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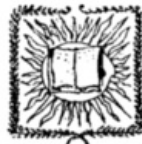
THE SQUIRREL INN.

THE SQUIRREL INN

BY

FRANK R. STOCKTON

AUTHOR OF "RUDDER GRANGE," "THE LADY, OR THE TIGER?" "THE LATE MRS. NULL," "THE CASTING AWAY OF MRS. LECKS AND MRS. ALESHINE," "THE MERRY CHANTER," "THE HUNDREDTH MAN," ETC.



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
I THE STEAMBOAT PIER	1
II THE BABY, THE MAN, AND THE MASTERY	7
III MATTHEW VASSAR	16
IV LODLOE UNDERTAKES TO NOMINATE HIS SUCCESSOR	25
V THE LANDLORD AND HIS INN	32
VI THE GREEK SCHOLAR	40
VII ROCKMORES AHEAD	47
VIII MISS MAYBERRY	56
IX THE PRESERVATION OF LITERATURE	61
X ROSE VERSUS MAYBERRY	68
XI LANIGAN BEAM	78
XII LANIGAN CHANGES HIS CRAVAT	90
XIII DECREES OF EXILE	96
XIV BACKING OUT	101
XV THE BABY IS PASSED AROUND	110
XVI MESSRS. BEAM AND LODLOE DECLINE TO WAIT FOR THE SECOND TABLE	119
XVII BANANAS AND OATS	132
XVIII SWEET PEAS	138
XIX THE AROUSED ROSE	149
XX AN INGENUOUS MAID	157
XXI TWISTED TRYSTS	163
XXII THE BLOSSOM AND THE LITTLE JAR	175
XXIII HAMMERSTEIN	181
XXIV TRANSLATIONS	197
XXV MR. TIPPENGRAY MOUNTS HIGH	204
XXVI ANOTHER SQUIRREL IN THE TAP-ROOM	213

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
THE SQUIRREL INN	FRONTISPIECE
ON DECK	11
A WAGON-LOAD OF NURSE-MAIDS	28
STEPHEN PETTER	33
THE SIGN	38
A GREEK IN AN outhouse	42
MR. TIPPENGRAY	44
"I SUPPOSE THIS IS MRS. CRISTIE"	49
LODLOE IS INTRODUCED TO STEPHEN PETTER	53
"PASSING NEARER, MR. TIPPENGRAY STOPPED"	65
"TEACH THE OLD HENS GOOD MANNERS"	76
"DON'T GET EXCITED"	80
"HAVE YOU HAPPENED TO HEAR ANYBODY SPEAK OF ME?"	83
"I AM HERE FOR A PURPOSE"	92
IDA MAKES HERSELF COMFORTABLE	102
"BACK!"	108
"HE BEGAN SLOWLY TO PUSH IT TOWARDS THE SQUIRREL INN"	112
"I WILL WHEEL IT DOWN TO MY SUMMER-HOUSE WHERE IT IS COOL AND SHADY"	113
"HE LEANED OVER THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CARRIAGE"	118
"CALTHY, THIS IS TRULY LIKE OLD TIMES"	129
"WILL YOU NOT TAKE THESE INSTEAD?"	143
"I HAVE DISSECTED ONE"	147
MRS. CRISTIE CONSIDERS	153
A MATRIMONIAL CONVERSATION	160
CALTHEA HOLDS HIM WITH HER LISTENING EAR	165
THE BABY AND THE SWEET-PEA BLOSSOM	179
MISS CALTHEA STEPS OUT	187
"WHAT SKEERED HIM?"	191
MR. TIPPENGRAY STOPPED AND LISTENED	192
THE TRANSLATION	198

THE SQUIRREL INN

I

[Pg 1]

THE STEAMBOAT PIER



The steamboat *Manasquan* was advertised to leave her pier on the east side of the city at half-past nine on a July morning. At nine o'clock Walter Lodloe was on the forward upper deck, watching the early passengers come on board, and occasionally smiling as his glance fell upon a tall man in a blue flannel shirt, who, with a number of other deck-hands, was hard at work transferring from the pier to the steamer the boxes, barrels, and bales of merchandise the discouraging mass of which was on the point of being increased by the unloading of a newly arrived two-horse truck.

Lodloe had good reason to allow himself his smiles of satisfaction, for he had just achieved a victory over the man in the blue shirt, and a victory over a busy deck-hand on a hot day is rare enough to be valuable. As soon as he had stepped on board, he had deposited his hand-baggage in a place of safety, and walked forward to see the men run on the freight. It was a lively scene, and being a student of incident, character, and all that sort of thing, it greatly interested him. Standing by a strangely marked cask which had excited his curiosity, he found himself in the way of the deck-hand in the blue shirt, who, with red face and sparkling forehead, had just wheeled two heavy boxes up the incline of the gang-plank, and was about to roll them with easy rapidity to the other side of the deck; but Lodloe, with his back turned and directly in front of him, made it necessary for him to make a violent swerve to the right or to break the legs of a passenger. He made the swerve, missed Lodloe, and then, dumping his load, turned and swore at the young man with the promptness and accuracy of a cow-boy's revolver.

[Pg 2]

It was quite natural that a high-spirited young fellow should object to be sworn at, no matter what provocation he had given, and Lodloe not only objected but grew very angry. The thing which instantly suggested itself to him, and which to most people would seem the proper thing to do, was to knock down the man. But this knocking-down business is a matter which should be approached with great caution. Walter was a strong young fellow and had had some practice in boxing, but it was not impossible that, even with the backing of justifiable indignation, the conventional blow straight from the shoulder might have failed to fell the tall deck-hand.

[Pg 3]

But even had Lodloe succeeded in stretching the insulting man upon the dirty deck, it is not at all probable that he would have staid there. In five seconds there would have been a great fight, and it would not have been long before the young gentleman would have found himself in the custody of a policeman.

Lodloe's common sense was capable of considerable tension without giving way, even under a strain like this, and, although pale with anger, he would not engage in a personal contest with a deck-hand on a crowded steamboat; but to bear the insult was almost impossible. Never before had he been subjected to such violent abuse.

But in a flash he remembered something, and the man had scarcely turned his empty truck to go back to the pier, when Lodloe stepped in front of him, and with a wave of the hand stopped him.

Two nights before Lodloe had been sitting up late reading some papers on modern Italian history, and in the course of said reading had met with the text of the *anathema maranatha* pronounced by Pius IX. against disbelievers in his infallibility. The directness, force, and comprehensiveness of the expressions used in this composition made a deep impression upon Lodloe, and as it was not very long he had committed it to memory, thinking that he might some time care to use it in quotation. Now it flashed upon him that the time had come to quote this *anathema maranatha*, without hesitation he delivered the whole of it, and square, straight into the face of the petrified deck-hand.

[Pg 4]

Petrified immediately he was not. As first he flushed furiously, but after a few phrases he began to pale and to turn to living stone; enough mobility, however, remained to allow him presently to raise his hand imploringly, but Lodloe had now nearly finished his discourse, and with a few words more he turned and walked away. The deck-hand wiped his brow, took in a long breath,

and went to work. If another passenger had got in his way, he would not have sworn at him.

Therefore it was that, gently pleased by the sensations of victory, Walter Lodloe sat on the upper deck and watched the busy scene. He soon noted that passengers were beginning to come down the pier in considerable numbers, and among these his eye was caught by a young woman wheeling a baby-carriage.

When this little equipage had been pushed down nearly to the end of that side of the pier from which the passengers were going on board, it stopped, and its motive power looked behind her. Presently she turned her head towards the steamer and eagerly scanned every part of it on which she could see human beings. In doing this she exhibited to Lodloe a very attractive face. It was young enough, it was round enough, and the brown eyes were large enough, to suit almost any one whose taste was not restricted to the lines of the old sculptors.

When she completed her survey of the steamboat, the young woman turned the carriage around and wheeled it up the pier. Very soon, however, she returned, walking rapidly, and ran the little vehicle over the broad gang-plank on to the steamboat. Now Lodloe lost sight of her, but in about five minutes she appeared on the forward upper deck without the baby-carriage, and looking eagerly here and there. Not finding what she sought, she hastily descended.

[Pg 5]

The next act in this performance was the appearance of the baby-carriage, borne by the blue-shirted deck-hand, and followed by the young woman carrying the baby. The carriage was humbly set down by its bearer, who departed without looking to the right or left, and the baby was quickly deposited in it. Then the young woman stepped to the rail and looked anxiously upon the pier. As Lodloe gazed upon her it was easy to see that she was greatly troubled. She was expecting some one who did not come. Now she went to the head of the stairway and went down a few steps, then she came up again and stood undecided. Her eyes now fell upon Lodloe, who was looking at her, and she immediately approached him.

"Can you tell me, sir," she said, "exactly how long it will be before this boat starts?"

Lodloe drew out his watch.

"In eight minutes," he answered.

If Lodloe had allowed himself to suppose that because the young woman who addressed him was in sole charge of a baby-carriage she was a nurse or superior maid-servant, that notion would have instantly vanished when he heard her speak.

The lady turned a quick glance towards the pier, and then moved to the head of the stairway, but stopped before reaching it. It was plain that she was in much perplexity. Lodloe stepped quickly towards her.

[Pg 6]

"Madam," said he, "you are looking for some one. Can I help you?"

"I am," she said; "I am looking for my nurse-maid. She promised to meet me on the pier. I cannot imagine what has become of her."

"Let me go and find her," said Lodloe. "What sort of person is she?"

"She isn't any sort of person in particular," answered the lady. "I couldn't describe her. I will run down and look for her myself, and if you will kindly see that nobody knocks over my baby I shall be much obliged to you."

Lodloe instantly undertook the charge, and the lady disappeared below.

[Pg 7]

II

THE BABY, THE MAN, AND THE MASTERY



The young man drew the baby-carriage to the bench by the rail and, seating himself, gazed with interest upon its youthful occupant. This individual appeared to be about two years of age, with its mother's eyes and a combative disposition. The latter was indicated by the manner in which it banged its own legs and the sides of its carriage with a wicker bludgeon that had once been a rattle. It looked earnestly at the young man, and gave the edges of its carriage a whack which knocked the bludgeon out of its hand. Lodloe picked up the weapon, and, restoring it to its owner, began to commune with himself.

"It is the same old story," he thought. "The mother desires to be rid of the infant; she leaves it for a moment in the charge of a stranger; she is never seen again. However, I accept the situation. If she doesn't come back this baby is mine. It seems like a good sort of baby, and I think I shall like it. Yes, youngster, if your mother doesn't come back you are mine. I shall not pass you over to the police or to any one else; I shall run you myself."

[Pg 8]

It was now half-past nine. Lodloe arose and looked out over the pier. He could see nothing of the young mother. The freight was all on board, and they were hauling up the forward gang-plank.

One or two belated passengers were hurrying along the pier; the bell was ringing; now the passengers were on board, the aft gang-plank was hauled in, the hawsers were cast off from the posts, the pilot's bell jingled, the wheels began to revolve, and the great steamboat slowly moved from its pier.

"I knew it," said Lodloe, unconsciously speaking aloud; "she hadn't the slightest idea of coming back. Now, then," said he, "I own a baby, and I must consider what I am to do with it. One thing is certain, I intend to keep it. I believe I can get more solid comfort and fun out of a baby than I could possibly get out of a dog or even a horse."

Walter Lodloe was a young man who had adopted literature as a profession. Earlier in life he had worked at journalism, but for the last two years he had devoted himself almost entirely to literature pure and simple. His rewards, so far, had been slight, but he was not in the least discouraged, and hoped bravely for better things. He was now on his way to spend some months at a quiet country place of which he had heard, not for a summer holiday, but to work where he could live cheaply and enjoy outdoor life. His profession made him more independent than an artist—all he needed were writing materials, and a post-office within a reasonable distance.

Lodloe gazed with much satisfaction at his new acquisition. He was no stickler for conventionalities, and did not in the least object to appear at his destination—where he knew no one—with a baby and a carriage. [Pg 9]

"I'll get some country girl to take care of it when I am busy," he said, "and the rest of the time I'll attend to it myself. I'll teach it a lot of things, and from what I have seen of youngster-culture I shouldn't wonder if I should beat the record."

At this moment the baby gave a great wave with its empty rattle, and, losing its hold upon it, the wicker weapon went overboard. Then, after feeling about in its lap, and peering over the side of the carriage, the baby began to whimper.

"Now then," thought the young man, "here's my chance. I must begin instantly to teach it that I am its master."

Leaning forward, he looked sternly into the child's face, and in a sharp, quick tone said:

"Whoa!"

The baby stopped instantly, and stared at its new guardian.

"There," thought Lodloe, "it is just the same with a baby as with a horse. Be firm, be decided; it knows what you want, and it will do it."

At this instant the baby opened its mouth, uttered a wild wail, and continued wailing.

Lodloe laughed. "That didn't seem to work," said he; and to quiet the little creature he agitated the vehicle, shook before the child his keys, and showed it his watch, but the wails went on with persistent violence. The baby's face became red, its eyes dropped tears. [Pg 10]

The young man looked around him for assistance. The forward upper deck was without an awning, and was occupied only by a few men, the majority of the passengers preferring the spacious and shaded after deck. Two of the men were laughing at Lodloe.

"That's a new way," one of them called out to him, "to shut up a young one. Did it ever work?"

"It didn't this time," answered Lodloe. "Have you any young ones?"

"Five," answered the man.

"And how do you stop them when they howl like that?"

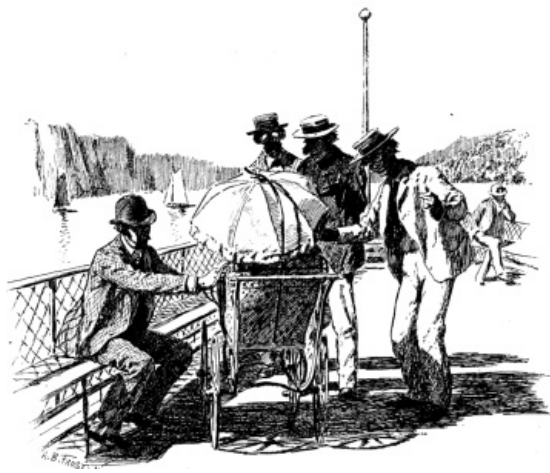
"I leave that to the old woman," was the answer, "and when she's heard enough of it she spansks 'em."

Lodloe shook his head. That method did not suit him.

"If you'd run its wagon round the deck," said another man, "perhaps that would stop it. I guess you was never left alone with it before."

Lodloe made no reply to this supposition, but began to wheel the carriage around the deck. Still the baby yelled and kicked. An elderly gentleman who had been reading a book went below.

"If you could feed it," said one of the men who had spoken before, "that might stop it, but the best thing you can do is to take it down to its mother." [Pg 11]



ON DECK.

Lodloe was annoyed. He had not yet arranged in his mind how he should account for his possession of the baby, and he did not want an explanation forced upon him before he was ready to make it. These men had come on board after the departure of the young woman, and could know nothing of the facts, and therefore Lodloe, speaking from a high, figurative standpoint, settled the matter by shaking his head and saying:

[Pg 12]

"That can't be done. The little thing has lost its mother."

The man who had last spoken looked compassionately at Lodloe.

"That's a hard case," he said; "I know all about it, for I've been in that boat myself. My wife died just as I was going to sail for this country, and I had to bring over the two babies. I was as seasick as blazes, and had to take care of 'em night and day. I tell you, sir, you've got a hard time ahead of you; but feedin' 's the only thing. I'll get you something. Is it on milk yet, or can it eat biscuit?"

Lodloe looked at the open mouth of the vociferous infant and saw teeth.

"Biscuit will do," he said, "or perhaps a banana. If you can get me something of the sort I shall be much obliged"; and he gave the man some money.

The messenger soon returned with an assortment of refreshments, among which, happily, was not a banana, and the baby soon stopped wailing to suck an enormous stick of striped candy. Quiet having been restored to this part of the vessel, Lodloe sat down to reconsider the situation.

"It may be," he said to himself, "that I shall have to take it to an asylum, but I shall let it stay there only during the period of unintelligent howling. When it is old enough to understand that I am its master, then I shall take it in hand again. It is ridiculous to suppose that a human being cannot be as easily trained as a horse."

[Pg 13]

The more he considered the situation the better he liked it. The possession of a healthy and vigorous youngster without encumbrances was to him a novel and delightful sensation.

"I hope," he said to himself, "that when the country girl dresses it she will find no label on its clothes, nor any sign which might enable one to discover the original owners. I don't want anybody coming up to claim it after we've got to be regular chums."

When the boat made its first landing the two men who had given advice and assistance to Lodloe got off, and as the sun rose higher the forward deck became so unpleasantly warm that nearly everybody left it; but Lodloe concluded to remain. The little carriage had a top, which sufficiently shaded the baby, and as for himself he was used to the sun. If he went among the other passengers they might ask him questions, and he was not prepared for these. What he wanted was to be let alone until he reached his landing-place, and then he would run his baby-carriage ashore, and when the steamboat had passed on he would be master of the situation, and could assume what position he chose towards his new possession.

"When I get the little bouncer to Squirrel Inn I shall be all right, but I must have the relationship defined before I arrive there." And to the planning and determination of that he now gave his mind.

He had not decided whether he should create an imaginary mother who had died young, consider himself the uncle of the child, whose parents had been lost at sea, or adopt the little creature as a brother or a sister, as the case might be, when the subject of his reflections laid down its stick of candy and began a violent outcry against circumstances in general.

[Pg 14]

Lodloe's first impulse was to throw it overboard. Repressing this natural instinct, he endeavored to quiet the infantile turbulence with offers of biscuit, fresh candy, gingercakes, and apples, but without effect. The young bewailer would have nothing to do with any of these enticements.

Lodloe was puzzled. "I have got to keep the thing quiet until we land," he thought; "then I will immediately hire some one to go with me and take charge of it, but I can't stand this uproar for two hours longer." The crying attracted the attention of other people, and presently a country woman appeared from below.

"What is the matter with it?" she asked. "I thought it was some child left here all by itself."

"What would you do with it?" asked Lodloe, helplessly.

"You ought to take it up and walk it about until its mother comes," said the woman; and having given this advice she returned below to quiet one of her own offspring who had been started off by the sounds of woe.

Lodloe smiled at the idea of carrying the baby about until its mother came; but he was willing to do the thing in moderation, and taking up the child resolutely, if not skilfully, he began to stride up and down the deck with it.

[Pg 15]

This suited the youngster perfectly, and it ceased crying and began to look about with great interest. It actually smiled into the young man's face, and taking hold of his mustache began to use it as a doorbell.

"This is capital," said Lodloe; "we are chums already." And as he strode he whistled, talked baby-talk, and snapped his fingers in the face of the admiring youngster, who slapped at him, and laughed, and did its best to kick off the bosom of his shirt.

[Pg 16]

III

MATTHEW VASSAR



In the course of this sociable promenade the steamboat stopped at a small town, and it had scarcely started again when the baby gave a squirm which nearly threw it out of its bearer's arms. At the same instant he heard quick steps behind him, and, turning, he beheld the mother of the child. At the sight his heart fell. Gone were his plans, his hopes, his little chum.

The young woman was flushed and panting.

"Upon my word!" was all she could say as she clasped the child, whose little arms stretched out towards her. She seated herself upon the nearest bench.

In a few moments she looked from her baby to Lodloe; she had not quite recovered her breath, and her face was flushed, but in her eyes and on her mouth and dimpled cheeks there was an expression of intense delight mingled with amusement.

"Will you tell me, sir," she said, "how long you have been carrying this baby about? And did you have to take care of it?"

[Pg 17]

Lodloe did not feel in a very good humor. By not imposing upon him, as he thought she had done, she had deceived and disappointed him.

"Of course I took care of it," he said, "as you left it in my charge; and it gave me a lot of trouble, I assure you. For a time it kicked up a dreadful row. I had the advice of professionals, but I did all the work myself."

"I am very sorry," she said, "but it does seem extremely funny that it should have happened so. What did you think had become of me?"

"I supposed you had gone off to whatever place you wanted to go to," said Lodloe.

She looked at him in amazement.

"Do you mean to say," she exclaimed, "that you thought I wanted to get rid of my baby, and to palm him off on you—an utter stranger?"

"That is exactly what I thought," he answered. "Of course, people who want to get rid of babies don't palm them off on friends and acquaintances. I am very sorry if I misjudged you, but I think you will admit that, under the circumstances, my supposition was a very natural one."

"Tell me one more thing," she said; "what did you intend to do with this child?"

"I intended to bring it up as my own," said Lodloe; "I had already formed plans for its education."

The lady looked at him in speechless amazement. If she had known him she would have burst out laughing.

"The way of it was this," she said presently. "I ran off the steamboat to look for my nurse-maid, and if I hadn't thought of first searching through the other parts of the boat to see if she was on board I should have had plenty of time. I found her waiting for me at the entrance of the pier, and when I ran towards her all she had to say was that she had made up her mind not to go into the country. I was so excited, and so angry at her for playing such a trick on me at the last moment, that I forgot how time was passing, and that is why I was left behind. But it never entered my mind that any one would think that I intended to desert my baby, and I didn't feel afraid either that he wouldn't be taken care of. I had seen ever so many women on board, and some with babies of their own, and I did not doubt that some of these would take charge of him."

[Pg 18]

"As soon as I saw that the steamboat had gone, I jumped into a cab, and went to the West Bank Railroad, and took the first train for Scurry, where I knew the steamboat stopped. The ticket agent told me he thought the train would get there about forty minutes before the boat; but it didn't, and I had to run every inch of the way from the station to the wharf, and then barely got there in time."

"You managed matters very well," said Lodloe.

"I should have managed better," said she, "if I had taken my baby ashore with me. In that case, I should have remained in the city until I secured another maid. But why did you trouble yourself with the child, especially when he cried?"

"Madam," said Lodloe, "you left that little creature in my charge, and it never entered my mind to hand it over to anybody else. I took advice, as I told you, but that was all I wanted of any one until I went ashore, and then I intended to hire a country girl to act as its nurse."

[Pg 19]

"And you really and positively intended to keep it for your own?" she asked.

"I did," he answered.

At this the lady could not help laughing. "In all my life," she said, "I never heard of anything like that. But I am just as much obliged to you, sir, as if I were acquainted with you; in fact, more so."

Lodloe took out his card and handed it to her. She read it, and then said:

"I am Mrs. Robert Cristie of Philadelphia. And now I will take my baby to the other end of the boat, where it is more sheltered, but not without thanking you most heartily for your very great kindness."

"If you are going aft," said Lodloe, "let me help you. If you will take the baby, I will bring its carriage."

In a few minutes the mother and child were ensconced in a shady spot on the lower deck, and then Lodloe, lifting his hat, remarked:

"As I suppose two people cannot become conventionally acquainted without the intervention of a third person, no matter how little each may know of said third party, I must take my leave; but allow me to say that, if you require any further assistance, I shall be most happy to give it. I shall be on the boat until we reach Romney."

"That is where I get off," she said.

"Indeed," said he; "then perhaps you will engage the country girl whom I intended to hire."

[Pg 20]

"Do you know any one living there," she asked, "who would come to me as nurse-maid?"

"I don't know a soul in Romney," said Lodloe; "I never was in the place in my life. I merely supposed that in a little town like that there were girls to be hired. I don't intend to remain in Romney, to be sure, but I thought it would be much safer to engage a girl there than to trust to getting one in the country place to which I am going."

"And you thought out all that, and about my baby?" said Mrs. Cristie.

"Yes, I did," said Lodloe, laughing.

"Very well," said she; "I shall avail myself of your forethought, and shall try to get a girl in Romney. Where do you go when you leave there?"

"Oh, I am going some five or six miles from the town, to a place called the 'Squirrel Inn.'"

"The Squirrel Inn!" exclaimed Mrs. Cristie, dropping her hands into her lap and leaning forward.

"Yes," said Lodloe; "are you going there?"

"I am," she answered.

Now in his heart Walter Lodloe blessed his guardian angel that she had prompted him to make the announcement of his destination before he knew where this lady was going.

"I am very glad to hear that," he said. "It seems odd that we should happen to be going to the same place, and yet it is not so very odd, after all, for people going to the Squirrel Inn must take this boat and land at Romney, which is not on the railroad."

"The odd part of it is that so few people go to the Squirrel Inn," said the lady.

[Pg 21]

"I did not know that," remarked Lodloe; "in fact I know very little about the place. I have heard it spoken of, and it seems to be just the quiet, restful place in which I can work. I am a literary man, and like to work in the country."

"Do you know the Rockmores of Germantown?" asked Mrs. Cristie.

"I never heard of them," he answered.

"Well, then, you may as well stay on board this steamboat and go back home in her," said Mrs. Cristie; "if you do not know the Rockmores of Germantown Stephen Petter will not take you into

his inn. I know all about the place. I was there with my husband three years ago. Mr. Petter is very particular about the guests he entertains. Several years ago, when he opened the inn, the Rockmores of Germantown spent the summer with him, and he was so impressed with them that he will not take anybody unless they know the Rockmores of Germantown."

"He must be a ridiculous old crank," said Lodloe, drawing a camp-chair near to the lady, and seating himself thereon.

"In one way he is not a crank," said Mrs. Cristie; "you can't turn him. When he has made up his mind about anything, that matter is settled and fixed just as if it were screwed down to the floor."

"From what I had been told," said the young man, "I supposed the Squirrel Inn to be a free and easy place."

"It is, after you get there," said Mrs. Cristie, "and the situation and the surroundings are beautiful, and the air is very healthful. My husband was Captain Cristie of the navy. He was in bad health when he went to the Squirrel Inn, but the air did him good, and if we had staid all winter, as Stephen Petter wanted us to, it would have been a great advantage to him. But when the weather grew cool we went to New York, where my husband died early in the following December."

[Pg 22]

"I will take my chances with Stephen Petter," said Lodloe, after a suitable pause. "I am going to the Squirrel Inn, and I am bound to stay there. There must be some road not through Germantown by which a fellow can get into the favor of Mr. Petter. Perhaps you will say a good word for me, madam?"

"I don't know any good word to say," she answered, "except that you take excellent care of babies, and I am not at all sure that that would have any weight with Stephen Petter. Since you are going to the inn, and since we have already talked together so much, I wish I did properly know you. Did you ever have a sister at Vassar?"

"I am sorry to say," said Lodloe, "that I never had a sister at that college, though I have one who wanted very much to go there; but instead of that she went with an aunt to Europe, where she married."

"An American?" asked Mrs. Cristie.

"Yes," said Lodloe.

"What was his name?"

"Tredwell."

"I never heard of him," said the lady. "There don't seem to be any threads to take hold of."

"Perhaps you had a brother at Princeton," remarked Lodloe.

[Pg 23]

"I have no brother," said she.

There was now a pause in the dialogue. The young man was well pleased that this very interesting young woman wished to know him properly, as she put it, and if there could be found the least bit of foundation on which might be built a conventional acquaintance he was determined to find it.

"Were you a Vassar girl?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Cristie; "I was there four years."

"Perhaps you know something of old Matthew Vassar, the founder?"

Mrs. Cristie laughed. "I've heard enough about him, you may be sure; but what has he to do with anything?"

"I once slept in his room," said Lodloe; "in the Founder's Room, with all his stiff old furniture, and his books, and his portrait."

"You!" cried Mrs. Cristie. "When did you do that?"

"It was two years ago this spring," said Lodloe. "I was up there getting material for an article on the college which I wrote for the 'Bayside Magazine.'"

"Did you write that?" said Mrs. Cristie. "I read it, and it was just as full of mistakes as it could be."

"That may be, and I don't wonder at it," said the young man. "I kept on taking in material until I had a good deal more than I could properly stow away in my mind, and it got to be too late for me to go back to the town, and they had to put me into the Founder's Room, because the house was a good deal crowded. Before I went to bed I examined all the things in the room. I didn't sleep well at all, for during the night the old gentleman got down out of his frame, and sat on the side of my bed, and told me a lot of things about that college which nobody else ever knew, I am sure."

[Pg 24]

"And I suppose you mixed up all that information with what the college people gave you," she said.

"That may be the case," answered Lodloe, laughing, "for some of the old gentleman's points were very interesting and made a deep impression upon me."

"Well," said Mrs. Cristie, speaking very emphatically, "when I had finished reading that article I very much wished to meet the person who had written it, so that I might tell him what I thought of it; but of course I had no idea that the founder had anything to do with its inaccuracies."

"Madam," said Lodloe, "if it had not been for the mistakes in it you never would have thought of the man who wrote the paper, but you did think of him, and wanted to meet him. Now it seems to me that we have been quite properly introduced to each other, and it was old Matthew Vassar who did it. I am sure I am very much obliged to him."

Mrs. Cristie laughed. "I don't know what the social authorities would say to such an introduction," she answered, "but as baby is asleep I shall take him into the saloon."

[Pg 25]

IV

LODLOE UNDERTAKES TO NOMINATE HIS SUCCESSOR



It was late in the afternoon when the Romney passengers were landed, and Mrs. Cristie and Lodloe, with a few other persons, repaired to the village hotel.

"There is a sort of stage-wagon," said the lady, "which takes people from this house to the Squirrel Inn, and it starts when the driver is ready; but before I leave Romney I must try to find some one who will go with me as nurse-maid."

"Madam," said Lodloe, "don't think of it. I have made inquiries of the landlord, and he says the roads are rough, and that it will take more than an hour to reach the Squirrel Inn, so that if you do not start now I fear you and the baby will not get there before dark. I prefer to stay here to-night, and it will be no trouble at all for me to look up a suitable person for you, and to take her with me to-morrow. It will be a good plan to take four or five of them, and when you have selected the one you like best the others can come back here in the wagon. It will be a lark for them."

[Pg 26]

Mrs. Cristie drew a long breath. "Truly," she said, "your proposition is phenomenal. Half a dozen nurse-maids in a wagon, from whom I am to pick and choose! The thing is so startling and novel that I am inclined to accept. I should very much dislike to be on the road after dark, and if you have planned to stay here to-night, and if it will not be much trouble—"

"Say not another word," cried Lodloe; "project your mind into to-morrow morning, and behold a wagon-load of willing maidens at the door of the inn."

When Mrs. Cristie and the baby and an elderly woman who lived in Lethbury, a village two miles beyond the Squirrel Inn, had started on their journey, Walter Lodloe set about the task he had undertaken. It was still hot, and the Romney streets were dusty, and after an hour or two of inquiry, walking, and waiting for people who had been sent for, Lodloe found that in the whole village there was not a female from thirteen to seventy-three who would think of such a thing as leaving her home to become nurse-maid to a city lady. He went to bed that night a good deal chagrined, and not in the least knowing what he was going to do about it.

In the morning, however, the thing to do rose clear and plain before him.

"I can't go to her and tell her I've failed," he said to himself. "A maid must be got, and I have undertaken to get one. As there is nobody to be had here, I must go back to the city for one. There are plenty of them there."

[Pg 27]

So when the early morning boat came along he took passage for the nearest railroad station on the river, for he wished to lose no time on that trip.

The elderly lady who was going to Lethbury took a great interest in Mrs. Cristie, who was to be her only fellow-passenger. She was at the hotel with her carpet-bag and her paper bundle some time before the big spring-wagon was ready to start, and she gave earnest attention to the loading thereon of Mrs. Cristie's trunk and the baby-carriage. When they were on their way the elderly woman promptly began the conversation:

"I think," said she to Mrs. Cristie, "that I've seed you before."

"Perhaps so," said the other; "I was in this region three years ago."

"Yes, yes," said the elder woman; "I thought I was right. Then you had a husband and no child. It now looks as if you had a child and no husband."

Mrs. Cristie informed her that her surmise was correct.

"Well, well," said the elderly woman; "I've had 'em both, and it's hard to say which can be spared best, but as we've got nothin' to do with the sparin' of 'em, we've got ter rest satisfied. After all,

they're a good deal like lilock bushes, both of 'em. They may be cut down, and grubbed up, and a parsley bed made on the spot, but some day they sprout up ag'in, and before you know it you've got just as big a bush as ever. Does Stephen Petter know you're comin'?"

[Pg 28]



A WAGON-LOAD OF NURSE-MAIDS.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Cristie, quite willing to change the subject; "all that is arranged. I was so pleased with the place when I was here before, and Mrs. Petter was so good to me, that I quite long to spend a summer there with my child."

[Pg 29]

"Well, I'm glad he knows you are comin', but if he didn't, I was goin' ter say to you that you'd better go on to Lethbury, and then see what you could do with Stephen to-morrow. It's no use stoppin' at his house without givin' notice, and like as not it ain't no use then."

"Is Mr. Petter's house filled?" asked Mrs. Cristie.

"Filled!" said the elderly woman. "There's nobody on the place but his own family and the Greek."

"Greek!" exclaimed Mrs. Cristie.

"Yes," said the other; "he keeps a Greek in an outhouse, but what for nobody knows. I think Stephen Petter is gettin' more oncommon than he was. If he wants to get custom for his house the best thing he can do is to die. There ain't no other way, for Stephen's not goin' to do no changin' of himself. My niece, Calthea Rose, the daughter of Daniel Rose, who used to keep the store,—she keeps it now herself,—goes over there a good deal, for she's wonderful partial to Susan Petter, and there's a good reason for it too, for a better woman never lived, and the walk over there is mostly shady, or through the fields, to both of which Calthea is partial, and so she knows most things that's goin' on at the Squirrel Inn, which latterly has not been much, except the comin' of the Greek; an' as nobody has been able to get at the bottom of that business, that isn't much, neither."

[Pg 30]

"I think I remember Miss Calthea Rose," said Mrs. Cristie. "She was tall, wasn't she, with a very fair complexion?"

"Yes," said the elderly woman; "and it's just as fair now as it was then. Some of it's owin' to sun-bonnet, and some of it to cold cream. Calthea isn't as young as she was, but she's wonderful lively on her feet yit, and there ain't many that could get ahead of her walkin' or bargainin'."

"And she keeps the store?" asked Mrs. Cristie.

"Yes," said the other; "she keeps it, and in more ways than one. You see, when Dan'el died—and that was two years ago last March—he left everything to Calthea, and the store with the rest. Before he died he told her what he had done, and advised her to sell out the stock, and put the money into somethin' that would pay good interest, and this she agreed to do, and this she is doing now. She wouldn't consent to no auction, for she knew well enough the things wouldn't bring more 'n half they cost, so she undertook herself to sell 'em all out at retail, just as her father intended they should be sold when he bought 'em. Well, it's took her a long while, and, in the opinion of most folks, it'll take her a long while yit. You see she don't lay in no new goods, but just keeps on sellin' or tryin' to sell what she's got on hand."

"It was purty easy to get rid of the groceries, and the iron and wooden things got themselves sold some way or other; but old dry-goods, with never any new ones to lighten 'em up, is about as humdrum as old people without youngsters in the family. Now it stands to reason that when a person goes into a store and sees nothin' but old calicoes, and some other odds and ends, gettin' mustier and dustier and a little more fly-specked every time, and never a new thing, even so much as a spool of cotton thread, then persons isn't likely to go often into that store, specially when there's a new one in the village that keeps up to the times."

[Pg 31]

"Now that's Calthea Rose's way of doin' business. She undertook to sell out them goods, and she's goin' to keep on till she does it. She is willin' to sell some of the worst-lookin' things at cost, but not a cent below that, for if she does, she loses money, and that isn't Calthea Rose. I guess, all put together, she hasn't sold more 'n ten dollars' worth of goods this year, and most of them was took by the Greek, though what he wants with 'em is more 'n I know."

"I am sorry to hear that there are no guests at the Squirrel Inn," was Mrs. Cristie's only reply to this information.

"Oh, you needn't give yourself no trouble about loneliness and that sort of thing," said the elderly woman; "before to-morrow night the whole house may be crowded from cockloft to potato-cellar. It never has been yit, but there's no tellin' what Stephen Petter has a-brewin' in his mind."

[Pg 32]

V

THE LANDLORD AND HIS INN



Stephen Petter was a man of middle age, who had been born on a farm, and who, apparently, had been destined to farm a farm. But at the age of thirty, having come into a moderate inheritance, he devoted himself more to the business of cultivating himself and less to that of cultivating his fields.

He was a man who had built himself up out of books. His regular education had been limited, but he was an industrious reader, and from the characters of this and that author he had conceived an idea of a sort of man which pleased his fancy, and to make himself this sort of man he had given a great deal of study and a great deal of hard labor. The result was that he had shaped himself into something like an old-fashioned country clergyman, without his education, his manners, his religion, or his clothes. Imperfect similitudes of these Stephen Petter had acquired, but this was as far as he had gone. A well-read man who happened also to be a good judge of human nature could have traced back every obvious point of Stephen Petter's character to some English author of the last century or the first half of this one.

[Pg 33]



STEPHEN PETTER.

It was rather odd that a man like this should be the landlord of an inn. But everything about Stephen Petter was odd, so ten years before he had conceived the notion that such a man as he would like to be would be entirely unwilling to live in the little village of Lethbury, where he had no opportunity of exercising an influence upon his fellow-beings. Such an influence he thought it fit to exercise, and as he was not qualified to be a clergyman, or a physician, or a lawyer, he resolved to keep a tavern. This vocation would bring him into contact with fellow-beings; it would give him opportunities to control, impel, and retard.

[Pg 34]

Stephen Petter did not for a moment think of buying the Lethbury "Hotel," nor of establishing such a house as was demanded by the village. What he had read about houses of entertainment gave him no such motives as these. Fortunately he had an opportunity of carrying out his plan according to the notions he had imbibed from his books.

Some years before Stephen Petter had decided upon his vocation, a rich gentleman had built himself a country-seat about two miles out of Lethbury. This house and its handsome grounds were the talk and the admiration of the neighborhood. But the owner had not occupied his country-home a whole summer before he determined to make a still more attractive home of it by lighting it with a new-fashioned gas of domestic manufacture. He succeeded in lighting not only his house but the whole country-side, for one moonless night his mansion was burned to the ground. Nothing was left of the house but the foundations, and on these the owner felt no desire to build again. He departed from the Lethbury neighborhood and never came back.

When Mr. Petter became impressed with the belief that it would be a good thing for him to be an innkeeper, he also became impressed with the belief that the situation which the rich man had chosen for his country-home would be an admirable one for his purposes. He accordingly bought the property at a very reasonable price, and on the stone foundations of the house which had been burned he built his inn.

This edifice was constructed very much as he had endeavored to construct himself. His plans for one part of it were made up from the descriptions in one of his books, and those of another part from the descriptions or pictures in some other book. Portions of the structure were colonial, others were old English, and others again suggested the Swiss chalet or a chateau in Normandy. There was a tall tower and there were some little towers. There were peaks here and there, and different kinds of slopes to the various roofs, some of which were thatched, some shingled in fanciful ways, and some covered with long strips or slabs. There were a good many doors and a

[Pg 35]

good many windows, and these were of different forms, sizes, and periods, some of them jutting boldly outward, and some appearing anxious to shrink out of sight.

It took a great deal of thought and a good deal of labor to build this house; which was also true of Mr. Petter's character. But the first-named work was the more difficult of the two, for in building up himself he consulted with no one, while in planning his inn he met with all sorts of opposition from the village workmen and builders.

But at the cost of all the time that was needed and all the money he could spare, he had his house built as he wanted it; and when it was finished it seemed to exhibit a trace of nearly everything a house should possess excepting chronology and paint. Mr. Petter had selected with a great deal of care the various woods of which his house was built, and he decidedly objected to conceal their hues and texture by monotonous paint. The descriptions that he had read of houses seldom mentioned paint.

[Pg 36]

The interior was not in the least monotonous. The floors of the rooms, even in the same story, were seldom upon the same level; sometimes one entered a room from a hallway by an ascent of two or three steps, while access to others was obtained by going down some steps. The inside was subordinated in a great degree to the outside: if there happened to be a pretty window like something Mr. Petter had seen in an engraving, a room of suitable shape and size was constructed behind the window. Stairways were placed where they were needed, but they were not allowed to interfere with the shapes of rooms or hallways; if there happened to be no other good place for them they were put on the outside of the house. Some of these stairways were wide, some narrow, and some winding; and as those on the outside were generally covered they increased the opportunities for queer windows and perplexing projections. The upper room of the tower was reached by a staircase from the outside, which opened into a little garden fenced off from the rest of the grounds, so that a person might occupy this room without having any communication with the other people in the house.

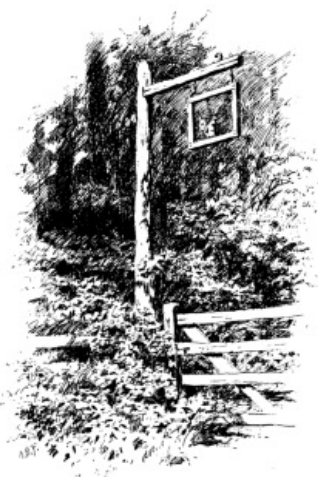
In one of the back wings of the building there was a room which was more peculiar than any other, from the fact that there was no entrance to it whatever, unless one climbed into it by means of a ladder placed at one of its windows. This room, which was of fair size and well lighted, was in the second story, but it appeared to be of greater height on account of the descent of the ground at the back of the inn. It had been constructed because the shape of that part of the building called for a room, and a stairway to it had been omitted for the reason that if one had been built in the inside of the house it would have spoiled the shape of the room below, and there seemed no good way of putting one on the outside. So when the room was finished and floored the workmen came out of it through one of the windows, and Stephen Petter reserved his decision in regard to a door and stairway until the apartment should be needed. The grounds around the Squirrel Inn were interesting and attractive, and with them Stephen Petter had interfered very little. The rich man had planned beautiful surroundings for his country-home, and during many years nature had labored steadily to carry out his plans. There were grassy stretches and slopes, great trees, and terraces covered with tangled masses of vines and flowers. The house stood on a bluff, and on one side could be seen a wide view of a lovely valley, with the two steeples of Lethbury showing above the treetops.

[Pg 37]

Back of the house, and sweeping around between it and the public road, was a far-reaching extent of woodland; and through this, for the distance of half a mile, wound the shaded lane which led from the highway to the Squirrel Inn.

At the point at which this lane was entered from the highroad was the sign of the inn. This was a tall post with a small square frame hanging from a transverse beam, and seated on the lower strip of the frame was a large stuffed gray squirrel. Every spring Stephen Petter took down this squirrel and put up a new one. The old squirrels were fastened up side by side on a ledge in the taproom, and by counting them one could find out how many years the inn had been kept.

[Pg 38]



THE SIGN.

Directly below the bluff on which the house stood were Stephen Petter's grassy meadows and his fields of grain and corn, and in the rich pastures, or in the shade of the trees standing by the

bank of the rapid little stream that ran down from the woodlands, might be seen his flocks and his herds. By nature he was a very good farmer, and his agricultural method he had not derived from his books. There were people who said—and among these Calthea Rose expressed herself rather better than the others—that Mr. Petter's farm kept him, while he kept the Squirrel Inn.

[Pg 39]

When it had become known that the Squirrel Inn was ready to receive guests, people came from here and there; not very many of them, but among them were the Rockmores of Germantown. This large family, so it appeared to Stephen Petter, was composed of the kind of fellow-beings with whom he wished to associate. Their manners and ways seemed to him the manners and ways of the people he liked to read about, and he regarded them with admiration and respect. He soon discovered from their conversation that they were connected or acquainted with leading families in our principal Eastern cities, and it became his hope that he and his Squirrel Inn might become connected with these leading families by means of the Rockmores of Germantown.

As this high-classed family liked variety in their summer outings, they did not come again to the Squirrel Inn, but the effect of their influence remained strong upon its landlord. He made up his mind that those persons who did not know the Rockmores of Germantown did not move in those circles of society from which he wished to obtain his guests, and therefore he drew a line which excluded all persons who did not possess this acquaintanceship.

This rule was very effectual in preventing the crowding of his house, and, indeed, there were summers when he had no guests at all; but this did not move Stephen Petter. Better an empty house than people outside the pale of good society.

[Pg 40]

VI

THE GREEK SCHOLAR



Mrs. Cristie and her baby were warmly welcomed by Stephen Petter and his wife. They had learned during her former visit to like this lady for herself, and now that she came to them a widow their sentiments towards her were warmer than ever.

Mrs. Petter wondered very much why she had come without a maid, but fearing that perhaps the poor lady's circumstances were not what they had been she forbore to ask any immediate questions. But in her heart she resolved that, if she kept her health and strength, Mrs. Cristie should not be worn out by that child.

The young widow was charmed to find herself once more at the Squirrel Inn, for it had been more like a home to her than any place in which she had lived since her marriage, but when she went to her room that night there was a certain depression on her spirits. This was caused by the expected advent on the next day of Mr. Lodloe and a wagon-load of candidates for the nurse-maidship.

[Pg 41]

The whole affair annoyed her. In the first place it was very awkward to have this young man engaged in this service for her; and now that he was engaged in it, it would be, in a manner, under her auspices that he would arrive at the Squirrel Inn. The more she thought of the matter the more it annoyed her. She now saw that she must announce the coming of this gentleman. It would not do for him to make a totally unexpected appearance as her agent in the nurse-maid business.

But no worry of this sort could keep her awake very long, and after a night of sound and healthful sleep she told her host and hostess, the next morning at breakfast, of the Mr. Lodloe who had kindly undertaken to bring her a nurse-maid.

"Lodloe," repeated Mr. Petter. "It strikes me that I have heard the Rockmores mention that name. Is it a Germantown family?"

"I really do not know," answered Mrs. Cristie; "he is from New York."

Here she stopped. She was of a frank and truthful nature, and very much wished to say that she knew nothing whatever of Mr. Lodloe, but she was also of a kindly and grateful disposition, and she very well knew that such a remark would be an extremely detrimental one to the young man; so, being in doubt, she resolved to play trumps, and in cases like this silence is generally trumps.

Mrs. Petter had a mind which could project itself with the rapidity of light into the regions of possibilities, and if the possibilities appeared to her desirable her mind moved at even greater velocity. It was plain to her that there must be something between this young widow and the young man who was going to bring her a nurse-maid; and if this were the case, nothing must be allowed to interfere with the admission of said young man as a guest at the Squirrel Inn.

[Pg 42]



A GREEK IN AN OUTHOUSE.

Mrs. Cristie did not want to talk any more on this subject. Nothing would have pleased her better at that moment than to hear that Mr. Lodloe had been unable to find her a suitable girl and that business had called him to New York. [Pg 43]

"Mr. Petter," she exclaimed, "I was told yesterday that you kept a Greek in an outhouse. What on earth does that mean?"

Here Mrs. Petter laughed abruptly, and Mr. Petter slightly lifted his brow.

"Who could have told you such nonsense?" he said. "There is no Greek here. It is true that a Greek scholar lives in my summer-house, but that is very different from keeping a Greek in an outhouse."

"And he's always late to breakfast," said Mrs. Petter; "I believe if we sat down at the table at nine o'clock he would come in just as we were finishing."

"How does it happen," said Mrs. Cristie, "that he lives in the summer-house?"

"He does not know the Rockmores of Germantown," said Mrs. Petter.

"He is a man of learning," remarked Stephen Petter, "with a fine mind; and although I have made a rule which is intended to keep up the reputation of this house to a desirable level, I do not intend, if I can help it, that my rules shall press pinchingly, oppressively, or irritatively upon estimable persons. Such a person is Mr. Tippengray, our Greek scholar; and although his social relations are not exactly up to the mark, he is not a man who should be denied the privileges of this house, so far as they can be conscientiously given him. So you see, Mrs. Cristie, that, although I could not take him into the inn, there was no reason why I should not fit up the summer-house for him, which I did, and I believe he likes it better than living in the house with us." [Pg 44]

"Like it!" exclaimed Mrs. Petter; "I should say he did like it. I believe it would drive him crazy if he had to keep regular hours like other people; but here he is now. Hester, bring in some hot cakes. Mrs. Cristie, allow me to introduce Mr. Tippengray."



MR. TIPPENGRAY.

The appearance of the Greek scholar surprised Mrs. Cristie. She had expected to see a man in threadbare black, with a reserved and bowed demeanor. Instead of this, she saw a bright little gentleman in neat summer clothes, with a large blue cravat tied sailor fashion. He was not a young man, although his hair being light the few portions of it which had turned gray were not conspicuous. He was a man who was inclined to listen and to observe rather than to talk, but when he had anything to say he popped it out very briskly. [Pg 45]

Mr. Petter, having finished his breakfast, excused himself and retired, and Mrs. Petter remarked to Mr. Tippengray that she was sorry he had not taken his evening meal with them the day before.

"I took such a long walk," said the Greek scholar, "that I concluded to sup in Lethbury."

"Those Lethbury people usually take tea at five," said his hostess.

"But I'm not a Lethbury person," said he, "and I took my tea at seven."

Mrs. Petter looked at him with twinkles in her eyes.

"Of course you went to the hotel," she said.

Mr. Tippengray looked at her with twinkles in his eyes.

"Madam," said he, "have you noticed that those large blue-jays that were here in the spring have almost entirely disappeared. I remember you used to object to their shrill pipes."

"Which is as much as to say," said Mrs. Petter, "you don't care to mention where you took tea yesterday."

"Madam," said Mr. Tippengray, "the pleasure of taking breakfast here to-day effaces the memory of all former meals."

"The truth of it is," said Mrs. Petter to Mrs. Cristie, when they had left the table, "Caltha Rose gave him his tea, and he don't want to say so. She's mightily taken with him, for he is a fine-minded man, and it isn't often she gets the chance of keeping company with that kind of a man. I don't know whether he likes her liking or not, but he don't care to talk about it."

[Pg 46]

Her first day at the Squirrel Inn was not altogether a pleasant one for Bertha Cristie. In spite of the much-proffered service of Mrs. Petter the care of her baby hampered her a good deal; and notwithstanding the delights of her surroundings her mind was entirely too much occupied with wondering when Mr. Lodloe would arrive with his wagon-load of girls, and what she would have to say to him and about him when he did arrive.



[Pg 47]

VII

ROCKMORES AHEAD



It was late in the afternoon of the day after Mrs. Cristie reached the Squirrel Inn that she slowly trundled the little carriage containing the baby towards the end of the bluff beneath which stretched the fair pastures where were feeding Mr. Petter's flocks and herds. All day she had been looking for the arrival of the young man who had promised to bring her some candidates for the position of child's nurse, and now she was beginning to believe that she might as well cease to expect him. It was an odd sort of service for a comparative stranger voluntarily to undertake, and it would not be at all surprising if he had failed in his efforts or had given up his idea of coming to the Squirrel Inn.

Having philosophized a little on the subject, and having succeeded in assuring herself that after all the matter was of no great importance, and that she should have attended to it herself, and must do it the next day, she was surprised to find how glad she was when, turning, she saw emerging from the woodland road a one-horse wagon with Mr. Lodloe sitting by the driver, and a female figure on the back seat.

[Pg 48]

The latter proved to be a young person who at a considerable distance looked about fourteen years old, although on a nearer and more careful view she would pass for twenty, or thereabouts. She wore a round straw hat with a white ribbon, and a light-colored summer suit with a broad belt, which held a large bunch of yellow flowers with brown centers. She had a cheerful, pleasant countenance, and large brown eyes which seemed to observe everything.

As the wagon approached, Mrs. Cristie rapidly pushed her baby-carriage towards the house. Before she reached it the young girl had jumped to the ground, and was advancing towards her.

"I suppose this is Mrs. Cristie," said the newcomer. "I am Ida Mayberry"; and she held out her hand. Without a word Mrs. Cristie shook hands with the nurse-maid.

"I think," said the latter, "before we have any talk I would better go to my room and freshen myself up a little. I am covered with dust"; and then she turned to the driver of the wagon and gave him directions in regard to a medium-sized trunk, a large flat box, and several long

packages tied up in brown muslin, which had been strapped to the back of the wagon. When these had been taken into the inn, she followed them.

As Mr. Lodloe approached Mrs. Cristie, hat in hand, she exclaimed in a tone which she was not in the habit of using to comparative strangers, in which category sober reflection would certainly have placed the gentleman:

[Pg 49]



"I SUPPOSE THIS IS MRS. CRISTIE."

"Will you please to tell me what is the meaning of this? Who is that girl, and where did she come from?" [Pg 50]

"Madam," said Lodloe, in a deprecatory tone, "I can scarcely pick up the courage to say so, but that is the nurse-maid."

"And you brought her to me?" exclaimed Mrs. Cristie.

"I did," he answered.

"Did you get her in Romney?"

"No," said Lodloe; "there wasn't a girl of any sort or kind to be had there. I was obliged to go to New York for one."

"To New York!" cried the astonished Mrs. Cristie.

"Madam," said Lodloe, "let me propose that we retire a little from the house. Perhaps her room may be somewhere above us."

And the two having walked a short distance over the lawn, he continued:

"I really believe that I have done a very foolish thing, but having promised to do you a service I greatly disliked not to keep my word. I could find no one in Romney, and of course the only way to get you a girl was to go to New York; and so I went there. My idea was to apply to one of those establishments where there are always lots of maids of all grades, and bring one to you. That was the way the matter appeared to me, and it seemed simple enough. On the ferryboat I met Mrs. Waltham, a lady I know very well, who is a member of the Monday Morning Club, and a great promoter of college annexes for girls, and all that sort of thing; and when I asked her advice about the best intelligence office, she told me to keep away from all of them, and to go instead to a teachers' agency, of which she gave me the address, where she said I would be almost sure to find some teacher who wanted occupation during the holidays."

[Pg 51]

"A teacher!" cried Mrs. Cristie.

"Yes," said Lodloe; "and you may be sure that I was as much surprised as you are. But Mrs. Waltham assured me that a great many women teachers found it necessary to make money during the summer, and were glad to do anything, just as college students wait at hotels. The more she talked about it the more she got interested in it, and the matter resulted in her going to the agency with me. Mrs. Waltham is a heavy swell in educational circles, and as she selected this girl herself I said not a word about it, except to hurry up matters so that the girl and I could start on an early afternoon train."

"Never in my life!" ejaculated Mrs. Cristie.

"Madam," interrupted Lodloe, "I beg you not to say what you intended. It is impossible for you to feel as badly about it as I do. Just to think of it stuns me. Did you see her baggage? She has come to stay all summer. There is no earthly reason to think she will suit you. I don't suppose she ever saw a baby."

Mrs. Cristie's mind was still filled with surprise and vexation, but she could not help laughing at Mr. Lodloe's comical contrition.

"I will see her presently," she said; "but in the mean time what are you going to do? There is Mr. Petter standing in the doorway waiting for your approach, and he will ask you a lot of questions."

[Pg 52]

"About the Germantown family, I suppose," said Lodloe.

"Yes," said Mrs. Cristie; "that will be one of them."

"Well, I don't know them," said Lodloe, "and that's the end of it."

"By no means," said the lady, quickly; "Mr. Petter has on his most impressive air. You must go and talk to him, and it will not do to sneer at the Rockmores."

"If it is absolutely necessary to have credentials in order to secure quarters here," said Lodloe, "I don't see what is to be done about it."

"Come with me," said Mrs. Cristie, quickly; "you have put yourself to a great deal of trouble for me, and I will see what I can do for you."

When Walter Lodloe and Mr. Petter had been formally introduced to each other, the brow of the latter bore marks of increased trouble and uncertainty. From the confidential aspect of the interview between Mrs. Cristie and the young man, the landlord of the inn had begun to suspect what his wife had suspected, and it galled his spirit to think of putting his usual test question to this friend of Mrs. Cristie. But he was a man of principle, and he did not flinch.

"Are you from Philadelphia, sir," he asked, "or its vicinity?"

"No," said Lodloe; "I am from New York."

[Pg 53]



LODLOE IS INTRODUCED TO STEPHEN PETTER.

"A great many Philadelphia people," continued the landlord, "or those from its vicinity, are well known in New York, and in fact move in leading circles there. Are you acquainted, sir, with the Rockmores of Germantown?"

[Pg 54]

Mrs. Petter now appeared in the doorway, her face clouded. If Mrs. Cristie had known the Rockmores she would have hastened to give Mr. Lodloe such advantages as an acquaintance in the second degree might afford. But she had never met any member of that family, the valuable connection being entirely on the side of her late husband.

"I did not know," said Lodloe, "that you required credentials of respectability, or I might have brought a lot of letters."

"One from Matthew Vassar?" said Mrs. Cristie, unable to resist her opportunity.

"Were you acquainted with Matthew Vassar?" interpolated Mrs. Petter with energetic interest. "He was a great and good man, and his friends ought to be good enough for anybody. Now put it to yourself, Stephen. Don't you think that the friends of Matthew Vassar, the founder of that celebrated college, known all over the world, a man who even after his day and generation is doing so much good, are worthy to be accommodated in this house?"

Mr. Petter contracted his brows, looked upon the ground, and interlaced his fingers in front of him.

"The late Mr. Matthew Vassar," said he, "was truly a benefactor to his kind, and a man worthy of all respect; but when we come to consider the way in which the leading circles of society are made up—"

"Don't consider it at all," cried Mrs. Petter. "If this gentleman is a friend of Mrs. Cristie, and is backed up by Matthew Vassar, you cannot turn him away. If you want to get round the Rockmores you can treat him just as you treat Mr. Tippengray. Let him have the top room of the tower, which, I am sure, is as pleasant as can be, especially in warm weather, and then he will

[Pg 55]

have his own stairs to himself, and can come in and go out just as Mr. Tippengray does, without ever considering whether the Squirrel Inn is open or shut. As for eating, that's a different matter. People can eat in a place without living there. That was all settled when we took Mr. Tippengray."

An expression of decided relief passed over the face of Mr. Petter.

"It is true," he said, "that in the case of Mr. Tippengray we made an exception to our rule—"

"That's so," interrupted Mrs. Petter; "and as I have heard that exceptions prove a rule, the more of them we have the better. And if the top room suits Mr. Lodloe, I'll have it made ready for him without waiting another minute."

Mr. Lodloe declared that any room into which the good lady might choose to put him would suit him perfectly; and that matter was settled.

[Pg 56]

VIII

MISS MAYBERRY



About five minutes after Walter Lodloe had departed for his loft chamber Miss Ida Mayberry made her appearance in the front doorway. She had changed her dress, and looked very bright and fresh.

"Isn't this a pretty place?" she said, approaching Mrs. Cristie. "I think I shall like it ever so much. And that is your baby? Is it a boy or a girl?"

"A boy," was the answer.

"And his name?"

"Douglas."

"I like that sort of name," remarked Miss Mayberry; "it is sensible and distinctive. And now I wish you would tell me exactly what you want me to do."

Mrs. Cristie spoke nervously.

"Really," said she, "I am afraid that there has been a mistake. I want an ordinary nurse-maid, and Mr. Lodloe could not have understood—"

"Oh, don't trouble yourself about that," said the other. "I understand perfectly. You will find me quite practical. What I don't know I can learn. My mental powers need a change of channel, and if I can give them this change, and at the same time make some money, I am sure I ought to be satisfied."

[Pg 57]

"But it seems to me," said Mrs. Cristie, "that one who is by profession a teacher would scarcely—"

"Perhaps not, years ago," interrupted the other; "but things are different now. Look at all the young college fellows who work during vacation, and we are beginning to do it, too. Now you will find me just as practical as anybody. Nine months in the year I teach,—moral and mental philosophy are my special branches,—and during vacation I am not going to wear out my brain in a summer school, nor empty my purse by lounging about in idleness. Now what could be better than for me to come to a perfectly lovely place like this, which I fancy more and more every minute, and take care of a nice little child, which, I am sure, will be a pleasure in itself, and give me a lot of time to read besides? However, I wish you to understand, Mrs. Cristie, that I am never going to neglect the baby for the sake of study or reading."

"But have you thought seriously of the position in which this would place you?"

"Oh, yes," was the answer; "but that is a disadvantage that has to be accepted, and I don't mind it. Of course I wouldn't go to anybody and everybody, but when a lady is recommended by a friend of Mrs. Waltham's, I wouldn't hesitate to make an engagement with her. As to salary, I will take whatever you would pay to another nurse-maid, and I beg you will not make the slightest difference because I am a teacher. Is that bell for supper?"

[Pg 58]

"Yes," said Mrs. Cristie; "and perhaps you have not yet reflected that my nurse-maid must take care of my baby while I am at my meals."

"That is precisely and exactly what she is going to do. Go in to your supper, and I will push him about until you come out again. Then you can show me how to put him to bed."

"Isn't she coming in?" asked Mrs. Petter, looking out of the window as she took her seat at the table.

"Of course not," said Mrs. Cristie, in a tone which was intended to make an impression on Mr. Lodloe; "my maids do not eat with me."

"But, goodnessfulme!" said Mrs. Petter, "you can't look upon that sort of a young woman as a servant. Why, I put her in one of the best rooms; though of course that doesn't make any

difference so long as there is nobody else to take it. I wonder if we couldn't find some sort of a girl to take care of the baby while she comes to her meals."

At this even Stephen Petter smiled. He was pleased that one of his guests should have a servant of such high degree. It was like a noble lady in waiting upon a queen.

"She shall be entertained," he said, "according to her station. There need be no fear about that."

"Upon my word," exclaimed Mrs. Petter, "if here isn't Mr. Tippengray! Well, sir, I don't know when I've seen you on hand at regular meal-time."

"Perhaps it is a little out of the common," said the Greek scholar; "but, after all," he continued, looking out of the window, "it appears I am not the last one to come in." And then, glancing around the table, he asked, "Am I taking her place?"

[Pg 59]

"Oh, no, sir," said Mrs. Cristie; "that is my maid."

Mr. Tippengray again looked out of the window; then he helped himself to butter, and said:

"Have you ever noticed, Mrs. Petter, that the prevailing style in wild flowers seems to vary every year? It changes just like our fashions, though of course there are always a few old fogies among blossoming weeds, as well as among clothes-wearers."

The next morning Walter Lodloe came to Mrs. Cristie on the lawn.

"I have been waiting for some time," he said, "in order to tell you that I am ready at any moment to repair the unpardonable blunder that I made yesterday, and to escort back to New York the very unsuitable young woman whom I forced upon you."

"Oh, you need not think of doing anything of that kind," said Mrs. Cristie; "the young person is perfectly satisfied with the situation, and intends to stay. She gives me no possible excuse to tell her that she will not suit me, for she takes hold of things exactly as if she remembered what people did for her when she was a baby. She doesn't know everything, but she intends to; that is plain enough. At present she is washing one of baby's frocks with my *savon de rose*, because she declares that the soap they gave her in the kitchen contains enough lye to corrode the fibers of the fabric."

"Then you think she may suit you?" said Lodloe.

[Pg 60]

"Oh, she will suit; she intends to suit; and I have nothing to say except that I feel very much as I suppose you would feel if you had a college president to brush your coat."

"My spirits rise," said Lodloe; "I begin to believe that I have not made so much of a blunder after all. When you can get it, there is nothing like blooded service."

"But you do not want too much blood," said Mrs. Cristie. "I wish she had not studied at Bryn Mawr, for I think she pities me for having graduated at Vassar. But still she says I must call her Ida, and that gives me courage."

There then followed a contention in which Lodloe was worsted about his expenses in the nurse-maid affair, and, this matter being settled, the young man declared that having shown what an extremely undesirable person he was to work for others, he must go and attend to his own work.

"What sort of work do you do?" asked Mrs. Cristie.

"I write," he answered—"novels, stories, fiction in general."

"I know that," said she, "having read your Vassar article; but I do not think I have met with any of your avowed stories."

"Madam," said Walter Lodloe, "there are so many people in this world, and so few of them have read my stories, it is no wonder that you belong to the larger class. But, satirize my Vassar article as you please, I shall never cease to be grateful to it for my tower room in the Squirrel Inn."

[Pg 61]

IX

THE PRESERVATION OF LITERATURE



Walter Lodloe set out to go to his work, and on his way to the little garden at the foot of the staircase which led to his room in the tower he saw the Greek scholar sitting on a bench outside his summer-house smoking a large cigar.

"Good morning, sir," said Mr. Tippengray; "do you smoke?"

The tone of these words implied not only a question but an invitation, in case the young man did smoke, to sit down on that bench and do it. Lodloe understood the force of the remark, and, drawing out a cigar, took a seat by Mr. Tippengray.

"Before I go to my work," said the latter, "it is my habit to sit here and enjoy

the scenery and a few puffs. I suppose when you come to a place like this you throw work to the winds."

"Oh, no!" said Lodloe; "I am a literary man, and I came here to write."

"Very glad to hear it," said the other; "very glad that that tower room is to have the right sort of occupant. If I had not this summer-house, I should want that room; but I am afraid, however, if I had it, I should look out of the window a great deal and translate a very little."

[Pg 62]

"What do you translate?" asked Lodloe, with interest.

"At present," said Mr. Tippetgray, "I am engaged in translating into Greek some of the standard works of our modern literature. There is no knowing what may happen to our modern languages. In the course of a few centuries they may become as useless to the readers of that day as the English of Chaucer is to the ordinary reader of our time; but Greek will stand, sir, and the sooner we get the good things of the present day into solid Greek the better it will be for them and the literature of the future."

"What work are you translating?" asked Lodloe.

"I am now at work on the 'Pickwick Papers,'" said the scholar, "and I assure you that it is not an easy job. When I get through with it I shall translate it back into English, after the fashion of Sir William Jones—the only way to do that sort of thing. Same as a telegraphic message—if it isn't repeated, you can't depend on it. If I then find that my English is like that of Dickens, I shall feel greatly encouraged, and probably shall take up the works of Thackeray."

Walter Lodloe was somewhat stunned at this announcement, and he involuntarily glanced at the gray streaks in the locks of the Greek scholar. The latter perceived the glance, and, knocking the ashes from his cigar, remarked:

"Did you ever notice, sir, that an ordinary robin is perfectly aware that while squirrels and cats are able to ascend the perpendicular trunk of a tree, they cannot climb the painted pillar of a piazza; and consequently it is perfectly safe to build a nest at the top of such a pillar?"

[Pg 63]

Lodloe had noticed this, and a good many other intelligent traits of animals, and the two conversed on this interesting subject until the sun came round to the bench on which they were sitting, when they moved to a shady spot and continued the conversation.

At last Lodloe arose. "It must be nearly dinnertime," said he. "I think I shall take a walk this afternoon, and see some of the country."

"You ought to do it," said Mr. Tippetgray. "It is a beautiful country. If you like I will go with you. I'm not a bad guide; I know every road, path, and short cut."

Walter Lodloe expressed his satisfaction at the proposed companionship, and suggested that the first walk be to the village of Lethbury, peeping up among the trees in the distance.

"Lethbury!" exclaimed the Greek scholar. "Well, sir, if it's all the same to you, I prefer walking in any direction to that of Lethbury. It's a good enough place, but to-day I don't feel drawn to it."

"Very good," said Lodloe; "we will walk anywhere but in the direction of Lethbury."

About half an hour afterward, Mrs. Petter, having finished carving a pair of fowls, paused for a moment's rest in serving the little company, and looked out of the dining-room window.

"Upon my word!" she exclaimed, "this is too bad. When other boarders came, I thought Mr. Tippetgray would begin to behave like other Christians, and come to his meals at the proper time. At supper last night and breakfast this morning he was at the table as soon as anybody, and I was beginning to feel real heartened up, as if things were going to run on regular and proper. But now look at that? Isn't that enough to make a housekeeper give up in despair?"

[Pg 64]

Mrs. Cristie, Lodloe, and Mr. Petter all looked out of the window, and beheld the Greek scholar engaged in pushing the baby carriage backward and forward under the shade of a large tree; while, on a seat near by, the maid Ida sat reading a book. Now passing nearer, Mr. Tippetgray stopped, and with sparkling eyes spoke to her. Then she looked up, and with sparkling eyes answered him. Then together, with sparkling eyes, they conversed for a few minutes, evidently about the book. After a few more turns of the carriage Mr. Tippetgray returned to the maid; the sparkling eyes were raised again from the book, and the scene was repeated.

"He has lent her a book," said Mrs. Cristie. "She did not take that one out with her."

"There's a time for books, and there's a time for meals," said Mrs. Petter. "Why didn't he keep his book until he had eaten his dinner?"

"I think Mr. Tippetgray must be something of a philosopher," said Lodloe, "and that he prefers to take his books to a pretty maid when other people are at dinner."

"My wife does not altogether understand the ways of scholars," said Mr. Petter. "A gentleman giving most of his time to Greek cannot be expected to give much of his mind to the passage of modern times."

[Pg 65]



**"PASSING NEARER, MR. TIPPENGRAY
STOPPED."**

"If he gives some of his time to the passage of a good dinner into cold victuals it would help his dyspepsia. But I suppose he will come when he is ready, and all I have to say is that I would like to see Calthea Rose if she could catch sight of them this minute."

[Pg 66]

Mr. Petter sat at the end of the table where he had a view of his flocks and his herds in the pasture below.

"Well," said he, "if that estimable young woman wants to catch a sight of them, all she has to do is to step along lively, for at this present moment she is walking over the field-path straight to this house, and what is more, she is wearing her bonnet and carrying a parasol."

"Bonnet and parasol!" ejaculated Mrs. Petter. "Fire in the mountains, run, boys, run! Debby, step out as quick as you can to Mr. Tippengray, and you needn't say anything but just ask if Miss Calthea Rose told him she was coming to dinner to-day, and tell him she's coming over the field."

In about one minute the Greek scholar was in his place at the table and beginning his meal.

"Now, Mr. Tippengray," said Mrs. Petter, "I don't suppose you feel any coals of fire on your head at this present moment."

"Madame," said the scholar, "did you ever notice that when squirrels strip the bark from the limbs of trees they are very apt to despoil those branches which project in such a manner as to interfere with a view?"

[Pg 67]

"No, I didn't," said Mrs. Petter; "and I don't believe they do it, either. Debby, put a knife, fork, and napkin for Calthea Rose. If she is coming to dinner it is just as well to let her think that nobody forgot to bring the message she sent. She never comes to meals without sending word beforehand."

But Miss Calthea had not come to dinner. She sent word by Debby, who met her at the front door, that she had had her dinner, and that she would wait for the family on the piazza.

"Bonnet and parasol," said Mrs. Petter. "She has come to make a call, and it's on you, Mrs. Cristie. Don't eat too fast, Mr. Tippengray; she's good for the rest of the afternoon."

[Pg 68]

X

ROSE VERSUS MAYBERRY



Miss Calthea Rose was a person of good height, originally slender, but gathering an appreciable plumpness as the years went on, and with good taste in dress when she chose to exert it, which on the present occasion she did. She possessed acute perceptions and a decided method of action. But whether or not the relation of her perceptions to her actions was always influenced by good judgment was a question with her neighbors. It never was, however, a question with herself.

When everybody but Mr. Tippengray had finished dinner, and he had desired the others not to wait for him as he would probably be occupied some time longer, the host and hostess went out to greet the visitor, followed by Mrs. Cristie and Lodloe. When Miss Calthea Rose turned to greet the latter lady her expression was cold, not to say hard; but when her eyes fell upon the gentleman by the side of the young widow, a softening warmth spread over her face, and she came forward with outstretched hands.

[Pg 69]

"Did you see that?" said Mrs. Petter, aside to her husband. "Jealous as she can be of Mrs. Cristie till she sees that she's got a young man of her own; then as sweet as sugar."

When Miss Calthea Rose set about to be as sweet as sugar, it was very good sugar that she took

for her model. She liked to talk, but was not a mistress of words, and although her remarks were not always to the point, they were generally pointed. At last Mr. Tippengray came out on the piazza. He walked slowly, and he did not wear his usual ease of demeanor; but nothing could have been more cordial and reassuring than the greeting given him by Miss Calthea. If this were intended in any way to inspire him, it failed of its effect. The Greek scholar stood apart, and did not look like a man who had made up his mind as to what he was going to do next; but Miss Calthea took no notice of his unusual demeanor. She talked with great graciousness to the company in general, and frequently directed remarks to Mr. Tippengray which indicated a high degree of good comradeship.

Under this general warmth Mr. Tippengray was forced to melt a little, and in a manner to accept the position thus publicly tendered him; but suddenly the maid Ida popped up the steps of the piazza. She had an open book in her hand, and she went directly and quickly to Mr. Tippengray. She held the book up towards him, and put her finger on a page.

"You were just here," she said, "when you had to go to your dinner. Now if you will finish the explanation I can go on nicely. You don't know how you help me. Every word you say seems to take root"; and she looked up into his face with sparkling eyes.

[Pg 70]

But not a sparkle sparkled from the eyes of the Greek scholar. He stood silently looking at the book, his face a little flushed, his eyes blinking as if the sunlight were too strong for him.

"Suppose you walk out on the lawn with me," said the nurse-maid, "and then we shall not disturb the others. I will not keep you more than five minutes."

She went down the steps of the piazza, and Mr. Tippengray, having apparently lost the power of making up his mind what he should do, did what she wanted him to do, and followed her. They did not walk very far, but stood barely out of hearing of the persons on the piazza; her eyes sparkling up into his face, as his helpful words took root in her understanding.

At the instant of the appearance of the maid Ida Miss Calthea Rose stopped talking. Her subsequent glances towards this young woman and Mr. Tippengray might have made one think of steel chilled to zero. Mrs. Cristie looked at Lodloe, and he at her, and both slightly smiled. "She understands that sort of thing," he thought, and "He understands that sort of thing," she thought.

At this moment Mrs. Petter glanced at her two guests and saw the smile which passed between them. She understood that sort of thing.

"Who is that?" said Miss Calthea Rose, presently.

Mrs. Cristie, full of the humor of the situation, hastened to answer.

"It is my nurse-maid," she said, "Ida Mayberry."

[Pg 71]

"A child's nurse!" ejaculated Miss Calthea Rose.

"Yes," said Mrs. Cristie; "that is what she is."

"I expect," said Mrs. Petter, "that he is teaching her Greek, and of course it's hard for her at the beginning. Mr. Tippengray's such a kind man that he would do anything for anybody, so far as he could; but I must admit that I can't see how Greek can help anybody to nurse children, unless there is some book on the subject in that language."

"Greek!" scornfully ejaculated Miss Calthea, and, turning her steely glance from the couple on the lawn, she began to talk to Mr. Petter about one of his cows which had broken its leg.

Ida Mayberry was a young woman who meant what she said, and in less than five minutes, with a sparkling glance of thanks, she released Mr. Tippengray. That gentleman returned to the piazza, but his appearance elicited no more attention from the lady who had so recently brought into view their friendly relationship than if he had been the head of a nail in the floor beneath her. From Mr. Petter she turned to speak to some of the others, and if her words and manner did not make Mr. Tippengray understand that, so far as she was concerned, he had ceased to exist, her success was not what she expected it to be.

Although he had been amused and interested, Walter Lodloe now thought that he had had enough of Miss Calthea Rose, and wandered away to the little garden at the foot of his staircase. He had not reached it before he was joined by Mr. Tippengray.

"Look here," said the latter, with something of his usual briskness; "if you are still in the humor, suppose we walk over to Lethbury."

[Pg 72]

Lodloe looked at him in surprise. "I thought you didn't want to go there," he said.

"I've changed my mind," replied the other. "I think this is a very good day to go to Lethbury. It is a pretty village, and you ought to have some one with you to show you its best points."

As soon as she thought etiquette would permit, Mrs. Cristie withdrew, pleading the interests of her baby as an excuse.

"Do you mean to tell me," said Miss Calthea Rose, the moment the young mother was out of hearing, "that she leaves her baby in the care of that thing with a book?"

"Oh, yes," was the answer; "Mrs. Cristie tells me she is a very good nurse-maid."

"Well," said Miss Calthea, "babies are troublesome, and it's often convenient to get rid of them, but I must say that I never heard of this new style of infanticide. I suppose there isn't any law against it yet."

Mr. Petter looked uneasy. He did not like fault found with Mrs. Cristie, who was a great favorite with him.

"I am inclined to think, Miss Calthea," he said, "that you judge that young person too harshly. I have formed a very good opinion of her. Not only does she attend to her duties, but she has a good mind. It may not be a fine mind, but it is a good mind. Her desire to learn from Mr. Tippengray is a great point in her favor."

[Pg 73]

Here Mrs. Petter, who sat near her husband, pressed violently upon his foot; but she was too late, the words had been said. Mrs. Petter prepared herself for a blaze, but none came. There was a momentary flash in the Calthean eyes, and then the lids came down and shut out everything but a line of steely light. Then she gazed out over the landscape, and presently again turned her face towards her companions, with nothing more upon it than her usual expression when in a bad humor.

"Do you know," she said abruptly, "that Lanigan Beam is coming back?"

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Petter, "I thought he was settled in Patagonia."

"It was not Patagonia," said Mr. Petter; "it was Nicaragua."

"Well, I knew it was the little end of some place," said she; "and now he's coming back. Well, that is unfortunate."

"Unfortunate!" said Miss Calthea; "it's criminal. There ought to be a law against such things."

Again the host of the Squirrel Inn moved uneasily on his chair and crossed and recrossed his legs. He liked Lanigan Beam.

"I cannot see," he said, "why it is wrong for a man to return to the place where he was born."

"Born!" scornfully exclaimed Miss Calthea; "it's the greatest pity that there is any place where he was born; but there's no use talking about him. He has written to them at the hotel at Lethbury that he will be there the day after to-morrow, and he wants them to have a room ready for him. If he'd asked them to have a grave ready for him it would have been much more considerate."

[Pg 74]

Mr. Petter now rose to his feet; his manner was very dignified.

"Excuse me, Miss Calthea," he said, "but I must go and look after my men in the cornfield."

Miss Calthea Rose sat up very straight in her chair.

"If there's anything you want to do, Mrs. Petter, I beg you won't let me keep you."

"Now, Calthea," said Mrs. Petter, "don't work yourself into such a terrible stew. You know Stephen doesn't like to have Lanigan pitched into; I'm sorry for even what I said. But that about his grave was enough to rouse a saint."

Miss Calthea was on the point of retorting that that was something which Stephen Petter was not, by any means, but she restrained herself. If she quarreled with the Petters, and cut herself off from visiting the Squirrel Inn, a great part of the pleasure of her life would be gone.

"Well," she said, "we all know Lanigan Beam, and if there's anybody who wants the peace of the community to vanish entirely out of sight, the responsibility's on him, and not on me."

"Mrs. Petter," said Ida Mayberry, appearing so suddenly before that good woman that she seemed to have dropped through the roof of the piazza, "do you know where Mr. Tippengray is? I've been looking all over for him, and can't find him. He isn't in his little house, for I knocked at the door."

"Does Mrs. Cristie want him?" asked Mrs. Petter, making this wild grasp at a straw.

[Pg 75]

"Oh, no," said Ida. "It is I who want him. There's a Greek sentence in this book he lent me which I am sure I have not translated properly; and as the baby is asleep now, there couldn't be a better time for him to help me, if only I could find him."

Self-restraint was no longer possible with Miss Calthea Rose. A red blaze shot into her face, and without deigning to look in the direction of the creature who had just spoken, she said in the sharpest tones of contemptuous anger:

"Greek to a child's nurse! I expect next he'll teach French to the pigs."

The maid Ida lifted up her eyes from the book and fixed them on Miss Calthea.

"The best thing he could do," she quietly remarked, "would be to teach the old hens good manners"; and then she walked away with her book.

Miss Calthea sprang to her feet, and looked as if she was going to do something; but there was nothing to do, and she sat down again. Her brow was dark, her eyes flashed, and her lips were parted, as if she was about to say something; but there was nothing to say, and she sat silent,

breathing hard. It was bad enough to be as jealous as Miss Calthea was at that moment, but to be so flagrantly insulted by the object of her jealousy created in her a rage that could not be expressed in words. It was fortunate that she did not look at Mrs. Petter, for that good lady was doing her best to keep from laughing.

"Well!" she exclaimed, as soon as she could speak composedly, "this is too much. I think I must speak to Mrs. Cristie about this. Of course she can't prevent the young woman from answering back, but I think I can make her see that it isn't seemly and becoming for nurse-maids to be associating with boarders in this way."

[Pg 76]



"TEACH THE OLD HENS GOOD MANNERS."

"If you take my advice, Susan Petter," said Miss Calthea, in a voice thickened by her emotions, "you will keep your mouth shut on that subject. If your boarders choose to associate with servants, let them alone. It simply shows what sort of people they are."

Calthea Rose did not like to hear herself speak in a voice which might show how she was feeling, and as there was no use of staying there if she could not talk, she rose to leave, and, in spite of Mrs. Petter's hospitable entreaty to make a longer stay, she departed.

[Pg 77]

When her visitor was well out of sight, Mrs. Petter allowed herself to lean back in her chair and laugh quietly.

"Leave them alone indeed," she said to herself. "You may want me to do it, but I know well enough that you are not going to leave them alone, Miss Calthea Rose, and I can't say that I wonder at your state of mind, for it seems to me that this is your last chance. If you don't get Mr. Tippengray, I can't see where you are going to find another man properly older than you are."

[Pg 78]

XI

LANIGAN BEAM



That evening about eleven o'clock Walter Lodloe was sitting in his room in the tower, his feet upon the sill of the large window which looked out over the valley. He had come up to his room an hour or two before, determined not to allow the whole day to pass without his having done any work; and now, having written several pages of the story on which he was engaged, he was enjoying the approbation of his conscience, the flavor of a good cigar, and the beautiful moonlight scene which he beheld from his window.

More than this, he was thinking over the events of the day with a good deal of interest and amusement, particularly of his afternoon walk with Mr. Tippengray. He had taken a great fancy to that gentleman, who, without making any direct confidences, had given him a very fair idea of his relations with Calthea Rose. It was plain enough that he liked that very estimable person, and that he had passed many pleasant hours in her society, but that he did not at all agree with what he called her bigoted notions in regard to proprietorship in fellow-beings.

[Pg 79]

On the other hand, Lodloe was greatly delighted with Miss Calthea's manner of showing her state of mind. Quite unexpectedly they had met her in Lethbury,—to which village Mr. Tippengray had not thought she would return so soon,—and Lodloe almost laughed as he called to mind the beaming and even genial recognition that she gave to him, and which, at the same time, included effacement and extinction of his companion to the extent of being an admirable piece of dramatic art. The effect upon Lodloe had been such, that when the lady had passed he involuntarily turned to see if the Greek scholar had not slipped away just before the moment of meeting.

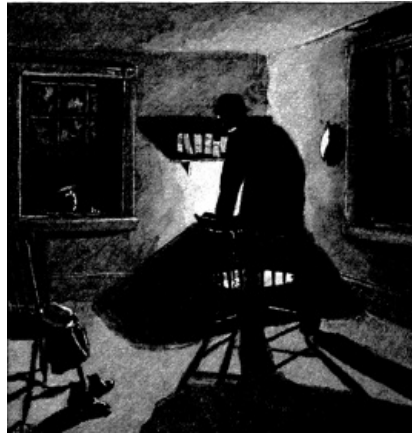
"When a woman tries so hard to show how little she thinks of a man," thought Lodloe, "it is a proof that she thinks a great deal of him, and I shall not be surprised—" Just then there came a

tap at the window opposite the one at which he was sitting.

Now when a man in the upper room of a fairly tall tower, access to which is gained by a covered staircase the door at the bottom of which he knows he has locked, hears a tap at the window, he is likely to be startled. Lodloe was so startled that his chair nearly tipped over backward. Turning quickly, he saw a man's head and shoulders at the opposite window, the sash of which was raised. With an exclamation, Lodloe sprang to his feet. His lamp had been turned down in order that he might better enjoy the moonlight, but he could plainly see the man at the window, who now spoke:

[Pg 80]

"Hold hard," said he; "don't get excited. There's nothing out of the way. My name is Beam—Lanigan Beam. I tapped because I thought if I spoke first you might jump out of the window, being turned in that direction. May I come in?"



"DON'T GET EXCITED."

Lodloe made no answer; his mind did not comprehend the situation; he went to the window and looked out. The man was standing on the sharp ridge of a roof which stretched from the tower to the rear portion of the building. By reaching upward he was able to look into the window.

[Pg 81]

"Give me a hand," said the man, "and we'll consider matters inside. This is a mighty ticklish place to stand on."

Lodloe had heard a good deal that evening about Lanigan Beam, and although he was amazed at the appearance of that individual at this time and place, he was ready and willing to make his acquaintance. Bracing himself against the window-frame, he reached out his hand, and in a few moments Mr. Beam had scrambled into the room. Lodloe turned up the wick of his lamp, and by the bright light he looked at his visitor.

He saw a man rather long as to legs, and thin as to face, and dressed in an easy-fitting suit of summer clothes.

"Take a seat," said Lodloe, "and tell me to what I owe this call."

"To your lamp," said the other, taking a chair; "it wasn't burning very brightly, but still it was a light, and the only one about. I was on my way to Lethbury, but I couldn't get any sort of conveyance at Romney, so I footed it, thinking I would like a moonlight walk. But by the time I got to the squirrel on the post I thought I would turn in here and stay with Stephen Petter for the night; but the house was all shut up and dark except this room, and as I knew that if I woke Stephen out of a sound sleep he'd bang me over the head with his everlasting Rockmores of Germantown, I determined to take a night's lodging without saying a word to him about it.

"There's a room back here that you can only get into by a ladder put up on the outside. I knew all about it, so I went to the ice-house and got a ladder and climbed into the room. I put my valise under my head, and prepared to take a good sleep on the floor, but in three minutes I found the place was full of wasps. I couldn't stay there, you know, and I was just getting ready to go down the ladder again when I happened to look out of a window that opened on the roof, and saw you in here. I could see only the back of your head, but although it was pretty well lighted, I couldn't judge very well by that what sort of a person you were. But I saw you were smoking, and it struck me that a man who smokes is generally a pretty good fellow, and so I came over."

[Pg 82]

"Glad to see you," said Lodloe; "and what can I do for you?"

"Well, in the first place," said Beam, "have you any liquid ammonia? The first notice I had of the wasps in that room was this sting on my finger."

Lodloe was sorry that he did not possess anything of the kind.

"If I'm not mistaken," said the visitor, "there is a bottle of it on the top shelf of that closet. I have frequently occupied this room, and I remember putting some there myself. May I look for it?"

Permission being given, Mr. Beam speedily found the bottle, and assuaged the pains of his sting.

"Now then," said he, resuming his seat, "the next favor I'll ask will be to allow me to fill my pipe, and put to you a few questions as to the way the land lies about here at present. I've been away

[Pg 83]

for a year and a half, and don't know what's going on, or who's dead or alive. By the way, have you happened to hear anybody speak of me?"

"I should think so," said Lodloe, laughing. "The greater part of this evening was occupied in a discussion on your life, adventures, moral character, disposition, and mental bias. There may have been some other points touched upon, but I don't recall them just now."

"Upon my word," said Lanigan Beam, putting his arms on the table, and leaning forward, "this is interesting. Who discussed me?"



**"HAVE YOU HAPPENED TO HEAR
ANYBODY SPEAK OF ME?"**

"Mr. and Mrs. Petter had the most to say," answered Lodloe.

[Pg 84]

"I'm glad to hear they're alive," interpolated the other.

"And Mrs. Cristie, who knew you when her husband was alive."

"Dead, is he?" said Beam. "Very sorry to hear that. A mighty pretty woman is Mrs. Cristie."

"Miss Caltha Rose was not present," continued Lodloe, "but her opinions were quoted very freely by the others, and sometimes combated."

"Caltha alive, is she?" ejaculated Beam. "Well, well, I ought to be glad to hear it, and I suppose I am. Anybody else?"

"Yes; there was Mr. Tippengray, one of the guests at the inn. There are only three of us in all. He had heard a great deal about you from Miss Rose. She seems to have been very communicative to him."

"Chums, are they?" cried Lanigan Beam. "Well, bless his soul, I say, whatever sort of man he is. Now what did they say about me?"

"It's my opinion," answered Lodloe, smiling, "that it is a very unsafe thing to tell a man what other people say about him."

Lanigan sprang to his feet, and stood, pipe in hand, before the other. "Now, sir," said he, "I have not heard your name yet—Lodloe; thank you. Now, Mr. Lodloe, I have before me the greatest chance of my life. It almost never happens that a man has an opportunity of hearing a straightforward account of what people say about him. Now if you want to do the biggest kind of favor to a fellow-being, just tell me what you heard of me to-night. You are a perfect stranger to me, and you can speak out plainly about it without having the least feeling one way or the other."

[Pg 85]

Lodloe looked at him.

"Here's a chance," he said to himself, "that seldom comes to a man; an opportunity to tell a man exactly what his friends and neighbors think about him. It's a rare experience, and I like it. I'll do it."

"Very good," said he, aloud; "if you want to see yourself as others see you, I'll turn on the lights and act as showman; but remember I have nothing to do with the painting. I have no prejudices one way or the other."

"All right," said Lanigan, reseating himself; "let the panorama move."

"About the first thing I was told," said Lodloe, "was that you were a good-hearted fellow, but the fact that your father was an Irishman had deprived your character of ballast."

"Umph," said Lanigan; "there are some people who are all ballast. I don't mind that."

"And then I heard that, although you were a wild and irresponsible youth, people generally expected that as you grew older you would gradually accumulate ballast; but instead of that you had steadily gone downhill from the moment of your birth."

"Now, then," said Lanigan, "I suppose I have no right to ask you, but I would like very much to know who said that."

"I don't object in the least to telling you," said Lodloe; "it is fitter that you should know it than that I should know it. That was a quoted opinion of Miss Calthea Rose."

[Pg 86]

"Good for you," said Lanigan; "you'd be death to the members of a scandal-monger society. You would break up the business utterly."

"To this Mr. Petter remarked," said Lodloe, "that he thought in many ways you had improved very much, but he was obliged to admit that he could never think of anything that you had done which was of the least benefit to yourself or anybody else."

"Upon my word," cried Lanigan, "that's a pretty wide sweep for old Petter. I shall have to rub up his memory. He forgets that I helped him to make the plans for this house. And what did Mrs. Cristie say about me?"

"She said she thought it was a great pity that you did not apply yourself to something or other."

"She is right there," said Beam, "and, by George! I'll apply myself to her. However, I don't know about that," he continued. "What else did Calthea say?"

"One remark was that having proved false to every friend you had here you had no right to return."

"That means," said Mr. Beam, "that having promised at least five times to marry her, I never did it once."

"Were you really engaged to her?" asked Lodloe.

"Oh, yes," said the other; "it seems to me as if I had always been engaged to her. Born that way. Sort of an ailment you get used to, like squinting. When I was a youngster, Calthea was a mighty pretty girl, a good deal my senior, of course, or I wouldn't have cared for her. As she grew older she grew prettier, and I was more and more in love with her. We used to have quarrels, but they didn't make much difference, for after every one of them we engaged ourselves again, and all went on as before. But the time came when Calthea kept on being older than I was, and didn't keep on being pretty and agreeable. Then I began to weaken about the marriage altar and all that sort of thing, but for all that I would have been perfectly willing to stay engaged to her for the rest of my life if she had wished it, but one day she got jealous, kicked up a tremendous row, and away I went."

[Pg 87]

"Well," said Lodloe, "she must have considered that the best thing you could do for her, for Mrs. Petter said that she had heard her declare dozens of times that from her very youth you had hung like a millstone about her neck, and blighted her every prospect, and that your return here was like one of the seven plagues of Egypt."

"Mixed, but severe," said Mr. Beam. "Did anybody say any good of me?"

"Yes," answered Lodloe; "Mrs. Cristie said you were an obliging fellow, although very apt to forget what you had promised to do. Mr. Petter said that you had a very friendly disposition, although he was obliged to admit the truth of his wife's remark that said disposition would have been more agreeable to your friends, if you had been as willing to do things for them as you were to have them do things for you. And Mrs. Petter on her own motion summed up your character by saying, that if you had not been so regardless of the welfare and wishes of others; so totally given up to self-gratification; so ignorant of all kinds of business, and so unwilling to learn; so extravagant in your habits, and so utterly conscienceless in regard to your debts; so neglectful of your promises and your duty; so heretical in your opinions, political and religious, and such a dreadful backslider from everything that you had promised to be when a baby, you would be a very nice sort of fellow, whom she would like to see come into the house."

[Pg 88]

"Well," said Lanigan Beam, leaning back in his chair, "that's all of my bright side, is it?"

"Not quite," said Lodloe; "Mr. Tippengray declared that you are the first man he ever heard of who did not possess a single good point; that you must be very interesting, and that he would like to know you."

"Noble Tippengray!" said Mr. Beam. "And he's the man who is chumming it with Calthea?"

"Not at present," said Lodloe; "she is jealous, and doesn't speak to him."

Mr. Beam let his head drop on his breast, his arms hung down by his side, and he sank into his chair, as if his spine had come unhinged.

"There goes the last prop from under me," he said. "If Calthea had a man in tow I wouldn't be afraid of her, but now—well, no matter. If you will let me take that bottle of ammonia with me,—I suppose by rights it now belongs to the house,—I'll go back to that room and fight it out with the wasps. As I haven't any good points, they'll be able to put some into me, I'll wager."

[Pg 89]

Lodloe laughed. "You shall not go there," he said; "I have more bed-covering than I want, and an extra pillow, and if you can make yourself comfortable on that lounge you are welcome to stay here."

"Sir," said Lanigan Beam, rising, "I accept your offer, and if it were not that by so doing I would destroy the rare symmetry of my character, I would express my gratitude. And now I will go down your stairs, and up my ladder, and get my valise."

[Pg 90]

XII

LANIGAN CHANGES HIS CRAVAT



Early the next morning, without disturbing the sleep of Walter Lodloe, Lanigan Beam descended from the tower, carrying his valise. His face wore that air of gravity which sometimes follows an early morning hour of earnest reflection, and he had substituted a black cravat for the blue one with white spots that he had worn on his arrival.

Walking out towards the barn he met Mr. Petter, who was one of the earliest risers on the place.

The greeting given him by the landlord of the Squirrel Inn was a mixture of surprise, cordiality, and annoyance.

"Lanigan Beam!" he exclaimed. "Why, I thought—"

"Of course you did; I understand," said the other, extending his hand with a dignified superiority to momentary excitement in others. "You thought I would arrive at Lethbury in a day or two, and had no idea of seeing me here. You have reason, but I have changed my plans. I left New York earlier than I intended, and I am not going to Lethbury at all. At least not to the hotel there. I greatly prefer this house."

[Pg 91]

A shade of decided trouble came over Mr. Petter's face.

"Now, Lanigan," he said, "that will not do at all; of course I don't want to be hard on you, and I never was, but my season is commenced, I have my guests, my rules are in full force, and I cannot permit you to come here and disarrange my arrangements. If for once, Lanigan, you will take the trouble to think, you will see that for yourself."

"Mr. Petter," said the younger man, setting his valise upon the ground, "I have no desire to disarrange them; on the contrary, I would stamp them with fixity. And before we go any further I beg that you be kind enough not to call me by my Christian name, and to endeavor to produce in yourself the conviction that since you last saw me I have been entirely rearranged and reconstructed. In order to do this, you have only to think of me as you used to think, and then exactly reverse your opinion. In this way you will get a true view of my present character. It does not suit me to do things partially, or by degrees, and I am now exactly the opposite of what I used to be. By keeping this in mind any one who knew me before may consider himself or herself perfectly acquainted with me now."

Stephen Petter looked at him doubtfully.

"Of course," he said, "I shall be very glad—and so will Mrs. Petter—to find that you have reformed, but as to your coming here—"

"Now, then," said Mr. Beam, "I know you are not the man to allow trifles to stand in the way of important movements. I am here for a purpose, a great purpose, with which you will be in entire sympathy. I will say at once, frankly and openly, that my object is the improvement of Lethbury. I have a project which—"

[Pg 92]



"I AM HERE FOR A PURPOSE."

"Now, now, now!" exclaimed Mr. Petter, with much irritation, "I don't want to hear anything more of any of your projects; I know all about them. They all begin with a demand for money from your friends, and that is the end of the project and the money."

[Pg 93]

"Stephen Petter," said the other, "you are not looking at my character as I told you to look at it. Every cent of the capital required for my operations I will contribute myself. No one will be allowed to subscribe any money whatever. This, you see, is exactly the opposite of what used to be the case; and when I tell you that the success of my plan will improve the business of

Lethbury, elevate its moral and intellectual standard, exercise an ennobling and purifying influence upon the tone of its society, and give an almost incredible impetus to faith, hope, and charity in its moral atmosphere,—and all that without anybody's being asked to give a copper,—I know you will agree with me that a mere matter of residence should not be allowed to block this great work."

Since he had been assured that he was not to be asked to contribute money, Mr. Petter's face had shown relief and interest; but now he shook his head.

"This is my season," he said, "and I have my rules."

Lanigan Beam laid his hand upon the shoulder of his companion.

"Petter," said he, "I don't ask you to infract your rules. That would be against my every principle. I do not know the Rockmores of Germantown, but if it were necessary I would immediately go and find them, and make their acquaintance—I should have no difficulty in doing it, I assure you, but it is not necessary. I staid last night with Mr. Lodloe, who occupies the top room of your tower. Don't jump out of your boots. I went to him because there was a light in his room and the rest of the house was dark, and he explained to me the Rockmorial reason why he occupies that room while the rest of your house is nearly empty. Now you can do the same thing for me. Let me have that upper room with no stairway to it; give me the use of a ladder, and I shall be perfectly satisfied."

[Pg 94]

"But the room's not furnished," said Mr. Petter.

"Oh, we can easily get over that little difficulty," replied Mr. Beam; "whatever furniture may be needed can easily be put in through the window. If there are any wasps up there I can fumigate them out. Now we call that settled, don't we? None of your rules broken, Lethbury regenerated, and nothing for you to do but look on and profit."

Mr. Petter gazed reflectively upon the ground.

"There can be no doubt," said he, "that Lethbury is in a stagnant condition, and if that condition could be improved, it would be for the benefit of us all; and considering, furthermore, that if your project—which you have not yet explained to me—should be unsuccessful, no one but yourself will lose any money, I see no reason why I should interfere with your showing the people of this neighborhood that your character has been reconstructed. But if you should lodge in that room, it would make a very odd condition of things. I should then have but three male guests, and not one of them literally living in my house."

"Ah, my good friend Petter," said Lanigan, taking up his valise, "you should know there is luck in odd conditions, as well as in odd numbers, and everything will turn out right, you may bet on that. Hello," he continued, stepping back a little, "who is that very pretty girl with a book in her hand? That cannot be Mrs. Cristie."

[Pg 95]

"Oh, no," said Mr. Petter, "that is her maid, who takes care of her child. I think the young woman has come out to study before beginning her daily duties."

"Upon my word," said Lanigan Beam, attentively regarding Miss Ida Mayberry as she daintily made her way across the dewy lawn to a rustic seat under a tree. And then, suddenly turning to Mr. Petter, he said:

"Look you, my good Stephen, can't you let me go in somewhere and furbish myself up a little before breakfast?"

And having been shown into a room on the ground floor, Mr. Beam immediately proceeded to take off his black cravat and to replace it by the blue one with white spots.



[Pg 96]

XIII

DECREES OF EXILE

Towards the end of the afternoon of the day after Mr. Lanigan Beam had



been installed as an outside guest of the Squirrel Inn, Miss Calthea Rose sat by the window at the back of her shop. This shop was a small one, but it differed from most other places of business in that it contained very few goods and was often locked up. When there is reason to suppose that if you go to a shop you will not be able to get in, and that, should it be open, you will not be apt to find therein anything you want, it is not likely that such a shop will have a very good run of custom.

This was the case with Miss Calthea's establishment. It had become rare for any one even to propose custom, but she did not in the least waver in regard to her plan of closing up the business left to her by her father. As has been said, she did not wish to continue this business, so she laid in no new stock, and as she had gradually sold off a great deal, she expected to be able in time to sell off everything. She did not adopt the usual methods of clearing out a stock of goods, because these would involve sacrifices, and, as Miss Calthea very freely said to those who spoke to her on the subject, there was no need whatever for her to make sacrifices. She was good at waiting, and she could wait. When she sold the few things which remained on the shelves—and she, as well as nearly every one in the village, knew exactly what these things were without the trouble of looking—she would retire from business, and have the shop altered into a front parlor. Until then the articles which remained on hand were for sale.

[Pg 97]

Miss Calthea was busily sewing, but she was much more busily engaged in thinking. So earnestly was her mind set upon the latter occupation that she never raised her head to look out at the special varieties of hollyhocks, dahlias, and marigolds which had lately begun to show their beauties in the beds beneath her window, nor did she glance towards the door to see if any one was coming in. She had much more important things to think about than flowers or customers.

Mrs. Petter had driven over to Lethbury that morning, and had told Calthea all the news of the Squirrel Inn. She had told her of the unexpected arrival of Lanigan Beam; of his unwillingness to go to Lethbury, as he had originally intended, and of the quarters that had been assigned to him in the ladder-room. She also told how Lanigan, who now wished to be called Mr. Beam, had a wonderful plan in his mind for the improvement of Lethbury, but whether it was electric lights, or gas, or water, or street railroads, or a public library, he would not tell anybody. He was going to work in his own way, and all he would say about the scheme was that he did not want anybody to give him money for it. And this, Mrs. Petter had remarked, had helped Mr. Petter and herself to believe what Lanigan had said about his amendment, for if anything could show a change in him it would be his not wanting people to give him money.

[Pg 98]

Mrs. Petter had said a great deal about the newcomer, and had declared that whatever alterations had gone on in his mind, soul, and character, he certainly had improved in appearance, and was a very good-looking young man, with becoming clothes. In one way, however, he had not changed, for in a surprisingly short time he had made friends with everybody on the place. He talked to Mr. Lodloe as if he had been an old chum; he had renewed his acquaintance with Mrs. Cristie, and was very gallant to her; he was hand-in-glove with Mr. Tippengray, both of them laughing together and making jokes as if they had always known each other; and, more than that, it wasn't an hour after breakfast when he and Mrs. Cristie's nursemaid were sitting on a bench under the trees, reading out of the same book, while Mr. Tippengray was pushing the baby-carriage up and down on the grass, and Mrs. Cristie and Mr. Lodloe were putting up the lawn-tennis net.

"I could see for myself," Mrs. Petter had remarked at this point, "that you were right in saying that there was no use in my talking about the boarders associating with servants, for when they made up the lawn-tennis game it turned out that Mr. Tippengray didn't play, and so that girl Ida had to take a hand while he kept on neglecting his Greek for the baby."

[Pg 99]

At last Miss Calthea let her sewing drop into her lap, and sat looking at an empty shelf opposite to her.

"Yes," she said to herself, her lips moving, although no sound was audible, "the first thing to do is to get Lanigan away. As long as he is here I might as well not lift a finger, and it looks as if that impertinent minx of a child's nurse would be my best help. If he doesn't have one of his changeable fits, he will be ready in three days to follow her anywhere, but I must look sharp, for at this very minute he may be making love to the widow. Of course he hasn't any chance with her, but it would be just like Lanigan to go in strongest where he knew he hadn't any chance. However, I shall see for myself how matters stand, and one thing is certain—Lanigan has got to go."

About this time Mr. Lanigan Beam, finding himself with a solitary quarter of an hour on his hands, was reflecting on a bench upon the lawn of the Squirrel Inn. "Yes," he thought, "it is a great plan. It will elevate the social tone of Lethbury, it will purify the moral atmosphere of the surrounding country, and, above all, it will make it possible for me to live here. It will give me an opportunity to become a man among men in the place where I was born. Until this thing is done, I can have no chance to better myself here, and, more than that, the community has no chance to better itself. Yes, it must be done; Calthea Rose must go."

At this moment Mr. Petter came along, on his way to supper.

"Well, Lanigan," said he, "are you thinking about your great enterprise?"

[Pg 100]

"Yes," said the other, rising and walking with him; "that is exactly what my mind was working

on."

"And you are going to do it all yourself?" said Mr. Petter.

"Not exactly," said Beam. "I shall not require any pecuniary assistance, but I shall want some one to help me."

"Is there anybody about here who can do it?"

"Yes; I hope so," said Lanigan. "At present I am thinking of Mr. Tippengray."

"A very good choice," said Mr. Petter; "he is a man of fine mind, and it will certainly be to your advantage if you can get him to work with you."

"Indeed it will be," said Lanigan Beam, with much earnestness.

[Pg 101]

XIV

BACKING OUT



Ida Mayberry was walking on the narrow road which led through the woods from the Squirrel Inn to the public highway. She had been much interested in the road when she had been driven through it on the day of her arrival, and had availed herself of the opportunity given her this pleasant afternoon, by the prolonged slumbers of Master Douglas Cristie, to make a close acquaintance with its attractions.

It was indeed a pleasant road, where there were tall trees that often met overhead, and on each side there were bushes, and vines, and wild flowers, and little vistas opening into the woods, and rabbits running across the roadway; a shallow stream tumbling along its stony bed, sometimes to be seen and sometimes only heard; yellow butterflies in the air; and glimpses above, that afternoon, of blue sky and white clouds.

When she had walked about half the length of the road Miss Mayberry came to a tree with a large branch running horizontally about three feet from the ground and then turning up again, so as to make a very good seat for young people who like that sort of thing. Ida was a young person who liked that sort of thing, and she speedily clambered upon the broad, horizontal branch and bestowed herself quite comfortably there. Taking off her hat and leaning her head against the upright portion of the branch, she continued the reflections she had been making while walking.

[Pg 102]



IDA MAKES HERSELF COMFORTABLE.

"Yes," she said to herself, "it will be wise in me not only to make up my mind that I will not grow to be an old maid, but to prevent people from thinking I am going to grow to be one. I believe that people are very apt to think that way about teachers. Perhaps it is because they are always contrasted with younger persons. There is no reason why girl teachers should be different from other girls. Marriage should be as practically advantageous to them as to any others, only they should be more than usually circumspect in regard to their partners; that is, if they care for careers, which I am sure I do."

[Pg 103]

"Now the situation in this place seems to me to be one which I ought seriously to consider. It is generally agreed that propinquity is the cause of most marriages, but I think that a girl ought to be very careful not to let propinquity get the better of her. She should regulate and control propinquities."

"Here, now, is Mr. Lodloe. He seems to be a very suitable sort of a man, young and good-looking, and, I think, endowed with brains; but I have read two of his stories, and I see no promise in them, and I doubt if he would sympathize with good, hard study; besides, he is devoting himself to Mrs. Cristie, and he is out of the question. Mr. Tippengray is an exceedingly agreeable man and a true student. To marry him would be in itself a higher education; but he is not a bit young. I think he is at least fifty, perhaps more, and then, supposing that he should retain his mental vigor until he is seventy, that would give only twenty years of satisfactory intellectual companionship. That is a point that ought to be very carefully weighed.

[Pg 104]

"As to Mr. Beam, he is older than I am, but he is young enough. Upon the probable duration of his life one might predicate forty years of mental activity, and from what I have seen of him he appears to have a good intellect. They talk about an aqueduct and waterworks he is about to construct. That indicates the study of geology, and engineering capacity, and such a bias of mind would suit me very well. Mrs. Petter tells me that he is really and truly engaged to that old thing from Lethbury; but as she also said that he is heartily tired of the engagement, I don't see why it should be considered. He is as likely to correct his errors of matrimonial inclination as he is those of mathematical computation, and as for her, I should not let her stand in my way for one minute. Any woman who is as jealous about a man as she is about Mr. Tippengray has waived her right in all other men."

About this time a phaeton, drawn by a stout sorrel horse, and containing Miss Calthea Rose, was turning from the highroad into this lane. As a rule, Miss Calthea greatly preferred walking to driving, and although her father had left her a horse and several vehicles, she seldom made personal use of them; but to-day she was going to Romney, which was too far away for walking, and she had planned to stop at the Squirrel Inn and ask Mrs. Cristie to go with her.

It was necessary, for the furtherance of Miss Calthea's plans, that she should be on good terms with Mrs. Cristie. She ought, in fact, to be intimate with her, so that when the time came she could talk to her freely and plainly. It was desirable, indeed, that she should maintain a friendly connection with everybody at the Squirrel Inn. She had not yet met Lanigan Beam, and it would be well if he should be made to feel that she looked upon him merely as an old companion, and cared for him neither more nor less than one cares for ordinary old companions. Thus he would feel perfectly free to carry out his own impulses and her desires.

[Pg 105]

Towards Mr. Tippengray she had decided to soften. She was still very angry with him, but it would not do to repel him from herself, for that might impel him towards another, and spoil two of her plans. Even to that impertinent child's nurse she would be civil. She need have but little to do with the creature, but she must not let any one suppose that she harbored ill feeling towards her, and, with the exception of Mrs. Petter, no one would suppose she had any reason for such feelings. In fact, as Miss Calthea's mind dwelt upon this subject, she came to think that it would be a very good thing if she could do some kindness or service to this girl. This would give effect to what she might afterward be obliged to say about her.

Having reached this point in her cogitations, she also reached the point in the road where Ida Mayberry still sat making her plans, and concealed from the view of those coming from the direction of the highroad by a mass of projecting elderberry bushes. Hearing an approaching vehicle, the young woman on the horizontal limb, not wishing to be seen perched upon this elevated seat, sprang to the ground, which she touched about four feet from the nose of the sorrel horse.

[Pg 106]

This animal, which was trotting along in a quiet and reflective way, as if he also was making plans, was greatly startled by this sudden flash of a light-colored mass, this rustle, this waving, this thud upon the ground, and he bounded sidewise entirely across the road, stopping with his head in the bushes on the other side.

Miss Calthea, who was nearly thrown from her seat, could not repress a scream, and, turning, perceived Ida Mayberry.

"Did you do that?" she cried.

"I am sorry that I made your horse shy," said Ida, approaching the vehicle; "but he seems to be perfectly quiet now, and I hope nothing is broken. Horses ought to be taught not to shy, but I suppose that would be difficult, considering the small size of their brain cavities."

"If some people had as much brains as a horse," muttered Miss Calthea, "it would be better for them. Back, Sultan! Do you hear me! Back!" And she tugged with all her strength upon the reins.

But the sorrel horse did not move; he had two reasons for refusing to obey his mistress. In the first place, on general principles he disliked to back, and was fully conscious that Miss Calthea could not make him do it, and in the second place, he wanted a drink, and did not intend to move until he got it. Just here the brook was at its widest and deepest, and it came so near the road that in shying Sultan had entered it so far that the front wheels of the phaeton nearly touched the water. Standing more than fetlock deep in this cool stream, it is no wonder that Sultan wanted some one to loosen his check-rein and let him drink.

[Pg 107]

"I am afraid you are not strong enough to back him out of that," said Ida; "and if there were not so much water all around him I would go and take him by the head."

"Let him alone," cried Miss Calthea. "Back, Sultan! Back, I say!" And she pulled and pulled, tiring

herself greatly, but making no impression upon the horse.

Now appeared upon the scene Mrs. Cristie, pushing her baby-carriage. She had come to look for Ida. She was full of sympathy when she heard what had happened, and, pushing Douglas into a safe place behind a tree, came forward and proposed that some one go for a man. But Calthea Rose did not want a man. She was very proud of her abilities as a horsewoman, and she did not wish a man to behold her inferiority in emergencies of this sort. She therefore opposed the suggestion, and continued to pull and tug.

"That will never do," said Ida Mayberry, who had been earnestly regarding the situation. "You cannot make him move, and even if we did go into the water, he might jump about and tread on us; but I have thought of a way in which I think we can make him back. You are pretty heavy, Miss Rose, and Mrs. Cristie is lighter than I am, so she ought to get into the phaeton and take the reins, and you and I ought to help back the phaeton. I have seen it done, and I can tell you how to do it."

[Pg 108]



"BACK!"

To this Miss Calthea paid no immediate attention; but as Mrs. Cristie urged that if Ida knew about such things it would be well to let her try what she could do, and as Miss Calthea found that tugging at Sultan's bit amounted to nothing, she stepped out of the low vehicle and demanded to know what the child's nurse proposed to do.

[Pg 109]

"Now jump in, Mrs. Cristie," said Ida, "and when I give the word you pull the reins with all your might, and shout 'Back!' at him. Miss Rose, you go to that hind wheel, and I will go to this one. Now put one foot on a spoke, so, and take hold of the wheel, and when I say 'Now!' we will both raise ourselves up and put our whole weight on the spoke, and Mrs. Cristie will pull on him at the same instant."

Somewhat doggedly, but anxious to get out of her predicament, Miss Calthea took her position at the wheel and put one foot upon an almost horizontal spoke. Ida did the same, and then giving the word, both women raised themselves from the ground; Mrs. Cristie gave a great pull, and shouted, "Back!" and as the hind wheels began slowly to revolve, the astonished horse, involuntarily obeying the double impulse thus given him, backed a step or two.

"Now! Again!" cried Ida, and the process was repeated, this time the horse backing himself out of the water.

"Bravo!" cried Lanigan Beam, who, with Walter Lodloe, had arrived on the scene just as Calthea Rose and Ida Mayberry had made their second graceful descent from an elevated spoke to the ground.

[Pg 110]

XV

THE BABY IS PASSED AROUND



"Good for you, Calthy," cried Lanigan Beam, advancing with outstretched hands. "How do you do? Old Sultan is at his tricks again, is he, declining to back? But you got the better of him that time, and did it well, too."

In his admiration of the feat he had witnessed, the credit of which he gave entirely to his old and well-tried fiancée, Lanigan forgot for the moment his plan for the benefit of Lethbury.

Irritated and embarrassed as she was, Miss Calthea did not forget her intention of treating Lanigan Beam as a person between whom and herself there could be nothing of a connecting order which could be set up as something of an obstructing order between herself and any one else. She therefore took his hand, made a few commonplace remarks about his return, and then, excusing herself, approached Mrs. Cristie, who was just about to alight from the phaeton, and gave her the invitation to drive to

Romney. That lady hesitated a few moments, and then, remembering some shopping she would like to do, accepted; and the attention of Miss Mayberry having been called to the baby-carriage behind the tree, the two ladies drove off.

[Pg 111]

Ida Mayberry gazed for a moment at the parting vehicle, and then, turning to Mr. Beam, she said:

"She might at least have thanked me for getting her out of that scrape."

"Was that your idea?" said Lanigan.

"Of course it was," said the young woman: "if I hadn't shown her how to make the horse back, she would have pulled her arms out for nothing. It is easy to see that she does not know anything about managing horses."

Lanigan laughed outright.

"I would advise you not to say that to her," he said.

"I would as soon say it to her as not," said Ida; "somebody ought to do it. Why, if that horse had shied towards me instead of away from me when I jumped from that tree, I might have been very much hurt."

Lanigan laughed again, but this time inwardly.

"Do you like yellow flowers, Miss Mayberry?" said he. "The largest wild coreopsis I ever saw grows in this region. I noticed some in a field we just passed. Shall I gather a few for you?"

"I am very fond of that flower," said Ida; and Mr. Beam declaring that if she would step a little way with him he would show her a whole field of them, the two walked up the road.

Walter Lodloe had been gazing with some dissatisfaction at the departing phaeton. His mind was getting into a condition which made it unpleasant for him to see people take Mrs. Cristie away from him. He now turned and looked at the baby-carriage, in which the infant Douglas was sitting up, endeavoring by various noises to attract attention to himself. Lodloe pulled the vehicle into the road, and, finding that the motion quieted its occupant, he began slowly to push it towards the Squirrel Inn. When Walter Lodloe turned into the open space about the inn he met Mr. Tippinggray with a book in his hand.

[Pg 112]



"HE BEGAN SLOWLY TO PUSH IT TOWARDS THE SQUIRREL INN."

"Really," said the latter, elevating his eyebrows, "I heard the creaking of those little wheels, and I—"

"Thought Miss Mayberry was making them creak," said Lodloe. "But she is not, and you may as well postpone the lesson I suppose you want to give her. She is at present taking lessons in botany from another professor"; and he hereupon stated in brief the facts of the desertion of the infant Douglas. "Now what am I going to do with the little chap?" he continued; "I must search for Mrs. Petter."

"Don't do that," said the Greek scholar, quickly; "it would look badly for the young woman. Let me have the child; I will take care of it until she comes. I will wheel it down to my summer-house, where it is cool and shady."

[Pg 113]

"And an excellent spot to teach Greek," said Lodloe, laughing.

"A capital place," gaily replied Mr. Tippinggray, putting his book into his pocket, and taking hold of the handle of the little carriage, elated by the feeling that in so doing he was also, for a time, getting a hold upon Miss Mayberry.

"Yes," he continued, "it is just the place for me; it suits me in all sorts of ways, and I have a mind to tell you of a most capital joke connected with it. It is too good a thing to keep to myself any longer, and now that I know you so well, I am perfectly willing to trust you. Would you believe it? I know the Rockmores of Germantown. I know them very well, and hate them for a lot of prigs. But I never told Stephen Petter. Not I. In some way or other he took it for granted that I did not possess the valuable acquaintanceship, and I let him think so. Ha! ha! That's the way I got the summer-house, don't you see? Ha! ha! ha!"

Lodloe laughed. "Your secret is safe with me," said he; and the two having reached the little garden, he left the Greek scholar and went to his room.

When Ida Mayberry had her arms full of the great yellow flowers she suddenly appreciated the fact that she must be a long way from the baby, and ought immediately to return to it. She thereupon hastened back across the uneven surface of the field. When she reached the spot where the baby had been left, no baby was there.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed, "Mr. Lodloe has taken the child away, and there is no knowing which way he has gone."

"Oh, the youngster's all right," said Lanigan. "Sit down and rest yourself, and we will walk to the



"I WILL WHEEL IT DOWN TO MY SUMMER-HOUSE, WHERE IT IS COOL AND SHADY."

[Pg 114]

inn."

"Not a bit of it!" exclaimed Ida. "You go that way, and I will go this, and if you see him, call out as loud as you can."

Very reluctantly Mr. Beam obeyed orders, and hurried in the direction of the highroad.

As he sat down by his open window Walter Lodloe looked out and saw Ida Mayberry running. Instantly there was a shout from the summer-house and the wave of a handkerchief. Then the nurse-maid ceased to run, but walked rapidly in the direction of the handkerchief-waver, who stood triumphantly pointing to the baby-carriage. After a glance at the baby to see that he was all right, Miss Mayberry seated herself on a bench in the shade, and took off her hat. In a few moments the Greek scholar was seated by her, the book was opened, and two heads were together in earnest study.

About ten minutes later Lodloe saw Lanigan Beam appear upon the lawn, walking rapidly. In a moment he caught sight of the group at the summer-house, and stopped short. He clenched his fists and slightly stamped one foot.

[Pg 115]

Lodloe now gave a low whistle, and Lanigan glancing upward at the sound, he beckoned to him to come to his tower-room. The young man at first hesitated, and then walked slowly towards the little garden, and ascended the outside stairway.

Lodloe greeted him with a smile.

"As you seem doubtful about joining the little company down there, I thought I would ask you up here," he said.

Lanigan walked to the window and gazed out at the summer-house.

"They are having a good, cozy time of it," said he, "but that won't do. That sort of thing has got to be stopped."

"Why won't it do?" asked Lodloe. "What is the matter with it, and who is going to stop it?"

"It's sheer nonsense," said Beam, turning away from the window and throwing himself into a chair; "why should an old fellow like Tippinggray take up all the spare time of that girl? She doesn't need to learn anything. From what she has said to me I judge that she knows too much already."

"It strikes me," said Lodloe, "that if he likes to teach her, and she likes to learn, it is nobody's business but their own, unless Mrs. Cristie should think that her interests were being neglected." He spoke quietly, although he was a little provoked at the tone of his companion.

"Well," said Mr. Beam, stretching his legs upon a neighboring chair, "I object to that intimacy for two reasons. In the first place, it keeps me away from Miss Mayberry, and I am the sort of person she ought to associate with, especially in her vacation; and in the second place, it keeps old Tippinggray away from Calthea Rose. That is bad, very bad. Mrs. Petter tells me that before Miss Mayberry arrived Calthea and the Greek were as chummy and as happy together as any two people could be. It is easy to see that Calthea is dead in love with him, and if she had been let alone I am confident she would have married him before the summer was over."

[Pg 116]

"And you think that desirable?" asked Lodloe.

"Of course I do," cried Lanigan, sitting up straight in his chair and speaking earnestly; "it would be the best thing in the world. Calthea has had a hard time with her various engagements,—all of them with me,—and now that she has found the man she likes she ought to have him. It would be a splendid match; he might travel where he pleased, and Calthea would be an honor to him. She could hold her own with the nobility and gentry, and the crowned heads, for that matter. By George! it would make him two inches taller to walk through a swell crowd with Calthea on his arm, dressed as she would dress, and carrying her head as she would carry it."

"You seem to be a matchmaker," said Lodloe; "but I don't meddle in that sort of thing. I greatly prefer to let people take care of their own affairs; but I feel bound to say to you that after Ida Mayberry neglected her duty to go off with you, I determined to advise Mrs. Cristie to dispense with the services of such a very untrustworthy nurse-maid."

[Pg 117]

Lanigan Beam sprang to his feet. "Don't you do that!" he cried. "I beg of you not to do that."

"Why not?" said Lodloe. "That would aid your philanthropic plan in regard to Miss Rose and Mr. Tippinggray. The maid away, there is no reason why they should not come together again."

"Now I am a straightforward, honest man," said Lanigan, "and I tell you plainly that that would be very hard on me. I've come here to my native place to settle down, and if I settle I've got to marry, and I have never seen a girl whom I would rather marry and settle with than Miss Mayberry. She may be a little slack about taking care of the baby, but I'll talk to her about that, and I know she will keep a closer eye on him. Now if you want to see everybody happy, don't prejudice Mrs. Cristie against that girl. Give me a chance, and I'll win her into the right way, and I'll do it easily and naturally, without making hard blood or hurting anybody. Then old Tip and Calthea will come together again, and everything will be jolly. Now don't you go and blast the happiness of all of us, and get that poor girl turned off like a drunken cook. And as for taking good care of the baby, just look at her now."

Lodloe looked out of the window. Ida Mayberry was leaning forward on the bench, twirling a great yellow flower before the child, who was laughing and making snatches at it. In a moment appeared Mr. Tippengray with a large white daisy; he leaned over the other side of the carriage and twirled his flower in front of the baby. The little fellow was in great glee, first clutching at one blossom and then at the other, and Mr. Tippengray laughed, and Miss Mayberry laughed, and the three laughed together.

[Pg 118]

"Confound it!" said Lanigan Beam, with a frown, "this thing must be stopped."

Lodloe smiled. "Work matters your own way," he said; "I shall not interfere."

An hour later when Calthea Rose and Mrs. Cristie returned from Romney, Ida Mayberry was walking by the side of the baby-carriage, which Lanigan Beam was pushing towards the spot from which there was the best view of the western sky.



**"HE LEANED OVER THE
OTHER SIDE OF THE
CARRIAGE."**

Mrs. Cristie looked at them, and said to herself:

"I don't altogether like that sort of thing, and I think it must be stopped."

Calthea Rose appeared to have recovered her good humor. She looked about her apparently satisfied with the world and its ways, and readily accepted Mrs. Petter's invitation to stay to tea.

[Pg 119]

XVI

MESSRS. BEAM AND LODLOE DECLINE TO WAIT FOR THE SECOND TABLE



As has been before mentioned, Walter Lodloe had grown into a condition of mind which made it unpleasant for him when people took Mrs. Cristie away or occupied her time and attention to the exclusion of his occupancy of the same. As a literary man he had taken an interest in studying the character of Mrs. Cristie, and he had now come to like the character even better than he liked the study.

A pretty woman, of a lively and independent disposition, and quick wit, and yet with certain matronly and practical points in her character which always surprised as well as pleased him when they showed themselves, Mrs. Cristie could not fail to charm such a man as Lodloe, if the two remained long enough together. She had charmed him, and he knew it and liked it, and was naturally anxious to know whether, in the slightest degree, she thought of him as he thought of her. But he had never been able to perceive any indication of this. The young widow was kind, gracious, and at times delightfully intimate with him, but he knew enough of the world to understand that this sort of thing in this sort of place might not in the least indicate that what was growing up in him was growing up in her.

[Pg 120]

On the afternoon of the day after Miss Calthea Rose had taken tea at the Squirrel Inn Walter Lodloe came down from his room in the tower with no other object in life than to find Mrs. Cristie. It was about the hour that she usually appeared on the lawn, and if there should follow tennis, or talking, or walking, or anything else, one thing would be the same as another to Lodloe, provided he and she took part. But when he saw Mrs. Cristie her avocation was one in which he could not take part.

She was sitting on a bench by Mr. Tippengray, Ida Mayberry was sitting at his other side, and the everlasting baby-carriage was standing near by. The Greek scholar and the nurse-maid each had a book, but these were closed, and Mr. Tippengray was talking with great earnestness and animation, while the young women appeared to be listening with eager interest. It was plain that the two were taking a lesson in something or other.

As Lodloe walked slowly from the gate of the little garden Mrs. Cristie looked up for a moment, saw him, but instantly resumed her attentive listening. This was enough; he perceived that for the present, at least, he was not wanted. He strolled on towards the field, and just below the edge of the bluff he saw Lanigan Beam sitting under a tree.

"Hello!" said the latter, looking up, "are they at that stupid business yet?"

[Pg 121]

Lodloe smiled. "Are you waiting for Miss Mayberry to get through with her lesson?" he asked.

"Yes, I am," said Lanigan. "I have been hanging around here for half an hour. I never saw such a selfish old codger as that Tippengray. I suppose he will stick there with them the whole afternoon."

"And you want him!" said Lodloe.

"Want him!" exclaimed Lanigan; "not much. But I want her. If there were only two together I would do as I did yesterday. I would join them, take a part, and before long carry her off; but I can't do that with Mrs. Cristie there. I haven't the cheek to break up her studies."

Lodloe laughed. "Don't let us wait for the second table," he said; "come and take a walk to Lethbury."

It was now Lanigan's turn to smile.

"You think you would better not wait for the second table," he said; "very well, then; come on."

The lesson on the bench had been deliberately planned by Mrs. Cristie. She had been considering the subject of her nurse-maid and Lanigan Beam, and had decided that it was her duty to interfere with the growth of that intimacy. She felt that it was her duty to exercise some personal supervision over the interests of the young person in her service, and had given her some guarded advice in regard to country-resort intimacies.

Having given this advice to Ida Mayberry, it struck Mrs. Cristie that it would apply very well to herself. She remembered that she was also a young person, and she resolved to take to herself all the advice she had given to her nurse-maid, and thus it was that she was sitting on the bench by Mr. Tippengray, listening to his very interesting discourse upon some of the domestic manners and customs of the ancients, and their surprising resemblance in many points to those of the present day. Therefore it was, also, that she allowed Walter Lodloe to pass on his way without inviting him to join the party.

[Pg 122]

When Lodloe and Beam reached Lethbury, the latter proposed that they should go and worry Calthea Rose; and to his companion's surprised exclamation at being asked to join in this diversion Lanigan answered, that having been used to that sort of thing all his life, it seemed the most natural sport in which to indulge now that he found himself in Lethbury again.

"Very good," said Lodloe, as they approached Miss Rose's place of business; "I shall not interfere with your native sports, but I do not care to join them. I shall continue my walk, and stop for you on my way back."

When Lanigan Beam entered Miss Rose's shop she was sitting, as was her custom, by the back window, sewing. A neighbor had dropped in to chat with her a half-hour before, but had gone away very soon. The people of Lethbury had learned to understand when Calthea Rose did not wish to chat.

Miss Calthea was not happy; she was disappointed. Things had not gone as she hoped they would go, and as she had believed they would go when she accepted Mrs. Petter's invitation to tea. That meal had been a very pleasant one; even the presence of Ida Mayberry, who came to table with the family when the baby happened to be asleep, did not disturb her. On the contrary, it gratified her, for Lanigan Beam sat by that young person and was very attentive to her. She carefully watched Mr. Tippengray, and perceived that this attention, and the interest of the child's nurse in Lanigan's remarks, did not appear to give him the least uneasiness. Thereupon she began gradually, and she hoped imperceptibly, to resume her former method of intercourse with the Greek scholar, and to do so without any show of restoring him to favor. She did this so deftly that Mrs. Cristie was greatly interested in the performance, and an outside observer could have had no reason to suppose that there had been any break in the friendly intercourse between Miss Rose and Mr. Tippengray.

[Pg 123]

But this unsatisfactory state of things soon came to an end. When the daylight began to wane, and Miss Calthea's phaeton had been brought to the door, she went to it with her plans fully formed. As Mr. Tippengray assisted her into the vehicle, she intended to accept his proposition to drive her to Lethbury. She had slightly deferred her departure in order that the growing duskness might give greater reason for the proposition. There would be a moon about nine o'clock, and his walk back would be pleasant.

But when she reached the phaeton Mr. Tippengray was not there. Ida Mayberry, eager to submit to his critical eye two lines of Browning which she had put into a sort of Greek resembling the partly cremated corpse of a dead language, and who for the past ten minutes had been nervously waiting for Master Douglas to close his eyes in sleep that she might rush down to Mr. Tippengray while he was yet strolling on the lawn by himself, had rushed down to him, and had made him forget everything else in the world in his instinctive effort to conceal from his pupil the shock given him by the sight of her lines. He had been waiting for Miss Calthea to come out, had been intending to hand her to her vehicle, and had thought of proposing to accompany her to the village; but he had not heard the phaeton roll to the door, the leave-taking on the porch did not reach his ear, and his mind took no note whatever of the fact that Miss Rose was on the point of departure.

[Pg 124]

As that lady, stepping out upon the piazza, swept her eyes over the scene and beheld the couple on the lawn, she gave a jerk to the glove she was drawing on her hand that tore in it a slit three inches long. She then turned her eyes upon her phaeton, declined the offer of Mr. Petter to see her home, and, after a leave-taking which was a little more effusive than was usual with her, drove herself to Lethbury. If the sorrel horse had behaved badly in the early part of that afternoon, he was punished for it in the early part of that evening, for he completely broke all previous records of time made between the Squirrel Inn and Lethbury.

Thus the hopes of Miss Calthea had been doubly darkened; the pariah with the brimstone blossoms had not only treacherously deserted Lanigan, but had made Mr. Tippengray treacherously desert her. She had been furiously angry; now she was low-spirited and cross. But one thing in the world could have then cheered her spirits, and that would have been the sight of her bitterest enemy and Lanigan Beam driving or walking together past her shop door; but when Lanigan alone entered that shop door she was not cheered at all.

[Pg 125]

Mr. Beam's greeting was very free and unceremonious, and without being asked to do so he took a seat near the proprietress of the establishment.

"Well, well," he said, "this looks like old times. Why, Calthy, I don't believe you have sold a thing since I was here last."

"If you had any eyes in your head," said Miss Calthea, severely, "you would see that I have sold a great deal. Nearly everything, in fact."

"That proves my point," said Lanigan; "for nearly everything was gone when I left."

"And some of the things that are gone," said she, "you still owe me for."

"Well put, Calthy," said Lanigan, laughing; "and after that, let's drop the business. What's new and what's stale in Lethbury?"

"You are about the newest as well as the stalest thing here," said she.

Lanigan whistled. "Calthy," said he, "would you mind my smoking a cigar here! There will be no customers coming in."

"You know very well you cannot smoke here," she said; "what is the matter with you? Has that pincushion-faced child's nurse driven you from the inn?"

A pang went through Lanigan. Was Calthea jealous of Miss Mayberry on his account? The thought frightened him. If he could have said anything which would have convinced Calthea that he was on the point of marrying Miss Mayberry, and that therefore she might as well consider everything at an end between herself and him, he would have said it. But he merely replied:

[Pg 126]

"She is a nice girl, and very much given to learning."

Now Miss Calthea could restrain herself no longer.

"Learning!" she exclaimed. "Stuff and deception! Impudent flirting is what she is fond of, as long as she can get a good-for-naught like you, or an old numskull like that Tippengray, to play her tricks on."

Now Lanigan Beam braced himself for action. This sort of thing would not do; whatever she might say or think about the rest of the world, Calthea must not look with disfavor on the Greek scholar.

"Numskull!" said he. "You're off the track there, Calthy, I never knew a man with a better skull than Mr. Tippengray, and as to his being old—there is a little gray in his hair to be sure, but it's my opinion that that comes more from study than from years."

"Nonsense!" said Calthea; "I don't believe he cares a snap for study unless he can do it with some girl. I expect he has been at that all his life."

Now Lanigan's spirits rose; he saw that it was not on his account that Calthea was jealous of Ida Mayberry. His face put on an expression of serious interest, and he strove to speak impressively, but not so much so as to excite suspicion.

"Calthea," said he, "I think you are not treating Mr. Tippengray with your usual impartiality and fairness. From what I have seen of him, I am sure that the great object of his life is to teach, and when he gets a chance to do that he does it, and for the moment forgets everything else. You may be right in thinking that he prefers to teach young persons, and this is natural enough, for young people are much more likely than older ones to want to learn. Now, to prove that he doesn't care to teach young girls just because they are girls, I will tell you that I saw him, this very afternoon, hard at work teaching Mrs. Cristie and Ida Mayberry at the same time, and he looked twice as happy as when he was instructing only one of them. If there were enough people here so that he could make up a class, and could have a sort of summer school, I expect he would be the happiest man on earth."

[Pg 127]

"I am afraid that is Mr. Tippengray's fault," continued Lanigan, folding his hands in his lap and gazing reflectively at his outstretched legs. "I am afraid that he gives too much of his mind to teaching, and neglects other things. He is carried away by his love of teaching, and when he finds one person, or a dozen persons who want to learn, he neglects his best friends for that one

person, or those dozen persons. He oughtn't to do it; it isn't right—but then, after all, no man is perfect, and I suppose the easiest way for us to get along is to stop looking for perfection."

Miss Calthea made no answer. She gazed out of the window as if she was mildly impressed with a solicitude for the welfare of her garden. There flitted into her mind a wavering, indeterminate sort of notion that perhaps Lanigan was a better fellow than he used to be, and that if she should succeed in her great purpose it might not be necessary that he should go away. But still,—and here prudence stepped in front of kindness,—if that child's nurse remained in the neighborhood, it would be safer if Lanigan kept up his interest in her; and if she ultimately carried him off, that was his affair.

[Pg 128]

Leaning forward, Miss Calthea took a match from a box on a shelf, and handed it to Lanigan.

"You may as well smoke if you want to," she said; "it's not likely any one will be coming in, and I don't object when the window is open."

Gratefully Lanigan lighted his cigar.

"Calthy, this is truly like old times," he said. "And to finish up with Tippengray, I'll say that if Lodloe and I had not our mind so filled with our own businesses and projects, I'd get him to go in with me, and help make up a class; but if I were to do that, perhaps people might say that all I wanted was to get in with the girls."

Here was a chance for Calthea to give her schemes a little push.

"There is only one girl," she said, "who would be likely to take part in that sort of thing, and that is the child's nurse at the Squirrel Inn; but if she really is given to study, I suppose she might help you to improve your mind, and if you are what you used to be, it will stand a good deal of improving."

"That's so, Calthy," said Lanigan; "that's so." He was in high good humor at the turn the conversation had taken, but did his best to repress his inclination to show it. "It might be well to go in for improvement. I'll do that, anyway." Lanigan blew out a long whiff of purple smoke. "Calthy is a deep one," he said to himself; "she wants me to draw off that girl from the old man. But all right, my lady; you tackle him and I will tackle her. That suits me beautifully."

[Pg 129]

At this moment Lodloe entered the shop, and Miss Calthea Rose greeted him with much graciousness.



**"CALTHY, THIS IS TRULY
LIKE OLD TIMES."**

"You must have taken a short walk," said Lanigan. "Don't you want to wait until I finish my cigar? It's so much pleasanter to smoke here than in the open air. Perhaps Miss Calthea will let you join me."

Lodloe was perfectly willing to wait, but did not wish to smoke. He was interested in what he had heard of the stock of goods which was being sold off about as fast as a glacier moves, and was glad to have the opportunity to look about him.

[Pg 130]

"Do you know, Calthy," said Lanigan, "that you ought to sell Mr. Lodloe a bill of goods?" He said this partly because of his own love of teasing, but partly in earnest. To help Calthea sell off her stock was an important feature of his project.

"Mr. Lodloe shall not buy a thing," said Calthea Rose. "If he is ever in want of anything, and stops in here to see if I have it in stock, I shall be glad to sell it to him if it is here, for I am still in business; but I know very well that Mr. Lodloe came in now as an acquaintance and not as a customer."

"Beg your pardons, both of you," cried Lanigan, springing to his feet, and throwing the end of his cigar out of the window; "but I say, Calthy, have you any of that fire-blaze calico with the rocket sparks that's been on hand ever since I can remember?"

"Your memory is pretty short sometimes," said Calthea, "but I think I know the goods you mean, and I have seven yards of it left. Why do you ask about it?"

"I want to see it," said Lanigan. "There it is on that shelf; it's the same-sized parcel that it used to

be. Would you mind handing it down to me?"

Lanigan unrolled the calico upon the counter, and gazed upon it with delight. "Isn't that glorious!" he cried to Lodloe; "isn't that like a town on fire! By George! Calthea, I will take the whole seven yards."

[Pg 131]

"Now, Lanigan," said Miss Calthea, "you know you haven't the least use in the world for this calico."

"I know nothing of the sort," said Lanigan; "I have a use for it. I want to make Mrs. Petter a present, and I have been thinking of a fire-screen, and this is just the thing for it. I'll build the frame myself, and I'll nail on this calico, front and back the same. It'll want a piece of binding, or gimp, tacked around the edges. Have you any binding, or gimp, Calthy, that would suit?"

Miss Calthea laughed. "You'd better wait until you are ready for it," she said, "and then come and see."

"Anyway, I want the calico," said he. "Please put it aside for me, and I'll come in to-morrow and settle for it. And now it seems to me that if we want any supper we had better be getting back to the inn."

"It's not a bad idea," said Miss Calthea Rose, when she was left to herself; "but it shall not be in a class. No, indeed! I will take good care that it shall not be in a class."

[Pg 132]

XVII

BANANAS AND OATS



When Walter Lodloe walked to Lethbury because he could not talk to Mrs. Cristie, it could not have been reasonably supposed that his walk would have had more practical influence on his feelings towards that lady than a conversation with her would have had; but such was the case.

It would have been very pleasant to talk, or walk, or chat, or stroll, or play tennis, with her, but when he reached the quiet little village, and wandered by himself along the shaded streets, and looked into the pretty yards and gardens, on the profusion of old-fashioned flowers and the cool green grass under the trees, and here and there a stone well-curb with a great sweep and an oaken bucket, and the air of quaint comfort which seemed to invade the interiors of those houses that were partly opened to his view, it struck him, as no idea of the sort had ever struck him before, what a charming and all-satisfying thing it would be to marry Mrs. Cristie and live in Lethbury in one of these cool, quaint houses with the quiet and shade and the flowers—at least for a few years until his fortunes should improve.

[Pg 133]

He had a notion that Mrs. Cristie would like that sort of thing. She seemed so fond of country life. He would write and she would help him. He would work in the vegetable garden, and she among the flowers. It would be Arcadia, and it would be cheap. Even with his present income every rural want could be satisfied.

An infusion of feasibility—or what he looked upon as such—into the sentimentality of such a man as Walter Lodloe generally acts as a stiffener to his purposes. He was no more in love with Mrs. Cristie than he had been when he left the Squirrel Inn, but he now determined, if he saw any reason to suppose that she would accept them, to offer himself and a Lethbury cottage to Mrs. Cristie.

He had a good opportunity to think over this matter and come to decisions, for his companion walked half the way home without saying a word.

Suddenly Lanigan spoke.

"Do you know," said he, "that I have about made up my mind to marry the governess?"

"She isn't a governess," said Lodloe; "she is a nurse-maid."

"I prefer to invest her with a higher grade," said Lanigan; "and it is pretty much the same thing, after all. Anyway, I want to marry her, and I believe I can do it if nobody steps in to interfere."

"Who do you suppose would do that?" asked Lodloe.

"Well," said Lanigan, "if the Lethbury people knew about it, and had a chance, every man jack of them, and every woman jack, too, would interfere, and under ordinary circumstances Calthea Rose would take the lead; but just now I think she intends to lend me a hand—not for my good, but for her own. If she does that, I am not afraid of all Lethbury and the Petters besides. The only person I am afraid of is Mrs. Cristie."

[Pg 134]

"Why do you fear her?" asked Lodloe.

"Well," said Lanigan, "when she was at the inn some years ago I was at my wildest, and her husband did not like me. He was in bad health, very touchy, and I suppose I gave him reason

enough to consider me an extremely black sheep. Of course Mrs. Cristie naturally thought pretty much as he did, and from what you told me of the conference over my advent, I suppose her opinions haven't changed much. She has treated me very well since I have been here, but I have no doubt that she would consider it her duty to let Miss Mayberry know just the sort of fellow she thinks I am."

"Of course she would do that," said Lodloe; "and she ought to do it."

"No, sir," said Lanigan; "you are wrong, and I am going to prove it to you, and you shall see that I trust you as if I had known you years instead of days. I want you to understand that I am not the same sort of fellow that I used to be, not by any means. I told old Petter that, so that he might have a little practice in treating me with respect, but I didn't give him any reasons for it, because Calthea Rose would be sure to suspect that he knew something, and she'd worm it out of him; but I don't believe she could worm anything out of you. When I left this place some eighteen months ago I went down to Central America and bought a banana farm, paying very little money down. In less than three months I sold my land to a company, and made a very good thing out of it. Then, thinking the company after a while might want more land, I bought another large tract, and before the end of the year I sold that to them, doubling my money. Then I left the tropics, fearing I might go too deep into that sort of speculation and lose every cent I had. I traveled around, and at last landed in Chicago, and here the money-making fever seized me again. It is a new thing to me, and a lot more intoxicating, I can tell you. I invested in oats, and before I knew it that blessed grain went up until, if its stalks had been as high as its price, it would have been over my head. I sold out, and then I said to myself: 'Now, Lanigan, my boy, if you don't want to be a beastly pauper for the rest of your life, you had better go home.' Honestly, I was frightened, and it seemed to me I should never be safe until I was back in Lethbury. Look here," he said, taking from a pocket a wallet filled with a mass of papers and a bank-book; "look at those certificates, and here is my New York bank-book, so you can see that I am not telling you lies."

[Pg 135]

"Now you may say that the fact of my having money doesn't prove that I am any better than I used to be, but if you think that, you are wrong. There is no better way to reform a fellow than to give him something to take care of and take an interest in. That's my case now, and all I've got I've given myself, which makes it better, of course. I'm not rich, but I've got enough to buy out any business in Lethbury. And to go into business and to live here are what will suit me better than anything else, and that's not counting in Ida Mayberry at all. To live here with her would be better luck than the biggest rise in oats the world ever saw. Now you see where I stand. If Mrs. Cristie goes against me, she does a cruel thing to me, and to Ida Mayberry besides."

[Pg 136]

"Why don't you tell her the facts?" said Lodloe. "That would be the straightforward and sensible thing to do."

"My dear boy," said Lanigan, "I cannot put the facts into the hands of a woman. No matter how noble or honorable she may be, without the least intention on her part they would leak out, and if Calthea Rose should get hold of them I should be lost. She'd drop old Tippengray like a hot potato and stick to me like one of those adhesive plasters that have holes in them. No, sir; I don't want Calthea Rose to think well of me. I want her to keep on considering me as a good-for-nothing scapegrace, and, by George! it's easy enough to make her do that. It's all in her line of business. But I want other people to think well of me in a general way, and when Calthea and Tippengray have settled things between them, and are traveling on the Continent, which they certainly ought to do, I'll start in business, and take my place as one of the leading citizens of Lethbury; and, as things look now, all will be plain sailing if Mrs. Cristie thinks well enough of me not to interfere between me and Ida Mayberry. Now all I ask of you is to say a good word for me if you can get a chance."

[Pg 137]

"After what you have told me," said Lodloe, "I think I shall say it."

"Good for you!" cried Lanigan. "And if I go to Calthy and ask her to lend me the money to get a frame made for Mrs. Petter's fire-screen, don't you be surprised. What I'm doing is just as much for her good as for mine. In this whole world there couldn't be a better match for her than old Tippengray, and she knows it, and wants him."

"If there was a society for the prevention of cruelty to Greek scholars, I don't know but that it might interfere in this case," said Lodloe.

[Pg 138]

XVIII.

SWEET PEAS.

Walter Lodloe was now as much flushed with the fever of love-making as Lanigan Beam had been flushed with the fever of money-making, but he did not have the other man's luck. Mrs. Cristie gave him few opportunities of making her know him as he wished her to know him. He had sense enough to see that this was intentional, and that if he made any efforts to improve his opportunities he might drive her away.

As he sat at his tower window, his fingers in his hair and his mind trying to formulate the prudent but bold thing he ought to do, a voice came up from below. It was that of Ida



Mayberry.

"Mr. Lodloe! Mr. Lodloe!" she cried; and when he had put his head out of the window she called to him:

"Don't you want to come down and help us teach Mr. Tippengray to play tennis? He has taught us so much that we are going to teach him something."

"Who are going to teach?" asked Lodloe.

[Pg 139]

"Mrs. Cristie and I," said Ida. "Will you come?"

Instantly consenting, Lodloe drew in his head, his love fever rising.

The Greek scholar was one of the worst tennis-players in the world. He knew nothing of the game, and did not appear capable of learning it. And yet when Lanigan Beam appeared, having just arrived on horseback from Romney, Mrs. Cristie would not allow the Greek scholar to give up his place to the younger man. She insisted on his finishing the game, and when it was over she declared the morning too warm to play any more.

As she and Lodloe stood together for a moment, their rackets still in their hands, Mrs. Cristie smiled, but at the same time frowned.

"It is too provoking," she said; "I wish Douglas would wake up and scream his very loudest. I was just on the point of asking Ida to go with me into the garden to pick sweet peas, when Mr. Beam hands her that horrible bunch of wild flowers, crammed full of botany, I've no doubt. And now just look at them! Before one could say a word, there they are on that bench, heads together, and pulling the weeds to pieces. Think of it! Studying botany with *him*, and Mr. Tippengray on the same lawn with her!"

"Oh, he's too hot to teach anything," said Lodloe. "You don't seem to approve of Mr. Beam's attentions to that young woman."

"I do not," said she. "You know what he is as well as I do."

"Better," said Lodloe. For a moment he paused, and then continued: "Mrs. Cristie, I wish you would let me go into the garden with you to pick sweet peas and to talk about Mr. Beam."

[Pg 140]

"Mr. Beam!" she repeated.

"Yes," said Lodloe; "I wish very much to speak to you in regard to him, and I cannot do it here where we may be interrupted at any moment."

As a young and pretty woman who knew her attractions, and who had made resolutions in regard to the preponderance of social intercourse in a particular direction, Mrs. Cristie hesitated before answering. But as a matron who should know all about a young man who was paying very special attention to a younger woman in her charge, she accepted the invitation, and went into the garden with Lodloe.

The sweet pea-blossoms crowded the tall vines which lined one side of a path, and as she picked them he talked to her.

He began by saying that he had noticed, and he had no doubt that she had noticed, that in all the plain talk they had heard about Mr. Beam there had been nothing said against his moral character except that he did not pay his debts nor keep his promises. To this Mrs. Cristie assented, but said that she thought these were very bad things. Lodloe agreed to this, but said he thought that when a young man of whom even professional slanderers did not say that he was cruel, or that he gambled, or drank, or was addicted to low company and pursuits, had determined to reform his careless and thoughtless life, he ought to be encouraged and helped in every possible way. And then when she asked him what reason he had to suppose that Mr. Beam had determined to reform, he straightway told her everything about Lanigan, Chicago oats and all, adding that the young man did not wish him to say anything about this matter, but he had taken it upon himself to do so because Mrs. Cristie ought to know it, and because he was sure that she would not mention it to any one. When Mrs. Cristie exclaimed at this, and said that she thought that the sooner everybody knew it the better, Lodloe told her of the state of affairs between Calthea Rose and Lanigan Beam, and why the latter did not wish his reform to be known at present.

[Pg 141]

Mrs. Cristie dropped upon the ground every sweet-pea blossom she had gathered.

"I cannot imagine," she said, "how you can take the part of a man who would deliberately attempt to lower himself in the eyes of one woman in order that he might have a better chance to win another woman."

"Mrs. Cristie," said Lodloe, "I am a young man, and I have lived much among young men. I have seen many of them in dangerous and troubled waters, floating down to ruin and destruction, and now and then I have seen one who had turned and was trying to strike out for the shore. In every case of this kind I have tried to give the poor fellow a hand and help him get his feet on firm ground. Sometimes he jumped in again, and sometimes he didn't, but all that was not my affair; I was bound to help him when I saw him facing the right way, and that is just the way I feel about young Beam. I do not approve of all his methods, but if he wants moral support I say he ought to

Mrs. Cristie looked at the pink, blue, and purple blossoms on the ground. "His sentiments are good and generous ones," she thought, "and I shall not say one word against them, but Ida Mayberry shall not marry that exceedingly slippery young man, and the good Mr. Tippengray shall not be caught by Calthea Rose." She came to this resolution with much firmness of purpose, but as she was not prepared to say anything on the subject just then, she looked up very sweetly at Lodloe, and said:

"Suppose we drop Mr. Beam."

He looked for an instant into her eyes.

"Gladly," he exclaimed, with an impulse like a lightning-flash, "and speak of Walter Lodloe."

"Of you?" she said.

"Yes, of me," he replied; "of myself, of a man who has no scheme, no plan, no concealments, and who only wishes you to know that he loves you with all his heart."

She looked at him steadfastly for a moment.

"Was it for this," she said, "that you asked me to come with you and pick sweet-pea blossoms?"

"Not at all," he exclaimed; "I meant no more than I said, and thought of no more. But the flowers we came to gather you have dropped upon the ground."

"They can easily be picked up again," she said.

"Not at all," he cried, and, stepping forward, put his foot upon the fragrant blossoms. Then with a few rapid dashes he gathered a bunch of sweet peas and extended them towards Mrs. Cristie.

"Will you not take these instead?" he said.

She put her hands behind her back.



**"WILL YOU NOT TAKE THESE
INSTEAD?"**

"I do not mean," he said, speaking low but strongly, "that in accepting them you accept me. I only want to know that you will talk to me of what I said, or at any rate think of it." [Pg 144]

But still she kept her hands behind her back. In her heart she knew that she wanted those flowers, but the knowledge had come so suddenly, so unexpectedly, and so unreasonably, that she did not even look at them, and clasped her fingers together more tightly.

"Some one is coming," said Lodloe. "Tell me quickly, must these flowers be dropped?"

Steps could plainly be heard not far away. Mrs. Cristie looked up.

"I will take one," she said; "the very smallest."

He thrust the bunch of flowers towards her, and she hastily drew from it one which happened to be the largest of them all.

The person who now appeared in the garden walk was Calthea Rose. She experienced no emotions but those of mild amusement at seeing these two together. At present she did not care very much about either of them, although, when she had heard of the expected coming of the young widow, she had been afraid of her, and was prepared to dislike her. But finding her, as she supposed, already provided with a lover, Calthea was quite satisfied with Mrs. Cristie. She liked

Lodloe on general principles, because he was a man. Her greeting was very pleasant. It often happened that the people whom Calthea Rose neither liked nor disliked were those who found her the most pleasant.

[Pg 145]

She was inclined to walk on and leave them among the sweet-pea blossoms, but Mrs. Cristie would not allow this. She joined Calthea, and the three went on together. When they stepped upon the open lawn, Calthea gave a quick glance around, and the result was very satisfactory. Ida Mayberry and Lanigan were still sitting together under a tree, and she saw Mr. Tippengray talking to Mrs. Petter not far from the summer-house. Nothing could be better arranged. Lanigan was on the right road, and it would be quite as natural for her immediately to join Mrs. Petter as it would be easy to get rid of her.

The party separated, Lodloe going to his room and Calthea walking towards the summer-house. She had come that day to the Squirrel Inn with a purpose; she was going to be taught by Mr. Tippengray. In this world we must adapt ourselves to circumstances, and she was going to adapt herself to the Greek scholar's hobby. She was a sensible woman, and did not for a moment purpose to ask him to teach her the dead languages, philosophy, or science, things in which he knew she took no interest. Indeed, she would not ask him to teach her anything, but she was going to give him the opportunity to do so, and she was quite sure that that would be sufficient for her purpose.

She intended to make herself an audience of one, and to listen in a way she knew would please him to the recital of his travels and experiences. Of these he had often essayed to talk to her, but she had not encouraged him. She never liked to talk upon subjects of which other people knew more than she did, and she always endeavored to bring the conversation into a channel where she could take an equal part. If she could lead, so much the better. But now she was going to let Mr. Tippengray talk to her just as much as he pleased, and tell her all he wanted to tell her. She now knew him better than she had done before, and she had strong hopes that by this new string she would be able to lead him from the Squirrel Inn to Lethbury whenever she chose.

[Pg 146]

Mrs. Petter had long been accustomed to look upon Calthea Rose as a person whose anger would blaze up very suddenly, but would go out quite as promptly—which was true, when Miss Calthea chose to put it out—but she was a little surprised that Calthea, after so recently going away in a huff, should treat Mr. Tippengray with such easy friendliness. If the Greek scholar himself felt surprised, he did not show it, for he was always ready to meet a cordial overture.

Miss Calthea had just accepted an invitation to be seated in the shade,—which she knew would very soon be followed by Mrs. Petter's going into the house, for that good woman was seldom content to sit long out of doors,—when up stepped Ida Mayberry.

"Mr. Tippengray," said she in the clear, distinct way in which she always spoke, "here is something which I have been trying to explain to Mr. Beam, but I am afraid I haven't a quite correct idea about it myself. Will you please read it, and tell me how it strikes you!"

[Pg 147]



"I HAVE DISSECTED ONE."

This was too much for the patience of Calthea Rose. Her resolutions of geniality and good nature could not stand for a moment against such an interruption at such a time. She turned sharply upon the nurse-maid, and, without attempting to disguise her feelings, said it seemed to her that a person so anxious to learn would be much better employed in attending to her business and in trying to learn something about babies than in interrupting conversation in this impertinent way.

[Pg 148]

"Learn something about babies!" exclaimed Miss Mayberry. "Nobody knows more about babies than I do—I have dissected one."

At this Mrs. Petter gave a cry of horror, and Miss Calthea stepped back, speechless with amazement. As for the Greek scholar, he suddenly retired to a little distance and leaned over a bench, his back to the company. He was greatly agitated.

Without further remark Miss Mayberry closed her book, and, with dignity, walked back to Lanigan Beam.

[Pg 149]

XIX

THE AROUSED ROSE



The soul of Miss Calthea Rose was now filled with one burning purpose, and that was to banish from the Squirrel Inn that obtrusive and utterly obnoxious collegiate nurse-maid who had so shamelessly admitted a desire for surgical research in connection with the care of an infant. It was of no use for Miss Calthea to think at this moment of her plans in regard to Mr. Tippengray, nor indeed of anything but this one absorbing object. Until she had rid herself of Ida Mayberry she could expect to do nothing that she wished to do. Leaving Mr. Tippengray to the quiet enjoyment of his agitations, Miss Calthea and Mrs. Petter immediately set off to find Mrs. Cristie.

"She must instantly know," said the former, "what sort of a serpent she has in her service. If I were in her place I would never let that creature touch my baby again."

"Touch the baby!" exclaimed Mrs. Petter, "I wouldn't let her touch me. When a person with such a disposition begins on infants there is no knowing where she will stop. Of course I don't mean that she is dangerous to human life, but it seems to me horrible to have any one about us who would be looking at our muscles, and thinking about our bones, and wondering if they worked together properly, and if they would come apart easily. Ugh! It's like having a bat in the room."

[Pg 150]

Mrs. Cristie was not in the mood to give proper attention to the alarming facts which were laid before her by the two women, who found her sitting by the window in her room. It had been so short a time since she had come from the garden, and the blossom of the sweet pea, which she still held in her hand, had been so recently picked from its vine, that it was not easy for her to fix her mind upon the disqualifications of nurse-maids. Even the tale that was told her, intensified by the bitter feeling of Miss Rose, and embellished by the imagination of Mrs. Petter, did not have the effect upon her that was expected by the narrators. She herself had been a student of anatomy, and was still fond of it, and if she had been able properly to consider the subject at that moment, she might not have considered it a bad thing for Ida Mayberry to have the experience of which she had boasted.

But the young widow did not wish at that moment to think of her nurse-maid or even of her baby, and certainly not to give her attention to the tales of her landlady and the spinster from Lethbury.

"I must admit," she said, "that I cannot see that what you tell me is so very, very dreadful, but I will speak to Ida about it. I think she is apt to talk very forcibly, and perhaps imprudently, and does not always make herself understood."

[Pg 151]

This was said with an air of abstraction and want of interest which greatly irritated Miss Calthea. She had not even been thanked for what she had done. Mrs. Cristie had been very civil, and was evidently trying to be more so, but this was not enough for Miss Calthea.

"We considered it our duty," she said, with a decided rigidity of countenance, "to tell you what we know of that girl, and now we leave the matter with you"; which was a falsehood, if Miss Calthea was capable of telling one.

Then with much dignity she moved towards the door, and Mrs. Petter prepared to follow; but before going she turned with moist eyes towards Mrs. Cristie, and said:

"Indeed, indeed, you ought to be very careful; and no matter how you look at it, she is not fit for a nurse, as everybody can see. Make up your mind to send her away, and I'll go myself and get you a good one."

Glancing out of the door to see that the Lethbury lady was out of hearing, Mrs. Cristie said:

"You are very good, Mrs. Petter, and I know you wish me well, but tell me one thing; wasn't it Miss Rose who proposed that you should come to me with this story about Ida!"

"Of course I should have told you myself," said Mrs. Petter, "though I might have taken my time about it; but Calthea did not want to lose a minute, and said we must go right off and look for you. She was as mad as hops any way, for we were talking to Mr. Tippengray at the time, and Calthea does hate to be interrupted when she is talking to him. But don't you worry yourself any more than you can help, and remember my promise. I'll stick to it, you may count on that."

[Pg 152]

When Mrs. Cristie had been left to herself she gave enough time to the consideration of what had been told her to come to the following conclusion: "She shall not have him; I have made up my mind to that. Interrupted by Ida! Of course that is at the bottom of it." And having settled this matter, she relaxed into her former mood, and fell to thinking what she should do about the sweet-pea blossom.

She thought until the supper-bell rang, and then she rose and with a pretty smile and flush upon her face, which showed that her thoughts had not in the least worried her, she put the sweet-pea blossom into a little jar which she had brought from Florence, and which was just big enough for one small flower.

At supper Walter Lodloe was very quiet and very polite, and Mrs. Cristie, who was opposite to him, though not at all quiet, was also very polite, but bestowed her attention almost entirely upon

Mr. Tippengray, who sat beside her. The Greek scholar liked this, and his conversation sparkled.

Miss Calthea Rose, who had accepted Mrs. Petter's invitation to spend the night,—for if ever she was going to do anything at the Squirrel Inn, this was the time to do it,—did not like Mrs. Cristie's politeness, and her conversation did not sparkle. In fact she was quieter than Mr. Lodloe, and paid little heed to the chatter of her neighbor, Lanigan Beam. This young man was dissatisfied. There was a place at the table that was sometimes filled and sometimes not filled. At present it was empty.

[Pg 153]



MRS. CRISTIE CONSIDERS.

"I cannot see," said he, speaking to the company in general, "why babies are not brought to the table. I think they ought to be taught from the very beginning how to behave themselves at meals."

[Pg 154]

Mr. Petter fixed his eyes upon him, and, speaking through the young man, also addressed the company.

"I'm not altogether in favor of having small children at the table," said he. "Their food is different from ours, and their ways are often unpleasant; but I do think—"

"No, you don't," interrupted Mrs. Petter from the other end of the table—"you don't think anything of the kind. That has all been fixed and settled, and there's no use in bringing it up again."

Mr. Petter looked at his wife with a little flash in his eye, but he spoke quietly.

"There are some things," he said, "that can be unfixed and unsettled."

Mrs. Cristie hastened to stop this discussion.

"As I own the only baby in the house," she said, with a smile, "I may as well say that it is not coming to the table either by itself or in any other way."

A thought now tickled Mr. Tippengray. Without any adequate reason whatever, there came before him the vision of an opossum which he once had seen served at a Virginia dinner-table, plump and white, upon a china dish. And he felt almost irresistibly impelled to lean forward and ask Mr. Lodloe if he had ever read any of the works of Mr. Jonathan Carver, that noted American traveler of the last century; but he knew it wouldn't do, and he restrained himself. If he had thought Lodloe would understand him he would have made his observation in Greek, but even that would have been impolite to the rest of the company. So he kept his joke to himself, and, for fear that any one should perceive his amusement, he asked Mrs. Petter if she had ever noticed how much finer was the fur of a cat which slept out of doors than that of one which had been in the house. She had noticed it, but thought that the cat would prefer a snug rug by the fire to fine fur.

[Pg 155]

Calthea Rose said little and thought much. It was necessary that she should take in every possible point in the situation, and she was doing it. She did not like Mrs. Cristie's attention to Mr. Tippengray, because it gave him pleasure, and she did not wish that other women should give him pleasure; but she was not jealous, for that would have been absurd in this case.

But the apparent state of feeling at the table had given her an idea. She was thinking very bitterly of Mrs. Cristie, and would gladly do anything which would cause that lady discomfort. There seemed to be something wrong between her and Mr. Lodloe, otherwise the two lovers would be talking to each other, as was their custom. Perhaps she might find an opportunity to do something here. If, for instance, she could get the piqued gentleman to flirt a little with her,—and

she had no doubt of her abilities in this line,—it might cause Mrs. Cristie uneasiness. And here her scheme widened and opened before her. If in any way she could make life at the Squirrel Inn distasteful to Mrs. Cristie, that lady might go away. And in this case the whole problem that engrossed her would be solved, for of course the maid would go with the mistress.

[Pg 156]

Calthea's eyes brightened, and with a smile she half listened to something Lanigan Beam was saying to her.

"Yes," she thought; "that would settle the whole business. The widow is the person I ought to drive away; then they would all go, and leave him to me, as I had him before."

And now she listened a little, and talked a little, but still kept on thinking. It was really a very good thing that her feeling towards Mrs. Cristie had so suddenly changed, otherwise she might never have thought of this admirable scheme.

[Pg 157]

XX

AN INGENUOUS MAID



Mrs. Cristie was unusually prompt that evening in going to the relief of Ida Mayberry, but before she allowed that young woman to go down to her supper she put a question to her.

"What do you mean, Ida," she said, "by talking about dissecting babies? Whatever you may have done in that line, I do not think it is very nice to bring it forward when you have charge of a child."

"Of course it wasn't nice," replied Ida, "and I should never have thought of speaking of it if it had not been for that thing from Lethbury. She makes me so angry that I don't know what I say. You ought to hear Lanigan Beam talk about her. He has confided to me, although I am not sure that he should have done it."

"Of course not," said Mrs. Cristie, very promptly; "he should not have confided anything to you."

"Well," continued Ida, "he told me, but said he would not breathe it to any one else, that the great object of his life at present was to rid this neighborhood of Calthea Rose. He says she has been a plague to this community ever since he has known her. She is always ready to make mischief, and nobody can tell when or how she is going to do it. As for himself, he vows she has made it impossible for him to live here; and as he wishes to live here, he wants her to go."

[Pg 158]

"And how does he propose to make her go?" asked Mrs. Cristie.

"He wants her to marry Mr. Tippengray, which she is very willing to do, and then he is quite sure that they will go away and travel, and stay abroad for a long time. He knows that this will be the very thing that she would want to do."

"And I suppose," said Mrs. Cristie, "that Mr. Beam told you all this in order that you might be induced to help on the match between Mr. Tippengray and Miss Rose."

"That was exactly his object," said Ida; "he said that everybody ought to help in this good work."

"And then, I suppose, he would like to marry you," remarked Mrs. Cristie.

"He hasn't said so yet," replied Miss Mayberry, "but I think he would like to do it."

Mrs. Cristie brought down her little fist upon the table, regardless of her slumbering child.

"That man is utterly without a conscience," she exclaimed. "If he hadn't kept on engaging himself over and over again to Calthea Rose, she might have married somebody else, and gone away long ago. He has no one but himself to blame that she is still here to worry him and other people. And as to his wishing to sacrifice Mr. Tippengray to his ease and comfort, I think it is the most shameful thing I ever heard of. I hope, Ida, that you did not encourage him in this iniquitous scheme."

[Pg 159]

Ida laughed, but quietly—remembering the baby.

"Not much," she said; "in fact, I have determined, if I can, to rescue Mr. Tippengray from that clutching old thing."

"How?" asked Mrs. Cristie, quickly.

"By marrying him myself," said the nurse-maid.

"Ida Mayberry!" exclaimed Mrs. Cristie.

"Yes," said the other; "I have been considering the matter a good deal, and I think it can be done. He is much older than I am, but that isn't of great importance when people suit in other ways. Of course I would not wish to marry a very old man, even if he were suitable, for I should have to look forward to a married life so short that it would not pay; but Mr. Tippengray was not born so dreadfully far back, and he is one of those men who keep young for a long time. I think he likes

me, and I am sure I can easily make him like me more, if I choose. There is nobody here that I need be afraid of, excepting you, perhaps."

Mrs. Cristie looked at her in amazement.

"Me!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said Ida; "and this is the way of it. For a time I rather liked Lanigan Beam, for he's young and good-looking, and particularly because he seems very much in love with me; but although he pretends to be anxious to study, I know he is not very deep, and will probably soon tire of that. So when my sympathy for Mr. Tippengray was fairly aroused,—and it has been growing for some time,—it was easy enough to drop Lanigan; but before I allowed myself to become too much interested in Mr. Tippengray I had to consider all sides of the case. You seem to like Mr. Tippengray very much, and of course if you really made up your mind to prefer him to anybody else, one great object would be gained, just the same as if I married him, and he would be saved from the hole those two are digging for him."

[Pg 160]



A MATRIMONIAL CONVERSATION.

"And in that case," said Mrs. Cristie, repressing a strong disposition to laugh, "what would you do? Perhaps you would be content to take anything that might be left."

[Pg 161]

"I suppose you mean Mr. Lodloe," said Ida. "Well, to speak plainly, I have never thought that I had a right to take him into consideration, but if the field were entirely open, I would not hesitate a moment in preferring him to either of the others."

Now Mrs. Cristie laughed outright.

"I could never have imagined," she said, "that a young girl such as you are could have such practical and business-like views about matrimony."

"Well," said the nurse-maid, "I don't see anything out of the way in my views. I want to bring an intelligent judgment to bear upon everything I do, and if the higher education is of any good at all, it ought to help us to regulate our affections."

"I have nothing to say on the subject," said Mrs. Cristie, "except that they did not pretend to teach us that at Vassar. I don't see how you can bring yourself to such calculations. But one part of your scheme I approve of highly: positively you ought to drop Lanigan Beam. As to marrying Mr. Tippengray, that is your affair, and his affair. And you may be sure I shall not interfere in any way."

Ida looked at her and smiled.

"I wasn't very much afraid of that," she said, "though of course I thought I ought to steer clear of even a possible interference; but now I can go ahead with a clear conscience."

Mrs. Cristie felt drawn towards this ingenuous maid.

[Pg 162]

"Ida," she said, taking her by the hand, "as you have been so confiding towards me, I will say to you that since you have concluded to drop Mr. Beam your choice is decidedly restricted."

"I am glad to hear it," said the other, warmly; "he is a good man, and I think he has brains that you can count on. Is it all settled?"

"Oh, no, no!" said Mrs. Cristie; "and mind, Ida, don't you say a word of this to a living soul."

"Oh, you needn't be afraid of that," said Miss Mayberry; "I never betray confidences."

"I am afraid," said Mrs. Cristie to herself, as she stood alone by her baby's bedside, "that I went a little too far. It isn't settled yet, and it would have been better not to say anything about it. However"—and then her thoughts went wandering. She was going down-stairs and out of doors as soon as she had satisfied herself that Douglas could be prudently left to his slumbers.

[Pg 163]

TWISTED TRYSTS



Mrs. Cristie found the lower floor of the Squirrel Inn quite deserted. She stopped before a window in a Norman tower and looked out. Twilight was fading, but there was a young moon in the sky. By stepping a little to one side she could see the moon, with the evening star twinkling not far away from it. She did not go out, however, but slowly wandered into a long room under the roof of a Swiss chalet. Here she went out on a queer little balcony and sat down; but her view was cut off by an out-jutting upper story of the old English type, with rows of small-paned windows, and she soon came in from the balcony. There was a light burning in the taproom, and as she passed its open door she stopped for a moment and gazed reflectively at the row of dilapidated stuffed squirrels, each of which had once stood guard upon the guide-post to the inn. But she took no note of the squirrels, nor of anything else in the quiet room, but as she stood, and instinctively put her finger to her forehead, a resolution came.

[Pg 164]

"I will be sensible, like Ida," she thought. "I will go out and let things happen as they may."

She went out into the young moonlight and, glancing across the lawn, saw, near the edge of the bluff that commanded the western view, two persons sitting upon a bench. Their backs were towards her, but one of them she knew to be Calthea Rose.

"I hope that is not poor Mr. Tippengray," said Mrs. Cristie to herself. "If she has secured him already, and taken him out there, I am afraid that even Ida will not be able to get him away from her. Ida must still be at her supper. I should not have detained her so long."

But Ida was not at her supper. As she turned towards the end of the lawn Mrs. Cristie saw her nurse-maid slowly strolling over the grass, a man on each side of her. They were plainly to be seen, and one man was Mr. Tippengray and the other Lanigan Beam. The three were engaged in earnest conversation. Mrs. Cristie smiled.

"I need not have feared for Ida," she thought; "she must have made a bold stroke to leave her rival in the lurch in that way, but I suppose in order to get one man she has to take both. It is a little hard on Miss Calthea"; and with an amused glance towards the couple on the bluff she moved towards the gardens. Her mind was in a half-timorous and undetermined state, in which she would have been glad to wander about by herself and to meet nobody, or, if it so should happen, glad to meet somebody; and wistfully, but yet timidly, she wondered which it would be. All at once she heard a step behind her. In spite of herself she started and flushed, and, turning, saw Mr. Petter. The sight of this worthy gentleman was a shock to her. She had been sure he was sitting with Calthea Rose on the bluff. If it was not he, who was it?

[Pg 165]



**CALTHEA HOLDS HIM WITH
HER LISTENING EAR.**

"I am glad to see you, Mrs. Cristie," said the landlord of the inn, "for I want to speak with you. My mind is disturbed, and it is on account of your assistant, Miss Mayberry. She has been talked about in a way that I do not at all like. I may even say that my wife has been urging me to use my influence with you to get her dismissed. I assured Mrs. Petter, however, that I should use that influence, if it exists, in exactly the opposite direction. Shall we walk on together, Mrs. Cristie, while I speak further on the subject? I have a high opinion of Miss Mayberry. I like her because she is what I term blooded. Nothing pleases me so much as blooded service, and, I may add, blooded associations and possessions. So far as I am able to have it so, my horses, my cattle, and all my live stock are blooded. I consider my house, this inn, to be a blooded house. It can trace its

[Pg 166]

various lines of architectural ancestry to honorable origins. The company at my house, with the exception of Lanigan Beam,—who, however, is not a full guest, but rather a limited inmate, ascending by a ladder to his dormitory,—are, if you will excuse me for saying so, blooded. And that one of these guests should avail herself of blooded service is to me a great gratification, of which I hope I shall not be deprived. To see a vulgar domestic in Miss Mayberry's place would wound and pain me, and I may say, Mrs. Cristie that I have been able to see no reason whatever for such substitution."

[Pg 167]

Mrs. Cristie had listened without a word, but as she listened she had been asking herself who that could be with Calthea Rose. If it was not Walter Lodloe, who was it? And if it was he, why was he there? And if he was there, why did he stay there? Of course she was neither jealous nor worried nor troubled by such a thing, but the situation was certainly odd. She had come out expecting something, she did not know exactly what; it might not have been a walk among the sweet-pea blossoms, but she was very certain it was not a conversation with Mr. Petter, while Walter Lodloe sat over there in the moonlight with Calthea Rose.

"You need not have given yourself any anxiety," she said to her companion, "for I have not the slightest idea of discharging Ida. She suits me admirably, and what they say about her is all nonsense; of course I do not mean any disrespect to Mrs. Petter."

Mr. Petter deprecatingly waved his hand.

"I understand perfectly your reference to my wife," he said "Her mind, I think, has been acted upon by others. Allow me to say, madam, that your words have encouraged and delighted me. I feel we are moving in the right direction. I breathe better."

"How is it possible," thought Mrs. Cristie, during the delivery of this speech, "that he can sit there, and sit, and sit, and sit, when he knows at this hour I am always somewhere about the house or grounds, and never in my room? Well, if he likes to sit there, let him sit"; and with this she looked up with some vivacity into the face of her landlord and asked him if even his pigeons and his chickens were blooded, and if the pigs were also of good descent. As she spoke she slightly accelerated her pace.

[Pg 168]

Mr. Petter was very willing to walk faster, and to talk about all that appertained to his beloved Squirrel Inn, and so they walked and talked until they reached the garden and disappeared from view behind the tall shrubbery that bordered the central path.

Mrs. Petter sat on a little Dutch porch, looking out on the lawn, and her mind was troubled. She wished to talk to Mr. Petter, and here he was strolling about in the moonlight with that young widow. Of course there was nothing in it, and it was perfectly proper for him to be polite to his guests, but there were lines in politeness as well as in other things, and they ought to be drawn before people went off walking by themselves in the garden at an hour when most farmers were thinking about going to bed. The good lady sat very uneasily on her little bench. The night air felt damp to her and disagreeable; she was sure there were spiders and other things running about the porch floor, and there were no rounds to the bench on which she could put her feet. But she could not bear to go in, for she had not the least idea in the world where they had gone to. Perhaps they might walk all the way to Lethbury, for all she knew. At this moment a man came up to the porch. It was Lanigan Beam, and his soul was troubled. The skilful Miss Mayberry had so managed the conversation in which she and the two gentlemen were engaged, that its subject matter became deeper and deeper in its character, until poor Lanigan found that it was getting very much too deep for him. As long as he could manage to keep his head above water he stood bravely, but when he was obliged to raise himself on the tips of his toes, and even then found the discourse rising above his chin, obliging him to shut his mouth and to blink his eyes, he thought it wise to strike out for shore before he made a pitiful show of his lack of mental stature.

[Pg 169]

And in a very bad humor Lanigan walked rapidly to the house, where he was much surprised to see Mrs. Petter on the little Dutch porch.

"Why, madam," he exclaimed, "I thought you never sat out after nightfall."

"As a rule, I don't," the good lady answered, "and I oughtn't to now; but the fact is—" She hesitated, but it was not necessary to finish the sentence. Mr. Petter and Mrs. Cristie emerged from the garden and stood together just outside its gate. He was explaining to her the origin of some of the peculiar features of the Squirrel Inn.

When the eyes of Mr. Beam fell upon these two, who stood plainly visible in the moonlight, while he and Mrs. Petter were in shadow, his trouble was dissipated by a mischievous hilarity.

"Well, well, well!" said he, "she *is* a woman."

"Of course she is," said Mrs. Petter; "and what of that, I'd like to know?"

"Now that I think of it," said Lanigan, with a finger on the side of his nose, "I remember that she and her young man didn't have much to say to each other at supper. Quarreled, perhaps. And she is comforting herself with a little flirt with Mr. Petter."

[Pg 170]

"Lanigan Beam, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," cried the good lady; "you know Mr. Petter never flirts."

"Well, perhaps *he* doesn't," said Lanigan; "but if I were you, Mrs. Petter, I would take him out a

shawl or something to put over his shoulders. He oughtn't to be standing out there in the night wind."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," she answered shortly, "and I oughtn't to be out here in the night air either."

Lanigan gazed at Mrs. Cristie and her companion. If that charming young widow wanted some one to walk about with her in the moonlight, she could surely do better than that. Perhaps a diversion might be effected and partners changed.

"Mrs. Petter," said he, "I wouldn't go in, if I were you. If you move about you will be all right. Suppose we stroll over that way."

"I am ready to stroll," said Mrs. Petter, in a tone that showed she had been a good deal stirred by her companion's remarks, "but I am not going to stroll over that way. The place is big enough for people to keep to themselves, if they choose, and I am one that chooses, and I choose to walk in the direction of my duty, or, more properly, the duty of somebody else, and see that the hen-houses are shut"; and, taking Lanigan's arm, she marched him down to the barn, and then across a small orchard to the most distant poultry-house within the limits of the estate.

[Pg 171]

When Mr. Stephen Petter, allowing his eyes to drop from the pointed roof of his high tower, saw his wife and Lanigan Beam walking away among the trees in the orchard, he suddenly became aware that the night air was chilly, and suggested to his companion that it might be well to return to the house.

"Oh, not yet, Mr. Petter," said she; "I want you to tell me how you came to have that little turret over the thatched roof."

She had determined that she would not go indoors while Caltha Rose and Mr. Lodloe sat together on that bench.

Early in the evening Miss Caltha had seen Mr. Lodloe walking by himself upon the bluff, and she so arranged a little promenade of her own that in passing around some shrubbery she met him near the bench. Miss Caltha was an admirable manager in dialogue, and if she had an object in view it did not take her long to find out what her collocutor liked to talk about. She had unusual success in discovering something which very much interested Mr. Lodloe, and they were soon seated on a bench discussing the manners and ways of life in Lethbury.

To a man who recently had been seized with a desire to marry and to live in Lethbury, and who had already taken some steps in regard to the marriage, this subject was one of the most lively interest, and Lodloe was delighted to find what a sensible, practical, and well-informed woman was Miss Rose. She was able to give him all sorts of points about buying a building or renting houses in Lethbury, and she entered with the greatest zeal into the details of living, service, the cost of keeping a horse, a cow, and poultry, and without making any inconvenient inquiries into the reasons for Mr. Lodloe's desire for information on these subjects. She told him everything he wanted to know about housekeeping in her native village, because she had made herself aware that his mind was set on that sort of thing. In truth she did not care whether he settled in Lethbury or some other place, or whether he ever married and settled at all. All she wished was to talk to him in such a way that she might keep him with her as long as possible. She wished this because she liked to keep a fine-looking young man all to herself, and also because she thought that the longer she did so the more uneasiness she would cause Mrs. Cristie.

[Pg 172]

She had convinced herself that it would not do for life to float too smoothly at the Squirrel Inn. She would stir up things here and there, but prudently, so that no matter who became disgusted and went away, it would not be Mr. Tippengray. She was not concerned at present about this gentleman. It was ten to one that by this time Lanigan Beam had driven him away from the child's nurse.

Walter Lodloe was now beginning to feel that it was quite time that his conversation with Miss Rose, which had really lasted much longer than he supposed, should be brought to a close. His manner indicating this, Miss Caltha immediately entered into a most attractive description of a house picturesquely situated on the outskirts of Lethbury, which would probably soon be vacated on account of the owner's desire to go West.

[Pg 173]

At the other end of the extensive lawn two persons walked backward and forward near the edge of the trees perfectly satisfied and untroubled. What the rest of the world was doing was of no concern whatever to either of them.

"I am afraid, Mr. Tippengray," said the nurse-maid, "that when your Greek version of the literature of to-day, especially its humorous portion, is translated into the American language of the future it will lose much of its point and character."

"You must remember, my dear Miss Mayberry," said the gentleman, "that we do not know what our language will be in eight hundred or a thousand years from now. The English of to-day may be utterly unintelligible to the readers of that era, but that portion of our literature which I put into imperishable and unchangeable Greek will be the same then as now. The scholar may read it for his own pleasure and profit, or he may translate it for the pleasure and profit of others. At all events, it will be there, like a fly in amber, good for all time. All you have to do is to melt your amber, and there you have your fly."

"And a well-shriveled-up fly it would be, I am afraid," said Ida.

Mr. Tippengray laughed.

"Be not too sure of that," he said. "I will translate some of my Greek version of 'Pickwick' back into English, and let you see for yourself how my amber preserves the fly."

"Let me do it," said Ida. "It is a long time since I read 'Pickwick,' and therefore my translation will be a better test."

[Pg 174]

"Capital!" cried Mr. Tippengray. "I will copy a few lines for you to-night."

From out an open Elizabethan window under a mansard roof, and overlooking a small Moorish veranda, there came a sound of woe. The infant Douglas had awakened from a troubled sleep, and with a wild and piercing cry he made known to his fellow-beings his desire for society. Instantly there was a kaleidoscopic change among the personages on the grounds of the Squirrel Inn. Miss Mayberry darted towards the house; the Greek scholar, without knowing what he was doing, ran after her for a short distance, and then stopped; Mrs. Petter screamed from the edge of the orchard to know what was the matter; and Lanigan ran to see. Mr. Petter, the natural guardian of the place, pricked up his ears and strode towards the inn, his soul filled with a sudden fear of fire. Mrs. Cristie recognized the voice of her child, but saw Ida running, and so, relieved of present anxiety, remained where her companion had left her.

Walter Lodloe, hearing Mrs. Petter's voice and the running, sprang from his seat; and seeing that it would be impossible to detain him now, and preferring to leave rather than to be left, Miss Calthea hurried away to see what was the matter.

[Pg 175]

XXII

THE BLOSSOM AND THE LITTLE JAR



Perceiving Mrs. Cristie standing alone near the entrance to the garden, Walter Lodloe walked rapidly towards her. As he approached she moved in the direction of the house.

"Will you not stop a moment?" he said. "Do not go in yet."

"I must," she answered; "I have been out here a long while—too long."

"Out here a long time!" he exclaimed. "You surprise me. Please stop one moment. I want to tell you of a most interesting conversation I have had with Miss Rose. It has animated me wonderfully."

Considering what had occurred that afternoon, this remark could not fail to impress Mrs. Cristie, and she stopped and looked at him. He did not give her time to ask any questions, but went on:

"I have been asking her about life in Lethbury—houses, gardens, everything that relates to a home in that delightful village. And what she has told me opens a paradise before me. I did not dream that down in that moon-lighted valley I should be almost rich; that I could offer you—"

[Pg 176]

"And may I ask," she interrupted, "if you have been talking about me to Miss Rose?"

"Not a word of it," he answered warmly. "I never mentioned your name, nor referred to you in any way."

She could not help ejaculating a little sarcastically:

"How circumspect!"

"And now," he said, coming closer to her, "will you not give me an answer? I love you, and I cannot wait. And oh! speak quickly, for here comes Mrs. Petter straight towards us."

"I do not like Lethbury," said Mrs. Cristie.

Lodloe could have stamped his feet, in the fire of his impatience.

"But of me, of myself," he said. "And oh! speak quickly, she is almost here."

"Please cease," said Mrs. Cristie; "she will hear you."

Mrs. Petter came up panting.

"I don't want to interrupt you, Mrs. Cristie," she said, "but really and truly you ought to go to your baby. He has stopped crying in the most startling and suspicious way. Of course I don't know what she has done to him, and whether it's anything surgical or laudanum. And it isn't for me to be there to smell the little creature's breath; but you ought to go this minute, and if you find there is anything needed in the way of mustard, or hot water, or sending for the doctor, just call to me from the top of the stairs."

[Pg 177]

"My dear Mrs. Petter," said Mrs. Cristie, "why didn't Calthea Rose come and tell me this herself,

instead of sending you?"

"She said that she thought you would take it better from me than from her; and after we had made up our minds about it, she said I ought not to wait a second."

"Well," said Mrs. Cristie, "it was very good in you to come to me, but I do not feel in the least alarmed. It was Ida's business to quiet the child, and I have no doubt she did it without knives or poison. But now that you are here, Mrs. Petter, I wish to ask your opinion about something that Mr. Lodloe has been talking of to me."

The young man looked at her in astonishment.

"He has been telling me," continued Mrs. Cristie, "of a gentleman he knows, a person of education, and accustomed to society, who had conceived the idea of living in Lethbury. Now what do you think of that?"

"Well," said Mrs. Petter, "if he's married, and if his wife's got the asthma, or he's got it himself, I have heard that Lethbury is good for that sort of complaint. Or if he's failed in business and has to live cheap; or if he is thinking of setting up a store where a person can get honest wash-goods; or if he has sickly children, and isn't particular about schools, I suppose he might as well come to Lethbury as not."

"But he has none of those reasons for settling here," said Mrs. Cristie.

"Well, then," remarked Mrs. Petter, somewhat severely, "he must be weak in his mind. And if he's that, I don't think he's needed in Lethbury."

[Pg 178]

As she finished speaking the good woman turned and beheld her husband just coming out of the house. Being very desirous of having her talk with him, and not very well pleased at the manner in which her mission had been received, she abruptly betook herself to the house.

"Now, then," said Mrs. Cristie, turning to Lodloe, "what do you think of that very explicit opinion?"

"Does it agree with yours?" he asked.

"Wonderfully," she replied. "I could not have imagined that Mrs. Petter and I were so much of a mind."

"Mrs. Cristie," said Lodloe, "I drop Lethbury, and here I stand with nothing but myself to offer you."

The moon had now set, the evening was growing dark, and the lady began to feel a little chilly about the shoulders.

"Mr. Lodloe," she asked, "what did you do with that bunch of sweet peas you picked this afternoon?"

"They are in my room," he said eagerly. "I have put them in water. They are as fresh as when I gathered them."

"Well," she said, speaking rather slowly, "if to-morrow, or next day, or any time when it may be convenient, you will bring them to me, I think I will take them."

[Pg 179]



THE BABY AND THE SWEET-PEA BLOSSOM.

In about half an hour Mrs. Cristie went into the house, feeling that she had stayed out entirely too late. In her room she found Ida reading by a shaded lamp, and the baby sleeping soundly. The nurse-maid looked up with a smile, and then turned her face again to her book. Mrs. Cristie stepped quietly to the mantelpiece, on which she had set the little jar from Florence, but to her surprise there was nothing in it. The sweet-pea blossom was gone. After looking here and there

[Pg 180]

upon the floor, she went over to Ida, and in a low voice asked her if she had seen anything of a little flower that had been in that jar.

"Oh, yes," said the girl, putting down her book; "I gave it to baby to amuse him, and the instant he took it he stopped crying, and very soon went to sleep. There it is; I declare, he is holding it yet."

Mrs. Cristie went softly to the bedside of the child and, bending over him, gently drew the sweet-pea blossom from his chubby little fist.

[Pg 181]

XXIII

HAMMERSTEIN



Miss Calthea Rose was up and about very early the next morning. She had work to do in which there must be no delay or loss of opportunity. It was plain enough that her scheme for driving away Ida Mayberry had failed, and, having carefully noted the extraordinary length of time which Mrs. Cristie and Mr. Lodloe spent together under the stars the previous evening, she was convinced that it would not be easy to make that lady dissatisfied with the Squirrel Inn. She therefore determined to turn aside from her plans of exile, to let the child's nurse stay where she pleased, to give no further thought to Lanigan Beam, and to devote all her energies to capturing Mr. Tippengray. She believed that she had been upon the point of doing this before the

arrival of intruders on the scene, and she did not doubt that she could reach that point again.

Miss Calthea was very restless that morning; she was much more anxious to begin work than was anybody else on the place. She walked about the ground, went into the garden, passed the summer-house on her way there and back again, and even wandered down to the barnyard, where the milking had just begun. If any one had been roaming about like herself, she could not have failed to observe such person. But there was no one about until a little before breakfast-time, when Mr. Petter showed himself.

[Pg 182]

This gentleman greeted Calthea coolly. He had had a very animated conversation with his wife on the evening before, and had been made acquainted with the unwarrantable enmity exhibited by this village shopkeeper toward Mrs. Cristie's blooded assistant. He was beginning to dislike Calthea, and he remembered that the Rockmores never liked her, and he wished very much that she would cease to spend so much of her time at his house. After breakfast Calthea was more fortunate. She saw the Greek scholar walking upon the lawn, with a piece of writing-paper in his hand. In less than five minutes, by the merest accident in the world, Mr. Tippengray was walking across the lawn with Miss Rose, and he had put his piece of paper into his pocket.

She wanted to ask him something. She would detain him only a few minutes. The questions she put to him had been suggested to her by something she had read that morning—a most meager and unsatisfactory passage. She held in her hand the volume which, although she did not tell him so, had taken her a half-hour to select in Mr. Petter's book room. Shortly they were seated together, and he was answering her questions which, as she knew, related to the most interesting experiences of his life. As he spoke his eyes glistened and her soul warmed. He did not wish that this should be so. He wanted to bring this interview to an end. He was nervously anxious to go back on the lawn, that he might see Miss Mayberry when she came out of doors; that he might show her the lines of "Pickwick" which he had put into Greek, and which she was to turn back into English.

[Pg 183]

But he could not cut short the interview. Miss Calthea was not an Ancient Mariner; she had never even seen the sea, and she had no glittering eye, but she held him with a listening ear, and never was wedding guest, or any other man, held more securely.

Minutes, quarter-hours, half-hours passed and still he talked and she listened. She guided his speech as a watchful sailor guides his ship, and whichever way she turned it the wind always filled his sails. For the first ten minutes he had been ill at ease, but after that he had begun to feel that he had never so much enjoyed talking. In time he forgot everything but what he had to say, and it was rapture to be able to say it, and to feel that never before had he said it so well.

His back was towards the inn, but through some trees Miss Calthea could see that Mr. Petter's spring wagon, drawn by the two grays, Stolzenfels and Falkenberg, was at the door, and soon she perceived that Mr. Lodloe was in the driver's place, and that Mrs. Cristie, with Ida Mayberry holding the baby, was on the back seat. The place next Lodloe was vacant, and they seemed to be waiting for some one. Then Lanigan Beam came up. There was a good deal of conversation, in which he seemed to be giving information, and presently he sprang up beside the driver and they were off. The party were going for a long drive, Miss Calthea thought, because Mrs. Petter had come out and had put a covered basket into the back of the wagon.

[Pg 184]

Mr. Tippengray was so absorbed in the interest of what he was saying that he did not hear the roll of the departing wheels, and Miss Calthea allowed him to talk on for nearly a quarter of an hour until she thought she had exhausted the branch of the subject on which he was engaged,

and was sure the spring wagon was out of sight and hearing. Then she declared that she had not believed that any part of the world could be as interesting as that region which Mr. Tippengray had been describing to her, and that she was sorry she could not sit there all the morning and listen to him, but duty was duty, and it was necessary for her to return to Lethbury.

This announcement did not seem in the least to decrease the good spirits of the Greek scholar, but his chin and his spirits fell when, on reaching the house, he heard from Mrs. Petter that his fellow-guests had gone off for a long drive.

"They expected to take you, Mr. Tippengray," said his hostess, "but Lanigan Beam said he had seen you and Miss Rose walking across the fields to Lethbury, and so they asked him to go. I hope they'll be back to dinner, but there's no knowing, and so I put in a basket of sandwiches and things to keep them from starving before they get home."

Miss Calthea was quite surprised.

[Pg 185]

"We were sitting over yonder the whole time," she said, "very much occupied with talking, it is true, but near enough to hear if we had been called. I fancy that Lanigan had reasons of his own for saying we had gone to Lethbury."

Poor Mr. Tippengray was downcast. How much time must elapse before he would have an opportunity to deliver the piece of paper he had in his pocket! How long would he be obliged to lounge around by himself waiting for Ida Mayberry to return!

"Well," said Calthea, "I must go home, and as I ought to have been there long ago, I am going to ask Mr. Petter to lend me a horse and buggy. It's the greatest pity, Mr. Tippengray, that you have lost your drive with your friends, but as you can't have that, suppose you take one with me. I don't mind acknowledging to you that I am a little afraid of Mr. Petter's horses, but with you driving I should feel quite safe."

If Mr. Tippengray could have immediately thought of any good reason why he should have staid at home that morning he would probably have given it, but none came into his mind. After all, he might as well be driving to Lethbury as staying there doing nothing, and there could be no doubt that Miss Calthea was very agreeable that morning. Consequently he accepted the invitation.

Calthea Rose went herself to the barn to speak to Mr. Petter about the horse, and especially requested that he would lend her old Zahringen, whom she knew to be the most steady of beasts, but Zahringen had gone to be shod, and there was no horse at her service except Hammerstein, and no vehicle but a village cart. Hammerstein was a better horse than Zahringen, and would take Calthea home more rapidly, which entirely suited Mr. Petter.

[Pg 186]

It may be here remarked that the barn and stables were not of Mr. Petter's building, but in order that they might not be entirely exempt from the influence of his architectural fancies, he had given his horses the names of certain castles on the Rhine.

Calthea was not altogether satisfied with the substitution of the big black horse for the fat brown one, but she could make no reasonable objection, and the vehicle was soon at the door.

Mr. Tippengray was very fond of driving, and his spirits had risen again. But he was a good deal surprised when Miss Calthea declined to take the seat beside him, preferring to occupy the rear seat with her back to the horse. By turning a little to one side, she said she could talk just as well, and it was more comfortable in such a small vehicle as a village cart to have a whole seat to one's self.

As soon as they were in the road that ran through the woods she proved that she could twist herself around so as to talk to her companion, and look him in the face, quite as easily as if she had been sitting beside him. They chatted together, and looked each other in the face, and the Greek scholar enjoyed driving very much until they had gone a mile or more on the main road, and had come upon an overturned wagon lying by the roadside. At this Hammerstein and the conversation suddenly stopped. The big black horse was very much opposed to overturned vehicles. He knew that in some way they were connected with disaster, and he would not willingly go near one. He stood head up, ears forward, and slightly snorting. Mr. Tippengray was annoyed by this nonsense.

[Pg 187]



MISS CALTHEA STEPS OUT.

"Go on!" he cried, "Get up!" Then the driver took the whip from the socket and gave the horse a good crack. [Pg 188]

"Get up!" he cried.

Hammerstein obeyed, but got up in a manner which Mr. Tippengray did not intend. He arose upon his hind legs, and pawed the air, appearing to the two persons behind him like a tall, black, unsteady steeple.

When a horse harnessed to a village cart sees fit to rear, the hind part of the vehicle is brought very near to the ground, so that a person sitting on the back seat can step out without trouble. Miss Calthea perceived this and stepped out. On general principles she had known that it was safer to alight from the hind seat of a village cart than from the front seat.

"Don't pull at him that way," she cried from the opposite side of the road, "he will go over backwards on top of you. Let him alone and perhaps he will stop rearing."

Hammerstein now stood on all his feet again, and Miss Calthea earnestly advised Mr. Tippengray to turn him around and drive back.

"I am not far from home now," she said, "and can easily walk there. I really think I do not care to get in again. But I am sure he will go home to his stable without giving you any trouble." [Pg 189]

But Mr. Tippengray's spirit was up, and he would not be conquered by a horse, especially in the presence of a lady.

"I shall make him pass it," he cried, and he brought down his whip on Hammerstein's back with such force that the startled animal gave a great bound forward, and then, finding himself so near the dreaded wreck, he gave a wilder bound, and passed it. Then, being equipped with blinders, which did not allow him to see behind him, he did not know but the frightful wagon, its wheels uppermost, was wildly pursuing him, and, fearing that this might be so, he galloped onward with all his speed.

The Greek scholar pulled at the reins and shouted in such a way that Hammerstein was convinced that he was being urged to use all efforts to get away from the oncoming monster. He did not turn into the Lethbury road when he came to it, but kept straight on. At such a moment the straighter the road the better. Going down a long hill, Mr. Tippengray, still pulling and shouting, and now hatless, perceived, some distance ahead of him, a boy standing by the roadside. It was easy enough for the practised eye of a country boy to take in the state of affairs, and his instincts prompted him to skip across the road and open a gate which led into a field recently plowed.

Mr. Tippengray caught at the boy's idea and, exercising all his strength, he turned Hammerstein into the open gateway. When he had made a dozen plunges into the deep furrows and through the soft yielding loam, the horse concluded that he had had enough of that sort of exercise, and stopped. Mr. Tippengray, whose senses had been nearly bounced out of him, sprang from the cart, and, slipping on the uneven surface of the ground, tumbled into a deep furrow, from which, however, he instantly arose without injury, except to his clothes. Hurrying to the head of the horse he found the boy already there, holding the now quiet animal. The Greek scholar looked at him admiringly. [Pg 190]

"My young friend," said he, "that was a noble thought, worthy of a philosopher."

The boy grinned.

"They generally stop when they get into a plowed field," he said. "What skeered him?"

Mr. Tippengray briefly related the facts of the case, and the horse was led into the road. It was soon ascertained that no material harm had been done to harness or vehicle.

"Young man," said Mr. Tippengray, "what will you take for your hat!"

The boy removed his head-covering and looked at it. It was of coarse straw, very wide, very much out of shape, without a band, and with a hole in the crown surrounded by a tuft of broken straw.

"Well," said he, "it ain't worth much now, but it'll take a quarter to buy a new one."

"Here is a quarter for your hat," said the Greek scholar, "and another for your perspicacity. I suppose I shall find my hat on the road, but I cannot wait for that. The sun is too hot." [Pg 191]



"WHAT SKEERED HIM?"

The Greek scholar now started homeward, leading Hammerstein. He liked walking, and had no intention whatever of again getting into that cart. If, when they reached the overturned wagon, the animal should again upheave himself, or in any way misbehave, Mr. Tippengray intended to let go of him, and allow him to pursue his homeward way in such manner and at such speed as might best please him.

[Pg 192]



MR. TIPPENGRAY STOPPED AND LISTENED.

The two walked a long distance without reaching the object of Hammerstein's fright, and Mr. Tippengray began to think that the road was a good deal narrower and more shaded than he had supposed it to be. The fact was, that a road diverged from the right, near the top of the hill, which he had not noticed when passing it in mad career, and naturally turning to the right, without thinking very much about it, he had taken this road instead of the one by which he had come. Our scholar, however, did not yet comprehend that he was on the wrong road, and kept on.

[Pg 193]

Soon his way led through the woods, with great outstretching trees, with wide-open spaces, interspersed here and there with masses of undergrowth. Mr. Tippengray greatly enjoyed the shaded road, the smell of the pines, and the flowers scattered along the edges of the wood. But in a few minutes he would doubtless have discovered that he had gone astray, and, notwithstanding the pleasantness of his surroundings, he would have turned back, had he not suddenly heard voices not far away. He stopped and listened.

The voices came from behind a clump of evergreens close by the roadside, and to his utter amazement Mr. Tippengray heard the voice of Lanigan Beam saying to some one that true love must speak out, and could not be silenced; that for days he had been looking for an opportunity, and now that it had come she must hear him, and know that his heart was hers only, and could never belong to anybody else. Then the voice of Ida Mayberry, very clear and distinct, replied that he must not talk to her in that way, that her line of life and his were entirely different. And she was doubtless going to say more, when her companion interrupted, and vowed with all possible earnestness that whatever line of life she chose should be his line; that he would gladly give up every plan and purpose, follow her in whatever direction she chose to lead, and do whatever she wished he should do.

Mr. Tippengray was very uneasy. The subject-matter of the conversation he was overhearing disturbed him in a manner which he did not understand, and he felt, moreover, that it was not proper for him to listen to another word. He did not know what to do; if he moved forward they would hear the wheels, and know that he had been near, and if he attempted to back out of the vicinity there was no knowing what hubbub he and Hammerstein might create. While standing undecided, he heard Lanigan speak thus:

[Pg 194]

"And as for Greek, and that sort of thing, you shall have all you want. I'll hire old Tippengray by the year; he shall be the family pedagogue, and we'll tap him for any kind of learning we may happen to want."

Instantly all thought of retreat fled from the mind of the scholar; his eyes glittered, and he was on the point of doing something, when there came from a little distance the voice of Mrs. Cristie, loudly calling for Ida. There was shuffling of feet, and in a few moments Mr. Tippengray

perceived the nurse-maid rapidly walking away between the trees while Lanigan leisurely followed.

With head erect and nostrils dilated, as if he had been excited by the perception of something upside down, Mr. Tippetgray again laid hold of the bridle of Hammerstein, and went on. In a few minutes he emerged upon an open space, through which flowed a little brook, and where sat Mrs. Cristie, Lodloe, Ida Mayberry with the baby in her lap, and Lanigan Beam. All of these persons, excepting the infant, were eating sandwiches.

At the sight of the little man and the tall horse, the former spattered with mud, smeared with the earth of the plowed field, and crowned with a misshapen hat with the expansive hole in the top, the sandwich-eaters stopped eating, gazed open-eyed, and then burst out laughing. Mr. Tippetgray did not laugh; his eyes still glittered.

[Pg 195]

It was half an hour before the tale was told, order restored, and Mr. Tippetgray had washed his face and hands in the brook and taken refreshment. Then he found himself alone with Mrs. Cristie.

"Truly you have had a hard time," said she, kindly.

"Madam," answered the Greek scholar, "you are entirely correct. This has been an unfortunate day for me. I have been cunningly entrapped, and heartlessly deserted; I have been nearly frightened out of my wits; have had my soul nearly burned out of my body, and have been foully besmirched with dirt and mud. But, worse than all, I have heard myself made the subject of contempt and contumely."

"How is that?" exclaimed Mrs. Cristie. "I do not understand."

"I will quickly make it plain to you," said the indignant scholar, and he related the conversation he had overheard.

"What a shameful way to speak of you, Mr. Tippetgray!" cried Mrs. Cristie. "I did not suppose that Mr. Beam would dare to say such things to one whom he knew to be your friend. I have no doubt that if I had not called Ida at that moment, you would have heard her resent that disrespectful speech."

"I hope so; with all my heart, I hope so," replied the Greek scholar.

He said this with so much feeling that his companion looked at him a few moments without speaking.

[Pg 196]

"Mr. Tippetgray," she said presently, "it is time for us to go home. How would you like to take Ida Mayberry back in your cart?"

The brightness in the eyes of the Greek scholar changed from the glitter of indignation to gleams of joy.

"Madam," said he, "I should like it of all things. It would remove from the anticipated pleasures of this day the enormous Alpha privative which has so far overshadowed them."

The young widow did not exactly comprehend this answer, but it was enough to know that he was glad to accept the opportunity she offered him. No sooner had he spoken than Mr. Tippetgray remembered the hazards to which he was exposing himself by again taking the reins of Hammerstein, but not for an instant did he think of drawing back. His desire to take Ida Mayberry away from that fellow, and have her by himself, overpowered fear and all other feelings.

Mrs. Cristie's arrangement for the return pleased everybody except Lanigan Beam. The nurse-maid was perfectly willing to go in the village cart, and was not at all afraid of horses, and Walter Lodloe had no objection to sit on the back seat of the wagon with his lady-love, and help take care of the baby. Lanigan made few remarks about the situation; he saw that he had made a mistake, and was being punished for it, and without remonstrance he took the front seat and the reins of the grays.

[Pg 197]

XXIV

TRANSLATIONS



Lanigan Beam had no more fear of Mr. Tippetgray as a rival than he would have had of Mr. Petter, but the apportionment of companions for the return trip nettled him a good deal, and, as a consequence of this, the pair of grays traveled homeward at a smarter pace, and Hammerstein and the village cart were soon left far behind.

The road was not the one by which Mr. Tippetgray had arrived on the scene, but led through the woods to the main road, which it joined at a point not far from the sign of the Squirrel Inn. Hammerstein traveled very quietly and steadily of his own accord, slackening his gait at the rough places, thus

giving Mr. Tippengray every opportunity for an uninterrupted converse with his fellow scholar; and he lost no time in submitting to her his Greek version of the lines from "Pickwick."

"I am very glad you have it with you," said Ida, "for I put my Greek dictionary in my pocket this morning, when I first came down, hoping to have a chance to do some translating, and what better chance could I have than this?" [Pg 198]



THE TRANSLATION.

Drawing out her dictionary and a little blank-book she immediately began her labors. Mr. Tippengray did not altogether like this. He felt an intense and somewhat novel desire to converse with the young woman on no matter what subject, and he would have preferred that she should postpone the translation. But he would not interrupt the engrossing occupation into which she now plunged with ardor. Rapidly turning backward and forward the leaves of the little dictionary, and tapping her front teeth with her pencil as she puzzled over the correlation of Greek and English words and expressions, she silently pursued her work.

Although he did not talk to her, it was very pleasant for Mr. Tippengray to sit and look upon this fair young scholar. At her request he made the tall steed walk, in order that her pencil might not be too much joggled, slyly thinking, the while, that thus the interview would be prolonged. The air was warm and balmy. Everything was still about them. They met no one, and every minute Mr. Tippengray became more and more convinced that, next to talking to her, there could be no greater joy in life than basking in the immediate atmosphere of this girl. [Pg 199]

At last she shut up her dictionary.

"Now, then!" she exclaimed, "I have translated it, and I assure you that it is a fair and square version, for I do not in the least remember the original paragraph."

"I have the original here," said Mr. Tippengray, pulling the second volume of "Pickwick" from his pocket, "and we will compare it with your translation, if you will be so good as to read it. You do not know with what anxious enthusiasm I await the result."

"And I, too," said Ida, earnestly. "I do not think there could be a better test of the power of the Greek language to embalm and preserve for future generations the spirit of Dickens. Now I will read, and you can compare my work with the original as I go on."

The translation ran thus:

"For the reason that he who drives a vehicle of the post-road holds high office above the masses," to him answered the Sire Weller with eyes affiliated; "for the reason that he who drives a vehicle of the post-road acteth at will, undoubted, humanity otherwise prohibited. For the reason that he who drives a vehicle of the post-road is able to look with affection on a woman of eighty far distant, though it is not publicly believed that in the midst of any it is his desire to wed. Among males which one discourseth similarly, Sammy?" [Pg 200]

"I wrote Sammy," she explained, "because I remembered that is the way the name is used in English."

Mr. Tippengray raised his eyebrows very high, and his chin slowly began to approach the sailor knot of his cravat.

"Oh, dear," he said, "I am afraid that this would not express to future ages the spirit and style of Dickens. The original passage runs thus," and he read:

"'Cos a coachman's a privileged individual," replied Mr. Weller, looking fixedly at his son. "'Cos a coachman may do without suspicion wot other men may not; 'cos a coachman may be on the very amicablest terms with eighty mile o' females and yet nobody thinks that he ever means to marry any vun among 'em. And wot other man can say the same, Sammy?"

"They are not much alike, are they?" said Miss Mayberry. "I think if Dickens could read my translation he would not in the least recognize it. The fact is, Mr. Tippengray, I do not believe that your method of Greek pickling will answer to preserve our fiction for the future. It may do for histories and scientific work, but when you come to dialect and vernacular, if you once get it into Greek you can never get it back again as it used to be."

"That will be a great pity," said Mr. Tippengray, "for fiction makes up such a large part of our literature. And it does seem that good English might be properly translated into good Greek." [Pg 201]

"Oh, it isn't the translation," said Ida; "that is all easy enough: it's the resurrection back into the original condition. Look at the prophet Enoch. He was translated, but if it were possible now to bring him back again, he would not be the same Enoch, you know."

"One might infer from that simile," said the Greek scholar, smiling, "that when a bit of English gets into Greek it goes to heaven, and would better stay there. Perhaps you are right in what you say about fiction. Anyway it is very pleasant to talk with one who can appreciate this subject, and reason sensibly about it."

Mr. Tippetgray shut up his book and put it back into his pocket, while his companion tore her translation from her note-book and scattered it in little bits along the road.

"I would not like it," she said, "if any one but you were to read that and know I did it."

Mr. Tippetgray's eyes and Mr. Tippetgray's heart turned towards her. Those words, "any one but you," touched him deeply. He had a feeling as if he were being translated into something better than his original self, and that this young woman was doing it. He wished to express this in some way, and to say a good many other things which came crowding upon his mind, but he expressed nothing and said none of these things. An exclamation from Ida caused him to look in front of him, and there was the spring wagon with the horses standing still.

Mrs. Cristie turned round and called to them:

"Mr. Beam says that there are some by-roads just ahead of us, and as he was afraid you might turn into one and get lost, he thought it better to wait for you." [Pg 202]

"Nonsense!" cried Miss Mayberry; "there was no danger that we would turn into any by-ways. The road is plain enough."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Mr. Tippetgray to himself. "I think that just now I was on the point of turning into a by-way."

The wagon now moved slowly on, and the village cart followed. Mr. Tippetgray would gladly have dropped a good deal behind, but he found this not practicable, because whenever he made Hammerstein walk Stolzenfels and Falkenberg also walked. It was plain enough that Lanigan Beam did not wish any longer to cut himself off from the society of the lady to whom he had made a proposal of marriage, and whenever he could find a pretext, which was not difficult for Lanigan, he called back to her to direct her attention to something, or to ask her opinion about something. Miss Mayberry did not respond with any readiness, but the persistence of the young man succeeded in making the conversation a general one, and the Greek scholar made no attempt to explain to the nurse-maid that he was in course of translation.

Dinner was very late at the Squirrel Inn that day, and Mrs. Petter gave her guests a scolding. But this did not in the least disturb the mind of Mr. Tippetgray, who was well used to being scolded for coming late to his meals. But something else disturbed him, and for nearly an hour after dinner he wandered about the lawn and around the house. He wanted very much to see Miss Mayberry again, and to tell her the things he did not have a chance to tell her on the road, and he also very much wished to prevent that rascally Lanigan Beam from getting ahead of him, and continuing his broken-off interview with the lady. [Pg 203]

[Pg 204]

XXV

MR. TIPPENGRAY MOUNTS HIGH



It seemed as if every one must be taking an afternoon nap, for the Greek scholar had the grounds to himself. When he began to be tired of walking, he seated himself where he had a good view of the house, and presently saw Ida Mayberry at her window, with the young Douglas in her arms. Almost at the same moment he saw Lanigan Beam approaching from the direction of the barns.

"If he turns his steps towards that window," thought the scholar, "I shall see to it that I am there before him."

But the young man did not walk towards the front of the house, but went in the direction of his room, where the ladder stood leaning against the open window. Mounting this, he disappeared within.

The eyes of Mr. Tippetgray flashed, and his face was lighted by a bright thought. In an instant he was on his feet and running lightly towards Lanigan's room. Cautiously and silently he approached the ladder; deftly, and without making the least noise, he moved the upper end of it from the side of the building, and then, putting it on his shoulder, gently walked away with it. [Pg 205]

Around to the front of the house Mr. Tippetgray carried the ladder, and boldly placed it nearly upright, under Miss Mayberry's window. In astonishment that young lady looked out, and asked him what in the world he was doing.

"I want to speak to you," said Mr. Tippengray, "on a subject of great importance, and I cannot afford to lose this opportunity. May I come up?"

"Certainly," said Ida.

In a moment the Greek scholar was standing on one of the upper rounds of the ladder, with his head and shoulders well above the window-sill. Little Douglas was delighted to see him, and, taking hold of his outstretched forefinger, gave it a good wag.

"It was a capital notion," said Mr. Tippengray, "for me to take this ladder. In the first place, it enables me to get up to you, and secondly, it prevents Lanigan Beam from getting down from his room."

Miss Mayberry laughed, and the baby crowed in sympathy.

"Why shouldn't he get down, Mr. Tippengray?" said she.

"If he did," was the answer, "he would be sure to interfere with me. He would come here, and I don't want him. I have something to say to you, Miss Mayberry, and I must be brief in saying it, for bystanders, no matter who they might be, would prevent my speaking plainly. I have become convinced, Miss Mayberry, that my life will be imperfect, and indeed worthless, if I cannot pass it in prosecuting my studies in your company, and with your assistance. You may think this strong language, but it is true."

[Pg 206]



THE PROPOSAL.

"That would be very pleasant," said the nurse-maid, "but I do not see how you are going to manage it. My stay here will soon come to an end, for if Mrs. Cristie does not return to the city in a week or two, I must leave her. I am a teacher, you know, and before the end of the summer vacation, I must go and make my arrangements for the next term, and then you can easily see for yourself that when I am engaged in a school I cannot do very much studying with you."

[Pg 207]

"Oh, my dear young lady," cried Mr. Tippengray, "you do not catch my idea. I am not thinking of schools or positions, and I do not wish you to think of them. I wish you to know that you have translated me from a quiet scholar into an ardent lover, and that it would be of no use at all to try to get me back into my original condition. If I cannot be the man I want to be, I cannot be the man I was. I ask you for your hands, your heart, and your intellect. I invite you to join me in pursuing the higher education until the end of our lives. Take me for your scholar and be mine. I pray you give me—"

"Upon—my word!" was the ejaculation, loud and distinct, which came up from the foot of the ladder, and stopped Mr. Tippengray's avowal. Miss Mayberry instantly thrust her head out of the window, and Mr. Tippengray looked down. It was Calthea Rose who had spoken, and she stood under the window in company with Mr. and Mrs. Petter. A short distance away, and rapidly approaching, were Mrs. Cristie and Walter Lodloe.

"Here is gratitude!" cried Calthea, in stinging tones. "I came all the way back from Lethbury to see if anything had happened to you and that horse, and this is what I find. The top of a ladder and a child's nurse! Such a disgrace never fell on this county."

"Never, indeed," cried Mrs. Petter. "I wouldn't have believed it if angels had got down on their knees and sworn it to me. Come down from that ladder, Mr. Tippengray! Come down from it before I make my husband break it to bits beneath you. Come down, I say!"

[Pg 208]

"Mr. Tippengray," said Mr. Petter, in solemn voice, "in the name of the laws of domesticity and the hearthstone, and in the honorable name of the Squirrel Inn, I command you to come down."

There was but one thing for Mr. Tippengray to do, and that was to come down, and so down he came.

"Disgraceful!" cried Miss Rose; "you ought to be ashamed to look anybody in the face."

"Never would I have believed it," exclaimed Mrs. Petter. "Never, never, if I had not seen it with my own eyes, and in broad daylight too!"

What Mr. Tippengray would have said or done is not known, for at that instant Ida Mayberry leaned far out of the window and claimed the attention of the company.

"Look here!" she cried, "we have had enough of this. Mr. Tippengray has nothing to be ashamed of, and he had a perfect right to climb up this ladder. I want you all to understand that we are engaged to be married."

This announcement fell like a sudden downpour upon the people beneath the window, and they stood silenced; but in an instant the Greek scholar bounded up the ladder, and, seizing Miss Mayberry by the hand, kissed it rapturously.

"I may have been a little abrupt," she said, in a low voice, "but I wasn't going to stand here and let our affair be broken off like that."

At Mr. Tippengray's spontaneous exhibition of tender affection, Mr. Petter involuntarily and reverently took off his hat, while Mrs. Cristie and Lodloe clapped their hands. The lover, with radiant face, now descended the ladder and received congratulations from everybody except Miss Calthea, who, with her nose pointed about forty-five degrees above the horizon, walked rapidly to the post where she had tied her horse.

[Pg 209]



MR. PETTER TAKES OFF HIS HAT.

Miss Mayberry now appeared, with the baby in her arms, and an expression of great satisfaction upon her face. Mrs. Cristie relieved her of the first, but the latter increased as the little company heartily shook hands with her.

[Pg 210]

"I had supposed it would be different with you, Mr. Tippengray," said Mrs. Petter, "but people ought to know their own minds, and I have no doubt that Calthea would have often made it very hot for you, especially if you did not turn over an entirely new leaf in regard to coming to your meals. But there must be no more laddering; whether it is right or not, it does not look so. When Ida isn't tending to the child, and it's too wet to be out of doors, you can have the little parlor to yourselves. I'll have it dusted and aired."

"Excuse me," said Lodloe, coming forward, "but if you have no further use for that ladder, Mr. Tippengray, I will take it to Lanigan Beam, who is leaning out of his window, and shouting like mad. I presume he wants to come down, and as I have locked the door of my room he cannot descend in that way."

"Poor Lanigan!" ejaculated Mrs. Petter, "he doesn't know what he's coming down to. But no matter what he undertakes he is always a day after the fair."

Mr. Petter drew the Greek scholar aside.

"My dear sir," he said expressively, "I have a special reason for congratulating you on your decision to unite your blood and culture with those of another. Had you been entrapped by the wiles of our Lethbury neighbor, a person for whom I have but slight regard, and who is looked upon with decided disapprobation by those as competent to judge as the Rockmores of Germantown, I am afraid, my dear sir, I should have been compelled to sever those pleasant relations which for so many months have held us together, and which I hope may continue for years."



LANIGAN BEAM WANTS HIS LADDER.

[Pg 211]

"My good Petter," said Mr. Tippengray, "I have a pleasant house in town, which I hope to occupy with my wife this winter, and I should like it very much if you and Mrs. Petter would make us a visit there, and, if you wish, I'll have some of the Germantown Rockmores there to meet you."

The landlord of the Squirrel Inn stepped back in amazement.

"Do you mean to say," he exclaimed, "that you know the Rockmores?"

"The way of it is this," replied the Greek scholar; "you see, my mother was a Purley, and on the maternal side she belonged to the Kempton-Tucker family, and you know that the head of that family married for his second wife a Mrs. Callaway, who was own sister to John Brent Norris, whose daughter married a Rockmore. So you see we are connected."

"And you never told me!" solemnly exclaimed Mr. Petter.

"No," said his companion; "there are pleasures of revelation, which are enhanced by a delay in realization, and besides I did not wish to place myself in a position which might, perchance, subordinate some of your other guests." [Pg 212]

"I must admit that I am sorry," said Mr. Petter; "but your action in the matter proves your blood."

And now, Mrs. Cristie having finished her very earnest conversation with Ida, the newly betrothed pair walked together towards the bluff from which there was such a beautiful view of the valley below. [Pg 213]

XXVI

ANOTHER SQUIRREL IN THE TAP-ROOM



"If I had known," said Lanigan Beam, as late that night he sat smoking with Walter Lodloe in the top room of the tower, "that that old rascal was capable of stealing my ladder in order to make love to my girl, I should have had a higher respect for him. Well, I'm done for, and now I shall lose no time in saying good-by to the Squirrel Inn and Lethbury."

"Why so?" asked his companion in surprise. "Was the hope of winning Miss Mayberry the only thing that kept you here?"

"Oh, no," said Lanigan; "it was the hope that Calthea might get old Tippengray. You will remember I told you that, but as she cannot now go off with him, there is nobody for her to go off with, and so I must be the one to travel."

Lodloe laughed. "Under the circumstances then," he said, "you think you couldn't stay in this neighborhood?"

"Not with Calthea unattached," replied Lanigan. "Oh, no! Quite impossible." [Pg 214]

When Miss Rose had been convinced that all her plans had come to naught, earnestly and with much severity and singleness of purpose she considered the situation. It did not take her long to arrive at the conclusion that the proper thing for her to do was to marry Lanigan Beam, and to do it without loss of time. Having come to this decision, she immediately began to make arrangements to carry it into effect.

It was utterly vain and useless for Lanigan to attempt to get away from her. She came upon him with a sweet assurance which he supposed had vanished with her earlier years; she led him with ribbons which he thought had faded and fallen into shreds long, long ago; she clapped over his head a bag which he supposed had been worn out on old Tippengray; and she secured him with fetters which he imagined had long since been dropped, forgotten, and crumbled into dust. He did not go away, and it was not long before it was generally understood in the neighborhood that, at last, he and Calthea Rose were to be married.

Shortly after this fact had been made public, Lanigan and Walter Lodloe, who had not seen each other for some days, were walking together on the Lethbury road.

"Yes," said the former, "it is a little odd, but then odd things are all the time happening. I don't know whether Calthea has taken me in by virtue of my first engagement to her, or on some of the others. Or it may be that it is merely a repeal of our last breaking off. Anyway, I found she had never dreamed of anything but marrying me, and though I thought I had a loose foot, I found I hadn't, and there's an end of it. Besides, I will say for Calthea that her feelings are different from what I supposed they were. She has mellowed up a good deal in the last year or two, and I shall try to make things as easy for her as I can." [Pg 215]

"But one thing is certain; I shall stick to my resolution not to tell her that I have made money, and have reformed my old, loose ways of living and doing business. All that I am going to keep as a sort of saving fund that I can draw on when I feel like it, and let it alone when I don't feel like it. We are going to travel,—she is wild on that point,—and she expects to pay the piper. She can't do it, but I shall let her think she's doing it. She takes me for a rattling scapegrace, and I needn't put on the sober and respectable unless I choose to; and when I do choose it will be a big card in my

hand. By George! sir, I know Caltha so well that I can twist her around my finger, and I am not sure, if I had got the other one, that I could have done that. It's much more likely that I should have been the twisted one."

"What is Miss Rose going to do about her business?" asked Lodloe.

"Oh, that's to be wound up with a jerk," answered his companion. "I've settled all that. She wanted to hire somebody to take charge of the store while we're gone, and to sell out the things on her old plan; but that's all tomfoolery. I have engaged a shopkeeper at Romney to come out and buy the whole stock at retail price, and I gave him the money to do it with. That's good business, you know, because it's the same as money coming back to me, and as for the old oddments, and remnants, and endments of faded braids and rotten calicoes, it's a clear profit to be rid of them. If the Romney man sends them to be ground up at the paper-mill, he may pay himself for the cartage and his time. So the shop will be shut day after to-morrow, and you can see for yourself that my style of business is going to be of the stern, practical sort; and, after all, I don't see any better outlook for a fellow than to live a married life in which very little is expected of him, while he knows that he has on tap a good bank-account and a first-class moral character."

[Pg 216]

The autumn was a very pleasant one, and as there was no reason for doing anything else, the guests at the Squirrel Inn remained until late in the season. Therefore it was that Miss Caltha was enabled to marry and start off on her wedding tour before the engaged couples at the inn had returned to the city, or had even fixed the dates for their weddings. Caltha was not a woman who would allow herself to be left behind in matters of this nature. From her general loftiness and serenity of manner, and the perfect ease and satisfaction with which she talked of her plans and prospects with her friends and acquaintances, no one could have imagined that she had ever departed from her original intention of becoming Mrs. Lanigan Beam.

In the midst of her happiness she could not help feeling a little sorry for Ida Mayberry, and this she did not hesitate to say to some persons with whom she was intimate, including Mrs. Petter. To be sure, she had been informed as to the year of Mr. Tippengray's birth, which, if correct, would make him forty-six; but it was her private opinion that sixty would be a good deal nearer the mark. However, if the young child's nurse should become an early widow, and be thrown upon her own resources, she, for one, would not withhold a helping hand. But she earnestly insisted that not a word she said on this subject should ever be breathed into another ear.

[Pg 217]

When Ida Mayberry heard what Caltha had said about her and Mr. Tippengray's age, she was very angry, and declared she would not go to the old thing's wedding, which was to take place the next day in the Lethbury church. But, after thinking over the matter, she changed her mind, and concluded that at times like this we should all be pleasant and good-natured towards one another; so she sat down and wrote a letter to Miss Caltha, which she sent to the expectant bride that very afternoon. The missive ran thus:

MY DEAR MISS ROSE:

I have seen so little of Mr. Beam in the last few days that I have had no opportunity to express to him some thanks which are due him from Mr. Tippengray and myself. I am therefore obliged to ask you, my dear Miss Rose, to give to him a message from me, which, as it is one of gratitude, you will be pleased to deliver.

Not long ago, when Mr. Beam took occasion to tell me that he loved me and asked me to marry him,—I remember now that it was on the very day that Mr. Petter's horse behaved so badly and, unfortunately for you, tipped you out of the tail end of the little cart, and made it necessary for you to give up both it and Mr. Tippengray to me,—he (Mr. Beam) was so good as to say that if I would agree to be his wife and still wished the instructive companionship of Mr. Tippengray, he would take that gentleman into his family as a tutor. Now this, as you will readily acknowledge, my dear Miss Rose, was very good in Mr. Beam, and in return I wish you to say to him, both from Mr. Tippengray and from me, that if there should ever be any position in our gift which he is capable of filling, all he has to do is to ask for it.

[Pg 218]

Most sincerely yours,

Ida Mayberry.

And the next day in church no face expressed a more delighted interest in the nuptial ceremonies than that of the pretty Miss Mayberry.

It was late in November, and the weather was getting decidedly cool. There was a fire in the tap-room of the Squirrel Inn, and also one in the little parlor, and by this, after supper, sat Mr. and Mrs. Petter.

The guests were all gone; Mr. and Mrs. Tippengray, who had had a quiet wedding in New York, were on their way to Cambridge, England, where the bride would spend a portion of the honeymoon in the higher studies there open to women, while Mrs. Cristie and Mr. Lodloe were passing happy days in the metropolis preparing for their marriage early in the new year. The

Beams were in Florida, where, so Lanigan wrote, they had an idea of buying an orange grove, and where, so Calthea wrote, she would not live if they gave her a whole county.

The familiar faces all being absent, and very few people dropping in from Lethbury or the surrounding neighborhood, the Squirrel Inn was lonely, and the hostess thereof did not hesitate to say so. As for the host, he had his books, his plans, and his hopes. He also had his regrets, which were useful in helping him to pass his time.

"What in the world," asked Mrs. Petter, regarding an object in her husband's hands, "made you take down that miserable, dilapidated little squirrel from the sign-post? You might as well have let him stay there all winter, and put up a new one in the spring."

[Pg 219]

"This has been a most memorable year," replied her husband, "and I wish to place this squirrel in his proper position on the calendar shelf of the tap-room before the storms and winds of winter have blown the fur from his body and every hair from his upturned tail. I have killed and prepared a fresh squirrel, and I will place him on the sign-post in a few days."

"If you would let that one stay until he was a skin skeleton, he would have given people a better idea of the way this year has turned out than he does now," said Mrs. Petter.

"How so?" he asked, looking at her in surprise.

"Don't we sit here stripped of every friendly voice?" she said. "Of course, it's always more lonesome in the winter, but it's never been so bad as this, for we haven't even Calthea to fall back on. Things didn't turn out as I expected them to, and I suppose they never will, but it always was my opinion, and is yet, that nothing can go straight in such a crooked house. This very afternoon, as I was coming from the poultry-yard, and saw Lanigan's ladder still standing up against the window of his room, I couldn't help thinking that if a burglar got into that room, he might suppose he was in the house; but he'd soon find himself greatly mistaken, and even if he went over the roof to Mr. Lodloe's room, all he could do would be to come down the tower stairs, and then he would find himself outside, just where he started from."

[Pg 220]

"That would suit me very well," remarked Mr. Petter.

"If this house had been built in a plain, straightforward way," his wife continued, "with a hall through the middle of it, and the rooms alike on both sides, then things might have happened in a straightforward way, and not all mixed up, as they were here this summer. Nobody could tell who was going to marry who, and why they should do it, if they ever did."

Mr. Petter arose and, still holding the stuffed squirrel in his hand, stood with his back to the fire.

"It strikes me, Susan," said he, looking reflectively in front of him, "that our lives are very seldom built with a hall through the middle and the rooms alike on both sides. I don't think we'd like it if they were. They would be stupid and humdrum. The right sort of a life should have its ups and downs, its ins and outs, its different levels, its outside stairs and its inside stairs, its balconies, windows and roofs of different periods and different styles. This is education. These things are the advantages that our lives get from the lives of others.

"Now, for myself, I like the place I live in to resemble my life and that of the people about me. And I am sure that nothing could be better suited to all that than the Squirrel Inn.

"All sorts of things come into our lives, and when a thing like Lanigan Beam comes into it, what could be better than to lodge it in a place where it can go no farther? and if something of a high order, something backed up by Matthew Vassar, but which is a little foreign, and not altogether of our kind, how well to be able to put that in a noble and elevated position, where it can have every advantage and can go and come, without being naturalized or made a part of us. Think, too, how high excellence can be worthily lodged, with the comforts of the North and the beauties of the South, as in the case of Mrs. Cristie's rooms; and how blooded service is not forced into a garret, but is quartered in a manner which shows that the blood is recognized and the service ignored."

[Pg 221]

"If I had known what she was when she came," remarked Mrs. Petter, "I should have put her on the top floor."

"Think, too," continued the landlord, "of noble sentiments, high aspirations, and deep learning, lodged of their own free will—for it appears that there was no necessity for it—so near as to answer every need of social domesticity, and yet in a manner so free and apart as to allow undisturbed and undisturbing reveries beneath the stars, and such other irregular manifestations of genius as are common to the gifted."

"Such as coming late to meals," interpolated the lady.

"Think, too," Mr. Petter went on to say, speaking in a more earnest voice—"think, too, of a life or a house in which there is no place for a Calthea Rose; in which she cannot exist, and which, I am happy to say, she has always opposed and condemned."

Mrs. Petter slightly yawned.

"All that sounds very well," she said, "and there may be truth in it; but, after all, here we are alone by ourselves, and, so far as I can see, no chance of being less lonely next season, for your rules keep out all common folks, and we can't count on the people who were here this year

[Pg 222]

coming again."

Mr. Petter smiled. "There is no reason to suppose," he said, "that next season we shall not be favored with the company of the Rockmores of Germantown."

And with that he walked away to place in its proper position on the shelf in the tap-room the squirrel of the past season.



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