Did you know she was an heiress?”

Govoni’s eyes narrowed. Was she being impertinent, or was it that she could not help it? He decided that she was born that way, so answered, “I never thought about it—certainly we neither of us imagined she would inherit this place after running away from it.”

“But Lucy must have known of the entail?”

"I do not suppose Lucy had the dimmest idea what an entail was—it sounds like something medical!"

"Well, I hope you neither of you have regretted your rash conduct?"

"I consider it the wisest thing I ever did," Amades answered, with a graver note in his voice.

"It must be rather strange for a musician to live in a mansion like this?" Lady Garraway continued, sweeping the impressive garden front of the house with her eyes.

"Most strange—musicians, as you evidently realise, live in hovels."

Perhaps fortunately at this moment Lucy appeared on the terrace, and seeing her husband and Lady Garraway, came towards them.

"Still very pretty," said Lady Garraway, "but distinctly fatter."

"Yes? Poverty and laughter are very fattening," Govoni said.

Lady Garraway stared at him. What did he mean? She seized upon the one word.

"Poverty! Do you mean that you had not enough to eat?"

"Quite often—when we forgot to buy food. I was telling Lady Garraway what a bad housekeeper you were, Lucy," he said as she joined them.

Lucy smiled and greeted her visitor: "I'm afraid I did forget a lot of things when I was first married—but my husband was very patient."

"And is it true that you have three children?" went on Lady Garraway, in her determined quest of information.

"Yes, three."

"Boys or girls?"

"A bit of both," said Amades, linking his arm with that of his wife. "Two boys and a girl."

"What are their names?"

"Sebastian Giovanni, Julian Anthony, and Gillian Mary."

"Quite pretty. Julian after your father, I suppose, Lucy? Very right and proper. But why did you not call your elder son Julian?"

"Because we called him Sebastian," Govoni answered. He was beginning to feel that this string of questions had continued long enough.

But there was a great deal more that Lady Garraway desired to know. She wanted to know what Amades thought of Wiltshire, if he was going to hunt with the Tedworth—“But I forgot you were a pianist,” she said hurriedly upon the heels of this question. “I suppose you do not ride?”

“Why not?” Govoni answered. “Is there any law in England that prevents pianists riding?”

“He looks splendid on a horse,” Lucy broke in. “And he rides faster than anybody else,” she added simply.

“Oh!” said Lady Garraway. For a moment it almost seemed as if the stream of questions had dried up temporarily. But she gallantly recovered herself.

“Where were you born?”

“In Rome.”

“Do they ride much in Rome.”

“EXTRAORDINARY LADY!”

“Well, there is the Campagna,” answered Govoni smiling. “They even hunt there. And there are quite a few horses on the Hungarian plains, where I have spent some time.”

“But they don’t really know much of horses except in England and Ireland, you know.”

“Arabs?” questioned Amades in his turn.

“I wasn’t speaking of the *East*. But you must come and see my stables. Now, let me see your children.”

Having offered a sight of her horses, which were famous in Wiltshire, Lady Garraway evidently felt that she should be shown something in return.

§ 11

“What an extraordinary lady!” Amades said, when at last she had departed after a glass of Madeira and a biscuit, having inspected the children, and everything else she could discover. “Have you many more ladies like that in Wiltshire?”

“I thought she would call up the servants and catechise them!” Lucy said with a giggle, as she threw herself into a chair.

“What does she do with all the information she collects?”

"Tells it to other people."

"But how very dull for them to be told the names of our dogs and our housemaids."

"Oh, no, not in the country," said Lucy placidly. "And you see, darling, you being an Italian and a musician makes it so much more exciting."

"They probably think I ought to have a monkey tied on to me!" said Govoni with a grin.

"Probably!" Then she jumped up and sat herself on his knee, and rumpled his hair and looked into his eyes: "Darling, dearest, isn't it lovely just to be together here, like being in an enchanted castle, you and me and the children, and not caring what anybody thinks or says or does?"

"The Family Govoni! Like a canvas by a Dutch painter, set in its own frame, complete and self-contained! But the question is, can we remain so? These great possessions of yours—and in a way I am a kind of public character."

"Oh, Amades, I wish you were not a public character. Do let us be private!"

He looked a little startled: "That, my Angel, is I fear, only possible to the poor and obscure. And I, unhappily, am not quite my own—I am, I always shall be, music's servant."

He took her hand and kissed it.

"And yours," he added.

§ 12

OLD CHINTZ AND FURNITURE

A SMALL amount of entertaining could hardly be avoided, either in the giving or the receiving. But the fact that in a few months' time Lucy was expecting the arrival of her fourth child made it comparatively easy to refuse to go out very much, even on those nights of each month when the moon was bright and the roads not dark and uncertain. Lucy and Amades rejoiced that this was so—they were so more than content to be alone together, knowing their children were well occupied and growing in health and happiness. The great household ran smoothly under the capable hands of the elderly housekeeper and her husband who was the butler—forty years earlier they

had been young servants in the Withers' employ, they had married and remained in the same service ever since. So Lucy had no household cares, and Benetta, her stand-by in the Vienna days, had taken up the position of nurse to Gillian, and was looking forward eagerly to the arrival of the new infant, as she had all the Italian peasant passion for babies.

Lucy and Amades much amused themselves in rearranging some of the rooms, making them less formal and more gay, more friendly. She found in a cupboard roll upon roll of a calendared chintz, with Chinese birds and fruits and flowers on a ground of pale primrose which had lain there since the end of the eighteenth century. She had curtains and covers made of it for the white panelled parlour which was the room she and Amades had adopted for their own special privacy. In a remote bedroom they found some mahogany chairs with carved backs in the "Chinese taste" which harmonised most happily with the chintz, and also a slender table with a pie-crust edge on which to drink their evening dish of tea. They ransacked their own home for the treasures discarded and dishonoured by their ancestors—Lucy's eyes, in particular, having been opened by the charm of the many out-moded things that adorned the Dower House. It was a game in which she and Amades vied with each other as to who should make the most pleasing discoveries.

One day Amades marched into the parlour where Lucy was sitting at her needle, bearing in his arms five pictures in somewhat tarnished gilt frames.

"Look," he said, "at these enchanting pictures I have found in that press at the top of the old staircase."

He ranged them along the wall and looked at them lovingly: "They are the very spirits of dance music!"

The pictures he had discovered were a fine set of Adam Buck coloured stipple engravings, each showing a single female figure attired in the classic high-waisted dresses of the end of the eighteenth century, each set against an appropriate country background. There was Caledonia in a reel, with her tartan waist-riband and right arm upraised; Cambria in a country dance, footing it gracefully through the fields; Hibernia in a jig, hands on hips, pretty dark head archly on one side, against the background of her Irish mountains; the Englishwoman in a minuet was more stately, with her long dress, her laced sandals, her white gloves above the elbow; while the French dancer was an elegant lady pretending to a peasant simplicity. All the dancing ladies had cameo-like profiles, and were most delicately stippled to the very bloom of youth and beauty.

“Are they not enchanting?” cried Amades, his hand dramatically clasped to his heart. “Were they but here in person I should be torn in two as to which one I would run off with! Methinks Hibernia has a witching eye, yet Caledonia has an air that appeals—”

Lucy smiled at him: “You imagine that every female is prepared to run off with you, just because I did so rashly!”

She examined the pictures closely: “I never saw them before, but I am sure they are by the same pencil as limned my ‘Mamma at Romps’—she is own sister to these charming creatures.”

FIVE COUNTRY DANCES

“Well, their graces shall not be hidden any longer,” Amades declared, and with his own hands he hung them in a row upon the white panelled wall. Then he sat down at the keyboard beneath, and played a snatch of her own music to each dancing lady.

“How heavenly!” Lucy cried, clapping her hands. “You must write down those dances this very minute,” and she seized music paper and a quill and set it before him.

“No hurry,” said he, “I can hold them in my head—they want a little working over first.”

But eventually he set them down—the “Five Country Dances for Strings” which became so deservedly popular throughout England and the Continent, which were his first serious effort as a composer.

§ 13

One afternoon Lucy suddenly realised that she had not seen her husband for some while. It was within an hour of their time for dining, and she searched in all his most likely haunts in the house, questioned a servant or two, none of whom had seen him, and then decided he must have gone to a special favourite spot in the park, as he never went away from Hall Place to any distance without telling her where he was going.

It was a delightful afternoon, the golden autumn air balmy with stored warmth, the shadows of the trees, whose leaves were faintly touched here and there with golden colours, lying at peace along the sward.

Lucy walked slowly, her eyes drinking in the beauty, her heart giving thanks for the pleasantness of her lot—to have not only this fair portion of

England, but Amades and his love. The first she could have relinquished easily, but to take away her Amades would be her death, even though her body should still walk the earth. But it was not an afternoon to think of death—the earth pulsed with fertility, she felt the new life within her. She had a sudden glimpse of Julian and two dogs tearing down a grass slope, and Gillian rushing after him. Her heart swelled within, at the benignancy of the scene. She must find Amades.

After a few moments she saw him, sitting with his shoulder towards her, upon a fallen oak-tree whose branches had been lopped so that one of them formed a rough table or reading-desk. On this a book was propped, and with his chin resting upon his hands, Amades was reading with complete absorption. Lucy drew close up to him before he saw her. When the rustle of her silk dress upon the grass caught his ear, he looked round, held out an arm, and drew her down on to the prostrate oak-tree at his side.

"Listen to this!" he said, and proceeded to read aloud in his sensitively modulated voice from the volume that lay open before him:

> ". . . still she retains
> Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
> Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
> Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
> That the shrewd meddling elfe delights to make,
> Which she with precious vial'd liquors heals;
> For which the shepherds at their festivals
> Carol her goodness loud in rustick lays,
> And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream
> Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils."

He looked up with shining eyes, glanced round the peaceful scene, and read again—

"SABRINA FAIR"

> "Sabrina fair
> Listen where thou art sitting
> Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
> In twisted braids of lillies knitting
> The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
> Listen for dear honour's sake,
> Goddess of the silver lake,
> Listen, and save."

“Yes,” said Lucy quietly, “my Papa taught me that when I was nine years of age.”

“And you never said it to me! Say it now, at once,” he commanded, leaning back against a bough.

Lucy’s fresh pellucid voice flowed with the smoothness of water—her father had taught her how to speak poetry with simplicity and beauty—as she repeated the lovely lines, saying the whole invocation to the end:

“By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance,
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head,
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave
Till thou our summons answer’d have,
Listen, and save!”

She had never forgotten the poetry her father had taught her in those receptive years.

“One country should not have Milton and Shakespeare,” said Govoni. “It is too much!”

He jumped up and pulled Lucy’s hand within his arm.

“Come home and feed me. I am completely starving. My interior is as hollow as yonder withered oak. A good world, my Lucy, with food, and great poetry—and even greater music. And you!”

When, three months later, his second daughter and fourth child was born, she was christened Sabrina, in honour of his discovery of the organ music and pastoral pipe of Milton. Like the other children she was given two names—Sabrina Teresa.

§ 14

Amades Govoni was deeply enthralled by his discovery of the range and beauty of English poetry. Shakespeare he had first read in the admirable German translation of Schlegel and Tieck, and found him so much to his mind, that from Shakespeare came the impulse to perfect his English, so as to taste the full sap and flavour which no translation, however good, can give. But the lesser Elizabethans, and English seventeenth century poetry he

had never read till he came to Hall Place, where in the library he found a rich store of such poets in contemporary editions. He browsed with eagerness, his quick mind selecting and rejecting. He had an unfaltering response to beauty in all its forms, not, like many musicians, finding it only in his own art, even though to him the most authentic of all beauty's voices was that of music. But poetry was obviously a sister goddess.

He was fortunate to find a guide to this enchanting though foreign, country of the mind that was English poetry, in a close and available neighbour.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PEACE

The Reverend Thomas Flaxman was the rector of Withers St. Mary. It was so small a village, and its population so almost completely agricultural, that Mr Flaxman found himself possessed of much leisure. A few christenings, a small number of burials, and an occasional wedding, with a Sunday sermon, and the administration of Holy Communion once a month, represented the sum of his clerical activities. Of intellectual companionship he had possessed none, since Julian Withers had died, and Lavinia's father. Lavinia herself did not like him—a feeling that he mildly reciprocated when he thought about her. But his seclusion did not distress him. He was a bachelor in the middle sixties, and lived alone, save for an aged man-servant and a cook. His rectory fitted him as a snail is fitted by its shell—it was built partly of stone in the oldest part, which was the remains of a monastic building, to which had been added a timber-framed, yellow-washed Elizabethan wing. A lawn, of an age-long green perfection, sloped to a little stream where rose-bay, willow-herb and meadow-sweet grew lavishly in their natural season. A mulberry-tree spread wide its ancient arms and dropped its purple fruit upon the lawn.

Within the house there was silence, and many books. It seemed as though the very walls were built of books—ancient books whose still old thoughts kept out the sounds of the contemporary day. Within the room known as the library—though each room in the house might have claimed that name—there was a great carved stone fireplace within which logs always smouldered on a deep soft bed of grey ashes. In summer, as in winter, this fire was never suffered to go out—at night it was covered with an iron curfew which was almost as old as the house, and in the morning a few puffs from the great bellows woke the slumbering spark. An air as of the seventeenth century which he loved, abode in the ancient rectory of the Reverend Mr Flaxman. He would not have a lamp in the house. Oil lamps were inventions of the Devil, as the clerical gentleman firmly believed.

Herrick and Marvell and Vaughan wrote and read by candlelight, and what was good enough for them, was good enough for him, or anyone else. So the dark hours were lit by candles—wax in the rector's rooms, and home-made mutton fat, in the kitchen quarters.

Whatever course conversation took in the Rector's presence he brought it gently round to the literature of the seventeenth century in a very few moments, by quotation, or allusion, or direct statement.

His first visit to Lucy and Amades—he had known Lucy since she was a child, for he had come to Withers St. Mary as a man comparatively young in years, though exactly as old in his ways—began in the drawing-room, but in a very brief space was removed to the library, for Mr Flaxman remembered a folio he wished to consult. Amades accompanied him, and Lucy, with a smile, slipped away to adjust some little household difficulty. An hour later the two men were still there, and had laid the foundations of a friendship that was to last. Amades recognised that this small, white-haired man was as much a connoisseur in poetry as he himself was in music, had as delicate and trained an ear for the turning of a phrase, or the fitness of an epithet, as he had himself for the weaving of the contrapuntal strands in a fugue of Bach. The way his long-fingered hands slid along the shelves, quietly withdrew a volume, and held it open with a sort of tender consideration as though the book had life, delighted Govoni. On his side Mr Flaxman was pleasantly surprised at the feeling Amades showed for English poetry.

"If I may be permitted to say so, you surprise me, as English is not your native tongue. You have a response that so many English people lack, even though it is their own language."

MUSIC AND POETRY

"Surely," said Amades, "there is a kinship between music and poetry, they both are based on rhythm and melody, they both express the mysterious depths of life and beauty, and when poetry is wedded to music we get a strange perfection."

"Do we?" said Mr Flaxman. "I do not know much of music, I fear, but such drawing-room songs as I have heard have not deeply impressed me."

"Drawing-room songs!" Amades laughed. "I said *poetry*—and *music*! Such for instance as Schubert wrote to Shakespeare. You will grant the poet, and I will speak for the composer. Come, you must hear."

He led the Rector into an adjoining room where his pianoforte stood. He sat down at the instrument.

“I have only what they call a ‘pianist’s voice,’ ” he said. “But enough to give you an idea of the song, which is ‘Hark, hark, the lark’ from *Cymbeline*.”

“Ah,” broke in Mr Flaxman, looking very much as though he were enjoying himself. “Where Cloton says, ‘I am advised to give her music o’ mornings; they say it will penetrate. Come on; . . . a very excellent good-conceited thing . . . a wonderful sweet air, with admirable rich words to it.’ Forgive me!—please to sing.”

So Amades sang the charming thing, the sort of *ländler* or rustic waltz to which Schubert had put Shakespeare’s lyric.

“But,” said he when he had finished, not giving Mr Flaxman time to make any complimentary comment, “there is an even better one, ‘Who is Silvia?’ ”

He sang it, drawing all the beauty from the delicate rustic music of the accompaniment.

“My dear sir, you have given me a singular treat. I had no idea that our Shakespeare had been so adorned. Possibly, might we have those two songs again?”

Amades complied willingly, and before he had finished the “Silvia” the door opened and Lucy inserted herself into the room with the trained dexterity of a musician’s wife. She smiled at both the men, and when the song was finished, turned to Mr Flaxman: “You are fortunate, sir, it is not often that my husband will sing.”

“Knowing he has no voice,” said Amades. “But I had to prove a point, my dear.”

§ 15

Having found somebody so much to his taste as the Reverend Thomas Flaxman, Amades and Lucy paid frequent visits to the rectory, and Amades often went over alone when Lucy was occupied with her children, or resting before the arrival of the baby who was to be called Sabrina.

Mr Flaxman knew a good wine, and the remaining portions of the monastic cellars in his rectory were not unworthily stored. He considered that a glass of reputable wine was an admirable accompaniment to the fruit of Parnassus—his palate was sensitive to both. These things he and Amades

savoured together on many an evening. Another matter that Mr. Flaxman liked discussing with Amades was his garden. It was tolerably extensive, and he had spent much time, thought, and money in "improving" it according to the best eighteenth century ideas. Though living in the first half of the nineteenth, he considered the eighteenth century the last in which it was possible for an Englishman to live like a gentleman. His rectory was a fortress to be held against anything that dated after 1799.

"FINGER OF TASTE"

"In the eighteenth century," as he said, "the Spirit of Planting was understood by the English nobility and gentry, and the finger of Taste shaped the landskip from its native rudeness. To this do we owe the Park, the rolling champaign, the Cascade, the Vista, the Arbour, the Temple. Works on that scale are not within the compass of my purse, or suitable to my profession as a minister of God, but what it is permissible to me to do, I have done. Each year, indeed, I contemplate some small improvement."

The rules of painting were applied to his landscape gardening, and the art of grouping studied. He admitted to Amades that he kept three cows in the Glebe pasture, though two would have been ample for his needs in milk and butter, because of the pleasing effect upon the beholder's eye, and the way they became the view. "I find that two cows do not group—one must have three." He quoted Addison, "A man might make a pretty Landskip of his own Possessions."

"But it requires thought, my dear sir, and, if I may say, some modicum of Taste."

He admired the work of Kent and "Capability" Brown, though his eyes twinkled as he told Amades the little story about Brown, to whom someone said, "I wish I may die before you, Mr Brown." "Why so?" asked "Capability" Brown, rather flattered. "Because I should like to see Heaven before you have improved it!"

"One can almost imagine him directing companies of the lesser angels in planting shrubberies and trimming grass verges!" he said, smiling.

"Evidently the musical side of Paradise would be rather neglected after he arrived there," Amades answered. "The harp discarded for the pruning hook!"

The full effect of Mr Flaxman's own efforts at improvement were sometimes destroyed by local rural obstinacy.

He had arranged a little dell with rocks and shrubs, and at one end had built a small classic summerhouse, where he would sit and read while he sipped a glass of wine, or have his silver urn transported so that there he might drink a dish of tea. He christened the spot the Vale of Tempe.

One morning he and Amades were spending a pleasant hour in the Rector's library, when the gardener's boy bobbed up at the window and announced breathlessly, "Farmer's heifers be broke through into Temple Valley, and be trampling of it down!"

"Temple Valley! I suppose you mean the Vale of Tempe." Mr Flaxman was too vexed at this miscalling of his favourite retreat to think for a moment of the heifers and the damage they were doing.

"Us doan't know about that—I knows as us always used to call un by un's praper name, which be Tadpole Bottom."

He vanished in chase of the strayed cattle.

"These rustics!" said the Rector regretfully. "There is no educating them!"

§ 16

CHURCH OF ROME

VERY early in their acquaintance the question of religion was naturally discussed between Amades and the Rector.

"I have not had the pleasure of seeing you in church," he said somewhat hesitantly. "I daresay Mistress Lucy's state of health has kept her away, while you——?"

"I," Amades answered, "am, as you might expect, not a member of the English Church."

"Not an atheist?" cried Mr Flaxman.

"Is that the only alternative?" Amades asked smiling. "No, on the contrary, a Roman Catholic. But you may think that as bad!"

"Certainly not, certainly not. Historically I find the Church of Rome exceedingly interesting. But her place is not here. In England, for English people, the English Church."

"But I, you see, am not English. I was actually born in Rome, and my birthplace fills me with spiritual and intellectual pride."

“I can understand that—I once spent a winter in Rome. It is a marvellous city. And I should, of course, have realised that you would belong to the Roman Faith. But your wife?—and your children?”

“My wife, of her own accord, after six months of marriage, embraced the Catholic Faith—and my children, of course, were born Catholics, and I hope will remain so.”

“Forgive me if I seem impertinent—I assure you that it is far from my intention—but your Faith, does it mean much in your life?”

Govoni answered simply and directly: “I fear I am in no sense an example of what a Catholic should be. I like this world, and enjoy it, not just in prosperous days like these, but in days that were the reverse of prosperous. But the Faith I hold is like the air I breathe—and just as necessary. Perhaps one too easily takes it for granted, like the air. I could wish you to see a cousin of mine, Father Sebastian Narni, a Dominican friar —then you would see what the Catholic Faith can make of a man, selfless holiness, humility, ardour, humour.”

His eyes shone with light as he spoke.

The Rector bowed, “I would be honoured to meet such a priest. The Church of Rome has produced many saints and saintly men, but we have George Herbert, a most holy man, and a poet, and John Donne—though perhaps I can hardly claim him as holy, but a poet of rare power.”

“And that,” said Govoni smiling, “covers all!”

They both laughed. They were neither of them theologians, and no embittered discussions would ever take place between them.

“But where,” Mr Flaxman asked, “do you obtain the services of your Church?”

“We have to go to Salisbury on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, we, and an old Italian servant we have with us. But we have fitted up a little chapel in a room over the old stable, and hope to have it consecrated, so that Mass may be said there when we have a priest staying with us. Come and see it.”

He led Mr Flaxman round the garden to the far side of the house where stood what was left of the ancient stone monastic buildings, once used as stables and hay loft, but abandoned from that use when Lucy’s grandfather built a stable wing, with loose boxes, and harness room, and coach-house, and a tower with a stable clock and a pigeon-cote. Since that day the lower

LITTLE CHAPEL

half of the Norman building had been used as a wood store, and the upper half, approached by an outside stone staircase, left empty. But Govoni had renewed its simple beauty. The walls had been white-washed, the massive beams that interlaced each other like woven tree boughs in the roof, had been cleaned and freed from their draperies of matted cobwebs. Unless the door were left open the light was dim, for the windows were narrow splayed ones, set in the great thickness of the stone wall. A simple altar had been set up, and on it were six bronze candlesticks, and above it a large crucifix of ebony, bearing an ivory figure of Christ—the candlesticks and the crucifix had been brought as spoil from Italy by an earlier Withers, and Amades had but restored them to their original use. There was little else, save a carved chair, an oak bench, a kneeling-cushion or two. It was a beautiful place.

"This was built by Catholic hands, and is now restored to Catholic uses," said Govoni. He added, with a smile at the Rector, "Do you realise that all your old English churches, and Salisbury Cathedral, and the other cathedrals, were built by Catholics? Must be rather a funny thought to you!"

"I confess," Mr Flaxman answered, "the thought had not struck me before. I must admit its truth. And I admire your little chapel—it has a feeling of prayer."

"Perhaps the old monks come back sometimes to say a *Pater Noster* and an *Ave*. I would much like to overhear them doing it. Have you ever seen a ghost?"

But the Reverend Mr Flaxman had not.

§ 17

THE birth of Sabrina gave great joy to Lucy and Amades—"a quartet is always better than a trio!" he said. She was a beautiful and placid infant—fair, with the finest of gold hair that looked as though it might have adorned a cherub's head.

"Each baby we have is better than the last," said Amades, bending over his wife's bed to look at the child cradled on her arm. "By the time we've had ten, they will be altogether too beautiful for this world!"

Lucy smiled up at him: "It is only because girl babies are prettier than boy babies," she said simply.

“I cannot have you slight my sex in that manner. And, anyway, they never make real musicians! But I sincerely hope this infant is not going to be more beautiful than her sister—it dawned upon me the other day what a devastating little witch Gillian is becoming. She’ll cause a lot of trouble one of these days!”

Lucy smiled happily. “She is very pretty, but she is a serious little thing, she likes books, especially poetry-books, and listening to you when you are playing, except when she is at games with her brothers. I do not think she is going to be a trouble.”

The following day Amades came to her room with a pleased countenance, and a letter in his hand.

“I have lovely news for you, Santa Lucia. My cousin Sebastian, the Dominican, has arrived in England on business connected with his Order, and he has obtained permission to come here for two days and christen our child. He will be here in three days’ time.”

“How lovely, Amades. I am so glad for you, and for the baby to be christened by him. And I shall so like to meet him again after that short glimpse in Rome. But I shall not be up when he arrives—will he be able to come and see me here?”

A CHRISTENING

She looked a little as if she would cry if this were not permitted.

Amades smiled at her—mother of four children, yet still herself such a child!

“A Catholic priest is permitted to go anywhere that he is needed, my Angel. And I know that the more you see of Father Sebastian the more you will love him—there is something about him that holds everybody’s affection.”

Lucy certainly loved him, from the first moment when he greeted her, when she looked in his retreated and yet smiling eyes, his sallow but attractive face, his slight, small figure, which tried in vain to conceal its thinness under the full white Dominican habit, with its wide sleeves and ample folds, its black leather girdle, and looped rosary of big brown wooden beads.

The christening took place at once. Great-Aunt Caroline was perturbed she could not be the child’s godmother, and inclined to be affronted that the old Italian servant Benetta was proxy godmother for the real one who was in Rome. But though somewhat disturbed at appearing to countenance a

Roman Catholic ceremony, with a priest “all dressed up” like Father Narni, she was determined to be present. Amades provided her with a seat near the church door, and also near the font, so that she could see the whole ceremony. Her sharp old eyes missed nothing. Benetta carried the white-robed infant, herself wearing a marvellous starched lace cap, and apron embroidered in many colours.

Great-Aunt Caroline was distinctly shocked at the way the proxy godmother and the babe were made to stand outside the church portal, while many interrogations were asked by the Dominican of the child’s sponsors, and many prayers said, the blest salt of wisdom put on the infant’s mouth, the unclean spirit bade to depart from the child. Miss Withers did not know that in the very church of Withers St. Mary where she sat under a Church of England clergyman, there was a little door by the font which in the days of the “Old Religion” had been called the “Devil’s door,” put there so that the Devil, when exorcised by the priest at a baptism, could find a speedy exit.

But at last came the time when the infant was admitted into the Church, as the priest said, “Enter into the Temple of God, in order that thou mayest have part with Christ unto eternal life.”

All the waiting time on the threshold Sabrina had cried lustily, but at these words, and as she was carried forward to the font, she subsided into silence, and submitted without a murmur while the water was poured three times on her head, as Father Sebastian Narni said “Ego te baptizo in Nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.” The lighted candle did not disturb her, and she remained contented till she was bidden to “Go in peace, and may the Lord be with thee.”

“And quite time, too,” said Miss Withers, half under her breath, feeling somewhat exhausted herself, and sure that any new-born baby ought to be worn out. “Much more sensible our way, though I always think that is too long.”

But Sabrina remained placid, and was restored to her mother’s arms a lamb received into the fold of the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

§ 18

SMALL COTTAGE

Lucy did not recover her strength quite so quickly after the birth of Sabrina as she had done after the birth of the three earlier children. She was a little languid, and

reluctant to resume her ordinary occupations. It was so pleasant in the little sitting-room next to her big bed-chamber. She lay in a long chair by the window, the placid infant sleeping in a cradle by her side. When Sabrina was taken for an airing in the park, she could watch from her window Benetta carrying the lacy bundle, carefully holding over the baby's face against the gentle spring sunshine, a little pink parasol of watered silk, with an ivory stick that folded in the middle and went into Benetta's capacious pocket when the sun went in.

And Gillian, who by contrast with her sister, felt herself almost grown-up, seized every opportunity to sit with her mother. She brought Lucy early daffodils and primroses, and arranged them with instinctive skill about the room. She loved the country, and the flowers that grew wild in the woods and fields far more than the gardenias and heliotrope and tuberoses that the gardeners carefully cultivated under glass.

"What I should really like," she said one day, "would be to live in a cottage like that one by the well in the village, with a thatch roof nearly covering it all up, and tiny windows, and a garden with cabbages and flowers all growing mixed up together, and the yew peacock by the gate."

Lucy smiled—she remembered how much nicer she had thought that cottage than Hall Place, when she was a girl.

"There isn't much room inside," she said, "as old Granny Greene will tell you."

"I know," Gillian answered. "I often go and talk to Granny Greene. Her bed upstairs is so big that it quite fills the floor, and she has to dress and undress on the bed, and she says it twists her old bones something cruel."

"But you wouldn't like that?" said Lucy.

"Oh, I think it would be fun. Besides my bones aren't old," Gillian answered, feeling that age was not a thing that would ever touch her limbs. "But I'm making Granny a quilted petticoat to keep the age out of her bones. And she has got the loveliest patchwork cover on her bed—her mother began it, and she finished it when she got married. Do you think I could make one for when I get married?"

Lucy discovered that Gillian also had a marked taste for poetry, and she had much happiness in making her daughter read aloud the poems her father had read to her in her own youth. Gillian read with remarkable feeling and understanding, and her cheeks flushed and her clear, wide eyes shone, and Lucy thought, "The child is going to be a beauty!"

Then she made the further discovery that Gillian wrote poetry herself.

"At least, it isn't real poetry," she said, hesitantly. "I cannot make it rhyme! It is little plain bits, sort of chopped up."

"Read some to me," Lucy said, looking with tender affection at her daughter.

"It is nearly all about the country," Gillian said, and began to read in a steady voice, though a little flush crept up her cheek:

"I look from the top of the bare Downs
Into a spread-out country.
Woods of spring green,
Ploughed fields all brown, or chalky grey.
A glittering river turning itself in and out;
Patches of mustard-seed and new pale corn.
Villages thatched with silver straw,
And church spires rising from among the roofs.
The sunlight and the shadows
Chase each other over the fields,
As the clouds go across the sun."

"The next one is called 'Cows in the Rain,'" said Gillian hastily, hoping to forestall any comment of her mother's.

YOUNG POETRY

"The rain fell fast and grey
Pattering on the roof of the cow's shed.
Under the damp red wall a calf stood chewing slowly,
Her ankles deep in mud.
She gazed through the moss-grown wall.
Through her seeming empty stare
She saw a field, and trees,
White clouds, and a soft warm breeze,
She whisked her tail for joy, and turned to a greener blade—
Her feet stuck in thick cold mud,
And she saw again a damp wall,
Smelt a dank yard, and heard
Rain falling on the roof."

"I like that very much," said Lucy quietly, knowing how cautiously the creative efforts of the young must be handled. "But I don't think cows have

ankles—is it hocks, or does that belong to horses? You had better ask the cowman, darling."

Gillian beamed. She felt now that she could really confide in her mother about her poems, that she would not say things that would make her feel embarrassed.

"Did you notice I had got two rhymes in that one?—trees and breeze, but I couldn't do any more. But I've written one that has the rhymes in the right places!"

"Read it," said Lucy.

> "Slowly, silently, the dew fell,
> The twilight wrapping the earth in peace.
> Who, oh who, was there to tell
> How the night had made the day cease.
>
> Swiftly, smoothly, night descended
> Over the quiet countryside.
> Downland crests never ended,
> Green fields stretched far and wide."

In spite of the rhymes Lucy did not think this as good as the "Cows in the Rain," but, fortunately, as Gillian finished reading it, Amades entered the room, a parcel in his hand.

"So you are reading poetry to your mother, Gillian, and I have just been to Salisbury to buy her a new poetry book."

He dropped the parcel on to his wife's lap, and leaned over Gillian to look at the pages she held.

"Manuscript? Is it by any chance a long-lost poem of the famous Mr William Shakespeare's?"

Gillian giggled, and Lucy explained.

"Then," said Amades, "it is far more important to me even than a new sonnet of Shakespeare. Have I your permission to read these poems?"

He sat down, and Gillian stood by with her hand round his neck, while he read the poems twice over.

"I think you see things," he said when he had finished the second reading. "And that is the important thing for making a poet, as hearing things is for a musician. You don't quite know how to use your own words

yet, but that will come, if you go on seeing and trying to find the only word that says what you see—there is always the one right word and the one right note, and the great musician and the great poet is he who finds it. See, here is one who did."

"PARADISE WITH A POET"

He took the parcel from Lucy's hand and unwrapped it, displaying a volume which bore the title *Lamia, Isabella, and Other Poems*, by John Keats.

He opened the book and began to read. His English reading aloud always gave Lucy peculiar pleasure, because he pronounced the words so beautifully, giving each one the courtesy of his attention, instead of the careless indifference often used by the native-born to their mother tongue. She was often so charmed by his voice and his way of reading that she gave less than her full attention to what he read.

Not so Gillian. At the opening words she stood as still as a tree on a windless day, her mouth slightly open as though she drank at the heavenly spring. When Amades ceased she laid eager hands upon the book, "Papa, please give it to me."

"I bought it for your mother."

But before he had finished the sentence, she was gone, and Keats with her. A moment later they saw her running across the grass towards the trees, the book clutched to her breast.

"Gone to Paradise with a poet!" Amades said. "What it is to be young!"

"You do not seem to me very old," Lucy said, smiling up at him. "And you have got some lovely, gifted children——" the sound of Sebastian's violin came to them through the door which Gillian had left open in her flight.

"Yes, the children are all right. But you are better still, and I am going to take you out into that spring sunshine you are missing."

He picked her up from her couch, and carried her summarily down the wide staircase and out to the garden, sending the footman running for rugs and cushions.

She was barely settled when Julian came rushing up and produced a slippery-looking animal from his pocket. "See, Mamma, this is my new ferret, it's a real good 'un."

Lucy shrank nervously away from the sharp-nosed, unpleasing creature.

“Don’t you like it?” exclaimed her son in surprise. “Oh, well, I suppose ladies don’t really understand ferrets. But I’ll fetch you two of the rabbits—they can nibble the grass by you.”

“I shall like that,” said Lucy, prepared for anything, so long as it was not ferrets.

As Julian walked away to get his pet rabbits she looked after him proudly. He was growing so tall, yet was broad-shouldered and powerfully built, and his face was so ruddy and English-looking. She did not realise that the very image of her dead uncle, Gilbert Fitzmaurice Withers, was walking those fields again in the person of her second son.

§ 19

Govoni’s prescription of sunshine and out-door air did more for Lucy than the care of her Apothecary, and very soon she was restored to full health and activity. It was a warm and forward spring. Lucy, released from her long indoor life and from the burden of child-bearing, became like a child herself, and aided and abetted her offspring in their desire to eat every meal out of doors, and spend every hour out of doors, on all possible days.

“I thought the English spring was always cold and wet, and that ‘the rain it raineth every day’,” Govoni said.

MAD FAMILY

“Very often it does,” his wife answered. “But sometimes we have a benignant spring like this.”

“Then let us make the best of it, this unique and exceptional spring.”

In vain the cook made raised pies and syllabubs, in vain tables were laid with fine linen and silver—the master and mistress and their offspring were lost, and often only came homewards as the shadows of the golden trees were lying delicately on the grass.

Lucy had occasional qualms, “What will the servants think?” she would ask her husband. But Amades answered cheerfully, “Servants are not paid to think—let us enjoy this marvellous spring, these marvellous days, while we may. I always understood that the English had very bad weather, and peered at each other through fog most of the year! But there is something almost Paradisal about this country in these days.”

Invitations to local entertainments and festivities were all declined, on the score that Mrs Govoni had not yet sufficiently recovered her strength. But as Mrs Govoni had been seen on several occasions playing games with her children, and driving as far afield as Stonehenge, these refusals met with some censure.

"Whole family is quite mad," said Lady Garraway. "My under-kitchen-maid has a sister who is still-room maid at Hall Place, and she says that meals are cooked and there is no one to eat them, as they have all disappeared with food in baskets, and nobody knows when they are coming home again. And, of course, being Catholics is a great drawback—so unnatural in England! The mother of one of the chamber-maids took her away, said she would have no truck with the Scarlet Woman for her child. She was a strong Wesleyan. I thought it very courageous. I went to see her, and she told me all about it. I gave her half a pound of tea, and she said it was worth it. What I cannot understand is why Lucy herself became a Roman—but I daresay there was Pressure, you never know with these Catholics, and of course she was abroad, and helpless. Her husband, they say, sits up half the night playing the pianoforte, and she sits and listens to him. The only one in that household who gets her meals regularly is the new baby, as she's had to have a wet nurse, as her mother cannot feed this one. The Apothecary told me himself—I asked him one day when he was coming away from Hall Place. 'Now, Mr Apothecary,' I said to him, 'who is ill at the Hall?' 'No one is ill, your Ladyship,' he answered. 'It is only a question of a wet nurse for the new baby.' 'And do you mean to tell me that Mrs Govoni cannot nurse her own child?' I said to him. 'In this case, unfortunately not, though I understand there was no difficulty with the others.' 'Well,' said I, 'then I can tell you the reason if you desire to know. It is because she is gadding about all day, instead of resting, and does not sit down to proper meals, and eats cold snatches out of doors, and lies on the damp grass——' "

"But we have had no rain for weeks," interrupted the Admiral's wife, who was the listener to this monologue.

"Do you mean to tell me that, at your age, you think the grass is ever dry? Why, sit down on it for five minutes, no matter how long the drought, and you feel the damp creeping up and creeping up, and you will have a nice twinge of rheumatism the next day."

MATRONLY CONVERSATION

"Not if you are as young as Lucy Govoni," said Mrs Melton, who had not liked the allusion to her age.

“She cannot be so very young now, she has a couple of big boys and a girl who is ten or eleven. I asked their names and ages when I called first, but I have forgotten exactly. They have given the children funny names—fancy calling the eldest boy Sebastian Giovanni! The second boy is Julian—I told them it ought at least to have been the other way about. And the girl is Gillian—sounds like a nursery rhyme—and now this new one, Sabrina. What a heathen-sounding name.”

Lady Garraway did not read Milton.

“Oh, I think it’s something to do with early Roman history,” said Mrs Melton vaguely.

“The odd thing is that this pianist person whom Lucy has married knows quite a lot about horses,” Lady Garraway continued, taking no notice of foolish interruptions about Roman history. “One of my grooms was talking to a stableman of theirs”—no source of information about her neighbours was scorned by Lady Garraway—“and he said that if a horse was sick or vicious there was nobody could manage it better than Mr Govoni. He’d just talk to it a bit, and it would take its douche, or follow him like a lamb. He said it was a pity he wasn’t in the horse business altogether, instead of messin’ about with music. And I must say he has completely won over the Master.”

The voice of the Master of the Tedworth was to Lady Garraway as the Voice of God.

“But,” said Mrs Melton, taking advantage of the reverential pause, “the Govonis don’t entertain at all, they just live to themselves. And when one thinks of what Hall Place used to stand for in our social life in Mrs Withers’ day——”

The halt for breath was injudicious, Lady Garraway rushed in: “Perhaps Lucy is afraid that her husband will not behave correctly—he cannot be a *gentleman*, you know, in our meaning of the word. I suppose abroad music may be enough, but, of course, here nobody cares about music, except a little singing after dinner, while the gentlemen are finishing their port. And my maid tells me there is another foreign musician coming to stay at Hall Place—an old school friend, or something, of Mr Govoni’s. But they don’t have Public Schools abroad, do they? Of course, it doesn’t give them a chance; no wonder foreigners are so odd. Breeding always tells, is what I say—you know the minute they open their mouths. The Wykeham motto, ‘Man maketh manners,’ you know. So sound, I always think.”

§ 20

As Lady Garraway truthfully reported—her news was usually accurate, even if her quotations were not—a visitor was expected at Hall Place, and this visitor was Giovanni Cavatini. His long friendship with Amades had widened both their musical horizons when they were young men, for it was from Cavatini that Govoni had first fully realised the music of Bach, and from him that Cavatini had entered into Beethoven's world. Owing to the circumstances of his upbringing he had almost thought there was no world in music save that of Johann Sebastian Bach. He still thought it the greatest—Bach was the sun around which the planets sang.

MUSIC OF HEAVEN

Very soon after their marriage Lucy and Amades had spent some delightful days with Giovanni in Leipzig, Lucy being taken to all Leipzig's musical shrines, and listening to the music of Bach played by her husband and his friend with a passion and devotion which were a revelation to her. Music took on a completely new meaning.

"That is the strange thing about this Bach," said Cavatini gravely to her one evening. "You will forgive me saying that I understand you are not trained as a musician—you play a little, nicely, like a young lady. You are not acquainted with Bach, yet so soon as you hear him played you perceive it is the music of Heaven. You do not understand, but you begin to love. Is it not so? There is a simplicity and a pattern and a sweetness which appeals. But were you a musician of the deepest accomplishment you would know there is an inexhaustible depth, a mastery, which you can never fully understand. It is like the sea—babes may play in the sparkling surf that laps the shore, and the strong swimmer goes out to the blue waters that float argosies!"

Giovanni ceased, his eyes had a remote look—he had forgotten he was talking to the pretty little bride of his friend.

Lucy gazed up at him without a word, she had never heard music talked of in that way before.

Her husband slid an arm round her waist: "Take no notice of him, angel, he goes quite mad when he talks of Bach, but it's not dangerous!"

Giovanni smiled—and Lucy thought how extraordinarily sweet was the expression on his thin, dark face when he smiled—and said, "Well, it was your beloved Beethoven who said that Bach's name should not be Brook, but Ocean!"

“Ah, so that is where you stole your nice little seashore metaphor!”

Those honeymoon days in Leipzig had given Lucy a real attachment to her husband’s friend, which had only increased and deepened as the years passed, and he visited them regularly at their home in Vienna, and joined them sometimes for their mountain holidays. He was not only godfather to their eldest son, but on all possible occasions, his teacher. She looked forward with eagerness to his visit to Hall Place, the first time he had been in Wiltshire, though he had played in London on several occasions.

She ran about the house like a girl, making preparations to please him.

“Which bedroom shall he have, Amades? The blue one, or the yellow one? Do you know his favourite colour?”

“No, I don’t suppose he has one—musicians are mostly colour-blind! The only important thing is that he has a view of those Downs, and, if you want to make your eldest son happy, that his room is close to that of ’Bastian.”

“But then they will play together all night!”

“And what if they do, darling? Does it matter?”

Lucy suddenly realised that it did not matter in the least. She was thoroughly schooled in the idea that so long as music was made beautifully, few other things mattered. And in other things than music, Amades had a way of stripping off the inessentials. So many things considered important, when they were taken to pieces, had nothing in them whatever.

§ 21

BEAUTY

“God!” said Amades, “I wish I knew what this beauty *means*!”

He and his friend Giovanni had been for a long tramp over the Downs, and were returning homeward just as the sunset was spreading its Paradisal colours over the darkening earth. The sun had just sunk below the horizon, and was sending up exultant beams, like shouts of ecstasy, into the dome of the sky. Little pink cherubs of clouds floated irresponsibly about in the radiance. And it was as if the Downs would detach themselves from the darkening landscape and float upwards, for a veil of mist, suddenly arisen after the warmth of the day, trailed along their lower

slopes, and made them appear like a long bank of cloud, rather than part of the solid globe.

They stood and gazed in silence, till Cavatini said, his eyes fixed on that sky, which was slowly deepening its note, “To me it is like one of Bach’s great exultant choruses!”

Amades turned to him with an affectionate smile, “And having said that, there is no more to be said!”

“Well—is there? Both Bach and the sunset seem to have reached a final expression of beauty. Except that there is no final expression of beauty—it is endless and continuous, always changing, and always the same.”

“That is why we never tire of pursuing it,” said Amades.

“You feel that as acutely as you ever did?” Giovanni asked, glancing sideways quickly at Amades.

“More so, I think. But why do you ask?” And he turned full on his friend.

Cavatini paused, and looked round at the Wiltshire scene about them, at Hall Place standing whitely among its trees in the distance.

“This is a lovely country, Amades,” he said. “A kind country, into whose arms one can sink in peace. One grows to love it, I think. And you have an adorable wife, beautiful children, an ancestral mansion, wealth——”

“And so you think, my Giovanni, that I will sink into a comfortable sloth, and feel there is more satisfaction in a good dinner than in a fine sonata, and that beauty is concentrated in the rosy hue of a glass of port?”

His eyes flashed, though his mouth still smiled.

“No, oh, no!” Cavatini cried.

“Listen,” Amades said, laying a hand on his arm. “There is truth in what you say—and danger. I have not been in this country yet quite a year. It has been a holiday, a settling down, an exploration of a new life. And Lucy was having a baby. But long before you spoke it had entered my mind that it cannot go on like this. But it is not simple—I cannot let my music and my wife hurt each other. Before all this estate descended on her we had the perfect life together—I was with my work, she was with me. But I see how she belongs here, this is the country in which she has grown and is at home. And the children, especially Julian and Gillian, have already sent down roots—like the mandrake they would cry if pulled up. This is the place for them

to grow in"—he spread his hand to the darkening fields and woods—"not a fourth-floor flat in Vienna. And 'Bastian is heir to all this—pity 'tis not Julian, he is far more the perfect sporting Englishman—and must be brought up to his heritage, which cannot be done in Rome or Vienna. It is I and my career who do not fit the picture, I who am the interloper!"

A PROBLEM

"Your sweet wife would be very grieved if she heard you use such a word," Cavatini said.

"That is part of the problem. I do not think she could live without me, I am sure I could not live without her. Yet also I cannot live without music, to make it and to teach it. Some of my pupils already cry that they are eaten with despair if I return not to my classes in Vienna. I have engagements to play in various capitals which, of course, I shall fulfil. And when her baby is somewhat older, then Lucy will come with me—we shall constantly elope together from Withers St. Mary! But that does not solve this problem of my pupils, and of the musical contacts from which I am cut off in this English country, which is not even London. But come, Lucy will be awaiting us, and see that you mention none of this to her. I would rather lose the use of my right hand than distress her mind."

§ 22

Giovanni Cavatini lay awake a long time that night in his spacious and comfortable bed-chamber. Lucy had given him the blue room. As sleep appeared to have entirely departed from him, he got out of bed and drew the curtains back, and looked out on the country, misty and mysterious under a wandering moon. In the distance he could see the swelling curves of the Downs, looking so remote from the concerns of humanity, unless a humanity as remote as the Bronze Age. Giovanni was not an archæologist, but one or two things Amades had said and showed him in their walks had touched a dormant side of his imagination—his explorations into the past had been apt to stop at the seventeenth century.

Nearer lay the Park, with its broad stretches of grass, and its trees, the little white Palladian garden temple shining palely. His room was a corner one on the garden front, and from one window, to which he had moved to survey a slightly different scene, he could see something of the older portion of Hall Place. Cavatini did not know much about English architectural styles, but he realised that this agglomeration of roof and wall and jutting

gable, represented several dates of building. What a large and involved house it was, with its stabling and out-buildings, and that solid remaining portion of the old monastery, an angle of which he could just see. More like a small village! What a needless amount of room in which to house the Govoni family. But, of course, Amades had not chosen or built it, and did not need it, nor did his wife—he remembered how entirely content she had always been in the very moderate Vienna apartment. There were no repinings for the stately life she had abandoned for love of Amades. But wealthy and important families had always more room than use for their room.

He gazed broodingly at the softly moon-lit scene before him. Then a thought struck him. Was it possible? How many entrenched English customs and oppositions would stand in the way? But Amades had a manner of going directly through all obstacles to a thing if he really wanted it—as he had proved in the case of Lucy herself. And what a solution it would be for him—the two things he loved best brought harmoniously together under one roof. It could be done, it must be done! He shivered with a kind of excitement, and also because he was a little cold with long standing at the window. At all times of year the English climate was chilly and dangerous. He had been delighted to see the charming log fire in the grate when he came up to bed, but now the fire was sunk into a mass of grey ash which seemed to breathe now and again with a faint pulsation. He slipped back into his bed and pulled the covers over himself. He lay contentedly quiet till sleep closed his wide dark eyes. If he could help Amades—

§ 23

THE next morning he drew Amades aside and propounded his plan.

ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Amades stared at him. “Hullocky! as the stable boys here say! The surrounding nobility and gentry would have fits! They think I am mad enough already. But, of course, it’s a glorious idea—I wonder I never thought of it myself.”

“Of course it’s a glorious idea—I know in a few moments you will be claiming it as your own exclusive creation! But let us go and look at the out-buildings. I thought of that great room under the Chapel. And wasn’t there a big barn with nothing in it but sacks and some rusty agricultural implements?”

They went away, arm in arm, talking hard. An hour later they returned to the more residential portions of Hall Place, still talking hard, and looking very pleased with themselves. Amades at once shouted for Lucy, who came running down the wide staircase, and he caught her in his arms at the bottom.

"Lucy, my Angel, have you any serious objection if I turn your ancestral home into an Academy of Music, a Conservatoire, where the gifted of the world shall assemble to sit at the feet of your husband, and increase the velocity of their fingers and the flight of their souls?"

Lucy gazed at him with her mouth slightly open, then her expression changed to one of pure joy.

"Oh, Amades!" she cried. "Then you would not have to go abroad? The music could be here? Oh, how lovely! I was so worried."

She hid her face on his shoulder and began to sob.

Amades sat down on the bottom stair and took his wife on his knee. As he did so, the butler appeared from his own secret regions on some business of his own. He took in the scene with his pale prominent eye and silently withdrew.

"You never knows what you'll come across in this residence," he said later to the housekeeper. "Not nowadays, you don't."

Amades never saw the butler, and it would not have made any difference had he done so.

"You were worried?" he said to Lucy. "And you never told me. What do you mean by having secrets from your husband?"

Lucy looked at him with the look she kept for him alone: "But, of course, I knew how you felt about the music, and your genius being wasted. You could not go on like this. Of course I would go anywhere you wanted, but there are the children. It's all been so difficult!" She sighed, and looked, as Cavatini, standing by, thought, absurdly like a child herself in spite of her four children.

"And now it is not difficult any more, because Giovanni, who is as gifted in friendship as he is as a fiddler, has found the solution. 'If you cannot go to your pupils, why not make them come to you?' he asked me. So we shall make Withers St. Mary into a musical centre at which Vienna and Leipzig will gnash their teeth, and your English authorities will have to rechristen it Withers St. Cecilia."

“Or Withers St. Lucy,” said Cavatini smiling. “For it is she who gives consent.”

“Consent!” cried Lucy, jumping up. “Consent! I bless you for the idea.”

And to his great surprise she kissed him warmly on the cheek.

§ 24

“WE WILL BUILD”

LIKE three children they promptly set off again to explore the possibilities of existing buildings, and to tell Lucy their scheme in more detail.

She outdistanced their proposals. “We will build,” she said, the blood of her architecturally inclined ancestors rising within her. “Papa built when I was a little girl, and I remember what fun it was! Stones and mortar and mess and workmen all over the place!”

She did not realise that part of the fun had been that the building confusion had driven her mother to seek refuge in Town, so that she and her father had enjoyed each other’s unstinted companionship.

The Withers estate could supply a couple of good carpenters; there was plenty of seasoned oak in the wood-yard; and a family of excellent stone-masons in the village. No need to go from home. Amades knew enough about architecture to work out a satisfactory rough plan of what was required in alteration of existing structures, and addition of new buildings. A young architect was later found in Salisbury who put the whole thing into professional shape, and undertook to supervise the building. The young architect was a friend of Mr Flaxman’s, who took an immense interest in the building plan as soon as he heard of it, and was able to satisfy vicariously that passion for building which his purse had never permitted him to indulge, except in the most restricted manner.

The nucleus of the scheme was a big barn, with a magnificent timber roof, from which the derelict agricultural implements and trusses of hay were easily removed. Then the estate carpenters—a father and son gigantic in build and strength, and admirable craftsmen—were set to work to repair and replace worn timbers, and lay down above the trampled chalk floor of two centuries’ use, a floor of broad oak boards, tongued and grooved, and when finished a joy to behold. One end of this floor was raised, like the dais in old halls. Oak framed windows were put in, high up on the wall—“It is music, not seeing, we are intent on here,” said Amades. “There must be no

distractions"—and two immense stone fireplaces, one at each end, to provide the necessary warmth, both for human beings and for instruments. Oak presses were built, and long oaken benches with backs to them: "We will be spartan, but not penitential," Amades declared. The old barn door was too decrepit for further use, it let in almost as much wind and rain as it kept out, so the carpenters expended all their skill upon a great Gothic door which opened in two halves lengthways, and was divided into small square panels, the framework of the panels heavily studded with solid square iron nails, made by the blacksmith of Withers St. Mary. "It is like a church door," said Lucy, when she saw it in place. The blacksmith, who was a craftsman when given the chance, as his father and grandfather had been before him, made the latches and stays for the casement windows, and to amuse the Govoni children, who found the smithy an enchanting place, made the catches in the shape of mice with curly tails, and gave the ends of the stays cats' heads.

The old barn, when finished, was a noble hall, with the dignity and proportion of a fine church nave. There was not a nobler music room in Wiltshire.

GREAT BARN

A disused stone cow-byre at right angles to the barn, was floored, windowed, and divided into five practice or study rooms. A covered way was built leading to a little-used wing of Hall Place which would provide the necessary dining-room and bed chambers for the students.

All these alterations took several months to complete, in spite of the intensive labour applied to them. Cavatini, in whose brain the scheme had originated, had not been able to watch the processes of building and alteration which had given such delight to Lucy and Amades and their children. But he returned to pay another visit to Hall Place when the whole thing was completed. With his host and hostess he looked at every detail and was enchanted with the way in which the scheme had been carried out, and with the extraordinary beauty of the altered barn.

"Now," said Amades, his eyes gleaming with satisfaction, "having provided this unique and magnificent British Music School, what shall I do if no pupils come to me?"

Cavatini laughed: "Your name is enough, Amades—if you started a school in tents in the middle of the Sahara Desert, they would come! And even were you unknown they would flock here for the mere pleasure of studying in such a wonderful place."

“Ah, but that is not the class of pupil I care for. Pleasure has nothing to do with my method of teaching the pianoforte—it is pain and despair, and only the stoutest hearts come through! We ought to have provided a nice comfortable little cemetery while we were about it—at least one suicide a day is to be expected!”

He was in the highest spirits. There was something fantastic and of a kind of fairy tale quality about this Music School in Wiltshire which enchanted him. Certain difficulties and oppositions which he was sure to encounter, added to his pleasure. He had cared greatly about his special pupils in Vienna, and underneath his very real enjoyment of this first year of his English life, had been troubled about them. He was a born teacher to the few who could understand his outlook, and respond to his deeply passionate feeling about music. He took little interest in the mere virtuoso, the most brilliant finger dexterity left him unmoved, unless accompanied by spiritual understanding. “Knights of the Clavier,” Giovanni told him old Bach had called such performers, and for such knights Govoni had no more use than the great Leipzig Cantor.

Cavatini, though his temperament was so much less resilient than that of Amades, could also teach with exceptional ability and imagination, and the two musicians had many long talks together on methods and ideals.

“To us poor executants, death is complete extinction; when our fingers are still, our name is forgotten,” Amades burst out one day when they were talking. “Of the composer and of the poet it can be said ‘for now he lives in fame, though not in life.’ But not of us who perform upon a musical instrument, or are gifted with a golden voice. Rather a nasty thought, if one has a taste for being remembered!”

“We may live in our spiritual children, our pupils—not that Paganini took much thought for that, but then his genius was a thing untransmissible. There will never be another like him.”

ONLY ONE PAGANINI

The death of that violinist who had been his master seemed to him irreparable—all the centuries had only produced one Paganini.

“Well, you live to carry on the Paganini tradition and to remember him. We shall all die quite soon, but we will do something for music while we are alive.”

And perhaps after we are dead, was the thought in his mind, where he felt stirrings that might sprout into something he would leave behind him.

“There is a curious idea, you know,” he said to Giovanni on another occasion, “that music is geographical! As to what makes the character of nations we seem to know little—it is obvious that a very hot or very cold climate must produce a different kind of human being and mode of life, and soil and water, I suppose. But there are no such marked geological differences between Germany and France—yet look at the difference between the people. And the English—a mixture of all races, Celtic, Roman, Saxon, Danish, Norman, yet the result something that is none of these.”

Cavatini smiled affectionately. He loved to hear Amades discoursing. It brought back the memory of their early happy days together, when they tramped through Germany and Italy, and talked—or rather Amades talked, and he listened. He was a good listener, and though he by no means invariably agreed with everything that Amades said, he loved listening to him, loved his extravagance and enthusiasm. His own life was almost entirely occupied with music, and lived among musicians—and musicians, as he would admit, were rather segregated and self-centred in their interests. It was rare to find among them the intellectual curiosities and interests, the appreciation of things quite outside music, that marked Amades. He put music first, but he recognised other arts and works. And he had the domestic contacts of husband and father—taking both parts in a way that filled Giovanni with a wistful admiration. He would never be either—only the lover more without hope than any the world had ever seen.

But while he was thinking these thoughts, Amades was still talking. What was he saying now?

“The only thing you can safely say about the average Englishman is that he is not a musician!”

“Oh, Amades!” Lucy broke in. “Is that quite fair? There must have been some great English musicians.”

“Have there been, my Angel? Then I wish you would tell me their names.”

Lucy could not think of any, which rather vexed her. She was quite sure she had heard of some, but their names escaped her.

“Well,” she said at last. “Somebody wrote music a long time ago. When I was little there was a whole lot of it in a chest in the dormer attic—rather queer kind of music-writing, I remember.”

The two musicians were at once interested.

“Show us where it is!” they demanded, and Lucy led them to the old attic, in the Jacobean part of the house, where she had often played as a child, and which had been hardly touched in the years since, save to add to it a few more discarded household objects. After a little search the old chest of hide, with its corners iron-bound and its massive iron lock, was discovered, and with some difficulty opened. It contained some parchment rolls and legal documents that did not appear to have any particular interest, and some oblong vellum-bound music-books, with the covers very stained and warped with damp, neglect, and age. They were obviously extremely old, and the music was, of course, all written by hand on hand-ruled staves.

OLD ENGLISH MUSIC

“This is much earlier than Bach’s day,” said Cavatini. “At least a century earlier, I should say. ‘A Concert of Viols’—this looks interesting, Amades. Let us collect all these volumes and see what we can make of them.”

And so the two Italian musicians, Amades Govoni and Giovanni Cavatini, were first made acquainted with the music of Byrd, Purcell, Orlando Gibbons, John Dowland, Thomas Campion, Giles Farnaby. Among the treasures in that chest were pavanes and galliards for the virginal; ayres and madrigals “apt for voices or viols”; some of Purcell’s sonatas for two violins, viol da gamba, and harpsichord; and, to Amades’ particular delight, Lawe’s music for Milton’s masque of “Comus.”

Lucy was justified of her remark that there were great English musicians, as her husband and his friend handsomely admitted.

Amades was really deeply excited by the discovery of the beauty and vitality of the music of the country which was his adopted home.

Cavatini said simply, “Bach would have valued these English composers.”

§ 25

One of the things that particularly appealed to Giovanni about this Hall Place Music School was its resemblance in idea—though carried out with a so much greater spaciousness and lavishness of equipment—to the old Germanic idea of the pupils residing under their master’s roof. His thoughts returned—though perhaps it was not possible to return to a place from which part of him was never absent—to the household of Johann Sebastian Bach at

Leipzig, where he, by his ancestor's letters and his own mysterious link of the blood, was so strangely at home. And because at home there, in some way cut off from his own day.

Lucy, who had grown almost as attached to Giovanni as her husband was, felt this.

"I do wish," she said one day to Amades, "that Giovanni would marry. He has a kind of lost look. I am sure he needs someone to love—I know he loves you, but I mean a woman, who would love him in return, and care for him, and be with him. If only our Gillian were a little older——"

She sighed, and looked at her husband.

"Sweetheart," said Amades, "I know you want everyone to be happy. But if Gillian were of a suitable age it would not make the least difference. As I have told you before, I have never known Giovanni, in all the years in which we have been close friends, look at or speak of any woman as a lover. There have been several charming members of your charming sex prepared to take a tender interest in him—but he always remains completely unconscious, or completely indifferent. I do not know which it is. But the result is the same; no woman gets near him."

"Do you think perhaps he loved someone who is dead? I have often felt that may be the explanation."

GIOVANNI'S SECRET

"That is possible—nevertheless, had that been so, I think he would have told me of it."

But in spite of their deep and tested friendship, Giovanni had this one secret which Amades did not know, which he kept silently hidden away, the secret of the "flower unopened," withdrawn in a dream. Only to his grandfather—almost unavoidably after that scene in the Cantor's *Componierstube*—and to Father Sebastian Narni, had he told it. To no other human beings were his lips ever unsealed on the matter of Catherina Bach.

But if he kept this personal secret till his death, he gave all else that he possessed of enthusiasm and knowledge to his friend Amades in the establishment of this Music School. They spent days together in planning details of equipment and curriculum. Amades meant to start as a purely keyboard school—Giovanni wished that it should have a broader basis.

"Simply because you are a string player!" scoffed Amades. "And all you fiddlers on catgut look down upon those who perform on the keyboard as inferior beings!"

“Was not Bach primarily an organist?” Cavatini asked with a smile.

Amades clutched his brow with dramatic despair. “Foiled again! as the villain cried! Do you think, friend of my heart, that you could for a brief period imagine a world in which Bach did not exist?—it might simplify our discussions!”

“There is no such world, thank God!”

Amades gave it up. But he brought Cavatini to agree that, at least at the beginning, the Music School should be simply for his own pupils. “Would you, Giovanni, consent to come and live here, then it should, of course, become a Violin School too. Nothing would give Lucy and me and your godson greater joy.”

Giovanni was touched, because he knew it was true. But nothing could dissever him from Leipzig. There he meant to live: there, above all, he meant to die. In Leipzig earth, in the churchyard of St. John, his bones should rest.

§ 26

WHEN the necessary building and alterations were completed, Lucy and Amades left their children behind them in their Wiltshire home, and went to Vienna for a few weeks to make arrangements about five of Amades’ most cherished pupils, who were to be the nucleus of the new school.

“Perhaps there will be no other pupils,” he said to his wife, “but if I can make these five young men into the musicians God meant them to be, then I shall have accomplished something. But they will be a funny crew at Withers St. Mary—what do you think the natives will make of them?”

“Treat them with the patronising kindness English people always apply to foreigners, knowing the poor things cannot help it!” said Lucy smiling.

Amades stared at her. “My Angel, are you feeling quite well? That remark is more in my style than yours.”

“I have learned something about other people than the English since we were married, darling. And the way some English people talk about foreigners——!”

“I heard Lady Garraway had paid you a recent visit! I suppose she wanted to find out about our extraordinary doings?”

FIRST PUPILS

Lucy nodded vigorously: “She is the most inquisitive woman in Wiltshire. And she didn’t a bit believe in the Music School. I’m quite sure she thinks we have lost most of our money and are turning the Hall into an hotel or spa. She kept saying that the water of that old closed-up well near the churchyard—it was once a holy well, Papa said—used to be considered medicinal, and why did we not open it up again?”

“So medicinal that I should think even Lady Garraway would never talk again if she drank it! But we will invite her to meet the pupils one day—as they none of them talk English, and only the Austrian speaks French, it ought to be amusing!”

The first five pupils who came to Withers St. Mary were of varied nationalities. Besides the Austrian, there was a German from Erfurt, a Pole, and two Italians, brothers, who in course of time became famous as the Piacci Brothers who performed all the great music written for two pianofortes on the concert platforms of Europe. There was not one of the five who did not attain a European celebrity, and in so doing carried the name of a small Wiltshire village into the musical circles of the world. Most of Govoni’s musical acquaintance in Vienna had thought the scheme quite mad.

“But, my dear friend, whoever heard of any English place in serious connection with music? The thing is palpably absurd!”

“What do you know of England? Probably never been there! I do not propose to teach a whole chattering class—I never have done, and do not intend to do so. When you come to think of it, the way we teach music to regiments of pupils, in noisy towns, is quite mad. Much madder than my school. In rural surroundings, where the only noise is that of birds singing and streams murmuring, without distractions, in a sort of monastic peace, these few chosen pupils will have a chance to learn what I can teach. In the silence music can make itself heard, and perhaps character—if these young men have such a thing—will find the opportunity to develop. Also there is a beauty of the eye, as well as of the ear—musicians are apt to forget this, and live as if visual ugliness were no matter. Look at the houses of some of our distinguished Herr Professors—look at their wives!”

He grinned broadly, and there was a slight uneasy stir among his audience. Amades Govoni had always been apt to make injudicious remarks—a tendency which had perforce to be overlooked owing to his genius. There were few to dispute his position as the outstanding classical pianist of

his time. And one or two of his old colleagues, as they looked at him, realised that while they themselves looked aged, Govoni seemed, if anything, younger. Partly his fair colouring, perhaps, and that irrepressible streak of boyish humour in him. Perhaps, also, happiness—his English wife was curiously attractive, and it was difficult to believe that she was the mother of, was it, four children?

"Is it four, the number of your children, Govoni?" one of the musicians asked. "And have they inherited musical talent, this quartet?"

"My quartet could hardly appear on the platform together," Govoni answered. "As my eldest son is beginning to think he is grown up, and the youngest child cannot yet walk!"

"But what of those between?—and what of the musical talent?"

SONS AND DAUGHTERS

"The musical talent, at present, seems concentrated in my eldest boy, whose whole existence from birth has been concentrated on the fiddle—he despises the pianoforte! My second son is what you might describe as completely English—horses and dogs, rats and ferrets are the things he likes best. He may have inherited his love of horses from me, but not his interest in rats, even though it is only a destructive one. He loves rats, because they are there to kill—he would be quite desolate if the race of rats died out!"

"Yes," said his listener, who was not interested in the question of rats, or even, particularly, in that of love. "Yes, and there are two other children, I understand?"

"Girls. One, as I have said, not yet upon her feet; the other a little witch who in a few years' time will have a most devastating effect upon my pupils! If you have any sons who wish to benefit from the unique opportunities which I offer at Withers St. Mary, send them speedily, before Gillian becomes dangerous!"

He smiled tenderly as he thought of the lovely child, just faintly becoming conscious of her womanhood, though nothing male outside a fairy tale or a ballad, had ever touched her imagination. She had Lucy's fundamental innocence, though Gillian's youth had been more free and young-companioned than Lucy's early days.

It was entirely Lucy's doing, he reflected later, this Pianoforte School of his which was raising such surprise among his colleagues in Vienna and elsewhere. It was because he could not endure to leave Lucy for anything but the briefest periods. The constant and steady work of teaching could not

be done in absence from her. Her inheritance of the Withers estate had certainly complicated both their lives, and might have been disastrous either to his music or his marriage. But he believed they would so manage this affair that neither would suffer. And for the children he felt it was pure blessing—not for the wealth, he never thought that important, but for the background, the roots, the thing he had never had himself. He was beginning to believe there was something about the English countryside no other country in the world possessed—the settled temperate quality, the kindness of it. He was glad his children were half English—Julian, he fancied, was going to become wholly so, and a bit over! Queer, the whole thing. If he had never played that night in Rome. If he had never seen Lucy——

§ 27

WILTSHIRE society round Withers St. Mary was scandalised, and thoroughly disapproving of the Music School. Such a thing had never been heard of before in the county, which proved it must be wrong. But then, so far as anyone could recall, no Wiltshire heiress of quality had ever married a foreign musician. This serious mistake might in time have been overlooked had there been any sign that Lucy intended to play her proper part as a hostess and revive the past glories of Hall Place. But there had been no such indication. The Govoni family actually appeared to prefer their own society to that of the neighbourhood. It was an unheard-of attitude, and most reprehensible. It had always been imagined that whatever foreigners were, they were at least gregarious. But the Rector, Mr Flaxman, was the only person who was in any way on intimate terms with the Govoni family. And that in itself was curious, as they were all Roman Catholics. But the whole thing was curious, unsatisfactory—though that was to be expected. And now this extraordinary Music School, foreigners of all kinds swarming into Wiltshire. The local ladies made up their minds to keep a strict watch on their daughters. They did not intend to suffer the disaster that had befallen poor Mrs Withers when Lucy eloped in such a surprising way.

DISAPPROVAL

The result of all this talk and feeling was exactly what Lucy and Amades would have most desired. They were left considerably and increasingly to themselves. No sense of isolation visited them—the establishment at Hall Place was large enough to provide its own life, even before the Music School began its activities.

Govoni's five chosen pupils, who were to start the scheme, had been overcome with joy when he summoned them to him in Vienna, and told them what he proposed. They vowed an allegiance as to a feudal lord, which made Govoni laugh affectionately at them.

"I do not really want all this wonderful devotion," he said, "save your devotion for Bach and Beethoven. What I want is work—and that you will behave yourselves with monastic decorum in this English village to which you are coming. No amorous dalliance with rural maidens—anyone of you who is found running after a petticoat, goes. Understand that quite clearly. Music is your only goddess—not a very respectable goddess in English eyes, you will find! We must give them no cause to enlarge that opinion. But it's a good country, and once was a country of musicians—I'll introduce you to a little English music which will surprise you later on. And you can learn to walk, and to swim, and to fish—it will all help you to be proper musicians."

Lucy was enchanted with the whole thing, enchanted that her home should have lent itself so perfectly to the scheme, and offered its oak and its stone and its native craftsmen's hands for the building—offered, too, the necessary peace and quiet seclusion from the world. "It is like Vienna over again!" she said, when the barn and the cow-byre echoed to sonata and fugue.

Her eldest son was as enchanted as she, listening for hours to his father's teaching of the five young men, and thereby immensely increasing the scope of his understanding of music, and in the more leisure hours playing violin sonatas with a potential famous pianist as his partner and accompanist.

Great log fires were lit in the barn on winter nights, the raised dais at one end illuminated by lamps, the lids of the two grand pianofortes raised, and music was made for the sheer pleasure of making it, though there might be none to listen save themselves, and perhaps Mr Flaxman and Great-Aunt Caroline.

Lucy was a little disturbed by this.

"Do you not think we should ask some people to come and enjoy this glorious music?" she asked her husband.

"Certainly—if there were any to enjoy it among our neighbours. Do you think Admiral and Mrs Melton would appreciate it, or deaf Lady Spicer, or the Egyptologist Mr Hackman, or Lady Garraway, who finds it agony to stop talking? No, Angel, I think we will keep our music to ourselves—

people would only come to stare, not to listen. One of these days we will give a Grand Farewell Concert, with printed programmes, and bouquets for all the performers!”

He laughed, and kissed her, and went back to his class.

BACH’S CHILD

Lucy was relieved. She did not really want to invite the neighbours, who none of them had the least understanding of music. It was only an uneasy sense of social duty that had stirred in her—and that could be better met by a garden party when the weather was again warm and suitable. She much preferred to keep this music to themselves, who loved and understood it, and to watch how her Amades expanded in the atmosphere and the work that was so deeply congenial to him. He worked as hard, and harder, than his pupils. His thoughts were turning to composition, and to prepare himself by intercourse with what he was coming more and more to recognise as the highest and the deepest of all musical minds, he was arranging Bach’s organ chorals for the pianoforte. The work absorbed him—the thought, the beauty, of Bach became part of his own being. With humility, with hope, he began to feel himself Bach’s child.

§ 28

THERE was one person at Hall Place who did not approve of the Music School—Sabrina was too young to express her opinion—and that was the second son of the house, Julian. But he was terribly interested in the building operations, and the improvised carpenter’s shop became a place of his daily resort. His hands were clever with tools, and he soon learned to saw straight and to adze a beam. The carpenter and his son were shy of his handling their cherished tools at first, the beechwood moulding planes, the shell augers, the tenon saw, which can be so disastrously damaged by unskilled use, but when they discovered that he had the right instincts, the right hands—perhaps he had inherited a certain delicacy and balance of touch from his father—they taught him a lot. He spent hours of each day watching, learning, listening, and not only learned how to use many of the carpenters’ tools, but began to talk as though his father had been a carpenter, and his grandfather a stone-mason.

He was so interested in the work being done that he did not give much thought to its purpose—something to do with music, he thought vaguely. His upbringing had inured him to music as a part of existence as necessary and

inevitable as one's dinner. He did not dislike music, when one was pleasantly sleepy by the fire after a long day out of doors, it was quite agreeable to listen to, but he was quite content without it. His father was jolly good at it, he knew that, and his sturdy young fists would have quickly done damage to anyone who had dared to speak slightingly of his father as a musician, or a man. But with every month he passed at Withers St. Mary he was becoming more English, and more wrapped up in rural pursuits. If Lucy or Amades perchance addressed him in caressing Italian—a tongue they often spoke together—he invariably replied, with a sort of defiant stiffness, in English. He thought of himself as English, he had no wish to recall anything of what he now regarded as his "foreign" childhood. This place was where he belonged. He was going to Sherborne, where his grandfather and great-grandfather, and farther back forbears had gone, and then, when he had finished with his education, he would come back and live for ever and ever at Withers St. Mary. He knew that the estate would descend to his elder brother Sebastian, which seemed slightly regrettable, as 'Bastian was really so much more interested in his fiddling. But just because of that he would want someone to look after the estate, so he would settle down, in the Dower House, perhaps, Great-Great-Aunt Caroline would be dead long before then, and attend to all the interesting things, and hunt, and skate on the great pond in winter, and Sebastian could get on with his violin. It would all work out excellently. Even while his father and mother were alive he could begin to do something of the kind, after he had left Sherborne, for his father was a musician too—and, of course, not English. Odd, that thought. Julian looked at it for a moment, and then put it away rather hastily.

OVERHEARD REMARKS

It was some overheard remarks of the men engaged on the music room, which first really disturbed him.

"Rum go, this," said the carpenter, as he chose some suitable nails slowly from a heap in front of him. "Doan't know what the old Guv'nor would 'ave thought of a lot of furriners coming to live in this place, Turks and Rooshians, and the like."

"Is it really Turks?" said another man with interest.

"All sorts, I heard tell, and all on 'em playing away day and night—why, 'tis enough to scare the pheasants off their eggs. Gamekeeper, he's real mad about it, says he'll not have no long-haired furriners a-trampling about his woods, and frighting the very foxes out of their holes."

“ ’Taint English, that it’s not—if he wants these kind of games, why doan’t he do ’em in his own country, wherever that is, I never rightly heard tell.”

“What’s it matter where it be, they’re all alike, them furrin parts. My son Tom, he’ve been in the Tropicals, and ’e says as there’s nothing to choose between ’em—all nasty! Give me Wiltsheer, says ’e. An’ I doan’t like no changes—I likes to go on steady, like we allus done. Old Squire, if he’d asseen furriners walking about on his land, why, ’e’d a shot ’em, good an’ quick, ’e would.”

“Well, mates,” said the carpenter, who was the oldest man among them, “we’d better be gettin’ on with this roof—it’s got to be done proper, furriners or no furriners.”

Julian’s ears were red and his face pale as he crept away from the partition besides which he had been standing when the men’s conversation began.

Foreigners! That was what they all seemed—not his mother, of course—to these Wiltshire men, born on the land, as much part of it as the badger in his hole, and the beech-trees of the chalk. His father could not help the misfortune of his Italian birth—indeed, from his colouring, and the way he sat a horse (Julian admired him intensely on horseback) he might easily have been taken for an Englishman. But then he went and did a thing like this, which no Englishman would ever dream of doing. He must go and explain to him—probably he did not understand how people were talking and feeling about it. He could not wish them to talk like that, he could not wish to make himself conspicuous and unlike his neighbours. The English passion for inconspicuous uniformity was already beginning to take hold of Julian, young though he was.

So he searched for and found his father. Amades, as his son came into the room, was struck afresh with surprise at his growth, his height, which yet had a sturdy look, his open-air countenance, the little quite unconscious swagger—an English youth, if ever there was one, and as completely unlike his elder brother in looks, as in temperament. But he appeared worried, which was unusual in his case.

“You have a worried and a serious air, Julian. What’s the matter? Lost your favourite ferret?”

“I’M ENGLISH”

Julian brushed this aside: “It’s the barn—they say you are going to bring over a lot of foreigners to live

here, and teach them music."

Govoni's eyes narrowed a little. "Well, you knew all about that before, it's not news."

"I knew that you were going to have a kind of music school, but I didn't know you were going to have a lot of foreigners to teach."

"Who did you think I was going to teach? Deaf Lady Spicer, or the local clod-hoppers, the cowman and the stable-boy? Not but what I'd teach them if they had talent, but I fear they do not excel in that way."

"But, Father, you can't do that—people will not like it—English people don't do things of that sort!"

"Are we English?—you and I, Julian?"

The boy hesitated, flushed scarlet, and said half under his breath, "I'm English."

"Your surname is Govoni, not Withers, and I do not wish to hear you talk of your countrymen as 'foreigners.' I am a foreigner too, if that's the case."

"You can't help it," Julian mumbled uncomfortably. "And anyway, you look quite English."

"Thank you—I realise that is a compliment. It is a pity you are not the elder son, the part would appeal to you more than it does to 'Bastian. But we cannot alter that, and we cannot alter the fact that you are only half English. And you may as well understand that I shall take such pupils as I choose in this school which your mother and I are building. I do not mind if they are Chinese, if they are talented."

There was an edge to his voice, though he smiled at Julian. He laid a hand on the boy's shoulder: "There are many English virtues, which you will do well to acquire—but do not cultivate the English weakness of thinking it matters what your neighbours say. It matters no more than a puff of wind! Now, clear out, I'm busy."

He tapped the sheets of music paper that lay on the table before him.

But when his son had somewhat awkwardly departed, Amades did not at once get to his work. He sat and thought. It was obvious that in his two sons the nationalities of their parents had not mingled, but split—one so definitely Italian, the other equally markedly English. Was it going to mean

difficulty, maladjustment, unhappiness? One brought the incalculable, the unforeseen, into the world in bringing children.

§ 29

USE and wont take the edge off any new thing, and before Govoni's music school had been in existence a year it became almost as acclimatised in Wiltshire as Salisbury Cathedral and Stonehenge. The pupils in the first years were all foreigners, but they were so entirely absorbed in their work, and Govoni imposed such an almost monastic discipline, and they were allowed so little opportunity to mingle with the local inhabitants, not to speak of the barrier of language, that their invisibility conveyed a quality of respectability upon them. And after a time there were one or two English pupils, young men of conspicuous talent. Govoni played in London with the Philharmonic Society, and the English musical public grew to acclaim, as the Continental public had done for many years, his incomparable powers, his genius in particular with the works of Bach and Beethoven. He had tried to keep the knowledge of his Wiltshire music school from spreading beyond a narrow circle. Being as it was within the park walls of Hall Place in a small, secluded village, he had hoped to keep it private to himself and his few chosen pupils with whom he wished to work, to try experiments both in keyboard technique and in interpretation of accepted classics. He was studying anatomy with an enthusiastic young surgeon he had met in Salisbury, as he wished to understand the most accurate, delicate, and powerful use of the shoulder muscles, and the economical and accurate use of the fingers—the loose-hung forearm, floating in air, the hammer-shoulder that could transmit the force of the body to the interpretative fingers. And he found, what Bach knew, a century or more before him, that the quiet, horizontal hand was the right position for the proper use of the fingers—the hand that flowed like water across the keys.

TECHNICAL STUDIES

Experimenting in these and other ways, he did not desire an influx of unsuitable pupils. Yet at his every appearance on a public platform he was besieged by young men who besought the privilege to call him master. They waved diplomas and certificates in his face—they had studied abroad with the famous Herr This and the celebrated Signor The-Other. If opportunity offered they swooped upon a pianoforte and showed him what they could do. He usually politely assured them that it was so good he could not possibly improve it. He occasionally lost his temper and swept them from

the room and slammed the door. Now and again a face sensitive and intelligent, good hands, would attract him, he would ask a question and demand the playing of a Beethoven scherzo or a Bach toccata. If the test were passed with some indication of real thought and feeling, even though with an imperfect technique, then a new pupil might journey down to Withers St. Mary. But Govoni was chary of new pupils, and the more chary he was, the more eager they were for admission to a paradise guarded with such a flaming sword. It was not to be entered by money—Govoni could ask what he would for his recitals, and he would teach a poor and promising pupil for nothing, with his material support included. As the years passed the number of pupils somewhat increased by sheer pressure from without, but he never would allow more than ten.

“I cannot count beyond ten!” he would say, spreading his two hands in an exaggeratedly foreign gesture. So when the number of ten was reached all that the most hopeful aspirant could do was to wait till death or public appearance removed one of the favoured few from Withers St. Mary.

Eminent professors and instrumentalists of all kinds and nationalities came on visits of enquiry and inspection from all the musical centres of Europe. They were surprised, and, generally, enchanted.

“But the peace!” they would say, indicating the beech-trees, the lawns, the encircling Downs. They walked to the small thatched, stone-built village through the Park.

“What a setting for an English rural opera!” cried a fat and famous tenor. “Only, of course, there is no English opera! But I can see yon rose-wreathed casement open and a lovely soprano—only once again there are no sopranos who are lovely, if their voice is good, then their figure is like mine!—lean forth to carol to the morn, and below I wait and join my voice to hers in the so-famous duet ——”

QUARTET PLAYERS

He showed signs of bursting into song, but Amades laid a restraining hand upon him.

“Not here, not now, Pietro! I have my reputation to consider—it’s a bit shaky in any case, as I’m a foreigner in these parts, like yourself. But if you began singing in the village street, Miss Derry, who is a most charitable lady, would probably rush out and give you a penny!”

“But I should be so proud—to have an honest-earn, as you say, English penny!”

Sometimes, when a sufficient number of musicians were visiting Hall Place together, there would be concerts in the beautiful old barn, to which no listeners were invited save a few who really loved music and had not to struggle with the powerful desire either to yawn or to make whispered remarks during its performance. The atmosphere was as restful as it was receptive—the darkly arching beams overhead, the big log fire, two log fires if the weather was cold, the wax candles in ancient, black iron tall stands, that had been discovered by Gillian in an outhouse, lighting each music desk.

On one or two occasions Cavatini stayed at Hall Place when its roof also sheltered a fine viola player and a ’cellist. So then the quartets of Haydn and Beethoven became possible, with Sebastian as second fiddle, as well as the violin sonatas of Bach, which Amades and Giovanni always played together when in each other’s company.

Lucy loved the quartet evenings in the big barn—loved them because Amades was free to sit by her side and listen, and by the pressure of his hand and the glance of his eye share and deepen her pleasure in that heavenly music which flowed from the four sets of strings, and floated into her heart and settled there. She looked round the big, dim room, at her son at the second desk, so absorbed and grave, at the three other players, at Gillian, grown so pretty, sitting on a cushion by the hearth, at Great-Aunt Caroline, thin and upright in a high-backed chair, her feet set precisely side by side on a footstool, her eyes closed in the far-off dreams of old age. Amades was too close to her to be seen, and she had no need to look at him, any more than to look at herself, they were part of one another. Why to her had been given this blessing, so rare and difficult of attainment, of a marriage whose love and delight increased with the years, she could never understand. It shook her heart at times with fear—could any earthly thing so perfect last? Yes, answered the music, this is more perfect, and will last when you and all you love, are gone—this longing and this gratitude of another human heart. They were playing Beethoven’s “*Von Herzen, mag sie zu Herzen gehen*.” From the heart it comes—ah, who could doubt it as they listened to the four big and little fiddles weaving their star-shine and tears—to the heart it goes.

Lucy turned to her husband. The tears of happiness that in response to that music stood in her eyes, gleamed in the light of the big fire. He picked up the hand that lay in her lap, and kissed it. And then he thought of Beethoven and his life. None of this domestic peace and joy had ever been his, and from his empty heart and hands he had poured this immortal music that would outlast joy and outlast grief of generations yet unborn. It flashed

across his mind how some Catholics were brave enough to pray that prayer which asks to be given their Purgatory here and now. Ah, no, he was not courageous enough for that. He stood up, he shook his shoulders. The quartet, to its last lovely note, was ended.

GREAT FUGUE

"And now," said he, stepping forward to the desks of the players, who were tuning and resining, and the 'cellist, who was a burly man, mopping his forehead, "you will please to tackle the Great Fugue. Lucy has not yet had an opportunity to hear it, and I can never hear it too often! It braces one to fight the world, it is as great as its name!"

§ 30

BUT these concerts in the big barn were only golden episodes in a long, hard programme of work. Govoni's ideas of work were of a rather terrifying order. His own abounding physical energy, his intense vitality, were not possessed by all his pupils, and one or two of them found the strain too great, and had to retire in desolation. But the gaps in the ranks were immediately filled. "A concert pianist must be tough, as well as emotional," Govoni declared. He made them take more exercise, in walking over the Downs, up hill and down dale, than most of them had ever taken in their lives before. He made them swim in the lake that lay in the Park, and if they could not swim, he taught them. He would have made them ride, but he said he did not think that would be fair to the horses—though there was one wiry little Pole who was as good a horseman as he was himself, and who was always begging for a horse. So often, indeed, that Govoni asked him whether he would not prefer the career of a jockey to that of a pianist. "You are just the build," he said, looking at him mischievously. "Whereas I am debarred by size from that exciting existence!"

Then, having exercised the flabbiness out of his pupils, Govoni turned to their musical education with an ardour, an enthusiasm, a deep and burning passion, that was his peculiar gift as a teacher. No one who had not seen Govoni teaching a responsive and accomplished pupil really knew what he was like. Those who had been his pupils carried the memory of him to the day of their death, and in some manner bore his stamp, however marked their own individuality might be.

The sensitive and highly wrought sometimes broke down in despair at what they regarded as their own complete failure, and then to them Govoni

would quote his favourite saying of Beethoven, “Artists burst into flames, not tears!” But, he would add, tears also were necessary. “Remember,” he said, to the young man playing the *Arioso dolente* in Beethoven’s penultimate sonata “that your heart is broken!”

He would smile, yet though he smiled, his own heart broke anew each time he heard that slow movement, or the *Arietta* of that mysterious last sonata—that tender, humble *Arietta* of Beethoven.

He knew that the loftiest experience he could instil was that of one taking to his heart such music.

Book Four

Brief Idyll

§ 1

GILLIAN, at seventeen, was a lovely creature, and not simply by reason of her youth and grace, but from some quality which came from her expanding mind. Music, amidst which she lived, had wrought its work upon her, but more than music, though she loved it dearly, she cared for poetry—for English poetry more than any other. It was not the majestic, Miltonic kind of poetry she loved most—though she could admire its grandeur—but the poetry which described and rejoiced in the English country sights and sounds she saw about her. Herrick, and Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads" enchanted her far more than Pope. She loved John Dyer's "Grongar Hill," and she loved Cowper. But there was one poet whose poems she had found in a small Salisbury bookshop and bought for herself, that she loved more than any other. His name was John Medlicott, and the volume was called *Poems, Chiefly of Rural Life*.

When she had read this volume, she went back to the shop in Salisbury—a little dark shop with a many-paned bow window, to which you went down one step from the level of the cobbles—and asked the old bookseller, who was also a book-lover, if he could tell her anything about John Medlicott.

She stood inside the low doorway, looking like spring in the retreat of winter. The old bookseller knew her well, the poems of Medlicott were not by any means the first book she had bought from him.

"Is he alive?" she asked. "Will he write any more poems, do you think?"

"I'm sure if he could have a glimpse of you enquiring for them, he would," thought the old man, his eyes smiling at her through his large spectacles. But aloud he said, "Why, yes, Missy, he's alive all right. Why, he has been in this shop of mine more than once. He's a Wiltshire man, you must know, he was born not such a great way from where you live, at Norton Baverwick."

"He has been here!" said Gillian, looking round the shop with reverential eyes. "Could you tell me what he is like to look at?"

“Well, I don’t know as I have looked at him so carefully as all that—I look more at books and their title-pages and imprints than I do at faces.”

“But you *must* have looked at him!” said Gillian, clasping her hands together in her anxiety.

“Well, of course, I’ve seen him. He’s tall, a bit of a scarecrow, as you might say, rather awkward in a small place like this, knocks books off the table and doesn’t seem to notice he has done it. But then, what can you expect?”

“Why do you say that, Mr Vincent?”

“Well, his father was a poor labourer in husbandry, and he spent his early years at the plough-tail. You can always tell in the walk, it gives a kind of roll. And he’s had very little chance of education, except what he got for himself.”

Gillian was shocked to think that a poet should struggle under such disabilities—she would have had them the most favoured of God’s creatures, and as carefree as nightingales and thrushes.

RURAL POET

“How he manages to keep himself nobody quite knows,” the bookseller went on. “But then, of course, he doesn’t need very much, a goose-quill and a notebook and the country to walk about in—that’s all he seems to want.”

“But he needs food and clothes—and a fire!”

“Yes, he needs food and clothes, as we all do. But I don’t think a fireside troubles him much, he seems to like all weathers, so long as he is out of doors.”

“Is he old or young?” Gillian asked.

The bookseller’s eyes twinkled at her: “Well, he’s not so old as I am, nor so young as you. He’s what you might call betwixt and between, twenty-eight or thirty, maybe. And though he is a shambling sort of a fellow, he’s got a nice kind of a face and a fine-shaped head—plenty of room in it for his thoughts! He’ll write some more poetry, if I’m not mistaken.”

“Does it help him if people buy his books?” said Gillian. “I mean does he have more money?”

“Of course it helps him. What do you think people write books for, Miss Gillian?”

"I'm sure he does not write his poems to make money," Gillian replied. "But everybody needs some money. I'll have six copies," she added, pointing to a small pile of the poems. "I can give them to my friends."

"Well, maybe they will become valuable one of these days—our Wiltshire poet," said Mr Vincent, as he wrapped the books up. "I will send them to-morrow by the carrier."

"No," said Gillian, who had the true book-lover's instinct of not being parted from a purchase. "I will take them, please. My Mamma is shopping in Salisbury, and I am driving home with her."

§ 2

The house was over a quarter of a mile away, and Gillian knew she had not time to reach it before that purple looming cloud spilt forth its deluge. It had grown much darker than she thought, not only with the threatening thunderstorm, but with the dusk of oncoming night. She should not have stayed so long in her favourite seat under the beech-tree whose silvery roots made a sort of arm chair. And she had always been told that trees were dangerous in thunderstorms. A sudden lightning flash lit up the white columns and circular steps of the little Garden Temple, as though a finger pointed to it. That was her nearest refuge, and she fled there, as a big drop of rain fell heavily on her forehead, and another smote her thin-clad shoulder.

The Temple was a curious little structure, Greek in intention, and built of marble expensively imported from Italy by an eighteenth century Withers. It was substantial enough, and in spite of its curved and open colonnade sufficiently deep to provide ample shelter from the storm, as the back of the building to the north was solid, and only the front was open.

Torrents of rain were now descending, and the lowering clouds had completed the eclipse of approaching night. Gillian sat down on a marble bench, and, half-frightened, half-exhilarated, watched the scene, through the veils of water, by the sudden vivid light that spread it out before her eyes, and then withdrew it into sudden glooms. It grew darker and darker, so that except during the lightning flashes she could see very little, and each flash left her eyes too dazzled for seeing, till the succeeding flash tore the black veil again. And the crash and roar of the thunder was so continuous it made her feel dazed. Gillian liked thunderstorms—only not quite such bad ones as this, when she was all alone, and at this distance from her home. She would have run

VESTAL VIRGIN

home and taken the soaking, only it had been so constantly impressed upon her by her mother, who was much afraid of thunderstorms, that you must never be under trees in a storm. And the trees between her and the Hall were rocking so in the gale that it sounded like the sea on a shingle beach.

There was a sudden momentary lull in the wind, though not in the rain, and in that pause Gillian heard running footsteps, and was conscious a minute later that someone had entered the Temple.

"Who is there?" she cried in a small frightened voice.

But before any answer could be given, the next lightning flash depicted the figure of a man standing by the entrance, revealing at the same moment her white, nymph-like form.

"A Vestal Virgin!" the man exclaimed, in a voice so gentle, and still a little shaken from his running, that Gillian ceased to feel any fear of him. But the voice was unknown to her, and had some quality in its intonation that was strange to her ear.

"Do not fear, maiden," the voice went on, "I took refuge here from the floods, and grieve if I have startled you. I little thought that anyone save myself would be abroad in such a storm."

"Do you like being out in storms?" Gillian asked, feeling entirely reassured, there was something in the voice that gave her confidence, and a curious content.

"I always like being out in the fields and hills, to see what is happening there in all kinds of weather."

"What sort of things?" Gillian asked.

"The way trees grow, and water moves, and where rivers rise, and birds sing and build their nests, and clouds float in the sky, and storms come up against the wind."

"Those are the sort of things that poets write about," said Gillian.

"Yes, like this:—

"How many pages of sweet nature's book
Hath poesy doubled down in favoured things,
Such as the wood-leaves in disorder shook
By startled stock doves' hasty clapping wings,
Or green woodpecker that soft tapping clings
To grey oak trunks, till, scared by passing clown,
It bounces forth in airy up and downs
To seek fresh solitudes: the circling rings
The idle puddock makes around the towns,
Watching young chickens by each cottage pen:
And such are each day's parti-coloured skies,
And such the landscape's charms o'er field and fen,
That meet the poet's never-weary eyes
And are too many to be told again."

"But I have read that!" she cried joyfully. "I love it. I think it is very beautiful—I like it better than John Milton and Shakespeare."

There was a curious silence in the little Garden Temple. Then he said, "I wrote that."

For a moment Gillian could not speak, but at last, in a small voice, she said, "Then you are John Medlicott?"

"Yes—and you are an angel from Heaven who has read and liked my verses!"

"Oh!" cried Gillian. "What a wonderful thing to happen! I never thought I should speak to you—I asked old Mr Vincent in Salisbury about you, and when he said that he knew you, and that you were born in Wiltshire, I was so happy!"

"You love this country? Are you Wiltshire too?"

"Yes—at least no. I mean I love it and it's my home, but I was born in Vienna."

"Aren't you English, then?" said Medlicott in a puzzled voice. "You sound English."

"Oh, I am, my mother is, and I live there."

A last pale flicker of lightning lit up the white face of Hall Place in the distance.

"What a pity," he said simply.

“Oh, why do you say that?” Gillian was trembling with the fear that in a minute he would go. The storm was nearly over, the violence of the rain was changing to a *rallentando* of slow drops. Soon it would be possible to leave the shelter of the Temple. She had not yet seen John Medlicott’s face, he was only a form in the darkness, and she wanted to see his face in a light that was not the uncertain glare of lightning.

“Because I thought if you really cared for my poetry I might show you some that I have lately written, which I think is better than the verse in the *Rural Poems*, which you have already seen.”

“But, please, will you not do so? Nothing could make me more happy!”

“You live at Hall Place—I live in a ploughman’s cottage. That is why.”

He stood up: “The rain is over. I have to get to Norton Baverwick, and that’s six miles as the crow flies.”

Gillian ran to him. He could not leave her like this. Would anyone let Shakespeare go if they found him?—and she cared much more for the poetry of John Medlicott than for Shakespeare’s plays, it was much nearer to her mind.

She laid her hand restrainingly on his arm, and felt that his coat sleeve was soaking, and that he was shaking a little.

“You cannot walk to Baverwick like this,” she said. “It’s eight miles by the road, I know. You must come home with me, and dry your clothes and have something hot to drink—my mother would not forgive me if I let you go like this. I read your poetry to her sometimes.”

Her voice trembled a little, her heart was crying so passionately. He must not go! He must not go!

Perhaps the tremor in her young voice touched him. He said, “Thank you, I will come, a hot drink may ward a chill. Will you tell me your name?”

“Gillian.”

“But you have another?”

“Oh, yes—Gillian Govoni.”

“Very pretty. But I think the Gillian is the one that really belongs to you.”

He shivered again, and Gillian said anxiously—a sudden strong maternal passion rising in her young bosom to warm and care for him—“Don’t you

think we had better run to the house?”

“A good idea—if you will give me your hand I will see you do not trip.”

She reached her hand to him, and it was received into the firm clasp of a capacious, rough palm. “How he holds my hand,” thought Gillian, “as if it were a plough-stilt and he were guiding me!” She wanted to laugh, and found that tears were running down her face in the darkness. With her other hand she dashed them away.

§ 3

THUNDERSTORMS

LUCY was worried at Gillian’s absence from the house in this horrid thunderstorm. She hated thunderstorms, and when they threatened, ran round the house looking for her children, like a hen gathering in her chicks when a fox is about.

Sebastian and Julian and of course the small Sabrina, were all safely accounted for, but Gillian was nowhere to be found. Sebastian said he thought he had seen her going up to the woods with a book under her arm.

“Oh, dear!” cried Lucy. “And trees are so dangerous in thunderstorms!”

“I believe you have told her that at least fifty-five times!” said Amades, coming up behind her and putting his arm round her waist. “Don’t fret yourself, Angel. She is a country child and knows how to take care of herself—she has probably taken refuge in one of the lodges, or with Great-Aunt Caroline, who, unlike you, enjoys a thunderstorm. They are probably both gazing at it out of an open window, with the mirrors uncovered, and the fire-irons attracting the lightning!”

Lucy always sent the maids rushing to cover up mirrors and polished metal when there was a bad thunderstorm.

Amades laughed and kissed her: “Funny little goose, aren’t you? It’s ridiculous to think of you as the mother of nearly grown-up children, when you are such an infant yourself!”

So he comforted and teased her, and insisted that she came to listen to him play over some old music he had just discovered, instead of giving her ears to the thunder. Her personal fears abated in his presence, but not her maternal ones, which were continually listening for a voice and a footstep.

Sebastian, who was very deeply attached to his mother, and could not bear her to be anxious, even though he might think her agitation unnecessary, was also listening for Gillian’s return.

“She has come back,” he announced, running into the blue parlour, where his father was playing the harpsichord. “And she has got a man with her—a very wet man, you’d think he had been swimming!”

“So the fair maid has found a knight in the forest!” said Amades, getting up with a smile and closing the harpsichord lid.

But Lucy was already out of the room and down the wide stairs.

There stood Gillian in the great cold entrance hall, which even the big copper urns of flowers that Lucy always kept there could not warm into friendliness.

Stately it was, and cold it was—as the architect who designed it had meant it to be, and so it would remain. But Gillian was neither stately nor cold. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes shone; she looked shy, and she looked excited.

With a quick glance Lucy saw thankfully that she was only slightly wet, not drenched as she had feared. But the tall man who stood somewhat awkwardly beside her was dripping so that the square of black marble on which he stood shone like a pool in the lamplight.

“This is Mr Medlicott, the poet, Mamma,” Gillian said. “He is so wet! He wanted to go home, but he lives at Baverwick, and I would not let him ——”

“Indeed not,” Lucy said, wondering where Gillian could have met the poet whose verses she cared so much for, even as she went on with the kindest smile. “We must give you some dry clothes, and a hot drink. Amades, you can lend him something to wear?”

EVENING SCENE

She made a hurried introduction between the two men, and Medlicott, looking far from happy, was led away.

“Darling!” Gillian flung her arms round her mother. “Isn’t it wonderful having him in our house?”

“It’s more wonderful having you safe, my lamb! But how did you meet him?”

“I was sheltering in the Temple from the storm, and he took shelter there too—but he was out in all the worst of the rain, you saw how he dripped!”

She looked meditatively at the pool on the marble floor. “Where are we having tea to-night, Mamma?”

“In the blue parlour—I’ve had the fire lit, as it has turned so chilly, and I thought you might have been wet.”

“That is lovely—I always think it is the most comfortable room in the house. I wish we lived in a cottage!”

“Well, run upstairs and change your shoes and brush those wild curls of yours. I will hasten the tea board, so that you and the poet may have something hot to drink after the wet woods.”

When John Medlicott, in dry clothes, his thick hair standing up on his head from the hard rubbing he had given it, entered the blue parlour a little later he thought he had never beheld a scene so like Paradise. A log fire, newly lit, was leaping on the hearth, and throwing a flickering glow on the walls and shining furniture. Two tall candles stood on the mantelshelf, and two on the little round table where Lucy sat behind a tall silver urn. Long blue curtains were drawn across the windows, the carpet, of a velvet softness, was blue, scattered with great red roses. And on a low carved stool, holding her hands to the blaze of the fire, was Gillian.

She jumped up as Medlicott entered with her father. She stood in front of him, looking shy. She pulled a chair nearer the hearth. “You must be cold, will you please sit here?”

She was away and back again, with a fragrant cup of tea—not a drink to which he was much accustomed, owing to its expense. She brought him sandwiches. She saw that his cup was rather a burden to him, and put a little table at his side. Then she sat down on her stool and looked at him. She had really not had much opportunity to look at him before.

His head was a fine shape, his brow lofty, but his features had a certain delicacy which went rather oddly with his big, loose, slightly stooping figure, and his large work-worn hands. His eyes were a pale blue, and had an expression curiously innocent and remote—they seldom rested on people. He had a beautifully cut mouth, the upper lip had an odd lift that was at once deprecating and appealing. It was a face that showed a sensitiveness that yet had something of the protective reticence of a wild animal’s about it.

Lucy also looked at him.

As no one seemed very talkative, Amades described great storms he had seen in Italy among the mountains, and the different ways that people behaved in bad thunderstorms. Then, at Lucy's suggestion, he played some of Purcell and Giles Farnaby on the harpsichord. Gillian sat on her stool by the hearth, looking into the fire, till some compulsion lifted her eyes to John Medlicott's. He was looking at her as if he and she were alone in the world.

§ 4

BARNETT'S TALE

WHEN BARNETT was brushing her mistress's hair that night, she said abruptly, "Funny, that John Medlicott sitting and drinking tea with you in the blue parlour like that!"

She sounded disapproving.

"Why was it funny?" asked Lucy rather coldly. Barnett's tone did not please her.

"Why, I should think he'd 'ave been more comfortable in the servants' hall."

Lucy did not answer—servants were such snobs.

This silence did not suit Barnett. She had something to disclose.

"You'll not remember his grandmother? Of course you couldn't, considering you was but a babe at the breast."

"Is there any reason why I should remember his grandmother?"

"Why, she was your foster-mother, that's all. Your own Mamma was too ill to nurse you—not to speak of not being inclined that way—and you had to have a wet nurse, and it was young Mrs Medlicott as was chosen by Miss Caroline, she being six months a widow. Her son Thomas, is what you might call your foster-brother, without meaning any disrespect, he grew up to be carter to Farmer Springett, and he married a dairy-maid from our dairy, and this John Medlicott's their second son. He was a bird-boy when he were little, and helped with the 'osses, and then were ploughman, till he took up with this writing of poetry, and now sits in the blue parlour a-drinking of tea!"

Barnett brushed so vigorously that it made Lucy feel as if she were a little girl again.

But what a strange story she had told. It made her feel as if in some way she were related to John Medlicott, who had made himself into a poet with nothing and nobody to help him. Her gentle heart was touched, and as she was falling asleep she remembered that other child, so cold and starved, the bird-boy who had sung for a shilling to her father and herself. The long-buried words floated through her drowsy brain—

“Take a bit, and leave a bit,
Away, birds, away!”

§ 5

BARNETT’S outline of John Medlicott’s life was roughly accurate, except, of course, that his narrow fame as a poet meant nothing to her. Poetry was not a matter within her cognisance, and had it been, she would have regarded it as exclusively a pursuit for the Quality—though generally, to do them justice, the Quality had more sensible pursuits than the writing of silly verses. But in that case why make this kind of foolish fuss over a low-born creature just because of his poems?—it did not make sense to Barnett. She would like to have seen her late mistress, Mrs Withers, drinking a dish of tea with a ploughman. Barnett liked people to know their places, and keep in them. But Miss Lucy had always been soft-hearted, and she did not seem to grow out of it, and as for her husband—well, of course, he was a foreigner. Barnett gave it up. Anyway, she did not expect that Medlicott would be coming to Hall Place again. They’d seen some queer doings since Miss Lucy came home a married woman—all these foreign young men a-thumping away at the piano. But she would say as they kept well out of everybody’s way, you needn’t never know they was there, unless you wanted to go listening. Not that she would demean herself—only one or two of the maids. But Mr Govoni, he’d spoke up sharp about that—if he really was annoyed you’d got to look out for stormy weather—and they’d kept away afterwards, as they knew it was as much as their places were worth. Anyway, it was a bit different, the maids prying round a bit, to a ploughman sitting with the family in the blue parlour, as if he was one of themselves.

YEOMAN FARMERS

§ 6

John Medlicott's forbears had, in the late seventeenth century been a prosperous family of small yeoman farmers, owning their solid stone-built farm-house and many surrounding acres at Norton Baverwick, father and sons working on the land themselves, but also employing labourers in husbandry. Each reigning Mistress Medlicott was notable in dairy and still-room, and had a good show of pewter on her oaken cupboard, and joint-stools, and stick-back chairs, and thick hand-woven linen sheets on the best bed, and goose-feather pillows and mattresses, and plenty of hearty, wholesome food on the long trestle-table.

So, for several generations, the Medlicotts had lived and died. But Enclosures did them no good, and though they were prosperous during the French Wars at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, the wretched summer of 1816 marked the beginning of their decline, and the drought two years later lasting from May till September helped the Medlicotts a little further on the downward path. The fine grassland, ploughed up for wheat during the wars, had lapsed into a mass of weeds and thistles. The twenty years after Waterloo wiped out the family of Medlicott as small yeomen farmers, and they became landless labourers. Their remote forbears, maybe, had been villeins on Domesday manors; in the first quarter of the nineteenth century they were again labourers in husbandry. If no longer bound in law to the land, yet tied to it just as firmly by poverty, by the Enclosures, which took away from the poor man the land on which he lived, and gave him nothing for his own save the six feet of earth which cannot be denied to the dead.

The little stone farm-house at Norton Baverwick was still called Medlicotts, but no Medlicott lived there. John Medlicott had been born in a rough, damp cottage, under a roof of rotting thatch that hung over the small windows like unkempt hair, and further dimmed such light as entered. Which was perhaps as well, for within was little to see save poverty and scant comfort, a young woman worn to middle-age in the effort to feed and clothe her husband, who was a carter and ploughman, and her three children, on a scanty weekly wage. She gleaned, and picked up wood for firing, she weeded for hours with a bent back in the long rows of the farmer's swedes and mangel-wurzels. With her small earnings they just managed to live. And the children began to earn a few pennies almost as soon as they could walk. Small Johnny was fortunate to get a job as bird-boy, and he did not seem to mind it as much as some of the other children, though often he was cold, and always he was hungry. But hunger was a normal condition.

"THINGS TO SEE"

“There’s things to see,” he would say.

“Things to see!” his harassed mother would exclaim, looking at him sharply, wondering if he was quite all there. “Why, there’s nobbut a plough field and the sky!”

“Well, that’s quite a lot, isn’t it?” Johnny answered. “And there’s lots of little flowers and animals, and the trees in the hedges, and the ways the birds sing.”

“You look out you don’t let ’em eat the seed, that’s your job, or Farmer’ll be coming at you with his stick.”

He was a queer child, but her maternal heart was glad that he did not so much dislike his job. She would put an extra scrape of dripping on his dinner crust.

But though she fed and clothed him to the best of her poor ability, she was completely puzzled when he first realised what the power to read would do for him. There was a little Dame School in the adjoining village, kept by an old woman who was a distant connection of hers, and one day she sent John over with a message and a basket of blackberries. It being a warm September day the cottage door was open, and a rough blackboard with words of one syllable chalked upon it stood before the half circle of children. The Dame pointed from her wooden armchair at the words with a long stick, and “Cat” chanted the children, “Rat” chanted the children.

It seemed like magic to Johnny Medlicott.

School broke up with a clatter. He delivered his blackberries and his message, and then shyly asked about the words on the blackboard—how did one know they said cat and rat? If it had been a picture of course one would have understood.

The Dame was kind, and living by herself was sometimes lonely. And it was not often that a child wished to learn his letters. She gave Johnny his first lesson, and then gave him a good dinner, which no doubt helped to make learning seem so palatable. He learned to read almost as quickly as Gillian’s grandfather, Julian Withers, had learned to read. But, unlike Julian, he had no books. He picked up any scrap of printed paper he saw, wrappings that pedlars had used for their wares; an ancient discarded news-sheet was a treasure of which he spelled out every paragraph, not greatly to his mental enrichment, but much increasing his facility with words.

Then one day he was set by the farmer’s wife to cart out a pile of rubbish to be burned, and among the rubbish was a book, its covers torn off, its last

pages missing—but a book of poetry. John's heart nearly stopped as he seized it and thrust it inside his smock, he was so afraid the farmer's wife would suddenly realise the treasure she had thrown away and demand it back, that he dared not stay to look at it. All day he worked like a guilty creature, fearing detection, but at last he was released from his labours. He sat down on a log remote from human eyes, he pulled from his bosom the tattered pages. The title-page was gone, he knew not who had written the poem. Had he done so it would have meant nothing to him. But as he read the opening lines his hopes expanded, his vocation descended upon him:

FARMER'S BOY

"O come, blest Spirit! whatsoe'er thou art,
The kindling warmth that hover'st round my heart,
Sweet inmate, hail! thou sense of sterling joy,
That poverty itself cannot destroy."

He was the "Farmer's Boy," but the revelation arose within him that one day he would be the poet. Years later he was to write:

"And so it cheered me while I lay
Among their beautiful array
To think that I in humble dress
Might have a right to happiness
And sing as well as greater men;
And then I strung the lyre again
And heartened up o'er toil and fear
And lived with rapture everywhere,
Till dayshine to my themes did come."

§ 7

"Of course you do not know how difficult it is to do anything when you are very poor," said John Medlicott to Gillian Govoni. "It is as if your feet were tied, and you can only move inch by inch. I wanted books so badly. The first book I bought cost me one whole shilling. I had to save for two months, and then I walked to Salisbury to buy it on a Sunday, because that was a day I did not work, and I found that no shops were open on Sunday. But I managed to get there on a Saturday soon after, taking in a load of hay. The bookseller looked surprised at me wanting to buy a book, but he was kind, and he said a shilling and sixpence was a lot of money for a book, and I

could have it for a shilling, as it was a little dirty. So I bought a sixpenny song book as well—oh, how rich I felt!"

He smiled up at Gillian, who was sitting on a low beech bough, while he lay on the ground, dry and warm in the sun.

"Was the bookseller Mr Vincent?" asked Gillian.

"Yes, do you know him? He has been very kind to me from that day, for I always went to his shop when I had a shilling or two to spend. When I wanted a book very badly that cost several shillings he would let me have it and pay him as I could, and he lent me his own books sometimes as well. I owe him much."

"I knew he was a nice man," said Gillian.

"You have been to his shop, then?"

"Oh, many times. I bought your poems there, and I asked him about you ——" She hesitated, suddenly feeling shy, though she found it so natural and easy to talk to him.

"Did you?" Medlicott looked at her gravely bringing his eyes away from the depths of the woodland. "You liked my poems enough to want to know something about me?"

"I was so glad you were alive—not dead like Shakespeare and Herrick—so that I could hope to read new poems that you had written."

"And if it had not been for the thunderstorm I should never have found you—the perfect reader that every poet dreams about."

He was silent for a moment. Gillian was getting used to these silences, she felt quite comfortable with them. She had a curious feeling almost as if she was by herself when she was with John Medlicott, only it was more exciting than being by herself. So she sat as still as a hare in its form and looked at Medlicott. He was again looking down through the vista of the trees, so it was quite safe to look at him. She guessed him about thirty years old, or near it, but there was something extraordinarily dreamy and simple in his face, aided by his colouring, his hair and eyelashes being the colour of grasses bleached by the sun. His expression was slightly startled, as if life surprised him—yet he could retreat into an immobile quietude.

THE JETTY SNAIL

His eyes came back to Gillian after the pause. He went quietly on with the conversation.

“You cannot compare me to Shakespeare and Herrick—you cannot compare anyone to Shakespeare. But even if I were able, I do not wish to write as Shakespeare did—he wrote of people and their passions, their joys and agonies—and what I write of is this, this earth, this England, the birds, the trees, the little things I saw as I walked the furrow, for ’tis irksome to be alone all day without any thoughts for company. A snail matters just as much as a king!”

He smiled at Gillian, and went on—

“To note on hedgerow baulks, in moisture sprent
The jetty snail creep from the mossy thorn,
With earnest heed and tremulous intent,
Frail brother of the morn
That from the tiny bents and misted leaves
Withdraws his timid horn,
And fearful vision weaves.

That is what I write about.”

“Oh,” cried Gillian, “I do like that. I never liked snails very much before, but I shall now. ‘Frail brother of the morn’—when they come out in the dew! St. Francis would have felt like that.”

Medlicott had never heard of St. Francis, so Gillian told him of birds and wolves, and “Sister Water” and “Brother Sun.”

“That is the way God must have meant us all to feel,” he said gravely when she had finished.

§ 8

“A NICE creature, that poet of Gillian’s,” said Amades to Lucy. “But I do not know how they will conduct their lengthy conversations when the summer is gone, for he seems as difficult to entice into a house as a wild animal. I meet him wandering about, and I ask him to come to breakfast or dinner, and he is most grateful, but full of palpable excuses!”

“Perhaps it is this big house,” Lucy answered regretfully. “I sometimes wish we lived in a little place again, like Vienna, without so many things belonging to us, and all these servants. He has had so very little, hardly enough to eat when he was small, and no books. And he does write lovely

poems, they seem to give you new eyes to look at things with, little things you had never noticed before."

"If he had been rich and comfortable he would never have written those poems, you can be quite sure," Amades said.

Suddenly he wondered whether this peaceful English comfort, his daily joy in his wife, and in the work which he was doing with his pupils, was destroying something in him which would have grown in loneliness and solitude? He put the thought from him—he had taken Lucy's love, he had become, as he knew, the centre of her universe, and no urge to creative work could be put before her happiness. Happiness was the frailest thing in the world, hardly did a human creature know he had it before it was gone—a breath bruised it, and on a word it vanished.

"SONGS FOR GILLIAN"

He saw it blooming in Gillian's face, during these late summer days, with an almost supernatural radiance. Was this what Medlicott had done for her? Ought he to warn her, or speak to Lucy, who seemed gently oblivious of anything but that a poet was a pleasant addition to their circle—so far as he would enter it. Heavens, thought Amades, would he take a bird and destroy it because it sang?

So Gillian woke each lovely dawn and thought would she see John that day. They made no engagements and no appointments, they just met. Certain spots in the woods they both frequented, and Gillian had rarely been long in one of them before, like a gentle Pan, Medlicott appeared, with no more formal greeting than a smile, and probably a new poem to read to her. He was writing much and well at this time.

"Soon there will be enough poems for a new book!" Gillian cried one day after he had finished reading to her.

"And it will be your book," said he. "I shall call it *Country Songs for Gillian*."

"Oh!" said Gillian.

"Everything I have is yours—all I do is yours."

He held out his rough hands with an appealing, beseeching gesture. Gillian put hers into them. They kissed for the first time.

§ 9

LUCY was aghast. She fled to Amades and wept on his shoulder.

“I never dreamed of such a thing. It’s so utterly impossible, and the child won’t see it.”

“Gillian is not a child now—he has made her into a woman.”

“Oh, darling, darling, not really—it’s just an infatuation. We must take her away.”

“She is as old as you were when we met, Lucy. Was your love for me an infatuation?”

“Oh, but that was quite different!”

“How?” Amades asked quietly. “I was a musician, he is a poet—both undesirables in the matrimonial market!” He smiled a little over Lucy’s bowed head.

She lifted it to look at him, indignant tears in her eyes: “How can you compare yourself to him? You are a genius, he is a ploughman—how can he marry our daughter?”

“I believe John Medlicott will have a permanent place among your English poets, even if it is a small one, is that not good enough for our daughter?”

“But he is a peasant—how can Gillian marry a man like that?”

Something flashed in Govoni’s eyes.

“Lucy, I never thought to say it to you, but you remind me of your mother. That is what she would have thought and said!”

“Amades!” cried Lucy, gazing at him as though he had struck her.

His look did not relax: “A ploughman is undesirable to you, so was a foreign musician to your mother—she would hardly have seen any social difference between the two. She would have crushed our love, separated us. Are you going to do the same to Gillian and her John?”

Lucy stood dumb a moment, a slow flush creeping over her face, then she flung herself down in a passion of tears.

“Oh,” she sobbed, “what a return to God for all He has given me!—and Blessed Mary’s husband was a carpenter!”

Amades picked her up bodily and held her as if she were a baby, kissing the tears from her face.

LOVE IN A COTTAGE

“Angel! I knew you had not thought—it was just that ancestral blood of yours getting up and saying a few things! You couldn’t help it! Now, cheer your face, and let us go and find Gillian.”

“She was weeping, and saying John was her life, when I came to you. Oh, let us tell her that it is all right, that we will not stand between her and her John. To think that when I’ve had you all these heavenly years I could dream of frustrating their love!”

She nearly broke down again, but Amades took her hand, and said, “Come, let us find Gillian.”

Gillian’s grief was quickly turned to joy when her parents—looking very much like a pair of lovers themselves—told her that if she really cared for John Medlicott they would put no serious difficulties in her way. She must wait till her eighteenth birthday before she became formally betrothed. “And,” said her father, looking at her searchingly, “you will have to live in such manner as he can provide for you. It may be possible to find a cottage for you on the estate, but you must not expect that we shall provide you with a large allowance. Are you prepared for that, and what it will mean?”

“To live in a cottage, instead of this great house, and keep it clean, and cook? Oh, it is what I long to do!”

“I am not sure that you will like it quite so much as you think, my child. Anyway, you will have to prove that you can do it properly before you leave this roof.”

“Benetta will teach me, won’t she, Mamma? I am afraid of Mrs Jevons—she is so terribly grand!”

“I am always a little afraid of her myself!” said Lucy, laughing. “At any rate, darling, you will be spared that in your cottage! Do you remember, Amades, how frightened we both were when we came to live here first?”

“I was petrified! You ought not to have been so, but I was not brought up to footmen in white silk stockings and haughty expressions!”

He laughed, and put one arm round his wife and the other round his daughter.

“I suppose we are all quite mad! And what Lady Garraway will say to our lovely Gillian marrying a ploughman imagination fails to conceive!”

“He is not a ploughman, Papa! He is a great poet!”

“Well, he has not much more than a ploughman’s wage to support you on, I imagine.”

“What does money matter?” said Gillian gaily, and kissed them both. “Ah, thank you, Papa, and thank you, Mamma. I was sure you would see that I could not live without John.”

“We have not forgotten what it is like to be in love,” said Amades. “It is our only excuse!”

§ 10

JOHN MEDLICOTT showed no visible surprise that his suit should be accepted. He loved Gillian, and she returned his love. That was the only essential thing—all the rest was external and unimportant. Had it been suggested that he should come and live in the big house he would have been filled with fears. He did not like the Hall. He continually met Gillian out of doors—and if the weather was broken there was always the Temple where they had first met and talked unseen. Gillian was always like that to him—he felt what she was in her spirit, and hardly saw her circumstances. His creative faculty was greatly deepened and increased by his love. It was at this time and just after it that he wrote nearly all his most permanent and lovely poetry. But still it was not love poetry—it was the snail and the celandine, the frozen pond, the brown furrows, the weed fires of November, the floating cloud, the song of the storm thrush.

“YOU I FEEL”

“I believe it is these things you love, not me,” said Gillian one day to him a little wistfully, feeling secretly and unexpressed that would he but write a song of his love for her, it would be very nice.

Medlicott turned his reflective blue gaze upon her. “But it is you I feel in all these things,” he said. “And through you I see more brightly what they mean. Is that not enough, my love?”

Gillian was conscious that there might be something lacking, but she had no experience of any other love-making, and she did so adore him. Each night she thanked God for the marvellous gift of his love, and in her prayers summoned a galaxy of angels to guard his sleeping and his waking.

The one room at Hall Place that Medlicott entered with any real enjoyment was the library. The grave tall room, so quiet and retreated, with

its walls of books that seemed to shut out the world, was congenial to his spirit.

"There are enough books here to last all one's life," he said with his slow smile. "I never thought there could be so many in one house."

He took down books from the shelves, handling them with a curious tenderness, as though they were alive—his youth had been so bereft that books to him would always be rare and precious.

"I first learned to form my letters," he told Gillian, "by scratching them with a stick on the earth, as I had no paper and no pencil. Then I found a piece of chalk and shaped it, and with that wrote on the walls of barns."

Gillian gazed at him with tender maternal eyes—to have been so poor as that, and now to write such marvellous poetry! She felt she would like to give him all the books in the world to make up to him for his early deprivations.

But John did not need all the books in the world—it was the books of poetry he cared for beyond all others, and from them he read aloud to Gillian. He read well, in a quiet rhythmical way, with a lack of emotion that seemed to go deep below the surface feeling to the hidden emotion which had caused the poem to be born. He and Gillian—because she liked what he liked—cared more for poetry about country scenes and country ways. "Poetry is always born out of doors," he would say. "Perhaps every poet should first be a ploughman or a shepherd. David was a shepherd, and his Psalms are poems."

But much as the library enthralled his mind, he could not stay there for great lengths of time. "Let us go to the woods," he used to say, or, "Let us walk on the Downs."

He taught Gillian to see. She began to feel as if she had been half-blind before. He had a minute attention for the smallest natural things, the delicate articulation of mosses, the patina of a weathered flint, the wings of a beetle, so busy on his own affairs he would not stay to be properly admired. He taught her to watch birds. He would stay silent and still to listen to a darkly iridescent young starling shrieking for joy on a fence.

"Look at him—singing as having all things, yet possessing nothing. How greedy and possessive we are when we compare ourselves with birds. Yet has any human being ever known the joy that a bird knows?

"MY LITTLE FLOWER"

Even in the depths of winter the birds ‘still chirp and hope, and wipe each glossy bill,’ and show gratitude for the smallest crumbs.”

He hardly made love to Gillian. He kissed her sometimes, very gravely, he held her hand in a quiet clasp. And he looked at her with his beautiful, shining, blue eyes—and when he gazed at her like that Gillian felt herself enveloped and enfolded in the benignancy of his spirit. He rarely used caressing words; sometimes he called her “my little flower.” It was a curious courtship, but Gillian had no amorous experience with which to compare it. Thus poets loved, and thus, by the grace of God, was she loved. She bloomed in innocent happiness, and Amades was fierce to protect his daughter from the astonished and contemptuous comments which were buzzing like wasps with stings in their tails round Hall Place.

He particularly went out of his way to encounter Lady Garraway—the fountain head of all local gossip.

“Mr Govoni!” she swept upon him like a frigate under full sail so soon as she set eyes upon him. “Mr Govoni, now I shall be able to get the truth of this ridiculous rumour about your daughter and the ploughman.”

“What ploughman?” he asked coldly.

“Why, that man Redcott, Medlicott, I never can remember his ridiculous name——”

“Do you mean John Medlicott, the poet?”

“Yes, I believe he has written some verses, but of course I’ve never read ’em, got more important things to do. But surely you know who his father was?”

“I know John Medlicott has written poetry that is going to be remembered.”

“But his father was a common farm carter——”

“And Shakespeare, they say, held horses’ heads outside the theatre!”

“But your daughter isn’t goin’ to marry Shakespeare!”

“No, nor Beethoven, whose mother was a cook—though I’d be tolerably proud to have either of them as a son-in-law!”

“Really, Mr Govoni, are you mad? Being foreign cannot excuse such conduct. No Withers can possibly marry one of the lower orders.”

“That may be, but my daughter is not a Withers—her name happens to be Govoni.”

“And you are goin’ to let her change it for Redcott! Oh, I must see Lucy—she will understand better than you appear to do what a difficult position you will be in socially. Do you imagine we can visit with a ploughman’s wife?”

“I imagine this particular ploughman and his wife will find themselves happier by your absence.”

Lady Garraway visibly swelled, as turkeys swell.

“Mr Govoni! Is that an insult?”

“Not in the least, dear Lady Garraway. I only suggest that as our social spheres and ideals are so apart, it would be well that we should not in future meet. Let us sink in peace to the earthy levels where we belong.”

“But, Lucy, at any rate, is a Withers!” cried Lady Garraway. “Though I have no idea where you sprang from!”

Anger made her prominent eyes still more protuberant.

“Not now, dear Lady Garraway, Lucy is not now a Withers, I assure you. I have smothered all her finer feelings!”

He smiled, bowed, and walked away. He did not think Lady Garraway would be likely to visit Hall Place for some time to come, however consumed with curiosity she might be.

§ 11

COTTAGE GARDEN

GILLIAN was enchanted at the idea that she would live in a cottage. It had always been her secret dream. When she had walked through the village of Withers St. Mary, when she had brought little comforts to such of the cottage people who were sick, though she had thought the cottages rather crowded and uncomfortable, she had thought they might be very nice to live in. There were generally too many people in them, such lots of children, and often an old toothless grandfather or grandmother in the chimney corner, rocking in a wooden chair, rather in the way.

But of course if she lived in a cottage it would not be at all like that. Only herself and John, and it would be clean and pretty. And she did like the

cottage gardens, great fat silvery green cabbages—John had shown her what a lovely colour cabbages were with the white September dew on them—and rosemary bushes, and bergamot, and cottage pinks, and onions hanging in bunches on the wall in the autumn sunshine, and cushions of thrift with their pink flowers, and honesty with the moon-like seed disc peeping through the split case, just like the moon looking through a thin cloud. There were such lots of things all growing together in a cottage garden—so friendly and confused. So much nicer than the big, orderly, tended gardens of Hall Place. John would show her how to work in a garden. He just broke off a little bit of a shoot and stuck it in the earth, and it grew. Everything that he planted grew. "Perhaps because I love them all," he said smiling in his gentle, remote way. "If you love things, you know what they want."

Gillian looked at him. She loved him—would that teach her what he wanted? If she only knew she would always give it to him, even if it was difficult. But John did not seem to want many things—just his poetry, and to be out of doors in the country. And, of course, herself. Only sometimes he did not seem to know she was there. But then of course, he was a genius, a poet. And poets were not like other people—that was one reason why she loved him so much. She caught her breath—please God, help her to know what he wanted, and help her to make him happy, so that he would write much more of his beautiful poetry.

She did not guess that perhaps it is not happiness which poets need.

§ 12

THEY met in the late summer, in the thunderstorm. They parted in the ensuing spring. Always quiet, John had seemed to grow quieter as time went on. His tenderness towards Gillian never lessened, but she began to feel that instead of coming closer to him, he was growing more remote. It distressed her deeply, she could neither understand nor alter it, but she told herself with innocent hopefulness that it would be all right when they were married.

A LETTER

Then one day a letter came to her from John. Her heart stirred happily. Only once before had she received a letter from him, a kind loving letter, which she had read so often it had acquired a certain fragility of appearance. The appearance of the writing was stamped upon her heart—a writing small and close, rather surprising from his large and clumsy hands, but an economy of paper had first taught him to write small. Almost Gillian wished that he lived further

away so that she might have more of his letters. Her fingers shook a little as she undid the wafer of this sheet.

> "My Dear and Gentle Gillian," she read,
> "I have not the courage to say it, so like a coward I write. I cannot marry you. When you get this letter I shall be far away, in another part of England. The thought of marriage terrifies me. I am too old for you, who are still such a child. Moreover you could not live my poor life, and I could not live yours. Even were our circumstances more matched I am not fit for marriage and its responsibilities—I must be free or the poet dies within me. My little love—for as you are the first girl I have loved, so you will continue to be the only one, your lovely innocent spirit will be always with me. Can you not see what it would be if the poet in me was dead? We should both be unhappy. I cannot face it, or bring such a fate upon you. This letter will make you unhappy to read, as it has given me anguish to write. But not unhappy for always. You are so young, so lovely. You will forget me, little as you may believe it now. But I shall always remember you till my life's end, and in every poem I may write in that future which of my own choice—nay, Gillian, not choice, but necessity—is lonely, it will be you I shall have in mind, it will be you I shall hope may read it. Forgive me, pity me. I love you, though I have done this."

Lucy found Gillian, lying on the floor of the Garden Temple, where she had gone to read her letter in blissful solitude.

§ 13

"And I cannot help her!" Lucy sobbed on her husband's shoulder. "She is frozen, she does not want me—I cannot reach her."

Amades kissed her hair. She seemed almost as young to him as his stricken daughter—there were some things Lucy would never know, and one of them was that in deep grief every human soul is solitary and beyond the reach of human consolation.

"No, my darling, you must leave your child to time—time heals all things, and quite quickly when one is young. Wounds are not mortal then. I think John Medlicott was wiser than any of us. Gillian has been enriched by the love of such a man, even for these brief months."

Lucy raised her head, and looked at him with astonishment: “But I feel so angry with John Medlicott,” she said. “Are you not angry also? To hurt our darling little Gillian like that, to play with her——”

“He did not play with her, Lucy—he is not like one of Lord Byron’s characters that all the young ladies so much admire. He has hurt her, he has hurt himself, but if Gillian is what I think her she will grow and flower because of this—she will carry all her life a memory that nothing can spoil.”

“Ah, Amades, you are so much wiser than I am—I cannot help wishing now that they had never met.”

“Do not wish that, my Angel, and do not be made too unhappy by Gillian’s little tragic face.”

“If I could only help her!” sighed Lucy.

NEEDED REFUGE

“You will help her best by leaving her alone, and not being too tender—her pride is hurt, as well as her heart, and had it been possible she had rather that we had known nothing of it.”

Amades was right. Gillian, after the first helpless grief, looked round for a retreat from the tender eyes of her parents, from her elder brother’s silent sympathy, and Julian’s truculent desire to “horsewhip” the poet.

“But you listen to me, Gillian,” said Julian to her. “You’ve had an escape, that’s what it is. He wasn’t a gentleman and didn’t know how to behave like one. What possessed you to think you could marry a man like that! But you are such a kid you probably did not know what makes a gentleman!”

Gillian looked at him: “Probably I don’t—any more than you know what makes a poet!”

She walked from the room, and fled to her bed-chamber to weep. Home was intolerable, she must go away somewhere else.

She found a refuge not very far away, just across the park, in the Dower House of Miss Withers.

Great-Aunt Caroline was very old, so old that she did not live in the present at all. So old that any grief told to her took on a transparent quality and seemed as though it had happened a long time ago. Gillian found she could tell her everything. And Great-Aunt—she was more than Great-Aunt to Gillian, but one “Great” seemed all that could be managed—patted the child’s shoulder with her withered hand that looked like the skeleton of a leaf.

“I know, my dear, I *know*,” she said. “I, too, in my youth was crossed in love. I met the great Haydn many times when he was in England—it was love at first sight, a great passion. But, alas, my dear, he had a wife—a most *unsympathetic* woman, I understand—so nothing came of it, for Haydn was a *good* man.”

Miss Caroline Withers was by then quite convinced she had been the one love of Haydn’s life.

So the old woman and the young one comforted each other.

But Lady Garraway said, with considerable satisfaction in her deep voice, “Well, Lucy Govoni will find it difficult to marry off that girl of hers now!”

Book Five

Full Circle

§ 1

Amades looked out from the Janiculum Hill, which was already casting its sunset shadow over Rome. From that great bastion, that Mons Aureus, he looked from the city to the Campagna, and from thence to the encircling hills. The blue dome of St. Peter's rose in lonely grandeur to the northwards, and the domes of lesser churches floated serenely among the other buildings. The ruins of the Colosseum and the Palatine were before him, and on the edge of the Campagna where stood the broken arches of the aqueducts, he could see the alien outline of the Pyramid of Cestius. In and out below him wound the slow ribbon of the yellow Tiber. It was very solitary on the Janiculum, and the past spoke there with a much stronger voice than the present.

There had always been some quality in Rome that made Amades more conscious of himself, of his own personality, than any other place in the world. It made him feel at once small, and greatly enlarged—his individual triumphs and griefs reduced in scale, but his status as child of this city, a Roman, enhanced and glorified. So much suffering, so much triumph, had Rome seen—surely no city in the world had a record like hers.

Amades wished to feel the smallness of his griefs, to bring them into scale with larger ones. They had seemed so great, so overwhelming, that he had not known how to face them when he was in Wiltshire. Time and its poppy of oblivion he could not hasten. He remembered how he had stood at the head of the stairs, just after he had come from Lucy's room, and felt that it was impossible to walk down those shallow treads. He stood with his hand on the curving, elaborately wrought iron rail, which itself had come from Italy, and felt that the power of movement had drained from all his limbs. And as he stood in that silent house, he was suddenly conscious of the slow heavy tick of the tall-case clock that stood in an alcove behind him. *Tick-tack*, it said, *tick-tack*, as the pendulum swung back and forth, endlessly, ticking out the seconds to eternity. Sixty seconds made a minute, sixty minutes made an hour, and twenty-four hours made a day and a night, a unit of the sun's presence and absence. And so to weeks, months, the changing seasons, years. For one hundred years that clock had stood in Hall Place; faithfully wound up each week by hands long dead. People died, but the

clock went on, the Voice of Time as it passes—oblivious, indifferent, relentless. But so slow. As he had stood on the stairs it had seemed like an eternity, listening to that quiet, unaltered, back and forth of the pendulum, yet it had been but a few frozen minutes. Time will vary his pace, as the happy and the unhappy both know. His pace for sorrow is leaden-footed, and for no prayers and no tears will he hasten. But Time has a brother, Space, which in the limits of this globe is called Distance. He could not hasten Time, but he could call upon Distance to help him wait and endure his life till Time's amelioration began its slow work. He could no longer stay in Withers St. Mary—the heart was gone from it, to him now it was dead and meaningless. Lucy had made it home, and Lucy was gone. He was now an exile indeed, alien in England.

MONODY

He remembered how he had stumbled down the stairs and into the first room he had come to, which had been the library. Gillian had risen as he entered, pale-faced, tears overflowing from her eyes as she looked at her father's ravaged countenance. She held an open book, and she put it into his hand.

"Read that," she whispered, kissed him, and slipped from the room.

Amades put the book down on the table face upwards, without looking at it. No book could give him comfort in that hour. He paced up and down the long room mechanically—the effort the body makes unconsciously to dull the brain. After a while, as he passed the table on which the open volume lay, he glanced down at it, and from the page one name stood out to him—Lucy. He picked up the book and read where his eye had fallen—

"In vain I look around
O'er all the well-known ground,
My Lucy's wonted footsteps to descry;
Where oft we used to walk,
Where oft in tender talk
We saw the summer sun go down the sky.
Nor by yon fountain's side,
Nor where its waters glide
Along the valley can she now be found.
In all the wide stretched prospect's ample bound
No more my mournful eye
Can aught of her espy,
But the sad sacred earth where her dear relics lie."

It was something like a hundred years ago that Lord Lyttelton wrote the “Monody on the Death of His Lady,” but its unaffected grief was poignant to Amades since his Lady bore that name of Lucy so dear to him.

As he stood now, two months later, upon the Janiculum Hill, that page was as clear to his mind as though the book lay in his hand. He could see the texture of the paper, a little brown stain at the top of the left-hand page, the feel of the cross-tooled morocco binding under his fingers. Grief, like joy, renders the mind wax to external impressions.

> “Such Lucy was, when in her fairest days,
> Amidst the acclaim of universal praise
> In life’s and glory’s freshest bloom
> Death came remorseless on, and sunk her to the tomb.”

Death had been doubly remorseless to him, it had taken not only his Lucy, but his eldest son. Sebastian had been within a year of his twenty-first birthday when he had been smitten with the fever which destroyed him, and his mother who nursed him. Recalling those agonising days, the swift shattering of their happiness—a happiness which had seemed so rooted and secure—Amades remembered a conversation he had with his son only a week or two before the onset of his illness.

He and Sebastian had been in the village and in the narrow little street had met Lady Garraway—a woman quite impossible to escape even on a more spacious thoroughfare. Sebastian was always smitten into complete silence by her overpowering loquacity. She repaid this by talking about him as if he were not present.

“Not so strong-looking as your other son, is he?” she remarked cheerfully. “Of course Julian leads a proper life, ridin’ and shootin’ and things like that, instead of sittin’ indoors all day with a fiddle, as I hear this young man does. Be twenty-one soon, won’t he? Well, I suppose you’ll be havin’ some fine festivities for the Coming-of-Age? Wake up the Hall a bit, and do some proper entertainin’, which I must say, Mr Govoni, you and Lucy haven’t done much of all these years you’ve been here—not what the neighbourhood expected of you. Disappointin’, you know. In your mother-in-law’s day Hall Place was the centre of distinguished entertainin’. But perhaps things will improve now this young man is near his majority. We must not forget he is the heir, must we? And then we shall have to be finding a charmin’ bride for him!”

She laughed—fortunately she had not any daughters, but she enjoyed the prospect of watching other important matrons angling for the heir to Hall Place. It promised a rich field of gossip and conjecture.

"Not much of the eager bridegroom about him yet, is there, Mr Govoni? Port wine, that is the stuff to put a little life into him. I'd send you over a dozen bottles, but I believe there is better port in your cellars than any I have got."

At last she released them.

"What an awful old woman!" Sebastian said, almost before they were beyond earshot.

Amades smiled: "She can't help it—gossip and horses is all she has to live for."

But Sebastian could not smile. He turned a rather desperate face upon his father.

"Is there any necessity for me to be heir to all this?" He waved his hand round the village and surrounding country.

"Well, you happen to be the eldest son."

"Which is a disaster, when you come to think of it, though I never do think of it if I can help it. But how completely it would suit Julian. And you know, Father, I do not want it—I hate looking at pigs, and poking cows about, and shooting rabbits and poor little birds. I hate girls who think music is only made for them to dance to. What I want to do is to go to Leipzig and live with Uncle Cavatini in that angelic little house of his, where there is *nothing* but music—no girls, no parties, no Lady Garraways—and we can play the Double Concerto and be happy!"

Amades glanced at his son. It was rarely he spoke out in that way, but he knew how deep was his desire for a life devoted to music with his godfather, and he suddenly realised how fundamental was his distaste for the life of an English country gentleman. He did not know very much about the English law of entail—he wondered if there was any possibility of setting it aside, and thus allowing Sebastian to live the life he desired and for which he was fitted—every year he had spent two months in Leipzig with Cavatini—and giving Julian the place for which nature had evidently intended him.

But within a short period of that conversation death had solved the problem with a sweeping thoroughness—taking not only Sebastian, but

Lucy away. So Amades had removed himself from the place that had become unbearable to him.

He had made careful and thoughtful preparation for everything. He had consulted Mr Attlee, and gone into every detail. He did not believe he should come back to Withers St. Mary, except as a passing visitor. The place would be Julian's when he was twenty-one, which he would be in less than two years' time. He might as well begin to take the responsibility, and learn—as, indeed, he had already by instinct begun to do—all about estate management, and crops, and what the tenant farmers wanted, and what it was possible to give them.

MEMORIES

The Music School was closed. His pupils, if he continued to teach, could come to him in Rome, or wherever he should settle. For himself he wished nothing, save the leisure to work, and to do the things in music towards which his mind was feeling tentatively. English country life had great attractions. It had seemed the natural and perfect setting for his love for Lucy—something closed in his throat, and the veins suddenly showed blue at his temples. He must not think too much of Lucy yet—let that tick-tock of Time's dial pass over his head for a few more hundred days and then he might be able to bear it. He put away the thought of her and of their happiness together, deliberately. That way lay despair. He had his destiny as a musician to fulfil. He realised, with a little rueful twist of the mouth, how Cavatini, who had immediately rushed over from Germany, had attempted to console him. He had said that his world was empty. "No world is empty to a musician that contains the music of Bach!" Cavatini had replied, his melancholy brown eyes looking beseechingly at his friend. And as he remembered his face, Amades suddenly felt a rush of compunction. After all, had not his life been infinitely fuller and richer than that of Cavatini, who lived in a complete personal solitude, who for some strange reason seemed oblivious that women existed, who looked as if he needed love, yet never considered it. Whereas he himself had found, had instantly known, had married, the one perfect wife. For twenty-two years she had been his, to have and to hold, and no jar, no disagreement, no bitterness, had ever been between them. Their lives had been enriched by two sons and two daughters. Added to this, a luxury and spaciousness of living which, as he knew, both he and Lucy would willingly have foregone. But even the danger of riches had not spoiled their love—nothing, he was convinced, could have spoiled that child-like mind, that simple, loving heart of his Lucy. Now, it remained for him to prove that he could do without those good things which he had

received in such abundance, that he would not repine in idleness. God had given him great gifts. He must render an account.

The evening bells were ringing all over Rome. He crossed himself, and turned away.

A new life, a new life, in this ancient City where he was born.

§ 2

“NO world is empty to a musician that contains the music of Bach!”

How faithfully Giovanni proved that in his own life, which was as dedicated to the music of Bach as is a priest’s to the service of the Altar. He joined ardently in the search which was beginning for lost and scattered music of Bach—he had made one or two discoveries which had caused much interest in musical circles in Leipzig. When asked how he knew certain things, and why he spoke “as one having authority,” he smiled and said he was “given to dreams.”

“You have studied Bach’s music so incessantly that you have acquired a kind of second-sight, or sixth sense, with regard to him,” said Amades.

“Perhaps,” Giovanni answered quietly. “At least I am more deeply convinced each year I live that he is the one supreme exemplar of music, the master of us all.”

“Because he shows the two qualities which probably rule the universe—rhythm and order. That explains the eternal quality which we are conscious of in his music.”

DEAD MUSICIAN

Amades felt at times that it was the thought of Bach and his music which had helped to preserve his mental balance under the shock of his wife’s and his son’s deaths. Before he went on to Rome, where he intended to settle and work, returning in the hottest months to England to see his children, he had gone with Cavatini to Leipzig, and in that little old narrow house, which seemed as though its walls were soaked in music, the two friends had played Bach, talked Bach, at all hours of day or night. The influence of that dead musician who had walked those very Leipzig streets was upon Amades’ spirit—unconsciously he was calmed, re-inspired with the desire to live and work again. Giovanni knew this would be so. The influence of the place itself healed Amades, for it brought back those early years when he and Giovanni had first met, had discovered their spiritual and musicianly affinity, had sealed their friendship. He began to feel that the hopes and

dreams of youth still lived within his breast, that work—perhaps his best work—still lay before him. He was not born merely to be a concert pianist and a teacher—even though he knew quite without pride his powers as both. But some creative work, something that he could leave behind him when he went to join his Lucy, was essential for his spirit. He wished to experiment, to write something which would express a new aspect of music.

"I have an idea of some new welding of music with a story, with a story in pictures. Opera is not what I mean, and ballet is not what I mean—something that is both and neither."

"There is something unbalanced in both opera and ballet," said Cavatini, "I have never cared for either. I prefer pure music."

"Opera is bound to be an imperfect form of art because singers can seldom act, even could they act the music restricts their emotion to a certain number of bars and not half a measure more. And also, if they can really sing, they are almost always too old and fat to be possible in any romantic part!"

Cavatini was thankful to see the deadly apathy which had been on him when he first came from Wiltshire, yielding and thinning away. He was really interested once more in what he was saying.

"Yes, that is true enough, as any one who has sat through even a single opera knows! But at least the dancers in ballet are young and graceful."

"But they would concentrate all the attention on their steps and posturings—the music is but a background. And, of course, in what I want the music is the essential centre—the other is decoration, perhaps tells a definite story. I do not know."

He sat broodingly. Cavatini got up very quietly, took out his Stradivarius from its wrappings, and with muted strings began to play—so imperceptively that it was almost like music heard in the mind, or below the threshold of hearing. He knew, from past experience of Amades, how certain music acted upon his brain.

After a while Amades sat up, and said slowly, "Figures, moving perhaps, not dancing—gestures—groups—no words, no singing. A silent accompaniment and setting for the music. As they do not have to sing, it will be possible for them to be beautiful!"

"Mimes?" said Giovanni, laying his violin down softly, "Is that what you mean?"

ART OF MIME

"Are not mimes wooden figures moved by strings?"

"No, those are marionettes. Mimes are people who express and act by gesture and movement alone."

"Well, so long as they do not express too much—I would want them rather stiff and still—they are only pictures to give a form and body to the music."

"But what are they to express?—some story?"

"Yes, I suppose some story. But what story I do not know. Let us go to bed, Giovanni. I am so tired."

And for the first time since Lucy's death Amades slept in the complete and healthful way he had been accustomed to sleep.

§ 3

It was through this half-formulated idea of Amades that he first came in contact with Jakob Emmert.

Jakob Emmert's "Everyday Stories," as he called them, were at that time known and loved in almost every country of the world. They had the magic of a universal simplicity and sympathy that made them as enchanting to children as they were to those nearing the last cradle of the grave. And they were most of them about such little things—little inanimate things, that everybody knew and nobody had thought interesting till Jakob Emmert had endowed them with a life and personality which henceforth was theirs for ever—for these Tales would renew their freshness with each new generation of children, and every child who had loved them in infancy would not forget them in old age.

Yet no one more simple had ever been born into this world than the teller of these tales. Perhaps that was the secret of it—the simplicity of his heart had shown him things that other people had missed. Yet when they were told it was seen at once that they were true—and enchanting. Like a fairy tale. The world put right way up, instead of askew, as it generally is. And as it is more comfortable not to be askew, perhaps that was the reason why everybody liked the "Everyday Stories." Perhaps, also, because they were such a curious mixture of the most everyday things, like a kitchen broom or a milk-churn, and the pure fairy tale, such as "The Count and His White Reindeer." Some people loved what might be called the plain tales, like "The Bucket that went to the Well," and others the more romantic ones, but

everybody loved "The Willow-Catkins," the "Conceited Cuckoo," the "Cat of Vorbach," the "Acorn and the Ash-Keys," and the "Naughty Will-o'-the-Wisp." These stories were all Emmert's own, but some of his tales were old traditional ones that he had heard when he was an awkward shabby little boy from old women as they spun and carded in the sun—tales that had been told to many generations of little German children. Jakob had loved and remembered them, and when he found that people wanted to hear his stories he had turned them out of half-forgotten corners of his mind, and written them down with so many touches of his own imagination in them that they became like new stories—such were the "Silver Horseshoe" and the "Flying Swans."

Gerda Cavatini, Giovanni's German mother had loved these stories, and she had given a German spiritual background to her Italian-born son by reading and telling them to him. Of all the stories, the one he loved best was "The Flying Swans."

GERDA ENTERS

The morning after Giovanni and Amades had been discussing the question of ballet and opera she came from her own home to her son's little house, to greet Amades. She had been away with her second husband, Doktor Anton Eccard, and had only returned the night before to Leipzig.

She was much attached to her son's friend—had always been so since as young men they had first met in Leipzig. She had loved Amades' son Sebastian, and always made much of him on his annual visits to Leipzig. His death had been a great grief to her. She herself was becoming old, but her sweet nature and the influence of the husband she adored, had kept her younger than her years.

She feared to see much change in Amades since his deep and double loss.

She entered the house, crossed the little paved courtyard at the back and went into the music room that her father had built. There her son and Amades were, both bending over a music score. She stood in the doorway a moment, looking at them. Giovanni's face she did not dwell on, she knew its every line, but Amades'? She had not seen him for several years. He was leaning downwards, and she saw his face for a moment in a position that accentuated all its lines. It was the face of a man no longer young, on which experience and suffering had drawn recognisable traces. Under his eyes, downcast at that moment, was a heavy scoring, the lines from nose to chin were deeply grooved by something more than laughter; the mouth was

thinner, and at once bitterer and more sweet; the tumbling mass of hair was still thick and fair, but there was a broad streak of white running across it. Suddenly Amades perceived her, and looked up, and as she saw his eyes, all the marks of age seemed wiped from his face—his eyes were as young, as searching, as startling in the kind of electric quality they possessed, as they had ever been. And his smile—she had always thought his smile one of the most attractive of the many attractive things about him.

He came swiftly across the room, and gave her one of his old hugs. A sob rose in her throat. He patted her shoulder, "Don't say anything—please don't say anything!"

She gulped. "I suppose I may say I am so glad to see you again, dear Amades?"

"Certainly you may say that!"

Her held her at arm's length and looked at her, "And I will say that you are prettier than ever—white hair suits your pink cheeks. You look as if you had a kind husband! How is the Doktor?"

"Oh, Amades, he grows more of a saint every day! And he never will stop working—there are so many ill and unhappy people, and they all bring their burdens to him."

"And like St. Christopher he carries them all across the river—he'll probably find he has been carrying the same Burden! Well, I do not know which of you is the most fortunate to have married the other."

Amades had always considered that Giovanni's mother was the sweetest woman in the world, after his own Lucy.

"What are you doing?" she asked him. "I hope you are staying a long time with us in Leipzig?"

"Not a very long time, I fear. Just a little time to be with Giovanni, to talk plans, and then I am going to settle down in Rome."

THE "FLYING SWANS"

"Rome!" said Gerda, and was silent as old memories rushed over her—that strange, enchanted City of her youth and her first marriage, where her son was born. She supposed she never would see it again—the Herr Doktor never seemed able to leave his patients for more than a few days.

"You have been on your travels, I hear," Amades said, looking at her affectionately.

"Oh, but only so far as Münsberg. We never can go long away. But we had a lovely experience there—who do you think I saw and heard, Giovanni? How I wished you were with us!"

Giovanni smiled at her, "Well, tell us, *Mütterchen*—you have not a hard enough heart to keep us in suspense!"

"Jakob Emmert!" she cried triumphantly. "He is getting old, but still sometimes he reads a few of his stories for some charitable purpose. It is hard to get tickets, for everyone in Münsberg desires to hear him—we were so fortunate as to have tickets bestowed upon us. It was a wonderful experience—he is so ugly and so beautiful! He read one or two of the smaller stories, and then he read the 'Flying Swans.' I will never forget it!"

"What is the 'Flying Swans'?" asked Amades, who knew little more of Jakob Emmert than his name and that he wrote a kind of fairy story.

"You do not know the 'Flying Swans'?" Gerda cried, astonished and shocked. "But that is incredible! Giovanni, where is your *Everyday Stories*? But no—Amades shall not read it to himself, nor shall you read it to him, for you do not read well, my Gianni. Come to us for *Abendessen* to-night, both of you, and I will for once turn away the lame and the halt and the blind, and Anton shall read the story to you. He reads beautifully, and he can give it you as well—or better—than Jakob Emmert himself."

§ 4

Doktor Anton Eccard had a character that was almost completely selfless. The only thing he had wanted for himself was to marry Gerda Cavatini—and even that was partly because he wanted to take care of her, for widowed, and with the father she had loved so much, dead, she had seemed to him very lonely. It was true she had her son, to whom she was deeply devoted, but Giovanni was a grown man, with a career that took him all over Europe. Moreover, there was an essential aloofness about Giovanni—he did not seem to live quite in the visible world. So Doktor Eccard had ventured, feeling he had little to offer save his love, to ask Gerda if she would marry him. And Gerda, feeling on her part, that Heaven was pouring blessings on her, had said she would. Neither of them was young—perhaps because they had been through sorrows they cherished the more their tender love for each other. It was a marriage on which the romantic young might look with envy—it had the radiance which is the more poignant because of

winter's approach, of a perfect September day, the crops gathered in, the late flowers still blooming.

Amades always took pride to himself because he, a score of years ago, had first seen what was to come, had opened Giovanni's eyes to the attractions of his still quite young mother. Giovanni had been so ludicrously surprised at the idea that his mother might again marry, regarding her, as Amades teasingly told him, in true filial fashion, as a faded creature with one foot in the grave. But no one had been more rejoiced than he when his friend's prognostication proved true.

THE DOKTOR'S HOUSE

Doktor Eccard's little house was shabby—there never was much money to renew curtains and rugs, as there were always so many poor people in want and trouble of all sorts. Gerda accepted this cheerfully, for she had moulded her mind entirely to Anton's ideas. But if shabby, the house was sparklingly clean and cheerful, the floors and furniture shone, potted plants stood on the window ledges. And the food, though of a simple, inexpensive kind—no out-of-season delicacies appeared on the Doktor's table—was always beautifully cooked and served in pretty Italian dishes that Gerda had brought back with her from Rome. Doktor Eccard believed in good food as an essential part of good health—"And without good health, where are we?" he would say. "Just a burden, unable to do any useful work in the world."

Amades felt that he was one of the few people he really wished to see at this period—he, and his wife, and his step-son Giovanni. His own three living children were, for the time, apart from him, all of them at Withers St. Mary. Julian was happy in the place that was so essentially his own—there had never been any spiritual kinship between him and Julian, as there had been between him and his dead son. Gillian was slowly beginning to discover that life was not quite ended because John Medlicott had left her. Sabrina was still a child. His children did not need him—and he needed something more than his children.

So it was good to see the Herr Doktor again, to feel again that benedictive atmosphere which emanated from him, to clasp again that big and capable hand. "When Doktor Eccard takes your hand," Giovanni's grandfather had said smiling, "you feel goodness all up your arm!"

In spite of his ceaselessly hard-working life the Doktor had always been inclined to stoutness—he was a big and clumsily built man. But he was much thinner, as Amades saw with regret, knowing it due to advancing age. His flesh had the look of a too-loose suit of clothes, it sagged a little, just as

his suits always sagged and looked dusty, in spite of Gerda's efforts. So much goodness had gone to the making of his heart and brain—he had written some very remarkable studies on mathematics and music in his later years—that there had been little left over for an external smartness. And smartness, however sure of itself elsewhere, always withered in his presence.

After the meal was over Doktor Eccard said to Amades, "If I am to read this lovely tale of Jakob Emmert's to you, then first you must give me a little music—a little Bach, you and Gianni together, and I think the Opus III of Beethoven after. What do you say?"

Amades said yes with all his heart. There was no one to whom he would so gladly play, and the one good and expensive thing in the simple home was the Schiedmayer pianoforte.

As he and Giovanni played two of the Bach Violin Sonatas, he felt his years and his grief drop away from him. He was young again. And so were the old Doktor and his wife—under Bach's spell they renewed their early joy.

§ 5

FAIRY STORY

JAKOB EMMERT could weave spells too, even though lesser spells than those of Bach.

Gerda adjusted the lamp for her husband and brought him the book, then seated herself close to him, where a hand could rest on his knee.

"She is still a little girl listening to a fairy tale," thought Amades, glancing at her. Lucy had possessed that quality too.

Gerda felt his glance, and looked across at him. "I find it quite difficult to believe that you have never heard this story, Amades," she said. "But now listen."

The Doktor began to read in his beautiful, quiet voice, which flowed on as naturally as a full river: "Far away, where the swallows fly when our winter comes, lived a king who had eleven sons, and one fair daughter named Elisa."

There was complete silence as he read of the eleven princes turned into wild swans by the wicked stepmother, and how, "with a strange cry they

flew out of the palace windows," into the world, where they were doomed to be swans by day, and only princes again as the sun sank below the horizon. The story went on to tell how the little sister grew up as good as she was beautiful, like her brothers, banished from her home, and how they found her and carried her over the sea to another country, where she discovered that she could undo the evil spell, by weaving for them coats of nettle-flax, which she plucked with blistered fingers, and in spite of being in danger of a fiery death as a witch, never opened her mouth to say the word which would have slain her brothers till the coats were finished, and the pyre which waited for her burst into roses instead of flames.

It is one of Jakob Emmert's most lovely and most loved stories.

Doktor Eccard laid down the book: "Always leaves one with a catch in the throat," he said, taking off his big steel-rimmed glasses and wiping them.

Giovanni turned to Amades, "Do you like it?"

Amades looked as if he were still in a far country. Then he woke up.

"Like it?" he said a little dazedly. "Like it?—why, it's my story!"

Giovanni looked at him in some surprise, then realised his meaning. "For your silent music drama, or whatever you mean to call it?"

"Yes, of course. Heaven-sent—mine!"

He looked excited, lit up, in the old fashion. Giovanni remembered that look when he had first heard the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, and cried in the same manner, "It is mine!" with Lucy also—"She is mine!" He always knew the things that belonged to his life.

The Doktor and Gerda had to be told what it was all about, and were deeply interested. "But," said the Doktor smiling, "though you declare it is yours, I imagine that Herr Emmert has a certain accepted claim to it!"

"Yes," Amades replied, smiling back at him. "Perhaps he has! But it will be all right. I shall go and see him. You know where he lives? Tell me, and tell me anything you can about him."

§ 6

GOVONI's music was a quite sufficient introduction to Jakob Emmert. He wrote at once in answer to Amades' request, in a small delicate hand, on a large sheet of fine expensive note-paper—having been so poor in his

childhood and youth he took a great delight in being able to buy nice things, he had never become quite used to the success of his “Everyday Stories,” and the honour and comfort they had brought him. He had never spoken to Govoni, but had heard him play on two or three different occasions.

> “My Dear Friend,” he wrote, “I feel honoured that you should wish to see me. Though a Writer myself I hold the Heavenly Art of Music in the highest Honour, and all Musicians are my Brothers. I am now become an Old Man, and rest in the middle of the day, but if you will come to the house where I dwell at any hour in the afternoon, it will give me much happiness to see you.”

There was a quality of innocent kindliness in the little letter which touched Govoni. He made the journey to Münsberg—where he had been several times to play concertos with the famous Münsberg Orchestra—and reached the house indicated, which was in the quiet outskirts of the town.

“Will you please to follow me upstairs, *mein Herr*?”

He was ushered into a pleasant room, rather crowded with books and small objects in wood and glass and china, but he did not notice the things in the room once he had seen the figure in the long chair by the muslin-curtained window. As Jakob Emmert lifted himself out of the chair Amades thought he was the tallest man he had ever seen. And certainly the thinnest. His arms were long and his hands long, his face was long and narrow, his eyes small and deep-set in his head, but their smallness could not hide the benignant sweetness of their expression. His mouth was the only thing about him that seemed to contradict the impression of length—for it was wide. His hair was almost white, but still flowed in long-locked profusion on his head.

He greeted Amades with the utmost cordiality.

“I am proud to see this great pianist in my simple apartment. Music and Poetry are lovely sisters—you, I suppose, put music first, I, perhaps, poetry. But no matter, we shall not quarrel. Sit down, and admire the flowers from my window.”

“Indeed, we shall not quarrel, and my purpose here is to ask your permission, your assistance, in linking these two sisters even more closely together.”

“Tell me,” said Emmert, leaning back in his chair, and folding his long hands together.

There was an extraordinary peace in the room, broken only by the faint movement of the muslin curtains in a light breeze from the garden, and the ticking of a Black Forest cuckoo-clock upon the wall. Amades felt as though he had known Jakob Emmert for years. He was just about to unfold his plan when Emmert held up his hand.

“One moment,” he said. “My Cuckoo is just about to speak, and he is a loud Cuckoo, who insists upon being listened to!”

The little door snapped open, and the elaborately carved wooden bird leaped out, with a great air of being sure of his welcome, and with opened beak and wagging tail announced that it was four o’clock, with an expression that suggested he would say it again if anyone denied it.

“Company, that little bird,” said Emmert smiling. “I always leave the door of my bed-chamber adjoining ajar in the night, so that I may hear him. When one is as old as I am one does not sleep very well. Now, please, proceed.”

THEATRE GLAMOUR

So Amades proceeded, outlining his scheme of writing music to a kind of mime of the “Flying Swans,” something that should neither be opera nor programme music, something abstract, and yet visible. Something that would avoid the stumbling-block of the singer who could not act, and the actor who could not sing, and the emotion tied to a conductor’s stick.

Emmert leaned forward with increasing interest as Amades unfolded his idea.

“So you think opera a bad art-form? You are completely right, it has grown obese, like your Fairy Queen weighing fourteen stone! In its beginnings no doubt it was different, for to dance and to sing seem natural expressions of joy.”

“But hardly of grief,” Amades said. “Does one indulge in lengthy arias, mostly in the upper registers of the voice, when one’s lover is being murdered, or the knife is in one’s own bosom?”

“Perhaps not! But the glamour of the theatre explains a good deal. I have always been a victim of that glamour. I always wanted to write poetic dramas for the stage, but they insist that I write about fir-trees, and storks, and loaves of bread, and blue shoes, and goblins——” he paused and sighed.

“Because there is no one else who can write in the way you do about such things, and never has been.”

“Well, I like them,” said Jakob Emmert with a sudden twinkle in his eyes. “And ever since I was a child my brain has been full of these little tales, and the only way to get rid of them is to write them down. But I used to dream that I would be a German Shakespeare!”

“And instead you have done something that even Shakespeare never did!”

Emmert beamed, he loved being praised, as a child loves it.

“Well,” he said, “then you and I together will make a thing that is quite new and quite beautiful. The ‘Flying Swans’ shall fly into a new world—that of music! I give them to you, do as you like with them, only create your music while I am still in this world to hear it.”

He was eager for details as to how the tale of the “Flying Swans” was to be treated on the stage and in the music. Govoni told him that the seed had not sprouted yet, only been put in the ground. As to the picture part of it, he would need some expert assistance—“Something between an artist and a ballet-master is what I need, somebody who is both and neither! Not so easy to find, but I shall find him, I always do when I really want a thing. And what is most essential of all I have your permission to use your lovely story.”

“Give me a sheet of paper from that writing-table,” said Emmert.

Govoni did so, and a quill, with which he wrote something in his beautiful small writing, and handed it across.

> “I hereby give and bequeath to my friend Amades Govoni, all rights of copyright and production in my story, ‘The Flying Swans.’—Jakob Emmert.”

“There, the story is yours. I know you will make something of it with your music that I never could. I feel as if this were going back to my childish days when I played with the little marionette theatre my father had made for me, while he played music with his flute. Ah, dreams!—it is dreams that make life worth living. Perhaps we will find our dreams true in the next world!”

§ 7

AMADES found, as he knew he would, that in the “Flying Swans” he could express his own dreams. It was a lovely tale—much older than Jakob Emmert, who had adapted it from ancient sources—and it was an allegory. It was as an allegory he saw it shaping in his hands. The stage-craft, the figures and their expressive, almost ritualistic movement, their dresses, the pictures that would be presented to the eye of the spectator, was but to occupy and enlighten his outward self, so that his inner self might be attuned to and understand the music.

SWANS' FEATHERS

Elisa was the innocence, the compassion, the faithfulness of womanhood—the dream that men in their youth perpetually seek and rarely find, because their own defects destroy what they would have. They are wild swans in their aspirations, in their skyward flights, and yet when they alight upon the earth, too often little more than farmyard geese. But Elisa weaves with tears and blistered fingers the green coats of stinging nettle which shall make them princes. Perhaps the youngest prince whose coat was not complete, so that instead of one arm he had a swan’s wing, was the most typical of all. Swans’ feathers—a bunch of eleven swans’ feathers lying on the foam of the sea—the lovely melody, swift and mounting, that Amades gave to the oboes in the score of the “Flying Swans,” came into his mind, dropping on to the paper under his hand as dew falls on the grass, unseen until it is there.

With this theme in his grasp, and his brain working like the sea before a storm, he fled to Rome and shut himself up. No one save Cavatini knew where he was. Rome was beginning to be hot and empty, but he did not mind the early summer heats of Rome, and it made his seclusion more secure. In the first hours of the morning he hired an excellent horse and rode for miles over the Campagna. That strange melancholy country, with its great sky had always appealed to him. Then he went home and worked. At mid-day he ate and slept, and after that he worked again, sat for a while on his flat roof and looked at the big Roman stars pulsating in the night sky, and then went to his bed.

He loved his lodging, for it was in this same street he and Lucy had dwelled when they came to Rome after their elopement. He had been unable to obtain the same rooms, but from his apartment, which was across the narrow street and a floor higher up, he could look down to the two windows from which Lucy had gazed out on Rome. Sometimes, as the light failed, he thought he saw her face there still. He shook himself, his mind was too robust to yield to fancies—but it was no fancy that he felt her presence with

him as he worked on the "Flying Swans." One reason the story had so strongly appealed to him was because he felt Lucy in the character of Elisa—that innocence and trustfulness. She, so sheltered and timid when he met her, had ventured out at his word, into a world as unknown and possibly as alarming as the midnight churchyard where Elisa picked her essential painful nettles. She would with pain have woven him such a shirt of salvation, she would, if necessary for his good, have kept a silence that doomed her to her death. Love is belief—it is faith, as well as charity. The creative spirit is endowed, necessarily, with belief in its own integrity, without that it could not create. But it needs also the belief of another human creature, one other is sufficient, but that one is essential. It was that belief, that charity, which Lucy had given him. He had known at once and saluted, the courage under her shrinking exterior that had taken her over the great park wall at Withers St. Mary into a completely strange and foreign world. And how joyfully she had adjusted herself to a life that in comparison with the life in which she had been brought up, was one of poverty. She had learned to market and to cook like a German *Hausfrau*. He had to buy dresses for her, as she would not buy them for herself, always saying those she had were good and needed no renewing. Then, when her inheritance of wealth and position fell upon her, how utterly unchanged she had been by it, her one anxiety lest he should not be happy in Wiltshire, willing to desert it all at a word from him. He had felt so free and unfettered that he had no wish save to stay. And when death had stolen into Hall Place, over the great wall, past the vigilant lodge-keepers and the tall footmen, up the stairs to Sebastian's bed-chamber, Lucy had met him without a tremor. She knew it was Death come for Sebastian, from the very first. Soon she knew it was Death come for herself as well. She refused to see and say farewell to the other children, for fear of the infection. Her husband also she would have refused for the same reason, but he would not be denied. But she held him as far away as she could, with weak strength she denied the kisses he besought. He told her desperately that he had no wish to live if she were leaving him.

FAITH AND CHARITY

"No, no!" she put up a hand grown suddenly so thin. "You must live, you have not yet written the music that is in you. Write something very beautiful, and put 'For Lucy' on it. My darling, I am so tired——"

Even as he looked at her the eyelids closed over her sunken eyes. She died that night.

"For Lucy" should be this "Flying Swans," and "For Lucy" those Trios for Violin, Oboe, and Pianoforte which he was to write in later years, and

which most musicians regarded as the apex of his achievement as a composer.

§ 8

In the Church of St. Cecilia in Trastavere is that profoundly touching marble figure of the Saint by Stefano Maderno, modelled as she was found in the catacomb, as if sleeping.

When he first brought Lucy to Rome Amades had shown her this figure and told her of the Saint's martyrdom. Lucy had wept. "Cruel, wicked men!" she had cried. "Surely God could have saved her?"

At that early day she had not then become a Catholic.

"God did better than that," said an old priest who was standing by, "He took her to Himself."

"Light a candle for her," said Amades tenderly, and Lucy lit her first Catholic candle, and said her own first prayer to a Catholic saint, even though it was but a half-formed aspiration and hope. She had felt nothing unnatural in praying to anyone so holy and so steadfast as Saint Cecilia.

IMMORTAL YOUTH

Before his morning ride, Amades always went to that church in Trastavere, heard Mass, lit a candle for his Lucy, and said a prayer for her soul—the soul of one very faithful departed.

But he found Lucy in many places in Rome besides churches. It so happened that since these first weeks of marriage he had not been in Rome again save on brief visits when he was playing some big concerto or giving a recital. When he came from Vienna Lucy was too occupied with her young children to come with him; on the occasions when he came from England, the journey was too far for her to make for so brief a time. Therefore the Lucy he now found in Rome was his bride, touched with an immortal youth. His memory of those days was extraordinarily vivid, as it had never been overlaid with later ones. The very autumn of Lucy's death they had planned that they would take a long holiday in Rome together, renewing all their memories. Now, he was renewing those memories with the very girl who had created them. He went to all the little restaurants where they had eaten together, and as he sat silent at his little table for two, he found he could recall all the things she had said about the food—he remembered her delight when she had first tasted those Roman delicacies *carciopi alla giudia*, and *la*

lingua in agro-dolce—the wine, the people passing in the streets, her little face in its straw bonnet trimmed with quilted blue ribbon, so gay and animated.

"Oh, Amades!" she would cry, "if you knew how different this is to being in Rome with Mamma! I never was allowed to see anything except from the carriage. Mamma had a horror that one of the beggars would touch her dress—one did, once, and she rushed back and tore it off and had it burned. I remember how vexed Barnett was, she wanted to keep the dress herself, because, like all Mamma's things, it was very expensive."

Little things—the trivial conversation of happy hours, when all the real things are said by eyes and touches of the hands.

Lucy did not like the Colosseum. "It is a horrid, cruel place," she said, "and looks like some frightful kind of skull. Papa told me as much about it as I want to know. But it does look rather wonderful in this moonlight, though still very terrifying." She had slipped her hand into his. "Don't lose me," she said. And she told him how she had met the Franciscan feeding the strayed cats there: "Mamma was so angry with me—I was shut up for three days on bread and milk, oh, and I had figs too! And then just afterwards I met you at the Spalatio Palace!"

And then, at considerable length, they exchanged minute remembrances of that epoch-making occasion.

When Amades walked now within the circumference of the ruined Colosseum he had no thoughts of gladiatorial shows on which hard Roman faces looked down in serried rows, of Christian martyrs dying in the arena. He saw Lucy, surrounded by hungry, green-eyed cats, talking to a gentle follower of St. Francis.

The Roman fireflies had enchanted her, flitting like little torches in the ilex groves, and against the sky shining larger than any star. They had seen the Campagna one evening shimmer with them, and she had held his arm and whispered, "Oh, Amades! to see this with you! I feel almost as though I had got to Heaven without dying!"

Amades shivered as the memory took him. Her sweetness. Was it possible to go on living in a world that no longer held her. But he had to live, and the little things, the little memories, helped him.

"ALL ROMAN THINGS"

Lucy had not at first liked the taste of goats'-milk, but she loved to run down with a little jug and stand by while one of the herd of goats that were

brought daily into Rome, was milked to supply her need.

"I will like goats'-milk!" she had said, valiantly sipping it. "I am going to like all Roman things, Amades, because you were born here."

"Even the beggars?" he had asked.

"Well, the beggars do rather frighten me," she admitted. "They are so dirty, and they have such awful sores."

"Not always so bad as they look," said Amades, with a certain Roman callousness. "And a very small coin will go a long way to heal a very large wound!"

There was no place where he and Lucy had walked together that he had not visited, and no place that had not given him the message that their love was indestructible. It had survived the difficult strain of life—it would survive death. In one sense he felt that she was even nearer to him than she had been when living, for there were no outside people to come between them—not even the children. All that he did now would be "For Lucy"—the remembrance of her face as she made that last request went through his heart like a mortal pang. He wept. And as he wept some words that his cousin, Father Sebastian Narni had once said in a Holy Week sermon came to his mind: "He who has never known tears, knows nothing."

A few years later he came across a little group of poems that at once tore and uplifted his heart by their peace and deep simplicity:

"How soon my Lucy's race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been,
And never more can be."

§ 9

It took him seven months to complete his "Flying Swans"—to make it such a thing that he did not hesitate to inscribe it as Lucy had desired.

Then an immense exhaustion fell on him. He was not ill, but the springs of the extraordinary energy that had always marked him, seemed as though they had run down.

Cavatini realised this from his letters—they were in the habit of writing once a week to each other—and came immediately and uninvited from Leipzig.

"I feel as if everything is finished!" Amades said, looking at him with a twisted smile.

"Well, the 'Flying Swans' is finished, and that is enough to fly away with even some of your vitality. You have given out—now you must take in."

"But that's just the trouble—I don't know where to take in from. All the usual ponds seem empty!"

"There is always Bach," said Giovanni tentatively.

Amades dropped into a chair, and began to laugh in something like his old fashion.

"You are the physician with only one prescription! If you break your leg—try Bach! If you lose all your money—try Bach!"

EYE AND EAR

"Well, I cannot imagine anything happening, any sort of disaster, I mean, in which Bach would not help one, because he expresses the essential order which must be at the root of this universe, or it would crash in ruin. It is god-like to know that order, and Bach did."

"A philosophy of life, and Bach had it! You are right, Gianni, as I believe you always are when you speak of Bach. What can I do, then?"

"Play him, so that more people may understand this, and so that, in consequence, there will be more peace in this world."

"A new mission to the heathen! I will gird on my armour and set forth into the wilderness that knows not Bach."

"Come back with me to Leipzig for a while—Bach was never here, you will be nearer to him in Leipzig."

Cavatini thought Amades had been alone long enough.

So with a little further persuasion Amades was induced to shut up his apartment in Rome, and bring himself and the score of his "Flying Swans" to Leipzig, where, Cavatini declared, was just the man to deal with the visual side, the miming part, of that work. He was immensely enthusiastic about it, and declared the music so exquisitely wedded to the fairy tale, so

endued with a vitality of its own, that there was no need for any visible delineation of the story.

“Yes,” said Amades, “in one way you are right, for the music is complete in itself, and could be performed as a kind of symphony. But I think if the eye is entertained with charming colours and forms, the music will sink deeper into the listener’s mind. It is an experiment in a new kind of art-form, and I desire to see it realised. While we listen to music of great beauty we generally look at something ugly or uninteresting—an orchestra is not usually chosen on account of its good looks. And no one can get much satisfaction from looking at the majority of operatic stars. We should listen to music in the dark, or in a noble church, or we should have something to gaze upon such as I am planning.”

“Well, come to Leipzig, and talk it over with Hans Falkmann.”

The discussions were lengthy, but after a period of scepticism Falkmann was converted to Govoni’s idea, and threw himself with great enthusiasm and energy into producing it.

The first performance took place in Leipzig, and Jakob Emmert, though old and frail, came from Münsberg to witness it. He sat in a box close to the stage—receiving an ovation like that accorded to royalty as he took his place, the whole audience standing up, which so touched and enchanted him that he could hardly see the figures of his Elisa and her eleven brothers on the stage, through the glittering drops in his eyes. It was as if he were a child once more, playing with his own little marionette theatre—only a theatre that had come to life in an unimagined glory. He did not understand the technical range and mastery and originality of the music—but he did understand its imaginative sympathy with his fairy tale, with his dreams—the dreams he had dreamed as a child, and which were still real to him now that he was an old man.

Govoni and Cavatini were with him in the box, and when it came to Elisa weeping as they arrayed her as a queen, he took Amades’ hand and held it till the whole thing was ended. When the curtain had fallen for the last time, the audience stood up and shouted for Jakob Emmert and for Amades Govoni, and together they came to the front of the box. The old Teller of Tales was so shaken with emotion they had to take him straightway and put him to bed.

A FAILURE

“It was Jakob Emmert’s presence which made the success,” Govoni said later on. For some of the critics complained that the music was difficult and in “a remote

manner.” Two famous conductors came to him and offered to give it orchestral performance, but did not want the “baby stuff” of the mimes, while Falkmann was approached to consider the question of the mimes without Govoni’s music—or with “something easier and prettier in the way of accompaniment.”

“Accompaniment!” cried Govoni savagely when he heard this. “My music is not an accompaniment—what a world of fools, asses without any ears! Well, now we know the whole thing is a failure.”

“Not a failure, Amades,” Govoni said. “Just that you are in advance of your time, like all composers who mean anything.”

“Like Bach, I suppose?” Amades asked with a grin.

“Well, you will not deny that we have not yet overtaken Bach?”

“True, and I am more fully convinced the more I study him, that we shall never do so.”

§ 10

At this time, through all the business of producing his own “Flying Swans,” Amades was deeply engaged in the study of Bach. He was studying the whole body of the works of Bach available, motets, cantatas, Passions, Brandenberg concertos, organ works, and music for strings, as well as the particular keyboard works which for years had held his mind and his heart.

The *Bachgesellschaft* was engaged upon its profitable labours, and Govoni was making researches of his own after little-known and half-forgotten music. Cavatini was of great assistance to him—anything that concerned Bach was a matter of passionate interest to him, and he had what Govoni called “second-sight” on the subject, making now and again odd little unexpected suggestions, which always proved fruitful.

“Are you guessing, or do you know?” Amades asked, after one of these prognostications.

Giovanni did not answer.

Odd, thought Amades, there is something odd about it. He will talk for hours about that music, and then he says some little thing, and behaves as if he had betrayed a secret, and just shuts up like the oyster who wants to keep his pearl. Oh, well, the thing that matters is the music.

He was becoming increasingly amazed by that music. It was like walking among the high hills and finding one majestic peak after another opening before his vision—and between the hills such heavenly valleys, filled with mountain flowers and singing streams.

"Lord!" he said one day to Giovanni, "it's really too much for me! Why the Almighty rolled all the composers into that one body of Sebastian Bach I'm at a loss to understand! He's the Alpha and Omega of music—all the other composers are just little bits of him walking about and pretending they are complete beings!"

"WAY TO BACH"

"You are becoming rather madder than I am! But let us go handsomely together to the Mad House, and take a few people with us if we can. Let us not talk, but show them a little what Bach is. We have both acquired a certain fame in the musical world—people will pay to hear us play, let us play Bach to them and nothing else!"

Amades stared for a moment, then flung his arms around him.

"An inspired idea! They will come to see us, and they will stay to listen to Bach!"

From this suggestion of Cavatini's sprang the Bach Violin and Pianoforte recitals which did so much to increase the growing understanding of Bach's music. Later Govoni developed the idea into giving a series of recitals of Bach's keyboard music. "Probably no one now living has heard the whole of the Well-Tempered Clavier," he said, "And I sometimes feel that it is more essential Bach than anything he ever wrote. It is not Bach directing choirs on the road to Heaven, or building vast architectural organ works—it is Bach meditating by himself, probably on the little clavichord."

He determined to publish his own edition of that work. He gave his time, his musical knowledge, his devotion for Bach, to this work—that the world should have an accurate and clear edition, so that no home where music was loved, should lack it. He meant that his edition should be within the reach of all poor music students, that it might be their daily bread.

Besides the actual edition of the Well-Tempered Clavier, he later published a little handbook, a guide on the subject, which he called *The Way to Bach*, in which he gave not only technical instructions, but interpretations of the forty-eight Preludes and Fugues. In course of time this little book was translated into many languages, and helped to spread throughout an awakening world an increased appreciation of Bach. Amades was

immensely proud of its success—it made quite a lot of money by its steady and continuous sales, and this money he used to found a Bach scholarship at Leipzig. “Few musicians have ever been successful authors!” he would declare. People bought the book who were not themselves musicians, for it helped to recall what they had felt when they had listened to Govoni’s playing of that music. No one who had heard him play the E flat minor Prelude and Fugue, and the B flat major Prelude and Fugue in First Book of *Das Wohltemperirte Klavier*, ever forgot it.

§ 11

AMADES was immersed in music again, in Rome, and Leipzig, and Vienna. He had taken up his life almost as it had been before he left Vienna to go to Wiltshire. He knew, apart from the constant musical urge within him, that it was the only way he could now live. He returned sometimes for a short while to Withers St. Mary, but each time, though his children welcomed him with much affection, he felt more of a stranger. Lucy had been his anchor there—he had no other.

Great-Aunt Caroline was dead, and had left all her personal treasures and her own income to Gillian, who, though still a little wistful, was showing signs of recovery from John Medlicott’s desertion. She was so young, thought Amades tenderly, that a wound would heal and leave no scar, especially as he detected a young man hovering round Gillian with evident devotion—an excellent and suitable young man. Sabrina was a delightful little girl in the care of an admirable governess: life had no problems for her and no unfulfilled desires since she had acquired a cream-coloured Shetland pony of her own.

FAMILY NAME

Julian had attained his majority, and took his responsibilities as an English land-owner very seriously, though he was continually breaking down into a boyish enjoyment of the good things life offered him. His life was exactly what he wished. He was proving himself extremely capable about affairs and worked hard to make Withers St. Mary a model estate and village. The Bailiff and the Head Gamekeeper were his particular friends and advisers—they were both men old enough to be his father, and had a real affection for him. That anything so promising could have originated in a foreign country was a continual astonishment to them, but they both had realised that any allusion to the fact that he was not a complete Englishman was sure to make “Mr Julian” look black. Govoni was a name never mentioned, if it could be

avoided. Julian always signed his necessary letters Julian Withers Govoni, with the Withers writ large, and the Govoni so small it was hardly there. An idea was growing in his mind that when his father deceased, he would drop the Govoni altogether, and revert to Withers, the name that belonged to the estate and to Wiltshire. He had heard that there were legal means of doing this. His sisters were practically certain to change their names by another method. He was not himself interested in young women, whom he politely and distantly alluded to as the "fair sex," but, when he was a little older—he would enjoy his freedom first—he intended to marry some suitable and well-bred girl. Already, young though he was, continuity was speaking to him—the line must be carried on. His mother might have caused a shipwreck in the long Withers tradition by her wild foreign marriage—but in any case she had the misfortune to be of the female sex. Actually things had turned out much better than might, at one time, have been expected.

He looked at the family portraits on the walls of the Long Gallery—a portion of the house that dated back to Jacobean days—from the somewhat sour-faced, bearded Elizabethans, to the gallant Royalists, and the jovial Georgian Squires, and felt that all was well. He was genuinely fond of his father, and so long as he lived would never do anything that might hurt him. But his father did not belong to Withers St. Mary and Hall Place, and he did.

He was a sturdy young English oak, with his feet in the clay.

§ 12

THE day that he reached the age of twenty-one had been excessively satisfactory. In the first place the weather had been a perfect English summer day—really hot in the sun, but tempered by a balmy breeze which set the flags fluttering, and the sides of the great tent where the more important of the tenantry were to feast, slapping suddenly now and then. For the lesser folk, the labourers and the villagers, barrels of beer and cider were broached, and an ox was roasted on a spit at a great open-air fire where all could cut and come as they liked.

TOASTING THE HEIR

There were presentations to the young Squire, and a magnificent collation in the great barn which had once been Amades' Music School, and the silver Jacobean Loving Cup, which was engraved round its lip with the legend "Drinke deepe and wyshe well," was handed round. For generations it had been used at the birth of the heir, and at his Coming-of-Age, and on no

other occasions. The last time it had seen the light had been at the majority of Gilbert Fitzmaurice Withers, Julian's great-uncle, whom he had never seen, but who might easily have been his father, from the strong resemblance in looks and character they bore to each other. One or two old people present who had known Gilbert remarked upon it.

"And no reason to be ashamed of it, he was a proper man, he was."

Julian felt certain of it, as Gilbert Fitzmaurice was a Withers.

His eyes sparkled, his russet complexion was heightened by excitement and the warmth of the day.

"Look at him!" said Lady Garraway, who had suddenly encountered old Mr Attlee resting on a seat that encircled an immense and beautiful beech-tree. "Dear me, it's quite pleasant to get into the shade. But as I said, look at Julian—we have really got back to the genuine Withers type again, in spite of poor Lucy's rash marriage. Really, you know, it was quite a blessing in disguise—though very sad, of course that the eldest son died. He could never have filled the place that Julian does. Foreigners can never be really at home in England, of course. There goes Mr Govoni—he looks quite English at a little distance, but of course he has very queer ideas. Oh, well, poor Lucy, I dare say she realised what a mistake she had made before she died."

"I never received the impression that Mrs Govoni regretted her marriage," said Mr Attlee dryly.

"Oh, well, she wouldn't be likely to *tell* you. But all that is over now, and the next thing we must hope for is that Julian will soon make a suitable marriage."

"Yes, it is very necessary that the line be carried on," said old Mr Attlee, thinking of all the Withers deeds and documents that reposed in the white-lettered black japanned boxes in his office. His face was the colour of old parchment, and his mind was concerned with continuity. This secure and settled English scene, this old-established English family—so rooted in the land that it could absorb foreign blood into itself and transmute it into something as indisputably English as that young man with a smiling face and a little unconscious swagger of the shoulders walking there on the summer grass. Yes, he must marry and produce an heir to all this. Certainly that was the necessary thing—old families, the glory of England, must not die out, things must be as they always had been. From generation to generation there must be an heir to these great landed estates, these ancient names. Continuity. The air was hot, even under the shade of this tree, Lady

Garraway was still talking, but he was not listening very much. He was old, he felt tired.

Perhaps it was an echo of Great-Aunt Caroline's voice he was hearing, like a ghost on the summer breeze, faint, but so persistent it drowned even Lady Garraway's—"The line must be continued—the line, continued."

§ 13

MOONLIGHT AND SLEEP

When all the festivities were over that night Amades found himself quite unable to sleep. He was returning on the morrow to Leipzig to continue his work. This was his farewell to Withers St. Mary—his abdication was now complete and the young prince reigned in his stead. He wandered through the deserted rooms for a while with a candle in his hand. Exhausted servants and exhausted family and guests were all wrapt in slumber. The "young Squire," as everybody now called Julian, was temporarily unconscious of his highly prized position, to which he would awake with renewed enjoyment on the morrow.

As he grew older Amades became more completely indifferent to possessions—the thought of a big house and estate an intolerable burden to his spirit. Music, the least material of the arts, wanted none of these things. Hall Place had only been dear to him because it enshrined his Lucy—and she was gone.

Through an undrawn curtain he had a sudden glimpse of the night. Impossible to stay under a roof with such a scene outside. He unbolted a garden door on to the terrace, and stepped into the astonishing night—it was not night, but a lunar day. Great shining cumulus clouds were rolling serenely across the sky, drifting beneath the moon—their curves and rhythmic movement were like visible music. Amades stood and gazed till he was not sure whether the clouds moved, or the moon, or himself. Everything seemed involved in a continuous flux, changing, shifting, re-shaping, fluid as thought, yet more peaceful than stillness. Suddenly as he stood gazing Amades' memory delivered to him words he had once read:

> "O Man! take heed
> What saith deep midnight's voice indeed?
> I slept my sleep——"

Here memory halted, missed its beat, he could not get the next lines, but suddenly swept on to the final ones:

> “Joy deeper still than grief can be:
> Woe saith: ‘Hence! Go!’
> But joys all want Eternity—
> Want deep, profound Eternity!”

Far off, in the silver night, a cock crew, and—so remotely it sounded as if from another world—a distant cock answered him. The Bird of Dawning was awake.

Ditchling: February-October, 1937.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Book author has been added to the original book cover. The resulting cover is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *Lucy and Amades*, by Esther Meynell]