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DUMARESQ'S DAUGHTER

A Novel

BY

GRANT ALLEN

AUTHOR OF
'IN ALL SHADES,' 'THIS MORTAL COIL,' 'THE TENTS OF SHEM,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES
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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

DUMARESQ'S DAUGHTER

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PARSON IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

Linnell, for his part, had made his mind up at once: Psyche Dumaresq should never marry a penniless painter. But unless she was ready to marry a penniless painter, father or no father to the contrary notwithstanding—unless she was ready to forsake all and follow the man of her choice willingly, to poverty or riches, she was not the girl he imagined her to be; and dearly as the wrench would cost him now, he would go away the very next evening, and never again set eyes on Psyche. Not, indeed, that Linnell had any doubt whatsoever in his own mind upon that score. He had never felt before how deeply he loved Psyche—how profoundly and implicitly he trusted her instincts. He knew she could never harbour so mercenary a thought in her pure little soul as that fallen idol, her unworthy father. He knew she would take him, money or no money. He knew that *there* he could never be mistaken. He had watched her daily, he repeated to himself once more in the words of the ballad, a little altered, and he *knew* she loved him well. If he went to Psyche to-morrow, and asked her plainly, 'Will you marry a penniless painter who loves you from the bottom of his heart?' he felt sure she would answer, with her own sweet, innocent, guileless boldness, 'I will gladly;' and he would love her all the better for that naïve frankness.

To do that would be no real breach of the virtual promise he had made her father; for was he not rich? Was he not well-born? Would he not make her supremely happy? Would he not be keeping the spirit of his bond by thus evading it in the outer letter? He said to himself 'Yes' to that question ten thousand times over, as he walked home alone across the breezy Downs to the Red Lion, with the keen wind blowing fresh against his flushed hot face, and the blood running warm in his tingling cheeks at the memory of that hideous unsought interview.

Not that he really meant thus to break even the letter of his bond with Haviland Dumaresq. Oh no; he needed no such overt trial of his beautiful Psyche's fidelity as that. He could trust her implicitly, implicitly, implicitly. Besides, the trial would be taken out of his hands. Dumaresq would go home, full of his discovery, his miserable discovery that Linnell was nothing but a common artist—a painter by trade—a journeyman colour-monger. The sordid philosopher, that mistaken father, would tell Psyche more or less directly the result of his own unspeakable inquiries: he would warn her against listening to that penniless young man; he would talk to her the common stereotyped cant of worldly-wise paternity: he would sink the brain that conceived the 'Encyclopædic Philosophy' to the miserable level of the Maitland intelligence.

Linnell could hear in his ears even now the echoes of that hideous unholy cant—'they were dangerous guides, the feelings,' and so forth, and so forth, *usque ad nauseam*, as though Haviland Dumaresq, a prophet born, had consented to dwell in his old age in the coasts of the Philistines. He could hear the greatest thinker of our time, in that sad dotage of his, 'with a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart!' Oh, heavens! It was incredible, it was loathsome, but it was nevertheless true. He hardly knew how to believe it himself, but he admitted it grudgingly to his own soul: Haviland Dumaresq had feet of clay, and the feet of clay had tottered to their fall in these last stages of a once mighty intellect.

But Psyche? Ah, well! He had no fear at all in his heart for Psyche. He could never conceive his own beautiful, free, great-hearted Psyche 'puppet to a father's threats, or servile to a shrewish tongue.' He knew what Psyche would do; he knew it perfectly. Psyche would burst in upon him to-morrow morning, when he called round to finish her father's picture, and flinging all conventional restrictions to the four winds of heaven—rules like those were not for such as Psyche—would cast herself upon him with a wild emotion, clasp her arms around his neck in a torrent of joy, and cry aloud that, rich or poor, come what might, she loved him, she loved him. Or if Psyche didn't do that—for, after all, a maiden is a maiden still—at least he would see, from the timid and tearful way she greeted him, that she at any rate was wholly unchanged by anything her father might have said to her overnight against a penniless lover. She would treat him more kindly and tenderly than ever; she would say by her actions, if not by her words, 'I would love you still, though you had no roof to cover you.' That was how a girl like Psyche ought to feel and act; and because he knew *she* would feel and act so, he loved her, he loved her. In Psyche's presence he was no longer shy. Perfect love casteth out fear. Psyche would never be bent aside by such base considerations as swayed that clay-footed idol, her father. The grand incorruptible Haviland Dumaresq of former days, that was dead now in the old man's shrunken and shrivelled soul, lived still in the purer and nobler nature of his spotless daughter.

And then, when Psyche had thus proved herself worthy of her high lineage—for what lineage, after all, could be higher in any real scale of worth than direct descent from the greatest and deepest of modern thinkers?—he would clasp her to his breast in an ecstasy of passion, and tell her plainly, what he had never yet told any living being, that the sacrifice she thought she was making for his sake had no existence; that all her father asked for her she should freely enjoy—that money, position, respect, should be hers—that *she* should be everything he himself had never been. For Linnell was rich, if it came to that; from Haviland Dumaresq's point of view quite fabulously rich; wealthy beyond the utmost dreams of Dumaresquian avarice: and if for some quixotic fad of his own he had chosen so long to give up the money that was rightly his due to the service of others, and to live entirely on his artistic earnings, he would not consider himself bound any longer to continue his obedience to that self-inflicted, self-denying ordinance, when he had a wife's happiness to consult and to provide for—and that wife his own matchless Psyche. He was rich; and he stood next heir in blood to an English baronetcy. Many things had conspired to make the shrinking, sensitive painter feel the importance of his own position far less acutely than most men would have done; but that was no reason why others should not value it at the current valuation of such things in the world of England. He could go to Haviland Dumaresq, if need were, and say to him honestly, with unblushing pride: 'The penniless painter has asked your daughter's hand in marriage, and has been duly accepted. But the man who marries her is rich beyond the furthest you ever demanded from your daughter's suitors, and belongs to one of the oldest and most distinguished families in all England.' It was horrible, indeed, to think of coupling such a base and vulgar thought as that with the honoured name of Haviland Dumaresq; but if Haviland Dumaresq had in point of fact sunk so low, Linnell would meet him on his own new level, and ask him still for his guileless Psyche.

With such thoughts as these whirling fast in his brain, the painter strolled back to the village inn, the air all full of Psyche, Psyche, Psyche. As he passed the Mansels', he caught through the hedge the gleam of a rustling white summer dress, and overheard the tones of a most educated voice, which he recognised at once as the final flower of Girtonian culture. He hoped Mrs. Mansel would let him pass by without calling him in, for he was in small humour that day to discuss the relative merits of Wagner and Mendelssohn, or to give his opinion in set epigrammatic phrase on the latest development of the subjective novel. But Mrs. Mansel spied him out with keen vision as he passed the gate, and came over with her sweetly subdued smile, in a Greek-looking robe looped up with an old gold oriental scarf, to call him for colloquy into her most cultivated garden. The *Academy* and *Mind* lay beside the learned lady's vacant place on the rustic seat, but in her hand she held coquettishly that far more mundane journal, the *Morning Post*. Curiosity survives as a maternal legacy even in the most highly-strung of the daughters of Eve; and Mrs. Mansel's curiosity was now at boiling-point.

'Oh, Mr. Linnell,' she cried with unwonted eagerness, 'I'm so glad you've come! I've been longing to see you. I wanted to ask you something *so* important. *Have* you any relations living in Northumberland?'

The question fell upon Linnell's ear like a clap of thunder from a clear sky. He hadn't the slightest idea in his own mind what on earth Mrs. Mansel could mean. But glancing hastily at her finger on the open page, the thought occurred to him with lightning rapidity that perhaps his half-brother Frank had just got married. That was the secret, then, of Sir Austen's desire to have the question of the succession settled upon a firm and secure basis before he left England! Linnell hesitated a fraction of a moment: then he answered doubtfully: 'I believe there's one member of my family living there at present. But I know very little of him. I've never seen him. To tell you the truth, our family relations haven't been always quite what you could call cordial.'

'A clergyman?' Mrs. Mansel asked with her soft low voice.

'A clergyman, yes,' Linnell made answer, bewildered. 'Is there anything about him in the paper to-day, then?'

'Oh, I felt sure he must be one of your family,' Mrs. Mansel cried, still holding that tantalizing sheet tightly in her small white hand. 'The name's Francis Austen Linnell, you see, and I recognised him, as I recognised you, by the peculiar spelling of the name Austen.'

'We're all of us Austens,' Linnell answered with a short, uneasy laugh. 'It's a point of honour with every Linnell I ever heard of to continue the family tradition in that respect. It's gone on in an unbroken line, I believe, since the time of Charles the Second; and it'll go on still till baronetcies are as extinct as dodos and megatheriums. But may I ask what my respected namesake's been doing at all to get himself mentioned in the *Morning Post*? Up to date, I can't say I ever remember any performance of his, except his birth, being thought worth recording in a London newspaper.'

'Like Mark Twain's hero,' Mrs. Mansel suggested with a musical little laugh, 'who up to the age of seventy-five years had never shown any remarkable talent—and never showed any afterward: so that when he died, ill-natured people said he'd done it on purpose to gain notoriety.'

'Died!' Linnell exclaimed, holding out his hand incredulously for the paper. 'You don't mean to say Frank's dead, do you?'

'Oh yes, I forgot to say it's his death that comes next by way of record,' Mrs. Mansel went on with serene composure. 'In fact, of course, I took it for granted you'd have seen the announcement somewhere already. No, not in the Births, Deaths, and Marriages: it's later than that. See, there's the place: "Appalling Catastrophe on the Great Northern Railway."'

Linnell took the paper from her hand with trembling fingers and ran his eye hastily down the lengthy telegram. 'As the 6.45 night express was steaming out of Doncaster yesterday evening' ... 'goods-waggons laden with heavy pig-iron' ... 'both trains were completely telescoped' ... 'harrowing scenes among the dead and wounded' ... 'the following bodies have already been identified' ... 'The Rev. Francis Austen Linnell, Vicar of Hambledon-cum-Thornyhaugh, Northumberland.'

He handed back the paper, very white in the face, to Mrs. Mansel. It was clear that the news profoundly affected him.

'Why, Mr. Linnell, I didn't know you were so much interested in the man,' the learned lady cried, astonished and penitent. 'If I'd thought you were so deeply concerned as that, I'd have broken it gently to you—indeed I would. Was he such a very near relation, then?'

'He was only—my brother,' Linnell answered with a gasp. He had never seen him; but blood is thicker than water, after all. A nameless shock seemed to run through his system. Two thoughts came uppermost in the painter's mind amid the whirl of emotion that those words had brought upon him. The first was a sense of profound thankfulness that he had written and posted that letter to Sir Austen before he knew of his brother's sudden death. The second was the idea that even Haviland Dumaresq would now no doubt be satisfied to accept as Psyche's husband the heir-presumptive to an English baronetcy, who had no longer any reason for concealing his position and prospects from the world in deference to the feelings of an illegitimate relative.

CHAPTER XIV.

RACK AND THUMBSCREW.

Haviland Dumaresq sat long on the bank, with his head in his hands, sobbing like a child. Then he rose wearily, and plodded home alone, his head aching and his heart heavy at the downfall of that mad momentary opium dream for his beloved Psyche.

Without and within, indeed, the day had changed. Dull weather was springing up slowly from the west, where the sun had buried itself behind a rising fog-bank. The philosopher made his way, with stumbling steps, across the open Downs —those prosaic Downs so lately mountains—and lifting the latch of the garden gate, entered the house and walked aimlessly into his bare little study.

A dozen books lay open on the plain deal table—books of reference for the subject at which he was just then working—a series of papers on mathematical and astronomical questions for the 'Popular Instructor.' He sat down in his place and tried to compose. It was for bread, for bread, for bread, for Psyche. But even that strong accustomed spur could not goad him on to work this dreary afternoon. He gazed vacantly at the accusing sheet of virgin-white foolscap: not a thought surged up in that teeming brain; not a picture floated before those dim inner eyes; he couldn't fix himself for a moment upon the declination of Alpha Centauri: with all the universe of stars and nebulæ and constellations and systems careering madly in wild dance around him to the music of the spheres, his mind came back ever to one insignificant point in space, on the surface of that petty planet he so roundly despised—the point occupied by a tiny inconspicuous organic result of cosmic energies, by name Psyche. At last he flung down his pen in despair, and opening the door half ajar in his hand, called up the stairs to her, 'Psyche, Psyche, Psyche!'

'Yes, papa,' Psyche answered, jumping up at the call from the tiny couch in her own bedroom, and running down the steep and narrow cottage staircase. 'You weren't in for lunch. I was so sorry. You've had one of those horrid headaches again, I'm sure. I can tell it by your eyes. I see the pupils look so big and heavy.'

Haviland Dumaresq drew one palm across his forehead, and gazed hard at his daughter's eyes in return. Though she had bathed them well in cold water, they still bore evident traces of crying.

'My darling,' he said, laying his hand on her shoulder with tender care, and drawing her over caressingly to the one armchair in that bare little workshop, 'something's been troubling *you* too. You're not yourself at all to-day, I can see. You look pale and troubled. Psyche, we two have never had secrets from one another up to this: don't let's begin to have any now. Tell me what it is. Tell me what's worrying my dear little daughter.' He spoke wistfully.

Psyche gazed up at him half doubtful for a moment; then she answered with a flush:

'You can read everything. You know already what it is, father.'

Dumaresq, trembling, took her little hand in his and stroked it tenderly.

'We must expect it so now,' he said in an undertone, as if half to himself, with dreamy persistence—'we must expect it so now, I suppose: the Epoch has come for it. In the essentially artificial state of society in which we human atoms now live and move and have our being, feelings that are natural at certain turns of life as song to the bird or play to the kitten must be sternly repressed at Society's bidding; and they can only be suppressed by being turned inward; they must find vent at last, if in nothing else, in these hysterical longings, and tears, and emotions. I must expect them all, no doubt; I must expect these outbursts. But it's hard to see them, for all that, however inevitable. My little girl has been crying—alone. It wrings my heart to see her eyes so red. Psyche, Psyche, you must try to dismiss it.'

'I can't,' Psyche answered, making no attempt to conceal the subject that floated uppermost in both their thoughts. Father and daughter were too nearly akin to allow of any flimsy pretences between them. 'I can't dismiss it—and, papa, I don't want to.'

'Not for *my* sake, Psyche?' he asked sadly.

The girl rose, the peach-blossom flush in her cheek now more crimson than ever, and flinging herself wistfully on her father's shoulder, answered without faltering, or sobbing, or crying:

'Anything but *that*, father; anything on earth but that; for your sake, anything; but *that*, never!'

The old man disengaged her softly from his neck, and seating her down in the big armchair, where she let her face hang, all shame and blushes, without venturing to raise her eyes to his, surveyed her long and anxiously in pitying silence. Then he cried at last, clasping his hands tight:

'I didn't think it had gone as far as *this*, my darling. If I'd dreamt it was going as far as this, I'd have spoken and warned you long ago, Psyche!'

'It hasn't gone far at all, papa,' Psyche answered truthfully. 'It hasn't begun even. It's all within. I don't so much as know'—she paused for a moment, then she added in a very low tone, tremulously—'whether he cares the least little bit in the world for me.'

'It *has* gone far,' the old man corrected with a very grave air: 'far, far, too far—in your heart, Psyche. And your own heart is all I care about. I ought to have foreseen it. I ought to have suspected it. I ought to have guarded my treasure, my beautiful treasure in an earthen vessel, far more carefully. What matters is not whether *he* cares for you, but that you should care at all for *him*, my darling.'

Psyche looked down and answered nothing.

'You think yourself in love with him,' her father went on, accenting the *think* with a marked emphasis.

'I never said so,' Psyche burst out, half defiantly.

Dumaresq took a little wooden chair from the corner by the window, and drawing it over by Psyche's side, seated himself close to her and laid her passive hand in his with fatherly gentleness. Psyche's blank eyes looked straight in front of her. The philosopher, gazing down, hesitated and reflected half a minute. Stars and worlds are such calculable bodies to deal with: they move along such exactly measurable orbits: but a woman!—who shall tell what attractions and repulsions deflect her from her course? who shall map out her irregular and irresponsible movements? And since the last six weeks or so, Psyche was a woman. She had found out her own essential womanhood with a burst, as girls of her type always do—at the touch of a man's hand. Her father gazed at her in doubt. How to begin his needful parable?

At last words came. 'My darling,' he said very slowly and gravely, 'you are all I have left to care for in the world, and I love you, Psyche, as no man ever yet loved his daughter. You are all the world to me, and the rest is nothing. Looking back upon my own past life, I don't attempt to conceal from myself for a moment the fact that, as a man, I have been a failure—an utter failure. The failure was a splendid one, I frankly admit; nay, more, perhaps, a failure worth making—for one man, once in the world's history—but none the less, for all that, an utter failure. No, don't interrupt me, my child, for I know what I'm saying. Am I a man to palter with the truth or to hide from myself my own great weaknesses? Have I not taken my own gauge like all other gauges—accurately and dispassionately? From beginning to end, my life has been all wrong; an error from the outset: like the universe itself, a magnificent blunder. Not that I regret it; I regret nothing. I am myself, not any other. I must follow out the law of my own being unopposed, though it bring me in the end nothing but blank disappointment.'

He paused a moment, and ran his hand abstractedly through her long fair hair: then he went on again in a soft musing undertone: 'But you, Psyche, it is for you to profit by my sad experience. I have learnt once for all, myself vicariously for all our race—learnt in a hard school, a hard lesson, to be transmitted from me to every future Dumaresq, for individuality runs too strong in the current of our blood—learnt that the world is right, and that the individual does unwisely and ill to cast himself away for the sake of humanity. Humanity will owe him no thanks for his sacrifice. My child, I want you to be happy—happy—happier far than ever I have been. I could never bear to see you condemned to a life of drudgery. I want *you* to be all that I have missed. I want *you* to be what I could never have been. I want you to be comfortable—at your ease—happy.'

Psyche caught at his meaning by pure hereditary sympathy. She glanced back at him with her proud free face, tenderly, indeed, but almost reproachfully. How could *he* ever think it of her? 'Papa,' she said in a very firm voice, 'I am *your* daughter. Individuality, as you say, runs strong in the blood. As *you* are, I am. But being the actual man you are yourself—why, how can you ever expect your daughter to be any otherwise?'

'You despise money too much, Psyche,' the old man said, in a tone of conviction.

'Do *you* despise it?' Psyche answered simply with a straight home-thrust. 'Papa, you know you do—as much as I do.'

Haviland Dumaresq's lips half relaxed in spite of himself. 'True,' he replied; 'very true, little one. But then I'm a man. I can bear all that—poverty, drudgery, misery. I know what it means. Whereas *you*, my darling——'

'I—am your daughter,' Psyche repeated proudly.

'Then you mean,' her father said in a heart-broken voice, 'that if he asks you, you mean to marry Mr. Linnell?'

'He hasn't asked me,' Psyche answered with a deeper flush.

'But if he does, Psyche—my darling, my daughter, promise me, oh! promise me, that you'll give him no answer till you've spoken to me about it.'

Psyche looked him back in the eyes sorrowfully. 'I can't,' she answered, faltering. 'Oh, anything but that, papa! I didn't know it myself even till you began to ask me. But I know it now. I love him, I love him too dearly.'

Dumaresq looked at her with melting regret. 'My child,' he said, faltering in his turn, 'you will break my heart for me. Psyche, I've had but one day-dream in my life—one long day-dream that I've cherished for years for you. I've seen you growing up and unfolding like a flower-bud, becoming every day sweeter and daintier and more beautiful than ever, flitting like a butterfly through this dull gray life of mine—and I've said to myself in my own heart: "If I've nothing else to give my child, I can give her at least the dower of being Haviland Dumaresq's only daughter. I can introduce her to a world where my name at any rate counts for something. There she will be noticed, admired, courted: there her beautiful face and her beautiful soul will both be rated at their true value. There some man who is worthy of her, by birth and position, will make her happy, as she richly deserves to be." I saw you in my own mind surrounded by comfort, honour, luxury. That was my day-dream, Psyche, the only day-dream of my sad long life. Don't break it down ruthlessly for me, I beseech you, by marrying a penniless man, who will drag you, by slow degrees of decline, down, down, down, to poverty, drudgery, wretchedness, misery. Don't let me see you a pale, careworn wife, harassed with debt, and many children, and endless rounds of household worries. Don't break my heart by spoiling your own life for me. Oh, for my sake, Psyche, promise me, do promise me, for the present to say "*No*" to him.'

'Papa, papa,' Psyche cried, 'you've said it yourself; if you've nothing else on earth to give me, you've given me the dower of being Haviland Dumaresq's daughter. I've always been proud of your own grand life, and of the way you've flung it so grandly away for humanity. Do you think I'm not proud enough to fling my own away too—for love? I'd rather bear drudgery with the one man I care for, than share wealth and position and titles and honours with any other man in all England.'

Her father gazed down at her with remorseful eyes. He was proud of her, but heart-broken. 'You're very young, Psyche,' he murmured again, holding both her hands in his, and pleading hard for his day-dream. 'You're only beginning your course through life. You'll meet many other men in your way through the world whom you can love as truly as you love Linnell. This is but the first slight scratch. Don't fancy, as girls will do, it's the deepest of wounds, the one grand passion. You'll find penniless young painters are as plentiful as blackberries on your path through life. I've seen women marry before now for pure, pure love, and marry a man who loved them truly; yet lead such lives, such unhappy lives of sordid shifts and squalid household tasks, that all the romance—yes, and all the health and strength and spirit too—was crushed clean out of them. Don't rush headlong at once on such a fate as that. Wait awhile, my child; I ask you no more: just a brief delay: wait and make your mind up.'

He meant it in the kindest possible way—the way of fathers; but he had mistaken his hearer. Psyche looked up at him with a great fact dawning ever clearer on her half-childish understanding. She had realized it but dimly and uncertainly before; she saw it now, under stress of opposition, in all its vivid and undeniable distinctness.

'Papa,' she cried, with profound conviction, 'I may wait and wait, as long as you like, but I shall love him for ever, and him only.'

He had forced it out of her. He had forced it into her almost. Without the spur of his searching question, she could never have put it so plainly, even to herself. But she knew it now. She was quite certain of it. She saw it as a simple fact of Nature. She loved Linnell, and she was not ashamed of it. She had forgotten by this time all her girlish bashfulness—her modesty—her reserve—and she looked her father full in the face as she repeated fervently: 'I love him! I love him!'

The old man flung himself back in his chair with a groan.

'Psyche, Psyche,' he cried, 'you'll kill me—you'll kill me! Was it for this I longed and dreamed in secret? Was it for this I worked and flung my life away? You'll bring down my gray hairs in sorrow to the grave. To see you drudging as a poor man's slave in some wretched lodging! For your father's sake, oh, take pity on yourself—refuse him, refuse him!'

'I can't,' Psyche answered firmly—'I can't do it, papa. My tongue wouldn't obey me. He hasn't asked me yet, and for your sake I hope he won't ask me; but if he does, I can't refuse him; I must say "*Yes*;" I can never say "No" to him.'

Her father rocked himself to and fro in his chair in speechless misery. If Psyche were to marry that penniless painter he would feel that his life was indeed a failure. His house would in truth be left unto him desolate. The ground would be cut from under his very feet. He had dreamed his dream of happiness for Psyche so long that he had come to live on it now altogether. It was his future, his world, his one interest in existence. It had intertwined itself alike in his opium ecstasies and in his soberer, saner, waking hours, till each form of the dream had only seemed to heighten and fortify the other. And now Psyche, for whose sake he had dreamt it all, was going herself deliberately to crush his hopes under foot by flinging herself away, and accepting that penniless, struggling painter.

He rocked himself to and fro in his chair with tears in his eyes. They rolled slowly down his weather-beaten cheek, and Psyche, watching them, let her own keep them company in solemn silence. One heart or the other must surely break. Which heart should it be? that was the question. Big drops stood upon the old man's brow. It was clear the disappointment wrung his very soul. The opium-fever made him see things ever in extremes. If Linnell wasn't rich, then Linnell was a beggar, and would drag down his Psyche to the grave or the workhouse. His agony stood out visibly in every line of his face. At last Psyche could stand the sight no longer. She flung herself upon him with tears and sobs.

'Papa,' she cried piteously, 'my dear, darling father; I love you, I love you, very, very dearly!'

'I know it, Psyche,' the old man answered in heart-broken tones, with his hand on his heart—'I know it; I know it.'

'Ask me anything but that, papa,' Psyche burst out, all penitent, 'and I'll gladly do it.'

The philosopher soothed her fair hair with his hand.

'Psyche,' he murmured once more, after a long pause, 'he's coming to-morrow to finish the picture. After that, I believe, he's not coming again. I think—he's going away altogether from Petherton.'

Psyche's face was as white as a ghost's.

'Well, papa?' she asked, in a voice that trembled audibly with a quivering tremor.

'Well, I want you to do one thing for me,' her father went on, 'one thing only. I won't ask you to give him up: not to give him up entirely. I see that's more than I could ask of you at present. The wound has gone too deep for the moment. But young hearts heal much faster than old ones. I do ask you, therefore, to wait and think. Remember how young you are! You're only seventeen. In four years more you'll be your own mistress. If in four years from now you love Linnell still, and he loves you still, then well and good—though it break my heart, I will not oppose you. Even now, my darling, I do not oppose you. I only say to you—and I beg of you—I implore you—wait and try him.'

Psyche looked back at him, cold and white as marble.

'I will wait, papa,' she answered, in a very clear voice. 'I can wait, if you wish it. I can wait, and wait, and wait for ever. But, four years or forty years, I shall always love him.'

Dumaresq smiled. That's the way with the young. The present love is to them always the unalterable one.

'If you'll wait for my sake,' he said, holding her hand tight, 'I'll let you do as you will in four short years. In three years, even, I'll give you law. You're young, very young. I never thought these things had come near you yet. If I had thought so, I'd have guarded you better, far better. But I want you to promise me now one other thing—say nothing of all this to Linnell to-morrow.'

'Papa!' Psyche cried, rising in her horror, 'am I to let him go away without even saying good-bye to him? without bidding him farewell? without telling him how sorry I am to lose him, and why—why I must be so terribly different now to him?

Suppose he asks me, what must I answer him?'

'My child,' the old man said in a soothing voice, 'he will *not* ask you. He'll pass it by in silence. But for my sake, I beg you, I beseech you, I implore you—try to say nothing to him. Let him go in peace. Oh, Psyche, don't break my poor old heart for me outright! I'm an old man—a broken-down man. If I have time, perhaps I may get over this blow. But give me time! I'm very feeble—worn out before my day. Let him go to-morrow without telling your whole heart to him.'

Psyche stood still and answered nothing.

'Will you?' her father asked once more imploringly.

Psyche, white as a sheet, still held her peace.

'For Heaven's sake, promise,' the old man cried again, with an agonized look. It was crushing his heart. He couldn't bear to think that Linnell should drag her down to those imagined depths of Bohemian poverty.

The poor girl gazed at him with a fixed, cold face. She looked more like a marble statue than a human figure as she stood there irresolute. The heart within her was divided two ways, and frozen hard with horror. But her father's attitude moved her to despair. He was an old man, as he said, and to refuse him now would clearly be his death-warrant.

'I promise,' she murmured slowly, and stood there rooted. Three years, three years—three long, long years! and she dared not even so much as tell him.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE CRUCIBLE.

At ten o'clock next morning, according to promise, Linnell presented himself at the Wren's Nest. He was pale and anxious, for he had passed a long and sleepless night—who knows not those sleepless nights, more precious by far than sleep itself, when a man's head whirls round and round with a thousand tunes played deliciously on a single chord?—but he was not in the least afraid of the result, for he could trust Psyche: though Haviland Dumaresq himself might fade at nearer view into common humanity, he could trust Psyche—he could trust Psyche! How often did he not murmur to himself reassuringly through the night-watches that, let who would fail, he could still trust Psyche! So he pulled himself together with what energy he might, and went round betimes to finish the portrait.

Psyche, too, for her part, was pale and agitated; but she was far too much of a woman already to let her devoted admirer plainly see it. She, too, had lain awake on her bed all night, not in the sleepless ecstasy of love like Linnell, but crying her eyes out in a fierce conflict of counter-emotions. Till yesterday she hardly knew she loved her painter; but we often learn what we love best only at the moment when we are called upon to give it up. Now that she was asked to relinquish all thoughts of loving Linnell, Psyche felt to herself for the first time how her whole future had unconsciously wrapped itself up in him. She had cried and cried till her eyes were sore and red; at least, for the first half of that long lone night. But about three o'clock the woman within her suggested suddenly that if she went on crying any longer like this, Linnell would detect those red eyes in the morning. So she rose up hastily and bathed them with rose-water; and after a long time spent in reducing the swollen lids to proper proportions, went to bed once more with a stern resolve not to cry again to-night, no matter what cruel thought might present itself to her. And she kept the resolve with innate firmness. She was Haviland Dumaresq's daughter, after all, and she knew how to control her own heart sternly. Let it throb as it would, she would keep it quiet. Her pride itself would never permit her to let her father or her lover see to-morrow she had shed a tear over this her first great sorrow.

So, when Linnell presented himself in the bare little dining-room at ten o'clock, Psyche was there, fresh and smiling as usual, to meet him and greet him with undisturbed calmness. Fresh and smiling as usual, but somehow changed, Linnell felt instinctively: not quite herself: some shadow of a thick impenetrable barrier seemed to have risen up invisible since yesterday between them. Could it be that Psyche too—— But no! impossible! Linnell dashed away the unworthy thought, half ashamed of himself for allowing it to obtrude its horrid face for one moment upon him. Such motives could never weigh with Psyche. Though Haviland Dumaresq had wallowed in mire, his Psyche could never soil the tip of her white little wings in it.

She held out her hand and took his with a smile. But her grasp had none of that gentle pressure he had learnt to expect of late from Psyche; that cordial pressure, unfelt and undesigned, which all of us give to friends and intimates. A man so sensitive and so delicately organized as Linnell felt the difference at once: he felt it, and it chilled him. 'Good-morning,' he said in a disappointed voice: 'we can go on at once, I suppose, with the picture.'

'Yes,' Psyche answered in tones she could hardly school herself to utter. 'It'll be finished to-day, I suppose, Mr. Linnell? Papa told me you thought you'd only want one more day for it.'

The artist looked at her with a keen and piercing glance. Was even his faith in Psyche, then, to be shaken? Would Psyche herself have nothing more to say to the penniless painter? He wouldn't believe it—he couldn't believe it. 'Yes, one more day,' he answered, 'and then we shall be done. It's been a pleasant task, Miss Dumaresq. I'm sorry it's finished. We've enjoyed it together.'

'The picture's beautiful,' Psyche answered, trembling, but trying to talk as coldly as she could. She had given her word to papa last night, and bitter as it might be, she would do the best she knew to fulfil it. But, oh, how much easier it was to promise last night—though that itself was hard—than to carry the promise into execution this morning!

'I'm glad you like it,' Linnell went on, making up his mind not to notice her tone—a man may so readily misinterpret mere tones: 'I never pleased myself better before; but then, I never had so suitable a sitter.'

'Thank you,' Psyche answered with well-assumed calmness: 'it's a pleasure to me if I've been able to be of any service to you.'

Linnell looked back at her in surprise and alarm. His heart was beating very fast now. There could be no mistaking the frigidity of her tone. Impossible, incredible, inconceivable as it seemed, Psyche must have found out he wasn't worth catching.

His hand could hardly guide his brush aright, but he went on painting through that whole long morning—the longest and most terrible he had ever known—with the energy of despair increasing and deepening upon him each moment. They talked continually—talked far more than usual; for each of them felt too constrained and unhappy to let the conversation flag for a single moment. Silence in such a case would be worse than unsafe: only by a strenuous stream of platitudinous commonplaces can the overflowing heart be held back at a crisis from unseemly self-revelation. Linnell talked about the picture and its effect: Psyche answered him back bravely with polite phrases. Her courage never failed or flinched for a second: though she broke her heart over it, she would keep her word to the letter to her father.

After all, it was only for three long years: an eternity of time when one's seventeen; but still an eternity with limits beyond it. Some day, some day, she could explain it all to him. Some day she could tell him with a bursting heart how much she had endured, and for his dear sake. For he loved her, he loved her; of that she was certain. His hand was trembling on the canvas as he worked; till then, poor fluttering heart, lie still. Some day you may burst your self-imposed barriers, and let your pent-up love flow down its natural channel.

Once or twice, however, the pressure was terrible. Once or twice the tears rose almost to the level of her eyes; but each time, with a superhuman effort of will, like her father's daughter, she thrust them back again. Towards the end especially, when Linnell, now thoroughly wounded in soul, began to hint at his approaching departure, the conflict within her grew painfully intense.

'I meant to spend all the summer at Petherton,' he said with a burst, looking across at her despairingly, towards the close of the sitting—'particularly once; I almost made my mind up. But circumstances have arisen which make me think it best now to go. Though, indeed, even yet I might stop—if other circumstances intervened to detain me.' He looked at her hard. She gave no sign. 'But that seems unlikely, he went on, heart-broken. 'So I shall probably leave almost at once. Unless, indeed, anything should happen—unexpectedly—to keep me here.'

He gazed at her, despairing. Psyche faltered. The heart within her rose up and did battle. She knew what he meant. One word would suffice—one motion of the hand. Could she keep it down? Could she do her own soul—and his—this gross injustice? And then her father's pleading face recurred to her. An old, old man—a broken old man! Her father's pleading face, and her sacred promise! Her promise! her promise! Come what might, she must, she must! It was for three years only! And he—he would wait for her.

Summoning up all her courage, she answered once more in the same set tone, but with agonized eyes:

'We shall be sorry to lose you. It's been a very great pleasure to us all to see you here, Mr. Linnell, this summer.'

Linnell noticed the struggle and its result; noticed it, and—as was natural for him—misinterpreted it too. A nature like his could put but one interpretation upon it. That she was really crushing down her own better feelings at the dictates of mere vulgar prudence and avarice! She would have liked to be cordial—to the man, to himself—modest and sensitive as he was in his heart, Linnell yet paid himself mentally the compliment of admitting so much—she liked the man; but she would make no concession to the penniless painter. He turned to his work once more with a stifled sigh of horror. He, too, had had a day-dream at last; he had thought just once, just once in the world, he had found the one true maiden to love him; and now the day-dream had melted again into airy nothingness, and the one true maiden had declared by no uncertain signs that she too preferred the worship of Mammon. Ah me! ah me! the horror of it! the pity of it!

There was a dangerous silence for half a minute. Psyche thought he must surely hear her heart as it beat with loud thuds against her trembling little bosom. At all hazards she must find something to say. She blundered in her haste and trepidation on the worst possible tack.

'But you will come again?' she murmured, almost persuasively.

Linnell looked up, and hesitated for an instant. Could she mean to relent? Was she leading him on? Never would he ask her if she took him with anything less than her whole heart, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, on his own account alone, without thought or calculation of money and position.

'A painter's life is governed by many varying conditions,' he answered slowly and very deliberately. 'We can't come and go where we will, like moneyed people. We must move where we find work cut out to our hands. Ours is a very precarious trade. We work hard, most of us, and earn little. Such people, you know, must be guided by the market. They must govern their motions hither and thither by demand and supply—hard political economy—paint what they find the world will pay them for.'

'But you're not like that,' Psyche cried, more naturally and unconstrainedly than she had yet spoken: 'you're well known, and can paint what you will. Besides, you can come and go where you please. You've nobody else in the world but yourself to think of. And—it would give us all so much pleasure to see you again at Petherton.'

Her soul misgave her as she spoke. Had she gone too far? Was she breaking the spirit of her promise now? Was she moving half-way, in her eagerness, to meet the penniless painter?

Linnell, too, looked up with a fresh burst of hope, as he heard her words.

'I might come back,' he said, eyeing her once more with that piercing glance of his, 'if only—I thought—I had something to come back for.'

Psyche shook with terror and remorse from head to foot. It was an awful ordeal for so young a girl. Her father should have guarded her heart from this strain. She had gone too far, then. She had said too much. Her feelings had betrayed her. She had broken her word. Oh, what would papa say to this? She must put herself right again; she must justify her promise.

'We shall all be delighted to see you,' she said, relapsing into the same cold impersonal voice as before. 'I hope you'll come. There must be plenty of things for you still to paint here.'

Linnell turned back, unmanned, to the picture again. Then she had fought it all out with her own heart, and the worst side had won within her! How beautiful she was, and how young, and how innocent! Who could ever have believed that under that sweet and almost childish face—childish in softness, yet full of womanly grace and dignity—there lay so much cold and calculating selfishness! Who could ever have believed that that seemingly simple country girl would stifle her own better inner promptings—deliberately, visibly to the naked eye—for the sake of money, position, worldly prospects! She would sell her own soul, then, for somebody's gold! And, oh, how futile, how empty was the sale! If she would but have loved him, how he would have loved her! And now, even now, when he saw she loved him far less than the chance of selling herself for hard cash in the matrimonial market—why, he loved her, he loved her, he loved her still! The more unworthy she was, the more he loved her. But he would never tell her so. Oh, never, never! For her own dignity's sake he would never tell her. He would never degrade himself—and Her—by putting her to the shame of that open renunciation of her better self. He would spare her the disgrace of belying her own heart. He would bear it all in silence. He would spare her—he would spare her.

He glanced across at her as he worked on mechanically still. A red flush stood now in the midst of her pale white cheek. She was ashamed, ashamed, of that he felt sure; but her heart was not strong enough to break through the vile bonds it had woven for itself. The Psyche he had dreamed of had never existed. But the baser Psyche that actually was he would always love. He would love her for the sake of his own sweet fancy. The ideal had made even the reality dear to him.

He painted away for some minutes in silence. Neither spoke. Psyche could not trust herself to say another word. The tears were welling up almost uncontrollably now. Linnell put touch after touch to the completed picture. Strange to say, the very power of his feeling made him paint intensely. He was surpassing himself in the exaltation of the moment. He was putting on the canvas the ideal Psyche—the Psyche that was not and never had been.

At last he drew breath, stood back, looked at it, and sighed. 'It's finished,' he said. 'One other stroke would spoil it.'

'Finished!' Psyche cried. 'Oh—I'm *so* sorry.'

Linnell packed up his things to go, in silence. Psyche never moved from her seat, but watched him. He packed them all up with a resolute air. She knew what it meant, but brave and proud still, she kept her compact to the very letter. 'Are you—going?' she asked at last, as he stood with the easel stuck under his arm, leaving the picture itself on the dining-room table.

'Yes, going,' he said in a very husky voice. 'It's all finished. Good-bye, Miss Dumaresq.'

'For ever!' Psyche cried, all her strength failing her.

'For ever,' Linnell answered, in choking tones. 'One word from you would have kept me, Psyche. It never came. You didn't speak it. If you spoke it now, even, it would keep me still. But you won't—you won't! You dare not speak it.'

Psyche looked up at him, one appealing glance. Her lips trembled. Her face was white as death now. 'I love you! Stop!' faltered unspoken in her parched throat. It almost burst, irrepressible, from her burning tongue. But her promise! her promise! She must keep her promise! The words died away on her bloodless lips. She only looked. She answered nothing.

With one wild impulse, before he went, Linnell seized the two white cheeks between his hands, and, stooping down, kissed the bloodless lips just once—and no more after. He knew it was wrong, but he couldn't resist it. Then he rose, and, crying in a tremulous voice, 'Good-bye, Psyche: good-bye, for ever!' he rushed wildly out into the cottage garden.

Ten minutes later, when Haviland Dumaresq came into the room to see what fruit his counsel had borne, he found Psyche seated in the one armchair with her cold face buried deep in her two hands, and her bosom rising and falling convulsively.

'He's gone, papa!' she said; 'and I've kept my promise.'

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT.

To Linnell the blow was a very severe one. At thirty, when a man loves, he loves in earnest. No playing then with light loves in the portal: no time then to wince and relent and refrain: the wounds he gets at that age go deep and rankle. As Linnell returned to the Red Lion that morning he felt the world was indeed a blank to him. Once only in his life had he indulged in the madness of daring to think a woman loved him: he had put that woman to the test, oh, such a tiny test! and found her wanting past all belief. Henceforth he would hold no girl a goddess. The game was played—and lost. Linnell was tired of it.

He had left the Oriental picture behind him at the Wren's Nest. The portrait of Haviland Dumaresq himself stood fronting him on the easel in his own sitting-room. It wanted several hours' work yet of its final completion. That fiery energy of despair he had felt at the cottage still possessed his soul. Seizing his palette, all on fire, and working away with a will from vivid memory alone—a memory now quickened by his unnatural exaltation—Linnell proceeded to fill in the remaining details, and to place upon the canvas a breathing, speaking, living portrait of the great philosopher in his happiest aspect. It was not Dumaresq as he appeared to the artist the day before on the west cliffs—not that shattered and disappointed old man of seventy, pleading hard against his own earlier and better self for the lowest and vulgarest estimate of life—but Dumaresq as he appeared on that first glorious evening at the Wren's Nest, with the heroic air of resignation and simplicity he had worn on his face, while he told in plain unvarnished language the story of his own grand and noble devotion in the morning of his days to an impersonal cause. Linnell remembered every curve of the features, every flash of the eyes, every turn of the expression, as Dumaresq had unfolded before them in full detail that strange history of magnificent self-denial. That was the Dumaresq that should live for ever upon his earnest canvas: that was the Dumaresq whose lineaments posterity should transcribe from his hand on the title-page of five thousand future editions of the 'Encyclopædic Philosophy.' For Linnell was too single-minded in his admiration of Dumaresq to let contempt for one aspect of the man's nature interfere with appreciation for the greatness of his life-work. Let him be emotionally whatever he might, intellectually, Linnell felt sure in his own soul, Haviland Dumaresq towered like a giant among the lesser and narrower thinkers of his age.

After three hours' hard work, he desisted at last, and, standing back in the room, gazed close with a critical eye at the portrait. His instincts told him it was a magnificent picture: he had put his very heart's blood into each stroke of the pencil. The landlady came up while he worked, and announced lunch; but Linnell would not lay aside his brush for a second till his task was done. 'Give me a glass of claret and a sandwich,' he cried hastily; and the landlady, lamenting sore that 'all them nice sweetbreads was cooked for nothing,' was fain perforce to acquiesce in his Spartan humour. But when the last touch had been put to the picture, and Dumaresq himself gazed forth from the canvas, a thinker confessed in all his greatness, Linnell stood before it with folded hands, astonished at his own unexpected force and originality. Never before in his life had he painted with all the inborn energy of his nature, unrestrained by petty fears and unworthy self-criticisms. Never before had he so trusted to his own true genius; and the result of that proud and justified confidence was apparent at a glance on the easel before him.

Women take refuge from disappointment in tears; men in action, and above all in work. The work had soothed Linnell's nerves gradually. He sat down to his desk, when the task was complete, and wrote a hasty note with trembling hands to Psyche. It was the first he had ever written to her: it would be the last—his one love-letter. And then no more hereafter, whatever might come with years.

'Dear Miss Dumaresq,

'I leave Petherton for ever this evening. I leave England for ever to-morrow. The Oriental picture is at the Wren's Nest. I beg you to keep it as some slight memento of me. The portrait of your father I have finished from memory this afternoon. Let it remain at the Red Lion till dry; then kindly send for it and take it home. You were quite right in thinking your father's features ought not to be lost to the world and to posterity. That they may not be lost, I beg you to accept this faint representation of them—not wholly unworthy, I venture to believe, of the striking original—during your own lifetime, and to leave it by will at your death as a sacred trust to the National Portrait Gallery. Before this reaches you, I shall have left the inn. No answer can then find me anywhere. Good-bye for ever.

'Faithfully yours,

'C. A. L.'

He folded it up, took it out, and posted it. Then he returned, all tremulous, to the Red Lion, packed up his belongings in his little portmanteau, paid his bill, and drove down to catch the last train to London. The dream of his life was gone for ever. He didn't care much now what became of him.

At the station he jumped lightly into the first carriage he happened to see. It was almost empty, but one man sat in the far corner, looking out of the window. As the train moved out, the man turned. Linnell recognised him. It was a journalist acquaintance of other days, a man on the staff of a London daily, who acted at times as a special war correspondent.

Linnell was by no means pleased at the unexpected recognition, for he would far have preferred to be left alone, and to nurse his chagrin and mortification by himself; but there was no help for it now: the journalist had seen him, and it was too late to change into another carriage. So he gulped down his regret as best he might, and said in as cheerful a voice as he could muster: 'Hullo, Considine, on the move as usual! And where are you off to?'

'Khartoum, this time,' the easy-going journalist replied jauntily. 'Hot work, too, at this time of year. I only received orders by wire to Plymouth at nine this morning, and I leave Charing Cross at nine to-morrow. But it's nothing when you're used to it. I'm all on the job, you know. Bless you! I was sent out to Zululand once, much quicker than that. Down at the office at six one evening, in comes a wire, "Troubles in Zululand." Says the chief: "Considine, me boy, you're off to Africa." Says I: "When?" Says he: "Steamer sailed from Southampton yesterday. Go overland, and catch it at Lisbon." So off I rushed to Cannon Street in the clothes I stood up in, and just managed to bundle into the night-mail, without even so much as a pocket-comb by way of luggage: bought a portmanteau and a few things I needed in a spare hour at Paris; and was at Pietermaritzburg, as fresh as a daisy, before the fighting had seriously begun on the frontier. I call that smart. But a job like this is really quite easy for me.'

'Well, but you don't know Arabic!' Linnell cried, a little taken aback.

'Arabic, is it? Sorrow a word, me dear fellow. But what of that? I've gone the world over with English alone, and as much of every native lingo I came across as will allow me to swear at the beastly niggers to the top of my wishes in their own tongue.'

Linnell looked graver.

'But you ought to know Arabic, really,' he said. 'Any man who goes to Khartoum nowadays is to some extent liable to take his life in his hands for the time being. I've been a good deal about in Africa myself, you know, and for my own part I wouldn't like to trust myself in the interior at present unless I could pass at a pinch as a decent Mohammedan. That is to say, if I valued my life—which I don't, as it happens—but that's nothing.'

'*You* speak Arabic, I suppose?' Considine said suggestively.

'Like English, almost,' the painter answered with a nod. 'I'd pass for a Mohammedan easily anywhere in Africa.'

'Shall you go out there this winter? You generally do, I recollect; and this time there'll be lots of amusement. Things are getting lively on the Upper Nile. They'll be having a row up yonder before long. I expect squalls, myself, before the winter's over, and I wouldn't be out of the fun myself for a sovereign, I can tell you.'

Linnell laughed.

'You're a born Irishman,' he answered good-humouredly. 'You love a fight, as your countryman loves to brandish his shillelagh at Donnybrook Fair. Well, no; I hadn't definitely canvassed the Nile for this next winter, I confess; but now I come to think of it, it might be worth while to see the fighting. I don't much care where I go now, and to a man who's thoroughly tired of his life, Khartoum at present offers exceptional attractions.'

'That's right, me boy,' the correspondent cried, slapping him hard on the back. 'You speak with the spirit of an officer and a gentleman. You'd better pack up your portmanteau at once, and come along off with me by the next opportunity. A man who can wear a burnous like a native and jabber Arabic's the right man for the place this blessed minute. I've got the very post in my gift to suit you. It's an artist you are, and an artist I'm looking for. The *Porte-Crayon* people are on the

hunt for a fellow who can draw to go out and get himself killed at Khartoum in their service. Liberal terms: first-rate pay: a pension if wounded: a solatium for your widow if killed outright: and an elegant tomb over your cold ashes in Westminster Abbey. What more can ye want? It's a splendid chance. You can paint the Mahdi as black as you like, and no criticism. Sure, there'll be nobody else on the spot to contradict you.'

The idea fell in well with Linnell's present humour. When a man has just been disappointed in love, he takes gloomy views as to the future of the universe. Linnell was anxious to go away anywhere from England, and not indisposed to get killed and be done with it. At Khartoum his various talents and acquirements would be worth more to himself and the world at large than anywhere else. He wanted action; he wanted excitement. The novelty of the position would turn the current of his pessimistic thoughts. And besides, if he died—for he didn't conceal from himself the fact that there was danger in the scheme—he saw how his death might be made useful to Psyche. Though she wasn't the Psyche he had once dreamt about, he loved her still, and he would love her for ever. He could leave all he possessed to Psyche. That would be heaping coals of fire, indeed, on her head; and even Haviland Dumaresq, probably, would not refuse to take a dead man's money. And Psyche would then have what she lived for. She wanted riches; and this would ensure her them. It would be better so. Psyche would derive far more pleasure from that heavy metal than ever he could.

'Really,' he said, with a bitter smile, 'I don't know, Considine, that what you propose mightn't very well suit me. Would it be too late now to see the *Porte-Crayon* people after we get up to town this very evening?'

'Too late, is it?' the correspondent echoed, delighted. 'Divvel a bit, I tell you. We'll ring them up out of the sleep of the just. Though they're rascals enough, if it comes to that, to deserve to lie awake from sunset to cockcrow. They're just dying to get some fellow to volunteer for the place. Old Lingard'd see you if it was two in the morning. You can arrange to-night, and pack at once, and come off with me by the first Continental train to-morrow. Why, I want a man who can speak Arabic myself. Camels I understand—I rode some dozens of them to death—may Heaven forgive me for it!—pushing on to Candahar in the Afghan business: but Arabic, I admit, 's one too many for me. I'll take you round to see old Lingard at once, when we get up to town, and we'll be whirling across France in a Pulman car by this time to-morrow. We'll catch the *train de luxe* at Paris, and you'll just have time to meet the Alexandria steamer before she leaves Brindisi.'

Linnell's mind was made up in a moment. He would go to Africa. And, sure enough, by eleven o'clock that night it was all settled: Linnell had accepted the proffered post as special artist for the *Porte-Crayon* at Khartoum; and Psyche lay, white as death, with Linnell's letter pressed against her heaving bosom, on her own little bed in the Wren's Nest at Petherton.

CHAPTER XVII.

THEN AND IN THAT CASE.

Even after the business with the *Porte-Crayon* was settled, however, Linnell did not go straight to his hotel. He had other work to do before he could finish the evening. He jumped into a hansom in hot haste, and drove round to his lawyer's, whom he wished to see upon important business. He drove to the private address, of course, not to the office; but late as it was, the lawyer was out—at his club most likely, the servant thought; and Linnell, all on fire to conclude his business at the earliest possible moment, drove down to the club forthwith to intercept him. He found the man of law relaxing his mind at that abode of luxury in a hand at whist, and waited with impatience for his hasty interview till the rubber was over. Then he said hurriedly:

'Mr. Burchell, I want you three minutes in the library. I won't detain you longer than that. But—— This is a matter that won't wait. I'm off to Khartoum to join Gordon to-morrow.'

'And you want your will made!' the solicitor suggested, with the rapid wisdom born of old experience.

'Precisely, that's it. You hit the right nail on the head at once. Can you draw it up for me here and now? I leave to-morrow morning by the 9.40.'

'My dear sir,' the lawyer remonstrated, 'this is very precipitate. But you know your own business better than I do. If you wish it, certainly; a will's a thing one can do off-hand. We'll get two witnesses here on the spot. Watson's here: you know Watson, I think: and your cousin Sir Austen's dining with him to-night in the club. Shall I ask them to attest? But perhaps that won't do; you may mean your cousin to benefit under the document.'

Linnell smiled.

'No, I don't,' he said. 'My bequests are few. Single, in fact. A very short paper. It won't take you two minutes to draw it up. Testamentary disposition reduced to its simplest and most primitive elements. I leave everything absolutely to a solitary person. Sir Austen will do as well as anybody else if he cares to sign it.'

Mr. Burchell went off for a few seconds to detain two fit and proper witnesses from leaving the club (as it was getting late), and returned triumphant at the end of that time with news that the needful legal attestors might be found when wanted in the first smoking-room.

'And now,' he said, taking up a sheet of blank paper with a smile, 'what's to be the tenor of this most hasty document?'

'As I said,' Linnell answered, looking straight with empty eyes into the vacant fireplace: 'I leave everything I die possessed of to Psyche, daughter of Haviland Dumaresq, of the Wren's Nest, Petherton Episcopi.'

And he wrote the names down as he spoke, for better security, on the back of an envelope which he handed to the lawyer.

Mr. Burchell whistled audibly to himself; but he was too old and too practised a hand at his trade to dream of remonstrating or asking any questions. He merely suggested in the most matter-of-fact voice, 'Shall I add, "whom it is my intention hereafter to marry"? The addition's usual, and in case of any dispute as to probate of the will, it carries weight with judges and juries. Some reason for a bequest is ordinarily given, when large sums are bequeathed to strangers in blood. The law expects at least a show of explanation. Otherwise, one is apt to have questions raised as to undue influence, inquiries as to sound disposing state of mind at the time, or other doubts as to precise fitness for testamentary disposition at the date of executing. May I add the clause? It simplifies difficulties.'

'No,' Linnell answered sharply and promptly. 'It is *not* my intention now or at any time to marry the lady. I leave it to her absolutely *sans phrase*. If you want a reason, say that I bequeath it her as a testimony to the profound respect I feel for the literary and philosophical ability of her distinguished father.'

The lawyer paused, with his pen in his hand.

'It's not my place, of course,' he said in a very quiet voice, 'to interfere in any way, however tentatively, with a client's

wishes or mode of disposal of his own property; but I think it only my duty to tell you at once that that will has a very small chance indeed of ever getting probate.'

'Why?' Linnell asked, half angrily.

'Now, don't be annoyed,' the lawyer answered, balancing his pen judicially on his extended forefinger. 'My object is not to thwart your wishes, but simply to ensure their being duly carried out. Bear with me while I explain to you in very brief terms wherein such a will is likely to defeat its own purpose. You're going, you say, to-morrow to the Soudan?'

Linnell nodded.

'Very well,' the lawyer went on, with demonstrative penholder; 'you go in a very great hurry. I don't presume to say what may be the causes which have led you to leave England in such breathless haste; but we will suppose, for the purposes of argument alone, that they are causes not entirely unconnected with relations you may have entertained or thought of entertaining with this young lady. You come up here to-night, late in the evening, in a state of obvious and unmistakable nervous excitement, and you ask me to draw up a will for you in the library of a club, at an unseasonable hour, leaving away every penny you possess from your kinsmen in blood, whoever they may be, to a complete stranger, whose name and status you can only define to me by her relationship to a gentleman equally remote in law and fact from you. And then you propose as one of your witnesses to this very doubtful and unsatisfactory transaction the heir-at-law and next-of-kin, Sir Austen Linnell, whom you intend to ignore, and whose interest it is to set aside, if possible, the entire document. As your solicitor, I ask you plainly, isn't this course of action open to objection? Mind, I don't suggest such a point of view as my own at all; but won't a hard-headed, common-sense English jury simply say: "The man came up to town disappointed, in a breathless hurry; ran off to the Soudan, foolishly, at a moment's notice; got killed there, when he needn't have gone at all if he didn't like"—I'm discounting your decease, you observe, because no will, of course, takes effect under any circumstances during the lifetime of the testator—"left all he had to leave to a young girl he had probably only known for a couple of months; and cut off, without even the proverbial shilling, the whole of his own kith and kin, including a real live British baronet, whom any man of sense ought to have coddled and made much of as a distinguished relative?" I put it to you, wouldn't the average respectable English juryman—pig-headed, no doubt, but eminently practical—say at once: "The man was not of sound disposing mind. He must have been mad to prefer a girl he wasn't going to marry to his own most esteemed and respected relative"? Observe, I don't for a moment suggest they would be at all right; but, as your legal adviser, I feel bound to tell you what view I think they'd take in such a contingency.'

'We must risk it,' Linnell answered, with enforced quietness. 'I'm sure myself I was never of sounder disposing mind before—in fact, till now I never had any reason to think of disposing of anything. And as to Sir Austen, we can substitute somebody else for him at a pinch. Though I think him far too much of a gentleman to wish to dispute anybody's will in his own favour.'

The lawyer's brows contracted slightly.

'In matters of business,' he said with quiet decision, 'it never does to trust too implicitly one's own father. Treat all the world as if they were rogues alike, and the honest ones will never owe you a grudge for it. But let that pass. Now see one other point. No will, as I said just now, takes effect in any case during the testator's lifetime. You're going on a distant and dangerous errand. The chances are, you may never come back again. It's our duty to face all possible contingencies beforehand, you see. In case you should meet with any accident over yonder in the Soudan—in case, for example, the whole Khartoum garrison should be blotted out to a man, as Hicks Pasha's army was the other day—what legal proof of death can we have? and how would you wish me to support myself meanwhile towards this young lady? Am I to communicate with her immediately whenever I have any serious ground to apprehend that some misfortune may possibly have overtaken you; or am I to wait a reasonable length of time after Khartoum's smashed, before unnecessarily harrowing her delicate feelings by letting her know that my suspicions are justified?'

'I'm afraid her feelings won't be particularly harrowed,' Linnell answered with a gloomy look. 'But wait, if you like, the reasonable time. It would be awkward if she were to come into the property for awhile, and—and I were afterwards to turn up unexpectedly like a *revenant* to reclaim it. Not, of course, that under such circumstances I should ever dream of reclaiming it at all.' The lawyer's eyebrows executed a rapid upward movement. 'But still, it's best to avoid all unnecessary complications. Let twelve months elapse before you communicate with her.'

Mr. Burchell made no audible answer; he simply arched his eyebrows still higher and went on drawing up the short form of will, writing the attestation clause, and taking instructions as to executors and other technical details. When all was finished, he handed the paper to Linnell to peruse.

'Will that do?' he asked quietly.

'That'll do perfectly,' Linnell answered, glancing over it. 'Will you kindly go down now, and get your witnesses?'

In two minutes more the lawyer returned.

'This is very unfortunate,' he said. 'It's getting late, and there's nobody I know left in the club at all but Sir Austen and the other man. We can't go and board an entire stranger with a polite request to come and see somebody he doesn't know sign an important legal document. I'm afraid, undesirable as it certainly is, we shall have to fall back upon your cousin's signature.'

'Very well,' Linnell replied with perfect trustfulness. 'Sir Austen let it be. We've met once or twice on neutral ground before, and we shall meet often enough now at Khartoum. I don't like him, but I trust him implicitly. In matters of that sort, one can always trust an English gentleman.'

'Not when you've seen as much of probate as I have,' the lawyer interposed with quiet emphasis. 'Where probate's concerned, a man should never trust his own mother. But if you *must* go to Africa to-morrow, and if this will must be signed to-night, we must get whoever we can to attest it. Ten minutes to twelve, and it's dated to-day. No time to be lost. I'll go down again and bring up your cousin.'

Two minutes later Sir Austen came up, coldly polite.

'Good-evening, Mr. Linnell,' he said with a chilly bow. 'Under other circumstances, I might perhaps have declined to undertake this little service. But we needn't conceal from ourselves at present the fact that my cousin Frank's sudden death, of which you have now of course already heard, has altered to some extent our relations towards one another. It's no longer necessary for his sake to adopt the attitude I once felt constrained to adopt towards you. I have to thank you, too, for your letter in reply to mine, and for what under the circumstances I must certainly call your very generous and friendly conduct—now unfortunately of no avail. You sign, do you? Thank you: thank you. Where do I put my name? There? Ah, thanks.—Here, Watson, you put your signature under mine.—That concludes the business, I suppose? Very well, then, Burchell, the thing's finished: now you can release us.—I understand, Mr. Linnell, you leave England to-morrow.'

'For the Soudan, yes. Viâ Brindisi.'

Sir Austen started.

'Why, how odd!' he said. 'A strange coincidence! I go by the same train. To the Soudan! Incredible. You're not going out to join Gordon, then, are you?'

'I'm going as special artist for the *Porte-Crayon*,' Linnell answered quietly. 'I didn't think of it till this afternoon; but I met a friend who told me of the post, and I made up my mind at an hour's notice; so now I'm off by to-morrow's Oriental express.'

They stopped there talking for half an hour or so, Sir Austen's iciness thawing a little when he learned that his cousin was to be thrown in with him so much for an indefinite period: and then, as the small-hours were closing in, they drove off separately to their various resting-places, to snatch a few hours' sleep before to-morrow's journey. At the foot of the club stairs, Sir Austen detained the lawyer a moment after Linnell had hailed a loitering hansom.

'I say, Burchell,' he said, lighting a cigar in the vestibule, 'what's your opinion of Charles Linnell's condition to-night? Didn't seem quite in testamentary form, did he? Odd he should want to make a will in such a precious hurry just now, isn't it?'

'Not at all,' the lawyer answered with prompt decision. 'You've settled up all your own affairs, no doubt, before leaving the country for so dangerous an expedition.'

'Ah, but that's different, you know. I'm going with her Majesty's approbation on active service. This painter fellow's

chosen to visit Khartoum of his own accord, and he's chosen to start at a moment's notice; and as far as I could see—just glancing at the body of the will hurriedly—he's left everything he possesses to some play-actress or somebody. Psyche Dumaresq, that was the name. Theatrical, obviously. It won't hold water. The man's in a very excited state of mind, that's clear. He laughs and talks in a dreary, weary way. Miss Psyche Dumaresq must have thrown him overboard. And now he wants to set out for Khartoum and get shot through the head, for no other reason than just to make that faithless lady sensible of her error with a thumping legacy. He was always as mad as a hatter, this Yankee painter fellow, and to-night he's more excited and madder than ever. I tell you what it is, Burchell: the will won't stand. The next-of-kin will inherit the estate. Miss Psyche Dumaresq may whistle for her money.'

Mr. Burchell only shook his head in quiet dissent.

'As sane as you are,' he answered with a nod; 'but a great deal too good for this world of ours in many ways. *He* doesn't want to wait for dead men's shoes. *He* doesn't want to get anybody's money.' And he murmured to himself, as he went down the club steps in the summer drizzle: 'If only I knew where Linnell was stopping, I'd go round to him now, late as it is, and advise him to make another will on spec. at Cairo or Alexandria. Sir Austen's far too sharp for my taste. But Linnell forgot to tell me where he put up, and I can't go round to every hotel in all London at this time of night and knock them up on the bare chance of finding him.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN A BELEAGUERED CITY.

The two Linnells and the correspondent Considine were the last Europeans who made their way into the lines of Khartoum before communications with the outer world were finally interrupted by the advance of the Mahdi. Three days after their arrival all ways were blocked; Omdurman was cut off, the river was surrounded, and a sea of rampant fanatical barbarism surged wildly up on every side round the undermanned ramparts of the doomed city.

It was a week or two later, under a tropical sky in one of the narrow lanes of the Nubian town, that two Europeans walked along slowly with doubtful tread among the eager and excited crowd of natives. Already the noise of artillery from the outlying forts thundered on the ear; already the hurry and scurry of a great siege were visible everywhere among the thronged bazaars. But the two Europeans walked on undismayed between the chattering negroes, engaged in strange talk amid that babel of voices. One of them was clad from head to foot in Arab costume, for Linnell invariably preferred that simple dress in the warm south; he had grown accustomed to it in his long camping-out expeditions on the frontiers of the desert, and it was better adapted, he said, than our cramping and close-fitting European garments to the needs and peculiarities of a hot climate. In face and figure, indeed, when so accoutred, he might easily have passed for an Arab himself; his dark hair, his regular oval face, his clear-cut features, and his rich brown complexion, still further bronzed by long exposure to the African sun, all helped to heighten his Oriental assumption and to turn him into a veritable son of the desert. Hardly a Mohammedan that passed but took him at a glance for one of the Faithful of Islam: mien and bearing were Oriental in the extreme: even at the mosques his behaviour passed muster; long usage had taught him with unerring skill when at Mecca to do as Mecca does.

The other man who stalked along by his side at a steady swing was the correspondent Considine, wearing European garb of the semi-tropical sort, in white helmet and linen jacket, and with the devil-may-care air of absolute assurance on his face which only the cosmopolitan Irishman in the journalistic service can ever assume to full perfection. The picture was symbolical of Khartoum itself during those short-lived days of its European culture. On the one hand, the tall white minarets and flat-topped houses of the native town; on the other hand, the great Government buildings in the meanest bastard Parisian style, the large hospitals, the European shops, the huge magazines, the guns, the ammunition, the telegraph, the printing-presses. But though those two were walking the streets of beleaguered Khartoum, their speech for the moment was not of Mahdis and assaults, but all of England. Haviland Dumaresq would have thought this indeed fame could he have heard the grave-looking Oriental in burnous and hood uttering his name with profound respect in the narrow and very malodorous alleys of that far African capital.

'And you know Dumaresq, then!' the Irishman exclaimed jauntily as he picked his way through the sloppy lane. 'A wonderful man, and as learned as a library; but between you and me, you'll admit, me boy, a wee little bit up in the clouds, for all that. Sure, I tried to read the "Encyclopædic Philosophy" meself once: it was at Peshawar, I remember, just after the outbreak of the Ali Musjid business, you know, when we were attacking the Khyber; and I found the book, in four volumes, in the library of the good civilian who put me up while I was arranging for my camels. Says I to myself: "Considine, me boy, philosophy disdains the alarms of war: here's a work that by all accounts you ought to know the inside of." But when I took it up and began to read it, by George, sir, I hadn't got through ten pages before I put it down again, staggered; not a blessed word of it could I understand. "Is it Persian it is?" says I to the civilian.—"No, sir," says me host; "it's meant for English."—"Well, then," says I, "if that's philosophy, it's not the proper mental pabulum, any way, for a descendant of fighting Considines of County Cavan." And with that, I shut the book up right off with a bang, and devil another word of it do I mean to read as long as I'm left in the land of the living.'

'That's the real difficulty about Dumaresq's fame,' Linnell said quietly, adjusting his robe and stepping over a gutter. 'He goes too deep for popular comprehension. If he were less great, he would seem to be greater. As it is, his work is oftener praised than looked at.'

'To be sure,' the Irishman assented with good-humoured acquiescence. 'The book doesn't sell. It's caviare to the general. Macmurdo and White dropped a power of money over it at the first push off; and though the sales have pulled up a little of late years, owing to the reviews, it can't have done much more yet than cover its expenses, for it's a big venture. I know all about it, ye see, for I was a hack of Macmurdo's meself, worse luck, when I first went to seek my fortune in London; slaved in the office from morning to night editing one of his children's magazines—the *Juvenile World*, the old

scamp called it; and a harder taskmaster than Sandy Macmurdo hasn't been known in the world, I take it, since the children of Israel evacuated Egypt.'

'It's selling better now, I believe,' Linnell continued with a quiet confidence. 'A great many copies have been bought up lately—enough, I hope, to make Dumaresq comfortable for some time to come; at least, till other contingencies drop in to help him.'

'Faith, it may make Sandy Macmurdo comfortable for a week or two in his neat little villa down at Wimbledon Hill,' the Irishman answered with a boisterous laugh; 'but sorrow a penny of it all will poor old Dumaresq ever finger. To me certain knowledge, he sold the copyright of the "Encyclopædic Philosophy" outright to Macmurdo and White for a very small trifle when I was working me fingers to the bone in the *Juvenile World* office.'

'Are you sure of that?' Linnell cried, stopping short in sudden dismay, and almost knocking over a fat old Nubian woman who was waddling behind them in her baggy clothes, unexpectant of the halt and the consequent blocking of the narrow alley.

'Sure of it, is it? Why, I know it for a certainty,' the Irishman answered. 'I heard Macmurdo discussing the whole thing himself with the philosopher. He's a sharp man of business, you know, is old Sandy Macmurdo: as good as three Jews or half a dozen Armenians: he sniffs a paying book as soon as he looks at it. Says Sandy: "This is a long investment, Mr. Dumaresq—a very long investment. If you hold on to it yourself, it'll pay you in the end, I don't deny: but it won't begin to pay you a farthing for the next fifteen years or so. Let's be fair and square. I'm a capitalist: you're not. I can afford to wait: you can't. I'm willing to bet on your chances of disciples. Better take a lump sum down now at once, than go on hoping and biding your time till you're a man of seventy." And Dumaresq saw he was right at a glance, so he closed with him then and there for a paltry cheque; for all the philosopher wanted himself was to get the book published and out somehow.'

'Then sales at present don't matter a bit to him!' Linnell cried, profoundly disappointed.

'No more than they do to us at Khartoum this minute,' the Irishman answered with good-humoured ease. 'Sorrow a penny does the poor old philosopher get from all his writings. So, if you've been giving away the book to your friends, as a Christmas present, to benefit the author, ye've just succeeded in supplying Macmurdo with extra pocket-money to lay on the favourite at Sandown Park Races.'

'That's exactly what I have been doing,' Linnell blurted out with regretful annoyance.

'And to what tune?' Considine asked, amused.

Khartoum is a far cry from Petherton Episcopi; and Linnell, who would have shrunk as a man of honour from disclosing the facts of the case in England, found his modesty forsake him in the heart of Africa.

'To the tune of eight hundred guineas or thereabouts,' he answered with warmth.

The Irishman drew a very long breath.

'Faith!' he said, laughing, 'I didn't know ye had so much money about you. But I see your idea. Ye're a generous fellow. Well, you're quite mistaken. Macmurdo and White have divided every penny of it!'

To Linnell the disappointment was a very bitter one. He gnawed his heart at it. But he saw at a glance that Considine was right. The explanation cleared up at once whatever had seemed mysterious and unsatisfactory about Dumaresq's conduct with regard to the money. With a start of regret, Linnell recognised now when it was all too late that Dumaresq must have paid for the picture of the Wren's Nest out of his own pocket. He had meant to enrich the family by his nameless generosity, and he had only succeeded, after all, in making the poor old philosopher spend twenty guineas from his scanty stock upon a useless water-colour!

He hated his art in that moment of awakening. He wished he had never gone near Petherton. But then—he would never have known Psyche!

And here at Khartoum, surrounded and beleaguered, he had no chance even of setting things right again by word or letter. All ways were closed: no chance of escape. He must wait through the weary long months of the siege till relief arrived

—if ever relief *did* arrive—from England.

But if relief never came at all, then Psyche at least would read his will, and know how much, after all, he loved her.

At Marquet's shop in the European quarter, Considine paused and gazed into the window.

'What are you looking for?' Linnell asked carelessly.

'For yourself, sure enough,' the Irishman answered, with a sudden start of recognition.

A faint shudder passed over Linnell's handsome face. He fancied he understood, yet hardly liked to confess it even to himself.

'Why, what do you mean?' he murmured incredulously.

'For Linnell,' the correspondent replied with cheerful alacrity. 'Ye'll know Linnell, surely?'

The painter froze up into himself once more.

'No, I don't feel sure I do,' he answered, trembling.

'Then you've missed the best medicine that ever was invented for a tropical climate,' Considine exclaimed, with warmth, slapping his friend on the shoulder. 'I'm going to secure some boxes for meself before they're all gone, now supplies are cut off. Ye'd better let me get a couple for you. Linnell's Pills—an American preparation. They've just driven Nile fever out of Khartoum. There's nothing on earth like them for malarious diseases.'

'Thank you,' Linnell answered, drawing himself up stiffly; 'I—I'm much obliged. I don't think I'll trouble you, though. I'm sure I don't need them.'

'Have ye ever heard of them?' Considine asked, point-blank.

Linnell hesitated.

'Yes,' he said after a moment, overwhelmed with shame, but too much a man to deny the fact. 'To tell you the simple truth—I live off them.'

Considine looked up at him with an amused smile.

'An' is it you, then, that makes them?' he asked, with Irish quickness.

'I did,' Linnell answered, forcing himself bravely to speak the truth—'or at least my father did. We've sold the patent; but I live still on the proceeds of the invention.'

There was a long pause, while Considine went in and made his purchase. When he came out, he handed a little packet without a word to his friend, who slipped it guiltily into his waistcoat-pocket.

'Linnell,' the Irishman remarked with Hibernian candour, as they went on once more, 'I never knew till to-day what a bit of a snob ye were. Ye think pills are beneath the dignity of a member of an English bar'net's family.'

The painter flushed up to his eyes at once, but not with anger.

'I was just thinking to myself,' he said quietly, 'you might have put that utter misinterpretation upon my obvious embarrassment.'

'Well, an' why should a man be ashamed of having made his money in good sound pills?' the Irishman asked with a confident air.

'It's not that,' Linnell answered, quivering with sensitiveness—'though pills are at best a ludicrous sort of thing for a cultivated man to make his money out of; but I've always been afraid, to tell you the truth, I was living on the proceeds of

pure quackery. It's all a matter of rubbishing advertisement in the end, I fancy. I could never bring myself to use the money got from that source as if it were my own. As far as I could, I've tried to pay my way, myself, out of my immediate earnings from my own art, and held my father's fortune apart as a sum at my disposal in trust for humanity.'

Considine paused and looked back at him astonished.

'My dear fellow,' he cried with convincing frankness, 'if that's your idea, I can assure ye, from me own personal knowledge, ye're mistaken entirely. It isn't quackery at all, at all. They're the best pills that ever were compounded. Malarial fever goes down before them like grass. If ye won't take me word for it, ye'll take Gordon's anny way; and 'twas Gordon that said to me only last night: "Considine, me boy," said he, "wherever ye go in tropical climates, remember to take two things with ye—sulphate of quinine, and a gross of Linnell's. The man that invented Linnell's," says he, "may never have had a statue put up to him, but he was the greatest benefactor of our species, after Jenner, in the nineteenth century." That's just what Gordon said to me himself; and he's as likely, I should say, as anny man living to know what he's talking about.'

The whole point of view was a novel one to Linnell.

'If I thought that,' he answered in a low tone, 'I should feel happier in my mind than I've felt for years. I've always had my doubts about my father's fortune. But let's change the subject. I'm sick and tired of it.'

CHAPTER XIX.

A LITTLE CLOUD.

At Petherton the autumn and winter passed slowly away, and Psyche's heart gradually accustomed itself to its great sorrow. She was brave, and she stifled her grief bravely. Haviland Dumaresq, watching her closely, with his keen gray eyes and his eager glance, flattered his own soul (poor purblind philosopher!) that Psyche had forgotten all about that obtrusive painter fellow. Oh, wilful foolishness of parents who think such things! Your children's hearts veil their wounds from your eyes with sedulous care, and you say with a smile: 'All's well! I can see no scars anywhere.'

But Psyche herself—ah, how different there! She had never forgotten him; she could never forget him. It wasn't merely that she had dismissed to his death the one man she had ever loved. It wasn't merely that he had left her abruptly, and gone where communications with him were practically impossible. It wasn't merely that his life was in danger, and that he might never perhaps return to see her. Worse than all those, though all those indeed were bad enough, was the horrible, hateful, haunting consciousness that she had been forced to show herself in a false light to Linnell, and that if Linnell died on that forlorn hope, he would die believing her unutterably mercenary, and cruel, and selfish. To show one's self in false colours to those one loves is inexpressibly painful. Her soul loathed the picture Linnell must have formed of her. It was torture to her to think he must go on so long mistaking so utterly her character and her feelings.

For Psyche had learned, three days later, on what dangerous errand her lover had started. She read the announcement casually in the *Athenæum*: 'Mr. C. A. Linnell, the rising young painter, whose Oriental subjects have attracted so much attention in the Grosvenor this year, has accepted the difficult and somewhat thankless task of special artist to the *Porte-Crayon* with Gordon at Khartoum. He set out for his perilous post on Saturday last, in company with Mr. T. A. Considine, the well-known correspondent of the *Morning Telephone*.' How bald and matter-of-fact the paragraph sounded, as it stood there among a dozen other indifferent scraps of gossip in the literary notes of the *Athenæum*! and yet what a tragedy it meant for Psyche, who had driven him forth, perhaps to his death, and felt herself very little short of a murderess!

If only he could have known! If only he could have known! Her promise! Her promise! That fatal promise!

Restraining her tears with a deadly effort, she rushed upstairs into her own room and locked herself in with all the impetuous sorrow of budding girlhood. Then she flung herself on her bed and gave free vent to her grief. She cried, and cried, and cried again, in a luxury of agony—till the hour of tea came, and she had to go down again.

But even so, she was Dumaresq's daughter. She rose, and bathed her face carefully. Her self-control was wonderful. It was with eyes scarcely red and with a cold proud air that she handed the paper across to her father with his cup of tea ten minutes later, and said in a voice hardly trembling with emotion: 'Mr. Linnell has accepted a post in Africa now, you see, papa.'

Haviland Dumaresq eyed her keenly, and thought to himself with a smile of inward satisfaction: 'A mere light scratch! The first shallow love of childhood! Profound emotions preclude speech. Women, before their affections are fixed, are necessarily plastic. Unable to choose freely for themselves, like men, they can shift their emotions from object to object, or hold them in suspense, an affinity unsaturated, till the one man comes on whom to focus their regard permanently. She could never have felt the parting very much, after all, or she couldn't talk as carelessly now as that about him.'

But in spite of philosophy, all through the autumn and winter months Psyche grieved silently, silently. Her sorrow was all turned in upon herself. She had no one to share it, no one to sympathize with her. Geraldine Maitland had gone with her parents for the season to Algiers: with Ida Mansel, that correct and cultivated Girtonian product, she had little in common; so she was left to brood over her great grief in solitude. Now, a sorrow turned inward is the most dangerous and insidious in its effects of any. The suspense and the isolation were wearing Psyche out. Only that unquenchable Dumaresquian spirit of hers enabled her to put so good a face upon it. But a Dumaresq suffers, and suffers in silence. Her father never knew how Psyche was suffering. With a brave heart she came down to breakfast each day as though she had not lain awake and cried all night: with a brave heart she took up the paper each morning to read afresh of new delays in the relief of Khartoum.

Everybody remembers that long-drawn period of horrible suspense, when a handful of brave Englishmen held out by

themselves against tremendous odds in the doomed city. Everybody remembers the breathless interest of that painful drama, and the slow lingering despair of hoping against hope for the gallant souls locked up in Khartoum.

But to Psyche the suspense was more terrible than to anyone; the despair was most poignant—the hopelessness most appalling.

She had sent Linnell to his death, she felt sure. He would die without ever knowing how profoundly she loved him.

Yet even so, she bore up like a Dumaresq. Her father should never know how she felt. At all hazards she would keep that terrible secret from him.

So night after night, as she lay awake and cried, she learnt to cry silently, imperceptibly almost. It was not merely a sort of crying that made no noise: it was a sort of crying that let the tears trickle slowly out, one after another, without even so much as reddening the eyes and eyelids. She practised crying in this quiet way, deliberately practised it, like a Dumaresq that she was: and to such a pitch of perfection did she bring it at last, that even the tears themselves ceased to flow. She cried, as it were, all mentally and internally.

But her eyes ached horribly none the less for that. Bright and clear and beautiful as usual, they ached worse every day with that unnatural effort.

One evening in January, as the days were lengthening again, and Psyche was looking forward to the time when Geraldine, dear Geraldine, might return from Algeria to comfort her soul, Haviland Dumaresq came home from the village with a London newspaper, and handed it to Psyche to read aloud to him. That was an ordeal she had often to endure now. The papers were full of Gordon and Khartoum—fears for the besieged, hopes for the relievers—and Psyche, all tremulous, was compelled to read aloud in a firm, clear tone those conflicting rumours, and pretend it meant nothing more to her soul than the meetings of Public Companies or the Sporting Intelligence. For with all his philosophy the philosopher had never mastered the simple fact that he was slowly killing his own child by unintentional cruelty. He was sure she had forgotten that little episode altogether now. Khartoum was no more to her than Jerusalem or Jericho.

'"We have all along counselled the Government,"' Psyche read aloud, '"to adopt a more vigorous and aggressive attitude towards the tribes that still block or harass the passage of our forces up the bank of the river. Unless something is done within three months to relieve the garrison which now holds out——"'

'Well?' Haviland Dumaresq murmured, looking up inquiringly as Psyche broke off in sudden bewilderment. 'What next, my child? Go on, won't you?'

'I—I don't know what next,' Psyche cried, faltering and laying the paper helplessly on her knees. 'I don't quite see. I think —there's a sort of blur somehow across the printing.'

Haviland Dumaresq took the paper incredulously from her hands. He glanced with his cold unflinching eyes at the leader she had been reading so quietly and calmly. Nothing could be clearer or more distinct than its type. A sudden thought flashed across his brain for a moment. Could Linnell by any possibility be mentioned in the article? Psyche had almost forgotten that foolish little love-episode by this time, of course; but the sudden sight of the painter's name staring her unexpectedly in the face from a public print might no doubt arouse for a second the latent cloud. Emotion dies and revives so strangely. He glanced down the column. No, nothing of the sort could he see anywhere. In a neighbouring column perhaps, then—among the telegraphic items! The painter might have escaped, or might have been killed, or rescued. He scanned the telegrams with an eager glance. Nothing there that cast any light upon the subject. 'You must be bilious, my child,' he said, with a searching look, handing her back the paper. 'Accumulation of effete matter uneliminated in the blood often gives rise to yellow patches floating before the eyes. Best relieved by exercise and fresh air. Go on, now, Psyche, and read a little further, if it doesn't hurt you.'

What a blank page the human heart often shows to those who think they stand nearest and dearest of all to it! Exercise and fresh air, indeed, for a broken spirit! How little Haviland Dumaresq, in his philosophic isolation, knew what inward grief was eating away his Psyche's soul and undermining his Psyche's eyesight!

The trembling girl, all calmness without, took the paper back from his hands without a single word, and went on reading for some minutes longer. Then the letters on the page disappeared once more, as if by magic, and a vague nothingness swam a second time in the air before her.

'I can't read, papa,' she cried, laying the swimming paper down in despair. 'The words all seem to fade into a blank before my eyes. I can see nothing. It's a sort of wandering haze. I don't think I can be very well this morning.'

'A yellow patch floating before your face?' Haviland Dumaresq asked with suggestive quickness. 'A sort of central glow or spot of fire, fading off at the sides into normal vision?'

'Oh no,' Psyche said; 'nothing at all of the sort. I've had that too: I know what you mean; but not lately: this is something ever so much deeper and more serious than that. It's a sort of cloud that rises up, I think, in my eye itself; and whenever it rises, I see nothing at all for a few minutes: the whole world seems to become a kind of mist or haze floating vaguely in dim outline in front of me.'

Dumaresq rose from his chair with great deliberation and moved to the window. 'Come here, my child,' he said with that gentle tenderness in his tone which he always displayed in talking to Psyche—for, oh, how he loved her! 'Eyes are far too precious to be neglected with impunity. The more complex an organ, the greater the difficulty in re-establishing equilibrium once upset. Let me look and see if there's anything the matter with them.'

Psyche walked forward with uncertain steps, half feeling her way between the chairs and tables, in a manner that brought the old philosopher's heart into his mouth like a child's. Could anything be wrong, then, with his darling's sight? He held her upturned face gently between his palms, and gazed down with profound searching into those deep-blue eyes. A cataract forming? No, nothing like that. 'The conjunctiva and cornea are perfectly normal,' he murmured with a sigh of distinct relief, for the bare suggestion of anything wrong with his Psyche's eyes had stirred him deeply. 'The lenses, too, seem absolutely right. If there's mischief anywhere, it must be deep down in the region of the retina itself. We'll test it carefully. But there's no hereditary predisposition to weakness of vision. Functional, functional; it *must* be functional. Your dear mother's eyes were as sharp as needles; and as for me, I can read the smallest print to this day, as you know, Psyche, at least as well as any man of twenty.'

He took down a book from the shelf at random and opened the title-page at three or four paces. 'Read as much as you can of that, my child,' he said, holding it up to her.

Psyche read it without a moment's delay: '"Contributions to Molecular Physics in the Domain of Radiant Heat, by John Tyndall."'

Her father's face lighted up with pleasure. 'Good!' he said, relieved, as his heart gave a bound. 'Try again, Psyche,' and he took down another. 'What's this?' he went on, walking a step or two across the room, and holding the title-page open once more before Psyche's eyes.

'"The Fertilization of Flowers, by Professor Hermann Müller,"' Psyche read out slowly; 'then there's something I can't quite see; and after that I can make out plainly the two words "Charles Darwin."'

'"With a preface by Charles Darwin,"' her father said cheerfully. 'Come, come, Psyche, that's not so bad. There can't be much wrong with the retina, anyhow, if you can read like this at eight feet distance.'

Psyche sighed and held her peace. She knew the world had faded away suddenly before her eyes more than once of late, and she could hardly treat this discomposing consciousness as lightly as her father did. But if *he* was satisfied, all was well. For herself, she could bear it as she had borne what was so much harder and deadlier to bear than mere blindness.

Dumaresq gazed at her for a minute in silence. Then he said once more, 'Has this happened often?'

Psyche hesitated. She couldn't bear to grieve him. 'Once or twice, papa,' she said after a brief pause. 'But it's nothing much; it'll go off soon—when the summer comes back to us.'

Dumaresq looked down at her with a satisfied air. 'No, it's nothing much,' he repeated. 'I know the human eye by this time pretty well. I made an exhaustive study of eyes, you know, when I was working up my second volume. If I saw the slightest cause for alarm in the case, I'd take you up at once to consult Critchett. But I don't see any. The cornea's normal; the retina's normal; and the power of vision is in no way defective. These occasional failures must be purely nervous. In girls of your age one must expect a certain amount of nervous abnormality. An incident of our civilization: we expel Nature, as Horace says, with a fork, but Nature will always get the better of us somehow.'

Poor old man! With all his wisdom and all his power of generalization, he never realized the simple truth that it was *he*

who was trying to crush Psyche's nature, and that one way or other Psyche's nature would in the end prove irresistible.

CHAPTER XX.

AT BAY.

Away over in Africa, the outlook was still gloomier. The 25th of January had come at Khartoum. That long, long siege drew slowly to its close. The end was not far off now. On the 13th, the fort of Omdurman, beyond the river, had fallen bodily into the enemy's hands. Starvation and disease were working their way ruthlessly among the remaining defenders. The Mahdi's troops were pressing like jackals about the fated city. It was whispered among the faithful in the town that Faragh Pasha, who kept the Messalamieh Gate, had been holding communications with the besieger's emissaries. The air was thick, as in all beleaguered cities, with vague flying rumours of suspected treachery. Everywhere doubt, panic, uncertainty: everywhere the manifold form of indefinite suspicion. And behind it all, the solemn reality of a certain fate staring them in the face. Unless relief came in six days more, the garrison must surrender out of pure hunger.

But still there was hope, for Wolseley was advancing. The army of rescue was well on its way. Stewart had reached the Abu Klea wells. The Mahdi's forces had been defeated at Gubat. Brave English hearts were eager to release them. By strange unknown sources, by the tales of deserters, by the curious buzzing gossip of the bazaars, news of what was happening in the outer world leaked in, bit by bit, from time to time through the wall of besiegers to the famished garrison. It was known that if the defenders could hold out for one week longer, reinforcements would arrive in river steamers before the quays of Khartoum. So they hoped and hoped, and despaired, and waited.

On that eventful Sunday, the 25th of January, while the notables of the town, pressed hard by hunger, were on their way to the palace to urge Gordon once more to surrender at discretion, three Europeans sat talking together in eager colloquy by the Bourré Gate on the south front of the city. One of them was a soldier in semi-English uniform; the other two belied their nationality by their complete acceptance of the Arab costume.

'Had any breakfast this morning, Linnell?' Sir Austen asked with good-humoured stoicism, the frank cheery stoicism which the English aristocrat makes it almost a point of honour to display in difficult circumstances. 'By George, what one would give for a British beefsteak now! Tender, juicy, with potato chips! The first thing I shall do when I get back to England will be to order a steak, grilled over the fire, and a dish of potatoes. Taste good, won't it, with a pint of Bass, after so many months of nothing better than roast donkey!'

'*When* ye get back, is it?' Considine murmured half to himself, with irrepressible Celtic spirit. '*If* ye get back, you mean surely, Sir Austen; for as things go at present, I'm glad for me own part I didn't waste me precious money on taking a return ticket. Me poor old mother'll be the richer for that same when she comes into me property after the Mahdi's eaten us up. Linnell and I had a prime breakfast, though—for Khartoum. A ration of gum and some pounded palm-fibre, and half a rat each, as well as a piece of Indian-meal bread.'

'You're in luck!' Sir Austen echoed, smacking his lips at the rat. 'I haven't tasted a morsel to eat this morning yet. There's breakfast waiting for me up at the palace, but the fire was so heavy on the gate till just now that I've had no time to turn and rest till this minute.'

'And what do you think of things generally now?' Linnell asked quietly. 'Shall we be able to hold out till Stewart's party arrives, or shall we have to surrender under the very nose of the expeditionary force at the last moment?'

Sir Austen shook his head gravely. 'Neither one nor the other,' he answered, like a soldier as he was, with the solemn note of supreme conviction. 'Don't suppose for a minute we're going to escape. The Mahdi's playing with us like a cat with a mouse. It increases his prestige to keep us dawdling. He knows Stewart's force has reached Metamneh. He knows we can't hold out till the relief arrives. Mark my words: he'll assault us to-morrow as sure as fate; and in our present feeble and hungry condition, we can't pretend to resist his numbers.'

'True for you!' the Irishman put in with reckless bravery. 'Our niggers are too empty, and too tired to fight anny more. When Wolseley comes, he'll come to find us all beautiful specimens for the College of Surgeons. I can see meself stuck up in a glass case: "Skeleton of the late Mr. T. A. Considine; typical example of the Black Celts of Ireland"!'

'And if an assault's made, what shall you do?' Linnell asked with scarcely trembling lips.

His cousin looked back at him like an English soldier. 'Die fighting to the last by Gordon's side,' he answered

unhesitatingly.

'Hear, hear!' the Irishman echoed with martial enthusiasm. 'The blood of our ancestors spurs us on to action. We'll be worthy of the fighting Considines of County Cavan.'

Linnell looked them full in the face for one minute in doubt. Then he made up his mind to speak his thought freely. 'Austen,' he said, turning round to his kinsman with a frankly cordial air, 'we're cousins, after all. Till we came to Khartoum, we never really knew one another. This siege has brought us face to face at last. Here we've learned to be brothers at heart, as we ought to be. There were faults on both sides, no doubt—misapprehensions, misconceptions, groundless fears; but we've forgotten them all, and corrected our impressions.'

Sir Austen seized his cousin's hand warmly. 'Charlie,' he said—'let me call you Charlie—you're a good fellow, and I know it now. There's nothing like a siege to make men friends. If ever we two get back to England alive, we'll stand on very different terms with one another henceforth from any we stood on before we came here.'

'Very well,' Linnell went on gravely, returning his grasp. 'We'll fight to the last, if you will, with Gordon. But we needn't make up our minds to die, unless the Mahdi's people insist upon killing us. For my own part, I've reasons for wishing to return. There are other mistakes I feel I should clear up. I'm not a soldier, like you, Austen; but if we must be attacked, I'll stop at the gate here and fight it out like a man by your side. Still, I want to say one thing to you; and to you, too, Considine, for it's always well to be prepared against all emergencies. I speak Arabic, and I know the ways and manners of Islam as well as I know the streets of London or Paris. If the worst comes to the worst, as come it will, stick by me, both of you. If we're all killed, well and good; somebody in England will be all the richer for it. But if by any stroke of luck we should manage to survive, remember, you stand no chance alone; you're both too obviously and unmistakably Christian to run the gauntlet of the Mahdi's forces. But by my side, and with my knowledge of Arabic and of Mussulman ways, you may get away safely in spite of everything.'

Sir Austen laid his hand gently on his new friend's shoulder.

'My dear fellow,' he said, in a tone of unwonted kindness and cordiality, 'for heaven's sake, don't deceive yourself about this. Don't lay that flattering unction to your soul. Make up your mind at once for the worst. Escape or safety is not on the cards. Unless I greatly mistake my man, the Mahdi means to attack us before to-morrow morning; and if he does, before to-morrow night, as sure as fate, we shall be all dead men. In our present condition, resistance is useless. We may sell our lives hard, but that's all. I can understand that you may want to get away. There may be somebody in England for whose sake you might wish to escape the massacre. That's natural, quite. But a massacre there'll be, as certain as death, and not a living soul in Khartoum—of the Christians, at least—will ever escape from it to tell the story. We may die hard, but die we must, in any case; so the best thing for us all to do is to make our minds up to it well beforehand.'

Linnell answered without the faintest display of emotion.

'Very well; I'm prepared. Gin I mun doy, I mun doy, and there's no help for it. I'll stay by your side here and fight it out. But, Austen, one or other of us may happen to escape. If it's you, take this address I give you; you'll see whose it is. Write to her that I never forgot her to the last; tell her I began to fear I might somehow have been mistaken; ask her to forgive me for having ever distrusted her.'

Sir Austen took the scrap of paper in the sacred silence with which men receive such things in a great crisis. He folded it up reverently in his pocket-book without looking at it. Then he wrote a few lines in pencil himself, on a page torn out from the notebook at the end, and handed it over to Linnell in return.

'Charlie,' he said in a very regretful voice, 'you're more likely by far to get away safe through this rabble of insane fanatics than I am. Your Arabic and your local colour may pull you through. I've written a word or two there to my wife. I've told her how much I mistook your character and conduct till we learned to know one another here. I've asked her to look upon you—if I should fall—as the head of the house; you know my meaning. I've told her how much your companionship's been worth to me. If ever you get away clear from this detestable hole—by Jove! how they're fusillading away at the gate now—tell her I loved her with my last breath, and that my last thoughts were of her only.'

'Boys,' Considine said, holding his pistol hard, 'I'm sorry to be behind ye both in this matter of sentiment. I've got no wife, and I've got no sweetheart. But it's not me intention to let meself be killed here for nothing, I tell ye. I shall bowl over as many of these niggers as I can; but when the fun's all over and done, I mean to walk across Africa on me own

legs, till I come out at Cape Town, if need be, before ever I'll let a nigger put daylight through me. So if ye two have any commands for home, regard me as the post—I'm the man to take them. It's me firrum intention to be buried at peace in the family vault of all the Considines, in me father's own place, in dear old County Cavan.'

As they spoke, Sir Austen took out his notebook once more.

'Charlie,' he said, scribbling down a few words on a blank page, 'take that up for me to the palace, to Gordon. The attack, I'm sure, will come from this side. I've been watching these fellows, and I see they're massing their men for the Bourré Gate. We must concentrate all our forces here; and I wish I felt sure of that fellow Faragh.'

Linnell took the note, and turned on his heel, with the quiet, gliding movement of the true Oriental. Considine gazed after him with an approving glance.

'He's a good fellow that,' he said, turning to Sir Austen; 'and it's very generous of him to propose to stand by you if we have to make our way out through all these blackguards.'

'And by you too,' Sir Austen added quietly.

'By me! Ah, yes; there's no reason there. But to help *you* out of Khartoum, I call really self-sacrificing.'

'Why so?' Sir Austen asked, with a faint tinge of distrust in the tone of his voice.

'Why! Because, me dear sir,' the Irishman answered, with true Irish bluntness, 'if *you* were to be killed, and *he* were to get away, he'd be a bar'net of the United Kingdom, for he's next in succession to the Linnell title.'

Sir Austen glanced up at him from his seat on a step with a sudden glance of suspicious doubt.

'And if *he* were to be killed,' he muttered, 'and *I* were to get away, I'd be next in succession to a far finer property than ever the Linnells of Thorpe Manor could lay claim to.'

'Ye mean the pills?' Considine suggested, with a cautious smile.

'Ah, you know all about it, then,' Sir Austen answered, not without some slight symptoms of embarrassment. 'Yes, I mean the pills, and whatever thereby hangs. Charles Linnell's a rich man; and his money'd take the mortgages off the Manor without feeling it. But I'll stand by him still, in spite of that, if he'll stand by me; for, after all, he's a rare good fellow. Not that we need either of us trouble ourselves about titles or estates as things go now; for before to-morrow evening, Considine—I tell you the truth—we'll be all dead men in a heap together. The Mahdi'll be in possession of Khartoum by that time, and he'll treat every man-jack of us as he treated Hicks Pasha's army before us—not a soul will get back alive to England. Don't buoy yourself up with any false hopes of escape or terms. Khartoum's doomed, and every European life within it.'

CHAPTER XXI.

AN ANXIOUS MOMENT.

A few hours later, on that terrible Sunday—the last before the final disaster at Khartoum—Sir Austen found himself in the great square of the town, in front of the Governor's house, where a starving crowd of natives was already gathered, eager to hear the last news of the deliberation going on inside the palace. Sir Austen had been relieved for the time from his dangerous and difficult post at the Bourré Gate, and had strolled into the city to learn for himself what hopes the Governor still had as to their chances of holding out till the army of rescue arrived to reinforce them.

It's wonderful how callous people get at last to the dangers of a siege, when once they're in the midst of it. The constant rain of bullets from every side passes absolutely unnoticed. Men cross open spaces under fire without seeming to observe it. Even a shell exploding causes far less commotion than the fall of an omnibus-horse would cause in Regent Street. So Sir Austen strolled on carelessly, undeterred by the distant thud of firing, through those covered streets, overhung with matting to keep off the heat of the mid-day sun, and past the hungry blacks who peered now and again from darkling doorways in the wall, greeting the English officer as he strode by with a military salute in true Soudanese fashion. Sir Austen saluted in return, and stepped on briskly. But the square, when he reached it, was alive with an eager throng of superior natives, both soldiers and civilians in every possible stage of weariness and misery. A long siege had left its mark on all. Famine stared visibly from every face. The gaunt Egyptians looked gaunter than ever: the stalwart negroes were worn to shadows. Among them the officer's quick eye was not long in picking out once more the still burly figure of his Irish friend Considine.

'What's up?' Sir Austen asked with considerable curiosity, forcing his way not without some difficulty through the buzzing throng. 'A deputation to Gordon?'

'Ye've hit it,' Considine answered lightly, with his accustomed easy, devil-may-care expression. 'The precise game. A dozen of the chief niggers are in conference with the Governor, and they want him to surrender at discretion this very morning. But they don't know Gordon. And from what I can guess of these fellows' lingo, I fancy Gordon don't see it in the same light as they do. They seem to me to be grumbling in their own tongue—which is a grand one for the purpose—and I can certainly answer for it that we've all of us got a right to, for we're confoundedly hungry.'

As he spoke, an Arab a step or two in front turned round to them with an intelligent air and smiled. Considine was the first to recognise who it was among the confused crowd of similar white Oriental dresses.

'Why, man, hanged if it isn't your cousin again!' he cried, with a sudden look at Sir Austen. 'Ah, but he's a splendid Arab! The devil himself wouldn't know him from a born Mussulman. Linnell, ye rascal, come here and tell us what the bother's all about. Ye can understand these niggers' unconscionable lingo. Tell us what the dickens the black fellows are haggling over.'

'Hush!' Linnell answered, coming over to them with an almost reverential air. 'Hush! He's going to speak. Let's hear what he says. I'll translate it all for you as well as I can afterwards.'

Something in the tone of his voice compelled attention. Considine and Sir Austen looked up at once, and saw standing on the steps of that whitewashed palace the well-known figure of a tall and commanding-looking man, in white European uniform and dark-red fez, that showed off to the utmost advantage the chastened strength and majesty of his sunburnt face and grizzled gray moustaches. A buzz ran wave-like through the assembled crowd—a whispered buzz of 'Gordon! Gordon!' The Governor raised his right hand for a moment, palm outward, as if to bespeak silence; and all at once a sudden stillness fell like magic even upon that motley crowd of noisy, chattering Orientals. One second they surged like a summer sea; then they looked up eagerly. Every man held his face upturned to hear, as Kashim Elmoos, Gordon's most trusted native officer, called out loudly in Arabic: 'The Governor will address you.' But for some minutes the Governor himself only glanced round impressively with his deep-blue eyes: his silence and his look, all pity and resolution, seemed well-nigh as eloquent in their way as his soldierly language.

The crowd waited patiently, hanging upon his lips. Then Gordon, steadying himself with his hand on Kashim Elmoos's shoulder—for he was ill that day, and had been up all night making the round of the ramparts—gazed about him compassionately on that silent sea of eager black faces, and began to speak in rapid and fluent, but very clear and

distinct, Arabic. Neither Sir Austen nor Considine could understand one word he said; but his winning smile, his cheery voice, his resolute manner, his quick cadences of emotion as he passed in turn from chiding to exhortation, made them almost able to follow in rough outline the general sense of what he was driving at. As for the straining mob of terrified Orientals, they hung upon his words in breathless silence, and stroked their chins, muttering now and then in concert, 'Allah is great. Gordon says well. He has faith to shame us. With Allah's help we shall hold out yet till hope comes of deliverance.'

But the Governor's face belied his confidence. As he went on with his speech, even in that dire extremity, some electric spark from the great man's heart seemed to run now and again through the entire assembly, so wonderfully did he inspire them all with the sense of personal devotion. They thrilled responsive. At one point, the Governor's voice sank low and musical.

'What's he saying to them now?' Considine asked in an almost inaudible whisper of Linnell, unable any longer to repress his curiosity.

'He's telling them he feels it all, not for himself—not for his reputation—not even for England—but for his people's sake—these poor sheep of Soudanese, whom he has tried so hard to save and to benefit. If all is lost, it is for them that he grieves over it. Four long days and nights he has never slept nor closed his eye; he has gone round the posts incessantly, and personally encouraged his starved and wearied soldiers to stand firm till help arrives from Wolseley. The question of food, he says, has worn him to a shadow. He is hungry for his people. But all will yet go well. If they will but hold out for three days longer, Stewart's troops will be here: and for his part, come what may, he will never, never, never consent to surrender. *They* may give up the town if they like; that is *their* look-out; but he and we and Kashim Elmoos will die fighting to the last for God and duty.'

'Hooray!' Considine cried out enthusiastically, at the top of his voice; 'and so say all of us, too, General. We won't give way. We're with you, we're with you!'

Gordon looked down with a placid, childlike smile in the direction of the suddenly interrupting voice, and added in English loud and clear:

'My determination is unshaken. I will hold out to the end. England will never allow us to perish. But even if she does, we must do our duty.'

Sir Austen pressed his way up through the surging crowd, now loosed in speech once more, and eagerly discussing this last deliverance of their Governor's.

'I have news for him,' he murmured to Linnell, as they pressed forward together through the wearied throng; 'I believe help is nearer even than he supposes. We took a man prisoner this morning near the Bourré Gate, trying to make his way as close as he could as a spy. From what Abdul Ahmed, who examined him, tells me, I think he can be relied upon for giving truthful information.'

They reached the steps, and moved slowly up to where Gordon himself had now taken his seat in a wicker-chair on the platform of the palace. Occasional bullets still whizzed past them with a whir; but the Governor nevertheless received his friends with that genial smile which never forsook him even in the last extremity.

'What goes at the gate, Linnell?' he asked, grasping Sir Austen's hand hard, and looking down into his very soul with those clear blue eyes of his. 'All well towards Bourré?'

'All well, as yet, I trust,' Sir Austen answered, trying his best to imitate his great leader's cheeriness. 'But we expect a determined assault to be made before long. We took a dervish prisoner this morning in the outer ditch, attempting, as I believe, to scale the rampart and communicate with Faragh——'

Gordon's eyes gleamed steely at the treacherous Pasha's name.

'Very likely!' he answered, with a quietly contemptuous air. 'Faragh can't be trusted. I made that man, and I know now, if he dared, he would willingly betray me. He has a cur's nature, I fear. But I'm not afraid of him. If we die, at least we have done our duty; though, even now, two hundred men would be enough to save us—two hundred Englishmen, of Probyn or Burnaby's sort. With their help we could hold out for another twelvemonth. Well, how about your prisoner?'

Sir Austen smiled back at that calm, heroic face of a great man struggling with a sea of adversity.

'My prisoner tells us,' he went on, in a very quiet voice, 'that the Mahdi has news of a severe defeat of his northern detachment on Saturday week by Stewart's troops at Abu Klea. He understands that Stewart himself is wounded or dead, but that his column has succeeded in reaching Metamneh. The dervish tells us that the army of relief made a reconnaissance in force at Metamneh on Wednesday, aided by our four steamers, which he seems to think have effected a junction with them; and he says that in the Mahdi's camp everyone is of opinion an assault must be made not later than Tuesday on all available points, for fear the army of relief should arrive by Wednesday or Thursday.'

The Governor listened to this exciting news with profound interest.

'My own information looks the same way,' he murmured, with that imperturbable calm of a brave spirit. 'Depend upon it, we are only three or four days off now from our deliverance. I have wrestled with this trouble in prayer, and it is passing away. It is passing away, I feel certain; but which way it will pass away, we can't tell yet. My grief is all for my poor starved people. I believe our steamers must really have met Stewart's detachment. But that makes our danger all the greater for the moment. Everything depends upon the next four days. The Mahdi's too good a strategist, you may be sure, not to know his one chance of success lies in preventing a junction. The nearer help comes to us, the more eager the enemy will be to hasten his assault. He'll attack us to-night, I believe—he'll attack before morning. I must see your prisoner, Sir Austen. Where have you left him?'

'At the Bourré Gate,' Sir Austen answered respectfully, 'in charge of Ali Ismail.'

At the words the General, like a wounded man, sprang from his seat astounded.

'In charge of Ali Ismail!' he cried, with an incredulous air. 'Why, Colonel, you surprise me! The man's a spy, of course, who came near on purpose, hoping to be taken, that he might communicate with Faragh. And you've left him in charge of one of Faragh's own most intimate officers! Why, what could you have been thinking about? In a man less experienced and less trustworthy than yourself, I should be inclined to call this culpable negligence! Depend upon it, the fellow has a message from the Mahdi. By this time he's arranged things comfortably with Faragh, no doubt. And the worst of it is, we don't know whom to trust. We must go down at once and try to prevent any further mischief.'

Sir Austen clapped his hand to his head in horror.

'Great heavens!' he cried, with a sudden burst of enlightenment, 'I must be mad! I never even thought of it!'

The General, never chiding him, moved down the steps with a resolute air.

'This is bad news,' he said quietly—'very bad news indeed. I've heard none worse through all this day of trial. I distrust Faragh, and I don't know how many of his subordinates may be implicated with him. If we had only the enemy to deal with, we might hold out for weeks; but with traitors in the camp—starvation and treachery to cope with at once—God alone knows now what may happen next to us. And when we fall, they will treat my poor people as these wretches treated the defenceless souls in Berber.'

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

Early next morning, about three o'clock, as Linnell was dozing uneasily in his bed, on the second floor of an old Arab house not far from the Bourré Gate, a strange sound and tumult in the city awoke him suddenly. It wasn't the mere ordinary fusillade or boom of the batteries; he could sleep through that quite carelessly now. It was something out of the common. He rose, and opened the latticed window to explore the mystery. Looking out across the flat roofs, a fierce red glare met his eyes to eastward. Something up, undoubtedly! Heavy firing was going on along the Blue Nile line, in the dead of night, in the direction of Bourré.

At the very same moment, even as he looked and wondered, an answering red glare burst up like flame towards the sky on the west, along the White Nile front, in the direction of Messalamieh. Heavy firing was going on in that quarter too. A horrible din seemed to grow upon his ears as he stood and listened. It was plain the enemy had assaulted in force—and from two sides at once. The end had come at last! The Mahdi must be making his final attempt on Khartoum!

With a tremor of awe, Linnell rose hastily and put on his Arab dress as usual. Then he took his field-glass in his hand, and stepped out upon the flat white roof of the tumbledown villa. His quarters were in one of the highest houses in the whole town, from whose top terrace he could command the entire Messalamieh district. Gazing in that direction, he saw at once, by the red glare of the fire and the white light of dawn, a number of swarthy clambering objects that swarmed and clustered over the rampart by the Messalamieh Gate. They looked like black ants, at such a dim distance, seen through the field-glass against the pale white wall of the fortifications: but Linnell knew in a second they were really naked black Soudanese soldiers, creeping one by one into the doomed city. They had filled up the ditch below with bundles of straw and palm-branch brushwood, and were escalading the wall prone on their bellies now, like so many cats or crawling insects!

At one glance he took it all in, that awful truth, in its full horror and ghastly significance. Those crouching black barbarians had almost carried the gate by this time, and in half an hour more the town would be glutted and given over to indiscriminate slaughter and rapine. Only those who have seen the black man at his worst can tell what nameless horrors that phrase encloses.

But before Linnell had time to make up his mind which way to go, or where duty most called him, another wild shout surged up simultaneously from the Bourré Gate, and another red glare burst fiercer and wilder than ever towards the pale expanse of tropical heaven.

The startled European turned his glass in the direction of the new noise, but saw no naked black bodies scaling the walls over in that quarter. The cry and din towards Bourré came all, it seemed, from well *within* the gate. The mad red glare that burst up anew to the sky was in the city itself. Then Linnell knew at once what had happened on that side. Faragh Pasha had betrayed them! The game was up! His creatures had basely opened the eastern gate! The Mahdi's wild gang was already within the beleaguered city!

In that awful hour, every European heart in Khartoum was stirred by but one thought. To the palace! To the palace! To die defending Gordon!

With a throbbing bosom, the painter hurried down the stairs of that crazy old native house and rushed out into the deserted streets of the city. The gray light of dawn and the red reflected glare of burning houses illuminated together the narrow tangled alleys. The minarets of the crumbling old mosque across the way stood out in pale pink against the lurid red background. But not a soul was to be seen in the deserted lane. Though the din and tumult rose fiercer and ever fiercer from the two main assaulted points, the silence in the empty houses on either side was almost death-like. For most of the Mussulman inhabitants had quitted the town three weeks earlier, by the Mahdi's permission, leaving few non-combatants within that doomed precinct; and the handful that remained were now cowering in their own gloomy little sunless bedchambers, waiting for the successful tide of negro savagery to burst in and massacre them like sheep in a slaughter-house.

Linnell girded up his burnous forthwith, and ran at all speed through the empty streets in the direction of the palace. As he neared that central point of the entire city, crowds of natives, Egyptian officials, black Soudanese soldiers, and

terrified Arabs, were all hurrying for safety towards the Governor's headquarters. It was a general *sauve qui peut*; all thought of their own skins, and few of organized resistance. Still, at the very moment when Linnell turned into the great square, a small body of Nubian troops was being drawn up in line, to make for the Bourré Gate, where the enemy was thickest. Sir Austen stood at their head, and recognised his cousin.

'Well, it has come at last, Charlie,' he said, with a solemn nod. 'The black brutes are upon us in real earnest. This means massacre now, for my poor fellows are far too hungry, and too exhausted as well, to make anything like a decent resistance. We shall all be killed. Save yourself while you can. In that dress, nobody'd ever take you for a moment for a European. Slink back into the crowd, and when the Mahdi's people break upon you, give in your submission, and accept the prophet.'

'Never!' Linnell cried, placing himself in line by his cousin's side, and pulling out his revolver. 'If we must sell our lives, we'll sell them dearly, at any rate, in defence of Gordon.'

And, without another word, they made for the Bourré Gate in awful silence.

As they reached the actual scene of the fighting, or rather of the slaughter—for the worn-out defenders were too weary by far to strike a blow, even for dear life—a horrible sight met the Englishmen's eyes. No words could describe that ghastly field of carnage. It was an orgy of death, a wild, savage carmagnole of blood and murder. A perfect sea of naked black-skinned African fanatics had poured through the open gate into the battered town, and was rushing resistlessly now through all its tortuous lanes and alleys. With hideous cries and bloodstained hands, they burst shrieking upon their defenceless enemies, who fled before them like sheep, or stood to be shot or sabred with Oriental meekness. Every form of weapon was there, from savage club to civilized rifle, and all were wielded alike with deadly but reckless exultation of barbarism. Linnell had never in his life seen so awful a picture of slaughter and desolation. The fanatics, as they swept forward, headed by their naked dervishes with blood-begrimed locks, shouted aloud in Arabic, or in their own guttural Central African dialects, fierce prayers to Allah for aid, and savage imprecations of divine wrath on the accursed heads of the Mahdi's enemies. Neither man, woman, nor child was spared in that first fiery onslaught; whoever they met at close quarters they ran through with their bayonets or their long native spears; whoever they saw flying at a distance, they fired at with their rifles in wild confusion.

One fierce band of dervishes in red loin-cloths made straight along the street towards Sir Austen's little party.

'Kill, kill, kill!' the black fanatic at their head shouted aloud to his followers in his deep Arabic tones, stretching his bare arms heavenwards: 'Jehad! Jehad! The prophet promises Paradise to all who die to-day in the cause of Islam. Slay, in the name of Allah and the Prophet; slay, in the name of the Mahdi, his servant!'

As he spoke, a bullet from Sir Austen's revolver whizzed hissing across the intervening space, and passed like lightning clean through his naked body. The red blood spurted out in a gush from the open wound; but the man pressed on regardless of the shot, for all that. By some strange chance, the bullet had missed any vital part; and the dervish, clapping his open hand to the spot for a moment, and then holding up his palm, dripping red with his own blood, before his frenzied followers, cried out once more, in still wilder accents:

'Kill, kill, kill! and inherit heaven. See, the blood of the faithful is your standard to-day! My children, Allah has given us Khartoum for our own. Who live, shall divide the women of the infidels. Who die, shall sup to-night with the houris in Paradise!'

With one fierce shout of 'Jehad! Jehad!' the black wave, thus encouraged, swept resistlessly onward, each man tumbling over his neighbour in his eager haste to inherit the blessing. Their red eyes gleamed bright in the glare of the fires; their long matted curls of woolly hair blew loose about their thick bull necks in wild and horrible confusion. A mingled gleam of spears, and short swords, and firearms, and naked black thighs, seemed to dance all at once before Linnell's vision. Huge African hands, begrimed with smoke, and spattered over with stains of blood and powder, wielded Remingtons and bayonets and savage native weapons in incongruous juxtaposition. It was all hell let loose, with incarnate devils rushing fiercely on, drunk with slaughter and mad with excitement. Sir Austen himself stood firm, like a practised soldier.

'Fix bayonets!' he cried, as they broke against his line. But his little band of weary and siege-worn Nubians faltered visibly before the shock of that terrible onslaught. 'We must fall back,' he whispered, half under his breath, to his cousin, forgetful that his men couldn't have understood even if they heard his English; 'but at least we can fall back in good order

on the palace, with our faces to the enemy, and die with Gordon!'

At the word, Linnell waved his right hand wildly above his head, and turning to the little band of trained Nubian allies, cried out in Arabic:

'Stand to your ground, men, and retreat like soldiers. We go to die with Gordon Pasha!'

The Nubians answered with a feeble cry of assent, and fell back a pace or two.

Then their assailants burst in upon them with a frantic yell of triumph.

'Infidels, sink down to hell!' the dervish shouted at their head in a voice of thunder; and leaping into the air, fell himself as he spoke, riddled through the body by a second bullet from Sir Austen's six-shooter. His followers paused for some seconds as they saw their captain's blood spatter the ground: then another naked warrior, one-armed and one-eyed, with a rifle of the newest Woolwich pattern brandished madly in his hand, and a bundle of strange charms, for all clothing, hung loose round his neck, sprang forward with a bound and took the fallen leader's place in quick succession. Waving the broken stump of his left arm excitedly round his head, he cheered on his horde, drunk with haschisch and fanaticism, to attack the infidels and inherit Paradise!

Step by step and corner by corner, Sir Austen and his little body of faithful adherents fought their way back, retreating all the time, but with faces to the foe, through the narrow alleys and covered bazaar, in the direction of the palace. As they went, their number grew ever smaller and smaller; one weary Nubian after another fell dying on the ground, and the Mahdi's men rushed fiercely with bare feet over his prostrate body. Now and again, a stray shot was fired at the assailants by an unseen friend on some neighbouring house-top; but, on the other hand, as the defenders retreated slowly and in good order before the overwhelming force of the foe, their enemy grew each moment more numerous and more audacious. Black warriors swarmed down the narrow lanes from every side like ants from an ant-hill. Religious frenzy and the thirst for blood had driven the dervishes mad with frantic excitement. Their thick lips showed blue with congested blood; their eyes started from their sockets; great drops of sweat poured down their naked breasts and limbs; even those that dropped, stabbed through with bayonet thrusts, and those that flung themselves in their frenzy on the serried line of the retreating defenders, cried aloud to Allah with foaming mouths as they fell to revenge his Prophet, and the Mahdi, his servant, on the cursed dogs of infidels who had sent them to Paradise before their time.

It was hot work. Linnell's brain reeled with it. Their faces ever to the foe, and their bayonets fixed, the little band fell back, a step at a time, disputing every inch of that narrow pathway. At last they reached the great square of the town, where already other hordes of the frenzied fanatics were engaged in a ghastly and indiscriminate slaughter of all whom they came across. In the far corner, by the wall, a little band of terrified Greek women, the wives of merchants who had refused to flee before communications were cut off, crouched all huddled together near the Etat Major buildings, where some faithful black troops were endeavouring in vain to guard and protect them. Even as Linnell looked, the Mahdi's men burst in upon the poor creatures with a headlong rush, and swept away the soldiers with their deadly onslaught. One unhappy girl they actually hacked to pieces before his very eyes, tossing her head in derision as soon as they had finished on to the flat roof of a neighbouring whitewashed building. The rest they drove before them with their spears into the further corner, where a fierce band of dervishes with grinning white teeth was already beginning to collect a living booty of women; while a second horde of marauders, turning fresh upon Sir Austen's own tiny company of worn and wearied negroes, rushed fiercely upon them with a loud cry of 'Mashallah; death to the infidel!'

Sir Austen gave the word to his men, in his scanty Arabic:

'To the palace! To the palace! Quick march! Keep order! There's nothing to fight for now,' he added in English to his cousin, 'but to save Gordon from unnecessary torture.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FALL OF KHARTOUM.

It was no longer possible to keep up any semblance, even, of a regular line. The scanty body of famished and wearied survivors fell back in a hasty and broken rout towards the steps of the palace. The Mahdi's men, following them up at a run, like a troop of hungry wolves upon a defenceless sheepfold, shouted louder than ever, and fell in murderous little groups, with discordant cries of triumph, on every man who stumbled or lagged behind in the scurry.

The confusion was horrible. Linnell's brain whirled with it. Fresh swarms seemed now to break in upon the square by every lane and street and alley, like kites that swoop down from all sides upon some wounded jackal. One seething, surging mass of black savage humanity occupied the square with shrieks and imprecations. Some hung like bees on the flat roofs of the houses around, and kept up a desultory fire from their rifles on the stragglers below; others pressed on with Mohammedan ardour towards the palace itself, where a small band of famished defenders still held out at bay round the sacred person of their revered Governor.

As Linnell and his cousin reached the steps, a little line of faithful blacks formed an alley down the terrace, and a tall, spare figure clad in white European uniform stood forth, to grasp Sir Austen's hand in solemn silence.

For a moment nobody spoke a word. All speech was useless. Then the Governor looked around him with a pathetic look of infinite pity.

'My poor, poor children!' he cried, gazing sadly on that wild orgy of fire and slaughter. 'I came to save them from the stick, the lash, and the prison. I did my best to protect them. But it was ordained otherwise. I have lived whole years in this last long fortnight. Not for ourselves, Sir Austen—not for ourselves, indeed—but for them I feel it.' Then after a short pause he added slowly: 'And what a disappointment, too—when they come up—for Stewart and Wolseley!'

Even in that final moment of defeat and death, the hero's first thought was for the feelings of others.

Linnell stepped forward and grasped the Governor's hand in turn.

'We will all die with you,' he cried with profound emotion. It was easy enough, indeed, for him. He had nothing left on earth to live for.

And yet—and yet, now that death stood staring him in the face, he would have given worlds that moment for one last word with Psyche.

'We'll meet them here, Pasha, I suppose?' Sir Austen said, trying to rally his few remaining men on the steps. 'You will die at your post, as a soldier ought to do.'

'No, not here,' the Governor answered, with his quiet smile. 'My duty lies elsewhere. I had thought once, if Khartoum fell in God's good time, of blowing the palace up, with all that was in it. But I see more wisely now. I elect rather, with God's help, to die standing. Besides, we must make an effort at least to save Hansel. He has sent to me for help. He holds out in the consulate. I must go and meet him.'

Hansel was the Austrian consul, whose house lay not far off down one of the neighbouring narrow alleys. To attempt to reach it was certain death; but, still, the attempt must be made, for all that. Some twenty black Egyptian soldiers, with Kashim Elmoos at their head, still rallied feebly round the adored Governor. They started on their last march, that little forlorn-hope, fighting their way boldly across the open square, now one wild scene of havoc, and keeping together in a compact mass, with Gordon at their head, leading the party bravely. Only once the Governor paused on the way to speak to Sir Austen.

'Better a ball in the brain, after all,' he said quietly, 'than to flicker out at home in bed unheeded.'

Near the corner, a fresh body of dervishes rushed upon them down a side-street. The Governor halted at once and drew his sword. Sir Austen endeavoured to fling himself in front of him.

'For heaven's sake, sir,' he cried, in an eager voice, 'fall back among the men! These wretches recognise you! Unless you

fall back, you're a dead man, and our one last hope is gone for ever.'

For even then he could hardly believe that Gordon would be unsuccessful.

But the Governor waved him back with that authoritative hand that no man on earth ever dared to disobey.

'March on!' he said in a military voice unshaken by fear. 'I know my duty. We must go to Hansel's.'

Before the words were well out of his mouth, a volley of musketry rang loud in their ears. A rain of bullets rang against the wall behind. Linnell was aware of a strange dull feeling in his left arm. Something seemed to daze him. For a moment he shut his eyes involuntarily. When he opened them again, and steadied himself with an effort, he saw a hideous sight in the square beside him. Gordon's body was lying, pierced by three bullets, bleeding profusely on the dusty ground. And half the Egyptians lay huddled dead around him.

What followed next, Linnell hardly knew. He was dimly conscious of a terrible swoop, a cry of wild triumph, a loud tumultuous yell of diabolical vengeance. The naked black warriors fell upon the body of their famous enemy like ants upon the carcase of a wounded insect. A great wave of assailants carried Linnell himself resistlessly before them. He felt himself whirled through the midst of the square once more, and carried by the press up the steps of the palace. His cousin was still by his side, he knew; but that was all. They two alone remained of the defenders of Khartoum. No trace of resistance was left anywhere. The whole town was given over now to indiscriminate massacre.

All round, the smoke and heat of a great conflagration went up to heaven in blinding mist from the ruins of charred and blackened houses. Men and women were running and crying for their lives; black ruffians were seizing young girls in their brawny arms, and carrying them off, struggling, to places of temporary safety. All the horrors of a sack by victorious barbarians were being enacted visibly before his very eyes. The scene was too confused to yield any definite sensation, and great red drops were oozing copiously from Linnell's wounded arm, which he had bound round now with a fragment of his burnous. He almost fainted with pain and loss of blood. Just at that moment, a naked black fanatic, with a blunted sabre lifted high in the air, seized him violently by the shoulder.

'Are you for Allah and the Mahdi, or for the infidel?' he cried in broken African Arabic.

'I am for Gordon and the English!' Linnell answered with spirit, flinging the man away from him in the wild energy of despair, and drawing his knife, for he had no cartridges left. 'Lay your hand on me again, and, by God, I'll send your wicked black soul to judgment!'

Sir Austen by his side tried to draw his sword feebly. Then for the first time Linnell observed in his flurry that his cousin, too, was seriously wounded.

The sight of an infidel in European uniform who dared to offer resistance, and of a man in Arab dress who drew a knife to defend him, brought whole squads of marauders to the spot in a moment. Another horrible rush took place in their direction. Once more there was a loud noise as of a volley of musketry. Once more smoke and fire flashed suddenly before Linnell's eyes. The unhappy man saw Sir Austen fling up his hands aloft in the air and heard him give a loud wild cry. Then he knew himself that blood was trickling again from his own right breast. The rest was dim, very dim indeed. Big savages pressed on up the steps of the palace. Sir Austen was lying like a log by his side. Naked black feet trampled him down irresistibly. A fellow with a bayonet seemed to thrust him through a third time. Linnell knew he was weltering in a great pool of blood. The din grew dimmer and still dimmer all round. Light faded. The consciousness of the outer world melted slowly away. All was over. Khartoum was taken, Gordon was dead. Sir Austen lay stark and stiff by his side. He himself was dying—dying—dying. Numb coldness spread over him. And then a great silence.

But that morning at Khartoum, for six long hours, the city was given over to massacre and rapine. The men were slaughtered and stripped of everything they possessed, the women were hailed off and divided as booty. Four thousand of the townspeople lay rotting in the streets under a tropical sun. At least as many Egyptian and Soudanese soldiers were bayoneted by the fanatics in cold blood. And Gordon's headless body cried out to heaven for mercy on his murderers from a corner of the square by the gate of the palace.

So much, we all learned long after in England.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN HOUR OF TRIUMPH.

At Petherton, during all that fearful time, how closely Psyche followed the march of events; how carefully she reckoned the chances of war; how eagerly she watched the slow advance of the relieving force up the Nile to Dongola and across the desert to Abu Klea and Metamneh! Early in the morning, before even Dumaresq came down to his Spartan breakfast, Psyche was already scanning with anxious eyes the *Times* or *Daily News* she hardly held in her trembling fingers. When papa went out on the Downs for his mid-day walk, Psyche brought forth the big atlas from the study shelf, and, pen in hand, pounced down, all eagerness, on those strange unknown names, fixing for herself with minute care the exact spot where Wolseley had last arrived, or the utmost point on the wide blank of sand yet reached by Stewart with his desert advance-guard. Here they camped last night: there they go to-morrow. Love had turned the pink-and-white maiden unawares into an amateur tactician of the first water. She read with more than military fervour the latest views of distinguished authorities as to the chances of the Camel Corps; the conflicting opinions of newspaper scribes as to the tactical value of Beresford's Naval Brigade. General Maitland himself could not have been more eager as to the possible merits of the mounted infantry; the very War Office could hardly have been more excited when the van of the relief party arrived at Gakdul.

And all this in the silence of her own heart! For Psyche did not dare to confide in any one. When she heard papa's footstep on the gravel path outside, or Ida Mansel's voice by the garden gate, the Atlas was hurriedly thrust back into its place on the shelf, the *Daily News* was carefully folded away in the rack by the fireplace, the tears were hastily brushed from those clouded eyes, and the poor self-restrained girl came back at one bound from Khartoum or Dongola to Petherton Episcopi. No one but herself knew with what anxiety she followed every move in that terrible and protracted game; no one but herself knew how often, as she gazed at that hopeless map with its impassable stretches of desert sand and its long curves of interminable Nile, names and places faded suddenly from her failing eyes, and a vast blank alone rose up visible before her—a mingled blank of despair and blindness.

Now and again, to be sure, there were gleams of hope. It was not all pure unmixed despondency. On New Year's Day, for example, came a message, a glorious message, from Gordon to the relieving force: 'Khartoum all right on the 14th of December.' A fortnight ago, then, Psyche thought with a thrill, Linnell was safe; but, ah, how many things may happen in a fortnight! Yet even so, that cheery message, despatched by a brave man in stifled despair, brightened up her New Year not a little. For a full week afterwards her sight never suddenly failed her unawares; she walked with a firmer and a freer tread; there was still hope, for Stewart's force was now well on the way for Metamneh. Then came the flicker of victory at the Abu Klea wells—why, now they were almost at the gates of Khartoum. How very short a distance it looked on the map! Psyche measured it carefully by the scale of miles with a pin and some thread: her heart sank within her when she found the result! How many days' journey, how many days' journey, if one came to look at it by that sterner method!

On the 22nd another message arrived from Gordon: 'Khartoum all right. Could hold out for years.' Her heart bounded with joy within her as she read. All would yet be well—and Linnell would come home again.

When Linnell came home, she would tell him all. She could stand it no longer, this misery of misinterpretation. She would ask her father to release her from her promise, that horrible promise that had wrought so much harm. She would fling herself freely, for all her pride, on her painter's neck, and with tears and entreaties beg him to forgive her. A Dumaresq as she was, she would beg him to forgive her.

The end of January, though full of suspense, was indeed a happy time in anticipation for Psyche. Everything was going on so well at the front. The relief of Khartoum was now all but accomplished. Day after day came brighter news. Gordon's four steamers, sent down the Nile to assist Wolseley, had united with the expeditionary force at Metamneh. Then all was still safe in the beleaguered city. Sir Charles Wilson had started for Khartoum; in three days more the siege would be raised—the siege would be raised, and Linnell would be free again! The whole world of England had its eyes fixed during that period of suspense on one man alone; to Psyche, too, there was but one man in all Khartoum, and that man was—not Gordon, but the Special Artist of the *Porte-Crayon* newspaper.

On a Wednesday afternoon towards the end of the month, Ida Mansel stopped with her pony-carriage in front of the Wren's Nest gate, and called out to Psyche, who was busy in the drawing-room, to come in with her that minute to

Melbury.

Psyche flung down her needlework at once. Melbury was the nearest country town, and she was delighted indeed to have such a chance; for the evening papers could be bought at Melbury. Every hour was of breathless importance now: nobody knew how soon tidings might arrive of the relief of Khartoum. She would buy a *Pall Mall* or a *St. James's* at Melbury: she would get the latest news, that way, twelve hours earlier. So she hurried on her hat and jacket anyhow, and rushed out in haste to Ida.

It was a lovely afternoon, and the sun was shining. Such a January day Psyche scarcely remembered. The hedgerows were bright with hips and haws; the feathery streamers of the clematis, or old man's beard, as village children call it, festooned the bare boughs with their flower-like fluffiness; the chirping of robins from the shelter of the holly bushes made her almost forget it was the depth of winter. Rooks cawed from the rookery in cheerful content; young lambs already bleated from the pasture-land. Everything spoke of spring and hope. And Psyche's heart was glad within her; for had not England sent out help to her painter? Was not an army well on its way, all to bring her lover back to her at Petherton?

For the very first time, as they drove along through the brisk clear air, Psyche ventured to broach the subject that lay nearest her heart to Ida Mansel. 'Do you think,' she asked timidly, with a deep blush, 'there's any chance—we might hear to-day—that they've relieved Khartoum?'

Mrs. Mansel was in her most oracular Girtonian mood.

'Perhaps,' she answered vaguely, flicking the pony's ear, 'and perhaps not. But, for my part, it simply surprises me to find how much importance everybody attaches to the particular question whether this one man, Gordon—an estimable person, no doubt, in his own way, but one among ten million—does or does not happen to get shot in an expedition on which he volunteered for the express purpose of going to shoot other people. To my mind, the interest the world displays in his fate smacks of provincialism.'

Psyche, with her poor heart fluttering within her, was not disposed to contest this abstract proposition.

'But there are so many more people in Khartoum with him!' she ventured to interpose, her thoughts all full of one among that nameless, unthought-of number.

'So there are many thousand estimable Chinamen dying every day in Pekin, I believe,' Mrs. Mansel answered, with chilly persistence. 'It seems to me irrational, in a world where hundreds must die daily of endless misfortunes, to make so much fuss over a few dozen Englishmen, more or less, who've sought their own death over yonder in Central Africa.'

'Perhaps you'd feel it more if you were personally interested in any one of them,' Psyche ventured to suggest, very tentatively, though her heart misgave her for even trenching so far on the dangerous question.

'That's just it, you see,' Mrs. Mansel replied, with philosophic calm, replacing her whip in its stand carefully. 'As it happens, we *have* a friend out there ourselves, you know. Mr. Linnell—you remember, that nice young man who was here in the summer, and who painted your portrait and your father's too—has gone out to Khartoum; and you recollect he's a very old chum indeed of Reginald's. Reginald's very much concerned at times about him. But what I say is, if *we*, who have acquaintances actually in danger there, don't make any unnecessary noise or fuss about it—if we're content to look on and watch and wait to see what time and chance will do for them—why should all the rest of the world go crying and shrieking and wringing their hands in wild despair, like a pack of children, about Gordon and his companions, who are the merest names to them? War's an outlet for our surplus population. It replaces the plagues of the Middle Ages. There are plenty more soldiers where those came from.'

The tears stood full in Psyche's eyes, though with a violent effort she held them back. But she could talk no more about Khartoum after that. 'Mr. Linnell, you remember, who painted your portrait,' indeed! As if *she* could forget—as if *she* could forget him! Oh, strange irony of accidental coincidence! How little she knew—how little she understood poor Psyche's sorrow!

They drove on into Melbury in silence almost, and up the long, white High Street, stopping at the grocer's and the wine-merchant's and the draper's, till at last they reached the one shop in the place that had now any interest for poor eager Psyche—the bookseller and newsagent's. There were no placards displayed outside the door as usual. Mrs. Mansel

pulled up the pony at the door and let Psyche jump out.

'Have the evening papers come in yet?' Psyche asked, trembling.

'No, miss,' the shopman answered, with glib unconcern; 'they're a little late. Behind time this evening; but *Punch* is to hand if you'd like to look at it.'

Psyche took it up in a vague, uncertain, half-dreamy way. *Punch* for *her* indeed! What sarcasm—what irony! Of how much interest to her were its jokes and its caricatures now, with Linnell imprisoned by that mob of fierce fanatic blacks in Khartoum! She opened the paper, hardly knowing what she did. It almost fell from her hands in her intense excitement. Oh, heavens! what was this? A terrible joy burst over her as she looked. The cartoon was a picture of two weather-stained soldiers shaking hands together amid loud huzzas and tossing-up of caps, while a body of faithful Egyptian and negro allies looked on from behind and shared in the universal rejoicing of their deliverers. Underneath was the simple legend, 'At Last!' Remote as Psyche lived from the great world of men and events, she took in at a glance what the picture meant. Love sharpened her senses to read it aright. She recognised even the faces of the two leading men. One of them was Wilson; the other, Gordon.

Then all was well! Khartoum was relieved! The steamers with the Sussex regiment on board—those steamers whose course she had followed so anxiously—must have run the gauntlet of the Mahdi's fire, and succeeded in forcing their way up the Nile to the besieged city. Wilson had thrown himself into Khartoum at last, and Linnell would now come back to England.

All England was thinking of Gordon that night—Psyche was thinking only of her artist lover.

She turned, on fire, and laying threepence hastily down on the counter, rushed out of the shop with her priceless treasure in her hands, all trembling. At the door space disappeared for a moment before her swimming eyes, but she cared nothing at all for all that now. What was blindness itself with Linnell safe? She groped her way, with her precious paper in her hand, to Ida Mansel's pony-trap, and in a second, as the wave of joy passed through her once more, she saw again as distinctly as ever she had seen in all her life, for no tonic on earth can equal happiness.

'Mrs. Mansel!' she cried, 'he's safe, he's safe! They relieved Khartoum, and defeated the Mahdi!'

'Who's safe?' Mrs. Mansel repeated, half incredulous.

And Psyche, too proudly honest to answer 'Gordon,' replied with a scarcely conscious blush:

'Why, your friend Mr. Linnell! I'm so glad to hear it!'

Ida Mansel took the paper sceptically from the girl's hand. It was that all too historical number of *Punch* with the famous cartoon, so soon to be falsified, representing the supposed junction of Wilson's reinforcements with the handful of defenders still left with Gordon; and, as everybody now knows, it was prepared beforehand, as such things must always necessarily be prepared, in anticipation of the shortly-expected triumph of that futile relief party. But neither Psyche nor her friend was critical enough to reflect, in their woman-like haste, that the drawing and the block must have been put in hand, at the very latest, several hours before the arrival of the last telegrams in that morning's papers. They were not critical enough to remember that *Punch*, with all its acknowledged virtues and excellences, has never laid any claim of any sort to rank as an independent purveyor and dispenser of authentic intelligence. They accepted the hypothetical announcement of the cartoon in good faith as so much honest comment upon established fact, and they made no doubt in their own minds that in London that evening the news of Gordon's safety was common property.

Oh, glorious, short-lived, inexpressible delight! Oh, sudden release of tense heart-strings! Oh, instant relief from unutterable suspense! Psyche drove back to Petherton beside herself with joy. Linnell was safe, and she would see him again. She had no fear now that he might have died or been killed during the siege. Some supreme internal faith told her plainly that all was well. England had wasted money like water and sacrificed lives by the thousand in the desert, all to bring Psyche back her painter; and now, in the very hour of the country's triumph, should any base doubt dare to obtrude itself on her happy mind that all was in vain, and that her painter was missing? No, no, a thousand times over, no! Not thus are the events of the Cosmos ordered. Psyche *knew* he was safe; she *knew* he would come back again.

The robins in the hedge chirped merrier than ever as they two drove back in high glee to Petherton. The sun in the sky shone bright and spring-like; the waves on the sea shimmered like diamonds. Everything was gay and blithe and happy.

For Linnell was safe, and Psyche was herself again.

And in many an English home that night sad hearts were mourning for their loved ones at Khartoum.

CHAPTER XXV.

AND AFTER.

At the garden-gate Haviland Dumaresq met them, with that strange, far-away look in his wandering eye which, as Psyche knew—though she knew not the cause—surely and certainly foreboded headache. His glance was dim, and his step unsteady. At sight of them, however, he roused himself with an effort; and raising his hat with that stately old-fashioned courtesy of his, which gave something of princeliness to Haviland Dumaresq's demeanour at all times, he invited Mrs. Mansel to leave the pony standing at the gate, while she came in herself for a cup of tea in their little drawing-room.

'He won't stand,' Ida said; 'but perhaps I can tie him;' and with Dumaresq's help she proceeded to do so.

Psyche could no longer contain her news.

'Papa, papa,' she cried, 'have you heard what's happened? It's all right! Khartoum's relieved, and—Mr. Linnell's safe again!'

It was the first time since the painter's departure that she had so much as mentioned his name to her father. Haviland Dumaresq started with surprise at the unexpected sound, and at Psyche's blushes. The news seemed to rouse him and quicken his dulled sense. The far-away look died out from his eyes, as he answered with a gasp that to Psyche said much:

'I'm glad to hear it—very glad to hear it. That young man's danger has weighed upon my soul not a little of late. I've thought at times perhaps I might have been in some degree answerable for having sent him out on that fool's errand; but all's well that ends well, thank goodness. Military events matter little as a rule to such as me. The silly persons by whose aid kings and statesmen play their deadly game of skill against one another count for not much individually on the stage of history. We reckon them by the head—so many hundreds or so many thousands swept off the board. Well, what's the next move? Check, Kaiser! check, Sultan! But with this young man it was a different matter. He had burst into our horizon and crossed our orbits. The comet that swims once distinctly into your ken interests you far more than the crowd of meteors that career unseen through the infinity of heaven.' He rang the bell for the one tidy maid-of-all-work. 'Maria, tea!' he said with a lordly gesture, in the voice in which a sovereign might give commands for an imperial banquet to chamberlains and seneschals.

'The Government must be infinitely relieved at this success,' Mrs. Mansel remarked, trying to break the current of the subject; for this narrow and somewhat provincial insistence upon the fate of the one young man whom they all happened to know personally vexed her righteous Girtonian soul by its want of expansiveness. Why harp for ever on a single human life, when population tends always to increase in a geometrical ratio beyond the means of subsistence?

'Yes,' Dumaresq echoed, away up among the clouds still, but bringing back the pendulum with a rush to Linnell once more. 'No doubt; no doubt—and I'm relieved myself. I, too, had sent my own private Gordon to the Soudan unawares; and it's cost me no little in mental expeditions to raise the siege and release him unconditionally. But no matter now, no matter now; it's all over. He'll come back before long, and then I'll be able to pay him at last for the portrait he thrust upon me, uncommissioned, before leaving England.'

Psyche glanced up at it where it hung on the wall—that portrait of her father that she had so loved and watched through these weary long months—that portrait into which, as she often fancied, Linnell had poured the whole strength and energy of his pent-up nature. Ida Mansel's eyes followed hers to the picture.

'It's a most striking piece of work, certainly,' the Girton-bred lady remarked with condescending grace. 'Not niggled and over-elaborated, like so many of Mr. Linnell's performances. As a rule, our friend seems to me to walk backwards and forwards too much while he's painting a canvas. I often advised him to sit more still. If you watch any of the great masters at work, I always say, you'll see them seated so close at their easels, and so certain of the value of every particular touch, that they never need to look at the total effect they're producing at all. That's art: that's the master's way of working. Corot said there were certain pictures of his which he never really saw in any true sense of the word till they'd been signed and framed and sold and paid for. How much better that than this perpetual niggling!'

'I think Mr. Linnell paints beautifully,' Psyche cried all aglow, her heart beating hard in righteous indignation at the bare

idea that anyone could venture thus coldly to criticise her divine painter at the very moment when he had just escaped from that deadly peril of his life in Africa. 'And as to niggling,' she went on, emboldened by love into something that dangerously approached art-criticism, 'it seemed to me, when I watched him at work, every touch he added to the pictures, and especially to papa's, brought them one degree nearer to truth and nature.'

Mrs. Mansel looked up with half-contemptuous surprise. This country-bred girl, who had never even seen an academy or a salon, far less the Vatican or the Pitti Palace—this village child give *her* lessons in æsthetics!

'You may niggle and niggle away as long as you like,' she answered coldly, 'but you can never get the thousands of leaves that quiver on an aspen, or the myriads of tiny lines and curves and shadows that go to make up one human face of ours. Not mechanical accuracy and embarrassed detail make the great artist: a judicious parsimony of touch and wealth of suggestion are what go to produce true pictures.'

Psyche gazed up at the portrait reverently—and was silent. In the matter of mere technique she felt herself wholly unfit to pit her own criticism against Ida Mansel's; but as a faithful exposition of all that was best and greatest in Haviland Dumaresq's face and figure—the man himself, and the soul that was in him, not the mere outer body and husk and shell of him—she felt certain in her own heart Linnell's picture was a triumphant success and a veritable masterpiece. And all the world has since justified her. The philosophic depth, the logical clearness, the epigrammatic power, the proud reserve, the stoical heroism, the grand self-restraint and endurance of the man—all these were faithfully mirrored or delicately suggested in the endless lines of that admirable portrait: not a shade but spoke Haviland Dumaresq's character; not a tone of expression but helped to swell the general sense of a forceful and self-sufficing individuality. To look upon it one could almost see those proud lips part, and hear that calm and measured voice say in haughty self-consciousness, as once to Linnell: 'I must go through the world in my own orbit, come what may. I move on my circuit, undeterred and unswerving.'

Ida Mansel, indeed, with her Girton-bred precision and her cultivated narrowness! She to pretend to sit in judgment upon such a soul as Charles Linnell's! Could she see in either original or portrait those traits that Psyche admired the most? Could she understand the real granite greatness of Dumaresq's character, or the piercing insight with which Linnell had read it in his face, and impressed it in imperishable colours upon his canvas? Did she know what the highest side of art was aiming at, at all?

'The worst of this cut-and-dried modern higher education,' Psyche thought to herself, falling for the nonce into that hereditary trick of unconscious generalization, 'is that it educates women beyond their natural powers, and tries to raise them into planes of thought for which nature and descent have never equipped them beforehand.'

But what, in her happiness, did she care for such strictures? Her painter was safe, and she could afford to laugh at them.

'It's a very good portrait, though,' her father said, taking up the cudgels half unconsciously for his daughter's lover. 'I don't pretend to understand its technical qualities myself, of course—art, I suppose, can only be adequately judged or understood by those who themselves have essayed and appraised its practical difficulties; but if I know how to read my own character (and I think I do, from an objective standpoint), Linnell, it seems to me, has managed to put it very cleverly on canvas. In considering a portrait——'

But even as he spoke he was interrupted by Reginald Mansel's sudden incursion, holding in one hand an evening paper, and all agog with ill-suppressed excitement at the strange and unexpected tidings contained in it. Psyche knew in a moment what their neighbour had come for. He had just learned the news of the relief of Khartoum!

'Seen to-night's *Pall Mall*?' he asked with emphasis, as he burst in with the eager face of a man who comes as the bearer of important information.

'No,' Dumaresq answered; 'but we've heard the news already, for all that. Mrs. Mansel and Psyche brought it from Melbury. I'm glad they've succeeded at last in getting there.'

Mansel stared back at him in mute surprise.

'Glad?' he exclaimed, bewildered. 'Glad? Glad of what? I know you're little interested in military affairs, and push your horror of war to an extreme; but, hang it all, Dumaresq! you'll admit yourself this is going a little too far for anything. Glad that the Mahdi's got into Khartoum! Glad that our people have all had their throats cut by those rampant savages!'

Dumaresq clutched the paper with a thrill of astonishment.

'Had their throats cut?' he cried, gasping. 'And by those savages, too? Why, what do you mean, Mansel? They told me all was well at Khartoum.'

Mansel shook his head as he pointed with his finger to the latest telegrams.

'No, no,' he answered testily; 'that's all wrong, all unfounded. Here's the genuine news from the seat of war. Wilson's steamers have got up to Khartoum, only to find the city taken, and Gordon and every Christian soul in the place massacred in cold blood by the Mahdi's people.'

For a minute or two Dumaresq, Mrs. Mansel, and her husband all gazed together at the fatal telegram. Absorbed in the news, they forgot all else. The philosopher wrung his hands in horror.

'Poor Linnell!' he cried, half under his breath. 'I acted for the best! I acted for the best! But I did wrong, perhaps, in dismissing him so abruptly.'

Mrs. Mansel turned round to look after her friend.

'Goodness gracious!' she exclaimed, with a little scream of horror, 'just look at Psyche!'

They turned and saw. The shock had unnerved her.

Psyche was sitting bolt upright in her chair. Her cheeks were pale and white as death. Her bloodless hands lay motionless on her knees. Her eyes were staring wide open in front of her. But she saw nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing, knew nothing. She was cold as if dead. Had the shock killed her?

That self-same evening, in Chancery Lane, at the office of Messrs. Burchell and Dobbs, family solicitors, the senior partner in that flourishing firm looked up from his perusal of the *St. James's Gazette*, and remarked reflectively:

'I say, Dobbs, that poor client of ours, C. A. Linnell—you remember—must have been one of the fellows murdered in this Khartoum massacre.'

Dobbs glanced aside from his *Echo*, and murmured in response:

'By Jove! so he must. He was out there, wasn't he? I'm sorry for him, poor fellow! A first-rate client! He must have been worth four hundred a year. And I say, Burchell, consols'll go down to some tune on this news too, won't they?'

'Fallen already,' his partner answered, consulting his tape and pursing his lips up. 'Stock Exchange feels these pulses so instantaneously. Look here,' and he rang the electric bell at his side. 'Brooks, will you bring Mr. Linnell's box to me?'

The clerk brought it, and Mr. Burchell opened it deliberately, and glanced over the will.

'Aha!' he said, laying it down with some obvious unction. 'Precious lucky young woman, whoever she may be, Miss Psyche Dumaresq! Sounds like an actress: some casual love of his. Jolly glad she'd be this minute if only she knew the good luck in store for her. I thought I remembered it. Miss Psyche Dumaresq! Linnell's left her every blessed penny!'

'No!' Mr. Dobbs replied, screwing up his mouth, and laying down his *Echo*.

'Yes, every penny, to "Psyche, daughter of Haviland Dumaresq, Esquire, of Petherton!"'

'The family'll dispute it!' Mr. Dobbs exclaimed, scenting prey upon the breeze and whetting his appetite.

'They can't!' his partner responded with cheerful certainty. 'There are none of them left. There's nobody to dispute with her. Sir Austen was the only relative Linnell had living; and Sir Austen was out at Khartoum along with him. Both of

them had their throats cut at once, no doubt. Precious lucky young woman, Miss Psyche Dumaresq!'

And all the time, Miss Psyche Dumaresq, unconscious of her luck, and most other circumstances, was sitting white as death in her chair at Petherton, with her open blue eyes staring blankly in front of her, and her dead, numb hands hanging down like a corpse's.

'Shall you write and inform her,' Mr. Dobbs asked, with his fat face screwed up, 'or wait for details and further confirmation? It's more business-like, of course, to wait for details; but promptitude often secures a new client. And eight thousand a year's not to be sneezed at.'

'No good,' Mr. Burchell responded, still scanning the will and shaking his head. 'I have Linnell's own express instructions not to write to her about it till a year's elapsed. Dumaresq—Dumaresq—let me see—Dumaresq. There's a fellow of the name writes sometimes, I think, in the *Westminster* or the *Fortnightly*. His daughter, no doubt: perhaps she jilted him. And a precious lucky thing for Miss Psyche Dumaresq.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

DESPAIR.

They carried Psyche up to her own room, and laid her on the bed, and tended her carefully.

'She's been affected like this more than once before,' Haviland Dumaresq said with a pang of remorse, trying to minimize the matter to his own conscience, 'though never quite so seriously, perhaps, as to-day. Poor child, poor child! It's strange how sensitive natures respond to a stimulus. She's been watching this campaign with such singular interest; and the suddenness of the shock, after such hopes aroused, shows how much she's been over-exciting herself all along about it.'

As for Ida Mansel, she held her peace and guessed the truth, for even Girton had not wholly extinguished her feminine instincts. They poured a little brandy down Psyche's throat to revive her, and gradually and slowly she came to herself again. She never once uttered Linnell's name, and nobody about her alluded to him in any way.

'Tell me what was in the paper!' she said, with the calm of despair; and they read it aloud to her—every word of it, ungarbled. She listened with her face buried deep in the pillow. 'Is that all?' she asked, as Ida Mansel ended. And her father answered in a choking voice:

'That's all, my darling.' After which she lay a long time silent.

At last she turned round, and with a terrible calmness looked up in their faces. Her eyes, though open, were singularly vacant.

'Why don't you light the candles?' she cried like a peevish child. 'It's so very dark. All dark, everywhere!' And she flung her hands about her with a curious impatience.

Haviland Dumaresq stood up in his horror. The candles were burning on Psyche's dressing-table, and the little white room was as bright as daylight. With an agonized face he looked down at his daughter.

'Don't you see me, Psyche?' he cried, all aghast. 'Look up at me, darling. Try hard. Don't you see me?'

Psyche groped out at him with extended arms.

'Where are you, papa?' she asked quite innocently.

Then she fell back in her place and burst at once into a flood of tears. She was glad she had that cloak to cover her sorrow with. Too proud to acknowledge the meaning of her grief, she could at least let it loose under false pretences. She could cry as much as she liked for Linnell now. They would think she was only crying for her own blindness.

That same evening a telegram went up to London, addressed to the greatest oculist of the day, begging him in terms of urgent entreaty to come down at once to a new patient at Petherton.

And Haviland Dumaresq had reason to bless the blindness too, in his own way, for it took him off for awhile from his remorseful conscience, and concentrated his thoughts upon Psyche's condition.

All the next day Psyche saw nothing; and the day after that, and the day after that again.

But the eminent oculist who had come down post-haste from town to see her, and who came down each evening again by the last train to watch the case—so profound was his admiration of the 'Encyclopædic Philosophy'—held out to them the happiest hopes for her recovery, after a short interval. It was a purely nervous affection, he said with confidence: functional, functional: no cataract, no disintegration, no structural disease: the merest passing failure of the optic centres. It was all in the brain, he assured them with great assurance many times over. They had every hope. There was nothing to despair about.

Every hope: no hope for Psyche! Nothing to despair about: while blank despair hedged her in and environed her! How

little they know about hearts, these doctors!

At first she fancied there might yet be a chance. Not for her, of course; that was nothing—but for her painter. All was so vague and uncertain at Khartoum. Youth is loath indeed to give up all for lost. So young a love, so soon crushed out; impossible! impossible! And even the papers, the London papers, those wise, sagacious, omniscient papers, held out doubts at first as to Gordon's death. Well, then, if as to Gordon's, why not also as to Linnell's just equally? She could not believe he was dead, with that day unexplained. She could not think an explanation would never come. She hoped on against hope, till all hope was impossible.

Slowly and surely her faith gave way, however. Each fresh day's telegrams brought fresh grounds for doubting that any living soul had escaped the massacre. Deserters brought in news of the two or three Europeans still held in horrible slavery in Khartoum; and Linnell's name was not among them. Day by day, the terrible certainty grew clearer and ever more clear to Psyche that her lover lay dead in the heart of Africa.

And yet, strange to say, the specialist was right. Psyche's blindness was only temporary. Hour after hour, as hope gradually sank and died out within her, her eyesight was slowly but surely restored to her. In three or four weeks she was as well as ever—to all outer view—as Ida Mansel observed her. But her heart—her heart was crushed within her.

Weeks rolled on, and months passed by, and the fate of all who had fought at Khartoum grew from time to time more fixed and certain. Spring returned, and with it Geraldine Maitland. For that congenial companionship Psyche was glad, as far as she could be glad for anything now; for Geraldine was the only living soul with whom she could talk—not freely, but at all—about her lost painter. To her father, she never even mentioned his name; the subject was a sealed book between them. It was too awful a shadow to recognise in speech. There are ghosts one can only pretend to avoid by strenuously ignoring them in the bosom of the family. Haviland Dumaresq knew in his own soul he had sent Linnell away to his grave; but he had done it for the best; he had done it for the best. No man is responsible for the unseen and unexpected contingencies of his actions. We must be judged by our intentions, not by results. How could he know the young fellow would run away with the precipitancy of youth into danger's mouth? All he wanted was to protect Psyche. His sole object in life, now, was his daughter's happiness.

His daughter's happiness! Oh, futile old philosopher! If only men and women would just be content to let each of us live his own life, undisturbed, and not scheme and plan and contrive so much for the happiness of others, how very much happier we should all be for it!

Haviland Dumaresq had meant to take Psyche up to London for the season that coming spring, and introduce her to those powerful friends of his—for he had friends, not a few, in virtue of his apostolate—by whose aid she was to make that brilliant marriage which he still wildly dreamed for her in his opium ecstasies. He had even, by superhuman efforts, provided beforehand the needful money for going into lodgings, good fashionable lodgings, for some months in town, where he might launch his Psyche upon the great world of London; and Ida Mansel, most practical of heads, had promised to find an eligible tenant meanwhile for the Wren's Nest, at the usual rate of furnished houses at the sea-side in early summer. But when May came round—that smileless May—poor Psyche's heart was still so sore that Haviland Dumaresq shrank himself from putting his own plan into execution. It would only spoil her chances in the end to bring her out while this mood was upon her. After all, he thought, there was plenty of time yet. His rosebud was still so young and fresh: no need to hurry. Let her get over this girlish fancy first about a blighted heart—girls are so plastic; and then, when she'd forgotten her supposed romance—young people take a hysterical delight in imagining themselves unhappy—he could fulfil his plan of taking her up to town, and give her a fairer chance in the matrimonial lottery with the gilded youth of our teeming London.

For at Petherton Haviland Dumaresq was a very small person; but in London, he knew, more than one rich man's son would be proud to marry Haviland Dumaresq's daughter. In that mighty mart, where everything finds its level so soon, even true greatness is more justly and generously appraised than elsewhere. The provincial celebrity sinks at once to his proper place; but then, *en revanche*, the truly great man who ranks in his shire but as a third-rate personage finds himself in London duly estimated at his right worth by a more critical audience.

So the spring and summer passed slowly away; and autumn came again, and with it the anniversary of Linnell's departure.

All through the summer, Psyche's eyes had troubled her again from time to time; but she thought very little about her eyes

now: of what use to her were they? The only thing on earth she cared to see was gone for ever. They would never help her to see her painter again. For despair itself becomes at last a sort of sacred cult, a mysterious pleasure.

Still, in a certain vague, indefinite way, without herself attaching much importance to the subject, Psyche dimly noticed a change in the character of the disease. Though she saw very well for most of her time, she observed that the periods of dimness were much more frequent now than of old, and the periods of total loss of vision, when they came, remained far longer, and were altogether more persistent in every way, than in the early stages. She recognised to herself, with a strange uncomplaining Dumaresquian acquiescence, a fatalistic acceptance of the order of the cosmos, that she was slowly going blind, for no particular reason, but merely because the will to see was failing her.

She concealed it as far as she could, of course, from her father. She couldn't bear to vex the old philosopher's soul, to pile on that pathetic, unsuccessful life one more great failure. He loved her so dearly and was so proud and fond of her. To be sure, it was only putting off the evil day. But Psyche put it off with all her might, for all that. Papa was old and far from strong. Psyche knew in her heart he couldn't live many years longer. Why vex his last days needlessly with this final burden? Was it not enough, and more than enough, that that great soul should find itself in old age poor and broken and weighed down with sorrow, without adding that last straw to complete the disaster? The pathos of Haviland Dumaresq's nobly wasted life sufficed as it stood: Psyche at least would do her best to conceal from him whatever might add to his misery.

So she strove hard to hide from him her growing blindness. If the dim fit seized her as she sat and read, she would lay down her book and remain sitting and talking without showing it in any way till her eyes began slowly to resume their function. If it came upon her when she was out walking on the Downs with her father, instead of going on and groping her way, which would have betrayed her case, she would pause and pretend to be scanning the landscape, or would sit down on the turf and pull grasses by her side, while her father looked on and never suspected the reason for her wayward conduct. Now and then, to be sure, circumstances arose where it was impossible wholly to conceal the facts. She might be reading the paper aloud to her father, and be compelled by that sudden mistiness of the words to break off all at once in the middle of a sentence: or she might be walking down the quiet main street of Petherton, and find the visible world in one moment of time transformed into a vast blank of darkness before her. But even so, she noticed one curious fact. These blind fits overcame her least often in her father's presence; and by a violent effort of will, when he was by, she seemed able actually to command her eyesight. The strong stimulus of a vivid desire to save him needless pain conquered the weakness and feebleness of nerve which alone made the solid earth thus fade into nothingness before her eyes at a moment's notice.

Nay, in her father's presence Psyche even pretended not to feel sad: she tried hard to bury her grief from his eyes: for his sake she would still appear to be young and joyous. Though her heart ached, she would still play lawn-tennis on the Maitlands' court, and still talk nonsense, hateful, light-tongued nonsense, with the mild-eyed young curate. She was her father's daughter, and could she not talk in her father's way? Had she not inherited his iron nature? Her heart might break, indeed, but no daw should peck at it. She kept her sacred sorrow locked up securely in her silent breast. And there it succeeded in eating her life out.

With Geraldine Maitland, however, she was less careful of concealment; at least, as regarded her fits of blindness. The two girls walked and talked on the Downs much together; and it often happened that in the midst of their conversation Psyche's feet and tongue would falter unawares, and she would put out her hands to grope her way before her through the thick darkness that all at once enveloped her steps. As the summer wore on—so Geraldine noticed—these sudden failures grew more and more common. On one such occasion, indeed, when they were strolling along the face of the east cliff, near the tumbling sea, the world became a sudden blank to Psyche, and she sat down despairingly on the short smooth grass, with her sightless eyes turned toward the waves and the warm sun of summer.

'What's the matter, dearest?' Geraldine Maitland asked in her sympathetic way, for Geraldine when she wished could be very womanly.

'It's all gone again,' Psyche answered with a sigh. 'Oh, Geraldine, it all goes so often now! I don't feel as if I'd strength to fight against it, even for papa's sake, any longer.'

Geraldine's face was very grave.

'What does your father say about it, Psyche?' she asked seriously. 'He ought, surely, to take you up to town to a doctor.'

'Oh no; not that!' Psyche cried, shrinking back with infinite horror. 'I don't want doctors to go cross-questioning me and torturing me any more. I can bear it all, if I'm only left alone; but I can't bear being worried and cross-examined and bothered by dreadful men about it.'

'But what does your father think?' Geraldine persisted still. 'I'm sure he ought to do something to set it right again.'

'He doesn't know—or he hardly knows at all,' Psyche answered quickly. 'I've kept it from him as much as I can. I don't want to cause him any needless trouble.'

Geraldine held her peace and answered nothing. But in her own mind she had decided at once what was the proper thing for her to do. She would tell Haviland Dumaresq that very day how Psyche fared, and would urge him to take some competent medical opinion.

That evening Psyche took tea at the Maitlands'. She noticed the General, always bland and polite, was even blander and politer than usual in his demeanour towards her. His courtesy had in it a touch of that tender and chivalrous gentleness which old soldiers, more perhaps than any other men, know how to display on occasion to a woman in distress. Even Mrs. Maitland, as a rule so painfully cold and distant, unbent a little that day to the motherless girl. She called her 'my dear' more than once, and it was not the 'my dear' of conventional politeness with which women hold one another off far more effectually than with the coldest courtesies: it was the 'my dear' of genuine feminine interest. After tea, too, Psyche observed that Geraldine slipped away for a quarter of an hour on some vague excuse, though she didn't attach much importance at the time to her sudden departure. When Geraldine returned, her eyes seemed somewhat red from crying, and she gave no explanation of where she had been, further than to say with an evasive smile that she had run out for a bit on a little private errand.

At seven o'clock Psyche returned to the Wren's Nest. She opened the door with a noiseless hand, and walked unexpectedly into the little drawing-room. For a moment the haze gathered over her eyes; as it cleared away she saw, to her surprise, her father, that strong man, sitting bowed and bent with sorrow in his easy-chair, his hands clasped hard between his open knees in front of him. Tears were trickling slowly down his bronzed cheek; his attitude was eloquent of utter despondency. On the table by his side stood a little glass bottle—quite empty. Psyche, in her sudden speechless terror, remembered to have seen it on the mantel-shelf that morning, full of those little silver-coated pellets which she somehow associated in her own mind—though she couldn't say why—with her father's frequent and distracting headaches.

'Why, father dear,' she cried, flinging one arm round his neck in an access of sudden energetic sympathy, 'what on earth does this mean? What's the matter with you, darling? And why—is the bottle—on the table—empty?'

Her father looked up at her and nodded his head slowly and despondently.

'It's lost its effect,' he answered in a very hollow voice. 'It's lost its effect altogether, I'm afraid. One after another, I've taken them in turn, and found no relief from this tremor of my nerves. I never took so many in my life before. I was frightened, myself, when I wanted another and found I'd taken the whole bottleful. They do me no good; they do me no good now. What can I turn to, to relieve me from this misery?'

'Father!' Psyche cried, with a sudden burst of horrible intuition, 'it isn't opium? Oh, for heaven's sake, tell me, it isn't opium!'

The old man drew her down to him in a wild spasm of remorse and affection.

'My darling,' he cried in the fervour of his regret, 'don't ask me its name! don't put any name to it! Forget it, forget it: I never meant you should know. But whatever it was, Psyche, from this day forth, for your sake, my child, I solemnly promise you, I have done with it for ever!'

There was a moment's pause. Then Psyche said again:

'Was it that that was troubling you when I came in, papa?'

Haviland Dumaresq looked back into her deep-blue eyes with those truthful eyes of his. He was too organically moral to mince a lie with her.

'No,' he answered shortly, though with a terrible wrench. 'It was *not*, Psyche.'

Again there was a pause. Then Psyche whispered very low once more:

'Has Geraldine Maitland been here this evening?'

Haviland Dumaresq groaned, but he answered, without one moment's hesitation:

'Yes, Psyche.'

Psyche drew over a chair from the wall and seated herself beside him. She held her father's hand in her own, tenderly. For three minutes those two who loved one another so strangely sat there in silence. At last Psyche looked up and said in a very low voice:

'Well, papa?'

Dumaresq put one hand to his forehead and sighed.

'To-morrow, Psyche,' he said in a dreamy way, 'we go up to London. I want to take medical advice about myself—and I shall seize the opportunity at the same time of asking Godichau's opinion about your eyesight.'

Psyche dropped his hand resignedly.

'As you will, papa,' she said in a very soft whisper. 'But I never wanted to trouble you, myself, about so small a matter.'

And all that night she lay awake and cried—cried in her silent, tearless fashion.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MEDICAL OPINION.

The great London doctor to whom Haviland Dumaresq submitted his case in due form next day shook his head gravely when the famous thinker detailed his symptoms to him with some very small mental reservations. For we none of us tell the whole truth to doctors. Even a philosopher can hardly be trusted to make a clean breast of it to his medical adviser; and Dumaresq, though he admitted in part the opium, glided gently and gracefully over that painful part of the subject. But Sir Anthony Wraxall (for it was no less a man than that celebrated physician) didn't need to be told to what extent his patient had persevered in the baneful practice. 'Even you, Mr. Dumaresq,' he said with a smile, 'who know so well how to regulate the lives of all the rest of us, can't be trusted at a pinch to regulate your own! Why, I quote you every day to my lady patients as the great authority on these questions of nerve; yet your own nerves have gone to pieces bodily. "Physician, heal thyself," is a very old cry. I feel its sting myself. Well, well, we must see what we can manage to do for you.'

'Not much,' Haviland Dumaresq answered gloomily.

Sir Anthony gazed hard at him from those keen small eyes of his—eyes like a ferret's, overhung with the heavy black, beetling eyebrows—eyes that seemed to peer through you outright into the profoundest depths and recesses of your being.

'You're right,' he answered. 'Quite true, Mr. Dumaresq. With you I may drop professional reserve. No use in prophesying smooth things to the thinker who worked out the scheme of the "Encyclopædic Philosophy." I won't pretend to give you the little prescription which in rather less than no time will make another man of you. You're very well aware that broken-down machines can't be restored by pouring a few drops of oil on their bearings. You're one of us in all essentials, and you know far more about your own case, no doubt, than all the rest of us put together. I can only aid you by my diagnosis. And I'm afraid I can tell you very little in that respect that's likely to please you.'

Haviland Dumaresq's lip trembled. It was curious to him to note, however, even in this moment of deep despondency, how much more everybody thought of himself and his work in proportion as they approached nearer to his own high level. A country doctor would have treated him at best (if indeed he knew the cosmical philosopher's name at all) as a mere dabbler with some superficial knowledge of animal physiology: Sir Anthony Wraxall, the greatest London consultant of his day, treated him at least with the deepest respect as a high collateral authority on his own subject. Dumaresq smiled a grim smile of satisfied appreciation. Recognition is dear to the very greatest of men. 'I thought as much,' he answered, in his calm impassive way. 'I felt, myself, things couldn't go on like this much longer. The machine's worn out, you say. Then you don't hold out much hope for my life? The mechanism can't work at such low pressure for any time worth speaking of without stopping altogether.'

Sir Anthony Wraxall shook his head ominously.

'Not for three months certainly,' he said, 'if you still continue to ply it with opium.'

'But I've left off opium,' Dumaresq answered with perfect confidence.

'Since when?' Sir Anthony asked, peering deeply once more into his patient's widely dilated pupils, which still bore evidence of a recent overdose.

'Since yesterday,' Dumaresq replied in his coldest tone and with consummate gravity.

If any other man had said such a thing to him, Sir Anthony Wraxall would have laughed outright, and been amply justified in so laughing. But the voice in which Dumaresq uttered those simple words, with all the earnestness of his stoical nature, meant a great deal; and Sir Anthony understood it.

'I see,' the great consultant answered with a very grave face. 'You have promised, no doubt?'

And Dumaresq, nodding his gray head solemnly, made answer with infinite weight:

'I have promised.'

'In that case,' Sir Anthony said more cheerfully, taking it for granted at once from the man's mere look that the resolve was enough, and that Dumaresq would do exactly as he intended, 'I think I can guarantee you, with moderate care and a change of climate, from eighteen months' to three years' respite.'

Dumaresq's face was statuesque in its repose; he never changed colour or moved a muscle. If sentence of death had been pronounced for that day, he would never have betrayed it in his facial expression. But his heart was very sore for poor Psyche, for all that. If he must die so soon—and leave Psyche unmarried—he would feel he had indeed thrown his life away for nothing. But still, three years is a very long time. Much may be done, with energy, in three years. Psyche had still the world to choose from. How many men would be pleased and proud to wed Haviland Dumaresq's daughter—his guileless Psyche!

'What climate?' he asked with Spartan brevity, sparing his emotions, to economize the great doctor's rigid quarter-hour.

Sir Anthony rubbed his hands together reflectively, as if grinding out wisdom from his palms between them.

'What you want,' he said with oracular calm, 'is rest, change, variety, an open-air life, sun, sea, and freedom. "The palms and temples of the South," you know, and all that sort of thing; you languish for the purple seas, as our *other* great man has somewhere phrased it. The Riviera's not exactly the place for you—overdone, overdone; too much noise and bustle and vulgarity. What *you* want, with your highly-strung nervous temperament, and your wide delight in natural contemplation, is Egypt or Algiers; quiet, solitude, novelty. The Oriental world will perhaps be new to you—though you seem to have exhausted universal nature.'

'I have never been in the East in my life,' Dumaresq answered gloomily; for how he was to raise the money to go, without trenching on his tiny reserve for Psyche, he hadn't at that moment the remotest notion.

Sir Anthony's face brightened up.

'That's well,' he said, with professional cheeriness. Your great doctor makes a point of putting the best face on everything. 'The newer the scene, the more likely to suit you. Novelty and stir of Oriental life—camels and Arabs and sands and date-palms—pyramids and temples and sphinxes and Memnons—the bustle of the bazaars, the calm of the desert—that's the kind of thing to rouse and stimulate you. Hire a dahabeeah and go up the Nile; or rent a villa at Mustapha Supérieur. Don't work, don't think, don't write, don't philosophize. Let that teeming brain of yours lie fallow for awhile. Ride, drive, play whist, talk gossip, drink tea, skim the *Saturday Review*, or the last new novel—I can recommend Ouida—and don't bother yourself in any way about anything or anybody. A good French cook, generous diet, sound champagne, and a comfortable carriage, will give the machine a new lease of life for an extra twelve months or two years at any rate. You've been living too sparingly of late, I feel sure. Pulse is low and circulation feeble. Change all that; make yourself comfortable wherever you go, and treat yourself to every luxury you've a mind to.'

He snapped his mouth to and looked very wise. 'Tis a professional way of announcing to your patient in polite pantomime that (with a little formality of cash transfer) this interview may now terminate.

As for poor Haviland Dumaresq, in his Spartan poverty, he fingered in his pocket those hard-earned guineas he was to pay so soon for this sapient advice, and wondered to himself where Sir Anthony thought the money was to come from for the dahabeeah and the villa and the comfortable carriage, the champagne and the cook and the generous diet. Did he really believe the 'Encyclopædic Philosophy' was a modern Golconda, or was it a part of his stereotyped professional humbug to treat every patient as a potential Midas? Dumaresq and Psyche had come up to town that morning by third class from Petherton; and by third class they would go down again to their home to-morrow. A dahabeeah was to them as practically unattainable as a royal yacht; a villa at Algiers as far beyond their means as Windsor Castle or the Winter Palace.

Sir Anthony glanced at him once more with inquiring eyes as he stood there doubtful. 'But mind, no opium!' he added sharply in a sudden afterthought.

The old stoic stared back at him with profound majesty.

'I have spoken,' he said, and made no farther answer.

Sir Anthony saw his mistake at once, and with practised tact bowed a hasty apology.

Dumaresq laid down the guineas on the table, and went out again to Psyche in the bare little ante-room with his heart very sad and his spirits sinking. He knew, of course, it couldn't possibly be Egypt; but somehow or other he must manage Algiers. He had only three years left to settle Psyche in! That one thought alone monopolized his soul. No time to waste upon foolish flirtations with penniless painters now! He must find some rich man to make his darling happy.

'What did he recommend, papa?' Psyche asked, all tremulous, as they went sadly down the steps together.

'Ten thousand a year and a brand-new constitution,' her father answered, with an unwonted touch of cynical bitterness. 'These great doctors are all alike, Psyche. They could cure us at once, if only we'd be millionaires of twenty-five to please them.' And in deference to his medical attendant's advice he hailed a hansom—an unheard-of luxury—and drove off at once to the famous oculist's.

The famous oculist, in his turn, after examining Psyche's eyes from every possible point of view, dismissed the poor girl herself to the waiting-room, and held back her father with a courteous wave for a moment's consultation.

'Mr. Dumaresq,' he said in a very respectful tone, 'of course you know as well as I myself do what's the matter with this poor young lady. It isn't her eyes themselves, properly speaking; they are not at fault at all. It's mere functional disuse of the optic centres. The retina and lenses are as right as ninepence. All she needs is to rouse herself—to rouse herself. Internal causes—I call it that. With an effort of will, she could see as well as ever she saw in her life again, I assure you.'

'So I thought,' Haviland Dumaresq answered, still unmoved, but trembling inwardly in every nerve. 'As this is professional, I won't hesitate to mention to you, in strict confidence, that my daughter's affections have been very severely strained of late.'

'I guessed as much,' Dr. Godichau replied, letting his *pince-nez* drop with a sudden movement from his eyes gracefully. 'Well, we all know the two best prescriptions medical science can propose for that. First, change of air; next, change of affections. A new scene, in fact—and a new lover.'

Haviland Dumaresq drew himself up stiffly. He approved the advice, but not the expression.

'I propose to take my daughter abroad,' he answered somewhat curtly, with his grand air. 'I wish to give her change of scene and fresh ideas. I shall take her out into an unaccustomed society, where she may have opportunities of forgetting her unfortunate fancies, whatever they may have been, and of forming perhaps new friends and new attachments.'

'One nail knocks out another,' Dr. Godichau answered with French sententiousness.

Haviland Dumaresq wondered in his own soul why all oculists have invariably a distinct want of sensitiveness. Could it be, he asked himself, because they have so often to operate painfully on the eye, and the eye is the most delicate of human organs?

'Well, I'll try to throw her into fresh surroundings,' he went on coldly, unheeding the specialist's ill-timed remark. 'Sir Anthony Wraxall, whom I've just been consulting on my own account, advises me to spend the winter in Algiers. Would Algiers, do you think, suit my daughter?'

'The very thing!' Dr. Godichau exclaimed with the common medical air of profound conviction. 'What the young lady wants is rousing—taking out of herself: engaging in the concerns of humanity generally. If once you can persuade her to use her eyes—to look about her and feel an interest in things—it'll be all right. Her sight'll come back again. Nothing's more likely to have that result than a totally new Oriental society. At Algiers she'll be compelled, against her will almost, to look at the Arabs and the mosques and the fresh forms of life that unfold themselves like a panorama before her. The young lady's never been out of Europe, perhaps? No; I thought not. Then nothing could be so good. I was going to advise a trip to Italy or Spain; but Africa's better, Africa's better! Take her there by all means. And if you can find a new nail to knock out the other, so much the luckier, of course—so much the luckier.'

Haviland Dumaresq went back to his shabby little hotel in the Strand that day fully determined in his own mind upon two things: to go to Algiers, though the trip should cost him the savings of a lifetime; and to find that rich husband for Psyche within the next eighteen months, before he himself should be finally incapacitated for providing for her future.

And all this time the senior partner in the firm of Burchell and Dobbs, family solicitors, was going about London

chuckling silently to himself at the untold wealth already potentially possessed, under the will of the late C. A. Linnell, deceased, by that lucky young woman, Miss Psyche Dumaresq.

But as for Psyche herself, she felt almost happy when her father told her they were to go to Algiers, for then she wouldn't be separated for the winter from Geraldine; and Geraldine was now her only confidential and sympathetic friend in her great sorrow.

END OF VOL. II.

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Transcriber's Note

Punctuation errors have been corrected.

The following suspected printer's errors have been addressed.

Page 49. Then changed to That. (That she was really crushing)

Page 104. handsame changed to handsome. (Linnell's handsome face)

Page 121. ot changed to to. (too precious to be)

Page 122. predisdisposition changed to predisposition.
(no hereditary predisposition)

[The end of *Dumaresq's Daughter, Volume 2* by Grant Allen]